



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
First Session

Standing Committee
on
Families and Communities

Ministry of Status of Women
Consideration of Main Estimates

Tuesday, November 17, 2015
9 a.m.

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First Session**

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Chair
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W), Deputy Chair

Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (ND)
Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (PC)
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)
McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (ND)
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)
Payne, Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

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Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Participants

Ministry of Status of Women

Hon. Shannon Phillips, Minister

Kim Armstrong, Deputy Minister

Suzanne Lacroix, Director, Women's Equality and Advancement

Kevin Peterson, Senior Financial Officer

9 a.m.

Tuesday, November 17, 2015

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

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

The Chair: Good morning, everybody. I'm Heather Sweet, MLA for Edmonton-Manning and the chair of the Families and Communities Committee. I'd like to call the meeting to order and welcome everyone. The committee has under consideration the estimates of the Ministry of Status of Women for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016.

I ask that we go around the table and introduce ourselves for the record. Madam Minister, please introduce your staff when it comes to your turn.

Mr. Orr: Ron Orr, Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mrs. Pitt: Angela Pitt, Airdrie.

Mr. Rodney: Dave Rodney, Calgary-Lougheed.

Ms Jansen: Sandra Jansen, Calgary-North West.

Ms Phillips: Shannon Phillips, Lethbridge-West, and Kevin Peterson, Kim Armstrong, Suzanne Lacroix from Status of Women, all three.

Mr. Hinkley: Bruce Hinkley, Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Ms McPherson: Good morning. Karen McPherson, Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms Payne: Good morning. Brandy Payne, Calgary-Acadia.

Mr. Westhead: Morning. Cam Westhead, Banff-Cochrane.

Ms Luff: Robyn Luff, Calgary-East.

Mr. Shepherd: David Shepherd, Edmonton-Centre.

Mrs. Littlewood: Jessica Littlewood, MLA, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

The Chair: Thank you.

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

Hon. members, the standing orders set out the process for the consideration of the main estimates. Before we proceed with consideration of the main estimates for the Ministry of Status of Women, I would like to review briefly the standing orders governing the speaking rotation. As provided for in Standing Order 59.01(6), the rotation is as follows. The minister or the member of Executive Council acting on the minister's behalf may make opening comments not to exceed 10 minutes. For the hour that follows, members of the Official Opposition and the minister may speak. For the next 20 minutes the members of the third party, if any, and the minister may speak. For the next 20 minutes the members of any other party represented in the Assembly or any independent members and the minister may speak. For the next 20 minutes private members of the government caucus and the minister may speak. For the time remaining we will provide the same rotation just outlined to the extent possible; however, the

speaking times are reduced to five minutes as set out in Standing Order 59.02(1)(c).

Members may speak more than once; however, speaking times for the first rotation are limited to 10 minutes at any one time. A minister and a member may combine their time for a total of 20 minutes. For the final rotation, with speaking times of five minutes, once again a minister and a member may combine their speaking time for a maximum total of 10 minutes. The speaking rotation is set out in the standing orders, and members wishing to participate must be present during the appropriate portion of the meeting. Members are asked to advise the chair at the beginning of their speech if they wish to combine their time with the minister's time.

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

Three hours have been scheduled to consider the estimates of the Ministry of Status of Women. With the concurrence of the committee I will call a five-minute break near the midpoint of the meeting. The clock will continue to run through the break, usually after the third-party slot.

Mr. Rodney: Except there may be an objection. We were saying, just for the information of other committee members, that other committees have had the five-minute break, and that's not included in the three hours.

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Rodney. In the first week we did because there was a rule of order that was requested and discussed, but when you look at the standing orders, the standing orders are very clear that we are scheduled to be here from 9 a.m. to noon exactly, the same as if we were in the Legislature. If we took a five-minute break and stopped the clock, we would be outside noon.

Mr. Rodney: I won't be a stickler. I just know that in the days preceding the opposition would never have gone for that. It would have been a big deal, but we won't make it a big deal.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

So we'll move forward with a break with the clock not stopping. All in concurrence? Thank you very much.

Committee members, ministers, and other members who are not committee members may participate. Ministry officials may be present, and at the discretion of the minister officials from the ministry may address the committee. Members' staff may be present and, space permitting, may sit at the table or behind their members along the committee room wall. Members have priority for seating at the table at all times.

If debate is exhausted prior to three hours, the ministry's estimates are deemed to have been considered for the time allotted in the schedule and we will adjourn. Otherwise, we will adjourn at 12 p.m.

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

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

The vote on the estimates is deferred until consideration of all ministry estimates has concluded and will occur in Committee of Supply on November 23, 2015.

If there are amendments, an amendment to the estimates cannot seek to increase the amount of the estimates being considered, change the destination of a grant, or change the destination or the purpose of a subsidy. An amendment may be proposed to reduce an estimate, but the amendment cannot propose to reduce the estimate by its full amount. The vote on amendments is deferred until

Committee of Supply convenes on November 23, 2015. Amendments must be in writing and approved by Parliamentary Counsel prior to the meeting at which they are to be moved. Twenty copies of amendments must be provided at the meeting for committee members and staff, and originals must be provided to the committee clerk.

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

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's an honour to be here today, of course, on Treaty 6 territory, to present the 2015-16 estimates for the newly created Department of Status of Women. I would like to begin by introducing my supernaturally competent and dedicated staff, that have joined us here today.

Kim Armstrong is our deputy minister. She's an experienced public servant. She's served in various leadership roles in the government of Alberta. Kim is also dedicated to improving women's equality and helping women become leaders. She hosts an important workshop called the Judy Project, which encourages and teaches women important skills for women to either become or improve their leadership skills.

Suzanne Lacroix is our director of women's equality and advancement. Suzanne was one of the three public servants who made up the entire women's equality and advancement unit under the former government. It was a challenging job, with little support. She excelled at it, and we are very proud to have her wisdom and her expertise with us here today.

Finally, Kevin Peterson is our senior financial officer. He works with both Status of Women and Environment and Parks in this important role, providing a one-stop shop for the minister. He's an asset. I would like to thank him for the work he has done to support this incredible new ministry.

We also have a few staff from the department and my office present in the gallery. I would like to welcome them as well. Thank you all for being here today.

This is an important time for women in Alberta. Never before has there been a department dedicated to improving the status of women in this province. As mentioned previously, until our government took power, three staff comprised the entire machinery of government that worked on the status of women. We now have 24 department staff, all of whom are talented and enthusiastic about working to improve women's equality in our province.

Some have made the argument that we do not need to have a conversation about gender in Alberta. Many would argue that that work is done. Those who make such statements, in my view, are turning a blind eye to violence, wage inequality, and a cycle of child poverty that is inexcusable in a wealthy province like ours. The fact is that if we want to build Alberta, we must take action on women's equality.

Alberta has taken other approaches throughout our history and even our recent history, and we have not made progress toward those outcomes for women in our province. Up until the mid-1990s Alberta had a formal women's machinery in the form of a women's secretariat, a women's program to support the advancement of women in public service, and an arm's-length women's advisory council. In the 1990s, under a previous government, women's equality was no longer recognized as a priority, and the Alberta government machinery was dismantled. Since that time government policies and programs have paid less attention to women's and girls' specific needs and concerns.

Alberta was for many years one of the Canadian jurisdictions without a formal women's machinery. The overall policy approach had been to use gender-neutral language and embed women's experiences and concerns within the larger context of families and

Albertans. Or not at all: there was a great silence around gender equality in Alberta, I would argue, until May 5, 2015. There had been scant gender-based analysis happening within the government of Alberta apparatus. This previous approach did not improve the status of women in our province or the outcomes for women and girls.

Ten years later Alberta continues to have some of the highest rates of intimate partner and sexual violence against women and girls in the country, the highest gendered wage gap, and some of the lowest representation of women on boards, public agencies, and private companies. In fact, in a recent study conducted by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, for two years in a row Edmonton and Calgary have been identified as two of the worst Canadian cities for women. The situation is more dire for our indigenous sisters.

Albertans have asked our government to work on the important issues that women face every day and make marked progress on women's equality. It is for this reason that our government created the first Department of Status of Women in Alberta, and it is for this reason that we are asking for your support in passing our department's budget of \$1.447 million. This is an increase of \$1 million; \$447,000 was a fund transfer from Human Services, that was responsible for women's equality and advancement until July 2015.

9:10

I am sure that all hon. members have read our business plan, and I look forward to getting into the details with you.

In addition, I would like to highlight some of our government's commitments on gender equality, which we will be able to discuss with you further today. We are committed to fairness and equality. Of our government's 13 cabinet ministers seven are women; that's over 50 per cent. We will focus on supporting women in leadership and making it possible for more women to be at the decision-making tables.

We will review employment standards to support family-friendly workplaces, including better compassionate care leave and time off for family duties.

Gender equality matters to us because we know that our work is better when we reflect diverse opinions. That's the Alberta way. It's our government's way.

We will work with ministries across government to develop the best child care policies going forward, working towards a \$25-a-day child care system as finances permit.

We will look at ways to address domestic violence, and we've already begun. My colleague Minister Sabir recently announced \$15 million in new annual funding for women's shelters, and we will be looking at additional ways to support survivors of gender-based violence going forward. Further, our government is supporting the call for a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, and we hope the new federal government will take action. We look forward to working with them.

During my travels around the province women have told me how important this department is to them, to their mothers, sisters, and daughters in order to build a better Alberta for them to grow up in, work in, raise a family in. With this increase of \$1 million Status of Women will help shape key policies designed to improve the lives of women and girls in Alberta. We will work with our colleagues across government until every Albertan has their chance to meet their full potential regardless of gender or identity.

The fact is that if we want to build Alberta, we must take action on women's equality. We must stand with our indigenous sisters and all our sisters against violence. We must ensure that our work

is inclusive and diverse. We must ensure that all our children have the best start in life. There's a lot of work to do. This is a long-term endeavour. As was once remarked about the work and achievements of Canada's first female indigenous chief, Elsie Knott: the difficult was easy; the impossible took a little longer. We have come far in Alberta, but we have not come far enough on improving equality for women and girls.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

We will move now into the 60 minutes for the Official Opposition. Mrs. Pitt, I believe you're going to be asking questions.

Mrs. Pitt: Yes.

The Chair: Would you like to go back and forth?

Mrs. Pitt: Please. Yes.

The Chair: Minister, you're in acceptance of going back and forth?

Ms Phillips: That's fine.

The Chair: Please go ahead.

Mrs. Pitt: All right. Well, good morning. First of all, I'd like to thank the hon. minister and the staff for being available for Status of Women budget estimates, the first ever. This is really exciting.

Let's just go right in here. In the business plan a number of key policy streams are mentioned: economic security and prosperity, violence against women and girls, leadership and democratic participation, health and well-being, justice and access to the legal system, and a natural resource based economy. The former government didn't do very much on this file, so I was very pleased to hear that this government values action in this area.

I do see the website starting to reflect more of your intent. There's lots of new information on there. It's really good to see more background and that there's work being done. I'm glad there's more focus on some of the serious issues facing women and girls. The need is very high. We witnessed some of that yesterday in the House as well. The problem I do see is that after six months here there's very little that's actually happening. We heard an announcement in July talking about staffing hires – there were 14 – but have yet to really hear any valuable announcements with details that affect so many Albertans.

In a recent Statistics Canada report we learned that there were 10,045 cases of intimate partner violence in Alberta in 2013. That's more than twice the national rate, and we know that 8 out of 10 victims of domestic violence are women. Alberta has the second-highest number of cases in Canada of murdered and missing aboriginal women, as you know. Both are very serious and concerning statistics and a reminder that we need to pay attention to some of the brutal realities in our great province.

Let's get started. I'd like to start by looking at the 2015-16 budget estimates document. There's not a whole lot there, but I'd like to get a better understanding of the funding and its intended purposes. The previously budgeted and projected amount of \$362,000 is under the line Women's Equality and Advancement. Can you give me some details about how this money was spent?

Ms Phillips: Sure. We were in the process of setting up a department, of course, and that process did not start until July, not May 5. Once we had the interim supply, then Deputy Minister Armstrong went about the business of hiring a number of staff, and essentially those staff have come to us through the good graces of

our friends in other departments. You know, there were just some very basic, logistical items of business such as supplies and so on and securing office space that happened through the summer.

I will note that for 24 FTEs that are now in the Department of Status of Women, we had over 400 applicants from within government of Alberta employees, signalling a high level of interest in this department and a real willingness to get to work on these matters.

Mrs. Pitt: So is ...

Ms Phillips: I'm just going to finish.

Mrs. Pitt: Sorry. Is this \$362,000 staffing costs, then?

Ms Phillips: Not all. Much of it is supplies and other pieces as well.

But you had asked what we had been up to for the past six months. I had corrected that and said that it was July.

Mrs. Pitt: Five months.

Ms Phillips: So let me just go through some of the pieces that have occurred with these budgetary allocations. Under women in leadership we have reviewed ...

Mrs. Pitt: Actually, sorry. Specifically, I was looking under the women's equality and advancement line, the \$362,000.

Ms Phillips: Yes. Women's equality and advancement has within it about six different items of business that people have gotten to work on, so let's talk about that. Under women and leadership we are reviewing organizational design methods for the ministry to ensure best outcomes. We have met with individuals, women's organizations, and other equality-seeking stakeholder groups in order to inform the development of this department. We have delivered training sessions to executive teams across the GOA; 225 government staff have been trained over this time. We have held events for international day of the girl, which, of course, involved more than 80 young women. We have commenced planning for the June 2016 meeting of Status of Women ministers, to be hosted by Alberta.

We have also begun work with other departments on key initiatives, including family violence, sexual violence, poverty reduction, aboriginal initiatives, legislative changes to occupational health and safety, diversity and inclusion, and the committee on family violence.

Finally, we have ensured over that time, in order to support the work of the ministry in women's equality and advancement, that there has been space set up that meets security standards and ensures a baseline for things like risk management insurance, financial transactions, and so on. And, of course, we've developed strategies and recommendations to address financial issues and funding pressures going forward.

Mrs. Pitt: So the funding for the minister's office begins next year? Is this correct?

Ms Phillips: That's right.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. What permanent positions do you intend to fill for this office?

Ms Phillips: Right now, again, in Status of Women we are in this engagement process where we are talking to communities to ensure that we are getting it right with respect to how we build this department and working with our partners across the GOA to

ensure that we are not duplicating anything but actually focusing our efforts on key objectives like women's equality. We've ensured a very lean process so far. The only ministerial staff that I have at the moment is Rebecca Bock-Freeman, who has joined us here today, and she fills the role of ministerial assistant in my office. However, other roles are backfilled by my support staff in Environment and Parks; that is to say, the chief of staff and press secretary roles.

Mrs. Pitt: Oh, so – sorry – is that one permanent position in the office?

Ms Phillips: Yes, that's right.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. All right. Just a clarification. I was at the announcement in July, which was really exciting, honestly, truly. I believe you said in July that there were 14 staff hired for this department, and today you said that there were 24. Can you explain why you made the decision to increase staffing size here over the last five months?

9:20

Ms Phillips: I'll defer to Kim on that because this has been a process over time, of course, as well, right?

Ms Armstrong: Just to give you the details of it, we started with five FTEs, which would be the women's equality and advancement unit three, myself as deputy minister, and my chief of staff. So that's the five. Then there's Rebecca, so that's six. There are the 14 you mentioned. That's 20. Then, in addition to the 14, over the course of that same period of time, July-August, we recognized we needed a couple of extra people, so my deputy colleagues gratefully, from my perspective, seconded additional staff to help us. The total is 24 right now, 24 human beings, one of whom is with minister's office, the other 23 of whom are with us, six of whom are permanent FTEs, the rest of whom are on secondment, being paid for by the 11 ministries that have seconded folks to us.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay.

Ms Phillips: What I was referring to when we launched the department were the folks that we had brought in from other departments, the other FTEs, in addition to the people that had already been working in Human Services, and the deputy minister.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. So are the 11 allocated from other budgets, then, or is that brought into this one?

Ms Armstrong: It's not 11 people. My apologies. It's 11 ministries that have sent us people, but some ministries sent more than one person. You're correct. They're being paid for by Justice, Culture, you know, E and P. I think those 11 ministries are continuing to pay for the one or two FTEs that they have provided us.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay.

Ms Phillips: That's why the budget in '15-16 is but \$1.447 million when, you know, we have now started to build the department. We did that because we wanted to make sure that we were adding the right number of people in the right ways and sort of carefully curating the work of the department and also because we are in constrained financial moments.

Mrs. Pitt: No, that's fine.

Ms Phillips: You know, it's much easier for us to I guess cobble together through the good graces of other departments our work as

we build the department because that work with respect to the engagement strategy and so on is to ensure that we are focusing with laser precision on the things that we can change.

This is a department where we could easily try to solve all the world's problems because, of course, many of the world's problems have as their basis a gender component, and that underlines a number of the inequalities that we see everywhere. In that spirit, it was my intent to ensure that we identified some very specific priorities where we could demonstrate very specific outcomes to Albertans. That's one of the reasons why we have taken our time. We've been deliberate in building this department. No, you haven't seen any grand pronouncements of new programs and so on because we haven't done our careful groundwork yet. We will get there.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. The line item women's equality and advancement is estimated at \$444,000 for 2015-16. What are the additional initiatives that are planned in this category?

Ms Phillips: Let me pull up some of these points of items that we have undertaken on this so far. This is the unit that has been transferred from the Ministry of Human Services effective this spring. That unit is responsible for implementing gender-based analysis; that is to say, GBA plus, across all government ministries to produce the efficient and effective social and economic results for all Albertans. GBA plus is something that is a method of looking at public policy within government apparatus, that is used in most other jurisdictions but had not been sort of widely employed in Alberta previously. So this was identified as one of the best practices. We canvassed what was happening and performed an interjurisdictional comparison of Status of Women initiatives across Canada.

That unit also provides specialized expertise to support the policy work of other ministries with respect to gender equality, and it also provides support to the minister at the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women forum. As I alluded to earlier, we are actually going to be the host of that FPT in June 2016, which is really exciting because we will host it here in Edmonton in this fabulous new building, where we can actually host these kinds of large events at very low cost. So we're excited about that.

You know, the goal for this women's equality and advancement unit was that all deputy ministers and their executive teams receive GBA plus training before the end of the fiscal year, and it's occurring sort of across government in other roles as well. That \$447,000 that you see as a line there provides our human resources and supplies and services dollars for those three FTEs. The federal-provincial-territorial meeting of ministers responsible for the status of women has provided direction and perspective to support our work along economic security, access to education and career opportunities, and issues facing immigrant and indigenous women. Those are the three things that we expect to be on the table when we host the FPT in June. That unit will also be responsible for working up how we host that event and what we see as the demonstrable outcomes working with our counterparts across Canada.

Mrs. Pitt: I certainly hope all women in the Legislature will be invited to that. I'll be looking for my invite.

The total spending in this ministry is actually pretty small, shocking, actually, to quite a few women in Alberta looking for this department to really make some changes. The targets from the business plan show very little change in the budget for the government's term. Is it your intention to have resulting programs operate or continue to operate out of other ministries and to keep this ministry as a small research and planning arm?

Ms Phillips: Well, my intention with the out-years: there was essentially a little bit of what I talked about already. We are in the process of undertaking that careful stakeholder work and ensuring that our work, whether it's in program delivery or working with other departments, is carefully focused on key outcomes. We are undertaking that work as we speak with respect to our stakeholder engagement and, you know, sort of carefully curating how we organize the department's work. So I did not want to put large amounts of money in the out-years when I didn't know if that was actually going to be the amount that the department would need to achieve its objectives. We could have thrown some spaghetti at the wall – right? – and gone: okay; \$10 million. But that would be pulling a number out of a hat that had not been carefully thought through of: how many humans do you need to get to where you are delivering this specific program or moving towards this specific outcome?

So that's why it looks like status quo. Will it be the same in Budget '16? Likely no, because we will have undertaken that work. It was a question of whether I went with what we have now, because that is a certainty, or if I pulled a number out of the air and went with an uncertainty. I didn't think that was fair, to just kind of dream something up. That's not really the way that I feel like approaching public policy.

Mrs. Pitt: So probably you anticipate that over time this will likely increase?

Ms Phillips: Well, yes, because at the very least, you know, other departments will probably come ask us why they're paying for our staff. At the very least there will be an element of the current staff that are on secondment, perhaps with some additions or subtractions, depending on where the results of the engagement strategy this fall land. So at the very least there will be that.

Then there will be some other focus on specific areas – right? – and there may even be some program delivery. We don't want to, again, be all things to all people, but there might be some very specific policy areas where we want to deliver some programs, so there would be some funding for that. Yes, I do foresee it increasing, but with a new department when you're building it from the ground up, you don't want to engage in too much guesswork.

9:30

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. On the Human Services website it says that two programs have been moved to this ministry, women's equality and advancement, of course, and women in leadership. This program helps to increase women's leadership in government of Alberta. First question here: can you describe each of these programs?

Ms Phillips: Yeah, sure. Let me just pull it up here because I've got lots to say on this matter. Just give me a second. You know, I think the first thing to say here is that we have begun a two-hour training program for women within the government of Alberta called the Judy Project. In fact, next Friday we are beginning the process of opening that up to women beyond the GOA.

Mrs. Pitt: Julie?

Ms Phillips: Judy.

Deputy Minister Armstrong will be giving some of those sessions, if you will, beginning, I think, next week. Those are open to folks outside of the GOA. She's already delivered training to . . .

Mrs. Pitt: Will you put those online?

Ms Armstrong: Sorry. What do you mean by that?

Mrs. Pitt: Will you put the speaking notes or information online . . .

Ms Armstrong: Like the PowerPoint? I don't know.

Mrs. Pitt: . . . for anybody to access as your presentation?

Ms Armstrong: Yeah.

Ms Phillips: Absolutely.

Kim has already delivered this training to several hundred GOA employees, and she offers this training each month at locations throughout Alberta. So that's one piece on women in leadership.

You know, internally to government we do have a volunteer-based leadership program that spans ministries, and that has been supported now by Status of Women, ensuring that we're reducing barriers to women's advancement. This is sort of a begin in your own backyard kind of piece because at the senior levels of the civil service in this province, you know, we have quite a bit of inequality. So there's that piece, certainly.

Then the other piece is that I've begun many conversations with women in the private sector on how we can best advance this leadership piece, both through support for lower income women, you know, women at the beginning of their careers, but also at the senior levels. You know, I've had a lot of very productive and interesting conversations with women who have made their way to sort of the heights of the boardrooms and have succeeded among the captains of industry. There's an appreciation at all levels, I think, of society of the need for, really, some government leadership with respect to how women are developed as leaders, and there are some things that we can do as a government to set examples to provide resources, you know, even provide public shaming where necessary with respect to pointing out some of the inequalities that we have at those upper levels.

Those conversations are ongoing, and that is part of the stakeholder engagement that I specifically asked for, some feedback from women at all levels in the private sector on how we increase our numbers, decrease our wage gap, and ensure that women have broken through many of those sort of, you know, qualitative or unseen barriers to advancement in both the public and the private sectors.

Mrs. Pitt: The women in leadership: where is that second program found in the budget?

Ms Armstrong: The two folks who comprise that program are also part of the secondment pool I referenced earlier. They were previously with corporate human resources but seconded from other ministries, being paid for by other ministries. They've only been in place since the spring, so it's new from that perspective. They were brought into our ministry when we started. One of them is being funded by E and P, I believe, and the other one culture, I believe. Those are their home ministries.

Ms Phillips: Again, we have a situation where, you know, folks have been seconded to fill some of those gaps.

Mrs. Pitt: On the Human Services website it does say that the programs have moved to this ministry, but only one appears there.

Ms Armstrong: Well, the program did move, but there were no dollars attached to it. That's just the most straightforward way for me to explain it. But they are with us now. They came on July 6. Those two people came over into our office space, and they're part of our ministry now.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. Good.

In the business plan in years 2 and 3 there is \$50,000 allocated for capital spending. What is the reason for this amount?

Ms Phillips: I believe it has to do with supplies, services, and some capital goods. I will let Kevin tell you exactly what those items are.

Mr. Peterson: The \$50,000 is set up for the start-up of the ministry. They do need to acquire some capital purchases such as teleconferencing equipment, desks, chairs, computers, that kind of thing. So it's a fairly nominal amount just to set up the ministry as a department.

Mrs. Pitt: Why are you setting it up in years 2 and 3?

Mr. Peterson: Because not everything will be purchased at the same time. As the ministry grows as per potential mandate, there will be additional capital required. As well, by year 3 you'll start to need some evergreening of other goods.

Ms Phillips: Right now, of course, some of our supplies, again, like the people, have been borrowed from other places. You know, as the ministry's mandate becomes much more clear after our engagement process, it is likely that there will be some capital required.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. That may or may not change as needs develop here during stakeholder reach-out.

Ms Phillips: No, not really. I mean, we have in place the appropriate number of desks and chairs and teleconferencing equipment and all the usual items that, you know, the folks need to do their jobs right now. We thought that we would be sort of careful about that and ensure that in the later years, as we anticipate the department will grow somewhat, there's a little bit of room there to acquire the necessary tools for the job for the people who work there.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. Related to line item 2, women's equality and advancement, there's a short section in last year's Human Services annual report that talks about the ministry establishing a unit to co-ordinate government initiatives and having developed a three-year plan. Has the new ministry built on this plan?

Ms Phillips: Yeah. I mean, you see that in the business plan, and it is true that, you know, the previous government sort of in the sunset days began some work. There was a little bit of work around agencies, boards, and commissions, for example. There was some work undertaken by our colleague MLA Jansen here around a number of initiatives, and they are to be lauded. They were good initiatives, and much of that has carried forward. It's a question of political priority. Folks, Albertans, asked us to put more of a focus on these matters, and that's why you see a more developed business plan and so on in front of you.

One of the things that the previous government did start to do was this gender-based analysis work and some of the women in leadership work. So as we have moved forward, those are things that we have built on, those sort of late-game efforts, if you will.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. Last year the government ran six gender-based analyses plus training sessions. Can you give me some more information about those sessions?

Ms Phillips: Sure. Well, I'll start with GBA. It's called GBA plus, right? That's sort of the lingo applied to it. It's an internationally used policy and research tool to advance equal outcomes for women and girls and boys by identifying who benefits and who is excluded

from public policy, right? At its very essence that's the lens. It's a lens that we put on our decision-making so that we can understand what our substantive outcomes will be. Even if we had the formal intention for equality going in, oftentimes, you know, once public policy goes into the sort of black box of government, what comes out the other side can have differential impacts for differently situated people.

9:40

So the "plus" in the name highlights that this analysis goes beyond gender to include other aspects of intersectionality: factors like age, education, language, geography, ethnicity, religion, culture, income level. I would say also that sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression would be in that category as well, all of these ways in which we have differential outcomes for what could be a uniformly applied policy. So the FPT – federal, provincial, territorial – ministers responsible for the status of women agreed earlier in 2015 that GBA plus would be a priority focus for their governments. We, I think, share the view of the previous government that that analysis is integral to government decision-making. I applaud them for undertaking it, and we're happy to move that forward, as I said.

Now, gender equality is one of the explicit considerations that government of Alberta staff must make to prepare project and cabinet reports, which is in addition to what are the likely financial implications of this, what are the likely stakeholder responses, all of the things that one might find in government project reports or cabinet reports. We, in addition, have some information and some analysis on what our public policy is, whatever is under consideration, what kind of gender-based impact it may have.

So the women's equality and advancement unit, which is, of course, the unit for which Ms Lacroix is responsible, has been working on implementing that GBA plus across government. More than 300 people from all ministries have been trained on this matter. Executive-level training is currently happening, and open training for all GOA staff will start next year, which is quite exciting, I think. Once trained, each ministry will have the capacity to apply GBA plus across all its programs and ensure that that process has sustainability to it – right? – so that there are enough people, a critical mass, if you will, which is something we always talk about in gender and politics. As soon as we have that critical mass of people who are either trained in the matter or who have that matter top of mind, all of a sudden we start to see changes happening, right? Status of Women is going to be providing the oversight and co-ordination for the implementation of that.

Of course, you know, GOA is a big edifice, and there's a lot of programming and policies that are under consideration on any given day. There is really no increased cost, once happening, to government in order to do GBA plus. It becomes a matter of course. So that's the goal for gender analysis in this province, at the very least in our own backyard as government, to have that analysis be something that just happens as a matter of course.

Mrs. Pitt: So 300 people have already been trained since the creation of this ministry. Is that correct, first of all, that there have been 300 since July?

Ms Phillips: I think since April, when the work was first undertaken.

Mrs. Pitt: Oh, okay.

Ms Phillips: More of it has happened simply because we've had some folks that are zeroing in on this now. They were in with the Status of Women ministry, and they're now in Human Services

doing other things. So there have been more of them more recently, as I'm reliably informed. I'm going to let Kim give you exact numbers.

Mrs. Pitt: I'm just working out logistics in my own head. So 300 people and their training sessions – so, like, 10 people a session? How does this work?

Ms Phillips: You know what, hon. member? I haven't attended one. I'm sure my staff thinks that I've probably got this on gender analysis and I probably don't need to be in a training session, so I'm going to defer to them on what the actual logistics are for this GBA plus.

Mrs. Pitt: Perfect. Thank you.

Ms Armstrong: Okay. So as you referenced, on the Human Services website there is a notion about the program, which was under the women's equality and advancement unit. It started in the fall of 2014. So about a year ago we started doing it in GOA. The training is not as simple as that. There's some train-the-trainer training, and then there's some basic training. We've developed different levels of training. You could take a week of GBA training, or you could take a two-hour course. The training being offered, for example, to every executive team in government, of which about half have been trained so far – that's the deputies and their ADMs – that's 45 minutes. It's very condensed, just high level, "Here's what it is," so that when they see the words, they know what it means and they have a basic understanding. The train-the-trainer training is, like, a week-long program. The basic training that's offered to staff is half a day long. It's not as simple as just: there's GBA training; there are levels of development of GBA analysis or GBA plus.

In total since the fall of last year we've trained over 300 people in the half-day program, in addition to – I don't know the numbers – eight executive teams, which is probably 80 people, which we've trained, at the executive level in the smaller version. The intention, though, is to continue to ramp up the GBA plus training because, obviously, as the minister has identified, it's critically important to our objectives. Starting in January, we will have more people trained within our ministry, because right now we're just learning it ourselves, some of us, and will be able to offer wider training to folks around the GOA, particularly focused on the policy folks. Every department has them.

Mrs. Pitt: Is the goal to make sure that all government staff receive this training?

Ms Armstrong: I don't know that we could say that all 26,000 government employees would get the training, but I do think it's certainly a goal of ours that folks working in policy shops across government have the basics of GBA plus.

Mrs. Pitt: Is there any intention to reach out beyond government with this sort of training?

Ms Phillips: Yes, I think so, in the long term. I will defer to Suzanne on this matter, but I would certainly see that as a goal. I think that in many ways when we lead by example, what ends up happening is that we can be helpful to civil society, the private sector, and elsewhere. You know, it becomes, then, like I said – you know, when we look at the academic literature around behaviour change, organizational change, and gender equality, what we find is that there must be a creation of a critical mass. We've seen that in the Legislature now, where we have something approaching

gender equality. We now are talking about women's issues more often, as we saw even yesterday. There is an element there of: once you have a critical mass of people who are thinking through our public policy objectives through a gender-based-plus lens, what ends up happening is that you see real change on the ground.

I see no reason for us, as we go forward as a government, to limit our efforts to the, you know, relatively small number of people, 26,000 people, within the Alberta economy who are working for the government of Alberta. Part of that is identifying where our work might be helpful, whether it's in civil society, in the private sector, or elsewhere, and where it's already happening – right? – so that we are not, you know, duplicating efforts. There are a number of places and a number of companies, in fact, where this work in some ways is eclipsing the work of the GOA, but there are some other areas where we may want to focus our efforts.

Mrs. Pitt: Would you be willing to partner with some of these organizations that are already putting their efforts towards enhancing the lives of women and girls?

Ms Phillips: Well, I think that's part of what's happening this fall – right? – identifying capacity out there in the community and within the civil society and, you know, sort of also the capacity – being time, inclination, resources – to undertake some of these efforts where we can be helpful and where we cannot step in on what is already happening and is already achieving objectives. I mean, that's the role of government, in my view, and that's another reason why we've taken our time this fall to identify some of those places where we may be able to engage in partnerships.

That's why I've had some conversations with folks in the private sector and in civil society myself, but also the department is undertaking that as they, you know, engage in this fall kind of – it's not an outreach effort; it's more about understanding what the role of the ministry is and what gaps it will fill within the community.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. Excellent. I'm glad to hear you won't trample on the private guys, but keep up the good work.

The business plan says that performance measures that reflect progress toward achieving all three outcomes are under development. Do you expect to have these measures ready for the spring budget, and can you give an indication of what types of measures are being considered?

9:50

Ms Phillips: Yeah. Sure. Definitely, once we have the department constituted after this fall's activities, yes. Once we have a larger budget, you know, then we will identify the performance measures so that we can identify where the financial resources are being expended and what kind of outcomes they are driving towards. We expect that after the mandate is finalized by cabinet, we will be publishing performance measures as part of Budget '16.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. In the spring. Do you know what those measures are going to be?

Ms Phillips: No. But, again, you know, I can give us some broad strokes, right? What we've identified as priorities, the five or six priorities of the department, will drive towards outcomes on equality. For example, will we have made any progress on services for women in situations of domestic violence? Will we have, for example, provided a sexual violence framework for the province? Will we have at least identified policies that government can put in place in order to substantively address the gender wage gap? Will we have at least undertaken a larger leadership role on, for example,

women in nontraditional work? These are some of the pieces that I think we will be designing those performance measures around.

The other piece that I want to highlight, that I think is very important for this ministry, is the issues related to missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. Of course, we have supported the call for a national inquiry, and we are relieved that we are now talking to a federal government who shares the same view. You know, the fact of the matter is that with many of our outcomes we will not succeed if we are not substantively and proactively identifying ways in which our government can address the deplorable levels of inequality and violence among our indigenous sisters.

There are a few pieces in place right now within the government of Alberta, but I believe very strongly that a status of women department in Alberta must take into account, you know, the demographic changes, the reality of inequality for indigenous women, new Canadian women as well, and that will form part of our performance measures and the questions we ask ourselves as a government and the accountabilities we expect of ourselves as a government.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. It's really important that we are able to measure. This is important for this ministry, to prove to the naysayers that this is important. You know, I'm hoping that there should be some way, especially with the training that's going on right now, to measure from now until springtime – right? – what kind of success you've had with the training or those outcomes. I understand this is new and there are lots of brand new initiatives going on, and that's great, but to be able to, I think, really make some changes and a difference in the lives of women and girls in Alberta, we have to prove it, too. So that's great.

Ms Phillips: Yes. Yeah.

Mrs. Pitt: Priority initiative 1.2 says, "Work with other Government of Alberta ministries to ensure an effective and efficient organizational structure is in place to support the ministry's mandate regarding issues in relation to the status of women." You've given some examples of organizational structures within our own government. Are there, perhaps, examples from other provinces that are being considered here?

Ms Phillips: They did a full sort of interjurisdictional comparison of various, you know, what the folks in the business call "women's machinery" across the country. What we have found is that, again – and we are focused on a few key initiatives and priorities. Those are status of women departments that remain relevant and are sort of hitting those best practices. As for this question of how it interacts with other ministries, I think, like I said, this could be the ministry to swallow all other ministries if we let it be, right?

So the idea there is to identify, you know, maybe one or two program areas that Status of Women is delivering, but other than that, we are working sort of in a horizontal way, as the political scientists identify it, to ensure that gender-based work is being considered across all government programs. So if and when, you know, Status of Women is delivering its own actual programs, we will make sure that those are sort of carefully bounded and are interacting well with other programs being delivered in other ministries such as – well, take your pick, right? Generally speaking, it would be Human Services, Health, perhaps Advanced Ed, or Economic Development and Trade that come to mind.

Mrs. Pitt: Have you had any conversations with other provinces in Canada, you know, that weren't necessarily behind the times and actually had this ministry already up and going?

Ms Phillips: I've had conversations with folks in Manitoba, for example, and in Ontario. I did leave it to the level of officials to discuss the sort of inner workings of various departments. I'm going to defer to Deputy Minister Armstrong on this matter because they were the ones who had very in-depth conversations with different women's machineries, if you will, across Canada.

Ms Armstrong: So we've met either in person and typically by telephone or video conference with women's machineries in the Yukon, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Newfoundland. We have yet to connect with Nunavut. And we also did Northwest Territories. We have done a complete crossjurisdictional scan, as well as with Status of Women Canada on a federal level, to really ask a lot of probing questions about what they're doing, what they would do differently if they were starting all over again, what their areas of focus are, what their operational budgets are. I could go on and on. So we have done an extensive amount of consultation across the country.

Mrs. Pitt: Good to hear.

Ms Phillips: I have a meeting scheduled fairly soon – I think it's just telephone or video conference – with my new federal counterpart, with whom I have not connected yet, but that will be happening soon. Of course, I have a great deal of patience for folks going through a transition and a change of government, so I'm waiting my turn. I'm sure she's very busy. But we'll be having that. It's in the coming days, I believe.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. All right. Priority initiative 1.4 says, "Explore opportunities to establish an advisory body to support the ministry as it solidifies its mandate and sets forward direction." At the press event where you announced your vision for this ministry, you welcomed many women to advise you. Was that the beginning of the advisory council?

Ms Phillips: Well, we haven't constituted an advisory council yet because, well, the fact of the matter is that most status of women ministries are supported by an advisory council, which is made up of folks within civil society, private sector, and elsewhere, but we haven't constituted that yet because, again, how that happens and how that work is supported and structured is sort of under discussion this fall. Most successful status of women ministries have an advisory council of some variety, including, you know, Alberta, which used to have one. We are likely to do it pending, you know, input from caucus and cabinet on this matter and, of course, the various stakeholders with whom we are engaging this fall. There's the informal advice that one gets, and then there's the formal advisory council, that is quite a bit more external to government, if you will, and supports the work of the ministry and provides those critical connections to civil society, the private sector, academics, community activists, First Nations, and others.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. When do you think this advisory council will be formed?

Ms Phillips: Well, again, I think what you'll find is that once cabinet and caucus have done a sort of final sign-off on the structure and mandate of the ministry, once we have figured out what that budget is going to be for '16, then you'll see some of that work falling into place.

10:00

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. So your vision is an advisory council?

Ms Phillips: Yeah. It is right now, you know, because it's a best practice across the country. If someone gave me a better idea, I might consider it, but at this point an advisory council is one of those sort of pieces of structure that across the country has proven to ensure that the department remains relevant to the communities that it serves.

Mrs. Pitt: Priority initiatives 2.1 and 2.2 talk about research, crossjurisdictional reviews, and external engagement sessions. What kind of timeline are you planning on for this information-gathering stage?

Ms Phillips: I think what you'll find is that some of that is happening right now as we constitute the department. But I think that will come out of Budget '16 as well, the larger pieces of engagement with the public. Those are sort of large efforts – right? – and require quite a bit of time on the part of staff. I think you'll find that we are undertaking a lot more of that public engagement once we have an idea of what we want to accomplish with it, right? I think there is a real need to talk to communities about issues related to economic equality. There's certainly a great appetite to talk about a better range of services for women in situations of domestic violence, for example, and there is certainly a great need and desire out there for the public to become more engaged in issues related to supports for missing and murdered indigenous women, supports for their families, and various initiatives to ensure better equality outcomes for indigenous women. Those are the areas where I would argue that, you know, government can be the most helpful, if you will, in providing that forum for a broader based public conversation, and we anticipate that that work will be undertaken through '16.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. We will wait for that.

Priority initiative 3.4 says, "Establish a grants program targeting specific initiatives aimed at improving the lives of women and girls in Alberta." The first question is: since there is very little increase in your budget over the next three years, is this a long-term project, and would the grant program come out of another ministry's budget?

Ms Phillips: Well, no. It would come out of Status of Women because it would be directly targeted towards the focused outcomes that we've identified. Again, that is something that will come out of future budgets because of, of course, the limited funds that it has right now. The model that we are looking at right now is some very small, project-based grant programs that would not be ongoing but would be for specific initiatives delivered by civil society.

I don't know if Deputy Minister Armstrong has more. Suzanne may have more to say on that topic.

Ms Lacroix: We are considering various models, but based on best practices of what's worked before, it might be via the form of a call for proposals with targeted topics that would address some very critical or emergent issues or where we think we can have a significant impact even though it might be small scale.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. That would make sense.

Ms Phillips: Yeah. I mean, I have quite a bit of – in my previous life I chaired a women's organization that did financial and economic literacy programming for very, very low-income women, very, very vulnerable women in southern Alberta. That was supported by the work of Status of Women Canada. You know, it was very small grants, where we ended up serving almost 2,000 women, which is a lot of people, in southern Alberta, in Lethbridge

and the area. And then, of course, that was cut by the previous federal government. Those are the kinds of programs that I have seen in my previous life actually deliver real and substantive workforce attachment for women and other really important self-esteem gains. When you're leaving an abusive relationship or whatever the case is, getting your head around your money is a really basic piece of that. You know, those were sort of project-based, short-term grants to deliver specific projects, and that's very likely where we will go, even on a smaller scale than that, with these undertakings in Alberta.

Mrs. Pitt: All right. Can you give an example of grants that are already available in other departments for this and an idea of where you see the greatest need for a new grant, or is that to be determined?

Ms Phillips: Well, I'm not sure where there's any granting capacity for women's organizations anymore, but I'll leave that to Suzanne to provide more. I do know that there used to be some under the multiculturalism education fund and a few other places, but those over the last few years have dwindled.

So I'll defer, in terms of the actual technical nuts and bolts of that, to Mme Lacroix.

Ms Lacroix: There are some small grants available through Alberta Human Rights and through, you know, their multiculturalism, particularly. There are family and community safety grants as well through Human Services. But none of them would specifically address women's concerns with respect to equality, so it would be mixed in with other issues but not with that specific focus. At the federal level there are still grants available through Status of Women Canada, but those have greatly diminished under previous administration. There is going to be a renewal under this current administration. We have yet to hear what that's going to be.

With respect to foundations, with the downturn in the economy those have dwindled. That was a lot of the money that women's organizations were relying upon to at least work within their operational budgets. Unfortunately, there are a lot of women's organizations that have had to close their doors because of the lack of funding. We are hoping to remedy some of that.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay.

Ms Phillips: Just to add to that, one of the things that we're sort of waiting for as we develop these business plans as well and develop the work of the ministry is the presence of the federal government. You know, who was it going to be on October 19? Really, it was a three-sided die, and you could've just thrown it, with some pretty different approaches to women's issues that would come up, right? Part of that, too, was: "Okay. Let's wait and see what they might reconstitute so that we're not stepping into that space or doing something where there is already money." Who knows what's going to happen there. That was also part of this fall, to take the time to go: "Okay. You know, who is it going to be, and what are their priorities going to be?" and then move forward on that basis.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. So you're looking out for sort of, you know, a double-up situation, where you're not necessarily addressing a need that's already being taken care of at the federal level.

Ms Phillips: Yeah. I mean, we just need to keep in mind what they're up to, right? Sometimes a double-up situation is exactly what serves organizations; they can use leveraging to then go to foundations after they've been funded from, you know, a little bit

over here and a little bit over there. If any of you have been in nonprofit governance, you know this piece very well. Just to make sure that we have at least had a chance to connect with our federal counterparts to find out what they intend to do. They're going to have to make some changes after, essentially, the women's machinery, for all intents and purposes, in almost everything but name only, was restructured considerably since 2006. You know, we need to just keep an eye on what they're up to.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. That's good.

Desired outcome 3 reads, "Research has identified areas of immediate need where there are currently gaps in programming. These issues may not be central to mandates in other ministries." That statement tells us very little and gives no rationale for engaging in the expense of developing a whole new ministry. Question 1: who led the discussions with other ministries to determine that there are gaps?

Ms Phillips: I'm going to defer to Deputy Minister Armstrong on that matter.

Ms Armstrong: When you say "led," I can say this in response to the question. I engaged with maybe 23 of the 25 deputy minister colleagues that I have at the table. I am still waiting. I had to reschedule a couple of meetings, but my intention is to engage with every single one of them, again, to have a really open discussion about what they're currently doing to serve women and girls in Alberta, to advance equality, what gaps they see, not just restricted to their own portfolio but just in general, you know, with their experience in government. But also, and probably more important than those conversations, our folks, the folks that we've been talking about, have been out engaging bilaterally with ministries. They've talked to Health. They've talked to – well, they've talked to probably virtually every ministry now to try to learn about what's going on in their ministries, about where gender-based analysis is or is not being done, and about what opportunities exist. So there have been a ton of discussions happening throughout government since July 6.

10:10

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. Are there any nongovernment stakeholders involved?

Ms Armstrong: Yes. Absolutely. We have had probably – I'm not exaggerating – hundreds of meetings, the 23 of us, with folks around the province outside of government in different what I'm going to call spaces. For example, in the violence against women space I just co-led a discussion with my colleague at Human Services, and we brought 25 thought leaders on intimate-partner violence together from around the province to talk about what we can do to stop this horrifying situation that we are facing right now. That's an example. We've also done engagement sessions with folks from agencies and academia throughout the province, and the total number of participants has been about 200 in quite significant engagement sessions to learn about what their experiences are and where they see gaps being.

In addition to those two identified things, we have also had the activity of having our staff who have portfolios out in the community meeting with, for example today, Pam Krause, who's the head of the Calgary Sexual Health Centre – I believe I have that name; she's a brilliant and amazing woman – who is speaking to our team right now. She is engaging with our team as we're here. So we're doing things like that. We have activities happening literally throughout the province, where our folks are out meeting with people.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. Were there any costs? Were there any large round-table discussions with many stakeholders at one time?

Ms Armstrong: So the costs would have been – like, we had meet-and-greets, one in Calgary, one in Edmonton. We have kept our costs to an absolute minimum, and by that I mean that we have used government space, hosted all our sessions in government space. We have served coffee and juice to folks. We have sent the minimum number of government staff to the session. We've restricted that with care and caution. So there are costs, but they're absolutely minimal. We hired no external consultants, no external facilitators. All the facilitation was handled by the brilliant folks at community development, which is with Culture. They are experienced facilitators. So we've, again, relied on the good graces of our colleagues in government. I'm proud to say that we've done it with very little expense.

Mrs. Pitt: All right. And those started in July?

Ms Armstrong: The conversations started in July, yeah.

Mrs. Pitt: In July. Okay. And they're still ongoing?

Ms Armstrong: The last discussions are happening. I could be wrong about the exact date, but right around now. We're just finishing up the discussions.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. Do you feel like there has been valuable information that – do you feel it's complete?

Ms Armstrong: Tremendously valuable information. Yeah.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. Yeah.

Ms Phillips: Yeah. I've had some reports of these engagement sessions, and it's one of the reasons why we put the very fine point on it, that we would build this ministry responsive to those who are working in this space.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

We'll move on now to the third-party opposition. Ms Jansen, I believe you're going to be asking questions.

Ms Jansen: Yes. Back and forth if that is okay with you.

Ms Phillips: Yeah. Sure.

The Chair: Go ahead, please.

Ms Jansen: Perfect. Thank you very much, and thank you, Minister, for taking the time out today. I was a little bit interested in your timeline, right off the top, talking about the way Alberta has handled women's issues. We indulged you as you went through your timeline, so I'm just going to make a few corrections to that timeline.

In 2013 I was named the associate minister of family and community safety, the first time women's issues had been named in a mandate letter for a ministry. I do want to correct. I think you've glossed over the work our previous government has done. I did want to actually make sure to point that out. Certainly, I had the opportunity to work with the delightful Suzanne Lacroix and some amazing people in the department. I think, you know, to be the first minister out there responsible for women's issues – we took that job very seriously, so I think it's unhelpful to characterize the previous government as not doing anything because certainly myself and the staff who are working with you now worked very hard on these issues. I just wanted to make that correction. As the

minister responsible for women's issues we did significant work moving forward a number of issues that you're building on right now, that you're not initiating, that you're building on right now, and that's work we did in our previous government.

You know, you pointed out yourself the GBA training that the government staff are going through. You're obviously very proud of it. It's work that our government started, and we were very proud of it when we did it, too. Happy that we're building on those things going forward, but I did want to mention, of course, that our government had been doing that work first.

I was a little bit concerned when you talked about measurables. In your measurables you talked about being able to provide as a performance measure whether you would be able to offer up a sexual violence framework. Well, we did that work. I was the first minister to come up with a family violence framework and a sexual violence framework, and that work was done. In fact, we were the first government to sit a lot of the sexual violence service providers down at the table across the province. It was an incredibly moving experience. I organized the event with the wonderful department staff and Sheldon Kennedy, and it was incredibly moving as some of the service providers had never had an opportunity to be acknowledged at the table. That work was being done, and it helped us form the sexual violence framework that is in place right now.

When it comes to measurables . . .

The Chair: Hon. member, we know that you have done a lot of work in this area, but if I could just remind you to please try to focus on this current government and the estimates and the business plan.

Ms Jansen: Well, I believe, Madam Chair, that since the minister made a point of putting on record at the start of this meeting what hadn't been done, I want to make sure that we correct the record for the record.

The Chair: I understand that. I just want to make sure that you spend your time talking about the current estimates and the business plan, please.

Ms Jansen: Well, certainly, the material that the minister covered at the beginning of her preamble covered that work, so I feel that I would like to actually put our work on the record as well. I feel that it's a quid pro quo. Do you not agree with that? Am I not allowed to put it on the record? Can you tell me that right now?

The Chair: No, it's fine. You can go ahead.

Ms Jansen: All right. Thank you. I'll continue.

We released the province's first family violence framework and sexual violence framework. We began work on a women's equality and advancement framework, and I was lucky enough to work with Suzanne Lacroix on that. We had begun that women's equality and advancement framework. We had some great cards printed up. We were taking them around the province. We did some wonderful infographics. I'm sure Ms Lacroix will attest to the work we had done on that, and we'd begun those consultations. I'm definitely going to want to know whether you actually are expanding on the work that we had started in that area.

I was lucky enough to attend the FPT in Yellowknife in 2014, and I must say that in the discussions we had around the table with other ministers responsible for women's issues, Alberta was actually doing quite well. We were very proud of the work we did, and I had a lot of great feedback from the other provinces in that they were quite impressed with the work we were doing, so I'm not sure I would paint the picture of a government that wasn't paying attention to women's issues. Certainly, we put out the province's

first transphobic and homophobic bullying fact sheets, the first meeting with the trans community. There were a lot of firsts that we did in that department.

You know, just for the record I want to note that when you talk about more women at the decision-making tables and working with colleagues across the government, there are a lot of us who've been doing that work for years, so I just want to make sure that it's noted that we have been doing that work for years.

In continuing on with this conversation about, you know, women in leadership roles, certainly I know that when we did estimates with the JSTL minister, we were talking about measurables. When you talk about measurables in this department – I was concerned that you said: are we going to be able to provide a sexual violence framework? – when you look at measurables like that, I'm wondering: can you explain to me whether you think the one we did was ineffective?

10:20

Ms Phillips: I sure can, yes. Well, as I understand it, that sexual violence framework was never released. When I saw it, I took exception to the first sentence and almost every sentence after that. It contained no gender analysis of hardly any kind. It was devoid of analysis based on gender. It was a completely neutral language document in which there was no LGBT analysis, there was no analysis of trans issues, and there was no analysis of inequality or rape culture or any of the things that underpin the sexual violence framework. Now . . .

Ms Jansen: You realize that this is actually my time, Minister.

Ms Phillips: All right. Well, go ahead. You can defend that thing all you want, but I will not release it.

Ms Jansen: You realize that the staff who put that together are still your staff.

Ms Phillips: Yeah. And they did that under political direction.

Ms Jansen: Well, I was the minister responsible . . .

Ms Phillips: The fact of the matter is that this government takes a different approach, an ideological approach, to sexual violence.

Ms Jansen: Wow.

Ms Phillips: That sexual violence framework was utterly distasteful, and, honestly, you know, you talk to stakeholders and so on, and they go: yeah, well, this was, we thought, the best that we could get. The fact of the matter is that it contained no gender analysis. It was drained of its women's equality analysis. It did not take into consideration LGBT issues, trans issues, rape culture . . .

Ms Jansen: Well, I'm talking now. So you're actually talking about a framework that we put together with staff from your department who are telling you that they did it under duress from me?

Ms Phillips: Nobody is telling me anything.

Ms Jansen: Well, no. I think that's exactly what you're saying right now.

Ms Phillips: The people elected me to take a certain view of the sexual violence framework, which I did.

Ms Jansen: Sorry. Exactly what your saying right now is that the staff in your department told you they put together the sexual

violence framework under duress. Is that what you're telling me on the record?

Ms Phillips: No. What I am telling you, hon. member, is that I was given the sexual violence framework . . .

The Chair: Member and Minister, I'm going to intervene just for a minute. I'm worried about the tone of the meeting, and I'm concerned that this is going to deteriorate, so I would just like to take a moment and go back to reminding that this committee is an extension of the Legislature and that the decorum needs to be maintained, as we would if we were in the House. If we could just be respectful of each other and try to engage in this debate a little bit more respectfully, please.

Ms Phillips: Right. That framework was not acceptable to me as a minister.

Ms Jansen: So are you still going with the term "disgusting"? I just want to make sure because you just said that on the record. You said that it was disgusting. You're saying that the sexual violence framework was disgusting.

Ms Phillips: Some of the language in that was drained of its gender lens, and it ran contrary to the whole point of gender-based analysis. We sent it back to the drawing board.

Ms Jansen: The gender-based analysis that our government was doing . . .

Ms Phillips: It was never released, so the fact that you guys say that it was released is wrong. On this matter . . .

Ms Jansen: We can spend this entire time talking over each other . . .

Ms Phillips: Sure.

Ms Jansen: . . . or I can ask questions and use my time effectively. I'm hoping, Minister, that we can actually do that.

Ms Phillips: Or I can respond to some of things that I have just heard based on the record.

Ms Jansen: Well, you know what? I mean, I can ask a question, and you can talk for the entire 10 minutes, and then I only get to ask one question. The point of estimates is that I get to ask a question . . .

Ms Phillips: Go ahead. If you'd like to brag more about the previous government's record on women's issues, I'm happy to have that conversation, because it's deplorable.

Ms Jansen: You know, you're using terms like "deplorable" and "disgusting," and we're actually in an environment here where I'm trying to ask questions. That kind of language is, first of all, unparliamentary and unhelpful to the situation. If you would like to continue on with the analogy that having everyone at the table together is really important and then you don't want to sit and have these discussions at the table, how exactly is that helpful? That's counterintuitive to the process.

I would suggest that perhaps, you know, we're all looking for the same outcome here, so to characterize my work as disgusting and deplorable is actually unhelpful to the process. I feel that I worked with the staff that you're currently working with now. We did some amazing work, that we're proud of here. We want to work together. I work with my colleagues across the aisle, and I think they can all attest to the fact that I am not here to be adversarial, but when you

use language like that, it's very unhelpful in an area where we all need to work together carefully. Can you bring that co-operation level to the table?

Ms Phillips: Of course I can.

Ms Jansen: Well, I'd like to see it, devoid of that incendiary language.

Ms Phillips: The fact of the matter is that you never released that framework, hon member, so, you know, we're talking about something that the public never saw and for good reason.

The Chair: Okay. Ms Jansen, would you like to go forward with a question, please? We'll try to keep this conversation moving forward to use your time effectively.

Ms Jansen: Can you tell me how many provinces have a dedicated minister for the status of women?

Ms Armstrong: How many provinces? I'm not aware of any.

Ms Lacroix: Every province and territory has to have a minister assigned to this portfolio, but it doesn't mean that they necessarily have the machinery behind it, as is the case, for example, in B.C.

Ms Armstrong: Yeah. There is no province that has a dedicated minister, where there's no other role for that minister – is that a correct statement? – and there's no ministry for the status of women in Canada with the exception provincially of Alberta.

Ms Lacroix: That's right.

Ms Jansen: When we talk about Alberta's deplorable situation of dealing with women's issues, in fact there isn't another province in the country that has a dedicated status of women minister.

Ms Phillips: Not until May 5, no.

Ms Jansen: I thought it was July.

Ms Phillips: Well, I mean, the Premier made it very clear within our platform and then when we were sworn in on May 24 that there would be a minister responsible.

Ms Jansen: So was there any work done between May and July in this area?

Ms Phillips: Well, we did not have any money to do it because we, of course, got our initial dispensation through interim supply.

Ms Jansen: But the staff were already there. They didn't take a break from their work.

Ms Phillips: They were doing their work over in Human Services, and then we moved the budget over – well, we had a budget for interim supply beginning July 1.

Ms Jansen: But they were doing the work in women's issues in Human Services, like they were doing when I was there.

Ms Phillips: There were three people, yes. There were three people doing work on women's issues in the government of Alberta.

Ms Jansen: So they didn't get any direction from May to July to do anything differently than they had been doing under our previous government.

Ms Phillips: Understanding, of course, that they knew that they were going to be moving into a free-standing department. Of course, during that time the Premier made very clear, for example, something that the previous government refused to do, which was to call on the federal government for an inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women. Despite the stellar record of the previous government the previous Premier refused to do that and add his name to the call for that national inquiry. So there was, of course, some work to be done there as well with respect to . . .

Ms Jansen: I'm actually talking about the work that was being done by the folks who were working in Status of Women, who had been working many years in that area. They weren't given any specific direction from May to July to do anything different than the work they'd been doing under the previous government?

Ms Phillips: Well, they were undertaking their GBA plus work and other work.

Ms Jansen: As they were undertaking it, they were doing work that they'd been doing since 2014.

Ms Phillips: Well, as many departments were doing, they were carrying on work that was ongoing work of the government of Alberta. Just because we had a change of government did not mean that we were shutting down the work of the government of Alberta. People were undertaking new initiatives – the existing initiatives, of course.

Ms Jansen: But you said new initiatives. They weren't undertaking new initiatives in women's issues at that time.

Ms Phillips: Not necessarily, no. However, there was some work undertaken within Human Services, of course, because we knew that we were going to be moving forward with new dollars for women's shelters, for example, which the previous government had also not done.

Ms Jansen: Okay. Well, I think I'm pretty happy. You know, I think I'd probably like to move on to some other areas, then.

Let's go back to the measurables again, and let's talk about how you're going to measure your success a year from now. I think, you know, that there are people concerned that you've obviously got a weighty portfolio in environment, so to be doing these both at the same time does leave some people concerned that maybe this is a little bit of lip service. What are your measurables going to be looking like a year down the road?

Ms Phillips: Well, as I discussed with hon. member Pitt, we are focusing on some very key objectives with respect to missing and murdered indigenous women and ensuring that we are getting our support for that inquiry right, ensuring that we are doing the correct things with respect to domestic violence and violence against women, starting with the new funding for women's shelters, something that had not happened in at least five years . . .

Ms Jansen: Actually, we had given more money to women's shelters.

Ms Phillips: . . . and some other initiatives that we are moving forward with.

Ms Jansen: Just for the record women's shelters had been given more money within the last five years.

Ms Phillips: However, I mean, this idea that . . .

Ms Jansen: Well, the narrative should be correct, Minister.

Ms Phillips: Yes, it should.

Ms Jansen: I mean, you know, it's helpful when it is correct.

Ms Phillips: Yeah, it is helpful.

Ms Jansen: You can't throw anecdote out there and then call it evidence.

Ms Phillips: As for this matter of ability to undertake the job, I think that my record stands for itself. Yes, I have been given two important . . .

Ms Jansen: Your record on what?

Ms Phillips: Well, on the fact that I've been given two important portfolios.

Ms Jansen: But that's not a record; that's an assignment. What has the record been so far?

Ms Phillips: You know, I can handle the job. That's the answer to that question.

Ms Jansen: All right. So your record is your assignment. That is what you're saying.

Ms Phillips: And the fact that we have undertaken some very important initiatives through building a Status of Women department.

Ms Jansen: So you're continuing a lot of initiatives that we had begun.

The women's equality and advancement framework: what's the status of that? Are you planning to go forward with that framework?

Ms Phillips: Well, I think we will, with some important sort of directional changes, including lifting many of the silences around gender within the government apparatus.

Ms Jansen: What directional changes specifically to the women's equality and advancement framework that we began are you looking at implementing? What directional changes?

10:30

Ms Phillips: Well, I think that we would make GBA plus training, as I said, more widely available and certainly find ways that we can be helpful to civil society and others in this matter. I think that there are many ways . . .

Ms Jansen: So is there a directional change that you saw in the previous women's equality and advancement framework that we were working on?

Ms Phillips: Well, the fact of the matter is that these undertakings will be far better resourced within their own department.

Ms Jansen: What can you name that you found particularly offensive in the previous work that we'd done on the women's equality and advancement framework?

Ms Phillips: There's nothing particularly offensive; it was just sort of lackadaisical. You know, when you have three people working in a women's apparatus embedded in one department . . .

Ms Jansen: So the work of the Mme Lacroix was lackadaisical. Is that what you think?

Ms Phillips: No. The political direction was lackadaisical, which resulted . . .

Ms Jansen: The political direction was mine.

Ms Phillips: . . . in some of the worst outcomes for women in the country, and there's a reason why women have identified Edmonton and Calgary as being some of the most challenging places to live in this province.

Ms Jansen: The political direction was mine: so, lackadaisical, disgusting, and deplorable.

Ms Phillips: The political leadership on this matter was, I think, generously described as lackadaisical on women's issues, which is why you have the outcomes that you have with respect to domestic violence, with respect to missing and murdered indigenous women. It cost no money to call for that inquiry, yet the previous government refused to do so. With respect to the gender gap in earnings, with respect to women in nontraditional work, with respect to supports for new Canadian women there are a number of ways that we could be better serving Albertans.

Ms Jansen: Oh, I agree. There always will be better ways.

Ms Phillips: There was almost zero priority put on it by the previous government.

Ms Jansen: You've got a bunch of women at the table who actually want to do that work. You know, we want to do that work. I believe there should be an inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women.

Ms Phillips: Well, your Premier didn't.

Ms Jansen: Well, you know what? There were a lot of things that I was moving forward that I was hopeful for in our government. I'm happy to work with any government who wants to work forward, too, but that discussion has to take place in a respectful environment. I'm a little concerned about the language you're using and about the tone you're taking, and I'm just wondering: how is it that we can work together effectively when you seem to be hostile – and I use that word generously – to the work we had done in the past? There are a lot of us who want to sit at that table and work things forward and make things happen in this province.

Ms Phillips: Well, you know, to my mind, the reason why we have a Status of Women department is because we had a previous government who took victory laps over doing very little. You want to talk about lip service? The situation we inherited is one where we have very high levels of domestic violence, we have very high levels of inequality for indigenous women, and we had a grand total of between three and four people working on women's issues.

Ms Jansen: I can assure you, Minister, that no victory laps were being taken over the status of women in this province, and that is a shameful suggestion to make. We were working very hard in this area, and when I sat at the table with folks like Sheldon Kennedy, we worked very hard to put together the sexual violence framework, so to describe it as disgusting or deplorable is simply unhelpful to the process. No one is taking victory laps in this area. We are committed to sitting down at the table and having a serious discussion about these issues. We can only have that in a respectful environment, Minister, a respectful environment that doesn't include name-calling and a lack of agreement that the work you're doing was the work we had already done in our government.

The Chair: Thank you, Member.

Okay. I'm going to call a break because I think right now we all need to have one. We're going to have our five-minute break now, and then we will come back. Please be back at 10:38. I will be starting right on time.

[The committee adjourned from 10:34 a.m. to 10:39 a.m.]

The Chair: Okay. We will call the meeting back.

At this time there are no independent caucus members, so we'll be moving on to the government caucus for their first 20 minutes. Ms Payne, I believe you'll be asking questions of the minister.

Ms Payne: Actually, Ms McPherson will be sharing the time.

The Chair: Oh, Ms McPherson. My apologies. Would you like to go back and forth?

Ms McPherson: If that works for you, Minister. Back and forth?

Ms Phillips: Whatever you like.

Ms McPherson: Okay. Well, thank you for the opportunity to ask questions, Minister. I'm happy to see that the government is making women's issues a priority. There definitely is plenty of evidence to show that Alberta is one of the most challenging places in Canada and, I would say from my personal experience, in the world to be a woman. It's great that we're making this a priority and committing resources to ensure fairness and equality for women in Alberta. Personally, I'm committed to women and girls being able to walk alone without fear, so I'm very happy to see this ministry.

I'd like to start by asking a broader question about the overall funding increase for Status of Women, and I'd just also like to preface my remarks by saying that some of the questions may seem rather repetitive, and I apologize in advance. The first question. The budget for this ministry is \$1.447 million for 2015-2016, an increase of \$1 million net new money. Why was there the funding increase? This is on page 227 of the main budget package.

Ms Phillips: Well, as we talked about, the original \$447,000 was the transfer from Human Services, which was, of course, the three to four FTEs that were responsible for the entirety of the women's machinery under the previous government.

Our government made a platform commitment of \$1 million to create the women's ministry, so that's the additional money that you're seeing in the estimates. It covers the staffing for another three FTEs and covers the engagement to help us develop the mandate. As I was discussing with MLA Pitt, it also covers the priorities and organizational structure for cabinet decisions, which is quite a large undertaking to ensure that we've got the right pieces in place for the mandate and, of course, you know, a little bit of supplies and services to stand up the ministry.

Ms McPherson: What was the pre-existing funding primarily used for?

[Mr. Smith in the chair]

Ms Phillips: It was used for the women's equality and advancement unit within Human Services.

Ms McPherson: Okay. Thanks for providing a little bit of clarity on where the new funding will be used and what the existing funding was allocated towards.

I'd like to know more about what you feel the impact of the new ministry will be on women. I understand that the government proposed a women's ministry to lead initiatives to increase gender

equality in Alberta. With a 1 and a half million dollar budget, how will Status of Women make real changes in the lives of Albertans?

Ms Phillips: Well, you know, I think one of the big things is that we've actually started talking about women's issues in this province in a way that we have not before. I think we saw that in the Legislature yesterday, and we saw it over the weekend with respect to the very excellent reporting done in the *Edmonton Journal* on the topic of domestic violence. The fact of the matter is that we've inherited a situation where we have a very large pay gap, where we have high levels of inequality for indigenous women and girls in this province, we have very high-cost child care, we have some issues related to women engaging in nontraditional work and having access to those good-paying energy and other sector jobs. There's a tremendous amount of work to do in Alberta that we have inherited through some years of really having three or four people working on the topic and not much more.

I think that what you're going to find is – what we've already done is to talk about women's issues in this province in ways that are really turning the page. We've gone from being one of the most conservative jurisdictions in the country on women's issues to being one of the most progressive, and that's really something to be proud of, and it's something that we're going to see, I think, having an effect on much of the work of government. For example, you know, we saw it even yesterday with respect to having a conversation about residential tenancies. Minister Sabir has indicated that we're having a look at ways in which we can look at the occupational health and safety code to ensure that women in situations of domestic violence are getting the supports they need there. There are a tremendous number of initiatives that we can lead and that we can support once we apply a gender lens.

The other really important piece of this is, of course, gender identity and gender expression. You know, what it means to be a woman is a much larger definition in 2015 than maybe it was in 1985. That's a good thing, when we expand how we think about these matters, which is why it's really important to have that lens in initiatives related to sexual violence, domestic violence, and so on, that we are understanding how these issues differentially impact different women, trans women, LGBT women in particular.

Ms McPherson: Thank you.

Do we have any idea how we might be able to measure the impact of these positive changes? Have we developed any KPIs for this?

10:45

Ms Phillips: We're not there yet, Member McPherson. As we said in the business plan, we're going to undertake a very robust engagement session and speak to the women and men who have been working on women's issues in this province for some time. What we're going to do here is ensure that we are getting it right. That starts even with our language, right? So when we write frameworks, for example, we will ensure that there is a gender lens put on those things. We will ensure that we are being as inclusive as possible in our policy design, and that includes trans women, it includes lesbian women, it includes new Canadians, and it includes indigenous women. We will ensure that that intersectionality of our analysis is present in all of the work and the undertakings of the government of Alberta. You know, where previously there were deafening silences on these matters, we will now – you know, it will be part of this ministry's work to go to where the silence is.

Ms McPherson: Thanks. That's great.

I'm looking forward to seeing positive impacts of these changes in my constituency and in Alberta as a whole. It's so important for

us to always remember that we're ultimately accountable to Albertans, and I'm glad this government recognizes that.

Changing the subject a little bit, I understand the ministry used to be handled by an existing ministry, so I'd like to know: why can't gender equality be handled by what we already have in place ministrywise instead of creating a new one? The budget for the new ministry is larger than it was previously.

Ms Phillips: Yeah. You know, this goes to outcomes. If you're going through life and you have a problem, one of the first things you ask yourself is: "What are my current strategies? How are they working for me so far?" If they're not, then it's time to take a good, hard look at that and change the way you do things. The fact of the matter is that we have inherited a situation where we have tremendous levels of gender inequality in this province, so the existing frameworks were not enough. We can do better. Part of that is a free-standing ministry. If you're not achieving your objectives, then you must do something differently. Certainly, as we have seen even in the last few months around conversations around domestic violence and so on, previous approaches were not enough.

If we rested on our laurels and said that they were enough, then we would essentially be accepting the status quo, which we are not doing. We are ensuring that we are going to move this province forward. We cannot build Alberta, we cannot build a 21st-century economy, we cannot support families if we do not have that conversation about gender equality. That's going to have to, sadly, in 2015 still come out of a ministry for the status of women. You know, it's too bad that we still even have to have this conversation in some ways.

Ms McPherson: I hope that we work you out of a job.

Ms Phillips: I agree.

Ms McPherson: What are some of the operational and strategic benefits – oh, sorry. I'm repeating myself. I'm so sorry.

We kind of covered this, but I'm not sure that I got the answer to it. Do other jurisdictions have a comparable ministry?

Ms Phillips: There are some comparisons, and I'll defer to officials on what the actual sort of lines are and tease out the specifics on what other provinces are or are not doing.

Ms Armstrong: What I've learned, and it's subject to change, is that, for example, it would range from one provincial government that has one person in a department that looks at women's issues, who's about to retire – I'm not sure who's going to succeed her – to governments that have 20, 25, 30 FTEs. It really depends. They don't have ministries per se, so there is no government, provincial or territorial, in Canada that has a ministry for the status of women – we are, I believe, the second in Canadian history; the first was in B.C. in the 1990s – but they would have either a secretariat or a unit or some such thing or a division or a branch looking at women's issues, right? That's typically been the case. There's a lot of excitement across Canada when I talk to our colleagues across the country about what has happened in Alberta and a lot of enthusiasm about the fact that this issue has been given ministry status.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Ms McPherson: Thank you. Thanks for the clarity.

Obviously, the new ministry will need staff to run it, and we've been talking about that a bit today. I know that in many organizations staffing and benefits can account for a large part of the budget. Given this, I'd like to know why the Status of Women ministry increased the number of people who work in the ministry now. Is this accounted for in the budget?

Ms Phillips: Well, as we said, the folks that we have: most of them are seconded by the good graces of other departments as we figure out the mandate and the structure of this department over this fall engagement period. That has been, I think, a really productive approach from other ministries, recognizing the value of the department and recognizing that, you know, this is a very strong and clear direction on the part of our government, that we are going to roll up our sleeves and get to work on gender equality. That has been helpful, and other departments are therefore going without because we have seconded their staff. I think what that shows is that there has been a very clear policy direction from this government that this is a priority. The civil service has rolled up their sleeves to find ways to make that happen for us, and I'm very appreciative of that.

Ms McPherson: Thank you.

Here's the next question. What services do all of the staff provide?

Ms Phillips: Right now we have our different project areas. Right now we have the women's leadership piece. We have the engagement piece. We are working very hard on our strategy with respect to indigenous women. We are working very hard on our intersectionality. I'll think you'll see very soon that we will be having some conversations about gender identity and gender expression in this province, and some of that work has been undertaken by Status of Women in addition to the initial phase work around domestic violence.

Ms McPherson: Thank you. The more I learn, the more I am definitely – well, I didn't need to be convinced anymore that this is very worth while.

A question that occurs is: what is the reasoning behind additional funding being provided in the midst of a recession? I know that that's a concern for constituents. With a recession why is the government spending money on something that many people wouldn't consider an essential service? Do you think that many people would feel that what the ministry provides are luxuries for better financial times?

Ms Phillips: Well, you know, this is one of the things that's been on my mind as we build this department, which is why, as I was saying to MLA Pitt, we kept the budget allocation through '16 at \$1 million even though we know it will be more, but what we didn't want to do was just pull a number out of the air, you know, just for the sake of a press release. We're not going to do public policy like that in this government anymore. What we wanted to do was be really, really careful about what our priorities were and what our outcomes could be. As I said to MLA Pitt, we could throw numbers around, but that would not be a helpful way to structure a brand new department and a brand new undertaking. So what we are going to do is carefully curate how many FTEs we need, what their initiatives are, what programming, if any, is delivered by the department, and what is delivered out of other ministries and make sure that all of our work is carefully laser guided on the priorities that civil society and others have helped us develop through this fall consultation piece.

You know, I think that overall we have a large cost to gender inequality. Some economists have done work on this. Domestic violence has a huge cost to the economy. I would argue that even the wage gap and women's attachment to workforce comes with lost productivity. Lack of available child care, then, comes with it, lost productivity in the economy. All of these things are connected.

Indeed, when we see, you know – as we've identified, a later objective of this government, when finances permit, is a rethinking

of the way that we ensure affordable child care for folks. We have seen in other jurisdictions that when governments have invested appropriately in child care in ways that help lift women out of poverty and children out of poverty and ways that foster workforce attachment in all the healthy ways and put a fine point on early education outcomes, what we find is that the returns to government are greater than investments because we have increased productivity, we have increased wages and attachment to workforce, and we have better early education outcomes for children as well, which then has a whole bunch of knock-on effects with respect to health care, prevention costs, education costs, and other costs of, quite frankly, poverty and inability to have workforce attachments.

You know, those are the kinds of things that are on our minds as we structure this department, ensuring that our priorities reflect those ways that we can grow the economy as well.

10:55

Ms McPherson: Thank you. I would say that we're all diminished that half of us are not participating at the same level.

You may have answered some of this already. What evidence would you cite to support this? Is there evidence referenced in your business plan?

Ms Phillips: Well, the business plan, you know, is sort of a statement of principles pending the engagement process, right? So what we tried to do there was to signal to the public what our priorities were and really make it very clear that our priorities are working on issues related to violence against women, all women, and ensuring intersectionality of our analysis, making sure that we're advocating, obviously, for a national inquiry on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls and that we are appropriately supporting families in that respect as well. That is certainly work that has not been undertaken yet in Alberta, and it's a priority for us.

You know, there are a number of other statements of principle in that business plan, including economic security. We live in a province where women earn the lowest percentage of men's full-time, full-year median earnings. A large amount of that has to do with, you know, women's ability to work in nontraditional occupations. It has to do with the structure of our economy, but it also has to do with the fact that, you know, Alberta has among the highest child care fees, and accessibility is a real problem for families. Particularly those of you who come from big cities know this very well, that perhaps the most affordable and accessible spot is a 45-minute commute, and then you've got to get back to work. So many of those things impinge upon a family's economic security, I would argue, but in particular women because women remain those who, StatsCan tells us, undertake between two-thirds and three-quarters of family responsibilities in terms of our time use.

It's important that those pieces of how a government can best expend our resources on issues related to child care – you know, that underpins women's economic security in this province and will go towards lessening that pay gap over time.

Ms McPherson: Thank you.

I'm just a little conscious of the time, and I'm not sure if I have enough time.

The Chair: You have one minute and 15 seconds.

Ms McPherson: Okay. I can ask the question. The answer might be deferred.

Again, thank you for explaining why the ministry is so important. For the record let me state that I and, I believe, many of my colleagues agree with you, and it's valuable to explain here why the ministry is necessary and beneficial to Albertans.

I'd like to change the subject a little bit, and that's to talk about domestic violence. I'm sure everyone in the room has read or heard of many recent and tragic incidents. We've had a number in Calgary. I might cry a little bit. We heard our colleague's harrowing story yesterday in the Legislature. Unfortunately, it's touched everyone's life directly or indirectly. I see that violence against women and girls – this is why it's so important – is one of the key policy streams mentioned in the business plan. How is Status of Women working to address violence against women?

Ms Phillips: I, too, am going to rely on my notes here a little bit. MLA Fitzpatrick is, of course, my city seatmate. I know her very well. I heard her story yesterday. Women are strong.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

I'm going to take a moment as the chair and just have a little discussion. I want to recognize that this topic, the status of women, is one that touches many of us in many different ways, and because of that it can become something where we get passionate and become strong advocates because we want to make sure that there's justice for women and girls. So because of that I recognize that we can be very strong in our opinions about how we see things.

I just want to go back to the standing orders a little bit. The Alberta standing orders entrust the Speaker with the power to preserve order and decorum under Standing Order 13(1). Standing Order 65(2) provides that the chair maintains order in these committees. This is consistent with *Beauchesne*, which states that during legislative committees "the Chairman of the committee is responsible for order and decorum in the committee," as at page 232, citation 820. Indeed, *Beauchesne* further states that "the duty to maintain an orderly conduct of debate by repressing disorder when it arises" is among the foremost of the Speaker's duties, which is on page 50, citation 171. We can assume that the importance of this matter extends to committee work and to the chair's duties in that regard. I know that I strongly believe that it does. All members of this committee and indeed of the Legislature are honourable members and deserve to be treated as such.

Members of the public can and do attend these proceedings, and they expect to see the members behaving themselves appropriately. We host senior civil servants from departments throughout the provincial government. These are officials from the highest level of government who oversee vital programs and services that our constituents depend on. We have independent LAO staff here who help us with our legislative duties, and we sometimes host independent officers whose job it is to serve our Assembly.

These meetings serve a vital function in our democratic system. We can and we do debate vigorously, but we need to do so in a respectful way that brings honour to this place and to its proceedings. This means creating positive working relationships, it means treating everyone with respect and dignity, and it means being welcoming and inclusive. While it is my responsibility as the chair to maintain the decorum, I would ask that all members take the responsibility for dealing with each other respectfully.

Thank you.

We will continue on with our proceedings. Mrs. Pitt, if you could please go on. You have your 10 minutes.

Mrs. Pitt: All right. Thank you very much. Let's talk about aboriginal women. Here's a quote. This quote is about Saskatoon. I'll read it to you.

Rates of violence are different for different groups of women.

The rate of violent victimization for Aboriginal women in the province is 23% higher than the national rate and 3.6 times greater than the rate for non-Aboriginal women in Saskatchewan.

This is on page 67 of *The Best and Worst Places to be a Woman in Canada*.

You say in priority area 3.1, "Identify one policy area where the ministry will lead development of a cross-ministerial strategy to enhance the status of women in Alberta." Have you had any initial planning sessions with the Aboriginal Relations ministry, and can you talk about that?

Ms Phillips: Yes. Well, there is an indigenous women's economic security council within the Aboriginal Relations ministry, with whom I have met. You know, certainly, we have a lot of work to do on this file of missing and murdered indigenous women. Our government, as a first step, of course, joined national aboriginal organizations, the United Nations, and many of Canada's provinces and territories in calling for that national inquiry on missing and murdered indigenous women. Every missing or murdered indigenous woman or girl is a person, who must be honoured and mourned. Part of that is that national inquiry. As soon as I have a chance to speak with my federal counterpart – of course, they made a commitment to the national inquiry, and this new government has also made that commitment – we will be discussing that matter and discussing how we can take action on missing and murdered indigenous women.

It's really my hope that what we can do through Status of Women, as we engage with indigenous women's groups across the province, is that we can put into place some of those responses and supports for families that the inquiry will inevitably recommend. Right? We know many of the things that the inquiry will inevitably recommend. We also know that there are best practices across the country that have not been initiated yet in Alberta around supports for families in particular and hearing from families. I mean, that's the essence of how we take action on this issue. For example, the government of Manitoba has some really fascinating programming whereby they have a number of different ways in which they engage the families of those missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. That not only accomplishes the objective of healing for these families, but it also provides us the only window, really, into the root causes and then the path forward for action, right?

11:05

What those programs in Manitoba that we're taking a careful look at actually do is give voice to what happened, and through that, then, there can be a braiding together of action for government to undertake, law enforcement and others, civil society sort of broadly speaking.

That's a piece that we are beginning our work on in our respectful engagement with our indigenous sisters and the families of missing and murdered indigenous women on this matter. It is a priority for us. You know, I'm very much looking forward to working with the federal government on this. I'm interested to see what they've got planned. We don't know yet.

Then there are the other pieces, especially economic security, that we talked about: child care and early childhood intervention and work, those educational outcomes. Putting that priority on accessible child care is something where then you begin to allow the building blocks for workforce attachment or educational outcomes attachment, right? A lot of the issues for indigenous women around economic security are: what do we do with the kids? It's making sure that even if folks come from a lower income background, their children have those early education opportunities

that come from a properly thought out and accessible child care system, right? I mean, that raises everyone up with an ability to then engage and have housing security, economic security, and some real outcomes on child poverty as well.

Mrs. Pitt: Apart from your supports and direction, really, in regard to murdered and missing aboriginal women, which are very commendable, there are more areas of priority in supports for aboriginal women in terms of that you're going to support the children of aboriginal women. For aboriginal women themselves are there sort of separate supports, and is this in conjunction with the aboriginal ministry?

Ms Phillips: Yes is the short answer to the latter question.

You know, on this issue of missing and murdered indigenous women we must engage in a way that honours the families and that honours the voices of indigenous leaders in a nation-to-nation way. This is careful work that we will undertake, with a really fulsome sort of engagement and participation piece to it.

One of the things that we looked at across the country was the services in this regard, or programming if you will, around missing and murdered indigenous women. What I found in best practices was that in Manitoba they were engaging with families from the ground up. That's where we're going to get our answers, right?

Mrs. Pitt: The prevention technique? Is that it?

Ms Phillips: When you're looking at the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, you know, the first place to go for, "Why did this happen?" is that that voice has got to belong to families, and that perspective has got to belong to the families. That's the approach that Manitoba has taken. Then out of that have come a number of different, interesting programs and other initiatives: speaking to indigenous men, speaking to men throughout society in all sort of mainstream society, if you will, issues related to economic security and specific programming for indigenous women.

Then, of course, there's the law enforcement piece. That is within the ministry now that we are looking in terms of our approach to the missing and murdered indigenous women issue. How do we engage the families in this matter? How do we hear from them? That will allow us our explanations as to what's happening out there and how we can best structure our efforts to remediate the issue.

That's, of course, a longer term undertaking. All of these things are longer term undertakings. They start with recognizing that we need a national inquiry, which is something that the previous government did not do.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. We have two minutes, so let's get this in here. Poverty. There's a part of this study, *The Best and Worst Places to be a Woman in Canada*, and I had some quotes. We don't have time. But you acknowledge in the business plan that the issues of gender equality are complex, and these stats are a good example of the complexity in Alberta's case. We have the lowest poverty rates overall in the country. Have you reached out to experts in Alberta's economy so that we can be sure that a solution that would make sense in eastern or central Canada or Manitoba isn't adopted here, where the issues are different?

Ms Phillips: Yeah. Agreed. I think that's why we put the bullet in there on a natural resource economy, right? We have a different economic structure in this province. Just full stop. You know, our energy economy is in many ways the backbone of this government but also in many ways supports the rest of the country's economic development. We have inherited a different situation. That's part of

why we've had some conversations with women in the private sector. In many instances there are some really interesting things happening in the private sector that are not happening in the GOA or that are happening in some places in the private sector but not in other places. That, I think, forms part of our economic security umbrella.

For me, you know, on women's issues, something that I've noticed over the course of my 20 years of interest in this topic is that many of the issues come back to economic security, which is why that is in there. When your economy is structured differently than the rest of the country, you're going to have different undertakings. It's one of the reasons why we've said that we need to take a long, hard look at our women in nontraditional work and make sure that we have child care policies that are underpinning a woman's ability to do that work, right? Again, where do we put the kids?

So I hope that answers your question.

The Chair: Thank you, Member, Minister.

Ms Jansen, it's your turn. Would you like to go back and forth or for 10 minutes?

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

Minister, I want to take you back to the women's equality and advancement framework and specifically what was in that framework that you don't like.

Ms Phillips: I think the framework is fine but that, you know, it required some political leadership.

Ms Jansen: So what exactly, specifically, did you like or not like about that framework?

Ms Phillips: Well, you know, it's hard to really provide too much detail on a framework that was being operationalized by three or four people embedded in a different ministry. The fact of the matter is that there was some GBA work undertaken. That was very good. The framework itself: I guess the question is whether it was ever formalized or approved.

Ms Jansen: Well, we were working on the framework, so my question would be – like, we had a family violence framework that we had finalized, a sexual violence framework that hadn't been released, working with all of the stakeholders, of course, that you're working with now. I don't think the stakeholder list has changed an awful lot. Tell me how you would do things differently.

Ms Phillips: Well, I think for starters, we have a free-standing ministry – so that is doing things differently – that is far better resourced, with far more emphasis on women's issues within the government of Alberta. You know, we have taken the view that the GBA framework can be used even among the elected so that we are naming gender equality in many of our publications, in our analysis. We are undertaking intersectionality. We are ensuring that lesbian and trans women are included in these conversations.

Ms Jansen: Specifically on the framework as it stood when we were working on it, can you point to a specific thing that you thought we were building on?

Ms Phillips: Well, you know, the GBA plus training was a good initiative, and that's why it continues under this government.

The fact of the matter is that when you have three or four people working, embedded in another ministry, where at no point is the word "woman" ever mentioned on the list of ministries for

Executive Council, at no point were those frameworks finalized or released to the public, we have a situation where . . .

11:15

Ms Jansen: So you're actually setting up a situation where, you know, as you've just said, you've gone from being one of the most conservative jurisdictions in the country to the most progressive. I think you mentioned that to my MLA colleague. You're setting up a high expectation for a minister who has two portfolios to handle, one of them being environment and being quite a bit of work. Aside from the fact that you're in this role, what have you done since, I'm assuming, July that has moved us forward to becoming the most progressive? What concrete actions have you taken since July?

Ms Phillips: Well, I think that, for starters, we've identified the priority areas for the ministry. You know, we have ensured that we've called for that inquiry on missing and murdered indigenous women as part of our indigenous women and girls initiatives. We have ensured that we are talking about economic security, access to child care, the gender wage gap, which were silences previous to this.

Ms Jansen: Well, what takes you to "most progressive" are actions, not calls for action. So what actions have you taken?

Ms Phillips: Well, we have called for an inquiry on missing and murdered indigenous women, for example, which was something that had not happened prior. We are setting up the department . . .

Ms Jansen: And the federal government would do that, and we're delighted that that's going to happen. That, of course, isn't work. What actual work has taken us to the point where we're most progressive?

Ms Phillips: Well, you know, we've got, of course, the women in leadership piece, which is redesigning the women in leadership program to ensure that it aligns with outcomes, and we have of course put forward a very broad engagement process. We have delivered training on . . .

Ms Jansen: Tell me about that engagement process a little bit. Has it begun?

Ms Phillips: Yes. I'll defer to Deputy Minister Armstrong, who has discussed it but will discuss it at greater length.

Ms Armstrong: The engagement process essentially looks at constructing the department, in a way, on a matrix. So there are the population streams and the policy streams. What we're doing differently, I think it's fair to say, from what's been done before is that in addition to sort of policy work around the main areas in women's machinery, like women's health, for example, we've also added on a series of population focuses. So we're looking at . . .

Ms Jansen: So who have you actually consulted with already?

Ms Armstrong: Who specifically?

Ms Jansen: Yeah.

Ms Armstrong: There are approximately 250 different organizations across the province that have sent representatives to engagement sessions. I don't have the list of all of those organizations. I mean, pretty much any women's organization in the province or any organization that's doing work in the women's space has participated in one way or another in our engagement sessions.

Ms Jansen: And what happens to that information?

Ms Armstrong: We're gathering it now, and we will obviously be providing the information to the minister.

Ms Jansen: And what happens to that information? Is it made available to the public?

Ms Armstrong: We are preparing a What We Heard document that will go back to the participants in the engagement sessions to reflect to them, because there are different sessions in different locations, both what we heard in each session, because we're capturing it, as well as what we heard globally across the different sessions.

Ms Jansen: For a lot of participants, I've found in the past, there's always a level of frustration when they take part in a process and then get a document back that's kind of a culmination of what everybody said. But then at some point you either act on it or you don't act on it. What's the deliverable out of that piece?

Ms Phillips: Oh, the deliverable is a department that is responsive to civil society and the private sector, to nonprofit . . .

Ms Jansen: No. The specific deliverable. I'm talking about the deliverable. I'm not talking about the department. What's the deliverable?

Ms Phillips: Well, the deliverable is that we have a women's machinery that reflects the needs of the engagement process.

Ms Jansen: No. A deliverable is a specific action. Do you have a specific action that you're going to take depending on the feedback that you hear?

Ms Phillips: Absolutely. We have identified our priority areas, which are of course outlined in the business plan, that are economic security and domestic violence and issues related to equality for indigenous women and girls. And there is women's health and so on. The deliverables are how we take action on our priority areas in a way that is responsive to the community.

Ms Jansen: I know what a deliverable is. I'm just saying: are you going to be able to go back to the people who took part in those programs a year from now and say that you've taken a specific action to address their concerns? Not a list of deliverables you know about now but deliverables that come out of whatever feedback you get from them as you gather all this information.

Ms Phillips: Well, that's certainly the intention. The intention is not for people to engage in an engagement process and then, you know, nothing really happens. The intention is for this to be a focused and responsive ministry that reflects the needs of civil society, of indigenous peoples, of the LGBTQ community, and others. That's the point of this, and that's the point of this robust engagement process, and, yes, that work will be reflected in Budget '16. That's why it's being undertaken now. It will take four months, not 44 years, to have deliverables.

Ms Jansen: What about women who work shift work? Women who work shift work obviously have some specific concerns. You know, I worked shift work my entire broadcasting career. The child care issue is very specific for women. There are a lot of women who could potentially take great jobs in the oil sands if they had the kind of child care that allowed them to take those jobs. So what specifically are you going to do in those areas?

Ms Phillips: Well, we made a platform commitment to \$25-a-day child care as finances permit. So, you know, we've begun those conversations both through the engagement process . . .

Ms Jansen: Well, as finances permit is a little bit of a tough one seeing as how you're in the process of running a fairly large deficit right now. That's not really on the horizon for the next couple of years, I think we can safely say. In the meantime what are you going to be doing?

Ms Phillips: Well, I think that, first of all, the financial situation that we inherited, with a similar budget deficit from March till now . . .

Ms Jansen: Actually, yours is bigger.

Ms Phillips: . . . will necessitate that we move money from lower priority areas to higher priority areas in order for us to . . .

Ms Jansen: So what would be a lower priority area?

Ms Phillips: Well, that's why we are taking our time with the Status of Women department. You know, on child care we have certain expenditures right now.

Ms Jansen: Which would be what?

Ms Phillips: Well, there is about – what? – \$180 million a year in Human Services for the subsidies, and then there are a few other initiatives around accreditation and so on. It's not my ministry, but that's from memory. So, you know, we have a policy that we are delivering right now. Part of what Status of Women is going to do is undertake that work with Human Services to ensure that we're getting the right outcomes out of child care.

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

We will now move on to the government caucus. Member McPherson, I believe you're going to go next.

Ms McPherson: Yes. Thank you. I'd like to pick up where we left off. I don't think we had enough time to hear the answer regarding the first question about domestic violence, so I'll just restate it. Violence against women and girls is one of the key policy streams mentioned in the business plan. How is Status of Women working to address violence against women?

Ms Phillips: Well, you know, we need to have a look through the current programming and so on to ensure that, again, resources are being directed towards the most important priority areas. We are having a look at the family violence review committee, for example, and ensuring that that piece is working the way that it ought to and is being the most responsive to families and to those who have experienced domestic or intimate-partner violence. That committee makes recommendations to the Minister of Human Services, who then works with cabinet and identified partners to keep women safe. The deputy ministers of Status of Women and Human Services co-chaired sort of thought leaders' dialogue on actions on domestic violence, family violence – that was just this month – to ensure that we've begun that process of reviewing how we deliver those programs and how we can do better, because it's very clear that we need to do better.

We've got some work that we are doing right now, as Minister Sabir has indicated, to address domestic violence in the workplace through the occupational health and safety code and related educational programs for employers. That's something that we are actually working on with Human Services to work up within Status of Women. One of the first things that I did when I became minister

was that I indicated this was something we should begin working on because it is something that prevails in other jurisdictions, most notably in Ontario. So we have some best practices identified on how, you know, workplaces can be more responsive to women in situations of domestic violence. We have many, many examples of this here in Alberta, where co-workers, employers all knew but didn't know what to do.

11:25

The fact of the matter is that we spend, you know, between a third and half of our waking hours or of all of our hours at work, and our productivity and our ability to do well at work is obviously severely impacted when women or others are in situations of domestic or intimate-partner violence. That's why there's such an economic cost to family violence as well.

Ms McPherson: Thank you.

You mentioned Ontario. Are you looking at the best practices across the country?

Ms Phillips: Yeah, we've been doing a lot of that work, both in terms of how other departments work but also some of the really interesting and innovative things that are happening in other jurisdictions. Manitoba is a leader on some pieces. I found that Ontario is a leader on others. Specifically related to sexual violence, Ontario has done some really, really cutting-edge work on how we talk about consent, how we talk about rape culture, how we talk about intimate-partner violence, how we talk about domestic violence and its effect on families. Ontario has done a tremendous amount of public campaign work and also a number of these ways of stitching that analysis into employment standards, OHS, et cetera, et cetera. So we are looking very closely at what they've done because certainly on sexual violence they have struck the right tone of intersectionality of analysis. There are very few silences in their sexual violence frameworks, and there are ways in which all women's experiences are given light in those frameworks. We think those are some of the best practices.

Ms McPherson: Thank you.

How have the changing economic conditions affected the prevalence of domestic violence in Alberta, and are you seeking to address this issue?

Ms Phillips: Well, we have heard, obviously, from some law enforcement and other community activists that we have seen an increase. I don't know if there have been any definitive reports on that matter, but we are certainly hearing that via the media from law enforcement and others. You know, the fact of the matter is that even a year or two or three ago Alberta exhibited some of the highest levels of domestic and intimate-partner violence, so this is a long-standing concern in this province and requires a turning of the page in how we approach it.

Ms McPherson: Thanks.

Okay. I want to shift gears a little bit again. I want to ask about women in leadership. There are plenty of studies that show women are still underrepresented in management positions in almost all fields. These studies also show that a pay gap remains, as does the existence of a glass ceiling. Given this in the business plan under key policy streams I see "leadership and democratic participation." How can government help increase women's representation on boards and in leadership roles?

Ms Phillips: Well, part of this is, of course, our review of agencies, boards, and commissions. It's part of it, right? Even those of us just

as individual ministers, as we take stock of all of the ABCs in our purview, we've also taken stock of gender representation on those ABCs, as we call them. I think that's part of it, right? There's a large amount of GOA work that gets done by ABCs. The majority of the appointments that the previous government undertook were men, and that's just a stone cold fact, right? So there's a lot of work that needs to be done to make sure that we've got appropriate representation. That's not an easy job; it doesn't happen overnight. That is working concurrently with the overall review of ABCs because, you know, we think that there are ways to realize efficiencies there and streamline much of the work undertaken by the previous government. We think that in particular on ABCs there are lots of ways we can do better, not the least of which is on gender representation. So there's that piece.

Then there's working with the private sector on women in leadership initiatives. I've had some really preliminary conversations with women leaders in Calgary and elsewhere, and they're really, really excited about this initiative because what it does is open a space, right? There's so much that's important about that. When government exercises leadership in naming a problem, all of a sudden it is then discussed more openly. You don't have any false consensus that there's no problem, right? It creates that critical mass of ability to speak about a pay gap, to speak about some of those informal barriers that exist in the public and private sectors. Those are the really important pieces. When we begin to exercise leadership, some of that just naturally sort of starts to fall into place. It's already happening.

I think that what we can do is to provide a best-practices model for women in leadership and, in fact, even something of a clearing house for important initiatives already being undertaken in the private sector and to learn from one another. You know, there are lots of small ways that lead to a substantive equality outcome rather than just a one-size-fits-all formal equality approach or, even worse, a silence around gender issues.

Ms McPherson: Thank you. I think it's a process of change management and also a shift in culture, and I'm happy to hear that those conversations are being welcomed.

How can MLAs get involved to help offset the cost to the ministry?

Ms Phillips: Well, I think I'll defer to Ms Armstrong on this matter.

Ms Armstrong: You know, we look forward to being able to learn from the lived experience, as we have this week, of all kinds of folks in elected official positions and to find out what their thoughts are on where we should be focusing our attention, where the gaps are. We're only ever going to be small in the bigger picture. We need to be catalytic, and we need to leverage our skills and abilities for the greatest impact; that's sort of how I'm conceptualizing it. I've learned that what I don't know is much more important than what I know, and it's really a journey of talking to people and finding out, you know, what their experience is and what their thoughts are on what we can do.

Ms McPherson: Thank you.

Well, I would say that we don't know what we don't know – yeah – and just that discovery process: I'm really excited. I will be phoning you.

How does Alberta compare to other provinces and territories in representation of women in leadership positions, and do we need to allocate further budget space to support women entering into these positions?

Ms Phillips: Well, you know, I'm not sure that we need to allocate more right now. It is a national issue, and I'll leave it at that.

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

We will now move over to the Official Opposition. Mrs. Pitt.

Mrs. Pitt: Awesome. Thank you. Human resources departments are constantly reporting that women actually constantly undervalue themselves more than men do in an interview process. What is something that your department can do to address these issues?

Ms Phillips: Well, I think that the women in leadership programming sort of in many ways provides women with the tools for not doing nothing. I'll let Deputy Minister Armstrong talk a little bit about those leadership pieces, but I think that that's part of it, for sure. Then, more broadly, when we are undertaking efforts, you know, best practices on the gender wage gap, we find that there is a culture shift and a conversation both in the private and the public sector on those matters so that we can make sure that pay is something that's commensurate, right?

One of the things that I found really interesting in the sort of interjurisdictional scan was that the province of New Brunswick undertook some efforts on the gender wage gap because they were losing, during the boom, all of their workers to Alberta. They were trying to find ways to keep families in New Brunswick, so they did this quite large study of the gender wage gap – right? – and identified all the usual things that one might expect with respect to child care and so on. You know, I think that's part of it, too, right? We see a really important piece there with respect to how we understand women's extra responsibilities and how we can ensure better workforce attachment, because then wages start to come up.

11:35

Mrs. Pitt: Was that one of the things in the study – I'm just curious here – that maybe had attributed lower wages for women to: this is what they thought they were worth and then finding out that men negotiated better in that process, you know, and that's what they ended up getting, right?

Ms Phillips: I can't remember that specifically because it was a government study, so it was more like: what can government do, right? But I think what we find is that because women are concentrated in lower wage occupations just in general, throughout this economy and everywhere else, throughout Canada anyway, there's an expectation just in terms of how we think about what work is worth, right? I think there are some leadership pieces from government on that and some actions that we can take to ensure just better workforce attachment – right? – so that you can do those extra hours, so that you can have the flexibility with your child care to take the conference away or all those things that lead to advancement in both the public and the private sectors.

I'm going to ask Deputy Minister Armstrong to talk a little bit about the women in leadership piece, on that matter in particular.

Ms Armstrong: Thank you, Minister. I could probably talk about this for an hour, but I'll be really quick. Two quick things I want to reference. One is that in terms of your initial comment about women asking for less money, you're absolutely correct. The research shows that, so part of what we're doing with this leadership program is naming that reality and giving women some strategies to build their confidence and to have the awareness that this is the way negotiation happens and trying to help them with that.

But I also want to point out that part of our leadership program in GOA is geared to the development of administrative professionals. We do training, and we've trained 200, 300 administrative

professionals across the government in different locations on how they can advance because they have felt like they have been left behind in many ways. Leadership training tends to focus on women in executive positions, and our program focuses on all women in the GOA and tries to offer something to everyone. So that's one facet of the program.

Mrs. Pitt: I have this fear of all our costs going up.

Okay. Minister, we've talked about the advisory council, and you've talked a lot about having the LGBTQ women represented along with aboriginal women and women across all walks of life. Will conservative women with maybe more traditional values be welcome on this council and during this process?

Ms Phillips: Well, we haven't laid out what the composition of the advisory council might be yet, so, you know, it's kind of too early for that. As in all things we're looking for a diversity of views, and I think I'll just leave it at that because it's still really quite notional – right? – at this point. We are committed to having one, but once we are able to properly resource it and also give it a mandate – like, what their undertakings are as distinct from the department's, I think, is important to recognize as well.

I guess on this matter I will just provide a further reflection, which is that almost everyone can agree that, you know, families need appropriate supports, whatever they look like. Families come in all different shades of the rainbow, but all kids need a full belly to learn, all kids need educators that are compassionate, all kids benefit when someone reads to them, all kids benefit from time with family and other caregivers. So when you're talking about issues related to child care or women being able to provide for families and reducing child poverty and all these things that are wrapped up in the Status of Women ministry, there's pretty wide consensus on those matters.

Mrs. Pitt: Oh, absolutely. I have some concerns that maybe traditional roles will not have the support that they need, just because that's generally the way it's always been in the past. I think it's really great that this ministry is focusing on empowering women of all walks of life, and I hope to hold you to account on that and include everybody, truly. I look forward to seeing that as well. Alberta has interesting work for us. As you said, we've imported many from other provinces, and it's a very unequal, gendered employment because of those reasons and because, you know, the industry in this province is very male heavy. That's okay.

I lost my page here. Violence against women. There is a study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives – what's my time here?

The Chair: You have two minutes.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. I'm not going to read it for you. It was in *The Gap* in the Gender Gap. I'm sure you've read it. It was released in 2013. It gave an overview of the spending in Alberta on family violence. Are you aware of this?

Ms Phillips: Yes.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. Have you had a chance to start looking at these services and evaluating them?

Ms Phillips: Yes. We participate in the interdepartmental committee on family violence, and that oversees how we implement multiyear strategies and priorities in family violence. That's one of the reasons why we made the commitment that we did to increase the funding to women's shelters, and we did that as one of our first undertakings over the summer.

The other piece that we are of course working on is the Family Violence Death Review Committee. We're one of four provinces who have it. We're ensuring that it is as responsible to families as it possibly can be. We are also looking at other jurisdictions and how they deal with this matter of domestic violence, as I mentioned. In Ontario and Manitoba indigenous women have some other forms of violence against women, not just in intimate-partner situations.

Yeah, we're having a look at best practices. One of the reasons why we shored up those budgets for women's shelters was because we did not think that it was enough previously. Certainly, on this issue of violence, generally, the previous government took a fairly law-and-order approach, where there were a lot of silences. There are a lot of ways in which we think we can do better on root causes, and we think that we can approach this matter in a more holistic way, so that's the direction that we've given.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. That's great, and that's a really great funding announcement for women's shelters as well. I commend both of you. I'm sure you had a hand in that.

Ms Phillips: Yeah. I just wanted to put on the record that I know that you've been working with your folks in Airdie, so the door's open to working together on that more.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will now move on to the third party. Mr. Rodney.

Mr. Rodney: Well, thank you very much, Chair, and thank you, Minister and staff, for all that you do. As a man I'm very honoured to participate in today's discussions. I just want to make the point, that may be obvious to many but, I think, still needs to be made, unfortunately, that men do care about women's issues, and some care very deeply. Maybe it's because of my mom or my sisters or my relatives, my neighbours, the people I work with, my wife, or a combination of all those incredible people, but in any case I'm one of those men that cares very deeply about all of these issues. In fact, in one of my undergraduate degrees I had a Marxist-feminist sociology prof who said publicly that I was the biggest feminist she'd ever met. I don't know if it's because I wrote essays entitled things like *When God Was a Woman* or *If Women Ruled the World*.

When it comes to being an MLA, I'm very proud of the work of our female teammates. We've collaborated in great ways in our constituency, in the Legislature, in my time as chair of the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission and in my time as associate minister of wellness. I won't take the time to go over that because we're here today, and I appreciate that, as the NDP member suggested, the world will be a better place when there is no need for a ministry like this. Again, don't take this personally.

Ms Phillips: Let's work me out of a job.

Mr. Rodney: It'd be better if we didn't need something like AADAC – right? – or wellness. It'd be better if we had a society that had an incredible quality of life and we didn't even have to toss around words like "equality," for whatever that means.

Let's look at the estimates here today. Just a few questions in the remaining time we have in our 10 minutes here. I'm curious, Minister. Why was it that the women's equality advancement framework was not included in the business plan?

11:45

Ms Phillips: Well, that framework was never finalized when we inherited it. We wanted to ensure that we were expressing the

appropriate levels of leadership and intent for the department. There was certainly, you know, some fine work being undertaken, but we could expand on it. As I have said many times, we inherited some things that were really good from the previous government and some things that we think we should change. On that file we wanted to make sure that we were not accepting previously written documents that had not even been finalized as sort of the tablets and, instead, that we were building a free-standing department that was responsive and responsible to civil society, the private sector, and the broader Alberta public.

Mr. Rodney: Sure. I mean, there could be a different version of that coming forward in a business plan next year or the following.

But let's face it. We are living in a society, like it or not, where people say: "Show me. Prove it to me." That would lead to the next question about the performance measures. I know this was very difficult when I was sitting in the wellness chair, but the question is: why are there not performance measures listed for the initiatives in the business plan, and how does the government plan to measure the success of the initiatives? Maybe this will let you off the hook a little bit. When can we expect to see some performance measures? Again, we just are living in that kind of world where people need to see the return on investment, even if we know it's a good one.

Ms Phillips: Yeah. This is why we're taking the time to build the department over this fall, in consultation with a number of different individuals, groups, and other folks, as Deputy Minister Armstrong noted, about 250 organizations so far. So there's that piece. As we build this department, it is both a lot of work but also, I think, quite gratifying to be able to do something from the bottom up. We will have performance measures in Budget '16, once we have constituted the department in a way that we know we'll be able to achieve the focused outcomes that we have identified as a result of this engagement process.

Mr. Rodney: Okay. Thank you.

Now, if we can take a look at priority initiative 3.1. It does state that the ministry is looking to "identify one policy area where the ministry will lead development of a cross-ministerial strategy to enhance the status of women in Alberta." That's extremely laudable and necessary, as we all know, but I'm just wondering, as I think a lot of Albertans might: is there a reason why the ministry would be looking to identify one as opposed to several? Is it a matter of not having enough resources, or will your ministry be focusing only on this one policy area and leaving others in the hands of other ministries? How is this going to work?

Ms Phillips: You know, this is subject to a cabinet decision on what we identify as that one key policy area that we want the department to focus with laserlike precision on. Of course, there are the six areas of focus for the department that we've already identified within that. There are likely to be one or two items there that sort of cross all of those priority areas, and that's subject to a cabinet decision and a caucus decision as well.

I think that the intention on this is not to become all things to all people. As I said before, this department could very easily swallow the entire GOA if we were to look at all of the different ways in which there's existing programming or existing issues that have as their basis a gender component. We want to carefully choose what we take on and not take on too much because we will always be, within the context of the large amounts of expenditures and programming for which the government is responsible, fairly small, you know, by comparison.

Mr. Rodney: Well, I felt the same way in wellness. Honestly, there was just so much that we could hit. The ministry named the sector of society, and it's almost like you could be in a dark room with blindfolds on and take, you know, some darts and try to throw them at the board and hope they stick. Instead, let's turn the lights on, take the blindfolds off, walk right up to it, and hit that bull's eye. I appreciate that you're trying to do that, but I think Albertans do need to know when this is going to happen. As you mentioned, it's a cabinet/caucus decision, but without these kinds of marching orders, people are just wandering.

Ms Phillips: I think what we'll find is that as a result of the engagement process and the building of the department over this fall and then moving into Budget '16, once we've identified what kind of resources the department needs, it will be a short amount of time until Albertans have some insight into that matter. You know, the idea here is that we take this time to sort of carefully stand up the department within the context of a fairly dire fiscal situation, and then we are in a position to be able to actually deliver on the outcomes that we've identified starting in Budget '16.

Mr. Rodney: That leads me to the next questions. Again, I don't want you to rush this, but of course the sooner the better, as you know. Two questions related to this. Will the grant program mentioned in 3.4 be focused around the one policy area, or will it target a wider range of policy targets?

Ms Phillips: Again, that's subject to cabinet approval at this point, so I'm not really at liberty to talk too much more about that. What it will do is be project-based and not ongoing. We are going to find ways to target those resources so that they are not stepping on, you know, what could be potentially forthcoming federal resources and work happening in other ministries.

Mr. Rodney: Great. Now, I think I've got just a little bit of time left here. Two more questions, if I may, and this will open the door for you for the last part of your section of the 10 minutes. Is the close to half a million dollars targeted for women's equality and advancement the funding for this program, and is there money in this budget for the grant program? We kind of talked around that, but I'll open the door even wider here. What do you anticipate you're going to specifically accomplish with the million dollars budgeted this year, seeing that a million dollars was already allocated for wages, salaries, and employee benefits? Next question: what will the \$2 million anticipated for the next two years be targeted towards? If this is a good use of money, what specific actions are we going to see in the next year or three?

Ms Phillips: Well, you know, the first thing is that we are going to make sure that we have the right resources in place to take action on the economic security and prosperity, violence against women and girls, the leadership and democratic participation piece, health and well-being, justice and access to the legal system, and, of course, as all of these things interact with our natural resource based economy. Those are the key initiatives of the department. I think what we will find is that by Budget '16 we will have action on our priority initiatives.

Mr. Rodney: Thank you.

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

For the last six and a half minutes we will move over to the government caucus. Ms Payne, I believe you're going to ask questions.

Ms Payne: Yes. Thank you, and thank you, Minister Phillips, for all of your answers so far today. I have to say that it's daunting to have only seven minutes. I have so many questions that I'd like to ask. I'm going to maybe focus a little more on something we've touched on briefly today but haven't gotten into in depth.

We've heard a lot today about encouraging women's participation in and attachment to the workforce and some of the barriers that exist for women who are looking to perhaps re-enter the workforce after having children or perhaps women who are planning families and how that can sometimes hold them back from leadership roles. On that note, there is a real extent to which workplace policies can have a huge impact on women and the choices they make around their careers, whether it's going back to work, the way in which they go back to work, or even career choices that they make when planning a family. You know, here in the Legislature it's a key issue that we're dealing with right now with one of our own MLAs.

So I'm just curious to hear: what are some of the ways that you envision the ministry being able to support employers and encourage more family-friendly workplaces both here at the Legislature, in government as well as the corporate sector, and how is that reflected in the business plan?

11:55

Ms Phillips: Well, the biggest piece of this, of course, is the employment standards review. That was something we committed to in the platform, and we're participating in that. As for family-friendly pieces here at the Legislature, you know, I think the members have already done a pretty good job of undertaking these matters, as all parties, and will continue to do so. So I'll just leave that piece aside for a moment.

You know, the employment standards is a key piece. Examining some of the underpinning reasons for the wage gap in Alberta is, I think, an important piece, and having a look at how we allocate resources in child care and how we design those policies is also a really key piece, right? We do have expenditures in child care and in other places for early intervention and early education pieces. We need to make sure that we're getting the right value for those undertakings, right? So that's a big piece on women's workforce attachment.

Then on the other side I think we need to take a pretty good, long look at how we ensure that women are able to access careers in nontraditional work. You know, there are some really interesting initiatives already happening out there. I think that we can do a better job of leadership on that matter, which goes straight to economic security. Again, you can get the job, but then if there aren't flexible hours or child care arrangements that one can avail oneself of, it becomes awfully difficult to advance in said occupation.

Those are issues that all families struggle with, and certainly right now families are struggling even more with that as we see many of the job losses related to the drop in the price of oil. You know, that's a real stress on families, and what we need to make sure of is that we're getting it right on those child care and early education opportunities for kids.

Ms Payne: Further to conversations around children and, I think, young girls in particular, item 3.2 in the business plan indicates that the ministry intends to develop a program targeted at young and teenage girls. Can you tell us a little bit more about what this will look like and what some of the intended outcomes are?

Ms Phillips: I'm going to defer to Deputy Minister Armstrong on this matter.

Ms Armstrong: We've been looking at girl power initiatives across the country, and we've identified that there's an opportunity, potentially a gap, one might say, for us to work with our colleagues in Education. There are a number of different things. For example, we found a program where they bring tradeswomen into high school classrooms to meet with teenage girls and high school girls so that they can see something real in front of them, a person talking about their job.

Second, the STEM sector. As we all know, there's a significant problem with women's representation in the STEM sector. So how can we work with, I'm saying, high school girls but possibly junior high as well to provide them with opportunities to see themselves reflected in those higher paying jobs, which also ties into the wage gap issue? I sort of referenced this earlier. Part of my intention there is to talk to girls – we haven't had the opportunity to do this yet – and see what they think they need and how we can support them. The minister talked about the international day of the girls. We had over 80 young women at Government House. It was a phenomenal event, and they were able to hear a number of different people, including another one of your colleagues, talk about their experiences and show a real human reflection of women in positions of political leadership.

So we're playing with opportunities and options there and looking at what's happening across the country. We haven't landed on what it will exactly look like. You know, with input from you folks and other elected officials, that will come in the next short while.

Ms Payne: I have to say that as the mother of a young girl it really heartens me to hear that we're really focusing on encouraging our girls and our young women to expand their horizons and to look forward to bright futures.

Ms Phillips: There's a role there for young boys as well.

Ms Payne: Absolutely. On that note, I was going to ask a little bit about item 3.3, which talks about a program for teenage men and young boys.

Ms Phillips: Well, yeah. I mean, we're weaving those pieces in, right? Some of the best work that I've seen on MMIW, coming out of Manitoba, engages indigenous men in a really empowering way. There are really nice examples out there of where that work has been done, and we're weaving it into our efforts as well. I'm the mother of two young boys.

The Chair: Sorry; we have two timers for the end, so it's quieter. I apologize for the interruption, but I must advise the committee that the time allotted for this item of business is now concluded.

Tomorrow we're going to become a very close committee. I would like to remind everybody that we are scheduled to meet again tomorrow, Wednesday, November 18, from 9 a.m. till 12 noon in the Grassland Room to consider the estimates of the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General and then again from 3:30 to 6:30 in the Foothills Room to consider the estimates of the Ministry of Seniors.

Thank you so much. The meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 12 p.m.]

