



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Second Session

Standing Committee
on
Families and Communities

Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General
Consideration of Main Estimates

Monday, May 2, 2016
7 p.m.

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The 29th Legislature
Second Session**

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

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Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W), Deputy Chair

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Standing Committee on Families and Communities

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Curtis Clarke, Associate Deputy Solicitor General

Rae-Ann Lajeunesse, Assistant Deputy Minister, Justice Services

Gerald Lamoureux, Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Services

Bill Sweeney, Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Security

Eric Tolppanen, Assistant Deputy Minister, Alberta Crown Prosecution Services

7 p.m.

Monday, May 2, 2016

[Ms Goehring in the chair]

**Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General
Consideration of Main Estimates**

The Chair: I would like to call this meeting to order and welcome everyone. The committee has under consideration the estimates of the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017.

I'd ask that we go around the table and have all MLAs introduce themselves for the record. Minister, when we get to you, please introduce the staff that are joining you at the table. I'm Nicole Goehring, MLA for Edmonton-Castle Downs and chair of the committee. We'll continue, starting to my right with the deputy chair.

Mr. Smith: Deputy Chair Mark Smith, Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Cyr: Scott Cyr, MLA for Bonnyville-Cold Lake. To my right I have Mr. Kyle Murphy, who is my legislative assistant.

Mr. Yao: Tany Yao, MLA, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Ms Ganley: Kathleen Ganley. I am the MLA for Calgary-Buffalo and the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General. I have with me today Philip Bryden, Deputy Minister of Justice and Deputy Solicitor General; Dr. Curtis Clarke, associate deputy Solicitor General; Gerald Lamoureux, assistant deputy minister of corporate services; and Brad Wells, senior financial officer, who is, in fact, seated behind me somewhere. Seated behind me are Eric Tolppanen, assistant deputy minister, Alberta Crown prosecution services; Fiona Lavoy, acting assistant deputy minister, correctional services; Rae-Ann Lajeunesse, assistant deputy minister, justice services; Frank Bosscha, assistant deputy minister, legal services; Lynn Varty, assistant deputy minister, resolution and court administration services; Bill Sweeney, assistant deputy minister, public security; Rodney Yaremchuk, executive director, human resources; Matt Barker, executive director, policy and planning services branch; and Dan Laville, director of communications.

Mr. Hinkley: Bruce Hinkley, MLA, Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Horne: Trevor Horne, MLA for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

Mr. Westhead: Cameron Westhead, Banff-Cochrane.

Ms Luff: Robyn Luff, MLA for Calgary-East.

Ms Drever: Deborah Drever, MLA for Calgary-Bow.

Mr. Shepherd: David Shepherd, Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Orr: Ron Orr, MLA for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mrs. Pitt: Angela Pitt, MLA, Airdrie.

Mr. Drysdale: Wayne Drysdale, MLA, Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

The Chair: Thank you, everyone.

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

Hon. members, the standing orders set out the process for consideration of the main estimates. Before we proceed with

consideration of the main estimates for the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General, I would like to review briefly the standing orders governing the speaking rotation. As provided for in Standing Order 59.01(6), the rotation is as follows. The minister or the member of Executive Council acting on the minister's behalf may make opening comments not to exceed 10 minutes. For the hour that follows, members of the Official Opposition and the minister may speak. For the next 20 minutes the members of the third party, if any, and the minister may speak. For the next 20 minutes the members of any other party represented in the Assembly or any independent members and the minister may speak. For the next 20 minutes private members of the government caucus and the minister may speak. For the time remaining, we will follow the same rotation just outlined to the extent possible; however, the speaking times are then reduced to five minutes as set out in Standing Order 59.02(1)(c).

I'd like to note for the record that this evening Mr. Ellis is an official substitute for Ms Jansen, but I do not see him present.

Mr. Drysdale: He'll be here. He was at the MLA luncheon and his table went last, so he'll be right here.

The Chair: Thank you.

Members may speak more than once; however, speaking times for the first rotation are limited to 10 minutes at any one time. A minister and a member may combine their time for a total of 20 minutes. For the final rotation, with speaking times of five minutes, once again a minister and a member may combine their speaking time for a maximum total of 10 minutes. Discussion should flow through the chair at all times regardless of whether or not speaking time is combined. Members are asked to advise the chair at the beginning of their speech if they wish to combine their time with the minister's time.

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

Three hours have been scheduled to consider the estimates of the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General. 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? Seeing no opposition, we'll call the break at about midpoint.

Committee members, ministers, and other members who are not committee members may participate; however, only a committee member or an official substitute for a committee member may introduce an amendment during a committee's review of the estimates.

Ministry officials may be present, and at the direction of the minister officials from the ministry may address the committee. Ministry staff seated in the gallery, if called upon, have access to the microphone in the gallery area. Members' staff may be present and, space permitting, may sit at the table or behind their members along the committee room wall. Members have priority for seating at the table at all times.

If debate is exhausted prior to the three hours, the ministry's estimates are deemed to have been considered for the time allotted in the schedule, and we will adjourn. Otherwise, we will adjourn this evening at 10 o'clock.

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

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

Again I will remind all meeting participants to address their questions and responses through the chair and not directly to each other.

The vote on the estimates is deferred until consideration of all ministry estimates has concluded and will occur in Committee of Supply on May 17, 2016.

If there are amendments, an amendment to the estimates cannot seek to increase the amount of the estimates being considered, change the destination of a grant, or change the destination or purpose of a subsidy. An amendment may be proposed to reduce an estimate, but the amendment cannot propose to reduce the estimate by its full amount. The vote on amendments is deferred until Committee of Supply convenes on May 17, 2016. Amendments must be in writing and approved by Parliamentary Counsel prior to the meeting at which they are to be moved. Twenty copies of amendments must be provided at the meeting for committee members and staff.

I will now invite the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General to begin with her opening remarks. You have 10 minutes.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm here today to present my ministry's 2016-19 business plan and highlights of the Alberta Justice and Solicitor General's 2016-17 estimates.

I will skip the introductions because we've already done that.

My ministry's business plan helps to ensure that Albertans can live in safe and resilient communities while having access to a fair and innovative justice system. We work alongside partners in law enforcement, family justice, the judiciary, and many other groups and organizations. Justice and Solicitor General has direct or shared responsibility for all elements of the justice system in Alberta. My ministry's programs and services help ensure Albertans' security and their access to justice through the efficient functioning of the courts, corrections, and law enforcement.

Our business plan supports the ministry's mission of ensuring Albertans have safe communities and an accessible, effective, and innovative justice system. My ministry's goals focus on outcomes. Specifically, these goals include that vulnerable Albertans are safe and supported during interactions with the justice system; justice system partners collaborate to make best use of resources to protect Albertans through prevention, intervention, and rehabilitation; Albertans' civil, criminal, and family legal issues are resolved quickly and appropriately; Albertans have access to non court based resolution options when it best suits their needs.

This year our ministry's consolidated operating expense budget is nearly \$1,396,000,000. We received a net increase of about 2.2 per cent, or \$29.8 million, over the 2015-16 forecast. That increase is largely a result of adding \$42 million in amortization expense related to the Alberta first responder radio communications system, or AFRRCs. Others include additional support to ALERT so that it can maintain its current number of officers and support staff – this occurred as a result of the end to a federal funding program – increased support to legal aid, and an additional operating cost to support the Alberta first responder radio communications system as it moves to being fully operational.

7:10

To offset these increases, savings will be achieved across the ministry in 2016-17, including hiring and overtime restraint, attrition management, and implementation of technological efficiencies such as improved scheduling software and new business processes. In addition, we are further controlling costs by implementing the government's two-year wage freeze for managers and opted-out and excluded employees. We also continue to look closely at our programs and services to identify changes that will

increase efficiency while preserving core programs that Albertans need.

Before I provide an overview of how Budget 2016 is being used to protect Albertans and support community safety and resilience, I'd like to draw your attention to several increases in the estimates. As you can see, in most divisions program support is increased. This is simply a reallocation of costs and has no impact on the overall budget targets. Costs for items such as premiums for the Workers' Compensation Board and risk management insurance have been centralized, so they'll show up under that line in each individual budget. Previously these costs were allocated in a number of areas. This change streamlines the allocation process of these shared costs and eliminates unnecessary work practices. Basically, the work of handling these administrative items has been centralized.

Now moving on to the divisions in the order in which they appear in the estimates – and I'll apologize that I didn't get through this last time, and I probably won't this time either – to ministry support services, supporting the work of the department is my ministry support services division. The division includes various corporate functions such as information technology, financial services, planning and policy development, human resources, and communications. Its voted operating budget for 2016-17 is \$52.4 million, a \$2.7 million decrease from the 2015-16 forecast. This decrease is primarily due to an internal budget reallocation as a result of implementing operational efficiencies and addressing ministry priorities and reduced supplies and services cost, hiring and overtime restraint, attrition management, and reduced IT-related costs.

Resolution and court administration services. The resolution and court administration services division promotes fair and equitable access to the justice system for all Albertans. In addition, they support the operation of three Alberta courts through administrative services and by offering a broad range of programs and services. Those programs and services provide Albertans with enhanced access to justice, including information, dispute resolution, and court assistance. The voted budget for this division is \$194.7 million, a decrease of \$4.4 million, or 2.2 per cent. These savings will be achieved mainly through reduced manpower and supplies and services costs and restructuring of services to achieve increased efficiencies. As you can see in the estimates, the budget for ticket processing has increased. This will ensure that adequate resources are in place to address increasing ticket volumes.

Legal services. Moving on to that division, it consists of two branches. Civil law provides legal services to all government of Alberta ministries and represents them in matters before the courts and tribunals. The Legislative Counsel office drafts government public bills, regulations, and orders in council. The division's voted operating budget is \$54.8 million, a decrease of \$0.6 million, or 1.2 per cent. The decrease will be achieved primarily through position management.

The Alberta Crown prosecution service prosecutes all offences under the Criminal Code of Canada and the Youth Criminal Justice Act as well as provincial statutes in all courts in the province and the Supreme Court of Canada. The division's budget is \$90.8 million, a decrease of \$1.7 million, or 1.9 per cent, from the 2015-16 forecast. This decrease will come primarily through the management and opted-out and excluded employees wage freeze savings, exercising restraint in filling vacancies, and reduced spending on supplies and services.

Moving on to the justice services division, key areas the division is responsible for are family support order services, which include maintenance enforcement and child support recalculation programs; the office of the Chief Medical Examiner; motor vehicle

accident claims and recoveries; the civil forfeiture office; the Property Rights Advocate; and the grant for Legal Aid Alberta. The division's voted operating expense for 2016 is \$40.1 million, a decrease of \$0.9 million, or 2.2 per cent. The decrease will be achieved primarily through position management.

Motor vehicle accident claims is a statutory program, and its budget is reported separately in the estimates. Its budget is \$21.1 million. This primarily represents payouts for Albertans injured in motor vehicle accidents by people without insurance.

As mentioned, the justice services division is responsible for the grant to Legal Aid Alberta, which ensures that low-income Albertans have access to legal services. This year's grant will be \$68.5 million, an increase of \$2.5 million over the 2015-16 forecast. Funding for Legal Aid Alberta is provided by the provincial and federal governments and the Alberta Law Foundation. The total grant for Legal Aid has increased by almost 60 per cent in the past decade, with the lion's share being provided by the province. The recent federal budget includes additional funding for the provision of criminal legal aid in Canada, with \$9 million pledged for this year. Alberta's share of this has not yet been specified. As you may know, a review of legal aid is currently under way. It's our goal that the recommendations from this review will be useful, practical, and affordable both now and in the future.

Now moving on to public security, this division is responsible for contract policing for the RCMP as Alberta's provincial police service; the Alberta Serious Incident Response Team, or ASIRT; the Alberta law enforcement response team, or ALERT; First Nations policing oversight; standards enforcement officers, including sheriffs, fish and wildlife, and commercial vehicle enforcement; the AFRRC system, mentioned earlier; crime prevention and restorative justice; and the victims of crime fund. The division's voted operating budget is \$501.2 million, an increase of \$5.4 million, or 1.1 per cent. This increase is primarily for funding for the Alberta first responder radio communications system as the project moves from construction to operational, an increase to ALERT, and addressing population growth for the municipal police assistance grant.

Where am I at?

The Chair: Fifteen seconds.

Ms Ganley: Fifteen seconds. All right. I'll jump to the conclusion.

Madam Chair, in summary, Budget 2016-17 maintains core services and programs provided by Justice and Solicitor General.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

For the hour that follows, members of the Official Opposition and the minister may speak. Would you like the timer to be set for 20-minute intervals, or would you prefer to let the full time flow?

Mr. Cyr: Twenty minutes.

The Chair: Twenty minutes. And will you be going back and forth with the minister?

Mr. Cyr: If the minister is okay with that.

Ms Ganley: Yeah.

The Chair: Thank you.

Go ahead, Mr. Cyr.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to thank Minister Ganley and all of the Justice and Solicitor General staff that are here today. I know this is a hot day, and it's definitely warm in here. It's definitely not on purpose by the opposition. The reason that we're

here today is to ensure that there is transparency in the process, putting victims of crime and vulnerable citizens first, to ensure that law enforcement has the right tools to support and maintain public safety to the best of our ability, to ensure that our justice system is fair and holds those who are guilty accountable for their actions.

Minister, like the last time we met for estimates, we'd like to cover a lot today. If at any point I've asked a question and I do interject, please don't take offence by that. It is simply that I have received the information that I'm looking for and that I have to commend your team on getting it to me sooner than we expected.

I'd like to start with questions on the Court of Queen's Bench, line 2.6, page 172. Do you or your government plan on asking the federal government for more judges on the Court of Queen's Bench?

Ms Ganley: The way the Court of Queen's Bench works is that the number of positions is created by the province, so that's within my purview, and then those appointments are made by the federal government. Currently there are multiple vacancies both in terms of the Court of Queen's Bench and in terms of the Court of Appeal. We have one Chief Justice vacancy, one associate chief – oh, sorry; that's incorrect. I'm saying the wrong thing.

7:20

We have six vacancies in total on the Court of Queen's Bench. We have been pursuing with the federal government those vacancies and the four on the Court of Appeal. I think we've written to them a number of times, and I've spoken in person. As I understand it, the Chief Justice of the Court of Queen's Bench himself has also spoken to the federal government about this, so we are hopeful those appointments will be made shortly. We are also working within my ministry to look at creating additional positions, but again those vacancies will need to be filled by the federal government.

Mr. Cyr: Were those vacancies left by the past government not asking that they be filled, or have we been after the federal government for a long period of time to fill these vacancies?

Ms Ganley: I can only, obviously, speak to since we have been in. We raised the issue, I think, probably in my first letter, as I recall; we raised it quite quickly. I can't speak to what the former government had done with respect to the former federal government, but certainly it is our hope that they will be filled soon.

Mr. Cyr: Okay. Thank you.

My next set of questions is going to be about ALERT, line 7, page 173. Minister, do you see value in restructuring ALERT? Is there a plan of the ministry, and is it represented in a shuffle of divisions under public security?

Ms Ganley: With respect to ALERT we have been working with them, obviously, with respect to the budget shortfall, which was created as a result of an end to a federal funding grant under the former federal government. Ultimately, we stepped in to fill that gap. There are also some changes going on with ALERT. As with anything that's been operating for a certain number of years, at a certain point it's sort of worth talking to stakeholders and looking into it to ensure that it's still fulfilling the function that it was intended to fulfill in the best possible way. We think ALERT is doing a fantastic job, but I think there are always ways in which it can be improved, so we are working with our stakeholders in law enforcement to ensure that it is meeting the needs of all of those stakeholders.

Mr. Cyr: Which stakeholders?

Ms Ganley: The other police services and the municipalities as well. A lot of municipalities have varied views on ALERT. For the most part they're very, very supportive, you know, but some municipalities or police services have the view that a few things could be improved, so we're working with them to ensure that we're sort of doing the best job to meet everybody's needs.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you.

All right. Under which line is the boost to funding that you recently announced for ALERT?

Ms Ganley: That would be line 7.8, organized and serious crime.

Mr. Cyr: Fair enough. Thank you.

Ms Ganley: Sorry. There is increased funding to ALERT there, but we've also moved the SCAN and sheriff surveillance units back under Justice and Solicitor General. In addition to the \$2.6 million increase, there's a little bit of work that we're paying for elsewhere, so the increase is actually a little bit more than that.

Mr. Cyr: Was the funding that you announced a year-over-year increase, or does it just replace the funding that was originally cut from ALERT?

Ms Ganley: It replaces a combination of things. It replaces the funding that ended from the federal government, but ALERT had also been previously directed under the previous government to draw down on their surplus, and that surplus is not completely but nearly exhausted this year, as I understand it, so a little bit in terms of the end of federal funding and a little bit to bump them up to cover what they were covering from their surplus previously.

Mr. Cyr: In this last year has ALERT laid off any significant number of employees?

Ms Ganley: ALERT hasn't laid off any employees.

Mr. Cyr: Not any employees? Congratulations.

Ms Ganley: Thanks.

Mr. Cyr: If we could change track here to fentanyl, under line 7.8. Minister, when you recently announced that you were restoring funding to ALERT, was the dollar amount the same as it was previous to ALERT's cut in budget there? Your press release shows that you're putting more money into ALERT, but is this not just a replacement of the money that was taken away by the federal funding not going forward?

Ms Ganley: There is a little bit of that. Again, ALERT was also drawing down on their surplus a little bit, so there's a little bit of a replacement for that. It doesn't show up directly in the ALERT budget. There's an increase of \$2.6 million for ALERT. We've also moved safer communities and neighbourhoods, so the SCAN team, and the sheriffs back into the ministry, so we're paying for that service in-house now. The total increase that would have come through the budget would have been in part to replace the federal funding but in part due to the surplus that they've been drawing down on.

Mr. Cyr: Okay. Are there going to be any further programs by the federal government like an ALERT initiative, and have we asked them to continue or replace that funding?

Ms Ganley: That funding had ended under the previous federal government. We had sort of asked them to look into it, but

obviously that's no longer something they're in a position to do. With respect to the new federal government, they had committed a hundred million dollars, I believe, in their platform to fight guns and gangs, so Alberta's share of that would be about \$10 million on a per capita basis. We had hoped to get a commitment from them that we as the province could use that funding however we liked, and we were going to use it for ALERT, but no such commitment has come yet, so we're not really sure exactly what they're going to be doing with that. We think that we have sort of a ready-made Alberta solution and that that's the best place for this funding.

Mr. Cyr: If you did get that \$10 million, would that be per year or for the next three years? I'm sorry. I'm not familiar with that.

Ms Ganley: I'm basing this on their platform commitment. As I understand, it's over five years.

Mr. Cyr: So \$2 million per year?

Ms Ganley: Roughly, I would imagine.

Mr. Cyr: Okay. So would you subtract \$2 million from what you're now giving ALERT, or would you increase by \$2 million what you've already given them?

Ms Ganley: Well, I think that we're going to have to determine that when we get there. I mean, our initial hope had been that the federal government would step up and fill that gap so that the province wouldn't have to. We're not in a time when we have a lot of increases to spread around. Our initial hope had been that we could use that funding for that, but now that that hasn't been the case, I think we'll have to see going forward.

Mr. Cyr: Okay. Thank you.

Due to the rise in narcotics like fentanyl and W-18 does the Justice ministry anticipate an increase in drug-related charges? If so, is your government looking to introduce programs similar to the Calgary drug treatment court?

Ms Ganley: Calgary and Edmonton both have drug treatment courts. We have been working with those drug treatment courts. Again, there was sort of an end to a stream of funding, so we've been working with them. Actually, many of the things that are done in those drug treatment courts are things that we already do within the ministry, so we're looking to sort of find efficiencies and combine everything together. Of course, this ministry already has probation officers who can monitor and counsellors who can support, so we're looking to make sure that we're as efficient as possible with those drug courts. Once that work is done, I think that it would be worth taking a look to see if they can be expanded elsewhere.

In terms of fentanyl, I mean, it's an incredibly deadly drug, so I think that we have to move in all manners in which we can to prevent it from getting into people's hands. Now, ALERT is obviously one piece of that, but I think that a larger piece is going to fall within the Health ministry in terms of ensuring that treatment beds are available, in terms of ensuring that naloxone kits are available.

We will be working with our police partners, and the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police has brought forward two resolutions with respect to regulation of the precursors, with respect to the regulation of pill presses. By and large, those things are primarily within the jurisdiction of the federal government, so we have asked them to act on that. Obviously, as was made evident recently, there was a small piece of that pill press that comes within the provincial

government. I don't know if I can refer to that because that's something that's coming forward in the House, but I'm sure that everyone is familiar with what I'm talking about.

7:30

Mr. Cyr: Thank you. Are you expecting any additional cost to be brought forward in the fight on fentanyl and W-18? Are you allocating new funds to do that?

Ms Ganley: Well, in terms of supporting ALERT, obviously we did allocate new funds there. We had also put out a call for grants in terms of people coming forward to provide educational materials to youth and to the public. I think, you know, the fact that people are still using this incredibly deadly drug indicates that maybe the message hasn't gotten out there as much as it should have. I mean, you can die on your first interaction with this drug – it's incredibly deadly; it's incredibly potent – so we're hoping to communicate that message. Again, a lot of the increases will be coming within the Health ministry budget because that will have to do with sort of increases in treatment options.

Mr. Cyr: The fight against it: now, what about the courts? Are we allocating more money in the court system to deal with these drug traffickers?

Ms Ganley: Well, I think that they'll come through the court system in the normal course, so there's no specific money allocated for that.

Mr. Cyr: Okay. Does the cost include the victims of crime that are affected by drug dealers and users, and has there been any consideration of how this will affect the plans for the victims of crime fund?

Ms Ganley: Certainly, our plan going forward in terms of the victims of crime fund is to follow the recommendations of the Auditor General, which are to determine what those needs are, where the gaps are, how we're best filling those needs, and how to best measure whether we're filling those needs, and then to move forward on that basis. So that's sort of what's going to happen in terms of that piece. Obviously, grants are available also under the civil forfeiture program for a number of programs that may be out there. But in terms, you know, specifically of victims in this instance I think, again, that a lot of that focus is going to be on treatment and on ensuring that people have the supports they need so that we can address sort of those underlying drivers of crime and poverty and ensure that people are supported and not fall into addictions in the first place.

Mr. Cyr: I'd like to move further into victims of crime, the fund itself. On page 182 of the estimate package, the victims of crime fund statement of operations.

Ms Ganley: Sorry. Statement of operations?

Mr. Cyr: Yeah. This is the victims of crime fund statement of operations at the very top. This is the whole fund itself, revenues and expenses.

Ms Ganley: Yes.

Mr. Cyr: All right. Again this year it looks like we're having a remarkably high reserve going into the victims of crime fund. Where are we going to be looking at using these funds? Is it going to be through the front lines? Is this kind of where we're going with this, or do you have other plans for it? There have been calls for,

say, legal aid extra funding. These are obviously funds that we need to go to our most vulnerable, so I was just curious: is there a specific direction that you are going with these funds?

Ms Ganley: With respect to the victims of crime fund there's been a surplus accumulating in that fund for about the last 15 years. The Auditor General has issued a report, and that report essentially asks us to sort of identify what the current needs are, what the forecasted needs are, the gaps in service, how much funding will be required, and to get an implementation and monitoring plan in place. So we're working to do that now. I think that report came out in February, and we sort of had to make an initial response saying how we're going to address that work, and now we'll sort of go on and do it.

Currently it's the case that of the \$33.3 million going through that fund, \$17 million is for grants to police-based and community-based victims' programs – those are grants to sort of outside programs – and then \$15.2 million is for the financial benefits to individual victims of violent crime. An application is made, and then, based on a number of factors, financial benefits are paid out.

I don't know: does that answer your question?

Mr. Cyr: Well, like, we don't see any extra spending forecasted in your 2016 and 2017 estimates. Are you going to be amending the spending over this next year, are you speculating, based on the Auditor General's report of the fact that we're not utilizing the reserves appropriately?

Ms Ganley: That's certainly sort of one comment, but really what the Auditor General, I would say, in principle has asked us to do is to understand what it is that we're trying to achieve with that money and to achieve that. The Auditor General has asked us to sort of go away and determine what the needs are and how best to meet them, so before we go forward and say that we're going to be using additional funds, I think we need to do what the Auditor General has asked, and that is to identify what those needs are. Once we have identified, you know, sort of what the needs of victims' groups are and how best to meet them and how much it's going to cost to meet them, we will be coming forward with a fulsome plan. But at this point we're not sort of putting the money before the plan because that's not what we've been asked to do.

Mr. Cyr: So when are we anticipating that this plan will be rolled out by? Is it sometime in the next six months or three years?

Ms Ganley: It looks like we initially completed an assessment in June and then – no. Sorry. June is upcoming. June is in the future. There's an initial review and then sort of the completion of the development of financial policy that addresses how the ministry will manage the funds, expected back by the Auditor General in September, and then development of preliminary performance measures in October. It sort of rolls forward from there.

Mr. Cyr: Okay. All right. When we did the last set of estimates, I brought this concern forward that reserves were being accumulated inappropriately there. It didn't seem to be a high priority for the ministry. It wasn't until the Auditor General got involved that this became a priority. Have there been any corrective actions with the management that is in charge of this fund for their lack of management on it?

Ms Ganley: Well, I think it needs to be borne in mind that, again, I can't speak to anything that happened before my time – right? – so it's difficult for me to know where that direction came from in terms

of keeping the fund. I mean, the fund has been accumulating a surplus for 15 years. I think that we're now moving on getting that plan into place, and everyone's working on doing that. So in terms of the individual employees, again, I can't speak to where decisions were made in the former government.

Mr. Cyr: Okay. Does the government plan on implementing all of the recommendations that the Auditor General has brought forward in his February 2016 Auditor General's report?

Ms Ganley: Yeah.

7:40

Mr. Cyr: With the downturn that we are experiencing right now, is the ministry expecting to have more victims of crime come forward, more crime to be happening in this next year? Has that been worked into this fund?

Ms Ganley: Well, again, I think what the Auditor General has asked us to do is to sort of look at the needs and what we predict the future needs will be. Obviously, that's going to be done in an imperfect way because it's hard to see the future. But it's to look at what the needs are and how we're measuring outcomes, and then we'll sort of move forward from there.

Mr. Cyr: Okay. Has the ministry had requests from our victim services units for more funding since 2009?

Ms Ganley: Again, I can really only speak to what I've received personally, but, yes, I have met with various victims' groups and with the association. They have indicated a need for greater funding.

Mr. Cyr: So with this big reserve that we're sitting on right now, isn't it being considered that we would, say, account for inflation or do something so that these victim services units are able to, I guess, get through this downturn?

Ms Ganley: Again, I think that what we've been asked to do by the Auditor General and what is, in my view, a very prudent practice is to look at what the needs are and how to best address those needs. We will be working with those victims' groups to do that, and they have been, you know, very receptive. We've had a really good working relationship with them, so I don't think that there will be any challenges there.

Mr. Cyr: Okay. On page 97 of the business plan, if you go to the capital investment at the very bottom, the very final line, victims of crime fund, you'll notice that it goes \$25,000, \$625,000, \$25,000, \$25,000, and \$25,000. What is that \$600,000 for?

Ms Ganley: I'm going to guess that that's a typo. No. I'm wrong. Sorry about that. That is the grant management system.

Mr. Cyr: Okay. The grant management system: is this tied in with Service Alberta, or how exactly is the grant system the responsibility of the victims of crime fund?

Ms Ganley: I think I'm going to pass that over.

Mr. Lamoureux: The system has been developed to track grants and management of the distribution of those grants out of that fund.

Mr. Cyr: To the various . . .

Mr. Lamoureux: Recipients.

Mr. Cyr: Fair enough. So we had no system in before?

Mr. Lamoureux: We had an antiquated system that needed to be replaced.

Mr. Cyr: Like Excel?

Mr. Lamoureux: No. I think it was a little more sophisticated than Excel, but it had reached the end of its life.

Mr. Cyr: Okay. Thank you.

This software: is this the preliminary investment, or is this all encompassed, installed, and trained?

Mr. Lamoureux: It's installed and trained, up and running. There's a small funding need in the future, but it's basically up and running now.

Mr. Cyr: Perfect. Thank you.

Okay. Now I'd like to move on to legal aid. Line 5 of the estimates, page 172. On line 5 we see a \$2.5 million increase to Legal Aid in 2016-17. Is this the amount of money that Legal Aid requested? Is it more? Is it less?

Ms Ganley: No. That's less money than what Legal Aid requested.

Mr. Cyr: How much was originally requested?

Ms Ganley: I'm trying to remember off the top of my head. I think it was \$75 million.

Mr. Cyr: Now, \$75 million?

Ms Ganley: Yeah, in total.

Mr. Cyr: Every year or over five years?

Ms Ganley: No, for this year.

Mr. Cyr: Oh, sorry. You're talking total.

Ms Ganley: Sorry. Not as an increase. I guess if last year's grant was \$66 million, then they would have requested a \$9 million increase. Sorry. They were requesting \$75 million in total.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you. Now, this \$2.5 million: are we anticipating that we're going to push through more legal aid cases with this money, or is this going to go to the increase in legal fees that we're paying out?

Ms Ganley: Last year when we initially announced the review of legal aid, we made some interim changes. I suppose that by "we" I mean Legal Aid because they would have been the ones to make the interim changes. Those interim changes included, you know, an end to certain services, so focusing on their core mandate of representation. They also included an increase to the financial eligibility guidelines, how much money you can make and still qualify for legal aid, and an increase to the tariff rate. That increase to the tariff rate was largely as a result of the fact that they were having difficulty retaining counsel in certain areas, particularly in the area of family law. They reported that sometimes it was taking up to six months in some areas to get counsel in place for individuals needing services in that area.

Those changes were made in last year's budget, so this increase will go to cover, again, an additional number of people. I think they've been saying that they sort of saw an increase of about 30 per cent in their applications.

Mr. Cyr: Sorry. This last year we saw a 30 per cent increase in applications?

Ms Ganley: That's what they had indicated. I don't think I can verify those numbers, but they had indicated that there's a significant increase in the applications for legal aid. Let's put it that way.

Mr. Cyr: Is that because of our announcements of increased funding to Legal Aid?

Ms Ganley: No. No, I think that's just as a result of – I mean, that's just more people applying. That's not people that we're covering. That's people who are coming forward to Legal Aid and applying for coverage. They will make that decision based on their own individual circumstances.

Mr. Cyr: Okay. So \$2.5 million isn't 30 per cent. Are we anticipating that this six-month wait time is going to actually increase, not decrease?

Ms Ganley: That specific number that I had talked about when I was saying six months: that was a reference specifically to people in certain areas of the province not being able to get family counsel on their matters because they couldn't retain lawyers for the tariff rate they were paying. That was the reason for the increase in the tariff rate.

In terms of wait times, I couldn't tell you exactly what they are at Legal Aid, but that's not based on funding. That's not the issue. You know, sometimes people will wait because their application needs to be completed or any other number of things. That's not a sort of situation where you have to wait for the money to come in.

Mr. Cyr: Are we . . .

The Chair: I'd just like to interrupt and remind the member that we're here to discuss the estimates.

Mr. Cyr: This is the cost of legal aid, and the amount of usage increasing to Legal Aid by 30 per cent has got to be a concern.

The Chair: Okay. Just the wait times – I would just like to remind you to stay on the estimates, please.

7:50

Mr. Cyr: Fair enough. Thank you, Ms Chair. All right.

In the last estimates cycle you also stated that your department was going through review of the legal aid, and now it is listed as a key initiative in the ministry's business plan on page 92, 1.1. What is the status of this review, and when can the public expect to see the results of the review?

Ms Ganley: The review is currently under way. It's looking at a number of things, including the governance model, the service delivery model, what services are delivered, and a number of other things, with a view to just ensuring that that money is targeted most specifically. I understand that I should be seeing some results in late summer and then, if the result is that changes are needed, how we want to move forward with those changes.

Mr. Cyr: Okay. Will that be public, that review?

Ms Ganley: The review has certainly gone out and consulted widely, so we've consulted with all sorts of different stakeholder groups, and then the ministry will, based on that, make its decisions.

Mr. Cyr: So it won't be public, released to the public, the review that you're compiling right now?

Ms Ganley: Well, it's just a review. It's an internal review of legal aid because we're the funder.

Mr. Cyr: Fair enough. Thank you.

On line 5, again back on the estimates statements, page 172. Does the increase in legal aid include any support for – and I'm sorry; I had trouble with this last time – the Rowbotham services?

Ms Ganley: Rowbotham applications are applications that if an individual is denied legal aid, they will go to the court and they will make a Rowbotham application for state-funded counsel. There were a number of these applications as a result of, I guess, a perception that, you know, people weren't being covered who ought to be covered. One of the ways we have addressed that is with the interim changes to legal aid. One of the things that was implemented was a review panel, so under certain circumstances a person can appeal the denial of legal aid, and we're hoping to use that administrative process. In terms of Rowbotham applications, they weren't being funded by the government in the first place. Those applications were brought by counsel acting on a pro bono basis usually, and in instances in which they were successful, sometimes then counsel would be paid for.

Mr. Cyr: Okay. I'd like to move to a different topic, the maintenance enforcement program, MEP. Page 96 highlights performance measure 4(a), which has to do with the regularity of payment rate of the maintenance enforcement program. During the last estimates cycle you alluded to an interprovincial agreement that would make collection of MEP payments more effective. This business plan is targeting the regularity of payments to go down by 2 per cent this year and the next. How can the target be lowered by the ministry when only five months ago you were claiming regularity would increase?

Ms Ganley: As I understand it, that agreement has been signed, which allows a certain amount of enforcement back and forth. The reason that we're projecting that there might be a slight drop is because of current economic circumstances. Sometimes people just don't pay their child support, but in some cases people don't have the money to pay their child support. Maintenance enforcement enforces against things like wages and bank accounts and that sort of thing. If people don't have those things, if they don't have any wages, there's a decrease in enforcement.

Mr. Cyr: That's a fair analysis, I would say. Okay.

Which line item does the maintenance enforcement program fall under?

Ms Ganley: It is under 6.2, which is family support order services.

Mr. Cyr: Do we have an amount of how much it costs?

Ms Ganley: Line 6.2, which encompasses both, is there, but that encompasses both the maintenance enforcement program and the child support recalculation program. How much is for each? There isn't a breakdown, in part as a result of the fact that the recalculation program is recalculation of child support, so the two things kind of work together, if you will.

Mr. Cyr: I see that we're anticipating a decrease in this line item. Is that reasonable, that it's going to be harder to collect money, that we're going to be spending less money in that area?

Ms Ganley: The \$0.8 million decrease is mainly manpower savings initiatives and a focus on reducing overall costs by centralization of shared costs. What I alluded to before in terms of the Workers'

Compensation Board and risk management insurance payments being centralized under that program support item, some of it is that. Some of it will be achieved through hiring restraint and salary freezes.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you. Does this line item include the cost of the investigation of the breach of the MEP client information earlier this year? When will that review conclude? Will that information be made public?

Ms Ganley: In terms of the incident we had with respect to that particular employee, maintenance enforcement wasn't the one doing the investigation in that instance. There will be an employer investigation. There was also an investigation by a police service, so obviously I can't comment on what the police service is going to do with their investigation.

Mr. Cyr: All right. Recently my office has gotten a few e-mails stating that there is a review happening on the maintenance enforcement program underneath section 7. They are not able to access funds from the maintenance enforcement program due to this. Is this a normal procedure? Is that cost captured in this line item as well?

Ms Ganley: I don't understand there to be a review under way. However, I believe that there was a court decision that's had an impact in this area. Here is someone to speak to the specifics.

Ms Lajeunesse: I'm Rae-Ann Lajeunesse. I'm the ADM of justice services. Section 7 expenses are basically extraordinary expenses. Oftentimes the orders aren't clear as to what may or may not be included, so maintenance enforcement has sort of an administrative policy to determine when they would accept certain special expenses. Recently a court observed that that might be operating outside of the bounds of MEP's authority, so we're taking that under consideration to determine if we should in fact be considering the merit of unspecified special expenses. We're the only jurisdiction that does that.

So that's sort of what has led us to this. It wasn't a scheduled review, and it's not something that we were being asked to do, but we're proactively responding to that observation.

8:00

Mr. Cyr: Madam Chair, is it okay if I ask another question to her?

The Chair: Yeah. Absolutely.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you. So ceasing this part of the MEP program is a reasonable way of coming to a decision? I guess we've got some very angry single parents out there right now that aren't getting funds through this any further and are waiting for an answer from your department.

Ms Lajeunesse: Right. Essentially, we're not ceasing the program altogether, and we hope to expedite the findings of the review in order to change our policy accordingly. So if there are currently funds being held that are attached to some of these questions about expenses that MEP perhaps should not be making a determination on, those funds would then be returned to the person that paid them. We would be trying to help guide people to either come to an agreement on the expenses – that's another way that MEP can be authorized to do that, if we can try to mediate an agreement between the parties – or, you know, as a last resort, if people have their orders specify what's included under special expenses.

Mr. Cyr: If I could just ask another. If we discontinue this, does that mean we're looking at savings or laying off staff at this point? I'm sure you must have several staff that are designated just to this section 7.

Ms Lajeunesse: No. It doesn't work that way. People process anything that comes in on different maintenance files in sort of a queue order. There's not a designated unit to deal with section 7 expenses, so it wouldn't be a ceasing of the program. We would still be enforcing section 7 expenses but only specified ones, so there would still be an order with specified expenses that we would have to try to enforce. So the program doesn't stop. It's just more direct in terms of us understanding what the expenses are that we're to collect.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you. You do a very good job answering. Thank you very much.

Minister, I'd like to move on to some of the reviews that you are currently in. We've discussed a few already. Line 4.3 is criminal and youth prosecutions. That is page 172 of the estimates. At the last estimates cycle you informed the committee that you are also undertaking a review of the Calgary Young Offender Centre. What is the status of the review, and when can the public expect to see the results of this review?

Ms Ganley: Sorry. I'm just a little confused on your question. Section 4.3 is criminal and youth prosecutions, and you're asking about the young offender centre?

Mr. Cyr: Is that not where that would be? Is there a different line number?

Ms Ganley: It's under corrections.

Mr. Cyr: Then I apologize. Can we move to that line number instead?

Ms Ganley: I think that's 8.3.

Mr. Cyr: That would make sense, the young offender centres. I apologize; I think this was a typo of mine. So what is the status of that review, and when can the public expect to see the results of that review?

Ms Ganley: Again I'm going to pass it over.

Dr. Clarke: The review is now completed. It was a review that was undertaken not just by the Calgary Young Offender Centre but by the Edmonton Young Offender Centre as well. The department decided to look at both centres because there are consistencies in programming and similar kinds of pressures. That report has just been tabled to the ADM, and we're now looking at the recommendations that have come out of the staff and the management team that also helped to develop that review. The review will be looking at a variety of things: programming, staffing, the facilities that are underutilized, and how we might be looking at new methods to utilize that space as well. Right now it's with the department, and it won't be released until we've had a chance to actually look at the implementation plans.

Mr. Cyr: When do you anticipate having a chance to look at the implementation plans? Are we looking at a year, three months?

Dr. Clarke: We'd be looking at the implementation of that by the fall.

Mr. Cyr: Great. That's very specific. I really appreciate that.

All right. If we could move to line 7.5, contract policing and policing oversight. At the last estimates cycle a member from the third party asked you a question regarding the current police funding formula on a per capita basis. You responded by citing that your department would bring forward a report for the MGA review. What is the status of this report? Again, I have to ask if and when this review will be made available, and do you anticipate changes to be made to the MGA based on this report this session?

Ms Ganley: If I recall correctly, what you're referring to is when we were talking about looking at the piece with respect to the MGA where certain communities in Alberta don't pay for their policing at all and that that has been seen as somewhat inequitable. Ultimately, we didn't do that with the MGA. So the MGA review has proceeded, and it will sort of have its outcomes when it does. This discussion, I think, will occur separately. Of course, there was actually a lot of consultation on this under the previous government – so we have a lot of information on that – and then we will supplement that consultation with a view to seeing if we can rectify that inequity a little bit. But there's no, like, formal review of it. It's just sort of conversations between ourselves and municipalities.

Mr. Cyr: So there's not a formal process where we're going to be changing this? It will be like each municipality is going to be treated differently? I'm just curious on how this will be enacted.

Ms Ganley: Well, what we're looking at – in terms of policing everybody is under significant restraint right now. You know, we're holding things flat, where population growth and inflation are exceeding that substantially, or trying to bend cost curves on things.

One of the things that has been noticed is that Alberta, relative to the other provinces around us, contributes a lot to policing. So we have a higher number in the municipalities that are opted out, where the province pays entirely for policing. We have a number of additional things like sheriffs and ALERT, and our transfers to the province, which are through municipal peace officer grants and returned ticket revenue, are higher than they are in other places.

You know, our government is committed to doing our best to ensure that front-line services continue to be available. One of the ways to do that, rather than sort of pulling back from those who are paying for their police and are contributing, is to ensure that everybody in Alberta contributes to policing. So we're certainly looking at that because I think that this is a time when the province is in some dire circumstances and the time has come now to look at those who aren't contributing.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Minister.

I'd like to move on to fatality inquiries. You have said that you are undertaking a review of the fatality inquiry system. First of all, can you direct us to what budget line supports the system? Is it included in line 6.3, office of the Chief Medical Examiner, and how much covers the cost of fatality inquiries?

Ms Ganley: A fatality inquiry, as I understand it – you mean the ones that go through the courts, like under the public fatalities inquiry act? Those will be partially within the budget of the Provincial Court because the Provincial Court will obviously run the inquiry, so they will have the judge and the court clerk and that sort of thing. Then there will be a prosecutor present as well, so in part it will be located within the prosecution service budget.

8:10

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Minister.

All right. I'd like to move on to the bail review, line 2.5, Provincial Court of Alberta, page 172. On Friday the results of the

bail review came back. Which line item includes the cost of the review?

Ms Ganley: Obviously, the review has come back, and it's given us a number of recommendations. None of those recommendations have yet been implemented, so the cost wouldn't be contained. What we will be doing moving forward – so there are a number of considerations here. Some of the recommendations from the bail review have to do with Crown prosecutors presenting at bail hearings. That would make it incredibly difficult to maintain the current system Alberta has, which is a 24-hour system – like, our hearing office is open 24 hours, which is unlike any other province in the country – but of course if we're not doing that, that can potentially have some implications for our police partners.

Those recommendations have come forward. They have not yet been implemented, and we need to work with our partners to ensure that we're implementing them in sort of an orderly fashion. So they're not reflected at all yet, I would say, in the estimates.

Mr. Cyr: Do you have an idea of the time frame? I see you've said that you're going to implement some, and you're looking into others, and you're going to talk to stakeholders and others. Do we have a time frame for when we're going to be complete with the implementation or non-implementation of this process?

Ms Ganley: I don't think we have a time frame on when we're going to be complete, and that relies in part on the fact that we don't yet know the needs. The reason we're going out to consult with our partners is to understand what their needs are and what their challenges are and which approach has worked better for them. Until we know sort of what's most important for them and what their needs are, you know, we're not going to know exactly when we can implement or how we can implement or what we can implement. So I think that much of that is still an open question.

Mr. Cyr: The ones we have committed to implementing, do we have a time frame on them?

Ms Ganley: The ones that are already under way – like, there are a number of things that were under way and are constantly under way. You know, a lot of the recommendations will centre around ensuring that the right information is in front of the presenters. In my view, that is the most important recommendation in the bail review. I think that is the thing that will move us the farthest, ensuring that the right information is in front of the presenter regardless of who the presenter is. But that's an ongoing thing, right?

We're talking about computer systems that communicate and ensuring that the information gets from one person to another. I mean, certainly, we're making moves with that. There are ongoing moves. There are moves to increase the PRISM system across the province to multiple Crown offices. But, again, that communication is going to depend in part, ultimately, on who's presenting in those hearings. If we expand the PRISM system, that will help with the Crown, but then the question is: how do we best ensure that that information is in front of police and that information is flowing between police services?

Again, it's all deeply interconnected, so it's difficult to say. You know, if you're talking about ensuring the best information in full, you're never really done. You're sort of always trying to make improvements.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Minister.

I'd like to go to page 176 of the estimates, please, public security, which is underneath department noncash amounts, amortization.

Ms Ganley: Yeah. Okay.

Mr. Cyr: We see \$1,410,000, \$1,600,000, \$1,600,000, \$43,605,000. Did we write something off?

Ms Ganley: No. That's amortization of the Alberta first responder radio communications system, AFRRCS. Because it's moving to operational, we'll amortize it over a number of years.

Mr. Cyr: That's exactly what I thought it was. Thank you very much. It just went from a really small number to a really big number.

Actually, that is timely because it goes into my next set of questions about the Alberta first responder radio communications system, AFRRCS. All right. Line 7.12 on page 173.

Ms Ganley: Sorry. What was that line number again?

Mr. Cyr: That was line 7.12. Now, we had projected in the last set of estimates that the AFRRCS system would be done by July of 2016. Is that still what we're anticipating?

Ms Ganley: Yeah. That's still when we anticipate coming online. We're already sort of in a testing phase. The commercial vehicle enforcement folks are already transitioned over onto that system. We're just ensuring that it works properly, and then we'll start to see more services transition on.

Mr. Cyr: Since the system was intended to replace older methods of communication, when will the province of Alberta communication system, PACS, used by the RCMP, and the multidepartmental mobile radio system, MDMRS, used by the Alberta government, be turned off and decommissioned?

Ms Ganley: I'm going to pass that over also.

The Chair: Hon. minister, I'd request that you introduce the staff member speaking so that people listening have an idea of who is speaking.

Ms Ganley: Sorry. Bill Sweeney, who's the ADM of public security.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Sweeney: The PACS system is antiquated. As quickly as we can transition the RCMP off of PACS into AFRRCS – it's going to take about a year for that transition to occur because there are 124 different detachments, there's training involved, and there's equipment with mobile communication within vehicles. It's quite a complicated procedure. The plan is to start them as soon as we're operational, but it's going to take a year.

Mr. Cyr: Perfect. What about the MDMRS? Sorry, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Absolutely. Go ahead.

Mr. Sweeney: I'd have to get back to you. I've seen the transition plan, but I don't recall the date.

Mr. Cyr: Fair enough. Thank you.

What are the annual costs budgeted to operate and manage the AFRRCS network? And if you are doing a review, what is the timeline of that review?

Ms Ganley: The estimate for this year is \$17,166,000 as indicated in terms of operational costs for that. I don't think we're reviewing

it. I mean, obviously, we'll watch to ensure that it performs, but I don't think we're reviewing it in that sense.

Mr. Cyr: Okay. Now, I've heard from some of my local fire departments and ambulance services that . . .

The Chair: I apologize for the interruption, hon. member, but your initial time has expired.

For the next 20 minutes we will now be going over to the official third-party opposition. Would you like the timer set for 10 minutes or the full 20 minutes?

Mr. Ellis: Twenty minutes.

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

Mr. Ellis: Yeah. We'll go back and forth, an easygoing conversation.

The Chair: Thank you. Go ahead, please.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, everybody, for being here, all the staff members. Minister, a pleasure to see you as always. Quite frankly, many of my questions have already been asked and answered, so I'm going to attempt to see if we can try and ask some questions that may be outside of the box. However, if I do duplicate some questions, I apologize, okay?

ALERT funding, you know, on page 173, line 7.8. I noticed there funding of \$29.1 million, an increase of \$2.6 million from the budget in October. I noticed that you did explain, of course, the 180-degree turnaround, and that's phenomenal. I apologize for applying so much pressure on you in November and December. I've got to say that just from my own personal experience and background, I knew how important ALERT was, and I'm very grateful for anyone who provided advice, including yourself, who realized that ALERT needed to be funded. Certainly, kudos to you and your team for making sure that ALERT was properly funded.

Now, as you know, Minister, ALERT provides critical investigations in regard to fentanyl and W-18. You did indicate that you were going to be working with Health – right? – in regard to this. Can you maybe elaborate a little bit more about the crossministerial co-operation that you're going to be doing with Health, again from a budget perspective, just to ensure that the funding is in place? Does that make sense?

8:20

Ms Ganley: Absolutely. Thank you very much. We were proud to be able to support ALERT. I didn't feel particularly pressured, so no worries. We certainly did hear from a number of our partners that it was really critical in a number of things, so we're glad to have funded it.

With respect to the sort of pieces surrounding fentanyl, there are two sides, in my view, that we need to attack this from. Obviously, there is the supply side, which is what this increased funding to ALERT will hopefully help with and ensure, you know, that all our police services are working together on that. I think they've been doing a phenomenal job of that.

Then the other piece of it is ensuring that people who fall into this drug are as best supported to leave it or that they don't fall in in the first place, if you will, so working on the demand side a little bit. A lot of that has to do with ensuring that naloxone kits are in the hands of social serving agencies and in the hands of everyone who needs them. We have had conversations with police, and at this time they were not interested in having those kits with them, and we will respect that. Then a lot of it has to do as well with ensuring

supports are in place. Obviously, we've been moving forward to open some beds in terms of addictions and recovery treatment.

With respect to the exact costs of those items you're probably best placed to ask the Health minister because they'll have those numbers in front of them.

Mr. Ellis: Well, of course. Thank you. But you'll obviously be communicating with the Health minister going forward.

In regard to the pill press machines – I don't know – it's already out there. Obviously, it's been tabled in the House; it just hasn't been passed yet. I guess where I'm going with this is: do you foresee this as a tool potentially, hypothetically, that could be used by police in order to again provide that service in the fight against fentanyl or W-18, which in essence will have an impact financially on the justice system one way or the other?

Ms Ganley: Sorry?

Mr. Ellis: Well, I mean, the bill that's currently before us right now is a bill that potentially if it comes into place – I know they're doing it in the United States. We can use them as an example. It's prohibited or restricted drugs in the United States . . .

The Chair: Hon. member, I'd just ask that you tie your questions to the budget.

Mr. Ellis: I am. I'm trying to. That's why I'm trying to clarify that, right?

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Ellis: If the bill gets passed, hypothetically there will be an impact on the justice system with potential dealings from a court perspective, right? I guess, how about this. Is that sort of stuff taken into consideration from, say – I know we've touched on legal aid quite a bit, but how about from a prosecutor's perspective? Obviously, there's going to be more work for them to do, right?

Ms Ganley: I think with respect to that particular bill, I mean, certainly it's a tool that police are going to be able to use. But it's a change to a pharmaceutical act, so we're talking about potentially a regulatory prosecution. Will it have an impact in terms of uptick? I mean, I think ultimately what we would like is to have a greater impact by working with the federal government to ensure that criminal sanctions are in place, so higher sanctions that will have sort of more of an impact on those individuals. You know, I'm not absolutely certain whether a regulatory sanction like that – I assume that it's going to fall under the prosecution service, so there may be a few of those, but I don't think it would have the sort of large-scale impact on the budget.

Mr. Ellis: Okay. Let's transition a bit over to ASIRT, right? That's on page 173, line 7.3. It looks like the October budget decreased funding to ASIRT by nearly \$200,000, at least according to the numbers that I got, from the 2014-15 budgeted amount. The 2016 budget, however, had an increase for ASIRT funding of almost \$500,000. Were there any negative impacts on ASIRT's ability to carry out their mandate when there was that decrease?

Ms Ganley: With respect to the increase in this year's estimates that is to ensure that an increase of people is available. That unit works quite hard, so we're trying to ensure that increased people are available.

With respect to the decrease from '14-15 to '15-16 I actually cannot speak off the top of my head to that change at that time.

Mr. Ellis: Okay. But there is a demand, obviously, for the services, which required the increase. Would that be fair to say?

Ms Ganley: Yes. They're doing a lot of important and valuable work. I mean, again, I can't speak to what that initial sort of situation was, but the reason we have given them additional funding is to ensure that they're able to meet the needs and to fund some additional positions.

Sorry. I think I may have an answer to the other part as well. Okay. In part the increase is due to ASIRT having had the benefit of paid investigators from CFNIS, so military police, for the last six years. That program has now been terminated due to issues within their own organization. So ASIRT is down one investigator, and then we've sort of added some additional positions as well.

Mr. Ellis: So it's primarily staffing is the way I'm reading that, right? Yeah.

Ms Ganley: Oh, and – sorry – in '14-15 the RCMP had provided two temporary secondments to assist.

Mr. Ellis: Yeah. Okay. That makes sense. I know it's an important function, and it's got to be there for what's going on, right?

Maybe we can change gears to the bail review. I'm very pleased to see that this bail review has come out. I overheard you say that, obviously, you know, there's no time frame in regard to an implementation – right? – that you're going to consult with stakeholders. That's phenomenal.

I guess if I can talk, first, about the justice online information network. I know I've been away for a couple of years, but I can't imagine it has changed, unless somebody wants to correct me. It is an archaic system. I think it still uses DOS or something. I mean, it's absolutely archaic. Is there funding available to improve this?

Ms Ganley: As I recall, there have been some small changes to the JOIN system.

Gerald, perhaps you can – sorry. Gerald Lamoureux.

Mr. Lamoureux: Sure. Last year we actually moved JOIN to a new platform, so it's on a modern, stabilized platform. We didn't actually change the look of the system, but it's actually on a better platform. We'll be doing improvements over time, when there's money available, but it is a stable system.

Mr. Ellis: Yeah. I'll just touch on personal experience. For those that don't know – again, we're going to touch on the budget as it relates to costs to the system itself – CPIC, unless things have changed, is very backlogged. My recollection is that it could be a year and a half to two years behind. That's how backlogged it can be. JOIN, as you know, it updated to the day. However, the problem with it being such an archaic system and actually quite difficult to manoeuvre is that I've found that it can be very underutilized; therefore, bail hearing officers, the presenting officers – it didn't matter if it was the Crown or the police officers representing the Crown – were tending to not use the system. Therefore, the people, of course, were not really getting a full understanding of the totality of the offender that's before them right now or in front of the justice of the peace.

Obviously, if you're hoping to make JOIN available to everyone – and maybe training is involved, which, obviously, has a cost involved in it – there's going to be some impact on the system. Is this something that you guys are taking into consideration?

8:30

Ms Ganley: Thank you for the very excellent question, actually. I mean, in my view, that is one of the core recommendations of

the bail review, ensuring that the right information gets in front of the presenter, whoever that presenter is. Obviously, they have recommended that we move to Crown presenters, and we will be looking at it. But one of the reasons that this is such an interesting and interconnected issue is that depending on how we ultimately roll that out, it will impact which one of those systems is being used. It certainly was identified in the bail review. I don't have it in front of me, but I'm just sort of remembering off the top of my head that sometimes people had challenges accessing the JOIN system because they didn't have sufficient training on it. So I think that that is certainly a piece that we're going to be looking at in terms of, you know, how we move forward and who's presenting going forward.

Again, we're going to have to work in concert, I think, with our partners. Some of the services, obviously, have officers who present on a regular basis, and they're much more familiar and adept with the system whereas some of them have officers that don't present very often, so they have a lot of challenges with that system. So I think that, yeah, that's definitely something we're going to be looking at going forward. But, again, it'll sort of depend on how we land because the Crown prosecution service is utilizing PRISM, which is being rolled out to more areas. So it just sort of depends on which way we go with that.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you.

I can't remember if you answered this or not, but was there any increase in funding for prosecutor services?

Ms Ganley: I don't believe there is, but let me check to make sure here. There's actually a slight decrease, which will be achieved in part through – obviously, they're in the management, opted-out, excluded employees, so there will be wage freezes in part through vacancy management and in part through a decrease in supplies and services, which is sort of a government-wide initiative.

Mr. Ellis: I guess where I'm going with this is – again I'm going to rely on some personal experience here. Obviously, section 524 of the Criminal Code is not new. It's something that's been around for a long time. In my experience, bail revocation, for those folks that don't know, certainly gives the Crown or the police in certain circumstances the ability to have the totality of an offender's charges, multiple as they may be, different places of occurrence, times of occurrence, all put into one courtroom, to be heard by one judge, to make a decision as to whether that person should be released or detained in custody. So here's where I'm going with this, and again my knowledge here is going back to between 2007 and 2009. However, the pressure that I had received as well as my superiors above me from the Crown's office was to stop doing 524 bail revocations as it was too much work.

So I guess my concern is that – now, mind you, those folks may not still be in there because, obviously, it's a different time, 2007-09, but obviously there is an increase in workload, which is where I'm going with this – if there is an increase in workload, obviously there's going to be a cost associated with this. We also have to understand that we have to work for what is the best interest of the public in these bail revocation things and hearings. Since there is a decrease, is there a possibility for money that can be received from somewhere if we are going to follow through with this 524 bail revocation direction that would come from you?

Ms Ganley: Well, I think, in terms of 524 certainly one of the suggestions was that there be increased education around the use of that particular provision because, obviously, you know, it's really important in the sense that what it does is to sort of reverse the onus. So if someone has committed a crime, they've been released on bail

– sorry; just for the benefit of the rest of the committee – and then the individual reoffends, section 524 puts the onus on the accused person to argue that they ought to be released rather than the other way about in certain circumstances. It's a very useful provision, and the bail review has suggested that it was underutilized.

Certainly, we will be working in terms of education around that. We're already working with the Crown prosecution services on that education, and we will be working as well with our police partners, again depending on how we decide to proceed forward on that piece, to ensure that everyone has the best training on how 524 works. Ultimately, it may be the case, depending on what route we choose, that there may be additional monies necessary, but I think that we're probably going to wait until we know what that is rather than trying to guess.

Mr. Ellis: So if you see my Chief Crowfoot Learning Centre e-learning module on the subject, don't be scared. I think it was a little bigger and [inaudible].

Anyway, good to know, and it's good to know that, again, you're going to take these recommendations seriously. Education, prevention, intervention, of course, are vitally important.

You know, one thing I wanted to touch on here is First Nations policing, page 173, 7.6. I noticed that there was a decrease of \$105,000. What was that?

Ms Ganley: I have a \$0.1 million decrease in funding due to internal reallocations of budget as a result of implementing operational efficiencies. Basically, it's internal. It's a comparatively small decrease, and that's the program support centralization at least in part.

Mr. Ellis: Oh, okay. My perception when I saw that was it looked like it was an officer's salary, but you're saying that it's not persons.

Ms Ganley: I don't understand there to be any layoffs resulting from this.

Mr. Ellis: Good to hear, right?

Rural policing. You indicated last year that you were looking at the disparity in the police funding model for rural municipalities with a population of 5,000 people and under for all those over the limit. Is that correct? Is this reflected in the 2016 budget at all?

The Chair: I apologize for the interruption, but the 20 minutes has expired. We will now be having a five-minute break, as agreed to at the beginning of the meeting. We will set a timer, and we will resume the meeting at the expiry of the timer.

[The committee adjourned from 8:39 p.m. to 8:44 p.m.]

The Chair: Thank you, hon. members. I would now like to invite the independent member from the Alberta Party to speak. You have 20 minutes. Would you like the timer set for 10 minutes?

Mr. Clark: No. I'd like to go back and forth with the minister if I may.

The Chair: Thank you. Go ahead.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much. Thank you, Minister, and thank you very much to all of your staff for being here. I'm going to start with the fiscal plan, and I'm just going to pick up again on the Alberta first responder radio communications system. The project, as I understand it, has been ongoing for some time, and I understand there have been some challenges in getting all forces to adopt the system. Can you update us? Have all forces signed on with that

system, or if not, if there are challenges, is that going to have an impact on costs?

Ms Ganley: I think it was always the plan to have them sort of have different people transitioning over at different times. As I mentioned, the commercial vehicle enforcement folks have already transitioned over, and I understand that the RCMP will commence transitioning next. I had heard from some stakeholders that there had been some concern not specifically with this project but with respect to a thing called API3, that happened a number of years ago. But I understand that they will all be transitioning over to the new system.

Mr. Clark: Okay. So there's no concern that we end up with a patchwork at all.

Ms Ganley: No. I mean, right now we have a patchwork of systems, you know, and in the interim, as we transition over, that will continue to be the case. But once they're all on, they'll all be on.

Mr. Clark: Okay. Thank you.

I am going to move now to the business plan, page 92, outcome 1, and specifically I'm going to focus my questions around legal aid. I know there's been a funding increase, which I know is welcome, and I also know that there's a legal aid review under way. But I want to talk about the value of legal aid not just to the Albertans it serves but potentially the financial and social return on investment of that. I know some see legal aid as a cost and perhaps even an unsustainable one at that, but there is some pretty remarkable evidence to promote a financial return on investment as well as a social return on investment for investments in legal aid.

There was a Canadian Bar Association report, Equal Justice: Balancing the Scales, released in November 2013, and it notes, among many other things, that legal aid can save public money in many ways by

reducing domestic violence, helping children leave foster care more quickly, reducing evictions and alleviating homelessness, protecting patient health . . . reducing work days missed due to legal problems, creating more stable housing, resolving debt issues and stimulating business activity.

There are some remarkable findings on the social return and financial return, anywhere from \$18 to \$1. The average they found to be \$6 to \$1. In Alberta, Legal Aid Alberta reports a return on investment of \$1.70 for every dollar invested in legal aid. I'll just ask first: are you familiar with this report?

Ms Ganley: I believe, actually, that I have seen a copy of the report. In terms of: can I refer to it off the top of my head? Probably not.

Mr. Clark: Fair enough. I'm just curious if this report or any aspect of it is helping you form part of the legal aid review. Are you considering some of the recommendations in this report?

Ms Ganley: Obviously, we're considering a number of factors and a lot of different input from a lot of different stakeholders. When you talk about the social return on investment, I mean, we certainly think that legal aid is something that's worth investing in. Obviously, we still think that it's the case that we need to be accountable to the taxpayer in terms of the spending of those dollars to ensure that we are doing the best job possible with each of those dollars. It's also important to recognize that some of the things you're citing, for instance, people needing access in times of evictions – in Alberta we have the residential tenancies dispute resolution board, which isn't within my ministry, but that's one way in which the Alberta government is attempting to ensure that people

have access to easier dispute resolution mechanisms. I mean, I think you're right, but obviously the picture is complex. Even though we know that legal aid can give us a good social return on investment, we still need to ensure that we're doing the best job with that money so that we're getting the best return on that investment.

Mr. Clark: Okay. Given that investment, do you have an estimate of how many more Albertans will be able to access legal aid based on the additional \$2.5 million in funding?

Ms Ganley: That will just really depend on what cases we're talking about. When people access legal aid right now, it works – not all of it. For instance, the youth defence office is based on largely staff lawyers. There are duty counsel in a number of places, who will operate a number of cases but only on sort of an initial appearance basis. Then there's also the certificate model. People will come, and they'll be granted a certificate, and it'll depend, you know, on what the matter is, how long that certificate is for, and that sort of thing. It's difficult to estimate based on an exact dollar figure exactly how many cases you'll get out of it because it is dependent on a number of factors.

Mr. Clark: Do you or Legal Aid Alberta or any stakeholder in the system that you're aware of track those statistics so we can judge and gauge how much . . .

Ms Ganley: Track the statistics in terms of how many people legal aid assists each year?

Mr. Clark: Yes.

Ms Ganley: I would have to get back to you on that. If it was someone, I expect it would be Legal Aid.

8:50

Mr. Clark: Yeah. I'd certainly appreciate that. What I'm curious about is what the impact of that \$2.5 million will be in terms of case throughput versus simply accommodating inflation in terms of fees or the cost. Are we actually moving more people through the system and helping more people, or are we just catching up on what was a fairly low compensation level? That's really what I'm driving at. If it's possible to get some of that statistical information back, I would really appreciate that.

I do have to ask: why \$2.5 million and not the \$9 million that was requested?

Ms Ganley: Well, certainly, it was a priority for us. In a time when most things are having decreases and sort of steady-state funding is the new increase, I think that a \$2.5 million increase is a significant contribution. Obviously, they're going to be challenged to work within that budget, so we will be working with them. In part, we're going to wait to see what the outcome of the review is in terms of, you know, what it says about how best to move forward. That may have some impact going forward, but certainly we think that it's something worth investing in, so we have, compared to other areas, increased their budget significantly.

Mr. Clark: In conducting the legal aid review, are you considering the social return on investment of legal aid based on some of the areas that the CBA report references and perhaps others?

Ms Ganley: Well, certainly, we do have to consider what the impact of having legal aid available is on the rest of the system. I think, for instance, one of the interim measures that legal aid had when we initially announced the review was an increase in the

family duty counsel program to a number of other centres. That ultimately can help to make sure that things are resolving sooner, so that's going to have that impact in terms of costs going forward.

In terms of the specific measures in that report, you know, as is the case with many things in social sciences, exactly how one calculates the social return on investment is not always the same from area to area, so whether I'm going to use the specific methodology referenced in the report, I couldn't say for certain.

Certainly, we will be looking at whether increases in certain areas of legal aid can result in decreases in certain areas elsewhere. Also, the bail review has suggested an increase in funding to fund duty counsel through legal aid, so that's going to be something we're looking at as well. Potentially, that will have an impact because there are some people who choose not to have a hearing in the first instance so that they can seek legal advice, so that may have an impact as well on corrections. We will be looking at all those factors together.

Mr. Clark: Okay. In the legal aid review report, will you publish the metrics that you do use to make those assessments?

Ms Ganley: Well, I think the report is coming internally, so it's an internal review of legal aid. In terms of what metrics we use, I mean, I think, ultimately, based on the information we get back, we will make decisions on how the system is going to go forward, but in terms of the exact metrics I can't say for sure.

Mr. Clark: Obviously, I'd encourage you, please, to consider using such metrics. I'll also ask that you please release the full legal aid report. I know it's an internal report, but I think this is a matter of great public interest. I'll ask again: will you release the full report?

Ms Ganley: Again, the legal aid report review is coming internally. We're reviewing an external agency, i.e. Legal Aid. We're looking at a number of issues, including government financial eligibility guidelines and a number of other things, so that information, you know, will be released as we consider it necessary. But in terms of whether – I don't even think there's going to be a full report in the sense that you suggest, so I can't make that commitment at this time.

Mr. Clark: So we can stretch our legs on the FOIP side then, perhaps, and see what we come up with. I just think that it is a matter of public interest that has a great bearing on the budget and, of course, legal outcomes for Albertans as well. All right. Well, thank you. I'll move on from legal aid, then.

I'm going to continue on to the business plan, outcome 2. You've talked in key strategy 2.1 about collaborating with partners, exploring options, preventative services, and mental health and addiction. I'm just curious if you can expand a bit on how you plan to do that, especially in conjunction with outcome 2.4 regarding alternatives to incarceration. What are your considerations there? What crossministry work are you doing, and what might that look like to Albertans?

Ms Ganley: Certainly, I can expand somewhat. Obviously, I'm not going to touch on everything because I would be talking for the remainder of our time, and I don't think that would make anyone particularly happy. I mean, in terms of looking at incarceration populations, Bill 9 is certainly one example in which, you know, we're looking at individuals who have committed sort of nonviolent, minor offences. Those individuals aren't best placed in incarceration situations. Obviously, Alberta has drug treatment

courts, that look at alternatives. We have a number of diversion programs as well that deal with alternatives.

As we move forward, we'll be looking at a number of ways to look at who is going to jail. There are a number of people who tend to go into remand centres for very short duration stays. The question is identifying what the reason for that is because if they're only there for a very short time, probably they're not presenting a danger to the public. So then the question is: why are we putting them in there at all? You know, in individual circumstances the reasons are going to be different. Sometimes they're not going to be able to get bail right away. Sometimes they've postponed their hearing because they want additional information or they want to speak to counsel or something like that. All those issues need to be looked at.

There are in other jurisdictions models of other diversion programs. Sometimes they have courts associated with them, and sometimes they're diversion programs. Currently we have a mental health diversion program and an alternative measures diversion program. Looking at sort of expanding those in places where we're best placed to expand those is certainly a way of ensuring that we're using the justice system to deal with sort of dangerous offenders and people that need to be segregated from the public and not dealing with people who are impoverished or who are homeless or who are, you know, in other ways suffering from addictions.

Of course, we do need to work with our partners going forward. Certainly, here in Edmonton the police chief is a very big advocate of sort of centres for wraparound services when people come into the justice system, of ensuring that they're in there. A number of our police partners have also made initiatives, you know, ensuring that social workers are available to also work with individuals because sometimes they're better placed than the police officers themselves.

I could go on at length, but I won't.

Mr. Clark: I'm sure you can.

Moving then to the business plan, page 97, under revenue, other revenue. It makes up the better part of 10 per cent of the revenue of the department. Could you expand just briefly, please, on what makes up other revenue and why it's such a substantial portion of your source of revenue?

Ms Ganley: Under revenue? Ah. Here we go. Sorry. Information flow the old-fashioned way. We're looking at motor vehicle accident claims, enhanced policing services, other recoveries and refunds. Under other recoveries and refunds we have a \$9.4 million increase from 2015-16 budget, mainly due to RCMP contributions of lease payments and operating costs toward the Alberta first responders – sorry. I'm perhaps looking at the wrong thing. That's revenue.

Maybe I'm just going to pass this over to Gerald Lamoureux, who can maybe do a slightly better job of explaining what's going on there. I think I may be looking at the wrong number.

Mr. Lamoureux: The other revenue is made up of a combination of things. For instance, \$9.4 million is related to the AFRRCS system. We're collecting funding from the federal government for their use of the system, \$9.4 million each year. So that's a portion of it. There's about \$6.6 million estimated for the coming year related to motor vehicle accident claim judgments that we expect to collect, and that's based on sort of historical information from the past. The final piece is \$8.4 million related to revenue associated with enhanced policing services.

9:00

Mr. Clark: Okay. Thank you. I'm just going to move on here quickly.

Then under expenses, Crown prosecutions: it's dropped dramatically, 6.3 per cent, since 2014-15. Can you speak to why such a dramatic decline in the cost of spending on Crown prosecution? We're on page 97 under expense, Alberta Crown prosecution service: \$97 million in '14-15 and only \$90 million in '16-17.

Ms Ganley: With respect to the drop this year – that's from \$92.54 million to \$90.836 million – it's a \$1.7 million net decrease comprised of manpower savings initiatives focused on reducing overall costs, including salary freezes for managers, overtime restraint, attrition management, and technological efficiencies. That deals with the decrease in this year.

In terms of last year, the budget change from '14-15 actuals, the \$5.7 million, was in part due to the court case management project and some information technology costs for the court case management project and then, obviously, the decrease that I've just explained from this year.

Mr. Clark: Okay. Thank you.

I'm going to move, then, to page 182 of the government estimates and the victims of crime fund. Fines and penalties are substantial and going up, from \$35 million in '14-15 to \$46 million, almost \$47 million in '16-17. The financial benefits and assistance to victims' organizations have only increased about 10 per cent whereas the fines and penalties have gone up 31 per cent. Can you explain why the financial benefits and assistance to victims' organizations have not kept pace?

Ms Ganley: With respect to the victims of crime fund – I assume you're referring to that – the fund has a surplus in it. That surplus has been growing for about the last 15 years. As noted earlier, the Auditor General has asked us to do a number of things, and those things sort of centre around determining what the needs are and then pulling the funding accordingly. We are working on that, and we will be looking at it going forward. I can go into additional detail, but I think I had answered it before, so it may not be the best use of time.

Mr. Clark: Okay. I'll ask about the – sorry; I'm jumping around here a bit. Back to page 173, government estimates: commercial vehicle enforcement has decreased 11.5 per cent since 2014 based on page 173. Can you speak to why that has dropped, please?

Ms Ganley: With respect to commercial vehicle enforcement that is sort of the same government-wide policy . . .

The Chair: I apologize for the interruption, but the time for this has expired.

I would now invite members of government caucus and the minister to speak. Would you like the timer to be set at 10 minutes, or are you okay for the 20?

Mr. Hinkley: We can go for the 20, and MLA Shepherd and I will be going back and forth.

The Chair: With the minister?

Mr. Hinkley: Back and forth as well if possible.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Hinkley: Minister, on page 172 line 5 of the 2016-17 government estimates shows that legal aid funding will increase by \$2.5 million in Budget 2016-17. This is encouraging given the strain that legal aid has been under in the face of increased demand.

Can you update the committee on how the additional funding will be used?

Ms Ganley: Legal Aid is obviously suffering from some significant challenges right now. Budget 2016 includes \$68.5 million for legal aid support to support the important and valuable work that they are doing. The funding increase is part of Legal Aid's base operating grant, so the added support will be used to support services that they already provide. Those include counsel to youth who are detained, duty counsel projects as well as certificate projects. This will provide increased services to low-income Albertans who are in need of legal aid, and the \$2.5 million increase is essential to ensuring that they are able to continue to do their work.

Mr. Hinkley: Okay. So that's increased access to legal services, then?

Ms Ganley: Yes.

Mr. Hinkley: Well, do you feel that the funding increase of \$2.5 million is sufficient to meet the demand, which we hear is growing?

Ms Ganley: Well, certainly, we think that it will be challenging for legal aid in the circumstances. You know, in this time, when other people are seeing freezes or rollbacks, I think that a \$2.5 million increase is significant, but they have been telling us that they will be challenged to do that. The grant that the province has been providing has increased significantly. The annual grant for legal aid has increased by 59 per cent since 2006, with the vast majority of that being provided by the province. The federal funding has stayed relatively static throughout that time. We are hoping that this grant will be helpful to them, but they will be challenged to operate within their targets. You know, I think we will be working with them going forward to ensure that they're able to do that.

We have a review under way, so we're awaiting the outcome of that review to make sure that we're targeting the money as well as possible. We're hopeful, going forward, that they will be able to operate, but we will continue to work with them to ensure that that is the case.

Mr. Hinkley: Okay. This is just an extra question now. With that increase in demand, we heard the other day that there's a percentage of First Nations that is incarcerated. Is there any opportunity to increase legal aid to First Nations?

Ms Ganley: Currently it's the case that legal aid assesses based on financial eligibility guidelines. Regardless of your circumstances, regardless of your place of origin I think you're going to come up against those same sorts of financial eligibility guidelines. There is also this discretionary coverage project, but certainly, you know, indigenous people are welcome to take advantage of legal aid, the same as everyone else.

Mr. Hinkley: So that increase should be beneficial to them?

Ms Ganley: It should be, yeah. It'll be beneficial to everyone, particularly to people who are more likely to come into contact with the criminal justice system.

Mr. Hinkley: Well, thank you.

If we can refer now to the Justice and Solicitor General business plan, page 92, under key strategy 1.1 it mentions the aim to "conduct a review of legal aid to create a cost-effective . . . program." Can you elaborate on how this review will be conducted and on the stakeholders you are planning to involve?

Ms Ganley: The review is now well under way. It's a review of their operation's finances as well as some cross-jurisdictional research. It will look at a number of areas, including the governance model and how services are delivered. We're ensuring that a range of viewpoints is considered, including members of the legal community, the judiciary, service providers, and the legal aid clients themselves. We're also engaging Legal Aid Alberta, obviously, since they're the entity in question, and the Law Society of Alberta in detailed discussions around the governance agreement which exists between the province, Legal Aid Alberta, and the Law Society. Basically, the goal of the review is to ensure the long-term financial stability and affordability of the programs while ensuring that there's access to justice for the most vulnerable.

Mr. Hinkley: So lots of people had input.

Ms Ganley: Yes. A number of groups will have been consulted.

Mr. Hinkley: Now, I understand that legal aid is the responsibility of both the province and the federal government. What have you been able to do to advocate for a funding commitment from Ottawa, and what are you hearing on when that might be coming?

Ms Ganley: Funding for legal aid is shared in part between the province and the federal government. The province's portion has increased significantly whereas the federal government's has remained relatively static at around \$10 million. The recent federal budget includes additional funding of \$88 million over five years for the provision of criminal legal aid in Canada. About \$9 million is pledged for 2016-17. We don't yet know what share of that will be Alberta's, but certainly we're hoping to go forward and make a case that because of the economic circumstances in this province there's both a decrease in revenue to the provincial government, which makes things challenging for us, at the same time as we're seeing an upswing in the number of applications. So we will be raising the issue of legal aid funding, you know, at our next federal-provincial-territorial meeting in June.

9:10

Mr. Hinkley: When are those? Are they coming up soon?

Ms Ganley: I believe it's coming up in June.

Mr. Hinkley: Okay. Very good.
David.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you. Minister, I do see that you've realized some savings in most of the departments here, but I note that under public security the overall budget has risen by about \$5.4 million. Could you give us a bit of an idea of where that increase is coming from?

Ms Ganley: Yes. Public security has some contractual obligations which the government is required to pay based on those agreements: \$5.2 million is for the Alberta first responders radio communications coming online; \$2.6 million was the increase to the Alberta law enforcement response teams, or ALERT, to maintain their 232 full-time equivalents; \$1.2 million is for the biology casework analysis agreement – that's an agreement with the federal government for the use of a lab – and \$1.1 million is for the municipal policing assistance grants, or MPAG, which are given to municipalities, and that's based on population growth.

Mr. Shepherd: Okay. Thank you.

Ms Ganley: Oh, sorry. Public security has also reduced funding to many other programs throughout the division to meet its obligations while receiving only the \$5.4 million increase.

Mr. Shepherd: Okay. Line 7.12, that you mentioned there, the \$5.2 million increase for operational funds for the Alberta first responders radio communications system: can you give us a sense of how they are going to be using that money?

Ms Ganley: Essentially, that's a contract to ensure maintenance of the first responders radio communications system. That will be a contract with a service provider to ensure that, you know, there are repairs done and that sort of thing.

Mr. Shepherd: Okay. Is that a one-time expense, then, for upgrades and maintenance, or is that continuing?

Ms Ganley: No. It will be an ongoing expense because we will need to continue to ensure that those towers are maintained.

Mr. Shepherd: Okay. Excellent. Thank you.

On page 173 as well, then, I also see that there is an increase of I think, as you mentioned, about half a million dollars for the Alberta Serious Incident Response Team. Can you give us a bit of a sense of how those funds are going to be applied?

Ms Ganley: The \$0.5 million increase is comprised of \$0.3 million, so \$300,000, in funding to fund specific First Nations ASIRT investigators – two people will be designated to ensure that they're focusing on files involving indigenous persons – and then \$0.2 million to address a budget shortfall due to an increase in the number of assigned files. That's for an additional person to be operating as well.

Mr. Shepherd: Okay. Excellent. Thank you.

Continuing on page 173, then, line 7.5, I see that there is actually a decrease – it looks like about \$2.3 million – in contract policing and policing oversight. I know that last year you raised that budget by about \$1.4 million; now we see it being reduced this year. Certainly, we're all concerned about safe communities. Can you give us a bit of a sense of why that reduction is happening?

Ms Ganley: That \$2.3 million reduction is primarily due to a reduction in supplies and services to achieve budget targets. The RCMP, like everyone else throughout government, is expected to reduce their spending on materials and supplies without a reduction in police officers. Essentially, what we're looking at in terms of that is that we're asking them to reduce their supplies and services, but that won't result in an impact to front-line services, so there won't be any reduction in terms of the number of officers. There won't be any layoffs.

Mr. Shepherd: Okay. Excellent. Thank you.

Looking, then, to line 7.7, we do see that there's an increase there for policing assistance to municipalities. It looks like about \$1.1 million. Can you give us a sense of how that's going to be applied?

Ms Ganley: The municipal policing assistance grants, or MPAG grants, are available to urban municipalities with populations over 5,000. Those are people for whom the municipality is responsible for policing. Those grants are based on population. Essentially, it's an increase based on the increase in population in those areas.

Mr. Shepherd: Okay. So if a municipality has had an increase in population, it'll be receiving additional assistance.

Ms Ganley: Right.

Mr. Shepherd: Okay. Excellent. Thank you.

Staying along public security, then, looking at expense line 7.8, can you give us a sense of why organized and serious crime spending is increasing by \$2.6 million? I guess you noted earlier that that's the line that includes response to the fentanyl crisis. Is that related to that?

Ms Ganley: Yes. The \$2.6 million increase is in the funding grant for ALERT. That line item deals with ALERT, and that will allow them to maintain their current policing complement at 232 officers. ALERT had previously received additional funding through the police officer recruitment fund from the government of Canada, which was depleted in 2014. This will provide them with stable funding.

Mr. Shepherd: Okay. So that's the ALERT issue that was discussed earlier. Excellent. Thank you.

Moving along, then, I guess we had discussed the concerns that were raised earlier about the increase in fentanyl and dangerous drugs on Alberta streets. Of course, we're all agreed that this is something we need to take serious action on. You had a chance to comment a bit on this earlier, but I was wondering if you could give us a bit more detail about the aspects of this budget that are specifically addressing that.

Ms Ganley: Obviously, a number of things will be also in the Health budget, but the ministry is providing \$29.1 million to ALERT, which brings together Alberta's integrated policing units to strategically tackle serious and organized crime, including the seizure of dangerous drugs. I think that, really, the strength of the ALERT model lies in the fact that there are members from different services who are integrated in it together. That allows them to share information, and they can move their resources around the province as they are needed. That's really important.

The ministry also provided \$220,000 out of the proceeds of crime fund to Alberta police services to do a proactive awareness and prevention program in order to sort of get out there the message about this incredibly serious drug because it is very, very dangerous. Not only can people die or be severely injured on their first interaction with it, but it can be in other things where people don't know that it is. So it's really a very dangerous time.

Mr. Shepherd: Excellent. Thank you.

At this point I'll hand things back to Mr. Hinkley.

Mr. Hinkley: Okay. With regard to first responders there has been a \$5.2 million increase. Can you quickly review how the money has been used and what the expected benefits for Albertans are?

Ms Ganley: The \$5.2 million increase in funding is for the additional integration of sites being ready and operational. The AFRRCS towers will be completed in '16-17, with 332 sites throughout Alberta. Operational funding for AFRRCS includes \$2.2 million from manpower to fund 19 FTEs, which include operational business relations managers and administrative support. There are also eight contractors budgeted for in the supplies and services, which supply detailed technical knowledge and specialized skills to the AFRRCS environment. Again, \$15 million is for the supplies and services, mainly operational and maintenance contracts.

Mr. Hinkley: The radio communications system has been under way for a number of years. What is the total capital budget for this project?

Ms Ganley: The total capital budget over a number of years was \$438 million.

Mr. Hinkley: Okay. Has the government tested the system yet? What are your results so far?

9:20

Ms Ganley: Well, as I mentioned, you know, some preliminary testing was under way. We've already transitioned over our commercial vehicle enforcement folks onto that system, and then, you know, additional transitions will be happening as we go forward.

Mr. Hinkley: Are you satisfied with it?

Ms Ganley: So far.

Mr. Hinkley: Okay. Very good.

Page 173, line 7.11, commercial vehicle enforcement. Your estimates indicate that there's a budget decrease of \$2.2 million in that area. How will this decrease be managed in a way that ensures that Albertans are safe on our roads?

Ms Ganley: The \$2.2 million decrease in funding is primarily due to internal reallocation of budget as a result of implementing operational efficiencies. Cost-reduction measures include the implementation of a two-year salary freeze of managers, overtime restraints, and attrition management.

Those commercial vehicle enforcement folks are doing an amazing job. They also have an enormous amount of technology, which I had the opportunity to see recently when I visited their site. They have a number of mobile units, and they use a lot of FLIR. I'm trying to remember what that acronym stands for, but it's essentially infrared technology, which allows them to see heat patterns, so they can see when the truck is braking whether the brakes are operational. Also, tires will overheat if they're improperly inflated. So there are a number of checks they can now do by way of technology. They also have a lot of management systems with respect to – you know, certain vehicle carriers will be on a system that essentially allows them to bypass in certain instances and only get pulled in sometimes as a result of their safety record.

They have managed to maintain safety through the use of technology while also exhibiting an amazing amount of restraint. Yeah, I think we're all pretty proud of the work that they're doing.

Mr. Hinkley: Okay. Very good.

In that same section, public security, line 7.4, there's a small increase in the budget for law enforcement standards and audits. How will that money be used?

Ms Ganley: The \$0.1 million increase in funding is primarily due to additional funding for a provincial breath-testing co-ordinator to assist in monitoring Alberta's impaired driving program's policies and procedures. That will help us to keep our roads safer.

Mr. Hinkley: Okay. When looking at last year's budget, I noticed that the parks conservation enforcement line has been removed from this year's budget, 2016-17. Can you please explain what happened to that portion of the budget? Where did it go?

Ms Ganley: The parks conservation enforcement program was transferred back to the Environment and Parks ministry from Justice and Solicitor General, as mutually agreed upon in March 2016. All related program expenses effective April 1, 2016, are now reported under the Ministry of Environment and Parks. The funding transfer reversed a Budget 2012 decision to split the functional duties of conservation officers between the respective ministries, which saw an equivalent of 25 per cent transferred to Justice and Solicitor General and the remaining 75 per cent of nonenforcement functions left with Environment and Parks. We think that this transfer back will improve accountability and reporting requirements as the program would be funded all under one ministry, which reflects all the associated expenses.

Mr. Hinkley: Okay. If we could move to page 93 of the ministry's business plan, it indicates that your ministry "aims to shift over time from a reactive model to a preventative model." In light of this goal how is the budget aimed at reducing some of the social factors that lead to increased crime?

Ms Ganley: As you'll be aware, we introduced Bill 9, An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences.

The Chair: I apologize for the interruption, but your time slot has expired.

I would now invite members of the Official Opposition and the minister to share the next 10 minutes.

Mr. Cyr: Back and forth is fine.

The Chair: Back and forth? Thank you.

Mr. Cyr: Okay. I'd like to cede my time to Mr. Orr.

Mr. Orr: Thank you. I'll be brief and pass it on. I just want to return to a question we asked last year, a regional question, an important one, with regard to Red Deer court services, particularly the facility, which I know you're aware of at this point in time. Red Deer is our third-largest city and third-largest region and probably the one area in the province, to my knowledge at least, that's most in need of a courthouse updo at this stage. Picking up from last year the very same question – you obviously recognized the need of it. You said last year that within our budget for courthouses Red Deer is quite high on the priority list. I'm just wondering: in a year how has it progressed? Has it moved? What's happening?

Ms Ganley: Red Deer continues to be incredibly high on the priority list for the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General. Of course, we're taking a whole government approach to infrastructure. So all of the projects went forward and were assessed on the same criteria regardless of what ministry they were recommended by, and they were assessed together. Ultimately, that project did not receive funding, so it is on the sunshine list to come up for funding as an approved project when funding becomes available. I mean, ultimately my colleagues, including the Minister of Infrastructure, would have had to weigh in the balance a number of competing priorities, including schools and hospitals and a number of road projects that need to be done very quickly in order to improve road safety.

Mr. Orr: Fair enough. I get that. That would actually eventually show up in Infrastructure estimates rather than Justice estimates, right?

Ms Ganley: That's correct.

Mr. Orr: Okay. One last question. We talked last time, too, about looking for creative solutions. In the interim is there anything there that's helping to alleviate the pressure on the Red Deer system? I guess the concern is, as it was last year, that 40 per cent of the cases involve children and the distress in their lives as these court cases get dragged out for months and sometimes almost years.

Ms Ganley: Some initial steps have been taken to address the capacity pressures, including moving traffic court, which uses the same infrastructure, obviously, as other courts, from the courthouse to the Red Deer Lodge, which frees up courtroom space. Some renovations are being completed to address current issues and needs in Red Deer. They were identified in the recent planning study. As well, we'll be continuing to work in terms of, you know, court case management programs, programs to ensure that families who are maybe better served outside of court are being served out of court. We'll continue to work, moving forward, on those initiatives.

Mr. Orr: Do you have any idea whether the wait times for courtroom bookings have improved or gotten maybe worse in the last year?

Ms Ganley: We do have lead-time numbers somewhere although I don't have them in front of me.

Mr. Orr: Well, if you could send me that, I'd really appreciate it.

Ms Ganley: Sure.

Mr. Orr: That would be great.

One last quick question: is the shortage of legal aid counsel, mentioned earlier, having an impact in Red Deer, or is it mostly about the lack of courtroom bookings?

Ms Ganley: There can be a number of reasons and individual cases for lead times. Certainly, we're working through a series of initiatives, including that court case management and improved scheduling software, to get that under way. Depending on what court you're in, it will relate to the number of judges or justices, if you're in the Court of Queen's Bench, who are available. In terms of legal aid counsel, again, it would depend on the individual case.

Mr. Orr: Okay. Thank you.

I'll pass it back.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Minister, for answering those questions.

Minister, at the last estimates we discussed that the RCMP is working on the final report for the High River flood. Now, have they made any progress on finalizing that report, that they were in the process of doing?

Ms Ganley: All right. I'm going to pass it over to Bill Sweeney to answer that.

Mr. Sweeney: I believe that the hon. member is referring to the CRC report, which is the oversight body dealing with public complaints. The process is that the oversight body does an interim report, which is made public; the commissioner responds; and a final report is released. We're expecting the final report to be imminently released. I've had conversations with CRC as recently as a month ago. They have received the commissioner's response with respect to the recommendations. I can't say with certainty that it'll be within the next month, but they certainly told me a month ago it would be within the preceding month.

Mr. Cyr: So soon?

Mr. Sweeney: Yes.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you very much.

You stated a few times that you're reducing overtime and have implemented wage freezes. Is that across all employees, or is this management?

9:30

Ms Ganley: Management, opted-out, and excluded employees will be subject to the wage freeze. In terms of overtime restraint, that will be across all employees.

Mr. Cyr: Okay. All right. At the last estimates we were asking some questions about FOIPs that have been coming into your office. We are wondering why your department is still taking so long with FOIPs. It seems like when we submit them, not only do they not come in, but they come back so redacted that we can't even read them. Is this something that you guys are working on as a department, reviewing the process? Is there any way that you'd consider reviewing it? And where would FOIP sit as a cost in the budget?

Ms Ganley: In terms of the budget the FOIP programs fall under corporate services. We are looking into streamlining processes, identifying a single point of contact, and hiring temporary staff. Some of the issues have related to staff illness and maternity leaves and moves to other departments or promotions. At the moment we're in the process of running an open competition for three FOIP advisers. This is the second open competition because we weren't able to hire as many people as we had hoped previously. The competition will address a current vacancy and provide a temporary replacement for an adviser who just left on a maternity leave. In addition, we're in the process of hiring two temporary FOIP advisers to specifically help deal with the backlog. The cost overall of the FOIP office within Justice and Solicitor General is \$1.2 million.

Mr. Cyr: So you're hiring additional FOIP personnel over the prior year?

Ms Ganley: We're going to have to hire some. We have some vacancies, and we had some people who went off due to illness or maternity leave.

Mr. Cyr: Okay. Did this happen in the last year, or has this been there for a long time?

Ms Ganley: I understand that these incidences to which I am referring were specifically in the last year, but I think there have been some sort of ongoing struggles in terms of personnel in those departments. There's been a significant, significant increase in the number of FOIP requests. Of course, we're running at \$1.2 million now, and we're trying to constrain these sorts of administrative budgets, so it's challenging.

Mr. Cyr: Okay. I'm sorry that I'm bouncing around here, Minister. Are fish and wildlife officers going to remain part of the Justice department, or is there a plan to move them over to Environment as well?

Ms Ganley: We had moved some officers over, but the fish and wildlife officers will be remaining within Justice and Solicitor General. The reason for the other move was just sort of one of administrative efficiency. Some of those conservation officers had been moved to our department, but the remainder of that program had remained in Environment and Parks. It just sort of resulted in

less – we think this will result in greater accountability by having all of the things in one place.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Minister.

Ticket processing has an estimated increase of almost \$2 million in spending in the last year. How is it that the court administration services spending will be more than 5 per cent more this year when the government is claiming that Bill 9, An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences, will save 9,000 hours of court clerk administration time? Why are there no expected savings in this area?

Ms Ganley: Over the last several years – and this year is expected to be no different – there have been significant increases in ticket volumes.

The Chair: I apologize for the interruption. I'd now like to invite the members from the third-party opposition to go back and forth with the minister.

Mr. Ellis: Great. Thanks, Chair. Minister, great. I guess we've got a few more minutes. I'm just noticing, on page 95 of your business plan there, 3.3. I'll read it to you. "Develop an eCourts plan for Alberta to enhance the operations of the courts and their sustainability." Would you mind just – I don't know what that is. Could you familiarize us with what that means?

Ms Ganley: Right. Right now the courts work with a large number of paper documents, and there had been, as I understand, some initial work done, that was then abandoned, with respect to going to some additional online filing. You know, electronic means can give us efficiencies in a number of areas, including disclosure to defence counsel, which can be provided much more quickly in that way, and then filing documents and ensuring that they're getting to the right places within the courthouse. This will sort of save on – well, it won't necessarily save on administrative costs, but it will reduce the sort of increasing administrative burden on the courts.

Mr. Ellis: Again I'm going by personal experience. The Calgary Police Service was doing e-disclosure even towards the tail end of myself leaving the arrest processing area in 2009. Were other jurisdictions not doing that, like Edmonton and the RCMP? Or were they sticking with the paper files? I guess that would explain why you have this in there.

Ms Ganley: Well, the e-disclosure will be coming from the Crown. Right now the process has been rolled out. I'm not totally familiar with how the information would have flowed between the police service and the prosecutors, but the prosecutors have been giving paper disclosure. This will enable them to provide that disclosure so that defence counsel can go on and access it.

Mr. Ellis: Yeah. Sorry. I guess, obviously, the police officer creates the file, which they give to the Crown and, of course, that is disclosed to the defence. You know, I know that Calgary was, I'll say, somewhat ahead of its time when it created this e-disclosure that you'd give the Crown, which, obviously, you'd give to the defence. But I guess the way I'm reading this is that you're looking to enhance that type of model. I guess my question is: was this not being done in other jurisdictions? Is this maybe something that you're trying to integrate throughout Alberta?

Ms Ganley: I'm going to pass that over to Eric Tolppanen, who is the ADM in prosecution services.

Mr. Tolppanen: Yes. Thank you. There is an e-disclosure system in place in Edmonton right now. It was rolled out last March and is now fully implemented. The e-disclosure process that we're in the preliminary stages of rolling out in Calgary is not so much with respect to information between police and Crown, which, as you pointed out, has existed for some time. The e-disclosure piece would be an electronic means by which disclosure would get to defence counsel, which is new.

Mr. Ellis: Okay. Great. You mentioned Calgary and Edmonton, but is this something that's going to be implemented throughout Alberta, like RCMP Lethbridge?

Mr. Tolppanen: Certainly, in the fullness of time, yes. Other offices do have e-disclosure processes as well such as Medicine Hat.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, sir. I appreciate you answering the question. I appreciate that.

On page 123 of your fiscal plan, I notice that staffing for the victims of crime fund, which is fine, looks like it's status quo, 37 in 2015-16, 2016-17. I guess where I'm going with this: is there consideration for increasing the staffing given what we've talked about for the last, you know, hour or so in at least certain parts of this conversation, which has to do with the Auditor General's recommendations of getting the funds out?

Ms Ganley: That will depend, ultimately, on what the outcome of the analysis is. Once we've gone out and determined what the needs are and how best to meet those needs, it will depend on whether – obviously, that money flows by way of grants to a number of individual victims' services agencies and victims' services agencies within police. You know, it may be increases there, or it may be increases in employees. It'll just sort of depend on what that analysis ultimately reveals.

Mr. Ellis: Okay. So time will tell, right?

Ms Ganley: Time will tell.

Mr. Ellis: I know that some folks touched on the radio communications system, line 7.12, page 173, an increase to that. You know, I don't want to keep mentioning it, of course, but it increased \$5 million. You suggested in October that the Edmonton Police Service and RCMP were to be the first jurisdictions to transition. Does this explain the funding commitments completely? I guess my big question here is that there's no mention of Calgary. So is Calgary kind of last on the list, or are we just dealing with Edmonton and the RCMP first?

9:40

Ms Ganley: As I understand it, Calgary is one of the last services to transition, but I will – okay. That is correct.

Mr. Ellis: Great.

I'm getting down to my last few questions here. Actually, I wanted to touch on the drug treatment court stuff. Obviously, I'm a big fan of the drug treatment courts in both Calgary and Edmonton. I did note, at least through my staff here, that the Edmonton drug treatment court – please correct me if I'm wrong – is a provincial-federal initiative. I think the funds are coming to Edmonton for that drug treatment court, and then my understanding is that for the Calgary drug treatment court the funds are provided by the city. Again, maybe I'm completely wrong, but that's the understanding I have. I guess what I'm suggesting here: is there going to be consideration not only to provide for the drug treatment court model

to have consistent funding but also for it to be permanent and kind of off that trial basis?

Ms Ganley: What we're looking to do in terms of the drug treatment court is to look at the ministry and see how much of that work we can do in-house. I don't understand that the city does now or ever had funded a drug treatment court in Calgary. I understood it to be the case that there was federal funding for one, perhaps the one in Edmonton, and then the province funded the other.

Dr. Clarke: It's for both.

Ms Ganley: Oh. It's for both. So we had federal funding for both.

Mr. Ellis: Are they the same funding model, or are they two different funding models? That was kind of my understanding.

Ms Ganley: Sorry. I'm just going to pass it over to Dr. Curtis Clarke.

Mr. Ellis: No, no. Sure.

Dr. Clarke: The funding right now is split evenly between Edmonton and Calgary in terms of the federal money, how it was disbursed, and the federal government wanted to expand those programs. What we did was that we looked at Calgary and Edmonton. Calgary is augmented somewhat by other funding, but the base funding is similar to what Edmonton and Calgary have. It's equal in that sense. The funding is there till 2018 for both of them.

Mr. Ellis: Okay. Great. Well, thank you.

I guess a question that I'll ask on behalf of my good friend here from Grande Prairie is: for those rural folks that really want to use the system of the drug treatment court as a way of assistance, is there anything in your department for expanding that model so that folks in northern Alberta and southern Alberta would have equal access to those drug court facilities?

Ms Ganley: I think as we look at being able to do more of that work within the ministry itself, because it does most of the pieces involved, or potentially look at partnering with an outside agency, you know, that might be something that we can look to, certainly, in the future.

Mr. Ellis: Yeah. Great.

Just in regard to Legal Aid – I know a lot of folks have discussed Legal Aid, so I'll try not to be duplicitous here – what else does Legal Aid receive in terms of funding? You know, what is legal aid covering?

Ms Ganley: Legal Aid receives funding from Justice Canada, they receive funding, obviously, from Alberta Justice and Solicitor General, funding from the Law Foundation, and then they also have small amounts that come from other areas, including recoveries and client contributions and some interest and other funding.

Mr. Ellis: Okay. Now, I know there have been some discussions – and maybe we're just getting ahead of our time, but I think I mentioned that I like to be ahead of the game here. You know, we talked about service delivery models. Is there a consideration, I guess, in regard to hiring kind of a central defenders office, or is that just going to be part of the review that's coming forward here?

Ms Ganley: That's certainly one of the things we're examining, so when we look at service delivery, we're looking at whether the certificate is more efficient.

The Chair: I apologize for interrupting. As there are no independent members present, I will now invite the government caucus to speak for the next 10 minutes. Would they like to go back and forth with the minister?

Mr. Hinkley: Yes, please.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Hinkley: Mr. Shepherd and I will go back and forth as well.

Just to go back to the question we left off on page 93 of the business plan. We were looking at the reactive model and the preventive model. In that light, how is the budget aimed at reducing some of the social factors that are leading to the increased crime?

Ms Ganley: Right. As we were discussing, obviously Bill 9 is one method by which we're doing that, ensuring that individuals with minor infractions aren't having warrants issued for their arrest. We believe that this legislation is an innovative and fair way to help protect vulnerable Albertans from a cycle of incarceration and poverty.

We're also dedicated to ensuring that front-line services are available to Albertans through these tough fiscal times. Much of that, obviously, will be in budgets outside of my ministry's budget, but understanding that ensuring that supports are there for people so that they don't fall into poverty in the first place can actually save a significant amount of money in the Justice budget down the line, I think, is really critical. For instance, we're supporting services like housing by investing \$292 million in housing overall, which includes \$13 million towards homeless and specialized populations, which will be delivered through Human Services. These investments will help to ensure that Albertans have safe and affordable places to call home. Fundamentally, you know, it's the view of our government that that housing first model will have a huge impact in terms of downstream costs in the justice system.

Mr. Hinkley: Going back to page 172 in your government estimates, line 2.3, ticket processing, I note that in that line there have been increases each year by approximately \$1.9 million. What is causing that increase?

Ms Ganley: Essentially, the program is supported by dedicated revenue. The dedicated revenue is based on an administrative fee charged on traffic tickets. Some of the reasons for the increase – I mean, there is an increase in the number of tickets being processed, which is why there are increases in that dedicated revenue, but the increase will also be due to manpower costs associated with contract increases for the AUPE contract, increases associated with the volume of tickets, and funding to support examination and development of initiatives to modernize that sort of enforcement. There are a number of things that will pay for the cost, but overall it sort of deals with the fact that there is kind of an increase in ticket volumes coming through.

Mr. Hinkley: Okay. Still on page 172 of the estimates it seems that your office has been operating on less money than in previous years. Have you laid people off? Are you not hiring new people, or what other efficiencies have you found to make savings?

Ms Ganley: Sorry. You're referencing now the budget for the minister's office?

Mr. Hinkley: Well, no. Your office as well as other offices. You've allocated less money. How have you found those efficiencies? Are you laying people off or what?

Ms Ganley: In ministry support services the budget was reduced by \$2.7 million this year, and this is comprised of \$3 million for internal reallocation of the budget as a result of implementing operational efficiencies and \$1 million in savings to be achieved through measures such as hiring and overtime restraint, not layoffs but attrition and attendance management and technological efficiencies.

Mr. Hinkley: Okay. Well, thank you.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you. Minister, could you give us a sense, then, of what programs and services you're supporting in this budget in regard specifically to young offenders and their reintegration in the community?

9:50

Ms Ganley: We work collaboratively with many service providers, internal and external to government, to provide supports and services for young persons. These include children's services, public school boards, indigenous supports and services, contract agencies, and Alberta Health Services. Specifics include contracted open custody group homes to house young persons; treatment facilities; the Kennedale school program in Edmonton; school program support in Edmonton at the Edmonton Young Offender Centre; West View school board of education program at the Calgary Young Offender Centre; McMan Youth, Family and Community Services; contract delivery; wraparound services; correctional transition teams; roofs for youth, which is a collaboration with Wood's Homes and the Calgary John Howard Society to facilitate placement of homeless youth; as well as Enviro and ExCel ARCH, which is an assisted reintegration from custody homes project.

Mr. Shepherd: Cool. I appreciate that, Minister. Certainly, I know that within my own constituency of Edmonton-Centre there are certainly concerns with youth that are on the streets that do get involved in some of these situations. I appreciate the work you've done on Bill 9 with that specifically given that, you know, if we can keep these young people out of the criminal system, obviously that's going to help realize some cost savings here as well as just going to provide more opportunities for these youths. I'm happy to hear that also in the event that they do get involved in the criminal system, we're providing these supports, this education, these other things in place to help ensure that once they're released, they're not going to be taken back up into that system.

That seems to tie in, I guess, with your business plan here, specifically outcome 2. We were talking about some key strategies, as you mentioned, collaborating with partners, exploring options to provide system-wide preventative services, engaging in a more holistic approach to criminal justice that ensures that individuals involved with the justice system, including addiction and mental health, have access to better supports. That's fantastic to hear. As part of this I see that your intent is to work with Human Services on some aspects of this as well. Can you give us a sense, I guess, of how those plans and those partnerships are in place to help support the prevention side of things?

Ms Ganley: Well, certainly, I think that with all groups of individuals it's really critical to ensure that you're sort of preventing people from falling into these situations in the first place. That's done in a number of ways. You know, obviously, education: ensuring that we fund enrolment growth so that individual students can get the services that they need in schools is really important going forward. Ensuring that people have access to supports through Human Services: when they fall on difficult times,

they have access to supports so they can continue to pay their rent. Ensuring that individuals suffering from mental health challenges may have access to supports through health services, for instance, is sort of a critical piece of that. Of course, ensuring that there is availability of affordable housing, I think, is probably the most critical piece of that. I think that those investments in affordable housing will ultimately have long-term benefits for communities and for the government.

Mr. Shepherd: Okay. Thank you.

I know that within my own constituency in particular and in some other areas as well, certainly, an overly large number of the individuals that are getting caught up in this and are dealing with these situations are marginalized groups, particularly First Nations, indigenous Albertans. Do you have any plans within this, then, within these partnerships and these plans for prevention, that are specifically targeted towards First Nations and indigenous?

Ms Ganley: Well, certainly, there will be, you know, a number of – the tripartite agreements, which exist between my ministry, the federal government, and First Nations, are certainly a way of increasing interaction of the police with First Nations people so that they are able to develop a relationship of trust so the police are sort of integrated into the community in a really critical way. In addition, there will be a number of different programs operating throughout the government that are targeted specifically, ensuring that those funds are available. Additionally, obviously, all of the programs that I have mentioned will be available to . . . [A timer sounded] Sorry.

The Chair: Thank you.

We have five minutes remaining. I would like to invite the Official Opposition to speak with the minister.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Minister. I'd like to finish the question that I'd asked about the ticket processing. How is it that we're not seeing savings – we're seeing increases – in the spending while Bill 9 has stated that we have 9,000 hours of clerk administration time that we're going to save?

Ms Ganley: I think the first and most important thing to recognize is that ticket volumes have been skyrocketing. The cost to provide those services has been increasing as a result of that, so there are increased costs associated with that. In large part, a lot of that ticket processing – when you're talking about getting back hours, what you're really talking about is clerks able to do other work because there is such an increase in volume. In addition, Bill 9 deals specifically with warrants, and it deals specifically with warrants for a specific type of offence. So the ticket itself will still need to be processed. It will still need to go through the system, and people will still have available to them the ability to challenge that ticket and say, "No, I didn't do it," and then come before the court as they would in sort of the normal course.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you.

I would like to ask one question about the AFRRCS system. Now, I've had – the fire departments and the ambulance services are concerned about the cost of this new radio system. Is the province planning on helping our local municipalities through this time of transition? It sounds like it's going to be rapid, according to your ADM.

Ms Ganley: Well, I don't know that I'd refer to it as rapid. I think the transition is occurring over a number of years. In addition, this project has been ongoing for a number of years, so the capital investment for this has been spread over a number of years. I don't think it comes as a particular surprise to anyone that we're transitioning over to this system.

The reason that it's really important to transition to this system is that, you know, increasingly individuals or governments are moving to these sorts of digital systems – right? – because the analog systems are getting a little bit outdated. I think that the first thing we need to recognize is that this is fundamentally about the security and safety of our front-line workers. That's really important, which is why the province had made such a significant investment. That investment was made over time, so we are of the view that people have had sort of time to prepare. Additionally, people need to replace radios in any event, right? They don't live forever.

There is no additional funding that's given. For those municipalities who are responsible for their own policing, there's no additional funding there. As part of the provincial policing agreement, funding was rolled out in terms of communities that are not under that, municipalities who currently don't have the responsibility for their policing costs and for the cost of their policing infrastructure. You know, some funding has been provided in terms of the transition, but in terms of the other pieces I think that the municipalities, much like the province, should be investing and have a reason to invest in the safety of their front-line officers.

Mr. Cyr: And if they don't have the ability because they're too small? That's what I'm getting at.

Ms Ganley: Well, again, the smaller municipalities, the folks who are under the provincial policing agreement, are having the costs of improved radios covered as well as most of the cost of migration and project management. So those smaller municipalities that don't pay for their policing are having the majority of those costs covered.

Mr. Cyr: Okay. That was my question there.

Are we looking at, when we're phasing this in over a few years, having this done, say, 100 per cent within three years? When are we expecting 100 per cent of the province to be fully on the AFRRCS system?

Ms Ganley: I'm going to pass it over to Mr. Sweeney again.

Mr. Sweeney: There are a number of variables that are at play. For example, the hon. member mentioned Calgary. The Calgary Police Service is electing not to migrate onto the system based on a business decision . . .

The Chair: I apologize for the interruption, but I must advise the committee that the time allotted for this item of business has concluded.

I would like to thank the minister and staff for coming and joining us here this evening.

I'd also like to remind committee members that we are scheduled to meet next on May 3, 2016, to consider the estimates of the Ministry of Education.

Thank you again to everyone. This meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 10 p.m.]

