



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
Second Session

Standing Committee
on
Public Accounts

Ministry of Assisted Living and Social Services

Tuesday, May 12, 2026
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**Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 31st Legislature
Second Session**

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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Sumera Idris, Acting Assistant Deputy Minister, Disability Services

Sonya Johnston, Assistant Deputy Minister and Senior Financial Officer

David Williams, Assistant Deputy Minister, Housing

9 a.m.

Tuesday, May 12, 2026

[Ms Gray in the chair]

The Acting Chair: Good morning, everyone. I will call this meeting of Public Accounts Committee to order and welcome everyone in attendance. My name is Christina Gray, the MLA for Edmonton-Mill Woods and the acting chair of the committee. As we begin this morning I will invite members, guests, and LAO staff who are at the table to introduce themselves, and I will begin at my right.

Mr. Lundy: Good morning, everyone. Brandon Lundy, MLA for Leduc-Beaumont.

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

Mrs. Sawyer: Good morning, everyone. Tara Sawyer, MLA for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Good morning, everyone. Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk, MLA for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

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

Ms Giesen: Good morning. Marika Giesen, acting assistant deputy minister, employment and financial services.

Mr. Cooley: Good morning. Dennis Cooley, deputy minister of Assisted Living and Social Services.

Ms Johnston: Good morning. Sonya Johnston, assistant deputy minister and senior financial officer.

Mr. David Williams: Good morning. David Williams, assistant deputy minister responsible for housing with the Ministry of Assisted Living and Social Services.

Mr. Peters: Good morning. Phil Peters, Auditor General.

Ms Hayes: Good morning. Patty Hayes, assistant Auditor General.

Mr. Schmidt: Marlin Schmidt, Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Ms Renaud: Marie Renaud, St. Albert.

Member Eremenko: Good morning. Janet Eremenko, Calgary-Currie.

Ms Robert: Good morning, everyone. Nancy Robert, clerk of *Journals* and committees.

Mr. Huffman: Good morning. Warren Huffman, committee clerk.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, everyone. We do have someone online, so I will ask MLA Lovely if you'd introduce yourself.

Ms Lovely: Good morning, everyone. Jackie Lovely, MLA for the Camrose constituency.

The Acting Chair: Thank you very much. Now I'm going to note for the record the following substitutions: myself for the hon. Mr. Sabir as chair and hon. Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk for Mr. van Dijken.

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts is mandated to review the Public Accounts of the government of Alberta and reports of the Auditor General. The committee examines the administration of government policy, not the merits of it, with the

objective of enhancing transparency and accountability in government spending of public funds. The committee operates best when it maintains a nonpartisan approach in carrying out its responsibilities on behalf of all Albertans.

A few housekeeping items to address. Please note that the microphones are operated by *Hansard* staff. Committee proceedings are live streamed on the Internet and broadcast on Assembly TV. The audio- and videostream and transcripts of the meeting can be found on the Legislative Assembly website. Those participating by videoconference are encouraged to please turn on your camera when speaking and mute your microphone when not speaking. Members participating virtually who wish to be placed on the speakers list are asked to e-mail or send a message to the committee clerk, and the members in the room are asked to please signal to the chair. Please set your cellphones and other devices on silent for the duration of the meeting, and comments should flow through the chair at all times.

Hon. members, are there any changes or additions to the agenda? Seeing none, would a member please move that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts approve the proposed agenda as distributed for its May 12, 2026, meeting? MLA Sawyer, thank you. Any discussion? Seeing none, all in favour? Any opposed? That motion is carried.

We have the minutes from the May 5, 2026, meeting of the committee. Do members have any errors or omissions to note? Seeing none, if a member could move that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts approve the minutes as distributed of its meeting held on May 5, 2026. MLA Sawyer, thank you very much. Any further discussion? Seeing none, all those in favour? Online? Thank you. Any opposed? That motion is carried.

I would now like to welcome our guests from the Ministry of Assisted Living and Social Services and the office of the Auditor General, who are here to address the ministry's annual report 2024 to 2025, responsibilities under their purview during that reporting period, and relevant reports and outstanding recommendations of the Auditor General, including additional information provided to the committee regarding outstanding recommendations related to the AG's Seniors Care in Long-term Care and COVID-19 in Continuing Care Facilities reports from February 2023.

I will invite officials from the ministry to provide opening remarks not exceeding 10 minutes. You may begin.

Mr. Cooley: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. My name is Dennis Cooley. I'm the deputy minister for Assisted Living and Social Services. My colleagues at the table have already been introduced. In addition, I'm joined here by colleagues from the ministry senior management team, who I may call upon during the session to provide supplementary information.

I'm pleased to be here today to discuss the '24-25 Assisted Living and Social Services annual report. The role of the ministry is to support Alberta's most vulnerable citizens, a role we take very seriously. The range of services offered by this department, either directly or through partnerships with community organizations and service providers, are fundamental to the success and well-being of so many Albertans. In '24-25 our ministry expenditures were approximately \$6 billion. I'm going to provide an overview of the audit recommendations before drawing attention to some of the ministry's key accomplishments.

In '24-25 ALSS made progress addressing the Auditor General's recommendations to improve the family supports for children with disabilities program. The department completed its work to address three recommendations, and I'm pleased to say that in December 2025 the Auditor General released a report confirming these recommendations had been implemented. In response to these

recommendations to improve performance management processes for the income support program, we have implemented internal processes to make the program more accountable and accessible to Albertans. The department is finalizing an internal audit review to determine if we are ready to inform the OAG that the recommendation is ready for follow-up.

In a 2023 performance audit the Auditor General found the ministry did not effectively assess and manage the condition of provincially owned affordable housing. Prior to this, the ministry had already taken steps to improve processes by restarting building condition assessments to provide more detailed information about properties and the future work required to maintain them, by developing a capital maintenance and redevelopment plan for all government-owned assets, and making improvements to the capital maintenance and renewal program, and by developing new program performance measures as part of the long-term strategy for capital maintenance and renewal. All of these recommendations are expected to be fully implemented by spring 2027.

In addition, the office of the public guardian and trustee continue to work on addressing the recommendation to improve their control systems. The department is finalizing an internal audit review to determine if we are ready to inform the OAG that the recommendation is ready for follow-up.

Finally, with the addition of continuing care to ALSS in '24-25 the department is reviewing the recommendations made in two performance audits of February 2023. The first is the Assessment of Implementation Report on Seniors Care in Long-term Care, which resulted in two recommendations, and secondly, the COVID-19 in Continuing Care Facilities report that resulted in eight recommendations. Both reports directed these recommendations to Alberta Health and Alberta Health Services. ALSS is now reviewing the recommendations, the implementation plans, and status updates so we can refresh the plans where necessary and work with the OAG to obtain formal sign-off of the implementation plan. As of today the OAG has provided feedback on the original implementation plans, but they have not been approved by the OAG. As we know, the implementation plan sets the criteria for follow-up audits.

Turning our attention now to programs ALSS delivered in '24-25. The ministry invested more than \$3.5 billion in disability programs, including more than \$1.6 billion to maintain funding for the AISH program, more than \$1.2 billion in funding for the PDD program, \$259 million for the FSCD program, and nearly \$28 million to support fetal alcohol spectrum disorder services. We also modernized how Albertans apply for disability supports by launching a new streamlined digital application for the PDD program that ensures applicants only need to share their story once.

Addressing the need for affordable housing continues to be a focus for the ministry, the work progressing on Alberta's 10-year strategy to improve and expand affordable housing through the stronger foundations strategy. The minister has invested \$395 million to build, renew, maintain, and operate affordable housing in Alberta through the government-supported affordable housing programs, including rent supplements. Through the affordable housing partnership the ministry has provided \$15 million to support 10 projects in four municipalities to create 259 new units. As of March 31, 2025, 20 affordable housing partnership programs are committed to and ongoing.

We also launched the stop housing delays web portal designed to cut red tape and help developers, municipalities, and housing partners remove barriers to residential construction. The portal received 71 submissions from 33 communities across Alberta in 2024-25.

9:10

We also introduced a new housing benefit for survivors of gender-based violence in 2024-25 by providing \$9.2 million to assist 946 households fleeing violence.

Across Canada and in this province, a major concern is the fact that a growing number of individuals do not have a place to live. In response ALSS has invested over \$223 million to support homelessness initiatives in the province. Of this funding, more than \$121 million supported the work of the province's action plan on homelessness to provide over 4,500 year-round, 24/7 spaces in over 30 homeless shelters across nine communities.

One of the department's highlights was the opening of the navigation and support centres in Edmonton and Calgary. The centres are a one-stop shop for Albertans to access a wide range of social supports and services, including income support, shelter and housing options, identification, health care, mental health resources, and addictions treatment. Since the centres opened, more than 10,000 unique individuals have accessed a range of life-changing supports.

The department has remained focused on supporting the well-being of seniors and their ability to age in their chosen communities. ALSS invested \$518 million to support seniors' financial assistance programs, serving almost 200,000 low-income seniors across the province.

ALSS continued to work to improve the seniors' lodge program by providing \$57 million to respond to challenges facing seniors' housing providers. This program supports approximately 11,000 lodge units in 150 lodges and 18 unique homes and cottages across the province.

Through the family and community support services program, or FCSS, the ministry has invested \$104.3 million in partnerships with municipalities and Métis settlements to design and deliver locally driven preventative social programming across the province.

Ensuring Albertans have the skills and education to participate in the workforce remained a top priority for the ministry. In 2024-25 ALSS invested \$81 million in career and employment information services to help Albertans prepare for, find, and keep jobs in their communities. More than 45,000 unique individuals access career and employment programs and services, and there are more than 700,000 walk-in visits to resource centres. In addition, 9,000 employees access supports funded through the ministry.

In 2024-25 the ministry took on the responsibility for continuing care and the establishment of the new provincial agency responsible for continuing care, known as Assisted Living Alberta, which became operational later in 2025. More than \$136 million was invested to increase direct hours of care in continuing care homes, enabling staff to provide a higher quality of care and reducing staff stress and burnout. We invested more than \$100 million in workforce initiatives, including bursaries, dual credit programming, and wage alignment to grow and support the continuing care workforce. The province also invested more than \$200 million to modernize continuing care spaces and add new continuing care spaces across the province. As of March 31, 2025, 2,252 continuing care home spaces were under construction.

Throughout 2024-25 the department implemented several initiatives to make life more affordable for vulnerable Albertans, including increasing AISH, income support, and Alberta seniors' benefits by 2 per cent to keep pace with inflation; providing \$2.2 million to Food Banks Alberta to support Alberta's network of food banks that provide food to Albertans in need; providing \$12.6 million in emergency evacuation payments to Albertans who had to evacuate their homes due to wildfires; and investing \$13.8 million

to support low-income transit programs in 19 municipalities to help across the province.

Madam Chair, that concludes my opening remarks.

The Acting Chair: Thank you very much.

I will now turn it over to the Auditor General for his comments. Mr. Peters, you have five minutes.

Mr. Peters: Good morning. Thank you, Madam Chair, hon. members, and departmental officials joining us today. Thank you for the opportunity to provide an overview of the work of the office of the Auditor General.

During our annual audit of the consolidated financial statements of the province we reviewed select transactions at the department. We also conducted separate financial statement audits of Alberta Social Housing Corporation and the office of the public guardian and trustee estates and trusts, and we issued clean audit opinions on these statements for the year ended March 31, 2025.

I'd like now to highlight the nine outstanding recommendations for this department. None are ready for assessment, and three have been repeated. In November 2024 we released our audit on the department's processes to assess and manage the condition of its provincially owned affordable housing. We made three recommendations: that the department collect information on the condition of its housing facilities, implement a maintenance strategy for those who operate the housing, and document how requested maintenance projects are prioritized and measure and report on housing conditions.

I will now turn to the three recommendations that are repeated from previous audit work. In our annual summary of ministry audit work released in November 2024, we repeated a 2014 recommendation, for the second time, for the department to improve controls and ensure that user access to information systems is properly authorized and disabled promptly when employees leave.

In March 2024 we repeated a recommendation from our December 2019 performance audit of income support for Albertans. While we found that the department had improved monitoring and performance reporting for key steps in the intake and case management processes, it had not improved processes to measure and report on the income support program's performance, so the recommendation was repeated.

In March 2022 we repeated a recommendation from our February 2013 performance audit of control systems at the office of the public guardian and trustee. We found that there continue to be errors with day-to-day trust administration activities and transactions, so we repeated our recommendation that the office improve and follow its policies and procedures.

In 2023 we assessed the implementation of recommendations from our seniors in long-term care performance audit. We reported that three recommendations from 2014 had been implemented, but we made two new recommendations which speak to improving the reporting results for Alberta's long-term care system and ensuring resident care is not compromised by insufficient staffing levels.

I would like to spend the last few minutes of my time discussing our report on COVID-19 in continuing care facilities, which we also released in 2023. We made eight recommendations in this report relating to pandemic and outbreak planning, the adequacy of continuing care facility infrastructure, illness tracking, and staffing challenges during an outbreak. In the original package to this committee the department assumed responsibility for one of the recommendations regarding development of a staffing strategy. We are waiting for the department to confirm who is responsible for the remaining seven recommendations in our report. Once responsibility is assigned, we will work with management to sign off the

implementation plans and then plan our assessments where management asserts they are ready.

Thank you to the management group here today for their time, co-operation, and assistance during our audits.

That concludes my comments, Madam Chair. Thank you.

The Acting Chair: Thank you very much.

We will now hear questions from the committee members. We'll begin with the Official Opposition caucus. You have 15 minutes. MLA Renaud.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you all for being here today. In my first set of questions I'm going to focus on employment. Although I'm not going to ask questions about the new program, ADAP, because it isn't in scope, I'm assuming that employment really is going to be the foundation of the changes that are coming.

Before I get to that, the deputy minister mentioned something that was, you know, something I didn't realize, that the navigation centres had assisted 10,000 unique individuals in this fiscal year that we're talking about. Can you tell me: out of those 10,000, how many were housed as a result of interacting with the navigation centre?

Mr. Cooley: Thank you for the question. The navigation support centres, as you know, are located in Edmonton and Calgary. It's a collaboration of government agency and partners who provide targeted assistance. Of course, one of them is employment and financial services, but there are also other services around shelter . . .

Ms Renaud: Yeah. I'm really just asking about the housing. I'm sorry to cut you off. I understand that there are multiple services there, and we'll get to that. I'm just asking about the housing.

Mr. Cooley: Of the approximately 35,000 total connections, 3,886 connections were related to housing supports. They were more or less equally split between Calgary and Edmonton, 1,834 from Edmonton and 2,052 from Calgary.

9:20

Ms Renaud: That's excellent. So almost 3,000 people were housed as a result of interacting with the navigation centre?

Mr. Cooley: Almost 3,000 people were put in connection with our services.

Ms Renaud: Connected to a housing organization. How many were housed? You can get back to the committee on that if you don't have that number.

Mr. Cooley: We do know that over 6,000 Albertans were supported in '24-25, including over 1,700 Albertans who were newly admitted to housing supports programs; 95 per cent of clients who received housing with supports remained stably housed in the program or exited to another form of stable housing.

Ms Renaud: So 95 per cent – that's great – of which number was that, 1,700? I can't remember. So 95 per cent of that 1,700 were housed. Is that correct?

Mr. Cooley: The total number of connections at the navigation centre was 3,886.

Ms Renaud: The total that was housed was over . . .

Mr. Cooley: We don't know the total number of housed from that, but we do know generally.

Ms Renaud: We know about referrals to housing organizations, but of the 10,000 in Edmonton and Calgary we have no idea how many were actually housed as a result of their interaction with the navigation centre. That's okay. Let's move on.

The ministry invested \$81 million in career and employment information services and targeted employment services. If you look on page 38, the pie chart at the bottom of the page seems to indicate that disability-related employment users – DRE is that program acronym – made up less than 1 per cent of the total people who accessed primary career and employment information services in this fiscal year we're looking at. Can you tell me what that 1 per cent represented?

Mr. Cooley: Would you mind just repeating the question just so we can get the specifics?

Ms Renaud: Okay. Pie chart, page 38, 1 per cent, people with disabilities: what does that number represent? If you don't have it, you can table that with the committee so we can move on.

There are 14,146 unique users of the same program. That is the career and employment information services. Does the ministry collect any demographic data on those users? Like, could you tell us how many are in the big cities? How many are in the mid-size cities? How many are rural? Do we have any kind of insight? While you're searching for that, we can move on.

Ms Giesen: Thank you, to the member through the chair, for the question. I think you were asking about whether we have a breakdown of career and employment services by community. We do. I do not have that data available to share with you today, but we do collect that breakdown by community.

Ms Renaud: Okay. Would you be able to table that for the committee?

Ms Giesen: We can. Yes.

Ms Renaud: Perfect.

Do you have a number that that 1 per cent represents for the DRE?

Ms Giesen: Yeah. The 1 per cent referenced in the annual report is specific to individuals who receive disability-related employment services. That's less than 1 per cent of the total career and employment services accessed.

Ms Renaud: Right. So less than 1 per cent of that 14,000-something.

Ms Giesen: Yeah. I can share with you that in terms of that utilization for disability-related employment supports 33 per cent was for job search supports, 29 per cent was for education and training supports, and 38 per cent was for workplace supports, at an average cost of \$5,634.

Ms Renaud: Okay. Got that, \$5,634.

There are 170 contractors with this particular area, so career and employment information services. Of those 170 providers, can you break down some of their expertise? Like, how many of them have multiple years' expertise with people with disabilities or immigrants or the francophone community or the Indigenous community or youth? I note that in your annual report this particular section talks about the diversity of contractors. I'm wondering if

you can just verify that for us. How many of these 170 contractors have that kind of experience, and where is it?

Ms Giesen: Thank you very much. I'm going to share with you some further details about the scope of employment services that are provided for individuals with disabilities. I may not answer directly every question but happy to follow up. In '24 and '25, as you mentioned, \$81 million was invested in career and employment information services. Of that, \$22.1 million was invested specifically to support persons with disabilities.

Ms Renaud: Yes. I'm sorry to cut you off. I do have the information that's in the annual report. What I was asking about – I note in the annual report that the department says that there are 170 contractors for all of this money that's going out for career and employment information services. What I'm asking about are the contractors. So if you could tell us about the contractors. Do they have experience with Indigenous communities, with immigrants, with youth? That's what it talks about in your annual report.

Ms Giesen: Absolutely. As we committed, we will follow up with a breakdown of our employment services contractors.

When we are procuring for employment services in a given community and depending on the population served, we seek specific expertise and skills and demonstrated competency in supporting those populations in those communities.

Ms Renaud: Okay. I read that one-third of the DRES applications were approved. Can you tell us what criteria is used, and is there somewhere we can find that criteria?

Ms Giesen: Thank you. Disability-related employment supports provide individualized supports and services to address barriers to employment. There are three categories of support, including training or education. That includes assistive services, sign language interpreters, communication access, assistive technology, job search supports.

Ms Renaud: Is that the criteria?

Ms Giesen: Those are supports.

In 2024-25 one-third of the approved disability-related employment services applications were for job search supports, 29 per cent for education and training supports, and 38 per cent for workplace supports.

Ms Renaud: Is there a criteria for approving or not approving an application?

Ms Giesen: If the member can bear with me, I will follow up on that.

Ms Renaud: Sure. Okay.

I note, too, in the annual report, maybe while you're looking, almost \$6,000 per approved application. That puts us, rough math, around 4,000 individuals. Does that number match?

Ms Giesen: Thank you. I will need to follow up with you on the specific number served.

Ms Renaud: Okay. While you're at that, if the department has any other – actually, no. Skip that.

The work outcomes reporting project – WORP, I guess, is the acronym – a postcompletion assessment following participation in career employment information services, noted that 67 per cent of Albertans were successful finding employment. How many of those

surveyed were on income support barriers for employment or, maybe while you're at it, expected to work? Maybe the two categories together.

9:30

Ms Giesen: Thank you to the member for the question. The work outcomes reporting project is a survey. It is a voluntary survey to individuals who either complete a stint on income support either as an expected to work or a barrier to full employment caseload or to other Albertans who access career and employment information services. I do not have in front of me the breakdown specifically of our response rate, but I can tell you that I believe that roughly 25 per cent of our respondents are past income support clients.

Ms Renaud: The reason I'm asking and sort of focusing on the 65 per cent success or completion is that this is the major category where people who are marginalized for whatever reason – correct? – will get this employment support, and the hope is that they find employment following. With less than 70 per cent success rate, I mean, we're trying to dig down and figure out: is this foundation strong enough to support tens of thousands of severely disabled people that are about to use this system as well? That is my concern.

In this fiscal reporting year how many case files or individual people were transferred from income support barriers to employment to AISH?

Ms Giesen: Thank you again to the member for the question. I do not have that breakdown for you, but I will advise that there is not a direct transfer from barriers to full employment to AISH.

Ms Renaud: I didn't mention what's direct transfer. Can you tell us how many people left barriers to employment to AISH?

Ms Giesen: No, I cannot. I can't provide that for you at the moment.

Ms Renaud: Okay. Page 41 of the annual report talks about the transformation, the employment services delivery model transformation to be specific. While I understand the creation and transition to the new ADAP program won't be in scope here and won't happen until AISH is dismantled, in AISH I would expect that a ministry preparing for tens of thousands of severely disabled Albertans to be looking for work to be hard at work building that foundation. Would the department describe what activities were undertaken in this fiscal year in preparation for the introduction of this new program?

Ms Giesen: Thank you, through the chair, to the member for the question. As you mentioned, the launch of the new Alberta disability assistance program is out of scope for the '24-25 fiscal year, but I can tell you that year over year through increased investments in employment supports we have built a significant foundation and network that positions our employment services partners well to take on and support the caseload of new disability assistance clients that will be coming this July. That was an over \$240 million investment just this fiscal year alone. I would say that over consecutive years of increased provincial investment . . .

The Acting Chair: Thank you very much. That ends the first block for the Official Opposition.

I will now move over to government members. MLA Lundy.

Mr. Lundy: Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair. Welcome to our officials joining us this morning, and thank you for all your hard work and your staff who work behind the scenes to pull all this together and help you guys serve Albertans.

I would like to begin with some questions on specifically OAG recommendations. Madam Chair, through you, of course, I'll be referencing page 28 of the annual report, where the ministry provides an update on the status of recommendations arising from the Auditor General's November 2024 audit on Processes to Assess and Manage the Condition of Affordable Housing. This is obviously an important issue raised by the Auditor General to make sure that when we are providing affordable housing that we're properly managing and assessing those properties. Through the chair to the deputy: at the time of the audit the ministry indicated that work was ongoing to address the recommendations. Can the deputy please provide an update on the progress made to date, including key actions taken and current implementation status?

Mr. Cooley: Thank you very much for the question, Madam Chair. At the time of the review, when the report was released, the OAG identified four key areas for improvement related to, first, obtaining complete and accurate information on the conditions of its housing facilities; second, improving oversight to ensure CMR projects are prioritized consistently; third, implementing a maintenance strategy; and finally, implementing performance measures to report on the condition of the Alberta Social Housing Corporation-owned facilities.

In response to these recommendations the ministry has prepared a maintenance strategy that will be used to address the points highlighted in the report. This strategy provides for an improved understanding of asset conditions, more consistent and transparent capital planning, stronger long-term stewardship of provincially owned affordable housing assets, and improved living conditions for Albertans in social housing.

Additionally, a building condition assessment, or BCA, program has been established, with assessments being conducted by a contracted third party. The department has been working with both internal and external stakeholders to complete BCAs for the housing corporation-owned buildings. To date 394 BCAs have been completed, and 588 are currently under way. This does not include the BCAs being led by housing providers or being paid for by the CMHC.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Lundy: Well, thank you, through the chair, for that information.

If I might, I would maybe like to follow up on one of the areas that you highlighted there related to performance measures. This, of course, relates to improving the ministry's understanding of the condition of its housing assets. Through the chair, can the deputy provide more detail on how the ministry is developing these performance measures and what steps are being taken to improve visibility and oversight?

Mr. Cooley: Absolutely. A consultant conducted a jurisdictional review of building condition assessment key performance indicators to replace the facility condition index, or FCI. As part of our CMR maintenance strategy a replacement performance measure was developed that takes into account the information obtained from the building condition assessments, which can be used to inform the department of the overall conditions of its properties.

This will be achieved by the calculation of a building health score, or BHS, that identifies the overall condition of an assessment by looking at the key building systems. The building health score allows the Alberta Social Housing Corporation to better understand the current and future state of provincially owned affordable housing units. This score, along with the findings from the building condition assessment, is used to assist the department in prioritizing CMR projects that will be completed in upcoming years.

Thank you.

Mr. Lundy: Great. Thank you for that additional information. I appreciate that.

Madam Chair, if I might, I'd like to move on to the seniors lodge program. Specifically interested in hearing from the deputy about some of the actions resulting from the Seniors Lodge Review Panel, which I was fortunate enough to co-chair with a number of great stakeholders. We were able to go across the province, talk to housing management bodies, municipal partners, and, of course, seniors themselves living in some of our lodge programs. It's a great opportunity to put some recommendations forward.

I would note that this is relevant under page 30 of the annual report, particularly the \$56.8 million provided through the lodge assistance program. The panel's work and recommendation did result in a comprehensive set of recommendations aimed at improving sustainability, governance, and the overall experience for residents. Through the chair, can the deputy minister provide an update on how the ministry is implementing these recommendations, particularly those aimed at strengthening oversight, funding stability, and operational improvements within the seniors lodge program?

Mr. Cooley: Thank you. The first suite of enhancements aims to support residents by addressing their evolving care needs and allowing them to age in place while reducing pressure on the acute-care system. Additional recommendations will be implemented over the next 24 months, including changes recently introduced in Bill 28, the Municipal Affairs and Housing Statutes Amendment Act.

I'm going to turn it to my colleague David Williams, the ADM of housing, to provide additional information.

Mr. David Williams: Yeah. Thank you very much, through the chair, to the member for the question. We've been working very hard on implementing the recommendations that were put forward by the panel. Of the 19 recommendations, 10 are under active implementation and five have already been completely implemented.

9:40

We have worked to improve the building design standards, working through to ensure that we have universal design aspects in there and encouraging a wide range of room assignments. We've also worked on the building codes to ensure around the B2, B3 designations for lodges to see clarity there. We've also worked with housing management bodies and Indigenous communities to adapt the lodge program to meet the needs of Indigenous communities. We've introduced tenant support workers within the lodge environment through the tenant support worker framework. We've also gone through consultations with housing management bodies to remove some of the barriers between health and housing service providers as part of the move with the development of ALA going forward.

We continue to work. Again, Bill 28 has another set of implementations, if passed through the Legislature, that would clarify the needs around capital maintenance reserves for our housing management bodies for their own assets as well as working on a number of other issues. So we are well under way in terms of doing that.

We are making other enhancements. As you would know, in Budget '24, in the year '24-25, that \$56.8 million that was provided to the lodge assistance program represented a 55 per cent increase in funding per person per day to the lodge program in order to ensure that we were catching up and keeping pace with that and ensuring that the balancing between the municipal and provincial cost sharing was maintained.

Mr. Lundy: Well, thank you very much, through the chair. I appreciate those key updates. It sounds like we're moving forward with this, which is great news.

Madam Chair, I might just add a quick follow-up for the deputy, then, regarding long-term program sustainability. We just heard about the funding and that envelope. I wonder if the deputy might be able to comment. How will the additional funding provided support low-income seniors and assist housing providers in addressing operating pressures and enhancing the quality of life for residents? Just looking for a comment on how we can ensure the long-term program sustainability of the lodge program.

Thank you.

Mr. Cooley: Thank you very much. In '24-25 \$56.8 million was provided to operators through the lodge assistance program grant to supplement the reduced revenue from housing 7,000 residents below the income threshold. The ministry raised the rate per eligible resident by 55 per cent, resulting in an increase of \$15 million in LAP funding compared to 2023-24. The government is working closely with seniors' lodge providers to improve seniors' lodges and their facilities, and this program is part of that overall process.

Mr. Lundy: Great. I appreciate it, and once again happy to hear these key updates on this important work.

With that, Madam Chair, I'm going to cede my time to MLA de Jonge.

The Acting Chair: Please.

Ms de Jonge: Thank you so much, Madam Chair, and good morning, Deputy. Good to see you here and your officials as well. I'm just going to go into page 23 of the annual report. It shows an investment of \$395.5 million to build, renew, maintain, and operate various affordable housing programs that the province runs, and that includes rent supplements. You know, my first question is: how are you prioritizing these investments to ensure that these funds are allocated where they're going to have the greatest impact, where they're going to help the most people and, keeping taxpayers in mind, where they're going to deliver value for money?

Mr. Cooley: Thank you. The ministry prioritizes affordable housing investments using a needs-based and outcome-focused approach. Funding decisions consider demonstrated community need, alignment with government housing priorities, project readiness, and the ability to deliver measurable outcomes within established time frames and budgets. Investments are assessed to ensure an appropriate balance between new supply, renewal and maintenance of existing housing stock, and affordability supports such as rent supplements. Standardized funding agreements, monitoring, and reporting requirements are used to ensure public funds are used efficiently and for their intended purposes.

Ms de Jonge: Thank you, through the chair.

I mean, you work with various housing providers in your affordable housing program. How are you ensuring that the housing providers and the partners that you work with have the capacity to actually deliver projects efficiently and achieve the intended housing outcomes that are outlined in the report?

Mr. Cooley: Colleagues in David's division work closely with housing providers, municipalities, and nonprofit partners to support delivery capacity and successful project outcomes. This includes providing clear program guidance, consistent application and assessment processes, and funding structures that reflect current market conditions.

The ministry also considers provider experience, governance, and project readiness as part of funding decisions. Ongoing engagement with the sector allows the ministry to identify emerging challenges, such as rising construction costs, labour shortages, or project complexity, and to work collaboratively with providers to mitigate these risks while maintaining accountability and value for money.

Ms de Jonge: Thank you, Deputy, through the chair. A big conversation that I've been having recently with my constituents is about program sustainability. Certainly, as taxpayers they want to ensure that the GOA is, you know, implementing their programs and planning programs with sustainability in mind. I'm wondering if the ministry has identified any risks and what those risks are in sustaining affordable housing outcomes over time. How are you addressing those risks through your program design and through the oversight of its implementation?

Mr. Cooley: Thank you for the question. Indeed, the ministry has identified key risks to sustaining affordable housing outcomes, including rising construction and operating costs, aging housing stock, and ongoing affordability pressures among low-income households.

These risks are addressed through a diversified program approach that combines capital investment, renewal and maintenance funding, and operating and rental supplements supports. Program design includes funding parameters, reporting requirements, and monitoring mechanisms that support long-term viability and stewardship of publicly funded assets. The ministry also uses information from funded projects and sector engagement to inform future program adjustments and policy development.

Ms de Jonge: How are you working with the providers, you know, through programs to reduce barriers, to improve project readiness, and ultimately ensure timely delivery of, whether it's, affordable housing units or rent supplement supports? How are you doing that work?

Mr. Cooley: Colleagues in the ministry work with providers to reduce the barriers by promoting clear and consistent program requirements and encouraging early project planning and realistic timelines. Engagement throughout the pre-application and delivery processes helps identify issues related to project scope, financing, readiness and allows for early problem solving. To support timely delivery the ministry encourages phased project approaches, where appropriate, and monitors progress through regular reporting. For rent supplement programs, streamlined processes and ongoing co-ordination with housing providers help ensure supports are delivered efficiently to households in need.

The Acting Chair: Thank you.

That concludes that government block. We will return to the Official Opposition. MLA Renaud.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to ask some questions on disability supports, PDD and FSCD, family supports for children with disabilities.

Before I begin, I'm just wondering if the department can tell the committee approximately how many contracts were procured for these disability supports by people that were not Canadian citizens or permanent residents.

Ms Johnston: The contractors or the clients?

Ms Renaud: Individuals. It would have to be the individual – right? – that the contract is procured for. The people, how many are – so we're hearing regularly from the minister that part of the reason they're doing what they're doing is to prevent immigrants from procuring contracts for disability services, social services. I'm just double-checking that that's not happening, as the criteria doesn't list that.

Mr. Cooley: We don't have that information at this time, but we would only be procuring contracts for individuals who are eligible for the program.

9:50

Ms Renaud: None would be eligible if they're immigrants, right? You have to be a Canadian citizen or a permanent resident to procure a contract, correct? Yes.

Mr. Cooley: Yeah, that's correct. Yeah.

Ms Renaud: Okay. In 2023-24 there were 20,033 unique users of family supports for children with disabilities, and in the fiscal year we're examining, which is '24-25, there are 18,535 unique cases. That's a 7.5 per cent drop in the number of children and families receiving services. Can the department explain this drop?

Mr. Cooley: Thank you for the question. In 2024-25 the department's focus was to maintain the current caseload and ensure that the more than 4,700 families that were brought onto the caseload in '23-24 were able to continue to access services in their agreements while prioritizing new families with emergent needs. The caseload decreased . . .

Ms Renaud: Okay. I'm just going to interrupt you because I don't have that much time. Maybe I wasn't clear with my question, so let me just rephrase that a little bit. Between '23 and the year that we're looking at, there was a 7 and a half per cent drop in the number of children receiving supports from FSCD. I actually understand what the program does. I don't need any information about that. I just don't understand how – when we know we have a wait-list, we know it's an oversubscribed program. We know it's been increased, actually, but we see the number has dropped 7 and a half per cent over this time period, and I don't really understand why.

Mr. Cooley: Yeah. The caseload, as I was getting to, decreased from 20,033 in March of 2024 to 18,535 by March of 2024. This decrease of 1,498 children, approximately 7.5 per cent, was due primarily to children aging out of the program or no longer needing services. Ninety per cent of the 2024-25 active closures were represented by those two groups.

Ms Renaud: Okay. Good. How many children and families have been approved by meeting eligibility, which is for legislated support, but do not yet have a signed contract?

Mr. Cooley: There's no standardized timeline for when an application is received to when services start. This reflects sort of that individualized needs-based structure of the program and the diversity of family circumstances, which means not all applicants will be eligible for the program, and those not eligible will not require the same level of services. Access to services is often influenced by multiple factors: you know, completeness of the information provided, eligibility determination, assessments, et cetera.

Ms Renaud: Do you have a number of how many have actually met that eligibility criteria that's legislated but do not yet have a signed contract?

Mr. Cooley: At this point, as families engage with the program throughout this multistage process, each stage is serving a different decision-making function. Families move in and out, so it's often difficult to – a family will start the process, their application process, and families may be at different points in the process for different reasons. As people progress through a combination of program requirements, they move through the process based on their own program requirements and family-specific circumstances.

Ms Renaud: I note before 2021, you know, on open data we used to be able to see how many people had met criteria but didn't have a signed contract yet. That reporting stopped, so we don't have it. We really don't know how many people, at whatever stage, have met the criteria that is in the legislation that are eligible for services but do not have them yet. I don't know what we call it. We don't call it a wait-list. I'm not sure what we call it anymore, but I know that we're overwhelmed with casework from families that are waiting, so we know there's a wait-list and trying to get to how many children and families met criteria but do not have services.

Mr. Cooley: The department's approach to public data, you know, such as open data, public data release, is guided by a principle that accuracy and clarity must come before the publication. With the FSCD program . . .

Ms Renaud: Is that a no? There's no wait-list?

Mr. Cooley: There are complex case management environments, and our legacy systems have historically used terminology and reporting categories that don't always align with the current service delivery approaches. In order to address this, we've taken a number of steps to review how our data is defined . . .

Ms Renaud: Sorry. I'm just going to cut off. That's okay if that's information that you are unable or unwilling to share. That's fine. I think that we just all need to recognize that this is a legislated program – it's the law – that if you meet this criteria, the government of Alberta should be there to support your child and your family. Now, because I know that we all know that there are families that are hurting that need a contract that don't have it. What I'm trying to get at is: what is that number? Because I go a little further and I see that the department underspent by \$3 million in this fiscal year, but I know that families are deeply, deeply struggling. People are losing their jobs, they have to stay home with their child, all kinds of problems. I'm trying to get to: do we have a number of how many Alberta children and their families have no contract but have met eligibility criteria? Pretty simple question. If that's not something the ministry is willing to share, then just say that.

Mr. Cooley: The issue is that because of the way the program operates, it's very difficult to have a single, weightless figure because it's often misleading. Families move in and out of the application process for a variety of reasons. They may start in January, pause the program, their application process, until June, pick it up again in late summer, and then maybe even drop out later on. For that reason, are they on the wait-list or are they not on the wait-list? The concept of a wait-list is very difficult to . . .

Ms Renaud: Madam Chair, I'm just going to interrupt again. I just want to clarify: was the data that was reported before 2021 inaccurate? Is that what you're saying?

Mr. Cyr: That's outside the scope – outside the scope.

Mr. Schmidt: Hey. If it's a point of order, raise a point of order.

Mr. Lundy: Point of order, Madam Chair.

An Hon. Member: There we go.

The Acting Chair: A point of order has been called.
MLA Lundy.

Mr. Lundy: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a point of order: 23(b) I think on perhaps both ends of our timelines. The member opposite has asked repeatedly, from my understanding, for a current wait-list. As the member knows, we're here to discuss the time frame from the annual report. The member has asked repeatedly for current wait-list information: how many families are currently waiting? She said that numerous times, so that would be on 23(b) on the one side. She's asked a couple of times about 2021 as well. I would suspect that it is also not relevant to our meeting here today. Madam Chair, I would ask for the member opposite to keep her questions to the time frame within the annual report.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. This is clearly not a point of order. I'm surprised that the member opposite, Mr. Lundy, was even able to raise a point of order, because Member Cyr was disrupting the proceedings. He couldn't very well have heard what my friend from St. Albert was even saying. To his point about asking about current numbers, my friend from St. Albert has never asked about current numbers. She has explicitly asked only about '24-25. The deputy minister has clearly stated that there are concerns around data integrity with respect to the reporting of these wait-list numbers, so my friend is asking questions to clarify what about the data has changed since 2021, which was the last day that the department did report those publicly. That's well within the scope of this committee's work, to understand what changes with respect to data that's reported by the ministry publicly. It's important that we understand what's changed, so I ask that you not find this a point of order and let my friend continue to pursue this line of questioning.

10:00

The Acting Chair: Thank you very much, members. Having heard the arguments on both sides and following the conversation, my understanding is that the member is trying to understand the currently in scope 2024-25 numbers and asking questions to bring that into context. I will offer a caution that we do need to stay in scope with the annual report, but I'm not going to find this a point of order at this point. I will ask the member to continue with her questions.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Chair. Could you tell the committee what the average cost per FSCD case is in this fiscal year that we're discussing and, in addition to that, the average PDD cost per year in this fiscal? And I'm not talking about the direct operations.

The Acting Chair: That ends the time for the Official Opposition block.

I will now move over to government members. MLA Cyr.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, and I'd like to thank the ministry for being before the committee today. I will say that the successes that your ministry has had over the last few years are showing just how much good work is being done. I will say that the current historic spend of \$6.6 billion is quite remarkable. I myself, in the most recent seniors' lodge modernization program, received \$16 million for one of my local lodges, and I'm very thankful for that and the good work there.

But getting back into scope here, because I don't want to be called out of order over this. On page 57 of the 2024-25 annual report I'm pleased to see that there was a commitment of \$1 billion invested through the continuing care transformation over three years, from 2023-24 to '25-26. Alberta is also receiving \$627 million over five years, from 2023-24 through to 2027-2028, from the federal government under the aging with dignity agreement.

Now, there are two parts to this question. How much funding was dedicated in 2024-2025 to the transformation of the continuing care system, and what are the meaningful results of this funding for the system transformation? And the second part of the question is: how does the ministry measure success of these investments, particularly in terms of reducing hospital pressures and improving patient outcomes?

Mr. Cooley: Thank you for the question. I'll begin with the first one, around the transformation and the costs. In 2024-25 the ministry invested approximately \$343 million; \$248 million through continuing care transformation and \$95 million through aging with dignity, that sums to \$343 million, to shift care to the community, enhance workforce capacity, and improve quality and accountability in our continuing care sector. With these investments we expanded the client-directed home-care invoicing program across the province, increasing client and caregiver choice and options in selecting their home-care service provider.

By March 2025 the program was supporting 2,632 clients across all health zones in the province, an increase from about 1,440 clients in March 2024. These investments also increased awareness and support for caregivers. Over \$1.4 million was provided to the Alzheimer Society of Alberta and Northwest Territories to fund projects that connected people with dementia and their caregivers to support services earlier in their journey as well as expanded available supports and services in the province.

These investments also supported training and employee mental health and wellness programs. For example, 12,459 staff members participated in the care for staff program delivered by the Alberta Continuing Care Association to support employee mental health and well-being. Additional funding supported research on interventions and tools to support continuing care workforce strength and resiliency. The health care aide bursary and workforce tutor programs also received continued funding to support current and future members of the workforce. The government also collaborated with Indigenous postsecondary institutions to recruit and train more Indigenous health care aides to support culturally appropriate care. The ministry also provided operational funding to maintain health care wage increases to aid in recruitment and retention and increase the average hours of care delivered in the community.

These investments also increased technology and innovation, including starting development of a new centralized continuing care information system. The new system will enable more comprehensive, consistent collection for continuing care across the province, which will enhance sector oversight and planning.

I think that's for the first question. Would you mind repeating the second question so I get it right?

Mr. Cyr: Absolutely. How does the ministry measure success of these investments, particularly in terms of reducing hospital pressures and improving patient outcomes?

Mr. Cooley: Thank you. Okay. On average in '24-25 Albertans waited 34 days in hospital for admission to a continuing care home once they were assessed by a health care professional, and 63 per cent of Albertans were moved to a continuing care home within 30 days of their assessment. The government has been working with Assisted Living Alberta to review community-based models that may support increased discharges from ALC and help transition Albertans to a more appropriate care setting. Government also contracted an additional 209 temporary and permanent continuing care home spaces in '24-25 to support increased transitions from ALC into continuing care homes. Temporary spaces have been made permanent as well during that fiscal year.

In '24-25 the government provided additional operational funding for hours of care in continuing care homes, increasing the average number of care hours delivered to 3.7 hours in type A facilities, 3.3 hours in type B secure facilities, 3.7 hours for type B regular spaces. These additional hours ensure greater quality of care and support for clients with complex health conditions.

Mr. Cyr: That's very impressive. I will say that in my constituency of Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul we do have seniors that are inside of our acute beds, which is a large problem. It appears that you're looking to correct that problem, so thank you for your work on that file. We want the right level of care for these individuals, and sitting inside of an emergency room is not that right level of care. Seeing those days starting to decrease is something that I think we all would agree is a success of your ministry.

Moving on to Assisted Living Alberta. The new public health agency for the continuing care health services sector was announced on January 30, 2025, and was established as a legal entity on April 1, 2025. Assisted Living Alberta provides a comprehensive system of continuing care with a range of wraparound services, including medical and nonmedical supports, home care, community care, and social services. What preparation did the ministry undertake in 2024 to 2025 to ensure that the success of Assisted Living Alberta happened?

Mr. Cooley: Thank you for the question. In 2024-25 the ministry undertook extensive evidence-informed planning to set ALA, or Assisted Living Alberta, up for success. We established the ALA transition committee to provide evidence-informed advice to the minister of ALSS and to his colleagues in cabinet about the transformation of assisted living in the continuing care sector. The committee brought together leaders from health care, continuing care, social services, housing, First Nations, and other community-based sectors to identify systemic barriers, operational challenges, and opportunities for innovation.

10:10

To support this work the committee established 11 communities covering key areas; for example, aging in place, alternate level of care, disability funding, home and community care, homelessness, housing infrastructure, liaison with Recovery Alberta, navigation, and pharmacy. In April of 2025 a series of round-table engagement sessions were held virtually and in communities across the province. The ministry engaged with key stakeholders across the continuing care sector to gather their input on ways to address the gaps, overcome barriers, and identify opportunities for improvement on topics raised by the transition committees. These discussions were instrumental in the transformation of our continuing care sector in the province.

We also heard directly from Albertans with experience in the continuing care system through a survey that was conducted between January 31 and March 3 in 2025. We had 4,040 unique responses that were received from survey participants, and their insights continue to inform the transformation of continuing care here in the province, ensuring that what we're doing aligns with the expectations of Albertans, aligns with their priorities and their desire and their experiences.

Together these engagement activities inform the successful stand-up.

The Acting Chair: Okay. That concludes that clock.

We will return to the Official Opposition, MLA Renaud, to continue.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Chair. What is the average cost per FSCD case and PDD case in this fiscal year?

Mr. Cooley: Would you mind repeating the question?

Ms Renaud: Average cost per case for FSCD and PDD in this fiscal.

Mr. Cooley: Between April 24 and March 25 the average cost per case for FSCD increased between \$1,081 and \$1,238 by the end of 2025.

Ms Renaud: What was the average cost?

Mr. Cooley: One thousand two hundred and thirty-eight dollars.

Ms Renaud: Was the average FSCD cost? One thousand two hundred. Per year?

Mr. Cooley: That's per month. Sorry.

Ms Renaud: Per month. Okay. And PDD?

Mr. Cooley: For PDD the average cost per case by March 2025 was \$7,461.

Ms Renaud: Okay. Perfect. Thank you very much.

I know that the PDD program caseload increased a little bit, adding 240 people to the overall total caseload. In the fiscal year that we're talking about where 240 people were added, could you give us the total number of people that left due to death, turning 65, leaving the province, all of those things?

Mr. Cooley: The response to that question is 202 individuals.

Madam Chair, if I may, we have responses to questions earlier, if we can read those into the record. Marika, would you mind that . . .

Ms Renaud: We don't get to say yeah.

Mr. Cooley: Okay.

Ms Renaud: Sure.

Ms Giesen: Thank you. Thank you to the member again for the questions. Apologies for the delay.

You had asked a few questions regarding disability related employment supports, including questions about the eligibility criteria. Happy to speak to that. The DRES regulation defines disability as a diagnosed and documented chronic or permanent physiological or psychological impairment of functions that limits an individual's ability to complete education or training, become employed, or maintain employment. Some key elements are to be a resident of Alberta; 16 years of age or older; Canadian citizen,

permanent resident, or protected person; legally entitled to work and/or train in Canada; and be experiencing a barrier as a result of their disability that impacts their ability to look for employment, participate in the workplace, and/or succeed in an education and training program.

Ms Renaud: That's great. I'm going to stop you there. I need to move on.

You mentioned that 202 people left PDD in this fiscal year? That leaves 38 people. Is that the total that it grew? Or did it actually grow 240 plus the 202? The caseload. In the report I see that the caseload grew by 1.8 per cent or 240 people. Is that net?

Mr. Cooley: I'm going to turn to my colleague Sumera Idris to provide the response to that question.

The Acting Chair: Thank you for coming to the podium. If you wouldn't mind just introducing yourself as you begin.

Ms Idris: Thank you, through the chair. My name is Sumera Idris, and I'm the acting assistant deputy minister for disability services.

That's correct. It was net.

Ms Renaud: That's the net number.

Ms Idris: Yes, that's the net number.

Ms Renaud: It's 240.

Ms Idris: Yes; 202 is the closures, and 13,641 is the net caseload.

Ms Renaud: Okay. Thank you.

The ministry provides \$1.2 billion in funding for PDD. Of that \$1.2 billion – I actually couldn't find it – what is the split between family-managed support contracts and service providers? Not looking at direct operations, just the main line.

Ms Idris: Thank you, through the chair. Can you repeat the question?

Ms Renaud: Sure. What is the split between family-managed supports and service providers in the \$1.2 billion?

Ms Idris: Okay; \$158 million for family-managed services and \$1.026 billion for service providers contracts.

Ms Renaud: Perfect.

Okay. Out of the service providers, \$1.026 billion, how much of that is employment-related, not community access necessarily but employment preparation, employment support, all of those employment programs? How much of that over \$1 billion to service providers is employment related?

Ms Idris: Through the chair, \$22.8 million was employment supports for about 2,200 individuals.

Ms Renaud: Out of PDD.

Ms Idris: Yes, PDD.

Ms Renaud: Okay. Do you have any employment stats for that \$22 million investment?

Ms Idris: I don't have that information.

Ms Renaud: Is that information the ministry collects?

Ms Idris: Can I ask for clarity? What do you mean by employment stats?

Ms Renaud: When I'm assuming a contract with the service provider is given, they're saying, "We have 10 people; we're going to support them to work," and so you assume – I don't know – maybe 8 of the 10 are working or 5 of the 10 are working. I'm assuming that the ministry collects information on the success of their investment. I don't know what you collect, so I'm just trying to get at what it is that you collect that tells us this \$22 million is supporting people to find work and to keep working.

Ms Idris: Yeah. I don't have that information with me right now. We do collect some information, but I'm not clear on what that is at this time.

Ms Renaud: Okay. Would the ministry agree to table whatever information you have about employment stats for PDD funding with the committee?

Mr. Cooley: Thank you for the question. We'll go back and take a look at what data we collect and determine the extent to which what we collect matches the question. Thanks.

Ms Renaud: Sounds good.

How many service providers receive more than 20 per cent in service delivery and administration? I'm not sure what the department calls the categories now. Years ago it used to be called service delivery and administration, but that is the piece that is absolutely not tied to direct service. How many organizations or contractors does PDD contract with that receive more than 20 per cent?

Ms Idris: Through the chair, we have 173 contracts in PDD, and of that 17 per cent was towards indirect costs.

Ms Renaud: I'm sorry. Could you repeat that?

Ms Idris: Yeah; 17 per cent of the contract expenditures were indirect.

Ms Renaud: Right. Yes. That would probably be the average, but how many outliers are there? How many contractors are outliers receiving at least 20 per cent or more?

Ms Idris: Through the chair, I don't have that information with me right now, but 20 per cent is the maximum for indirect.

10:20

Ms Renaud: Okay. Well, Madam Chair, just to clarify: during budget estimates for the fiscal year that we're talking about, we did hear of an outlier or two, so I know that they do exist. Perhaps the ministry could agree to table that information with the committee.

Mr. Cooley: It would be helpful if there is a specific outlier we can – you know, if you can tell us the name and we can go in and . . .

Ms Renaud: I'd have to go back through *Hansard* and get those names for you, but okay.

Very much along the same lines as FSCD, how many Albertans have met the eligibility requirement for PDD, persons with developmental disabilities, but still do not have a signed contract?

Mr. Cooley: The access to services is continuing to be managed through that province-wide prioritization and review framework . . .

The Acting Chair: That just concludes that block. We will move back to government members.

I'm looking to recognize MLA Sawyer. Please.

Mrs. Sawyer: Thank you. Through you, Madam Chair, to the department I would like to touch on the alternate level of care if I

could because the government is making significant investments in addressing the number of alternate levels of care. For those who might be watching, I'll just refer to it as ALC. Patients in acute care across the province are who we're talking about. Those are individuals who might be waiting for home and community care supports before moving back into their community, people waiting for admission to a continuing care home, or people waiting for another setting or service with respect to mental health and addiction or housing supports. So, through the chair, how did continuing care investments contribute to decreasing the number of ALC patients in hospitals during '24-25?

Mr. Cooley: Continuing care investments help reduce the number of ALC patients by expanding alternatives to hospital care and speeding up transitions for people who no longer need acute care. For health there were a number of processes under way. This was the first time the department was asked to look at this issue. The former ministry worked quickly – ALSS worked quickly on-the-ground to identify some of the issues that ALC patients were faced with. Working with AHS at the time, the ministry was able to set up triage teams to quickly find supports for ALC patients to reduce barriers to discharge. This has ranged from identifying supports needed such as income support for seniors' benefit coverage to bringing the office of the public guardian and trustee in earlier to support those that could not make the decisions for themselves.

More broadly, how these investments contributed: we'll start with more continuing care spaces; capital funding supported the creation of new continuing care spaces giving hospitals more places to discharge patients who still needed support but not hospital-level care. This is long-term, but ALS has begun to invest in new processes and create new spaces. Secondly, Alberta also added temporary spaces to relieve immediate pressures, helping move patients out of hospital sooner while longer term placements were arranged. About 209 spaces were identified earlier on. We also worked a lot to expand home and community care. Investments in community-based care created more options for patients to return home safely with supports rather than remaining in hospital while waiting for facility placement. Investments in home care, especially client-directed home care, started to have an impact, with over 5 million hours of care starting to come on stream for 2024-25.

Next, with respect to workforce and service-capacity improvements, funding to build workforce capacity and improve service delivery meant that the system could assess, place, and support patients more effectively in the right setting. Without the workforce expansion, that was not possible.

Finally, we had faster patient flow-through through the system. The ministry, you know, working in conjunction with ALA and Acute Care Alberta, started to look at ways to flag earlier in the processes any barriers that could lead to longer stays, such as ensuring social supports, whether or not they were needed or if guardian and trustee was required. With more capacities outside of the hospitals patients could be transferred sooner, which reduced bed-blocking and freed up acute-care beds for patients who actually needed hospital services.

Mrs. Sawyer: Thank you very much. Through you, Madam Chair, you mentioned workforce, so that's perfect. That segues into me wanting to ask you about workforce investments because addressing continuing care workforce recruitment is quite important. We want to make sure we have retention since the workforce is pretty critical in bringing quality care. Can we look at pages 59 and 60 of the annual report? It says workforce investments in continuing care staff,

mental health, mentorship, resiliency, and health care aid recruitment and retention. Could the ministry let me know: how did these investments create meaningful supports for the continuing care workforce as well as what data or metrics you might be able to provide to illustrate that these investments achieved the desired results?

Mr. Cooley: Thank you for the question. In 2024-25 the ministry prioritized continuing care workforce capacity, attraction, and retention as well as support for mentorship programs and mental health and well-being initiatives. Key investments in these priorities included the following.

First, “\$10.7 million for HCA bursaries to decrease financial barriers and support 400 additional students to receive HCA training in continuing care.”

Next, “\$84 million . . . to support HCA wage increases and alignment, including \$53 million to maintain the COVID-19 wage top-up for continuing care home HCAs and \$31 million to align home care HCA wages.” The investment included an additional 32 cents per hour for employee paid benefits.

Next, “\$2.5 million to the Alberta Continuing Care Association to administer the care for staff program” which “delivered staff-informed projects to support employee mental health and well-being across Alberta.” In August 2025 the government of Alberta announced a new \$7.5 million investment to extend and expand the care for staff program to two additional years, going now out to the end of fiscal year ’26-27.

Together these investments are helping to create a more stable, supported, and resilient workforce, ultimately improving continuity and quality of care for Albertans.

Mrs. Sawyer: Madam Chair, I’m going to completely pivot because I want to take a minute to talk about seniors’ events and recognition. Coming from a rural constituency our seniors are often the backbone as our volunteers and leaders.

In the 2024-25 Seniors, Community and Social Services annual report, you talk about delivering a range of senior special events and awards, including Seniors’ Week, the minister’s seniors service awards, the Day of Older Persons in Alberta, and age-friendly Alberta recognitions. Collectively they’re intended to recognize seniors’ contributions and promote age-positive narratives. What role does the ministry play in enabling local engagement and supporting age-friendly communities through seniors’ special events and recognition events? I’ll just say at the same time, how do seniors’ special events and recognition programs contribute to strengthening seniors’ sense of belonging in their local communities?

10:30

Mr. Cooley: Thanks. Certainly, the ministry plays a leadership role by funding, co-ordinating, promoting seniors’ special events and recognition activities in communities. These activities reinforce our commitment to healthy aging and social inclusion through that intergenerational connection. Specifically, each year the ministry supports local engagement by providing targeted grants, support for Seniors’ Week provincial launch. We plan and deliver awards, including the minister’s seniors service awards, that recognize exceptional Albertans who contribute their time and effort to improving the lives of seniors as well as the age-friendly Alberta recognition awards, that acknowledge communities who’ve had commitments to building inclusive and supportive communities for everyone.

This raising awareness through acknowledgement of seniors related to official days or observances such as the Day of Older Persons in Alberta: we have the World Elder Abuse Awareness Day and the Intergenerational Day. In addition, we partner with sector organizations like Healthy Aging Alberta and the Alberta Elder Abuse Awareness Council to advance ministry priorities. Finally, we support knowledge-sharing platforms such as CORE Alberta and communities of practice to strengthen that collaboration.

With respect to your question around how seniors’ special events and recognition programs contribute to strengthening the communities, you know, we believe that these special events strengthen the seniors’ sense of belonging by, quite frankly, celebrating their contributions and reinforcing seniors’ roles as active and valued members of the community.

The Acting Chair: That concludes that block.

We’ll return to the Official Opposition for the fourth rotation. Looking at MLA Renaud.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Chair. We invest over \$1.2 million in the disability advocate’s office, and we expect that ministry will influence the department’s work, but that is somewhat difficult to see. On September 30, 2024, the office of the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities released a what-we-heard document called Access to Mental Health Services and Resources for Persons with Disabilities. This comprehensive report and recommendation, I thought, was quite good. The five recommendations address things like rural versus remote access, improving accessibility of existing supports, et cetera. Can the department share with the committee how this ’24 report was used to inform improvements to mental health supports for disabled Albertans?

Mr. Cooley: Thank you for the question. We did receive that report, and we reviewed the report, like, you know, similar to how we review other reports. We take the report in, examine the recommendations, and then look to see how the extent to which the recommendations align with . . .

Ms Renaud: That’s what we expect would happen. The recommendations go out. The department, I guess, may not accept all of them, but follow the ones that you accept. My question was: how was that report used to influence mental health policy in disability services?

Mr. Cooley: I mean, there’s no one-to-one alignment between the recommendations and how our programming is shaped, but we certainly do, you know, take the report, understand the value that the report brings, and see that its major themes are reflected.

Ms Renaud: I appreciate the report. I enjoyed reading it. I think there was some really great insight in it, but as a Public Accounts Committee I think it’s incumbent on us to look for targets. Did you meet those targets, and did it do what it said it was going to do? That’s where my question was going. I guess we can just look at the report and appreciate it.

My next question is about another report from the same office, the office of the Alberta disability advocate, and this report is called Accessible Alberta, in 2025. It was obtained by an advocacy group through filing a freedom of information request, but this report was completed by the advocate. Now, appendix 1 is called *Towards an Accessible Alberta: Report on Engagement for Potential Accessibility Legislation for the Province of Alberta*, and it was prepared by Happy Cities consulting. Can the department tell the committee how this contractor was selected, and was this a sole-source contract?

Mr. Cooley: We'll look, do a search, see if we can find the information that you requested. In the meantime, Madam Chair, if you can indulge us, we do have responses to some earlier questions.

The Acting Chair: Please proceed.

Ms Giesen: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Member. I will try to be quick to answer a few of your earlier questions. You had asked regarding the number of barriers to full employment clients who are approved for AISH. In 2024-25 2,058 barrier to full employment clients were approved for AISH. That is quite in line with our average of about 2,140 per year over the last five years.

I also wanted to speak quickly again to disability related employment support. The member made reference to the 1 per cent reference in the annual report, so I just want to clarify that disability related employment supports provide a specialized suite of employment services. It is only a small part of the full suite of employment services programming that we provide to persons with disabilities, so I just want to clarify. In fact 12 per cent of clients who accessed career and employment services in '24-25 were people with disabilities, and \$22.1 million of that budget was allocated to employment supports for persons with disabilities.

Thank you.

Ms Renaud: The disability advocate's office made six recommendations to the government of Alberta in this ministry. The recommendations were clear and specific about the immediate need for accessibility legislation. Did the department receive those recommendations?

Mr. David Williams: Yes. The report was received, but accessibility legislation is being led by Municipal Affairs.

Ms Renaud: Okay. I note the creation of the accessibility legislation working group that was brought together to advise the advocate. Can the department tell the committee who from the ministry was involved in this working group?

Mr. Cooley: The contract that you asked about earlier and the working group: those activities were led by the advocate, so the advocate led the contract and dealt directly with the supplier.

Ms Renaud: So the advocate selected the contractor?

Mr. Cooley: Yep.

Ms Renaud: In the advocate's report it lists, you know, department staff, but doesn't say who, so that's my question. I'm asking who from the ministry or the department was assisting the advocate with that working group.

Mr. Cooley: We don't have that information at this time. We can certainly get back to you.

Ms Renaud: Okay. I'm going to switch gears a little bit here. The ministry piloted a project in August of '24 for long-term income support recipients in Calgary. That's a total of 1,178 individuals. Now, while the pilot seems to have successfully cleaned up files due to transition and primarily noncompliance, it was not so successful in terms of employment, with only 20 per cent successfully closed because of employment. Can the department or the ministry tell us: what was the total cost of this pilot, and who delivered this pilot? Was this delivered in-house, or was this contracted out?

Ms Giesen: Thank you, Madam Chair, through the chair to the member. Let me share a bit of information about that pilot. That was a pilot that was delivered by ministry staff in conjunction with contracted employment service providers. In August of 2024 the then-FCSS ministry initiated a pilot targeting about 1,200 long-term expected-to-work recipients in Calgary, starting with individuals who had been receiving income support benefits for the longest duration. The process there was to have an employment readiness assessment updated with the client that was conducted by ministry staff together with the client developing a mutual action plan that defines specific client accountabilities then identifying activities to better enable attachment to the labour market, including engagement and participation with available employment supports in that community.

10:40

Ms Renaud: Do you have a total cost for this pilot?

Ms Giesen: No, I do not have a total cost. Again, that would have been a referral to existing employment services that were already funded under CEIS. Yes.

Ms Renaud: Okay. Thank you.

We've repeatedly heard the minister, actually, the Premier, too, talk about the high rates of fraud in disability programs. In '24-25 the ministry received 2,312 complaints related to income support, AISH, PDD, and FSCD. The investigation unit accepted 1,084 new matters for investigation. We know that 274 investigations were concluded, and 109 resulted in criminal charges. That means 4 per cent of the complaints were substantiated. Of those criminal charges how many were specifically related to AISH, and what is the total funding directed to the fraud investigation unit in this fiscal year?

Ms Giesen: Thank you, through the chair to the member. I don't have an exact cost for you, but I'm happy to give you a breakdown of our staffing in '24 and '25. The investigations unit had 25 full-time equivalent positions. That included 21 investigators and four team leads or senior investigators as well as six operational support staff.

In terms of the breakdown between income support and AISH, I do not have – pardon me. I do have that number. In terms of the requests for investigations in '24-25: 88 per cent income support, 8 per cent AISH.

The Acting Chair: Thank you. That concludes that block.

I'm now moving to government members. I see, MLA Lovely, you've turned on your camera. I will send it over to you.

Ms Lovely: All right. Thank you so much, Chair. I'd like to ask some questions regarding the Continuing Care Act. It came into effect on April 1, 2024. I understand that this act provides the continuing care sector in Alberta with one consistent legislative framework for the full spectrum of continuing care services and settings. In what ways has the new legislative framework supported a high-quality, accountable, flexible continuing care system, and how does the Continuing Care Act support regulation of continuing care in Alberta?

Mr. Cooley: The Continuing Care Act improves the continuing care system by bringing together multiple pieces of outdated legislation, some of which was more than 35 years old, into one updated and streamlined legislative framework. This has modernized Alberta's approach to home and community care, supportive living accommodations, and continuing care homes,

ensuring that the system is person-oriented throughout. The new legislative framework sets the conditions for change in the continuing care sector and supports more Albertans to age at home, enables flexibility in the workforce, and improves oversight and quality of services. The act also reinforces oversight and quality of care by giving government clear authority to monitor continuing care operators and provider compliance.

Operators and providers who fall under the jurisdiction of the act can be inspected by our ministry at any time to determine compliance. Where issues are identified, the act provides a range of enforcement tools, including specified measure orders and stop orders. The enforcement action chosen depends on the safety and security of residents or clients, severity of the infraction, and the response to rectify by the operator or the provider. If noncompliance is identified, ALSS may escalate our response based on the level of risk, the severity and the frequency of the contravention, and the operator's response to corrective action. The ministry publicly reports on inspections and compliance monitoring results.

Overall this new legislative framework supports a continuing care system that is higher quality, more accountable, and better able to accommodate the needs of Albertans.

Ms Lovely: Thank you so much. I'd like to switch gears now to home care. One of the pillars of the government's continuing care transformation is to shift to care in the community. On pages 58 and 59 I see that a total of \$73.3 million was invested in client-directed home care invoicing, innovative home and continuing care pilot projects, and supports for caregivers. First question of two is: what has the government done to provide comprehensive home care services to enable more Albertans to age at home or in their community instead of accessing facilities-based care or emergency care services?

Mr. Cooley: Thank you for the question. The government continues to invest in home and community-based services and supports as part of the transformation of the province's continuing care system to ensure that Albertans are getting the care they need when and where they need it. Alberta Health Services provided home and community care to a total of 140,960 unique clients in 2024-25. They were supported in part by investments of \$107.5 million through the continuing care transformation and aging with dignity funding streams.

Additionally, the government provided \$2.4 million for four innovative home and community care pilot projects to help enable transitions to home from acute care and provide caregiver support. These projects include pharmacist-led integrated health services for marginalized populations in the Edmonton zone, intensive home care programs in Calgary and central zones, and the adult support programs in the central zone.

Ms Lovely: Is there anything else that you'd like to say about the measurable improvements in client quality of life because of increasing home and community care through these efforts?

Mr. Cooley: Yeah. I mean, certainly, government invested \$2.4 million in these four innovative home care projects to enable these transitions out of acute care and provide caregiver support. We supported, you know, 371 clients during the fiscal year in question. The pharmacist-led health services for marginalized population program that I spoke about just earlier had 193 clients enrolled in the program. There were 105 clients in the intensive home care program that were enrolled through the Calgary restorative in-home program, 64 clients enrolled through the Red Deer destination home program, and eight clients through the Rimbey destination home

program. One client was enrolled in the Rimbey extended evening program, which is an adult support program.

Additionally, just over 2 million hours of care were provided through the client-directed home care invoicing program. Those hours supported just over 2,600 clients, an increase of just over 1,400 clients from March of 2024.

We've also, as I mentioned, invested \$1.2 million in the Alberta Caregivers Association to strengthen community connections, \$1.3 million to the University of Alberta to develop improved caregiver support models, and \$1.4 million to the Alzheimer's Society of Alberta and Northwest Territories to expand their support and their navigation options.

Ms Lovely: Let's hop over to job seekers with disabilities. Our government understands that job seekers with disabilities have additional challenges finding employment. That's why I'm pleased to see on page 41 of the annual report that ALSS has several programs intended to serve them. Can the deputy minister speak to the investments that were made in 2024-25, specifically in career employment services for persons with disabilities?

Mr. Cooley: Thank you for the question. In 2024-25 \$22.1 million was invested specifically to provide career and employment services for persons with disabilities. This funding supports the delivery of specialized assessments, employment development, job placements, workplace supports, disability-related supports, and workplace exposure and work maintenance supports.

Ms Lovely: What supports and services were provided by disability-related employment supports?

Mr. Cooley: Individualized supports and services that address the barriers to employment created by an individual's disability. The program assists the individual to be successful in an education program, a job search, or employment. There are three categories of support: training or education, so providing assistive services, sign language interpreters, communication access, real-time translation, and assistive technology; we also provide job support services such as, you know, supports for interviews, career fairs, workshops, interpreters, et cetera; then we provide workplace supports, so on-the-job supports, again, interpreters or assistive technology or work-site modifications in order to facilitate the employment of a disabled individual.

10:50

In '24-25 one-third of the approved DRES applications were for job search supports, 29 per cent were for education and training, and 38 per cent were for workforce supports. The average cost per DRES application was \$5,634, and these supports assisted Albertans to, you know, obtain the skills and the training and the supports that they needed in order to find and secure meaningful employment.

Ms Lovely: Okay. Still on Albertans with disabilities pages 10 and 43 to 47 of the 2024-25 annual report describe the scope of the disability services division and highlight continuous improvement efforts across the persons with disabilities and family supports for children with disabilities programs. How is the ministry enhancing systems and processes to improve the PDD and FSCD programs, and what evidence suggests that the continuous improvement effort of the ministry has improved client or staff experience?

Mr. Cooley: In the year in question, '24-25, the ministry launched the new digital application platforms for PDD and FSCD, allowing Albertans to upload documentation online, check their eligibility,

and track their application status. This new application reduced duplication and improved consistency across the delivery regions.

I'll leave it there.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, and that ends that block.

We're now into the fifth rotation. This is considered the final round, where members will read questions into the record for a written response.

We will have three minutes for the Official Opposition. MLA Eremenko.

Member Eremenko: Thank you, Madam Chair. I do have a number here, so I'll try to go quickly. How many more complaints were made to licensing and compliance for continuing care than in the previous three years? Was there an increase in the severity or seriousness of complaints?

How many more sanctions were laid in '24-25 as compared to the previous three years? Did the severity of sanctions laid increase?

How does licensing and compliance co-ordinate with protection for persons in care under a different ministry? Have any financial penalties been laid under licensing and compliance in the fiscal year?

How many kids who have been approved for FSCD are waiting for a signed contract, and how many adults who have been approved for PDD are waiting for a signed contract in the fiscal year in question?

The Acting Chair: MLA Schmidt, please.

Mr. Schmidt: Okay. Madam Chair, I have one. You know, I've noted that when we've asked questions, the department has really struggled to provide answers, but when the government backbenchers ask questions, answers are readily available. I'd like the department to provide all written communications, including e-mails, text messages, briefing notes, meeting notes, and calendar invitations, as well as records of phone calls and virtual meetings between the department, the minister's office, and government caucus members or caucus staff relating to preparation for the Public Accounts Committee meeting held on May 12, 2026, including any discussions regarding anticipated lines of questioning, witness preparation, messaging, or committee strategy.

The Acting Chair: Thank you.

Seeing no other written questions for the record from the Official Opposition, I'll move over to the government to read their questions into the record.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Thank you, Chair. Through you, because I actually love service dogs a lot, I'd like to ask some questions about service dogs. Could you tell me more about the service dog program and why the government of Alberta funds this program? I understand that Alberta's service dog program is somewhat unique in Canada in allowing owner-trained dogs to support Albertans with disabilities. Also, I'd like to know about Alberta's approach and how Albertans with disabilities are supported through the service dog program.

I have another question I'd like to ask here. Since we've been exploring approaches and tools for providing improved experiences for employable Albertans with specific client accountability and program duration outcomes, I would like to know – the ministry initiated a pilot project targeting long-term income support clients in Calgary. I'd like to know how the Calgary pilot for long-term income support recipients contributed to increased program efficiency. How did the Calgary pilot inform future program efficiency initiatives?

Another one I'd like to ask would be – this is regarding independent advocacy with Alberta's disability system and the ministry's support for accountability mechanisms related to disability services – what role did the office of the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities play within the disability services system for individuals with disabilities, and what mechanisms does the advocate use to provide advice, and how is it used by the ministry?

The Acting Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.

I would like to thank officials from the Ministry of Assisted Living and Social Services and the office of the Auditor General for their participation in responding to committee member questions. We do ask that any outstanding questions be responded to in writing within 30 days and forwarded to the committee clerk, and we thank you for that. You are welcome to stay for the remainder of the meeting if you wish to, but we are now moving on to other business, so thank you again for joining us today.

Members, agenda item 5 is the Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees conference. They will be holding their annual joint conference with the Canadian Council of Legislative Auditors from August 23 to 25 in Halifax, Nova Scotia. This conference allows elected officials and Legislative Assembly Office staff from federal, provincial, and territorial public accounts committees across Canada to share and discuss PAC best practices.

The practice of the committee has been to send the chair and deputy chair and two Legislative Assembly Office staff to attend the conference. However, the subcommittee on committee business has recommended that the committee consider sending two additional committee members, one from each caucus, to the conference, as some other jurisdictions do. The committee began discussions on the possibility of sending two additional committee members at our December 2, 2025, meeting and elected to delay consideration of the matter until the date for the 2026 conference was drawing near. Since this is our last meeting in the spring schedule, it would seem to be an appropriate time to consider if we want to move forward with the subcommittee's recommendation.

With that being said, there are multiple ways we can proceed, and I am looking for members to engage in debate. MLA Cyr.

Mr. Cyr: Well, thank you for that. I would like to thank the subcommittee for the hard work. I will say that with prior conversations it seems like the will of the committee is moving in a different direction than the subcommittee, so I'd like to propose a motion that

the Standing Committee on Public Accounts approve the attendance of the chair and the deputy chair and two Legislative Assembly Office staff at the 2026 CCPAC and COLA conference to be held August 23 to 25, 2026, in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and that the select committee members be identified as alternates and their names provided to the committee clerk.

The Acting Chair: Okay. Thank you for moving that motion.

We have a motion on the floor that would be sending the chair, deputy chair, and two LAO staff to this conference. As I understand it, this is the practice that has happened in the past. Is there any discussion on this motion?

Oh, you would like to motivate, of course. MLA Cyr, please continue.

Mr. Cyr: Well, thank you for that, Madam Chair. As a former PAC chair myself for my first term in 2015 to 2019 I found it very valuable to go to that conference as well as bringing a government member, in this case, to be able to see what practices are used throughout the nation and hear some of the presentations. I think that this is a fantastic way for our committee to be able to strengthen

itself and really understand kind of what others are doing and how they're accomplishing the good work that they're doing and bring those learnings here.

I would hope that I can get support from the entire committee on going back with the practice of sending one government member and one opposition member.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, MLA Cyr.

Any other members? MLA Schmidt.

11:00

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you. I have a number of concerns with the part of the motion to send the deputy chair – you know, when Member Cyr was motivating this motion, he talked about learning from practices of other Public Accounts committees from across the country. We've seen the former deputy chair try to implement changes with respect to how this committee operates, and those other members have voted him down. Now he's been kicked off the committee for even trying to adopt those changes, so to hear Member Cyr suggest that we're going to send the deputy chair and the chair to learn something that will change the operation of how this committee works and improve our work is not – I have a hard time believing that.

Secondly, I have concerns specifically with sending the deputy chair. I note that Mr. Lundy is chairing the citizen initiative proposal review. Four hundred thousand Albertans are waiting for that chair to get his committee to make a decision on whether or not Albertans will have a vote on whether Alberta should stay in Canada. He also chairs the Electoral Boundaries Commission. This is vital work that needs to be completed in time to prepare for the next election. Even though we suspect that that is an illegitimate process and probably an unconstitutional process, the government still has a commitment that it needs to make.

He's also responsible for Legislative Offices, Madam Chair. This member in particular has a significant amount of work that he needs to get done before we send him on a taxpayer-funded holiday to Nova Scotia. So maybe we could vote to put him on a work plan. Perhaps if he accomplishes these other work objectives, he's justified in being sent on a taxpayer-funded holiday to Nova Scotia. But I just don't see how that member could possibly spare the time to go to Nova Scotia to attend this conference.

Those are my concerns with this motion, Madam Chair.

Thank you.

The Acting Chair: There are others. MLA Lundy, followed by MLA Eremenko.

Mr. Lundy: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. Happy to table my CV next committee meeting if it so pleases the members opposite. Also, thank you for identifying the extremely important work that we are undertaking. I can assure all members of this committee that when the time comes to either appoint an alternate or attend the conference that the very, very important work will be fully considered and completed as required on behalf of all Albertans. We'll make sure that if scheduling or other conflicts necessitate it, as the motion allows for, there will be an alternate appointed.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, MLA Lundy.

MLA Eremenko.

Member Eremenko: Yeah, I just want to speak to the work of the subcommittee that this is now the second time in as many weeks that a decision that was agreed upon at the subcommittee level, with members of both sides of this committee, was agreed upon, and then

it was only at the committee meetings, such as we're seeing today, that there's now been a shift. So whoever, you know – after the subcommittee meeting, government members are going back to their respective corners and are being informed that no, the decisions that were made at the subcommittee meeting no longer apply and we're going to be changing course.

It's a procedural piece for me that if we are going to be spending the time, the resources, of our LAO staff, of everybody else involved, that where decisions are made at the subcommittee level that those be adhered to and respected. I'm not sure what kind of a – feels like a bit of a facade, otherwise. I mean, why go through this at all if it's not actually then holding water?

Member Cyr said that it appears to be the will of the committee to change course from what was decided at the subcommittee level. That is not the will of the committee. That is the will of one member who decided to change course, and I don't think we voted on anything at all.

So let's continue on with respecting the decisions of the subcommittee where both sides of this committee have an opportunity to contribute to that dialogue. I'm not sure why this continues to be a trend from the government members, who simply disregard the decisions that were made previously and present another motion at the whim of, I don't know, whatever the weather happens to be that day.

The Acting Chair: I see MLA Lundy, followed by MLA Cyr.

Mr. Lundy: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. Appreciate those comments, and we'll certainly endeavour to have that discussion with the chair. So, without, you know, going into fulsome detail when we meet as a subcommittee, our intention is always to reach agreement wherever we can although there are often times where we want to test the will of the fuller committee as perhaps we've seen so today, but both the chair and I are willing to talk to all committee members about improvements to that process and seeking some input on that. At the end of the day we view it as a chance to try to help serve this larger committee, but all decisions, of course, will always be for the full committee to consider.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Acting Chair: MLA Cyr.

Mr. Cyr: It seems like the opposition members are in conflict with each other in this decision. We have one that is demanding we follow a subcommittee. We have the other, MLA Schmidt that is, to quote the December 2 meeting from *Hansard*: "When [there's] a taxpayer-paid flight to Halifax is in the offing, the members are all over it. It's been clear from the day that these guys were elected that all they're interested in is lining their own pockets." Does he have that same, I guess, thought for his fellow colleague that he now appears to be throwing under the bus here?

I wish the opposition would work together as a team, because it seems pretty clear that they're fighting amongst each other, which is bringing that tension inside of the committee. I just would like to see this PAC committee work the best way it possibly can.

In my time, my first, I worked very well with MLA Dach, and we took what were learnings from those meetings and those conferences back to the committee. What we see today was built on that co-operation. It seems like the opposition side really does need to come up with how it is that they're going to either support the subcommittee or be completely against it, and then call us out for saying: let's just work this through and do it the way we've always done it.

Thank you.

The Acting Chair: Okay. Seeing no other comments. The motion we have on the floor is up on the screens. It, in essence, sends the chair, deputy chair, and two LAO staff to the conference. I will note that select committee members may be identified as alternatives, alternates are also included in this motion, and that will be coordinated through the committee clerk should this pass.

I will ask all those in the room and online, if you are in favour, to please indicate so now. Okay. All those in the room and online, if you are opposed, please indicate now. Okay.

That motion is carried.

Mr. Cyr: Let's go with a recorded vote.

The Acting Chair: A recorded vote has been requested. Give us one moment.

Those in the room who are in favour of the motion please raise your hands.

Mr. Huffman: Thank you, Madam Chair. Mr. Lundy, Mr. Cyr, Mrs. Sawyer, hon. Ms. Armstrong-Homeniuk, Ms de Jonge.

The Acting Chair: I see we have our member who is participating remotely, and you have your hand raised, so I'm indicating you as voting for the motion. Thank you.

Those in the room who are opposed to the motion please raise your hands.

Mr. Huffman: Thank you, Madam Chair. Member Eremenko, Ms. Renaud, and hon. Mr. Schmidt.

For the motion, six. Opposed, three.

The Acting Chair: That motion is carried.

The date of our next meeting has been set to October 27 with the Ministry of Forestry and Parks. I hope that you all think about Public Accounts lots between now and then.

I will call for a motion to adjourn. If a member would move that the May 12, 2026, meeting of the Standing Committee of Public Accounts be adjourned. MLA Eremenko.

All in favour? And any opposed? That motion is carried. Thank you. The meeting is now adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 11:10 a.m.]

