



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
Fourth Session

Standing Committee  
on  
Alberta's Economic Future

Ministry of Skilled Trades and Professions  
Consideration of Main Estimates

Monday, March 13, 2023  
7 p.m.

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The 30th Legislature  
Fourth Session**

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

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Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)

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

### **Participants**

Ministry of Skilled Trades and Professions

Hon. Kaycee Madu, KC, Minister

Olin Lovely, Assistant Deputy Minister and Senior Financial Officer, Financial Services



7 p.m.

Monday, March 13, 2023

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

**Ministry of Skilled Trades and Professions  
Consideration of Main Estimates**

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you. We'll call this meeting to order and welcome everyone in attendance. The committee has under consideration the estimates of the Ministry of Skilled Trades and Professions for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2024.

I'd ask that we go around the table and have members introduce themselves for the record. Minister, please introduce the officials who are joining you at the table when it comes to your turn.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** We'll do that as we go around the table.

My name is Glenn van Dijken. I am the MLA for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock and the chair of this committee. We will begin, starting to my right.

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you. Good evening, everyone. Tracy Allard, MLA for Grande Prairie.

**Mr. Rowswell:** Hello. It's Garth Rowswell, MLA, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

**Mr. Turton:** Evening, everyone. Searle Turton, MLA for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

**Mr. McIver:** Ric McIver, the MLA for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. Walker:** Good evening. Jordan Walker, the MLA for Sherwood Park.

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

**The Chair:** Minister, introduce yourself.

**Mr. Madu:** Okay. Thank you, Chair. Kaycee Madu, Minister of Skilled Trades and Professions. With me this evening are my deputy minister, Bev Yee, ADM Mike Fernandez, and ADM and SFO Olin Lovely.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Eggen:** Good evening. My name is David Eggen. I'm the MLA for Edmonton-North West.

**Ms Gray:** Good evening, everyone. Christina Gray, MLA for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**The Chair:** Good. I'd like to note the following substitutions for the record. We have Mr. Turton for the hon. Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk.

A few housekeeping items to address before we turn to the business at hand. Please note that the microphones are operated by *Hansard* staff. Committee proceedings are live streamed on the Internet and broadcast on Alberta Assembly TV. The audio- and videostream and transcripts of meetings can be accessed via the Legislative Assembly website. Members participating remotely are encouraged to turn your camera on while speaking and mute your microphone when not speaking. Remote participants who wish to be placed on a speakers list are asked to e-mail or message the committee clerk, and members in the room should signal to the

chair. Please set your cellphones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting.

Hon. members, the standing orders set out the process for consideration of the main estimates. A total of three hours has been scheduled for consideration of the estimates for the Ministry of Skilled Trades and Professions. Standing Order 59.01(6) establishes the speaking rotation and speaking times. In brief, the minister or member of Executive Council acting on the minister's behalf will have 10 minutes to address the committee. At the conclusion of the minister's comments a 60-minute speaking block for the Official Opposition begins, followed by a 20-minute speaking block for independent members, if any, and then a 20-minute speaking block for the government caucus. Individuals may only speak for up to 10 minutes at a time, but speaking times may be combined between the member and the minister.

After this, speaking times will follow the same rotation of the Official Opposition, independent members, and the government caucus. The member and the minister may each speak once for a maximum of five minutes, or these times may be combined, making it a 10-minute block. If members have any questions regarding speaking times or the rotation, please send an e-mail or message the committee clerk about the process.

With the concurrence of the committee I will call a five-minute break near the midpoint of the meeting; however, the three-hour clock will continue to run. Does anyone oppose having the break?

Ministry officials may be present and, at the direction of the minister, may address the committee. Ministry officials seated in the gallery, if called upon, have access to a microphone in the gallery area and are asked to please introduce themselves for the record prior to commenting.

Pages are available to deliver notes or other materials between the gallery and the table. Attendees in the gallery may not approach the table.

Space permitting, opposition caucus staff may sit at the table to assist their members; however, members have priority to sit at the table at all times.

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

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

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

The vote on the estimates and any amendments will occur in Committee of Supply on March 16, 2023. Amendments must be in writing and approved by Parliamentary Counsel prior to the meeting at which they are to be moved. The original amendment is to be deposited with the committee clerk with 20 hard copies. An electronic version of the signed original should be provided to the committee clerk for distribution to committee members.

Finally, the committee should have the opportunity to hear both questions and answers without interruption during estimates debate. Debate flows through the chair at all times, including instances when speaking time is shared between a member and the minister.

I would now invite the Minister of Skilled Trades and Professions to begin with your opening remarks. Minister, you have 10 minutes.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Chair, and good evening, colleagues. Once again thank you for this opportunity to speak about Skilled Trades and Professions and the 2023-24 budget. Let me once again introduce my deputy minister, Bev Yee; assistant deputy minister

Mike Fernandez; and assistant deputy minister and senior financial officer, Olin Lovely.

Budget '23 allocates \$219 million for Skilled Trades and Professions. This is a 9 per cent increase, which allows the ministry to provide stable multiyear funding to key partners and programs. It provides flexibility for us to consult with partners and target funding to address labour market demands.

Alberta has apprenticeship education programs in 47 trades. At the end of 2021 there were approximately 39,000 registered apprentices learning on the job at more than 10,000 employer sites around Alberta. Approximately 6,600 journeypersons were certified in 2021. Despite this impressive number, several key Alberta industries are experiencing acute labour shortages.

Budget '23 invests \$68.9 million to advance apprenticeship education. I am pleased to say that the new apprenticeship registration has increased from 7,820 in 2020 to more than 13,000 in 2022. In the current school year 11 postsecondary institutions across Alberta have approximately 22,000 seats for apprenticeship classroom instruction. The apprenticeship learning grant helps these institutions fund classroom instruction. Budget '23 adds \$15 million over three years, \$5 million per year, for the apprenticeship learning grant, which translates to more than 1,000 new apprenticeship seats. The 2023 budget invests \$10.3 million over three years for innovative pathways into apprenticeship programs. These pathways will help Albertans already employed in the trades to elevate their skills and promote these career options to underrepresented Albertans. My ministry maintains vital partnership with community organizations to promote apprenticeship education and encourage young people, women, Indigenous people, and unemployed Albertans to consider apprenticeship programs.

Budget '23 provides support for three long-standing key partners: Careers: the Next Generation, Women Building Futures, and Skills Canada Alberta. Careers: the Next Generation facilitates paid internships for high school students, including in the registered apprenticeship program. Women Building Futures helps unemployed and underemployed women explore careers in the skilled trades. Skills Canada Alberta promotes skilled trades and technology careers as a first option for youth. My ministry will also be seeking partners to promote apprenticeship-related services to Indigenous learners to increase the number of Indigenous apprentices, the number of seats available for apprenticeship programming, and to create new partnerships between employers and Indigenous communities. Budget '23 also includes funding for partnerships with cultural communities. Ensuring newcomers have access to learning support is something I am passionate about, and I am pleased to see more support in this area.

Budget '23 includes \$102.4 million for foundational learning assistance. This is an additional \$5.8 million per year for adult learning opportunities that allow Albertans to upskill and reskill for jobs with labour market demand. This increase will assist program students to deal with inflationary pressures on living costs, tuition, supplies, transportation, and child care. Currently in Alberta 1 in 5 adults face daily literacy and numeracy challenges, which can severely affect their ability to make informed life decisions.

**7:10**

The community adult learning program funds 80 organizations serving urban, rural, remote, and Indigenous communities to support foundational learning. These can include literacy and numeracy programs, skills for learning basic digital skills, and English language learning. Budget '23 adds \$1.5 million over three years to support community adult learning programs across Alberta.

Demand continues to increase in part due to the arrival of thousands of Ukrainian newcomers. In response to recommendations

from the Premier's Advisory Task Force on Ukraine, Budget '23 directs \$1.1 million in new English language funding for Ukrainians. Language education helps Ukrainian temporary residents to find stability and opportunity. Many of them are highly skilled professionals who can help meet Alberta's labour needs.

The government of Alberta passed the Labour Mobility Act in 2021 to support the seamless movement of out-of-province certified workers to Alberta. The Labour Mobility Act is currently in approvals; once approved, it will be proclaimed and come into force. Budget '23 allocates \$170,000 to complete the regulation, proclaim the act, and see the framework come into effect. Budget '23 also ensures Skilled Trades and Professions can continue reducing barriers to credential recognition for skilled professionals from around the world. Recognizing newcomers' credentials in a timely fashion is key to our plan to grow and diversify Alberta's economy.

We have a focused team working with our professional regulatory partners to create a more efficient system. Skilled Trades and Professions' 2023 budget supports a robust, effective, and competitive workforce and the goal of transforming the adult learning system to provide high-quality education, skills, and training for Alberta's future. Mr. Chair, I am excited to see the positive impact of Budget 2023 and to lead exciting work ahead. Our partners are counting on the government of Alberta to ensure that the skilled workforce we need for today and for tomorrow is going to be there for them.

With that, Mr. Chair and colleagues, I want to thank you, and I'm happy to take any questions you may have.

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

For the hour that follows, members of the Official Opposition and the minister may speak. Hon. members, you will be able to see the timer for the speaking block both in the committee room and on Microsoft Teams. Members, would you like to combine your time with the minister's time?

**Mr. Eggen:** Yes, please.

**The Chair:** Minister, combined time or block time?

**Mr. Madu:** Block time.

**The Chair:** Block time. Okay.

Member Eggen, you have up to 10 minutes to speak in a block.

**Mr. Eggen:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Minister, for your introductory comments. I must say that this is kind of a unique circumstance for me because, of course, we're doing budget estimates for a new ministry. While we quite often, just to give you some trade secrets on how to do this – right? – need to go back and see where there've been cuts made and changes and so forth, this is all fresh ground. You know, I seek always to be constructively critical and look for more information because, of course, not just ourselves but our partners in the postsecondary institutions and the trades and the workforce, industry, employers in general, everyone is interested to see where we can go to make this the most effective to ensure that we're building a workforce for now and for the future for this province.

My first set of questions are referring to the business plan, so I will give you page numbers to go with that, and then we can, you know, work with that. I've actually not done block time for a long time because my Advanced Education minister: we have a conversation. I can always stop and then pass it on to him whenever. [interjection] You lose the time, though. Okay. [interjection] So

don't do that. There's someone telling – it's like that voice in my head that's telling me. Okay; I won't do that, Lord knows.

If you can look to the business plan, then, to page 122, key objective 1.1, “to create a modern, flexible and efficient skilled trades certification, and apprenticeship education system in Alberta,” clearly it is based on the success of polytechnics such as NAIT and SAIT in finding employment for their graduates in the trades and the close partnership these institutions have with employers and trade unions throughout the province to ensure standards of practice and accurate projections of how many apprenticeships Alberta is likely to need from year to year.

With that fairly successful formula that's been used for a number of years, where you see a more than 95 per cent employment rate in different trades in NAIT and SAIT and so forth, what changes or modernizations are you planning for the existing apprenticeship programs in the province? Of course, as I say, not just in my assessment but the assessment of the institutions, of students, of employers, and whatnot, the way by which they determine, let's say, how many pipefitters you need for the year – they will determine that and with a high degree of accuracy. They're usually quite successful. So if there are changes you want to make to that formula, I would be very curious. Everybody is wondering what's going to happen with that.

Further to the business plan, again page 122, objective 1.4 says that you would like to “expand the apprenticeship model to increase learning opportunities to meet labour market demands.” I would like to know and others as well: first of all, what new apprenticeship programs are you currently pursuing in your ministry? Are you working with our postsecondary institutions and Advanced Education to flesh out what these initiatives are and what they will look like? You know, I speak to colleges, universities, and polytechnics all the time, and they have not specifically mentioned their interactions with your ministry but, rather, the Ministry of Advanced Education, which is fair because you're new so far. In Advanced Education estimates, which we completed last week, there was plenty of discussion about the trades and apprenticeships but very little mention of a separate ministry and what it actually is going to do in terms of picking new apprenticeship programs.

I would just add a further thing around that. I mean, we know that the apprenticeship programs that are most successful here in the province and indeed across the country and across North America, of course, bring people in, and they're interested in participating because they get to be paid, as they are in various years of their apprenticeship. If you're, say, again, a plumber and pipefitter, yes, you spend time at school, in NAIT or SAIT or other places, but then you also are going out into the field for extended apprenticeship training, and you're getting paid for that at the same time. So as you build these new apprenticeships, I'm curious to know if you're willing and able and understand that the success largely depends on making it affordable and making it affordable by paying apprentices to do the work experience element of their training. I think that's an important thing to consider as well. Again, you can see how I went through and made these questions.

With the business plan, again on page 122, I see that, you know, expanding the apprenticeship concept is good but only if there are carefully thought out programs that you're considering. I just want to make sure that you are working through this every step of the way, not just to say, “Well, this is where we need the jobs in the next couple of years” but also looking for different choices that you can give students for them to pursue what they think they're interested in and what they think will be an employable skill in the future also.

7:20

I guess that has to do with consultation – right? – just to make sure that as we expand the apprenticeship program, which we support wholeheartedly, it is a substantive consultation that is flexible and organic in nature. We just don't want people in Edmonton making decisions in government, you know, on what they think the jobs of the future are going to be when, in fact, maybe they're wrong. I mean, we trained an awful lot of geophysicists in the last 15 or 20 years, and for a long time that was the way to explore for oil properly, and everybody got a job. Then suddenly the geophysics market for workers just dropped out; it bottomed out. You know, we just don't want to be left being five years behind in what emerging apprenticeships should be.

Maybe I can squeeze one more question in here as well. Again on page 122 of the business plan objective 1.2 says, “advocate for, and champion, skilled trades and professions as a . . . pathway that will lead to rewarding careers.” Most important to create a desirable pathway to ensure a trades education or, really, any education, for that matter, is to make sure that it's affordable and will not burden a student with excessive debt after they graduate. Your ministry together with Advanced Education must ensure that tuition and other fees are affordable, right? My question, the first part anyway, is on the 2 per cent cap on tuition that Advanced Education just announced. Does that also apply to skilled trades and professions? Will it also apply to extra instructional fees? Will institutions be backfilled for the reduced tuition income that they might lose and otherwise be forced into making cuts in other areas to make up for this loss of income?

I've just talked to both NAIT and SAIT to prepare for these budget deliberations, and both of them said that, you know, while they want tuition to be affordable, they need to make sure that they know, if it's a 2 per cent cap and their inflationary costs are 5 or 6 per cent, you will backfill the difference so that they simply just don't have to pass those off into other areas to make cuts. You know what I mean? This is a common criticism of putting caps in place, that you can't just make a cap; you also need to backfill it in the institutions so that they're not just compelled to make cuts in other areas.

Certainly, you know that our Alberta New Democrat government would make sure that tuition is affordable and that everyone who chooses to go to postsecondary education or training or trades will have a space to do so and that it will be of the highest quality and will be consistent. That's really what students and schools and teachers and everyone in Alberta are looking at right now, to have reliability in our postsecondary institutions and trades and skilled professions so that certainty can be passed on for their ability to make plans for themselves and for their families. Certainly, as New Democrats, hopefully, to form the next government . . .

**The Chair:** Thank you, MLA Eggen.

Minister, you have up to 10 minutes to respond.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Member Eggen, for your questions. I think I got about four or five questions out of you. Let me begin with your first point. As you know, Member, in July 2022 we passed the Skilled Trades and Apprenticeship Education Act, otherwise known as STAEA, and that act replaced the 30-year-old Apprenticeship and Industry Training Act. That was a major modernization that was brought into being by the government in 2022.

The act is intended to accomplish the following: number one, enable the Alberta government to be more flexible and quickly respond to the changing needs of students, industry, employers, and educators; number two, it expands apprenticeship education to

other professions and high-demand occupations; number three, it eliminates a significant amount of red tape for government, educators, and industry, clearing the way to provide education and training that is efficient and meaningful; number four, it encourages more Albertans to pursue trades professions as a valuable and meaningful career and reinforces that skilled trades are important, respected, well-paying, and in-demand occupations; and lastly, it allows industry more flexibility in how apprentices are trained.

There are a few signature parts of that particular legislation. Under STAEA, Mr. Eggen, a new education credential is awarded to apprenticeship education program graduates along with a journeyman certificate. The education credential is separate from the journeyman credentials and is a formal acknowledgement that a person has completed a postsecondary program of study. The journeyman certificate also recognizes that someone is a skilled professional who has met the certification standard and is authorized to work in the trade anywhere in Alberta.

There are four levels of educational credential that would be awarded, depending on the length and complexity of the program: advanced diploma, diploma, certificate, and certificate of achievement. This model brings apprenticeship in line with other postsecondary education programs and regulated professions in Alberta, where an academic credential is separate from the licence to work. Educational credentials can help employers, even those outside of the trade, understand the level of education someone has achieved. And, finally, educational credentials can also open doors to further education as postsecondary institutions may award credit toward other relevant postsecondary programs based on the educational credentials.

Now, also, with respect to your second question, I think it deals with mostly industry pathways. Skilled Trades and Professions did launch the industry pathways initiative, which provides a framework for the department to work with Alberta industry groups to explore adopting their apprenticeship learning model and our trade designation to support workforce development or regulation needs. This initiative was made possible by the legal separation of apprenticeship and trade regulation introduced by STAEA. I do know that work is still ongoing to strengthen the on-the-job instruction through mentorship. The formal mentor role was introduced by STAEA, and STAEA replaces supervision with mentorship to strengthen the on-the-job learning component.

Now, with respect to your third question, whether or not we are working with Advanced Education and indeed other postsecondary institutions to make sure that these programs are implemented in a way that buys their support, the short answer is yes. We have been consulting with all of the 11 postsecondary institutions that we are responsible for: Keyano College, Lakeland College, Lethbridge College, Medicine Hat College, Northern Lakes College, Olds College, Portage College, NAIT, Northwestern Polytechnic, Red Deer Polytechnic, and SAIT. All of that work is ongoing, and we intend to continue to do so.

In budget 2022-2023 all of those institutions were funded. Keyano College, for example, was \$745,000; Lakeland, \$778,000; Lethbridge College, \$1.5 million; Medicine Hat College, \$953,000; Northern Lakes, \$569,000; Olds College, \$612,000; Portage College, \$319,000; NAIT, more than \$12 million; Northwestern Polytechnic, more than \$2 million; Red Deer Polytechnic, more than \$2 million; SAIT, more than \$11 million. That work continues, and I continue to look forward, you know, to working with them to make sure that we are all aligned.

Your last question deals with: how do we deal with making sure that postsecondary education is affordable and in a way that allows students to be able to have a good education without the pressure

that comes from postsecondary institutions and tuition and things like that?

7:30

Advanced Education, obviously, provides base operating grants and apprenticeship learning grants. Minister Nicolaides has been working diligently with postsecondary institutions across the province to make sure that the needs of students, in terms of what they need, are well taken care of. Postsecondary institutions who have apprenticeship programming get base operational funding from Advanced Education to support instruction, academic support, student services, operational and institutional support, and so on. Skilled Trades and Professions also provides apprenticeship learning grant funding, formerly known as the apprenticeship technical training grant, to support our postsecondary partners' apprenticeship program development and delivery.

There's no question that from time to time there will be pressure. Myself and Advanced Education will continue to monitor those pressures to see whether or not there's a need for intervention within the fiscal year. But, as you know, the budget cycle is a one-year cycle, oftentimes a three-year cycle. If there's a need for us – if there's anything that was missed in this particular budget, we'll have to deal with that in next year's budget.

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

MLA Eggen or MLA Gray, you may proceed for 10 minutes of questions.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much. Thank you, Minister and to the department officials who are here. I'm jumping in because I wanted to also ask about objective 1.1 on page 122, the Skilled Trades and Apprenticeship Education Act changes that the minister already referenced a little bit in their comments, the changes coming into effect July 2022. They were very big changes that specifically, as part of that when it comes to skilled trades, removed the Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board and replaced it with the Alberta Board of Skilled Trades. Now, the Alberta Board of Skilled Trades mandate includes a few different things, but in particular it includes specifying the scope of activities in designated trades and establishing standards and requirements for designated trade certificates. The minister would be aware, from the debate on Bill 67, that the new board in its mandate was of particular concern because of the potential impact on designated trade certification.

When I go to the Alberta Board of Skilled Trades website now, I have to say that when I compare it to what the AIT Board was putting out, there's a complete lack of information. AIT used to post meeting minutes. There was an annual report – now, the new board hasn't had a year yet, so I wouldn't expect an annual report yet. But there are no meeting minutes. They've posted a single newsletter that was posted in August of 2022. In that newsletter they committed to regular newsletters, but there's only been the one. In that newsletter they talk about a public feedback survey, but those results haven't been shared. They committed to publishing an engagement plan on the website by October 31, 2022. That is not there. So it appears we've gone from a board that regularly provided updates and provided lots of information to one where I can't tell what's going on.

Now, the good news, Minister, is that at their first meeting the ABST signed a designated trade certificate requirement board order to maintain the scope of practice status quo under the Skilled Trades and Apprenticeship Education Act, so not significantly changing the trades designations yet. Great. That's what a lot of our stakeholders were quite worried about, that the new board would come in and negatively impact trade certifications.



But I'm concerned about the lack of transparency, that they have not shared what is happening at their meetings, what is the direction they are intending to go in. One of my specific questions to you, Minister, is: have you met with the board? Do you meet with the board regularly? What expectation do you set for the board for them to be transparent about the work they are doing? The changes that they will make have a wide-ranging potential impact if the board isn't getting it right. Of course, during the debate we were concerned about making sure worker and trade worker input was there and available to the board.

As we know, every province has mandatory trade certifications. There was only a single province that didn't, B.C., and they're bringing it back. Having those mandatory trade certifications supports higher, more stable-paying jobs, attracts more people into the trades, and improves the perception of the trades: all very good reasons for this board to work transparently.

I've taken a few minutes of this block. I'd like to cede the remainder of my time to my colleague for another one of his questions, and I hope to hear more from the minister about his expectations for this board and how more information will be communicated to the public.

**Mr. Eggen:** I accept your ceding.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you.

**Mr. Eggen:** You're welcome.

I mean, actually, further to that, another concern that I have and others as well is that when this board does start new apprenticeship programs or starts to change the qualifications for existing trades, we maintain the continuity between not just what had been done before but also to ensure that a trade is following the standard that is set on a Canadian level and on a North American level, too. Many of these trades, like plumbers and pipefitters or carpentry and so forth, are part of an international organization that sets a standard so that an Alberta plumber and pipefitter can go and work on a job in the southern United States with that same qualification and standard. So when we are both making changes to existing trades and, in fact, starting new apprenticeships, is the Ministry of Skilled Trades and Professions consulting nationally and internationally to ensure that they are lining up their apprenticeship standards with a standard that might already exist or is being built elsewhere?

Okay. So my questions: I wanted to pass back to talking about affordability again. As we know, Alberta students graduate with more than 30 per cent more debt than any other province in Canada, right? This is a misconception that I've heard for three and a half or four years, that it's cheaper in Alberta, and that's why we had to jack up the tuition. Well, in fact, people end up with more debt as an Alberta graduate than other provinces because of the granting system and all that kind of stuff. With not matching student aid increases – and we want to attract students into the trades. It has to be made affordable for them to do so right now. I want to ask what your ministry is doing to make a trade school education more expensive – more affordable, not expensive. Quite the opposite. You know, for example, I was just talking to NAIT today, and they had to increase – they've increased their tuition again for the next school year. It does not fall under that 2 per cent cap. That doesn't start until 2024-25. So, you know, time is of the essence. We need to make sure that trades are attractive and affordable right now.

Further to that, in terms of budget my next question is to do with workforces in our schools. Again, as a result of unprecedented cuts to polytechnics, colleges, the 11 colleges that you have described, there's been a significant loss of faculty and staff. Just using NAIT: 230 job losses there and 240 at SAIT, just as an example. It's

impossible to increase enrolment in the trades when we do end up having to cut the workforce due to cuts to operational funding. Of course, the workforce are the people who are actually delivering the education through our schools.

Your government, for example, is no longer providing the Campus Alberta grant information that documents how much each institute is receiving. I mean, we do get that information by dribs and drabs, but you know, again, I would like to implore your ministry and your government to provide the Campus Alberta grant information in its entirety so that we can see that our trades, colleges, and polytechnics are getting the adequate funding that they need.

My next question. Maybe that's all I've got time for it looks like here. The institutions are being funded for their base commitment in apprenticeship seats, but last year and this year there have been additional teaching seats without any additional funding. This is resulting in some very tight budgets; for example, institutions are now resorting to replacing instructors with instructional assistants to make up for the funding shortfall, decreasing the quality of education that apprenticeship students will receive. Was this change in apprenticeship education delivery part of the ministry's plan?

7:40

This is again an example, Mr. Chair, of the operational funding grants being flatlined or being decreased and institutions being compelled to look for savings wherever they can, but to lose, let's say, 20 per cent of your highest level instructors and have to replace them with instructional assistants – right? – over time that erodes the quality of education that is being delivered in the classroom. And as a result, over time Kenney ruined both the reputation and the integrity of the system as a whole. So, certainly, we are here to make the trades strong and we're here to offer these constructive engagements, and certainly we would make sure that schools are adequately funded, that tuition is affordable, and everyone in Alberta who wants to choose to take advanced education, a trade, and so forth would be able to do so.

**The Chair:** Thank you, MLA Eggen.

Minister, you have up to 10 minutes to respond to questions.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Member, for that question. I think the first question that Member Gray asked was about the Alberta Board of Skilled Trades in the context of transparency. There is no question; I have met with them, and I continue to meet with them as the need arises. In fact, last week I met with the board chair in my office, and from time to time my deputy minister and ADM do meet with them as well.

As you know, this is a brand new board that was established in the summer of 2022. It's a board that is made up of 15 members. They have started functioning, but we are working with them to build up their board in terms of process, procedures, and things like that. I am not concerned about transparency because it's a brand new board with a defined mandate.

In section 13 of the skilled trades and apprenticeship act it states that

the Minister shall appoint a board to be known as the "Alberta Board of Skilled Trades" consisting of not more than 15 individuals who, in the opinion of the Minister, are knowledgeable with respect to the contribution of skilled trades . . .

and all of that. But here are the functions, the responsibility of the board. It makes "recommendations to the Minister respecting the designation of trades" and designating restricted activities within a trade, consults with industry regarding "standards and requirements for certification in designated trades." It promotes "the value of

designated trades careers and certification” and making board orders such as specifying the scope of “activities that fall within [the profession of] a designated trade; establishing standards and requirements for [designated trade] certification,” and “recognizing documents issued outside Alberta as being the equivalent of” an Alberta trade certification.

Now, you know, the mandate of the board is very clear, and I am looking forward to continuing to work with the board to ensure that they have the resources that they need to carry out their responsibilities. I am not concerned at this point in time because I don't see – no concerns have been raised or flagged with respect of transparency with the board, and we are working with them, you know, to make sure that their processes are going to be fully fleshed out and that they have the resources that they need to meet their responsibilities.

You know, STAEA established the Alberta Board of Skilled Trades, as I said before – and they do meet on a regular basis. Just last week the chair did confirm for me that they just met with the board to talk about some of their mandate items. The board is currently setting up its stakeholder and industry advisory systems. The board has – again, their responsibility to advise the minister on a whole range of issues is well laid out. My ministry and the postsecondary institutions use the standards that are set by the board to develop apprenticeship education programs in our province.

Now, your second question deals with support for students. Alberta has many options to support apprentices as they return to classroom education, an extensive scholarship program that includes the Alexander Rutherford scholarship. The bright futures scholarship and the high school apprenticeship scholarship support apprentices who have recently completed high school. In 2022 there were 681 bright futures and high school apprenticeship scholarships awarded.

In Budget 2023 we are investing \$43.8 million over three years in direct support for organizations that promote apprenticeships and help students gain critical on-the-job experience. Funding for community partners such as Women Building Futures, Careers: the Next Generation, and Skills Canada Alberta helps to promote and build awareness for skilled trades and professions and expand support for Albertans wanting to register in apprenticeship programs.

Let me also say this. The partners that we work with support youth, women, and Indigenous Albertans to skilled occupations and build connections to employers and paid on-the-job experience. My ministry is also investing more than \$10 million over the next three years to develop innovative learning pathways that will expand support for Albertans wanting to register in apprenticeship programs and to create more opportunities for those already employed in the trades to elevate their skills.

I am very much committed in increasing awareness of the value of a career in the skilled trades. You know, oftentimes, Member, you've heard about the doctrine of parity of esteem. We want to make sure that Albertans, our young people, see the value in apprenticeship education, that it is a field of study, a field of endeavour that they can go into, achieve rewarding success, and make sure that they have the skills not just for today but for the jobs of tomorrow. I want to make sure that we will get to the point in short order where we can begin to see an apprenticeship education at the same level as an academic degree or postgraduate degree, because the individuals that work in the trade build our province. Without them, it would be difficult for us to build anything in this particular province and country.

The last point I want to make is scholarships. We do offer a lot of scholarships. More than 900 scholarships are available to apprentices every year, consisting of preapprenticeship scholarships,

high school apprenticeship scholarships, apprenticeship scholarships, and apprenticeship training scholarships. The scholarships range from \$1,000 to \$2,000, \$1,500, depending on the apprenticeship scholarship in question. Alberta also offers Alberta student loan grants through Advanced Education. Alberta Student Aid provides provincial loans and grants to apprentices registered in the Alberta apprenticeship program and attending an approved classroom instruction period as a full-time student.

In 2021-2022 the average student loan and grant amount awarded to apprentices was \$5,622, compared to \$23,969 for other postsecondary certificate students and \$23,955 for other postsecondary diploma students. There is also federal support that sometimes comes in to help.

**7:50**

Now, the next question that you asked has got to do with Campus Alberta. Well, I think what happened here is, as you know, Member Eggen, the Alberta base operating grant replaced the Campus Alberta grant. The grant is still there. Postsecondary institutions who have apprenticeship programming still do get base operational funding from Advanced Education to support instruction, academic support, student services, operations, institutional support, and so on. That funding is still there. It's just a change in nomenclature.

Your other question is: what happens? You talk about the fact that some of the teaching supports have increased without additional support. You alluded to the idea of operational funding being cut. I mean, again, whilst I can't speak to items that are specifically within Advanced Education, what I can say is that both Advanced Education and my department do offer in-year increases. Like I said in my earlier remarks, we do monitor pressures. For example, in 2023 we allocated additional funding as a consequence of pressures to Northwestern Polytechnic in the amount of \$341,800, and we awarded SAIT an additional \$1 million, almost \$1.4 million, to deal with in-year pressures. So from time to time we do see pressures, and the department must be flexible to make sure that the funding is there for them.

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

MLA Gray, proceed. Ten minutes for questions.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you. Just touching again on the Alberta Board of Skilled Trades, Minister. I am raising concerns that there is not enough information about what the board is doing. The AIT Board had meeting minutes, frequent updates, and here we have a board that's been operating since July of 2022 that has issued a single newsletter. I'm asking you, in your role as minister, to work with the board to increase the communications to the thousands of people who can and will be impacted by the work the board is doing, especially after the debate that we had on Bill 67 and all the questions, where the government essentially said: trust us; we will do great things.

Now this board has gone away into a black box, and you're saying: "I'm not concerned about transparency. They met with me last week." That doesn't help anyone else, Minister. So I am asking for your commitment that you will help to have more newsletters published or something, like, just some insight into: how is the board thinking? What are they planning to do? How are they gathering input? What were the results of this survey? What is the engagement plan that they originally said they were going to have in October 2022? When is that coming?

With that said, I will switch topics to outcome 3 from the business plan, objective 3.2. I'd like to just talk about the fairness for newcomers office. To be honest, Mr. Chair and, through you, to the

minister, some of my concerns here are really similar to the concerns I had with the previous board; that is, not a lot of information being shared with the public about what is happening within this office. The fairness for newcomers office opened in March 2020, and essentially nothing has been published from them since the 2020 baseline questionnaire summary. That baseline questionnaire summary went out and took self-reporting from the professional regulatory organizations that are under the legislation that is related to this. It did not measure actual timelines. In fact, the report even said that timelines were not measured; instead, we were asked if they were generally able to meet a six-month target, and the same goes for the interim registration decisions.

I'm concerned that we're not seeing any outcomes. In fact, I will suggest that the business plan doesn't have a performance metric for this office, and perhaps that would be appropriate so that Albertans could measure what the work is that is happening here at the fairness for newcomers office.

I'd like confirmation. There are three staff at the fairness for newcomers office. It appears there's a fair registration practices officer, an analyst, and an office administrator. In government estimates, line 2.3, it lists the budget of almost \$1.2 million. On page 124, initiatives supporting key objectives, it said, "The ministry will allocate \$486,000 to the Fairness for Newcomers Office to implement the Fair Registration Practices Act." I'd like to know a little bit more detail about what that money is being spent on, and I would love your help in identifying where the remainder is, because \$486,000 for implementing the act out of that \$1.2 million, three staff – the other piece I was able to find was the Alberta triple-track satellite site pilot project, which was announced just a few weeks ago, listed as having a budget of \$200,000. If you could break down the budget of the fairness for newcomers office a little bit, how the money is being spent.

I note that you are hosting the Premier's Summit on Fairness for Newcomers, the second annual, I believe, this coming Friday. There's no agenda information available to the public. I'm curious: is that coming out of the \$486,000 mentioned in the business plan? As well, are members of the Official Opposition able to attend your summit? Yes. Okay. Thank you so much, Minister.

**Mr. Madu:** There will be public registration.

**Ms Gray:** Okay. We're not going back and forth, but I appreciate the yes.

And then the other question I have for the fairness for newcomers office in my set of questions. I'm looking for a better breakdown of the money being spent, why this office hasn't published anything, because it genuinely leaves me with the impression that there's been no material change when it comes to newcomers, when it comes to the credential recognition process through our professional regulatory agencies. How would I know anything has been improved when there is no information other than the information that is on the websites, repeating over and over that they cannot help individual cases, that they're only looking at systemic issues?

I can appreciate that, but for the many, many newcomers who live in my constituency of Edmonton-Mill Woods and contact my office, it's very hard for me to explain how this office is making their life better. Nothing I can point them to on the website, a baseline questionnaire that didn't actually measure anything but just took self-reported guesstimates, and a budget that is not clear, but I'm sure you will clarify that for me next.

My other question around this office is that you have the power to collect information and to trigger audits under section 10(2) of the legislation. So my question – and I'm wondering if these are happening or not. Have you initiated any of these audits, which can

help you to determine whether registration practices carried out by the regulatory body are transparent, objective, impartial, procedurally fair? As minister you would be the person selecting the auditor. If you have triggered audits – and maybe this is a regular part of the work that's happening now – who are you choosing to be the auditor in these cases? And what kind of background do those auditors have for the work that they're doing? That would all be really helpful for me to better understand what's happening with the fairness for newcomers office.

With three minutes and 30 seconds left, I wonder if my colleague the hon. David Eggen would like to ask a question.

**Mr. Eggen:** Yes, I would. Thank you so much for your time. I guess I just have a little bit of time, so I'm going to go to one of my stakeholder questions. I had asked – I think this is from SAIT – and they were curious to know: what are the minister's plans for Alberta industry training and period exams moving forward past the pandemic? And just as a reminder that not all trades in the province of Alberta are Canadian red seal trades; some are actually designated occupations, and the government registers those apprentices and issues the government of Alberta journey person certification without exam periods. In those programs there is no vetting of learning outcomes and objectives outside of the training of faculties that do not issue those certifications. They're just looking for clarity around those exams, and that would be a useful question for you to answer.

I also have a question from NAIT. They specifically said that there's \$15 million in additional funding from the apprenticeship learning grant announced by yourself, the minister, last week, but is there additional ALG funding still available, as in years past?

You know, I just received, 10 minutes ago, an e-mail from a gentleman. He wanted to say: dear MLA Gray and MLA Eggen, as a constituent of Minister Madu I am disappointed that the minister doesn't appear to be answering your questions. I also see that he watched the estimates that I did on Thursday and said that it was a lot more helpful. He just wanted to mention, you know, if you can be more specific about your answers. He's watching – the voters are watching – and he would appreciate specific answers to these questions. He's probably a postsecondary stakeholder.

Thank you.

8:00

**The Chair:** Minister, you have up to 10 minutes to respond.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you so much, Chair. I'm going to go back to the comment made by Member Gray about the Alberta Board of Skilled Trades with respect to the need for more information, newsletters, and things like that. As I indicated in my earlier remarks, this is a new board. We are working with them to establish their processes and to make sure that they're up to speed. I think once they begin fulsome work, you are going to see more information being put out there. It's something that I support. So stay tuned.

Now, with respect to your question on the fairness for newcomers office, as you know, that is one office where I am very proud of the work that they do. They came in as a result of the Fair Registration Practices Act, that we put in place in the summer of 2019, one of the earliest pieces of legislation that we put in place, to send a very strong signal that foreign-trained professionals, when they come to our province, have a reasonable time frame for the regulatory bodies to inform them what is required of them. That work is ongoing because, for me and for this government, it is not acceptable for many of the regulatory bodies to take as long as they want. Sometimes it takes 18 months, 24 months for foreign-trained professionals to be informed of what the expectations are before

they begin to make the actual transition to their chosen profession. That is one of the problems that the fair practices registration is meant to accomplish. I am proud of that piece of legislation. I am proud of the work that the fairness for newcomers office is doing.

Now, the office, obviously, is very important. As I indicated before, it ensures that all qualified individuals applying to Alberta's regulatory bodies have access to an equitable, timely, and streamlined registration process. The fairness for newcomers office works with regulatory bodies to streamline, simplify, and accelerate the assessment of qualifications by identifying ways Alberta's regulators can improve upon and speed up their existing registration processes for all individuals, whether domestically or internationally trained. This is done by ensuring registration processes meet requirements of the act such as requiring an interim registration decision to be provided within six months of receiving all information required from an applicant to make a decision and having regulatory bodies report on their registration and assessment practices to the minister.

The fairness for newcomers office collects data from more than 70 Alberta regulators on their credential recognition timelines and processes. These data inform work with regulators on reducing barriers and improving efficiency in the system. Now analysis of 2021 registration data provided by Alberta regulators is under way.

In December 2021 the fairness for newcomers office published the results of a 2020 baseline survey wherein regulators themselves reported their adherence to the Fair Registration Practices Act. Now, based on the responses to the eight indicators as assessed, Alberta's regulatory bodies are mainly compliant with the act, with 59 per cent indicating they meet the majority of the indicators, 3 per cent reporting meeting all the indicators, and 8 per cent meeting only a few of the indicators. Yet I am not fully satisfied with some of these outcomes. I want them to make sure that they are earning top scores when it comes to meeting the spirit and intention of the act.

I can now tell you that, yes, we did authorize an audit of some of the professional regulatory bodies, and that audit is being conducted by Deloitte. There is an audit under way with respect to the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta. There is an audit under way with the College of Registered Nurses of Alberta, with the College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Alberta, as well as APEGA. That audit with respect to these four regulatory bodies is ongoing, and I look forward to the report of the audit.

Now, you also talked about staff within the fairness for newcomers office, and I think you alluded to three staff. I want to correct that; there are nine staff. We have been beefing up that particular office because we believe in the work that that office does. The office itself: the budget for that particular office is \$1.1 million; that is for nine FTEs. In budget 2022-2023 the budget was \$1.1 million; in budget '23-24, the same amount of money.

Now, you asked what the budget is meant for. As I have indicated, the salaries and benefits are about a million dollars, supplies and services about \$126,000. If you add that up, it gives you the total budget for the ministry.

Now, Mr. Eggen asked some of the questions that he received from some of our PSIs – I think it was SAIT – talking about period exams. Now, as you know, postsecondary institutions have a very strong system of evaluation. Industry has a role to play as well in the evaluation as they deliver 80 per cent of their education: industry, 80 per cent; PSIs, 20 per cent; altogether, 100 per cent. There was a decision following the passage of STAEA and, obviously, during the pandemic to suspend the period exams so that the department could embark on a fulsome review of the period exam. I can report that that review is coming to a conclusion, and I

am waiting for my department to provide me their briefing and recommendations as to what the next step would be. But I can assure you that the period exam is something that is important to PSIs, important to our students, important to our partners, and we are working with all of these individuals; we are consulting with them.

The Alberta Board of Skilled Trades is also having a conversation on this, so by the time that we get a sense of industry working with postsecondary institutions and, obviously, those in the apprenticeship program and skilled trades, we would be in a much better position to report on where we go next from there.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you.

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

Member Eggen for, well, up to four minutes and 50 seconds.

**Mr. Eggen:** Sure. Okay. Well, that works for me. I would like to talk about foundational learning. It's one of the biggest line items in your budget. Certainly, I mean, as so many of these things are, there's a strong overlap between advanced education and, I would suggest as well, K to 12 education. Of course, we have to analyze carefully why and in what circumstances someone requires foundational learning as an adult and try to bring them up to speed and then also to try to look for ways to, you know, ensure that we have fewer people in that position as adults that were pursuing literacy in other places in their lives.

My first question is from your business plan, page 123, performance indicator 2.1. You say that you want to "improve access and affordability" and to "support under-represented groups." I would be curious for your ministry to describe those underrepresented groups of which you speak. How many people have been identified as requiring foundational learning assistance here in the province of Alberta? You have a number of how many people you have enrolled, but I'm curious if you've done speculation or research as to how many people are out there that require foundational learning supports. You know, chances are there are more, and we want to help them.

**8:10**

My second question in regard to foundational learning. You know, you say that you want to support Albertans to improve in literacy, numeracy, language. I'm curious to know if you have done an analysis of what level of education people who access foundational learning actually have, what percentage, for example, of that group has not completed their high school diploma. That would be a very important detail for us to pursue. Then, further to that, has your ministry conferred with the Ministry of Education about how we can support students who are at risk of not completing their high school education? Maybe they are new English language learners; maybe they require special ed assistance and so forth.

All of these things, obviously, Mr. Chair, through you to the minister, are interrelated. If someone did not get the supports that they needed as a new Canadian with English language training or special education for students, then, of course, they become adults that require foundational learning in order to get a trade, right? So it all kind of hooks together. I'm asking if you have in fact made those connections with K to 12 education, have done an analysis of how many people are out there, and what steps are you going to take to reach out to the population that is not receiving foundational learning at this time but does require that?

**The Chair:** Okay. Minister, you have about a minute and 20 seconds to respond.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Chair. I think the member asked about foundational learning and how many people are receiving support. I can tell you that Budget 2023 provides an additional \$17.5 million over three years for foundational learning, so that's a good thing. In terms of the statistics, as of February 1, 2023, approximately 9,900 Albertans have received foundational learning in 2022-23. This is a 20 per cent increase from '21-22, when approximately 8,230 Albertans received foundational learning support.

In terms of the demographics, in 2022-23 the student demographics are as follows: 69 per cent identify as female, 29 per cent identify as male, and 2 per cent did not specify; 53 per cent identify as nonimmigrant, 47 per cent identify as immigrant, and 25 per cent identify as Indigenous persons; and 8 per cent identify as a person with a disability.

In terms of: have we consulted with Education on high school? From time to time we have conversations with . . .

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister. I hesitate to interject, but that concludes the first portion of questions for the Official Opposition.

We will now move to the government caucus for 20 minutes of questions from the members. MLA Turton, would you like to combine your time with the minister's?

**Mr. Turton:** No. Actually, I prefer block. I like the nuanced answers from the minister.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you.

**Mr. Turton:** Excellent.

**The Chair:** You have up to 10 minutes to speak.

**Mr. Turton:** Yes. Well, thank you very much, Minister, for coming out here tonight – I know it's been a long budgetary process at this point – and, as well, to the rest of your team, that helps support you. Just know that for many of the residents of Spruce Grove-Stony Plain, the work that you do is extremely valuable. My riding is, I would say, a blue-collar riding. We have a lot of tradespeople in my neck of the woods who work at power plants, where I spent many years – and I'll be touching base on that – as well as the Acheson industrial park. I come from a long history of tradesmen. Actually, I know many of my colleagues across the floor talked about the building trades and the impact that they have made here in Alberta. I know, for myself, I'm actually a 24-year member of the building trades, of local 1325. You know, I've been on almost every industrial construction site and have seen men and women involved in the trades and construction industry over many decades, so I'll be touching base a little bit on that.

I guess my first question, to kind of kick-start the discussion here for tonight, is really pertaining to the processing time for the regulatory bodies in terms of applicants that are applying to regulatory bodies. I know it's been told by many members of this government, including yourself, Minister, about wanting to cut red tape and wanting to make sure that we can deliver the work of the people in the most efficient and timely manner possible. I know when I go through performance metric 3(a) on page 124, it talks about how the period of time, between 2019 and 2020, for first-time applicants actually dropped from 11 to six days. I think that's an important message for Albertans to understand about how your ministry has continued to provide services in a timely and efficient manner. Just wondering if you can maybe elaborate a little bit about how the ministry actually achieved this decrease, which is actually quite substantial.

In terms of the other two questions I have, it really – now, as much as I would love to talk about apprenticeship programs and

trades, I really want to zero in on two major questions that I have. Those two questions pertain to getting disenfranchised groups, individuals and groups of people that are currently outside of trades, involved and active and being, you know, productive members of society. The next question I have really has to involve the CALP, the community adult learning program.

As you know, Minister, I've actually heard you multiple times agreeing and saying that, like, financial technological literacy is extremely important in these current times. I remember when I went through my own apprenticeship program in 1998, way back in the day – I might have had hair back then, but that's a different story – and seeing the types of technology, the drafting rulers at NAIT that were being used, to be able to get into the trades. You know, I think it was a 65 per cent average at the time, which I was quite thankful for, guys like myself. I wasn't one of those big-time academics in school, but I remember just the level of technology that they talked about to be able to get into the trades.

When you compare that to today, you need computer literacy. You need to be able to understand some more advanced math. I mean, trades are a complicated business. Some of the largest structures and oil projects and oil sands projects involve some pretty elaborate calculations, and it takes a certain amount of intelligence to be able to kind of figure it out. I know in the key objective 2.2, specifically on page 123 for the numerous people watching online – I know some members of the opposition were talking about some of those people watching.

I guess the first question I have is: what specific targets or metrics will be used to measure progress on the community adult learning program? Again, back to my previous question about making sure as a government that we are actually delivering services to the people of Alberta in the most efficient and timely manner possible. Then, obviously, just to get a little bit of elaboration as well about these programs and initiatives under this community adult learning program: how will it actually affect Albertans? How will it actually get new people entering the workplace, maybe provide them access to skills, either hard or soft, and be able to allow them to maybe move up the ranks when it comes to being able to be involved with other types of occupations that maybe perhaps can provide a little bit better for their families.

The last thing I kind of want to talk about is something that's actually pretty near and dear to my heart, and that really has to deal with Women Building Futures. You know, in my 23 years being involved in 1325, I have to honestly say that I have had the absolute pleasure to work with some absolutely incredible women tradesmen. I have to say, honestly, even at this current occupation, this current part of my own journey, that I work with some pretty incredible women here at the Legislature as well. But I want to touch base specifically on two of them, and they both have different stories.

One is named Essie, and I was actually just working with her on the weekend. We were chatting, and she's a wonderful young lady, 18 years old, and she is going through for heavy-duty mechanics. I will say, I admit, I am not a mechanically minded individual. I'm a journeyman carpenter and scaffolder – I'm proud of it – but when it comes to the mechanics, I'm definitely not there. I remember asking her the question: why do you want to get into the trades? We were walking down the road, and we passed, actually by absolute fluke, a couple of old-time trucks – and I'm sure there are probably some members here that would probably appreciate it – and she started gushing about this Chevy engine. You could just see the passion in her eyes and her voice about why being a tradeswoman was so important to her. It was cool. She was telling me about vehicles and working with her hands and that not everyone is cut out for maybe white-collar trades, and then she summed it up by saying:

“You know what? I also want to make just as much money as the boys and show them who’s boss.” I mean, it was just awesome to see another fantastic young lady entering blue-collar life.

8:20

The other one I just want to touch base on is a gal named Ronnie. I worked with her in about 2003. She was actually the last journeyman I worked with before I became a journeyman. I was a third-year apprentice and trying to move up. Again, I remember those conversations we had. We were building a scaffold 175 feet up in the air at the Genesee power plant in 2004 – I can still point out the conversations – and hearing her stories about, you know, being a single mom and wanting to all of a sudden support her family. She knew she couldn’t cut it being a waitress. She wanted to get out there. She was a single bread earner, and she wanted to really go out of her way to make sure that her kids absolutely had the best life possible.

Right across Alberta there are stories of women that are trying to get into the trades, and that’s why Women Building Futures I think is so important. I know that there was in the budget a 6.25 per cent budget increase. Line 3.2, to everyone watching online, page 203. I know for yourself, Minister, you’ve talked hard about: how can we make blue-collar trades open and accessible to all? I know my previous question with CALP, getting people involved right from the start, providing those hard skills for them, but then, also, just with Women Building Futures about, you know – and I guess the question really comes down to with yourself, Minister, and some of your experience. Like, how is this government breaking down those gender-based barriers for skilled trades occupations that have been previously dominated by men?

Now, as much as I appreciated Ronnie for everything that she was teaching me back in 2004, I have to admit, even looking back, that Ronnie was the exception. You know, she was a powerful woman, and she knew her stuff. I mean, no one could build a scaffold better than she could, but she was still a part of the minority. It was still a male-dominated trade.

Now, it’s changed a lot. I talked with a lot of my old colleagues, and it’s being much more inclusive. I really think organizations like Women Building Futures are one of those organizations that are breaking down those barriers. Like, when you talk to them and you go through – I know a couple of times I’ve had breakfast; I’ve visited them at their sites and other trade halls – you listen to them, and story after story it’s, like, single moms kicking butt, showing those boys who’s boss, and actually making a difference and really doing an absolutely fantastic job.

I remember even talking to an old foreman, and he said: “You know what? I would rather give a million-dollar piece of equipment to a woman that was trained at Women Building Futures than some of these punk guys because they’ll trash the equipment.” At least those women know what they’re doing, right? They’ll treat it with respect, right? You know, they’re fantastic workers.

Minister, I know this is a passion of yours. I want you to just maybe perhaps elaborate a little bit about some of the types of supports that we’ve been giving them.

Thank you very much for allowing me to just kind of share a little bit about my story during this block.

**The Chair:** Good. Thank you, MLA Turton.

Minister, you have up to 10 minutes to respond.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Chair, and thank you, MLA Turton. You are absolutely correct. You know, when you hear stories like these, beginning with your last question and comment there, you get to see why it is important that we do everything we can to knock down

all kinds of barriers that face some folks, including women and underrepresented communities, Indigenous communities, and those who have been out of employment for a long time, looking to get back to the workforce.

You know, the reason why the Premier established a focused ministry called Skilled Trades and Professions is to make sure that we are laser focused on the need to knock down barriers, whether that’s for women or for those who are coming to our province from within the country, who are seeking to come from Ontario, B.C., Nova Scotia, who come to Alberta to practise their professions, their skills, and their careers, or those who are coming from overseas.

You know, we as a government made two significant steps in 2019 and in 2021. In 2019 we passed the Fair Registration Practices Act, a consequential piece of legislation. Then in 2021 we passed the Labour Mobility Act, and I can report that we are working now to complete the regulation on that particular act. There’s a lot of good stuff coming there.

You know, MLA Turton, let me take you back to your first question, which has to do with the work that we have done to drop the processing time from nine days to six days. We are talking about the processing time for domestic applicants who applied to a regulatory body in Alberta. That is significant. That is what we want to see happen. That was the whole reason why in our party’s platform in 2019 there was a whole section called fairness for newcomers action plan. That action plan then gave rise to the Fair Registration Practices Act and the fairness for newcomers office.

I would also note for the benefit of this committee, members, that for the first time in our province’s history we hosted the first-ever Premier’s Summit on Fairness for Newcomers in February 2022. I am proud and very pleased to report that in about a week from today we will be back in Calgary to host the second-ever Premier’s Summit on Fairness for Newcomers. That is what we want to see happen. We want to make sure that anyone, whether you come from within the country or whether you come from overseas to this province, when you come here, you have a shot at your full potential. I think that’s what you are seeing with the work we began in 2019, seeing that assessment time drop all the way from 11 days to six days. We do think we can do more, and that is the whole essence of the work that we are doing.

You are going to see a lot of good work when we finally proclaim the Labour Mobility Act and ensure that the regulations are in place so that if you have ever worked in B.C., for example, or in Ontario, there’s no reason why you should come here and start the process all over again. It doesn’t make any sense, so that work is under way as we speak.

Back to your second question. Your second question had to do with what specific target measures will be used to measure progress on the community adult learning program, and how will the initiatives under the adult learning program impact Albertans? You know, great question, MLA Turton. The community adult learning program ensures that adult learners have access to part-time, nonformal literacy and foundational opportunities like digital and life skills below the grade-10 level. The community adult learning program supports rural, remote, and urban communities to meet learner needs and are often the only community-based provider that delivers face-to-face programs.

Ongoing funding. Albertans will continue to have access to learning spaces across the province. The program ensures that adult learners can persist in learning skills that they can use in their everyday lives while having access to relevant and engaging learning opportunities. Adult learners also benefit from community and adult learning programs that are well connected to their communities so they can learn close to home. Specific targets and

metrics include a number of learners that have participated in CALP literacy and foundational opportunities. It also includes a number of hours of learning.

MLA Turton, in this budget the community adult learning program provides \$16 million in annual funding to support foundational learning opportunities and approximately \$2 million in annual funding to support instructors' professional development to increase their capacity to deliver quality learning programs. I will look forward to continuing to re-examine this particular program in terms of what it might need in the future.

**8:30**

Now, coming to your last question, that is a topic that is very close to my heart, Women Building Futures. You know, you talked about the fact that there is a 6.25 per cent funding increase, and that is important. As we heard in the two examples from some of your colleagues, it is critically important that we do everything we can to knock down barriers. In fact, I met with one of the organizations that provided apprenticeship programs to mostly Indigenous women, and they talked to me about how they have run into difficulties with some of their funding. I had a conversation with the department on this, and we all agree that as our economy booms – Alberta's economy is booming right now – employers are in need of workers.

We have a lot of women who are very much interested in the skilled trades, and oftentimes there are barriers. It's not enough to just say that we have those seats available for them; oftentimes there are obstacles. There are family circumstances, there is child care – you name it – poverty, and things like that that oftentimes are prohibitive of them going into the skilled trades that they love so much. My department is looking into all of that in a comprehensive manner to make sure that we are knocking down those barriers so that those women can get into the skilled trades and achieve their full potential.

This government recognizes that skilled trades historically have been male dominated. There is no question about that, particularly in industrial and construction trades. As of December 2022 approximately 5,700 women were registered apprentices out of a cohort of 45,000. This is an increase of 13 per cent over 2021, so we are trending in the right direction. We are trending in the right direction even though I would like to see that number dramatically go up. But we are making progress.

Since the Skilled Trades and Apprenticeship Education Act came into force in July 2022, my department has been working with the Alberta Board of Skilled Trades, industry, and postsecondary institutions to create a more flexible and efficient system. Evolving and modernizing a program with historic traditions takes focused effort and time. This government is very much committed, MLA Turton, to making sure that we provide all of the support, all of the resources and funding to our key partners, and that's exactly why we have increased the funding for Women Building Futures.

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

We have about 25 seconds left. MLA Turton, you wish to speak?

**Mr. Turton:** Oh, absolutely. I've got another six questions, actually, I'd like to ask in 20 seconds. No. I just want to again thank you, Minister, for the work, obviously, that you have done. Just know that there are Albertans watching, not just on TV but on job sites all over this province, that are thankful for the work that you're doing. Thank you very much for that. It is making a difference.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you. That concludes the government members' first block of questions.

Now we move to five minutes of questions from the Official Opposition, followed by five minutes of response from the minister. Please remember that discussion should flow through the chair at all times regardless of whether or not speaking time is combined. After this block of questions we will take our five-minute break, so that everybody is aware.

MLA Gray, you're up.

**Ms Gray:** Yes. Thank you so much. The first one is a relatively straightforward technical question. I hope you can explain it to me. On page 125 of the business plan or page 6 of government estimates the statement of operations shows revenue and expense, and then there's a line for interministry consolidation adjustment that seems to show a reduction of \$44 million to the ministry's budget. So from \$218 million it becomes \$174 million. I just would like to understand what that consolidation line is. On page 6 of the government estimates it shows a lot of the ministries have these decreases. Is it adjusting down the government's budget entirely? Please, if you could help me to interpret that, I would appreciate your help.

We have talked about the Board of Skilled Trades, and we've talked about the fairness for newcomers office. The minister's answer on the audits was very helpful, and my quick follow-up question would just be: when do you expect the audits that are under way at the four agencies to be completed? I ask this just in the context of a looming election. Is this something that's likely to carry through that? I don't know how long an audit takes. When do we expect to see that?

Now, the minister has referenced the Labour Mobility Act a number of times. Certainly, we all have seen the data that shows that reducing labour mobility barriers could significantly boost Alberta's and Canada's economy by reducing labour mobility costs by \$500 per person per year, and it could help attract workers to Alberta, increasing provincial GDP by as much as \$2.8 billion. Improving the overall Canada credential recognition system could potentially increase the annual incomes of the people affected by an average of \$15,000 to \$20,000, in excess of \$3 billion for those with out-of-province credentials.

My question to the minister is: with the bill having passed in November 2021 and section 27 having come into force December 2, 2021, but the majority of the bill having not yet been proclaimed – you've referenced a couple of times today that that work is in progress – when do you anticipate being able to proclaim this? Again, in the context of a looming election date, is this something you see happening before the election, that this work will be proclaimed? How much is left to do? Is there some way you can contextualize that for me?

Then I think I had a sub. Oh, a slightly related comment was that just in the business plan, performance metric 3(a), around average processing time for domestic applicants who apply to a regulatory body in Alberta, the numbers are obviously trailing right now, but even before the Labour Mobility Act comes into force, they're really good it seems like. Now, these would be average. I'm just curious if the minister is anticipating that metric 3(a) is going to significantly decrease once the Labour Mobility Act comes into force. I was just trying to connect those two goals as we go through this estimates process.

Oh, one minute? All right. I'm going to pick my question. The minister was formerly the minister of labour, and there are pieces of this ministry that come from labour, and I was trying to map things out. In 2022 the ministry of labour had two operating expense lines: 2.4, labour attraction and retention, which had a \$4 million budget, and 2.5, labour qualifications and mobility, which had a \$9 million budget. The description for 2.4 in this year's budget and

government estimates matches the description that was used for line 2.2.

So 2.2 in your budget, labour attraction, retention, and mobility, seems like it might be carrying over from labour except that the previous budget was \$9 million for that line item, the other line item was \$4 million, and your line item is \$170,000. I don't think that you've dropped \$10 million out of labour attraction and retention, because it's a very important part of what the government does. But if you could help me to identify: what work is happening under this line item in your ministry? It looks like an enormous reduction during a time when labour attraction is a priority, but I imagine the remainder of what used to be labour's lines 2.4 and 2.5 have gone somewhere else. If you wouldn't mind unpacking that.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you, MLA Gray.

Minister, you have five minutes to respond.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Chair. I'm going to let my assistant deputy minister and senior financial officer respond to the consolidation question. I think you referenced \$44 million of reduction and things like that. If I can have Olin Lovely respond to that, please.

8:40

**Mr. Lovely:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. When we're doing the consolidation for the financial statements, we can't double-count the money that goes into the postsecondary institutions. What you're seeing on that line is \$40 million for apprenticeship and approximately \$2 million that flows out to the PSIs, and all that money is accounted for on an accounting basis in Advanced Education.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Olin.

Member, your next question deals with: when can we expect the audit on the four regulatory bodies to be completed? Now, as I indicated, that audit is being conducted by Deloitte. I mean, I don't want to, you know, give you a firm date because, obviously, there are circumstances that may lead to them having to come back to us for an extension or something or some delays in the process. But, generally speaking, we expect the audit to be completed by March 31 of this year, and in April we would then begin to work with the audited parties, the four regulatory bodies, to build out the actions that we expect to see from them, depending on the results of the audit. My sense is that by summer or if there are things that we need to follow up on, we should be able to report back on them. For example, if we find that there is need for best practices from other jurisdictions based on some of the recommendations coming from the audit, then we'll begin to have the conversation with the regulatory bodies at that point in time.

Now, you also talked about the Labour Mobility Act and the regulations given the fact that the act was passed in 2021 and hasn't been proclaimed yet. As you know, COVID intervened, but there is a massive piece of important regulation that we have been working on and consulting with stakeholders on. We want to make sure that stakeholders are in a comfortable place so that when the act is proclaimed, they will have the opportunity for easy transition based on the expectations of the regulations. You know, we expect – one of the things that the regulation is meant to do is ease the transition of a professional who is working within the province that comes to Alberta. We have been working with our stakeholders to make sure that they are ready for the implementation of the Labour Mobility Act. My sense is that by the end of April or before the end of April we'll proclaim the act, and it would take effect immediately.

Now, in your last question you talked about metric 3(a), and it deals with out-of-province and in-province: what's that time frame,

whether or not we expect to see a reduction in the amount of time for the assessment. That is the goal. The goal is that we want to see continuous progress. There is no question in my mind that continuous improvement is a goal that we all share. I want to make sure that the professional regulatory bodies here in our province understand that they need to work with us and work with their members, new and potential members, to make sure that there isn't undue delay in the assessment period, because when there are inordinate delays, it affects that particular applicant. And it's not just for them. It's their families; it's their self-esteem. I am very much committed to making sure, as I said before, that we knock down all of those barriers. It's work that is ongoing, and I look forward to continuing that particular work with them.

I will say this to you, that based on the conversations that I've had with regulatory boards, I think they understand that Alberta's economy is booming. Employers need workers, and we've got to work with them.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Minister. That concludes that block of questions for the Official Opposition.

We will now take a five-minute break and return in five minutes for government caucus questions.

[The committee adjourned from 8:44 p.m. to 8:50 p.m.]

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

We will start with the 10-minute block for government caucus members, five minutes. MLA McIver, you are to start.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Chair. I'll jump right in. Thank you, Minister, for being here and for your good answers thus far. As you know, Alberta's got a booming economy. That's very much thanks to the opportunities provided under our government's economic growth. We've done more than replace the 183,000 jobs lost under the last government, so there's been some good work done in this term of office.

We're one of the top destinations for immigration to Canada, yet some Alberta immigrants have expressed concerns about proper integration into the workforce and the hurdles they have to go through to get their education and skills recognized in Alberta. On line 2.3 of page 203 of the estimates there's \$1.175 million allocated to the fairness for newcomers office. I guess, since I hear quite a bit from newcomers who can't get recognized, what work is being done to streamline and speed up the assessment of qualifications for new workers in Canada? How are we making sure that the regulatory bodies actually meet their obligations, including their time obligations, to play – not guard at the gate to keep people out but, rather, a welcoming force that helps people get in and then helps them to either recognize the qualifications they have or to minimize the time that it takes to upgrade if they need that. I think time is of the essence.

Also, on apprenticeship, of course, this is near and dear to my heart. My father was a welder, and I was a butcher by trade. My son's a pipefitter currently. He's had a very good career except for when he was out of work for a period of time during the last government as part of the 183,000 jobs sent out, but he's sure got lots of work to do now. What is the current number of apprenticeship seats in postsecondary institutions? On line 3.2, page 203, how many more seats will be funded with the \$15 million dollars over the next three years? Is the trend for enrolment up, and if not, what can we do about making it go up? I think that we're going to need the people, not just in energy but in a whole range of other things, construction, IT, lots of other technical things.

I guess my question is, like: what are we actually doing both as a government, and what are we doing to encourage the private sector,



hopefully with our co-operation, to encourage them to get more people into the trades and also just to let them know from a younger age, starting in high school, that the trades are a good thing? I think it's a pertinent story that my son and his buddy in grade 12 were in a shop class. They had a great teacher who said: "You two boneheads, I have got an opportunity for you. I'm going to help you move all the rest of your classes to the morning, and in the afternoon you're going to go framing houses. I've got a crew for you, and they're going to teach you." His buddy is a finishing carpenter now, building some of the biggest, most expensive homes in Alberta, and my son is, you know, 15, 20 years into a pipefitting apprenticeship, and he's got it ever increasing.

So, I guess, that early push, that early experience, that early encouragement: are we doing anything there? Those are things that I think matter in terms of my two questions, one about getting the workforce here and getting their qualifications recognized, but the other one is growing our own, getting our young women and young men started earlier if we can. Are you co-ordinating your efforts at all with postsecondary or even high school departments to get people thinking about or introduced to or experiencing some of the work opportunities that this province has to offer? Of course, the more people we have working, the better, and the fewer people unemployed, the better, and why not here? This is the place where you'd make the most money in Canada on average if you do have a job.

I think I gave you probably five minutes' worth of material to come back at me with, and I look forward to learning something from you.

**The Chair:** Thank you, MLA McIver.

Minister, you have five minutes to respond.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Member McIver. The two questions that you asked are very pertinent questions. One deals with ongoing work on labour mobility, and the second part is dealing with apprenticeship education and the skilled trades. You know, Alberta's economy is booming right now. We have heard from employers that their biggest need right now is a labour shortage, and we know that it is not going to get any better. So there's a need for us to take a multipronged approach in making sure that we are doing everything we can in postsecondary institutions to train the workers of today and tomorrow but also to make sure that those who have chosen to come to our province to fulfill their dreams are provided the support and the resources that they need. That is the whole essence of the Fair Registration Practices Act, that we put in place in 2019, and the Labour Mobility Act, that we put in place in 2021.

You know, that act ensures that registration practices in place for regulated professions and designated trades are transparent, objective, impartial, and procedurally fair. It is critically important. We can't afford not to have the skilled workers that our economy needs. We can't afford not to knock down the barriers that are oftentimes on the path of foreign-trained professionals who are either coming from out of country or those who are already certified in our province but can't be certified in other provinces but have difficulty coming to work in Alberta here. That is why we are working with all of the various regulatory bodies, Member, you know, to make sure that those opportunities are going to be there for them.

With respect to the Fair Registration Practices Act, as I indicated before, there is an audit going on with four professional regulatory bodies to make sure that there is a faster assessment process in place. We've made progress, and those professional regulatory bodies understand that they need to make it easier for people who

want to continue in their profession to make that easy transition, and that work is ongoing.

The reason why we continue to have the Premier's Summit on Fairness for Newcomers – as I said before, we had one in February of 2022. We're having one on March 17 in Calgary, where we'll bring together the leaders and the heads of the various regulatory bodies and immigration consultants, other stakeholders, newcomer-serving agencies, you know, to have a dialogue on: what more can we do to make sure that we continue to knock down opportunities for them?

On your second question, you know, Member McIver, myself and the Minister of Advanced Education began this work in Budget 2022 with the Alberta at work program, where the government made a historic, the largest ever, investment, \$605 million, to make sure that we are training workers, giving them resources to upskill their education, and things like that. Minister Nicolaides then embarked on seat expansions in critical industries across all of our postsecondary institutions. The initial target was 7,000. I think the last number that I saw was 10,000. That seat expansion continues in Budget 2023.

I was at NAIT last week to make an announcement of an additional 1,000-seat expansion in our postsecondary institutions, I mean, for the skilled trades. I was in Calgary last month to make another announcement at SAIT, and we continue to do those works. I want to make sure, this government wants to make sure that we have the well-trained, well-prepared workers to meet the jobs not just of today but that of tomorrow. So that work, Member McIver, is ongoing.

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

We now move to the Official Opposition. MLA Eggen.

9:00

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to ask what this ministry's strategy is to allow new Canadians to get their credentials to practise in their field of expertise. You will know that our New Democrat government will work with colleges, polytechnics, and universities as well as professional regulatory organizations to provide focused testing and training programs that new Canadians need to use their skills that they're bringing with them to Alberta and to Canada.

We've learned from Bow Valley College in Calgary, for example, and NorQuest in Edmonton. They build an innovative and targeted approach where students are tested to identify their strengths and deficiencies, and then the faculty will build a customized education program to suit their needs. A student can start working in their field of expertise in a matter of weeks or months rather than years. This is something that certainly we support, and I'm hoping: would Skilled Trades and Professions be pursuing this as well?

My second question is in regard to page 203 of the government estimates, numbers 1.1 and 1.2. Of course, as I said, we all know that this is a new ministry, and many people would like to know how offices are structured. I noticed that the minister's office has a budget of \$770,000, which I think is quite high. Other estimates that I have participated in have considerably lower office expenses even when they're dealing with ministries with much larger budgets. Can the minister provide a breakdown of how many staff he has employed in his office, what their salaries and roles are? Just for clarity since I guess this is a new office as well.

My third question is in regard to a question that was given to me by SAIT. They are curious to know – this is something that I hear all the time from, as you say, the 11 colleges that you are directly related to with skilled trades and so forth but others as well – how do you ensure that funding for apprenticeship delivery is being

delivered for that very purpose and not just being put into general revenues to bolster other programs?

Now, we know that we want to maintain the integrity of the independence of our colleges to make decisions, but since you are making a lot of targeted budget announcements, I think it's fair that you should be auditing to ensure that those monies are in fact being used for exactly what you are describing them to be used for. I mean, certainly, we see colleges and universities looking for ways by which they can expand spaces. But, you know, another issue in this regard comes to mind just from Mr. Lovely's comments about not double-counting money. I'm curious to know: with these targeted initiatives that you're announcing in schools, colleges around the province, are they built into the budget, or are they new money? Right? I think we really need to know that. I don't want people just to be reannouncing things along the way. The initiatives that you announced, for example, in Calgary and SAIT: is that built into your budget here now? Where does it reside? Just for the sake of clarity I think that Albertans would like to know that.

So just in review, once again, I'm looking for ways by which new Canadians can practise in their field of expertise, the expenses around your ministerial budget, and we would appreciate the answers to those questions as well. We know that Albertans want an investment in skilled trades. We know that a dollar invested pays an exponential return, and certainly if we are able to form the government here in the next couple of months, we would invest to ensure that people can access skilled trades positions regardless of where they live in Alberta and that the tuition and expenses will be affordable and not an obstacle for them to get an education that they need for themselves and their families.

**The Chair:** Thank you, MLA Eggen.

Minister, you have up to five minutes to respond.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the member for that question. The member's first question deals with the minister's office budget of \$770,000, and if you look at the budget document, you will find that the budget forecast for '22-23 was around \$313,000.

I think the member knows, as he rightly noted, that this is a brand new ministry that was created to provide a focused attention on skilled trades and professions. My ministry oversees the development of ministerial policies aligned with broader government-wide objectives and priorities. The budget includes salaries, benefits. There are six full-time equivalent positions in my office. The budget includes supplies and services that support the operations and activities of the minister's office. As the member may know – he was once the Minister of Education – there are always budgetary allocations for the minister's office to fulfill the responsibilities of the minister. There is no exception here. Supplies and services generally include costs such as travel, telephone, office supplies, and things like that. If you take a look at the breakdown of the \$770,000 – salaries and benefits, \$664,000; supplies and services at \$45,000; and other supplies at \$61,000 – that brings it to \$770,000.

Now, the member also talked about some of the questions that he received from SAIT. I will get back to your number one question, which is the need for new Canadians to get their credentials, but that will be my last thing I will address.

Again, you know, when it comes to, "How do we make sure that the funding that we provide to postsecondary institutions is being used for that particular purpose and ensure that they are not being diverted to general revenue?" that is an important question, and I think the answer lies in the fact that those PSIs enter into a funding agreement, a grant agreement with the province.

There's a terms-of-grant agreement. They are required to report back to us, and there are performance metrics. I don't think we've had a situation whereby we have seen grant funding being diverted to general revenues. Otherwise, that would be cut off when they report back to us. My expectation and the government's expectation is that when PSIs apply for grant funding, they usually specify the purpose and the number of seats and how the money should be spent, so I have no concerns with respect to all of that.

Now, back to your first question. You know, new Canadians: how do we make sure that when they come here, they're able to get into their chosen profession? That is something that is important to me, Member Eggen. As you know, I was trained as a lawyer in Nigeria. When I came here about 18 years ago, I had to go through the same process again, so this is something I am very familiar with, and that is why we have in our platform the fairness for newcomers action plan.

I played a role in making sure that people like myself, who come to Alberta in pursuit of opportunity, have the resources that they need. That is why we have the Fair Registration Practices Act. That is why we have the Labour Mobility Act. That is why we are working with various regulatory bodies, you know, CPSA. That is why we have the triple-track assessment by CARNA, an investment of \$250,000 to make sure that for health care workers who are trained overseas, when they come here, they have an easier path to get to their chosen profession. That is why we entered into the MOU with the Philippines, to make sure that nurses can come here and achieve their full potential.

**9:10**

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

We now move to the government caucus. MLA Walker, you have five minutes for questions.

**Mr. Walker:** Well, thank you so much, Chair, and thank you, Minister, for being here. I've really quite enjoyed the discussion this evening. You've just been listing so many of the government's achievements, in part due to this great Ministry of Skilled Trades and Professions. Again, I'm really finding it quite enlightening.

I know that yourself and myself and many people are passionate about ensuring people realize their full potential, including economically and professionally, in skilled trades, including, as you were just mentioning previous, with foreign qualification recognition, which is so critically important.

You and I had both worked in the labour ministry years ago, knowing how important this is and how it directly impacts Albertans, especially new Albertans. Thank you so much, Minister, for the important work you're doing here in this great Ministry of Skilled Trades and Professions.

My questions, Minister, this evening will focus on adult learning – I think MLA Turton had a few lines of questioning along those lines – and then also I want to circle back to apprenticeships specifically. I want to focus first, of course, on Ukrainian newcomers. We're doing so much to support them. I want to learn more about what we're doing to support them within your ministry, having to come from a terrible conflict and war-torn country due to Russia's unlawful invasion, which we all condemn strongly. But we also want to support Ukrainian newcomers who are coming here fleeing that conflict. There's a great, long history of Ukrainian Albertans, going back all the way to the 1890s, and we have a great community as well in Sherwood Park.

I'm just wondering. Specifically, first, Minister, there has been, again, an increase in Ukrainian newcomers to Alberta as a result of the war brought on by Russia against Ukraine. There has also been a need for more grants to support the community adult learning

program. That's what I'm focusing on here, the community adult learning program for all Albertans. Line 4.2 on page 203 of the estimates shows an increase of \$1.6 million for the community adult learning program.

My questions here: how will this additional funding be used to help disadvantaged Albertans, and, secondly, will this mean that we will see an uptake in the numeracy and language programs? That's really critically important. We have great volunteer organizations working, I know, in the Edmonton area, including in Sherwood Park, that are helping to settle newcomer Ukrainians. One of the big things I'm hearing as a need is ESL supports and training. I'd really like to know more about that, Minister.

Then, also, moving on to my second line of questioning, on apprenticeship, moving to another cohort here, specifically self-identifying Indigenous adult learners who want to continue with lifelong adult learning, the Ministry of Skilled Trades and Professions provides a variety of supports to self-identifying Indigenous adult learners and apprentices. The ministry also works in partnership with several organizations that deliver supports directly to Indigenous Albertans to encourage their participation in the trades. Now, in line 4.3, also on page 203 of the estimates, there was a 23.74 per cent increase in adult learning initiatives here. Since October 2022, let's say, roughly, Minister, what grants and programs has the ministry put in place for Indigenous learners?

I'm really curious to hear your answers to these two lines of questioning on Ukrainian newcomers but also Indigenous adult learners. I know your ministry is doing so much to help all groups to remove barriers for them to realize their potential and get fully connected and realize their dreams within Alberta, in Alberta's economy.

Again, Minister, just thanks so much. I'm really looking forward to your responses here this evening.

Thank you so very much.

**The Chair:** Thank you, MLA Walker.

Minister, up to five minutes for a response.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you so much, Chair, and thank you, Member Walker. I do want to thank you for your years of long advocacy and good work whilst you were in the public service. I remember all of the good work you did with respect to, you know, foreign qualification recognition within the government of Alberta, and you've continued that work as the hon. Member for Sherwood Park with all of your hard work. So thank you, as well, for your work.

You did ask a very important, you know, question which has to do with support for Ukrainian newcomers in the context of the community adult learning program. I think for me and for all of us in government it is very important that we provide all of the support that Ukrainians who have come here, fleeing from the disastrous, unjust war that has been waged against that country by Russia – that support for them is critical. It is important that they know they have an ally in our government and in Alberta. Albertans have a very strong generational relationship with Ukraine. Some of the early Albertans come from Ukraine, and we need to show solidarity with them in this moment that they need us. That is why, Member, we have provided \$16 million annually to support foundational learning opportunities and approximately \$2 million in annual funding to professional development to increase their capacity to deliver quality programs.

You know, I was very happy a couple of days ago to announce a grant of \$12,000 to boost the Red Deer public library to help Ukrainian newcomers learn English. This is money from Budget 2022. The library's adult literacy program has seen a jump in demand over the past year with many newcomers from Ukraine

arriving in the Red Deer area and not just the Red Deer area but across our province. These additional funds have allowed the library to add seven more classes of 12 to 17 people and to replenish resources used by learners who work one on one with volunteer tutors. It's critically important. Being able to get employment when they come from Ukraine, English as a second language classes: all of those things are going to help them to make a fast transition.

The funding that we provide supports areas of services such as general equivalency diploma support; mental health; substance abuse; family violence awareness; Indigenous, French, and language services; diversity and inclusion programming; parenting skills; family literacy programs; job search and resumé support; exam invigilation; information on postsecondary and learning opportunities; form completion support; newcomer support; you name it.

We are also working with, you know, immigrant-serving agencies to make sure that they have the resources that they need to continue to provide ongoing support for Ukrainians who are coming to our province. There is no question, Member Walker, that the influx of displaced Ukrainians at our borders has added additional – we have added additional programming and support as required on a volunteer basis.

Your last question deals with self-identifying Indigenous adult learners and some of the support that we have provided to them. I can tell you, Member, that beginning in 2022, our government has provided a grant of \$750,000 over three years to support the Trade Winds to Success Training Society. This is the organization that I told you I met a couple of weeks ago. They do important work, and I am very glad that we are supporting them. This is an Indigenous-led nonprofit that works with partners and industry to provide shop experience and training to prepare Indigenous Albertans for apprenticeship training. The funding creates space for 100 students over three years. Trade Winds to Success provides foundational apprenticeship training and support to Indigenous students through a network of Indigenous partners, unions, and employers.

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

We now go to the opposition caucus. MLA Gray, you may proceed.

9:20

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much. I am going to go back to a question I attempted earlier, but I might have been a little too quick with it. Essentially, on page 203 of the GE, line 2.2, labour attraction, retention, and mobility, I'm asking how it relates to the previous labour ministry line, labour attraction and retention – while they have the same description and they have similar names, under labour it was a \$4 million line, and here it's much less – as well as what's going on in that particular line item. It's also at \$420,000 this year and dropping in the estimates to \$170,000. I'd just like to understand that. Under labour there was labour attraction and retention, and then there was another line for labour qualification and mobility, which had another \$9 million in it. So just trying to map where things are moving between ministries. I was hoping you could walk me through line 2.2 just a little bit more. What is coming out of that line?

Similar question: labour market development agreement money flowing through the federal government. I'm familiar with LMDA money as it gets spent in the labour ministry, what it used to be, which I believe now is Jobs, Economy and Northern Development. I was just hoping the minister could break down how the \$153 million of LMDA dollars are used within the Skilled Trades and Professions ministry. I'd just like to make sure I understand which parts of the ministry flow through federal funding – I guess it may

not be flow through, but you can walk me through what that particularly looks like. I think that would be great.

The other thing I wanted – and this is more of a political question. Within the business plan for Skilled Trades and Professions the minister's mandate so clearly speaks to supporting the skilled trades and supporting those professions. We know that we need to do more and more training, especially with the labour shortage coming up. Just recently the Official Opposition did an announcement, one of those political, looking-towards-the-election announcements, that a future NDP government would work to fund union training centres, because union training centres are provincially recognized educators like NAIT and SAIT. They don't receive provincial funding, but they train hundreds of thousands of skilled workers. They turn out some of the highest skilled, safest workers in the trades workforce. They're well recognized, but they don't receive provincial funding. That's actually quite unique in Canada. In other provinces they do.

One of the things that happens in politics is that good ideas belong to everyone, and when we made that announcement I wondered if we wouldn't see funding towards union training centres in the upcoming government budget. It appears you've chosen not to do that. So given that union training centres have paid for infrastructure, the ability to skill up thousands of apprentices, and they are provincially recognized educators, this question is for the minister. Have you considered working with union training centres like the building trades that MLA Turton was speaking about earlier, or has that not been considered by you and your government? That was something I was looking for in the budget and the business plan and did not see.

So line 2.2, labour attraction, retention, mobility, trying to understand that, and if you can help me find some of the other lost money that used to be in labour, that would be helpful. LMDA spending and breaking that down within the Skilled Trades and Professions ministry: that would be really helpful for me.

I was also curious around the line item to do with premiums, fees, and licences. I believe there was, yeah, some money here under revenue. I'm looking at page 125 of the business plan for premiums, fees, and licences, and just not being as familiar with your ministry, I don't know what those fees are in relation to.

So some of these are a little bit detailed questions, but it would really help me to understand your budget. Thank you very much, Minister.

**The Chair:** Thank you, MLA Gray.

Minister, up to five minutes to respond.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Member Gray, for your questions again. I think, Member Gray, as you know, to your first question, the previous labour and immigration ministry and the previous jobs, economy, and innovation ministry were reformed to now give birth to the current Ministry of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development and the Ministry of Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism and my own Ministry of Skilled Trades and Professions.

So what I think you are looking at on line item 2.2, labour attraction, retention, and mobility – and you are wondering from the previous budget. You saw reference to \$4 million in expenditures, and all of a sudden it is \$170,000 here. The reform of those ministries explains that. There are portions of the work that was previously done by labour and immigration that went over to Trade, Immigration and Multiculturalism, and it does make sense that those expenditures will go with them. There are portions that went to the current Ministry of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development. Those expenditures will go with them. The part that

comes to my ministry, the \$170,000, as I said before, essentially is meant to deal with the work we are doing around the Labour Mobility Act and things like that. So that explains that for you, Member Gray.

Now, with respect to, you know, that you were expecting to see funding for trade training centres. Again, I can't speak to that. We have in Budget 2023 – I value the work of trade unions. They are vital, key partners, but I mean, ultimately, I think that Alberta's economy is booming right now. We are focused on creating jobs and opportunities for Albertans and making sure that the skills that our partners, employers, PSIs need are going to be there for them. If we find that it is something that is required in the future, obviously, we would be able to have that consideration. Currently approximately 99 per cent of apprentices attend one of the postsecondary institutions, and approximately 1 per cent of apprentices attend a union training centre, so I can't really speak to that particular issue at this point. Those are decisions made by Treasury Board in Budget 2023.

Now, you talked about premiums, fees, and licences on page 125 of the business plan, and I'm trying to figure out what those are. Under premiums, fees, and licences you have revenue generated from exam fees that are charged to apprentices when they take the red seal exam, and then you have, under other revenue, recoveries from foundational learning support, and then you have fees that get reimbursed back from institutions when they do not attend. But by and large, the premiums, fees, and licences are revenue generated from exam fees that are charged to apprentices when they take the red seal exam.

Let me also, you know, finally, add that, I mean, again, back to your first question, there are three ministries that have responsibility for the previous budget, that amount of money that you refer to, the \$4 million, and it does make sense that some of those expenditures will go to the appropriate ministry. I hope I'm clear on that.

Thank you, Chair.

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

We will go to the government caucus now. MLA Rowswell, the floor is yours.

**9:30**

**Mr. Rowswell:** Thank you very much. Well, I've got to tell you that the questions I was going to ask were quite completely handled by the opposition, but I do want to give you a chance to expand on it if you want.

I'm trying to get a handle on the foundational learning part of things, and I see in here that it provides grant funding to students to support transition to postsecondary studies and helps them find employment. It covers tuition fees, books, and eligible living costs. What kind of person fits that? Like, is there an income part to this, or is it any kid coming out of high school could – you know, like, that would have been great if I could have gotten it when I went to university. But I'm just wondering: who qualifies for foundational grants, and who are you trying to help? Is it a specific group of people or not? You know, you're spending some more money there, so I'm just trying to see if there's an answer to that.

If there's something that you've left unsaid in the skilled trades and apprenticeship act – like, that has been covered by a lot of different questioners tonight – feel free to expand on that if you've got anything left to say.

With that, I'll pass it on to MLA Allard.

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, MLA Rowswell, and thank you, Mr. Chair. We have talked a lot about skilled trades this evening, which is, I would argue, a large portion of your ministry, but professions

is the other part, and I wanted to talk a little bit about health care professions in particular.

We've all lived through the pandemic, and we learned a lot from it. I would argue that the pandemic was a highlighter and it showed us a number of issues across government and government service delivery. Certainly, it highlighted the importance of an adaptable and resilient health care system. We've seen some things that we need to do differently, and maybe we've learned about attraction and retention and how critical that is. Being from Grande Prairie, with a brand new hospital, it's certainly top of mind for my constituents that we are able to staff that hospital now that we have that beautiful facility open.

Minister, I wanted to spend a few minutes talking to you about this challenge, that we know that health care systems across the country are struggling to find enough staff and, I would argue, probably across the world. I'm glad to see that this government, under your ministry, is taking strong action to resolve the shortage in Alberta, but I know that it takes time.

I want to point you to page 124 of the business plan. It's at the top under initiatives supporting key objectives. The second bullet says:

The ministry will support the implementation of the Alberta Triple Track Satellite Site Pilot Project that will streamline the licensure process and reduce the timeline for processing applications from internationally educated nurses.

I just wanted a little bit more clarity. Can you expand more on what the triple-track satellites pilot project is and how it will reduce staffing shortages in our health care sector in the short and medium term?

I also wanted to know if there's any way for nurses that were internationally educated that happen to already be here in Alberta or in Canada – if they can partake in that program as well.

I don't have a lot of time left, but I'm going to use up my last minute, and then it'll come back to me, I guess, in the next block. I wanted, then, to dovetail onto that. We know that if there's a shortage of nurses, that impacts the work of doctors and vice versa: if there's a shortage of doctors. We need an ample supply of both professions to have our hospitals and health care system running well.

I wanted to know: under your ministry what is being done to ensure doctors from other jurisdictions are being licensed in Alberta by CPSA in a timely fashion and with reasonable requirements given their training and experience, particularly – and this is a Grande Prairie example – a foreign-trained physician who may have practised in other provinces or territories for a number of years and then wants to move to Alberta, and they're being asked, in my opinion, some crazy things, like: can you do an English proficiency test? But they've been practising in a different jurisdiction in Canada for 10, 15, 20, maybe even 30 years, and then they come to Alberta, and we put them through the wringer one more time. It's exceedingly frustrating, when we look at the health care shortages that we are experiencing right across the country, that we can't streamline this. So I'm hoping that you have a really exciting answer for me with respect to the doctors and nurses.

Finally, with my last 17 seconds: what is the Alberta government doing to knock down barriers newcomers face in order to bring in internationally trained health care workers in general? And that would be all allied health, not just doctors and nurses, because we know that they all go hand in glove.

With that, I will let the minister take a shot at these questions. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you, MLA Allard.

Minister, you have up to five minutes to respond.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you so much, Chair, and thank you, Member Rowswell and Member Allard, for your questions. I'm going to begin with Member Rowswell's question. I think your question borders on: who are the folks that benefit from the foundational learning assistance grant? Broadly speaking, Member Rowswell, there are folks who are underemployed or unemployed and who are looking for employment opportunities, are looking to upscale their skills and looking to sharpen their skills or upgrade their education to have a better chance at finding employment.

I think that grant is important because it creates access to adult learning opportunities and supports this government's priorities to upskill and reskill unemployed Albertans for jobs where there is a labour market demand. That really is the focus of the grant.

And we see that today, as I travel across our province meeting with the 11 PSIs that are our key partners. I hear that from the presidents of those institutions and the deans of colleges, about the need to make sure that those fundings are there for those individuals who need a little bit of help. I also hear that from places like NorQuest, you know, NorQuest College, where they deal with a lot of ethnocultural people who are trained overseas, many of whom can't – when they come in, they struggle with language barriers, they struggle with computer literacy, and they struggle with all kinds of child care problems. Those are some of the things that this grant is meant to address.

These programs help to build those foundational skills, development competencies for Albertans wanting to go on to further education or to gain employment. In Budget 2023 we have the foundational learning assistance grants at \$99.2 million, because we believe this is a worthwhile investment. We know that there are gaps in our labour market. We know that there are job shortages. We hear from employers, mostly in the construction industry – I mean, you name it – even in the service industry that they are short of workers. And we want to make sure that we are preparing Albertans for the jobs not just of today but tomorrow and also that Alberta employers, our economy is able to benefit from those individuals who are unemployed but would like to get employment or folks from our Indigenous communities, who face all kinds of barriers to employment. We want to help them knock down those barriers.

You know, Member Allard talks about health care workers. As you know, we saw the impact of the pandemic. It opened up and showed the gap in our health care system and the need for us to work together to make sure that we are training, we are providing the support for health care workers, whether they are trained here or whether they're coming from overseas.

Member, one of the things we did was to provide \$200,000 to the College of Registered Nurses of Alberta for the development of an Alberta site to conduct competency assessment for internationally educated nurses. That is also why we promulgated the Labour Mobility Act, to make sure that folks who are trained in this country, who work in B.C., Ontario, Nova Scotia, can come to Alberta and work. That is why we put forward the Fair Registration Practices Act. That's why we are working with the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta to knock down barriers.

Just this morning I read an article from Manitoba. The Manitoba government is removing a particular exam for medical doctors, and I am looking forward to learning more about that particular program in Manitoba so that we can follow suit, because we want those health care workers to come here to Alberta to work. I don't want them to go to Manitoba or to Saskatchewan or anywhere else. I want them to come here to Alberta.

9:40

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

Now we move to the Official Opposition caucus. MLA Eggen, you may proceed, with up to five minutes of questions.

**Mr. Eggen:** Yes. Well, thank you very much. Certainly, we all have a goal in mind, which is to make sure that Albertans have access to high-quality education and skilled trades and professions, that they can use to have a fulfilling life and to help build the economy here in the province of Alberta. What I think the difference is between our Alberta New Democrats and the UCP is that we recognize that we have to make sure that access to postsecondary and to trades and skilled trades and professions is affordable regardless of where you live here in the province of Alberta.

So while you might be announcing many new spaces for skilled trades and so forth in different colleges and professions, I'm noting still that, of course, we've had the highest increases in tuition in the country here, in Canada. You can open up all the spaces you like, but if it seems to be deemed unaffordable for people, especially young people, then they're less likely to make that choice. To make affordable choices, part of that, as I said before, is to expand apprenticeship, certainly, around the province but to make sure that apprentices are receiving compensation for the labour that they are engaging in while they are doing that training. That's the key to success to so many of our traditional trades, like plumbers and pipefitters and so forth, that they are getting a pay that can help them go through school while they are getting their journeyman ticket and so forth. We need to expand that concept so that we have paid practicum opportunities for students so that you're not ending up with unmanageable debts when you finish your education.

As well, when you are talking about building new spaces and investing in skilled trades and so forth, you have to remember that the foundation of that system is our advanced education – colleges, polytechnics, and universities – across the province and adjusting for population and inflation, which is not insignificant. We've now seen more than \$1.2 billion taken out of the postsecondary system since the UCP has assumed government. So what is needed, besides an ambitious new ministry, which, you know, is interesting for sure: you have to put your money where your mouth is, basically. What we do need to do now is to repair the damage that has taken place in postsecondary right now, recognize that it's an exponential return on the dollar to repair that damage and reinvest in postsecondary in a significant way and to make sure that we keep it affordable for all Albertans who choose to go to school and receive upgraded training through the trades and other skilled professions.

That's what a New Democrat government would do. I'm hoping that we can manage to do so in the spirit of constructive criticism, of course, with which we always do engage in these budget deliberations.

With that, I will cede the balance of my time to my colleague.

**Ms Gray:** Oh, thank you very much. Well, with the final minutes I would ask the minister: if you can just walk me through the labour market development monies, the \$153 million that your ministry – I'm familiar with it in how labour used to use their LMDA money. I just want to understand in the skilled trades ministry where those funds are used.

Can you talk a little bit about how you are working with Health on health professions governance? I ask because I note on page 202, which describes your role in professional governance – it's clear that you oversee the nonhealth professional regulatory organizations, and I imagine there's some co-ordination between yourself and

Health when it comes to the health organizations. If you could speak a little bit more towards that, that would be helpful.

Finally, metric 3(b): I simply wanted to say that the number of people who have applied is an interesting metric, but the number of people who succeeded, I think, would be more valuable.

**The Chair:** Thank you, MLA Gray.

Minister, you have up to five minutes for a response.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you so much, Chair. To Member Eggen's question, I would say a comment about – I don't really see any question there. I saw a comment about the cost of postsecondary tuition. I think that, you know, yes, I get it that oftentimes the path that led all of us to this is politics, but I think also facts do matter, and I think the facts are – let me go back a little bit. Whilst, obviously, I appreciate the need for us to make postsecondary affordable in our province – and I do think that we have done so; the Minister of Advanced Education has been doing a fantastic job in making sure that postsecondary is affordable and available to Albertans – when you take a look at the average cost of tuition amongst the postsecondary institutions in our province, you will come out with one fact, and that is that it is actually far cheaper to go to university and tertiary institutions here in our province than in Ontario, in B.C., and in comparable provinces. Those are facts.

I mean, I understand that you raised an issue that is important to you, and whilst I also understand the politics, I will also caution that Albertans need to be given – you know, the accuracy of information is important to them, and the facts don't bear out the fact that postsecondary tuition is higher in Alberta compared to comparable provinces. We all share in the goal of making sure that postsecondary education is within the reach of any Albertan who wants to attend a postsecondary institution. That is the focus and mandate of this government, that is the focus of the Minister of Advanced Education, and that is my focus as well, the reason why we have all kinds of funding – grants, bursaries, and scholarships – in place in Alberta and the reason why we've undertaken some policy reforms, you know, to make sure that students have a breathing space in being able to pay back some of their loans and things like that.

Listen, I mean, to your question on the need to pay students when they are in the trades programs, as you know, in Alberta the majority, 80 per cent, of learning occurs on the job site under the supervision of a journeyman that acts as a mentor to the apprentice. That 80 per cent of learning that occurs on the job is a paid apprenticeship program. They are paid. The part that is not paid is the 20 per cent learning that occurs in our postsecondary institutions. So, again, I think it is safe to say that they are paid. It is not true that they are not paid.

Member Gray asked me to walk her through the labour market transfer agreement in terms of how those costs are broken down. The labour market transfer agreements are bilateral agreements between individual provinces and the federal government. They are allocated as follows: foundational learning, community adult learning programs, and apprenticeship programs. Currently there are two agreements, the labour market transfer agreement and the workforce development agreement, as far as I know at this point in time. The labour market development agreement assists individuals who are actively receiving employment insurance, those who have had an EI claim in the last five years or are currently unemployed, and individuals who have paid at least the minimum employee portion of EI premiums in five of the last 10 years. The workforce development agreement increases labour market participation of

underrepresented groups by improving the skill levels of unemployed individuals.

9:50

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

We now move to the government caucus for five minutes of questions. MLA Allard, you may start.

**Mrs. Allard:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. We're down to the wire here for time, so I'll be quick. I'm just looking and focusing on outcome 3. It says on page 123, "Alberta has a competitive advantage that attracts skilled workers to meet labour market demands and drive economic growth." I just wanted to highlight that this United Conservative government has been already doing that, so I wanted to, through the chair, congratulate the minister on the work that's already been done to achieve those goals. Looking at our numbers, we're leading the country in economic growth, we're leading the country in net migration into the province, and we're leading the country in entrepreneurial upstarts. It's an exciting time to be in Alberta, so I just wanted to highlight that.

I actually wanted to reference something that MLA Gray mentioned. I, too, had flagged that on page 124, performance indicator 3(b), while interesting and a gauge of sort of the level of interest to come to Alberta – and that's a helpful metric to see how it's trending – I would actually agree with Member Gray that it would be more helpful, I think, on a go-forward to understand how many of those applicants actually were successful so that we know if we're really moving the needle in terms of particularly those professions that have multiple layers of regulatory red tape and regulatory bodies to work through, to see if what we're doing is actually moving the needle for those people.

With that, Mr. Chair, because our time is short, I will cede my time to MLA Stephan.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. Stephan:** Thank you very much. I really appreciate being able to talk about trades. I have two sons who are currently apprenticing in the trades. Even though I have a lot of formal education, I know that in my experience working as a tax lawyer, many people with great trade skills who were entrepreneurial and creative, who were very successful business owners creating a lot of jobs for individuals in central Alberta ended up being my boss.

Just before I ask a question, because I know we are short on time, I do want to comment on some of the comments the members opposite make about affordability. To me, the best way to have affordability and to benefit our postsecondary students is for them to have a job at the end of their education. And, you know, when you look at affordability, it's not just a question of cost; it's also about the income that you earn when you graduate. I expect that most young men and young women who are looking at the trades look at: how much are they going to make when they graduate? Of course, the investment in obtaining an education in the trades is a temporary two- or three-year cost whereas once you graduate, that income that you earn from those skills that you have as a tradesperson will be for the rest of your life. To me, the more important component of affordability is actually the income that you earn when you graduate.

What I can say is that, Minister, I see individuals coming to Alberta. We are seeing record numbers of migration. We are seeing individuals come from not only across Canada but throughout the world, and it's a wonderful thing. I know, Minister Madu, you are a testament of the great opportunities that Alberta has for individuals

who come here and work and want to serve, raise their families. This is a land of freedom and prosperity.

I just want to ask a question. I know that there is a 2019 report on construction trades, and it notes that only 8 per cent of workers were positively influenced by a guidance counsellor. I guess, Minister Madu, what I want to ask is – you know, as a guidance counsellor we often advise on what we know, and there seems to be a scarcity of guidance counsellors who understand and have first-hand, lived experience in the trades so that they're able to advise on the opportunities and the great careers that we have. In terms of promoting the opportunities of trades in our schools so that our young men and young women appreciate the great opportunity in the trades, because often there's a lack of awareness, maybe, I'm just wondering what initiatives the ministry is making to increase the prestige, increase the awareness of opportunities in the trades in our schools for our young men and young women.

**The Chair:** Thank you, MLA Stephan.

Minister, you have just under four minutes to respond.

**Mr. Madu:** Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Member Stephan, for your very thoughtful questions. You know, my second daughter is in grade 9, and they have selective courses that they take. One evening she came home, and she says to me: I selected woodwork, carpentry. I was excited, and that was long before I became the minister of this particular profession. I was excited because I've always thought that the people that build our society are people who are able to work with their hands. And where do you find them? In the skilled trades. This is complicated construction work that requires multitasking skills and things like that. We would not be able to maintain the highest standard of living that we have without making sure that we have our young people fully engaged to participate in the skilled trades.

That is why Premier Smith made this ministry a priority, to focus on the need to tackle the notion of parity of esteem that oftentimes makes it impossible for our young people to go into the skilled trades. We are investing a lot in making sure that we are working with partners, industry stakeholders, postsecondary institutions, and the Department of Education. I've been asking my department to look at the German model. You know, in Germany an apprenticeship education or a skilled trade is part of the elementary school system. Ireland has adopted a similar – I understand Australia is also looking at the same thing. If we are going to get to the point where we completely eliminate the parity of esteem that exists between academic programs and apprenticeship programs, we have to get our young people right while they are in elementary school.

That is why I was so excited that the Department of Education's Minister LaGrange has been working on the careers task force, that will make recommendations on how her ministry, my ministry, Advanced Education can work together to make sure that this is going to be a part of our educational system. The reason why we have been expanding seats – historic funding, as I indicated, began with Budget 2022, with the Alberta at work program, to make sure that we are working with industry stakeholders, with employers to provide them the resources they need to attract our young people in the skilled trades. Women Building Futures is a classical example. They are doing amazing work there. I want to make sure that our young women find comfort in organizations like Women Building Futures, the organization that deals with young women within the First Nations communities. We have to work with them.

You know, in this Budget 2023 there is a component of a skilled trade training program for ethnocultural communities because we don't want them to come here and pursue just degrees; we want them to make that particular transition to work in the skilled trades because that is really what our economy needs at this point in time. I'm excited, and I look forward to the work that lies ahead.

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

I must advise the committee that the time allotted for consideration of the ministry's estimates has concluded. I would like to remind committee members that we are scheduled to meet tomorrow, March 14, 2023, at 9 a.m. to consider the estimates of the Ministry of Jobs, Economy and Northern Development.

Thank you, everyone. This meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 10 p.m.]









