



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Standing Committee
on
Families and Communities

Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General
Consideration of Main Estimates

Tuesday, April 3, 2018
3:30 p.m.

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Fourth Session**

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

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

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Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (AP)*
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Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Participants

Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General

Hon. Kathleen T. Ganley, Minister

Philip Bryden, QC, Deputy Minister

Bill Sweeney, Senior Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Security

Brad Wells, Executive Director and Senior Financial Officer, Financial Services

3:30 p.m.

Tuesday, April 3, 2018

[Ms Goehring in the chair]

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

The Chair: Good afternoon. 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, 2019.

I'd ask that we go around the table and have all MLAs introduce themselves for the record. Minister, please introduce the officials that are joining you at the table. I am Nicole Goehring, MLA for Edmonton-Castle Downs and chair of this committee. We will continue, starting to my right.

Mr. Smith: Mark Smith, vice-chair, MLA, Drayton Valley-Devon.

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

Mr. Ellis: Mike Ellis, MLA, Calgary-West.

Mrs. Pitt: Angela Pitt, MLA, Airdrie.

Dr. Starke: Yes. Good afternoon. Richard Starke, MLA, Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Ms Ganley: Kathleen Ganley. I am the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General. I am joined today by Dennis Cooley, associate deputy minister, Justice and Solicitor General; Philip Bryden, Deputy Minister of Justice and Solicitor General; Gerald Lamoureux, assistant deputy minister, corporate services; and Brad Wells, senior financial officer.

Ms Luff: I'm Robyn Luff, MLA for Calgary-East.

Ms Renaud: Marie Renaud, MLA for St. Albert.

Ms McKittrick: Bonjour. Annie McKittrick, MLA, Sherwood Park.

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

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

Ms Miller: Good afternoon. Barb Miller, MLA, Red Deer-South.

Drever: Good afternoon. Deborah Drever, MLA for Calgary-Bow.

Mr. Shepherd: Good afternoon. David Shepherd, MLA for Edmonton-Centre.

The Chair: Thank you.

I'd like to note the following substitutions for the record: Mrs. Pitt for Mr. Yao, Mr. Fraser for Member McPherson.

Please note that the microphones are operated by *Hansard*, and the committee proceedings are being live streamed on the Internet and broadcast on Alberta Assembly TV. Please set your cellphones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting.

Hon. members, the standing orders set out the process for consideration of the main estimates, including 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 members of the third party, if any, and the minister may speak. For the next 20 minutes 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 reduced to five minutes as set out in Standing Order 59.02(1)(c).

Members wishing to participate must be present during the appropriate portion of the meeting. 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 rotation that follows, with speaking times of up to five minutes, a minister and a member may combine their speaking time for a total of 10 minutes. Discussion should flow through the chair at all times regardless of whether or not the speaking time is combined. Members are asked to advise the chair at the beginning of the rotation if they wish to combine their time with the minister's time. If members have any questions regarding the speaking times or the rotation, please feel free to send a note or speak directly with either the chair or the committee clerk about this process.

A total of six hours has been scheduled to consider the estimates of the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General. The committee will continue its consideration of the ministry's estimates on Thursday, April 5, at 9 a.m.

At this point I would generally note that a break would be called at the midpoint of the meeting with the agreement of the committee. However, for today's meeting I've been advised that the members of the government caucus will be ceding their 20-minute time slot in the rotation to accommodate a break for the minister to feed her baby.

Committee members, ministers, and other members who are not committee members may participate. However, only a committee member or an official substitute may introduce an amendment during a committee's review of the estimates. Ministry officials may be present and, at the direction of the minister, may address the committee. Ministry officials seated in the gallery, if called upon, have access to a microphone in the gallery area. Ministry officials are reminded to introduce themselves prior to answering a question or questions.

Pages are available to deliver notes or other materials between the gallery and the table. Attendees in the gallery should not approach the table. Members' staff may be present and seated along the committee room wall, space permitting. Opposition caucus staff may sit at the table to assist their members; however, members have priority to sit at the table at all times.

If debate is exhausted prior to six hours, the ministry's estimates are deemed to have been considered for the time allotted in the schedule, and the committee will adjourn. The scheduled end time of today's meeting is 6:30 p.m.

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

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

The vote on the estimates and any amendments is deferred until consideration of all ministry estimates has concluded and will occur in Committee of Supply on April 19, 2018.

Amendments must be in writing and approved by Parliamentary Counsel prior to the meeting at which they are to be moved. The original amendment is to be deposited with the committee clerk,

and 20 copies of the amendment must be provided at the meeting for committee members and staff.

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

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm here today to present my ministry's 2018-21 business plan and 2018-2019 estimates.

Firstly, I'd like to introduce the senior officials who are here with me today. We've already introduced the officials at the table, but behind me, in no particular order, are Eric Tolppanen, assistant deputy minister, Alberta Crown prosecution service; Kim Sanderson, assistant deputy minister, correctional services; David Peace, assistant deputy minister, justice services; Frank Bosscha, assistant deputy minister, legal services; Bill Sweeney, senior assistant deputy minister, public security; Mary MacDonald, assistant deputy minister, resolution and court administration services; Rodney Yaremchuk, executive director of human resources; and Fiona Lavoy, executive director, policy and planning services branch.

My ministry business plan, to begin with. My ministry helps to ensure that Albertans can live in safe and resilient communities while having access to a fair and innovative justice system. Our divisions include many areas such as the Alberta Crown prosecution service, correctional services, public security as well as support for the courts. We work alongside our partners in law enforcement, legal aid, and the judiciary along with many other organizations to ensure the justice system functions efficiently and effectively.

In the business plan my ministry's goal is to focus on outcomes including that vulnerable Albertans are safe and supported during interactions with the justice system; that justice system partners collaborate to make the best use of resources to protect Albertans through prevention, intervention, and rehabilitation; and that Albertans' civil, criminal, and family legal issues are resolved quickly and appropriately.

This year my ministry's consolidated budget is nearly \$1.5 billion. That's an increase of \$66.4 million over Budget 2017, an almost 5 per cent rise, and builds on in-year funding over the past 12 months. This is intended to address pressures including population growth, recent Supreme Court of Canada decisions, increasing caseloads, and a rise in rural crime, which is a trend that affects jurisdictions across Canada.

Our government is taking action to combat rural crime by investing \$10 million for more RCMP officers, civilian staff, and Crown prosecutors. With help from our partners at the RCMP, we have developed a detailed, seven-point action plan to protect rural Albertans and their property. The first three elements of this plan require an investment of \$8 million for 39 police officers and 40 civilian support staff. This will support rural crime reduction units with specifically trained officers who will focus on arresting prolific offenders. It will support specialized policing intelligence through six additional intelligence-focused RCMP officers and four crime analyst positions to identify prolific offenders and target organized crime.

A policing support centre will also be funded. Twenty-three civilians will input investigative updates, which will allow officers more time to patrol the streets. The rural crime fighting strategy also provides \$2 million for the Alberta Crown prosecution service to hire up to 10 Crown prosecutors that will focus on rural areas. The plan promotes better co-ordination with the Alberta sheriffs, fish and wildlife enforcement, commercial vehicle enforcement, and conservation officers, effectively making these officials additional eyes and ears for the police.

3:40

The RCMP will also explore new ways of using technology to target rural crime as well as engaging and educating Albertans about crime prevention. Alberta's commanding officer will have the flexibility, within the funding provided, to deliver the programs in a way that meets specific needs of provincial communities.

I will now expand further on Budget 2018, starting with public security, the division spearheading the rural crime reduction strategy. This division's budget this year is \$518.2 million, an increase of \$34.9 million over last year. It includes an additional increase of \$13.4 million for the RCMP as the province's provincial police service, \$8.1 million of which is for a pay raise settlement, and \$5.3 million is for 20 additional police officers and associated operating costs. This is in addition to the rural crime reduction initiative.

The Alberta Crown prosecution service prosecutes offences under the Criminal Code of Canada, the Youth Criminal Justice Act, and provincial statutes in all Alberta courts and the Supreme Court of Canada. For 2018-19 the Crown prosecution service's budgets will increase to \$103.9 million. This will address increased caseloads arising from the Supreme Court of Canada's 2016 decision in *Jordan*, which placed a ceiling on how long a case should take to make its way through the court system. This funding will be used to hire up to 10 Crown prosecutors and support staff and is in addition to the rural crime reduction initiative.

Resolution and court administration services supports the operations of all three of Alberta's courts and offers a broad range of programs and services, including information, dispute resolution, and court assistance. This division's operating expense budget increased by \$7.9 million to \$198.2 million, allowing us to create four new positions for provincial judges. It also helps my ministry to address staffing pressures, providing for 13 bail clerks and 55 court clerks.

Budget 2018 also provides funding for the justice services division, which includes programs such as legal aid, the office of the public guardian and trustee, the office of the Chief Medical Examiner, and the maintenance enforcement program. Legal Aid Alberta's annual grant increased by \$7.9 million over last year's budget to \$89.3 million while the justice services operating budget only increased by \$4.7 million to \$164.1 million. This funding will help to maintain existing services.

The legal services division provides legal service to government ministries. This year the budget rose from \$53.6 million to \$58.1 million, a rise of \$4.5 million, mainly to support an internal reallocation of staff.

Correctional services provides secure custody of sentenced and remanded adults and young offenders. The division also provides court-ordered community supervision of individuals both pre- and postsentence. Its 2018-19 budget increased by \$7.5 million to \$287.4 million. The majority is for contractual obligations, including food, chaplaincy, and video visitation services for inmates.

This year's budget provides victims of crime with \$40 million, a \$4.4 million increase over 2017-18. It will help provide financial benefits to victims of crime and support 77 police-based and 37 community-based victims' programs, ensuring victims of crime are treated with courtesy, compassion, and respect.

In conclusion, Budget 2018 will enable Albertans to access a fair and innovative justice system. It will also help ensure that Albertans across the province, wherever they call home, can continue to live in safe and secure communities.

And that is the first time I've ever gotten to the end. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Before we go into the rotations, I would like to give the opportunity to Mr. Fraser to introduce himself for the record.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hon. minister, I'm Rick Fraser, Calgary-South East.

The Chair: Thank you.

For the hour that follows, members of the Official Opposition and the minister may speak. My understanding is that Mrs. Pitt and Mr. Ellis will be sharing their time. I would like to know if you would like the timer set for 20-minute intervals so that you are aware of time, or would you prefer to let the full hour flow without interruption?

Mrs. Pitt: The whole hour, please.

The Chair: Thank you.

As mentioned, members are asked to advise the chair at the beginning of the rotation if they wish to combine their time with the minister's time.

Mrs. Pitt: Yes, if we can. And, Chair, as you mentioned, if Mr. Ellis and I could share the time together in that hour, it would be appreciated.

The Chair: Minister, are you okay with going back and forth?

Ms Ganley: Absolutely.

The Chair: Thank you.

Just a reminder that discussion should flow through the chair at all times regardless of whether or not the speaking time is combined.

Go ahead, Mrs. Pitt.

Mrs. Pitt: Wonderful. Welcome, everybody. Thank you for being here today. I'm just going to dive right in as we only have the first hour here.

Minister, your ministry's business plan was prepared based on your government's policy decisions as of March 7. Now, only two days later, on March 9, your government announced a \$10 million investment to fight rural crime. Why is there not one mention of rural crime in your business plan?

Ms Ganley: The business plan gets worked on pretty continuously over the course of the year, and in this particular instance I think that decisions were still being taken with respect to how best to address rural crime. We've had ongoing conversations with our partners in the RCMP and other places, and ultimately I think we just had it written prior to the final decisions having been made.

Mrs. Pitt: When was the final decision made, then, to invest more to fight rural crime?

Ms Ganley: I don't think that's information I can actually share. The government made the announcement after the final decision was made, but obviously there were a number of conversations and a number of things that are subject to confidentiality that were going on in terms of discussions.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. It appears to the public that it may have been an afterthought because the budget doesn't actually mention rural crime anywhere in the business plan.

Ms Ganley: It was definitely not an afterthought.

Mrs. Pitt: There's a perception out there that perhaps that might be the case.

Minister, do you acknowledge that the crime epidemic has hit rural areas much harder than our cities?

Ms Ganley: Our data indicates that some rural areas are seeing the highest crime rates that they've seen in the last five years, and that's higher than in most urban areas. Obviously, it's going to be distributed a little bit unequally around the province, but, yes, most of those areas that are more affected and seeing sort of a rise in crime from earlier times tend to be rural. That was the focus of what we did. It's also that those are the areas where we have the contract for policing services, so that enables us to have an impact there that we maybe don't necessarily have in other places.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. Do you recognize the unique situation in rural areas given that people live much farther from emergency services?

Ms Ganley: Absolutely. I think that's why the plan was developed the way it was. As myself and Deputy Commissioner Shean both said, you know, Alberta's geography tends to present unique policing challenges, particularly in rural areas. We can't change that geography, but we can try to change the way we do business in order to ensure that we're meeting the needs of the people in those areas in spite of the geography.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Minister.

Performance indicator 1(a), page 101. I see that the Alberta crime rate for 2016 was 5,206 whereas the national rate was 3,207 per population of 100,000. Why is Alberta's crime rate much higher than Canada's?

Ms Ganley: A lot of academic ink has probably been spilled on that particular question. I mean, Alberta tends to have a slightly higher crime rate. It tends to be related to demographics, so population sorts of demographics there. We have seen in certain areas of Alberta an increase at a faster rate than in other places in the province. There are a number of reasons that have been speculated on for that. I think that in general most – I don't want to say all because not everyone will agree, but many academics agree that it has to do to a certain degree with the demographics of the population in Alberta. I wouldn't want to say that that's the only reason. There are probably other reasons for that also.

Mrs. Pitt: Could you expand a little bit more on that? I think that's probably important to recognize, certainly within your department, in order to address some of the problems that we're experiencing here in Alberta that, just from the numbers, may be a little bit unique when compared to the rest of Canada.

3:50

Ms Ganley: Again, I want to be very careful to say that I'm speaking on a population level here. It's not specific to individuals. The population in Alberta tends to be younger, and there is certain evidence that younger males tend to be more likely to be involved in crime and in certain types of crime, and the population in Alberta tends towards those demographics. So that's certainly one factor that's been put forward. I suspect that if I were able to say with certainty exactly what causes crime, there'd be a number of different things I could say. I mean, I wouldn't want to speculate too much on what the different drivers are because I think that our understanding of crime and what the underlying drivers are is constantly evolving. I think we've learned a lot in the last, say, 10 or 20 years about how best to address crime, and I think we'll probably learn just as much in the next 10 or 20 years.

Mrs. Pitt: One of the factors might be – I’ve heard this elsewhere before – that Alberta has a higher population of young men and that young men tend to commit more crimes. Is that a fair extrapolation of what you just said?

Ms Ganley: Yes, I suppose so. I don’t want to suggest that they’re the only ones committing crime or that there’s something – there are sort of population level statistics which shouldn’t be generalized to the individual. Let’s put it that way. But, yes, there are sort of impacts of things like age and demographics. There are impacts of neighbourhood characteristics, new technologies, economic conditions, and that sort of thing.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. Do you have any idea what the 2017 numbers are?

Ms Ganley: I think that if it is not in the documents, I probably don’t want to suggest that it’s locked down at this point.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. Will you have them, and will those be posted?

Ms Ganley: They come from Stats Canada.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay.

Ms Ganley: It sounds like it’s in July when they come from Stats Canada.

Mrs. Pitt: In July they’ll be released? Okay. Excellent.

You mentioned, and I think we agree, that crime rates were highest in the rural areas. How recent are those stats? Is that from Stats Canada? Is that from your own internal sourcing, and when?

Ms Ganley: We’ve been looking at the last five years. What we’re really looking at are trends with respect to crime. Obviously, when we say that, it doesn’t mean all rural areas. It just means that some are more affected than others.

Mrs. Pitt: And this is of crimes being reported.

Ms Ganley: Yeah. Right. I mean, there is that.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. Do you think the economy is a factor in the increase in crime?

Ms Ganley: I think that most academics would probably agree that the economy does have an impact in terms of overall crime trends. I don’t want to suggest by any means that the lack of money would make everyone turn to crime or that people who don’t have money will always turn to crime, but on a population level I think that generally there is agreement that economics have some impact on crime statistics.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. And certainly here in Alberta.

Ms Ganley: I would say that probably could be. Yes.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. Minister, on March 9 you announced \$8 million to fund 39 new officers and 40 civilian staff and \$2 million to hire additional Crown prosecutors. Which line items in the budget do these fall under?

Ms Ganley: Obviously, the Crown prosecution service is item 4 all the way down, 4.1 through 4.4. Contract policing is line 6.5, so that’s the RCMP contract.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. I’m going to come back to that because I’m going to have another question.

Line item 6.9, the sheriffs branch. I see that this line item is going up about \$5 million. Is this part of that \$8 million?

Ms Ganley: No, that’s not part of the \$8 million. That is unrelated.

Mrs. Pitt: Line item 6.10, fish and wildlife enforcement. This amount is increasing by \$2.4 million. Why is that?

Ms Ganley: That has to do primarily with addressing existing manpower and supplies and service pressures in the budget.

Mrs. Pitt: So additional officers?

Ms Ganley: Filling vacancies.

Mrs. Pitt: How many vacancies are there, and how many were filled?

Ms Ganley: We have that number somewhere. You know what? I’m going to have to get back to you with the total. Oh, here it is. Fifteen vacancies. There are currently 15 vacant positions, so we’ll be looking to fill some of those.

Mrs. Pitt: They’re not filled yet?

Ms Ganley: No. I believe those are the vacancies as of – well, I don’t want to say necessarily today – when these documents were compiled.

Mrs. Pitt: That’s fair. That’s fair. Yeah.

Minister, in outcome 2 of your business plan, “Vulnerable Albertans are safe and supported during interactions with the justice system,” I notice there’s no discussion about the victims of crime fund here or in any part of your business plan. You did touch on that in the opening, but why isn’t it in the business plan?

Ms Ganley: Obviously, the victims of crime fund is sort of undergoing some reworks. You’ll be, I think, familiar with recommendations that came from the Auditor General in terms of a gaps analysis. We’re still sort of working out final decisions on that. That has been added to, I suppose, by the recent report by Roberta Campbell that came out that also had recommendations with respect to victim services. The work we had been doing in terms of sort of how to meet those recommendations of the Auditor General we’re now looking at in light of those recommendations as well. We’re hoping to have more to say about that soon.

Mrs. Pitt: The AG’s report came out in February of 2016. That’s two years ago. Have there been any changes made since then?

Ms Ganley: A significant amount of work has gone on with that. Obviously, these most recent recommendations have come out very, very recently, so that has had an impact on the work that we were completing in response to the Auditor General. We have been working with that office. What the Auditor General asked us to do is actually a fairly – I think it’s an important exercise, but it’s an interesting exercise in the sense that, you know, we had been asked to look at: what are the needs, how are you attempting to meet those needs, and how are you measuring whether you’re meeting those needs? That’s a pretty broad set of questions. We did a lot of work with stakeholders on that, but now we just want to loop back around in light of these most recent recommendations with respect to victim services.

Mrs. Pitt: It’s been two years since the AG’s report came out. The report said that there’s a massive surplus accumulating. At that time it was \$56 million, in 2016, which in four years is about an

additional \$23 million. The fund: I get that there's a lot of work going on in the back end, but there's no money actually getting to the front line, to victim services organizations. The fund has been accumulating, I would assume, at a significant rate over the last couple of years given that we've seen an increase in our crime rates. So what's the delay? Why are we not getting this money where it needs to go? Why is it still sitting there? Why is it taking so long? When are we going to actually see some movement on this file?

4:00

Ms Ganley: I think the first thing I'd say is that there is a \$4.4 million increase in here, so we are seeing some increase. In terms of talking about getting that money where it needs to go, I think the important thing is that we do the work that the Auditor General has asked us to do and that others have asked us to do in terms of ensuring where that place is, right? So there's a certain amount of that work going on. We hope to have more to say about that in the near future.

Mrs. Pitt: Good. It's taken a long time. I want to put that on the record: two years since the AG report and much longer for a lot of these organizations that are having to fund raise so that they can support victims in our communities and in every single community.

Now, in the 2018-19 estimates for revenue from fines and penalties it's the same as last year, \$49 million. Minister, if crime is increasing, shouldn't we see an increased revenue here?

Ms Ganley: I'm sorry. What line item are you on?

Mrs. Pitt: Page 203, the statement of operations for the victims of crime fund.

Ms Ganley: Right. It looks like what we're doing in those instances is estimating it. I mean, obviously, the actuals will be different in the end. The method by which we estimate those: I feel like that is usually based on past years, what we anticipate seeing. The money that comes in from the victims of crime fund tends to be a surcharge on top of fines and other things. We may not necessarily be predicting increased money coming in in terms of fines. That could be one explanation for that. Yes, I think that's what we're looking at.

We are seeing increased transfers from the government of Canada.

Mrs. Pitt: Increase in transfers from the government of Canada: for what and to where?

Ms Ganley: Sorry. I was just looking at the line items in terms of where the increase was.

I'm going to pass it over to Brad Wells.

Mr. Wells: Just going back to your first question on the revenues, it has remained flat. The volumes historically have been increasing, but year over year the past year we have not seen that increase in the volumes of our fines. The volumes have remained constant. That's why you're seeing the revenues projected as being flat at this point.

Mrs. Pitt: Why is that, though? That doesn't make sense. If crime rates are increasing, are fines not getting paid?

Mr. Wells: Most of the revenue is related to Traffic Safety Act fines, so it's not necessarily related to serious crimes, which are increasing. It's more related to Traffic Safety Act fines. With the Traffic Safety Act fines, right now our volumes year over year have been flat, so that's why revenue is being projected the same way.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. Thank you.

The line item program support services: what exactly is that? I see a reduced expenditure in that line item. Can you explain what it is and why there's a reduction? Program support services, same page, 203, in expenses.

Ms Ganley: We're going to have to get back to you on that one. Sorry about that.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. Thank you.

Assistance to victims' organizations: how many organizations is the \$22 million divided amongst?

Ms Ganley: I actually think I said that. I'm just going to see if I've got that. It goes to, obviously, a number of different organizations. I believe it is 77 police organizations and – there it is. It is 77 police-based organizations and 37 community-based victims' programs.

Mrs. Pitt: Sorry. Seventy-seven police organizations and 37 . . .

Ms Ganley: Community based.

Mrs. Pitt: Thirty-seven community based. So 77 police based are very likely victims' assistance societies. Then community based: could you give me an example?

Ms Ganley: There are lots of different ones. Sometimes they operate sort of more integrated with police, but sometimes they're operated through members of the community, and I think that's just sort of a historical relic of the way the system evolved, to a certain degree. Those organizations sort of came up, and then we began funding them, so we have sort of a bit of a – the system has sort of different participants delivering the services across the province. Depending on where you are, it will look slightly different. Sometimes they're integrated with the police and sometimes they aren't. So those organizations themselves existed, and then JSG provides them with funding.

Mrs. Pitt: Are there any new organizations that JSG is funding? Have there been any new ones in the last five years?

Ms Ganley: I don't believe that there are any new ones this year, but we can look to see if there are any new folks that have been added.

Mrs. Pitt: Because it's a granting process?

Ms Ganley: It's a granting process.

Mrs. Pitt: It's how they're funded. Those grant numbers have not increased?

Ms Ganley: No. They've stayed relatively flat, and the source of concern from our victim-serving partners is with respect to those. I think there were a couple that were increased. Yeah, we're doing in this budget a \$1 million increase in funding in grants and financial benefits awards, so you will see a little bit of an increase in some of those things in here. Then, hopefully, we'll have other things to say about that soon.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. I will await the funding announcements from the victims of crime fund for service agencies supporting victims in our communities.

Minister, I'm going to tap in my colleague here. Go ahead.

Mr. Ellis: Great. Well, thank you very much, Mrs. Pitt.

Minister and staff, thank you very much for being here. Minister, I wasn't able to either privately or publicly congratulate you on your baby, so I just wanted to say to you and your husband: congratulations. I sincerely wish you both the best.

Minister, I just want to touch a little bit here on the RCMP officers. You indicated in your opening remarks that there was an increase in funding for the RCMP. I'm sorry; maybe I didn't quite hear. How much was that increase for those RCMP officers?

Ms Ganley: The increase in this year's budget, which is in the contract policing and oversight line, includes \$13.4 million for the RCMP.

Mr. Ellis: So \$13.4 million is your increase. I apologize. Since you have it there, how much in total are we paying for our provincial police service at this time?

Ms Ganley: I believe that is the number in contract – oh, no, because it doesn't include policing oversight. It's the \$256,167,000 number. That's the number in line 6.5.

4:10

Mr. Ellis: That would include not only the officers but also all the administration staff that go along with that. Is that correct?

Ms Ganley: Yeah. That's everything in those areas of the province where the province contracts for the policing as opposed to the municipalities contracting for the policing.

Mr. Ellis: I think it was at this time, approximately, last year you indicated that the cost was around \$115,000 per officer. Does that include the 30 per cent that is contributed by the federal government, or is it \$115,000 and then another 30 per cent on top of that?

Ms Ganley: That's our share.

Mr. Ellis: The \$115,000 is our share, and then 30 per cent . . .

Ms Ganley: I mean, obviously, those are estimate numbers. The officers themselves will cost a little different, and then there's equipment and all of that.

Mr. Ellis: Yeah, of course. There's a pay scale, of course.

I think it was noted in part of the previous conversation with my colleague here: fish and wildlife. Let me see. You have about 15 vacancies – is that correct? – for those officers right now?

Ms Ganley: That is my understanding, yes.

Mr. Ellis: So are you looking to fill all of those vacancies in the near future, or is that over a period of time?

Ms Ganley: That money will go to fill vacancies and also for supplies and services that have been in some cases deferred. I wouldn't want to say for sure that we're going to fill every single one of those vacancies. The plan is to this year have those officers all in place.

Mr. Ellis: Oh. Okay. Great. Will they just be performing their regular duties, or will they have additional duties on top of what they're currently doing?

Ms Ganley: In general they'll be performing their regular duties. We have been working with all of our different branches to ensure sort of better information sharing with the RCMP. I don't know if you'd call that additional.

Mr. Ellis: Okay. Would you say that the RCMP are taking a lead on we'll call it the crime that is in our province at this time?

Ms Ganley: Well, obviously, in the jurisdictions in which the RCMP operate, they would be taking a lead, yes.

Mr. Ellis: Yeah. Then just to add to what you were saying there, improving the communication with the sheriffs and fish and wildlife and, I can only assume, some of our peace officers that are in the communities as well: has that communication over the last several years not been occurring? Have there been some barriers that these agencies have been facing where they have not been communicating with each other?

Ms Ganley: I don't know that I would describe it as barriers. I think that all folks understand and all our policing partners understand the importance of information sharing. I think that in part what we're looking at is sort of MOUs between organizations, technology that allows for sort of increased communication, that sort of thing.

Mr. Ellis: Is there any sort of line item in your budget that would be put aside for sharing of information between policing agencies, whether it be from an urban area to a rural area, or is that really dependent upon, you know, each individual agency having proactive police officers that are just communicating – like, are you leading any sort of communication charge from your perspective?

Ms Ganley: A lot of what we're working with – and again it's in partnership with our RCMP partners. We're working on sort of information-sharing protocols to ensure that information is able to flow from one agency to another. Often people have concerns about whether or not they can share information, and if we make it clear to everyone the circumstances under which they can share information, I think that goes a long way. Those protocols will enable them to sort of share back and forth as between agencies. Of course, we'll continue to monitor that as it moves along.

Mr. Ellis: Just to go back to the RCMP component, as we break that down, roughly how much are we paying per officer?

Ms Ganley: I think the estimate we have: I mean, if our portion is the \$115,000 plus 30 per cent – I don't know if I want to do that mental math and potentially get it wrong.

Mr. Ellis: Okay. Copy that. Thank you.

These 39 officers: where are they coming from, Minister? Where are they coming from, these 39 officers that are going to address crime issues within Alberta? You've indicated that they'll be part of a joint crime unit, almost like a task force, obviously co-ordinated under the RCMP, but the RCMP right now are facing, you know, probably a 20 per cent shortage in human beings just throughout Canada. So where are these officers going to come from?

Ms Ganley: Depending on the position, the answer will be slightly different. Obviously, with respect to the crime reduction units those will be people that are applying into those units and moving into those units, so they could potentially be coming from places all over the country.

In terms of additional deployment of positions – and the RCMP will make those final decisions – again, they can come from all over the country. Presently the RCMP under the PPSA in Alberta has roughly about 93 per cent of positions actively working. That isn't to say that those other ones aren't filled but just that some of those folks are on, you know, injury leave or various other things. So we have about 93 per cent, up in that area.

The RCMP – and we’ve had conversations with them – have been working to ensure that they are staffing up, so they’re putting officers through depot as quickly as possible. They have heard, I think – now, I’m reporting third-hand what I heard from other folks, but they are alive to those concerns about not being able to get officers in place quickly enough. That’s why they have been continuing to put folks through training, to ensure that they’re doing a better job of making sure that those individuals are able to get out on the front lines.

Mr. Ellis: Right. At depot usually there are RCMP or retired RCMP officers that are part of your staff there. Depot can only accommodate 42 officers per class, which is certainly better than when I was in CPS. We could only accommodate 24 per class, right? But the point is that they are very limited. When we take into account the time it takes to recruit somebody, when we take into account the time it takes to train somebody, get the necessary funding through the federal government, have you been given any guarantees by the RCMP deputy commissioner that we in Alberta are going to be getting officers? Like, how? I mean, from what I have heard, there are areas all throughout Canada that are facing a serious crisis when it comes to policing. So what guarantees do you have, if you have any, that any officers, whether it be through depot or whether it be through recruiting or just a transfer from another jurisdiction, are going to be ending up in Alberta?

Ms Ganley: Obviously, the RCMP is in the best position to answer most of those questions. What I can tell you is that they are definitely alive to the concerns. We’ve had many conversations with them about it. Presently our indication is that 93 per cent plus of those positions are actively working individuals. You know, in any given organization, especially one with this many officers – I think we have over 1,500 RCMP officers working under the PPSA in the province – you’re going to expect that there are a certain number of people who have recently moved or who have gone on an injury leave or something. I mean, they’re doing a fairly good job of keeping on it. We’ll continue to talk to them. We’ll continue to monitor it actively. But in terms of the actual internal mechanics of how the RCMP deploys, you’d probably have to ask them.

Mr. Ellis: When I talked to the Chestermere city council and mayor, they indicated that they have allotted to them 19 officers when, in fact, right now they’re probably only getting service for 14 to 15 officers. To your point, that doesn’t even include any of the HR concerns, whether somebody might be sick or injured or other sort of just workplace items that do occur. You know, they’ve indicated that just to respond to regular calls to service, just to answer a 911 call, sometimes they’re having to get officers to respond from Drumheller and Hanna, who now become disadvantaged because they’re doing the calls to service in Chestermere.

4:20

Again, we’re talking about a number where we are 20 – I don’t know the math on this one either, but it certainly is a certain percentage below even meeting the minimum staffing requirements. I do not understand where the RCMP has indicated to you that they are going to be able to find the human beings, just the beating hearts, to address this concern regarding repeat offenders and any sort of, you know, rural crime initiatives when they are barely meeting the calls to service load within the rural communities right now. Again, I ask you – and if you don’t know, that’s fair – where are they getting the beating hearts to do this?

Ms Ganley: I think the first thing to note is that when I’m talking about the numbers under the PPSA, those are the contracts that we have with the RCMP. Chestermere is a municipal contract, so that’s different. They contract directly with the federal government. For the sake of the committee, municipalities with more than 5,000 people contract directly for their own policing. Then the province provides grants for rural areas, and those urban areas with less than 5,000 are covered by the PPSA.

So when I’m talking about our contract with the RCMP, it’s those areas that I’m generally referring to. Those are the numbers that I have been giving you because, obviously, I’m not necessarily privy to other folks’ contracts. So between municipalities and – in terms of getting officers on the front lines, you know, I know that the RCMP is working quite hard. I think that that 93 per cent number is, I mean, a fairly good number. It’s not a perfect number. Obviously, we’ll continue to work on it.

I think that they are very interested in meeting the needs of those communities, and I think that they’re working very hard on that. That’s one of the reasons that part of our plan includes civilianized employees as well, because we know that we can get those individuals into place to allow RCMP officers to have more time to spend in their communities, to have increased visibility in their communities, and to take some of that load in terms of, you know, administrative work off those individuals.

Certainly, in conversations with our RCMP partners I think it’s become clear that a large proportion of that crime is committed by a small number of individuals. If you do begin moving to those front-loaded services, if you do begin moving to, you know, those integrated crime units that focus on those individuals and ensuring that there are wraparound services available for individuals, that actually does take load off the response to calls by focusing on those individuals and getting them off the streets.

Mr. Ellis: Minister, you know, although it’s appreciated that you increased the funding \$8 million for more RCMP officers, I guess my question is: if they are not even meeting the minimum staffing requirements that Albertans have already committed to paying, then why would we give them more money? Really, they haven’t met their commitment to Albertans by meeting the minimum staffing requirements.

Ms Ganley: Again, in terms of the contracts which I have with the RCMP – and if municipalities want to come and talk to me or to the federal government about their contracts, I’m happy to have those conversations, too – they have been working very hard to ensure that those vacancies are filled. Obviously, there are going to be moments at which people are moving from one location to another. There are going to be people who get promoted, there are going to be people who get sick, and there are going to be people who have babies. So, you know, it’s not going to be completely full, but 93 per cent is pretty good. They’ve committed to continue working on those numbers, and I think we’re best positioned to continue working with them.

Mr. Ellis: All right. Minister, you have indicated in the past that, certainly, if municipalities would like more police officers, then by all means they can get the funding themselves, and they can get more police officers. But it goes back to what I was saying before. When we include all the stages here, from even getting a class together, for recruiting and training, and getting the funding together, you know, some of the former RCMP officers that I’ve spoken to have indicated that, I mean, we’re talking anywhere from two and a half years to I’ve heard as much as seven and a half years

before we can even get a police officer in that particular municipality, even if they do come up with the money.

Again, I just am really failing to understand where the RCMP have indicated to you that they are going to be able to address this rural crime issue. Really, it's not even about the collective, you know, teams that are being put together. You know, when I talk to rural communities, they just want somebody to answer the 911 call. That's where we're at. We're at the very basics right now of: why can't we get the RCMP to attend a 911 call?

Whether you have an answer or not, I guess my question really boils down, again, to: given all the processes that need to occur with the RCMP just to get one officer – just to get one officer – out of depot and into Alberta, how and what commitment has the RCMP given you that they are going to be able to get 39 officers to Alberta given that they are facing a 20-plus per cent shortage of human beings, that they are not even meeting the minimum staffing requirements for Canada?

Ms Ganley: Again, I think that you're perhaps a bit misinformed in your numbers. Certainly, they have committed to working with us to get those individuals into place. I do know that in my conversations with them it's not a matter of them waiting for a position to become available before they attempt to recruit through depot. I have had conversations with the deputy commissioner. Of those 39 positions, there are already people moving into some of those positions. So they are already moving on this.

In terms of other, you know, very specific questions on how they allocate resources internally, I really think that your best place is to ask them. They have absolutely committed to continue to work with us on ensuring that those individuals are in place. The suggestion that because it's the case that they may not be able to have an officer immediately appear, the province ought not do anything, that we ought not be concerned about rural crime, that we ought not invest money to help these individuals who don't feel safe in their homes: I think that that's wrong. I think that the province absolutely is not only in a position where we ought to but where we're required to respond, and that's why we are responding.

I think, yes, probably things don't happen instantly, but I do know that the RCMP is alive to the concerns. I do know that they're interested in fixing the concerns. I do know that we're interested in fixing the concerns. And I think that the suggestion that we ought to do nothing is not, in my view, the right course of action.

Mr. Ellis: I had an opportunity to listen to the RCMP speak about their plan. I think it was at the municipal conference here in Edmonton. I listened to the deputy commissioner, and he spoke of education, prevention, and intervention. You know, maybe you can or cannot answer the question, but certainly my question to that RCMP deputy commissioner is: since other police agencies have been doing these things for a decade, why would they only now start talking about better communication with fish and wildlife and the sheriffs and talking about education and prevention and intervention initiatives? I guess my question to you is: did you have an opportunity to, you know, ask the RCMP deputy commissioner if these initiatives, which he's spoken of or plans to implement – why has it taken the RCMP so long to commit to initiatives that, really, other police services in Alberta have been doing for over a decade?

4:30

Ms Ganley: I think that the RCMP is well aware. Certainly, in my conversations with this deputy commissioner and with his predecessor as well, they are well aware. I think that all – okay; I can only speak for the folks I've spoken to in Alberta, so I won't

say throughout the country. But in Alberta, certainly, there is absolutely a recognition that we need to be moving towards a more proactive way. We need to be doing a better job of figuring out who these prolific offenders who are preying on our society are and do the things necessary to get the evidence to get those cases to court so that we can seek greater punishment.

I think that, you know, there is generally an understanding on their part that we need to be doing a better job of ensuring the availability of wraparound services, of ensuring that everyone links up to those services. I mean, this is a project that's ongoing, right? As the understanding of the drivers of crime advances, the way we do business advances. We learn things over time, and we change those things.

I think it was the RCMP that we went to to say: what do you think would be the best way to address this? This is the plan that we developed in conjunction with them. They had already piloted the idea of this crime reduction unit in central Alberta. It's getting excellent results, and that's why they said that this is a really good way to go. So that's what we're looking at doing. I don't think it's a matter that they've only discovered this now. I think it's a matter of, you know, that we went to them and said: what can we do to help; what would you like to expand? This is what we came to together.

Mr. Ellis: These new-found groups: what is their relationship with ALERT right now? How are they working with them?

Ms Ganley: I mean, obviously, this is a situation that's still evolving, but the idea is that ALERT has a very similar function, right?

Mr. Ellis: Yeah.

Ms Ganley: So ALERT sort of works at, I would say, the highest level of things, and they can move throughout the province. These reduction units will be a little bit more localized, and they'll focus on sort of different priorities. The RCMP will have the ability to deploy them, but the communication as between those two things will need to occur in order to make that work. In fact, ALERT is one of the reasons, I think, that when the RCMP came to us and said, "This is what we think the best method is," we immediately agreed and said: "Yes, of course. We have an agency that's provincially funded that does a similar thing. Certainly, you know, we think they're very important, that the work they're doing is very important." So this is just another instance of the same thing. It works well, so we'll continue to do more of it.

Mr. Ellis: Let's talk a little bit here about not only the relationship between ALERT but that, I mean, obviously Alberta is a very large land mass. You know, it's been indicated by one of my colleagues here that there are 113 detachments. Who is going to make the determination of – let me just say this as well. I can't think of any rural community in Alberta that has indicated that crime is not an issue. So which lucky communities, to your point, Dr. Starke, are going to be able to get this extra effort by these new teams that are going to address the problem? Who's going to be deciding this?

Ms Ganley: Well, my understanding in my conversations is that, I mean, ultimately the RCMP would be the experts, so they would do the deployment. The point of intelligence-led policing is to follow where the trends are and where the offenders are. Perhaps Mr. Sweeney can expand on that. But the idea behind these intelligence-led units is to follow where these prolific offenders are.

Mr. Sweeney: My apologies. I've got one heck of a cold. I think my granddaughters gave it to me over the weekend.

The question that you had, hon. member, was where these units are going to go to.

Mr. Ellis: Yeah. And who's going to decide how they're going to be deployed?

Mr. Sweeney: Currently the plan is to deploy them according to the districts that are currently composed within K Division. There are four districts: central, south, east, and west. But they'll be fluid; they'll be dynamic. They'll go where the crime is. They'll go where the targets that are identified through the intelligence component of this plan tell them they need to go and target on the right people.

As the minister indicated, the slight variation with respect to the CRU mandate as opposed to ALERT is that these are looking ostensibly at those types of criminal behaviours that ALERT wouldn't be looking at. They're focused on high-level organized crime: drug trafficking, fentanyl, those issues, ICE units, as you know. These are ostensibly property crimes that we'd be focusing on.

Mr. Ellis: Right. Then, obviously, since there are RCMP members in ALERT, I'm assuming that the level of communication will have, we'll say, improved for these new teams. Does that sound right, sir?

Mr. Sweeney: Yeah. I think both would probably agree that the state of criminal intelligence in the province has deteriorated in the last few years in the context of resources and information that's going into the Criminal Intelligence Service Alberta. The Chiefs of Police are going to be the board of governance for ALERT. This is a focus that they have collectively agreed is something that they need to spend time and money and energy and effort on, criminal intelligence. The commanding officer has in fact included that in his plan with respect to rural crime, so it's all going to fit together within the context of the chiefs' proverbial handshake on the way forward.

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

Speaking of ALERT, Minister, has there been an increase in funding to ALERT, or has it remained the same?

Ms Ganley: At this point the grant which is going to ALERT has remained the same, but of course because of the way ALERT operates in terms of its sort of corporate nature, they may be expending more in a year than the grant. You know, we're going to continue to work with them and to monitor that. Obviously, there was the increase in funding when the former federal government cut funding to ALERT, so the province had to step in to sort of take over that piece.

Mr. Ellis: Minister, if I can just change gears for just a moment. You know, we've talked extensively here about rural crime and we've talked about the increases, but I think it's not just the thefts and the break and enters and the drugs. We have mental health issues that take up resources. We have suicides that take up resources. We have domestics that take up resources. In your conversations, obviously, with the RCMP they've indicated there's been an increase. But all the other police services throughout Alberta, whether it be Calgary, Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Edmonton, et cetera: have they also indicated a strain on their resources in dealing with these other calls to service? If so, have you addressed this anywhere in your budget through increases for them?

Ms Ganley: As the member is aware, this is primarily an area in which the municipalities have jurisdiction. Alberta is much more generous than the other western provinces in terms of the grants we flow to those municipalities. We also are more generous by way of comparison to other jurisdictions. You know, 500 or 750 is the maximum population before the municipality has to pay for policing whereas here in Alberta it's 5,000. That's, I think, significantly more generous. So a lot of those conversations would be as between the municipalities and whatever their particular contracted police service is. Certainly, I think it's the case that a lot of those police services are looking to city council and having those conversations, but I wouldn't want to speak as between their relationship to each other.

4:40

Mr. Ellis: But these municipalities who are strained, at least from my understanding, whether it be through just resources, money, obviously look to you for leadership, right? You know, if they do look to you, if they do say to their provincial government, "Help. We've had increases to domestics, to suicides, mental health issues," certainly, there's only so much that a municipality or a police service can do without getting support. Are you or has it been indicated in your budget that you will be supplying any sort of support to assist these police services throughout Alberta who are facing some very serious challenges right now?

Ms Ganley: You know, I'm really glad to hear you raise that. Actually, here in Alberta we often talk about the fact that the provincial budget in some ways is disproportionate to the budget in other provinces, so we pay more for the same services. This is one of those areas, policing, in which on a per capita basis the province invests significantly more. We have managed to maintain that investment in spite of a downturn, and I am incredibly proud of that. I think that is absolutely a thing that we should keep moving forward on. I'm really happy that we haven't acquiesced to calls to reduce that level of commitment to our policing partners and to municipalities to be in line with other jurisdictions. I think that in this time of recession, it is really critical that we maintain those front-line services.

Certainly, I hear thanks from our policing partners on that, not only that issue but also on the issue of ensuring that we are maintaining those wraparound services, things like investments in housing, things like investments in acute care and long-term care, in mental health services.

Yeah. I absolutely think that those things are very important, and I'm very proud that we've been able to do that.

Mr. Ellis: Right. So let's just expand on that, Minister, if we could, please. Obviously, with the Me Too movement some police services have indicated that there have been an increased number of reports and calls to service, which has really put a huge strain on the detectives and certainly the constables that address calls to service as that pertains to sex crimes. Have you put any money aside? Is there anything in your budget to assist these municipalities, to assist any police service that is certainly feeling that, you know, they want to be able to address all of these calls to service in a timely and effective way? Not only that, but of course if they're having to prosecute these alleged offenders, we need to have the resources in place there as well. So because of the increase in the calls to service, the reports, the prosecutions as indicated by some of the police services I have spoken to, my question is: what do you have in your budget to assist in addressing that issue?

Ms Ganley: Certainly, there is the normal increase. The municipal police grants are based on population, so there will be a normal

increase in that. There will also be increases in terms of returned fines revenues. Those tend to go up a little bit in additional years.

You know, again, I think we're glad we've continued to make that investment, that we haven't heard calls from your leader with respect to bringing services in line with what's provided in other jurisdictions. I'm glad we've continued to pay that and to provide that support.

We've also recently provided – I think only \$1.1 million is reflected in my budget, but also in Status of Women and Community and Social Services we've invested \$8 million in terms of a plan with AASAS in order to increase the availability of counselling to individuals as this sort of Me Too movement continues to move . . .

The Chair: Thank you.

The time for this portion of the meeting has expired.

I would now like to invite for the next 20 minutes Mr. Fraser from the third-party opposition and the minister to speak. Mr. Fraser, are you wanting to combine your time with the minister?

Mr. Fraser: Yes, please.

The Chair: Minister?

Ms Ganley: Absolutely.

Mr. Fraser: Thanks, Minister. I know that in your ministry it's a challenging job and that Alberta faces a number of dynamic, changing things as we grow and, you know, take on more population. I just kind of want to go in the same vein as my hon. colleague from Calgary-West, from the Official Opposition. You talked a little bit about demographics and that as Alberta starts to grow, the economy comes back. You talked about demographics, and you obviously look at those things. We know that there's a fentanyl crisis, and that's going to continue to happen. There are issues with mental health. You talked about the Me Too movement and other things. Obviously, you try to budget to the best of your ability. If these things continue to increase, is there a reserve plan, again, to put more boots on the ground?

Ms Ganley: You mentioned a couple of things there. I think that when we're talking about the fentanyl crisis and we're talking about things like mental health, certainly the police have a role to play. But I think they will agree that in large part – I mean, I hear them say all the time that we can't enforce our way out of this problem. So a lot of that money, in my view, is better placed in Health. Certainly, I think it is important that we continue funding those enforcement agencies, like ALERT, that sort of focus on this type of crime and keeping a close eye on it. I mean, we'll continue, I think, to monitor the situation, but most indications that we're getting currently, even from our policing partners, are that the important investments right now in terms of the fentanyl crisis are in sort of mental health and addiction services.

Mr. Fraser: Right. So, again, the question was: is there any kind of reserve funding for any type of crisis when it comes to rural crime or spikes in crime or anything like that?

Ms Ganley: Well, obviously, we'll be willing to go forward with that. We try to give the most accurate picture we can of the budgets. We don't try to sort of hold a, quote, unquote, slush fund back.

Mr. Fraser: Right. Fair enough. Now, you did talk about, you know, fentanyl and the crisis and everything, and you're absolutely right that a lot of that does need to be handled within health care.

Obviously, you can see how the two ministries dovetail when it comes to that particular issue. When you talk about the economy, we know that domestic crime and those types of things have been on the rise, especially when the economy is not doing so well, which leads to the fentanyl crisis and other mental health issues. Is there a task force that is talking on a regular basis with Health on how they combat that and, again, making sure that our police officers in these particular areas aren't spending a lot of time in emergency waiting rooms dealing with mental health patients and so that they're out there to fight crime?

Ms Ganley: There is, actually, a ministerial task – an opioid commission. Sorry. I'm trying to remember the exact term. Certainly, our policing partners work in conjunction with that in order to share information. You know, the situation is evolving quite rapidly, and our understanding of the situation continues to evolve. Certainly, that is situated in Health, but a number of our policing folks sit on that as well.

I think another investment – and this wasn't in-year; this was last year. We have invested in terms of having additional medical examiners and in terms of having additional support staff in the medical examiner's office because they're keeping a lot of that data for us, and I think that that data is really critical in terms of how to address the situation going forward.

Mr. Fraser: Great. One of the things we know is that cannabis sooner or later will be legalized by the federal government. I know that your department is working on a plan. Has there been any discussion around people who are currently in the justice system for offences of small possession of cannabis? Has there been any conversation at all to stay those charges and move those people out and to free up any Crown prosecutors when it comes to just small possession when it comes to cannabis, which will eventually be legalized anyway?

Ms Ganley: There are a couple of different things going on there, and this is a little bit complicated because sometimes charges are combined with other charges. Generally the prosecution service of Canada prosecutes Controlled Drugs and Substances Act charges. Those are federal prosecutors. Those conversations would have to occur ultimately at the federal level.

Mr. Fraser: Okay.

Ms Ganley: I guess my message to folks out there is that at this moment it is still illegal, so govern yourselves accordingly.

4:50

Mr. Fraser: Right. On page 101 of the business plan under key strategy 1.3 it refers to the need to prepare for legalization of cannabis. What additional costs can we expect related to legalization of cannabis?

Ms Ganley: There are a couple of different things, and some of them are still, unfortunately, moving targets. The deadlines on this one were a little rapid, but we think that we'll be ready nonetheless. Obviously, some of those costs will be borne in the AGLC for setting up and regulating the system. We are expecting that there will be costs when they do approve a screening device. We don't know exactly what those costs will be, but those are sort of screening and testing devices for impaired driving. Those will be costs in some cases falling on the province and in some cases falling on municipalities, but of course those municipalities, as I'm sure you're aware, are looking to us with respect to that. And then there will be costs to the health care system as well.

Mr. Fraser: Okay. Are those numbers reflected in your estimates at all in terms of additional cost?

Ms Ganley: Well, obviously, many of those things – the AGLC resides in Finance. Alberta Health Services will be within health care. Since we don't know when, if, or what device will be approved in terms of the screening devices, we don't have those numbers at this stage.

Mr. Fraser: Right. Again, what are the numbers around investigating and the ongoing nature of, you know, policing cannabis right now? Are those costs in the budget? Are you going to start weeding that out as cannabis becomes legalized? Excuse the pun.

Ms Ganley: I mean, I think it's very difficult to separate one crime type in that way – right? – to say that an officer is necessarily doing a certain thing with a certain amount of their time. Our police partners right now are more concerned that there will be additional strain on policing resources as a result of additional impaired driving cases than they are thinking that they're going to have their workload lighten, but obviously we'll monitor that as time goes on. We don't have really good data from when prohibition ended, so we're not totally clear on how those things will shift.

Mr. Fraser: Right. Okay. Thank you.

Obviously, the opioid epidemic is, you know, a serious issue and an ongoing crisis. Where in your line items does it contain any policing related to drug offences and opioids specifically? Is there a line item in your budget at all dealing with that?

Ms Ganley: Certainly, you know, you'll see that within ALERT's budget. They are organized and serious crime. That's line 6.8. They do a lot of that sort of integrated policing and communication. Again, a lot of that is ultimately going to be seen in the Health budget. Federally I'll let them deal with border services. That's also not specifically related to our budget.

Mr. Fraser: Right. In your relationship with policing departments, you know, throughout Alberta in all of our communities, what is their response? Are they asking for more officers? There is a desperate need, obviously, to combat some of this opioid crisis. Are they asking your office for more funding?

Ms Ganley: Well, I think that from many of the conversations that I've had – and I don't want to speak for anyone – certainly police governance has a very good, I think, in my view, understanding of sort of how addictions and mental health work. In a lot of cases what they're suggesting is that what we really need to see is, again, those increased investments in mental health, those increased investments in housing services and those sorts of services.

Certainly, I think everyone can always use more resources, right? I guess the challenge of governing, at the end of the day, is determining how to best allocate those resources. But often in their conversations what they're suggesting is that, you know, dependency treatments and those sorts of things are a good investment in that way.

Mr. Fraser: Okay. On page 102 of your business plan you talk about how important it is to make sure that people feel safe and supported in their interaction with the justice system; specifically, making sure that indigenous and Métis people are included in the process. What measures are there in the budget to address the overrepresentation of indigenous peoples in the justice system?

Ms Ganley: Sorry; I could go on for so long. Certainly, that's something that's reflected – and I think it's important to note it is reflected – within our ministry, but it's also reflected across the provincial government. You know, with a lot of that support, some of it can come from victims' services in terms of individuals specifically interacting with the justice system. Some of it comes in terms of RCAS, in terms of individuals within the court system who can help navigate individuals through the justice system, because we know that those individuals are disproportionately likely to be indigenous folks. Also, you'll see supports that come within correctional services. They run a lot of really good programs with respect to that as well.

But I think it's also critical to see, you know, that everyone needs to sort of move together on this one – right? – in terms of ensuring adequate health services on reserves, in terms of ensuring adequate mental health services, in terms of ensuring adequate access to education. Those sorts of pieces are going to play a huge role. Because the problem has complex drivers, I think it would be hard to say: oh, it's only in this area. It's probably distributed throughout.

Mr. Fraser: Can you tell the committee how many police services are on our First Nations and reserves in Alberta, and how closely does your office work with them to deal with the very issues that, you know, we're facing in all our towns and cities?

Ms Ganley: By and large, primarily we're dealing with the RCMP. There are also three First Nations policing services throughout Alberta, and we were actually very happy to see that. Enhanced positions on-reserve through the RCMP or those First Nations policing services are funded in partnership with the federal government. For years and years and years the former federal government had not allowed any increases. Not only had they not allowed new folks to join with respect to enhancements, but they hadn't allowed an increase in the per-officer cost. That put a huge strain not only on the RCMP but on our First Nations policing services because they weren't getting funded enough.

The federal government has just recently committed to change that. They're going to start by looking at the per-officer funding, and then they're going to allow new entrants to that position. As that comes on stream, we'll see increased costs because those are split 52-48. So we'll see sort of increased costs on our end, but it'll depend, you know, on who wants to enter into those agreements and how much of that funding from the federal government ultimately lands in Alberta. We'll need to contribute some of ours as well.

Mr. Fraser: Right.

Again, when we talk about the disproportionate number of people in the justice system from our indigenous communities, is there a task force that your department works with to work with our First Nations communities to come up with key strategies to reduce crime and address issues, along with your partners in Health and, I would assume, Municipal Affairs and Indigenous Relations, to deal with the issues on our First Nations?

Ms Ganley: I would say that there are a number of different groups that are working in this area. We do have some groups that are dealing with victims' services. We have some that are dealing in terms of corrections and policing and sort of supports going back and forth. We have some crossministry ones as well. There are, I think, a number of different folks who are working on this issue. Obviously, a lot of the work is run out of Indigenous Relations as well with respect to when you're talking specifically about indigenous folks.

Mr. Fraser: Okay. Alberta Justice and Sol Gen was given about \$2 million in 2015 to consolidate data about missing and murdered indigenous women across different police services. Has that report been released yet? Where is that report?

While they talk about it, I'll ask you another question.

Ms Ganley: Sure. That sounds great.

Mr. Fraser: Are you seeing an increase in Alberta human rights submissions, and how is your office specifically working with that department to make sure that there's access for everybody and that Albertans know how to access that particular issue to ensure that their human rights are preserved?

5:00

Ms Ganley: There is a small increase in terms of year-over-year funding in terms of Alberta human rights. You know, each year we see a few more cases coming forward through the Human Rights Commission and tribunals. We are seeing an increasing number of complaints. There is a small increase in funding. I think this is one of those, I will admit, challenging decisions where getting the right amount of funding can be a bit of a challenge – right? – in light of the fact that you're seeing claims increase, and you're wanting to keep cost increases to less than population plus inflation. So we're currently recruiting for a new chief. We're doing some work to look at the human rights tribunal to make sure that, in addition to increasing funding, we're also doing business a little bit better so that we're maximizing the return for Albertans.

Mr. Fraser: Okay. Very good.

I just kind of want to go back to rural crime. It's obviously a serious issue, and it seems like a bit of a plague in central Alberta and throughout rural Alberta, for sure. You talk about the contract that you have with the RCMP. I think that in Alberta we've got a proud history of being mavericks and making sure that we get things done, and we do it our own way, and we come up with an Alberta solution. My question: at what point within your department and within your government, if this contract with the RCMP is not working and they're not meeting the criteria that you've put forward, would you look at another solution? I guess the other part, too: is there a timeline attached to dealing with these issues? I think rural Albertans really need to know that, you know, there's something concrete going to be put in place with a timeline rather than it just go on and on and on.

Ms Ganley: There are a bunch of things wrapped up in there. I do think the RCMP take this issue seriously, and they are working to address it. Obviously, you know, again, as our understanding of crime moves forward, as the way we police moves forward, I think we will see sort of impacts start right away. Certainly, the pilot on that crime reduction unit in central Alberta has had very, very good results, so I think we'll start to see those results quite expeditiously. The thing about crime is that you can drive the line down, but you're never going to get the line to zero, so it's difficult to say that there's a point in time at which that will come to an end, I think, in that way. Certainly, we're looking to see that reduction.

What I imagine you're alluding to is a provincial police service. The challenge with moving to that model: first off, I mean, there would be a lot of start-up costs. You know, we have under just our contract over 1,500 officers, so getting those bodies into place would be a bit of a challenge, because those folks are RCMP officers, so presumably they'd go elsewhere in the country. There's also the case that presently, for that portion of Alberta that's policed under that contract, the province pays 70 per cent of the costs, and

the federal government pays 30 per cent of the costs. That wouldn't necessarily be the case if we changed models.

Mr. Fraser: Correct. Yeah. I think the question just was, you know: if it wasn't working out, would you just have the fortitude to move on and come up with a different solution?

Just another quick question about rural crime: how much money is actually being directed towards the hiring of new Crown prosecutors in rural Alberta right now?

Ms Ganley: The announcement we made with respect to rural crime would be to add that \$2 million, so that's sort of roughly between eight and 10 prosecutors. We don't know yet exactly where those individuals are going to be deployed, but we'll be looking to make those decisions fairly quickly.

Mr. Fraser: Okay. Now, are they mostly junior Crown prosecutors?

Ms Ganley: Again, when you flow money in, you sort of make an estimate on roughly how much an individual costs. Some will cost more; some will cost less. It depends on whom we're able to recruit and when we're able to recruit and where we're able to recruit them to.

Mr. Fraser: Right. So what is the average caseload of a Crown prosecutor in rural Alberta, and with this hiring, how much do you expect that caseload to decrease?

Ms Ganley: I mean, there are a number of factors that drive that. Obviously, it differs by area, but my understanding is that the average is roughly 500, I think, in terms of cases being carried in rural Alberta. Sorry. I'm just going to pass it over to my deputy minister here.

Mr. Bryden: Phil Bryden, deputy minister. You know, we've been doing a fair bit of analysis of caseloads in different areas, and . . .

The Chair: Sorry. Thank you. The time allotted for this portion has expired.

I would now like to invite for the next 20 minutes Dr. Starke and the minister to speak. Dr. Starke, are you wanting to combine your time with the minister?

Dr. Starke: Yes, please.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Dr. Starke: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you, Minister and your staff, for being here to discuss some of the issues that face us. I appreciate your efforts personally and the efforts of the people in your department because we are dealing with some significant challenges. You know, I just want to say from the outset that I've underlined some of the statements in the ministry's business plan: the second paragraph on page 99, "Justice and Solicitor General helps ensure that all Albertans can live in safe and resilient communities while having access to a fair and innovative justice system," and outcome 1, "Albertans are safe and protected through focused work on a preventative and sustainable model of community safety."

Well, Minister, as you can probably guess from our 35-second interactions that we've had in question period, rural crime has become the number one issue in my constituency, and I can't even begin to describe to you how much this is changing rural life. I have heard stories from realtors who have told me that rural properties over the last three or four years have become harder to sell and less desirable and that, in fact, people who moved out of the city to go

to a rural property and live, you know, away from the city, in some cases have made the decision to sell the rural property and move back. The number one concern is the distance from law enforcement and the level of crime in the area.

The other story that is a huge concern is of families who have told me that they have moved elderly relatives from a rural property when one member of the spousal pair passes away. They don't feel safe anymore with grandma, who is 80 years old, living alone in the house that she has maybe lived in for 50 or 60 years. I relate that to you because I think it is important. I'm not saying that you don't understand it – I think you do, and I think members of your staff do – but I just want to make sure that it's on the record just how serious this is and how this is changing the character of life in rural Alberta.

As someone who grew up in the city and was used to having the police literally minutes away, you know, now living in rural Alberta, we know that a 911 call might get answered in an hour if we're lucky, so that's a concern.

Now, a lot of the questions about the RCMP have already actually been asked, but I did want to ask one thing, and it follows a little bit along the line of Mr. Fraser's questions about a provincial police force. I spoke with a colleague of yours who's an NDP member recently elected in the British Columbia Legislature. Notwithstanding what your colleague the Minister of Economic Development and Trade feels about their relative academic capacity, I will say that he was extremely thoughtful. He was a retired RCMP officer, at one time had been the CO of the largest detachment in the country, in Surrey. He described to me that the RCMP is currently in a crisis of morale, and we've seen that in decreased recruiting at depot. I guess my question to you, Minister, is: what guidelines are we going to use to establish that the RCMP are, in fact, the police force for our province that they need to be, and at what point do we start looking at a provincial police force?

Ms Ganley: Absolutely. I'd like to begin by thanking you for raising those concerns. I know you've raised them many times in the past, and I appreciate that. I think it's hearing from folks like you, from my own colleagues, from municipal leaders, and from average Albertans that has really highlighted how much of an impact this issue is having on individuals, on their way of life and on their homes. We do think that everyone deserves to feel safe in their homes, and that's a huge concern. Certainly, I think you're right. One of the things that we need to do is to work very hard with the RCMP to ensure that they are able to meet the requirements of the population.

5:10

I know I've had a lot of conversations with them in terms of ensuring that everybody is on the same page to understand that this is, in fact, a service, right? It's a service that's being provided, and folks need to recognize that that's what's going on and that service levels are expected and that the public has a right to feel safe in their homes. I think that, certainly from my conversations with the governance of the RCMP, they understand that, very much so.

You know, there are some concerns within the RCMP in Alberta. My understanding is – and I don't want to speak for anyone – that part of our challenge in terms of maintaining RCMP officers is the draw of the large municipal police forces, and one of the things that drives that is sort of a wage disparity, if you will. The federal government has taken some steps, because they get to make that decision, to increase the pay for those RCMP officers. I think that that will help somewhat.

I think that we will need to continue to have those conversations going forward because policing has changed an enormous amount. The strain and the demands that we put on those officers are very,

very high, and I hope that they hear us from across the aisle, both saying that, you know, that's very challenging work and that that has impacts. But I think a lot of these moves, not only sort of pay equity things but also a lot of these moves in terms of putting more boots on the ground, moving to civilian officers, ensuring that we have those crime reduction units that are focusing on those prolific offenders: I hope that that will help them in their work and that by being helped in their work, that will help with morale.

Dr. Starke: Okay. Good. Minister, I appreciate that.

I will tell you that it's interesting that you mention the wage disparity, because this RCMP officer that I met last October specifically mentioned that his son was also an RCMP member but that many of the officers that had gone through depot with him had gone on to join municipal forces because the wage disparity on an annual basis was \$10,000 to \$15,000 in some cases. I don't think there's much question that for RCMP officers posted to remote rural locations, that is a very challenging lifestyle. To think that those officers are in many cases being paid significantly less than an officer working in a municipal force is, I think, at least part of the answer to the problem we're fighting.

In late October I hosted a town hall meeting, and there were three sort of parts to this puzzle that we talked about, and you and I have discussed this as well. We've talked a little bit about policing. My colleague here has talked a little bit about the Crown prosecutor piece to this. I'm very concerned about that. We have the pressures of the Jordan decision. We have also the pressures of higher caseloads. Now, I'm not sure what your numbers show, but the numbers that I was given by members of the St. Paul office were that they are averaging 2,000 case files per Crown prosecutor, and that's a significant workload.

To compound the issue, you know, the Finance minister likes to talk about the freeze on management salaries as a means of cost control. Of course, our Crown prosecutors are considered management, so many of our most experienced Crown prosecutors have had their salary frozen for the last seven years. Other jurisdictions are paying those Crown prosecutors, who are highly skilled and experienced and know the Alberta situation well, 20 to 25 per cent more than we are offering under our frozen salary system, and they're going elsewhere. That contributes to the turnover we're seeing. I think we've lost 21 prosecutors in the last 12 months.

I guess my question is: is there any consideration given to removing the freeze on management salaries or reclassifying the Crown prosecutors so they are no longer considered management or doing something else to improve retention? I can tell you, I mean, anyone will tell you that you'd rather retain a really good employee than constantly be in this recruiting mode.

Ms Ganley: I think you're absolutely correct. That's certainly an issue that's been raised to us in terms of that problem with the salary freeze. That's certainly been raised on several occasions by the association and the sort of impacts that that has on the ability of the service to operate. That's definitely, I think, something that's worth considering. I mean, it's obviously hard to get an exemption to a rule, but I have heard that concern, and I see definitely where you're making that point.

In terms of the caseloads, we have sort of been looking through those numbers, and we do believe that our numbers are correct. Sometimes there's a difference in how you count them, whether a file is counted at each appearance as opposed to just this one file, so that can account for some of that. Certainly, we do know that the caseloads are higher in rural areas, and that's one of the reasons we're sort of taking steps to try and address that to ensure that there

is a sort of more even service, I think, across the province. Our understanding is that currently, or at the last time that I asked, there are only seven vacancies in those sorts of non Calgary/Edmonton offices. Sometimes when people leave, they move just to another municipality, or you fill those vacancies. People come in from other provinces; they go out to other provinces. Right now we understand the number is seven, but we will keep recruiting to those positions to ensure that those people are in place so that it doesn't put additional strain on the other folks in the office.

Dr. Starke: Well, anybody who's worked in health care also can tell you that, basically, recruiting professionals into rural communities is a challenge right across the board, whether you're talking doctors, dentists, veterinarians, pharmacists, right across the board.

Crown prosecutors was the second issue that was identified.

The third issue deals with rehabilitation, counselling services, and the whole issue of drugs in remand versus counselling services in remand. This was brought to my attention by, actually, one of the speakers at my town hall. I think this was the one voice that is rarely heard from at these town hall meetings, but this was a former addict, a former criminal who had gotten clean, gotten sober, has taken a community counselling certificate course, and now volunteers at our homeless shelter in Lloydminster, a pretty cool individual. I'm very proud of him.

He told me that through his interactions with the criminal justice system, there's a tremendous disparity in the availability of counselling services in remand, that in Calgary you could see a counsellor about once a month, in Edmonton you could hardly get in to see a counsellor, yet when he was in Medicine Hat, he saw the same counsellor weekly. It was the counsellor in Medicine Hat – and kudos to whoever that person was – that got him into a detox program, got him into a sober house in Lethbridge. That was the start of his road to recovery, and he's still a year and a half later clean and sober.

My first question. You and I talked a little bit in question period about drugs in remand. I know there's a new fancy-schmancy machine in Edmonton that's supposed to keep drugs out of it, yet we tragically still hear about situations of overdose cases in remand. What is the situation? Are we keeping drugs effectively out of remand centres, or aren't we? If not, why aren't we?

Ms Ganley: We work with a number of strategies to try to keep drugs out of remand centres. Obviously, the body scanner is something that has been brought up repeatedly and often by our union partners. The reason that they raise that is because those overdoses, in addition to being very hard on the inmates and their families, are also very hard on our staff. That's certainly one of them, but we also utilize sniffer dogs and searches and a bunch of different methodologies. I don't think that it would be in any way reasonable to say that we are a hundred per cent preventing the flow of drugs into remand centres. I don't think you could have said that at any point in the history of remand centres. We need to keep doing what we're best able to do to continue moving that forward, but the challenge in terms of a remand centre versus a sentence facility is that folks are going in and out a lot more often. So that creates a challenge.

One of the strategies that we're focusing on is that we've determined that there is a lot of cost associated with individuals who are in remand for a very short period of time. Five days or less, generally, is how we define that. We're focusing on ways that we can ensure that those individuals who – obviously, you know, if you only need to be in jail for four days, you're not presenting a huge danger to society. We're trying to figure out why – and there are

multiple different reasons – it is those individuals who are coming in and how to stop that from happening. We're hoping that that will begin to have an impact not just on costs but also on drugs entering the system.

5:20

Dr. Starke: Okay. Well, Minister, I think you'll agree that sometimes the criminal justice system ends up being the sign that we've failed somewhere else, that there's been a failure. I hate to put you in that position, but, I mean, the reality of it is that it means we've failed in health care, we've failed in education, and we've failed in social services. The result is that the person then ends up having an interaction with the criminal justice system. I think that's tragic. I, for one, am really glad to see the expansion of harm reduction services and supervised consumption centres. I think this is a positive step, and I'm hopeful that it will eventually see a resulting decrease in some of the issues that you're dealing with.

I wanted to talk specifically, just looping back a little bit, on the crime reduction units that you talked about. We have the one in central Alberta, that's integrated, the central Alberta crime reduction unit. You've mentioned in the past that it's already showing success, and then I've heard you say that we expect or we hope that it will have success. I guess I'm a little bit confused. Is it already having success, and if so, what are those numbers? What are the projected reductions, or how are we even measuring success? Are we going to see a decrease in the incidence of criminal activity? Is that something that people are even going to notice? By all means, I think that if we arrest bad guys and prosecute them successfully, that's great. Even better yet, rehabilitate them such that they're no longer in the cycle: best of all. But how are we going to measure that?

Ms Ganley: Just to clarify my statements, there was a crime reduction unit already operating in central Alberta. That's the one that has been having success. I will say it in past tense. We can say that's it's already demonstrated that it's had success. The new ones that we have announced recently, which are in the process of being formed and staffed up and sort of under way already: we anticipate that they will have the same outcome.

In terms of how we're measuring it, it kind of has a lot to do with which types of offenders we get. I mean, it's very difficult to say that X number of people were not impacted because this particular offender was taken off the street. We measure in terms of drugs seized, guns seized, folks arrested, that sort of thing, but also in terms of, I think, the quality of the evidence that we can put in against a specific offender, so someone who is one of these prolific offenders, because that will keep them off the street for longer.

Dr. Starke: Part of the reason that I raised this – and I just want to make it real clear that this came clear at our town hall meeting – is that it is my belief that the incidence of rural crime right now is being incredibly underreported. The reason I say that is because I've talked to all kinds of people that have just given up. They just have quit phoning the RCMP. They've been victimized three, four, five times. They've now gotten to the point where they can't get insurance anymore, and they've just given up phoning the RCMP because the RCMP response in some cases has been: "Nobody is hurt. Figure out what you've lost. Report it to your insurance company. There's nothing we can do." So after you've heard that two or three times, people stop reporting to the RCMP.

I guess my question is: do we have any sort of feel – I mean, there are other crimes that we know of that we know are also underreported in a variety of different areas. Do we have any way of quantifying what the degree of underreporting of rural criminal activity is?

Ms Ganley: I think you're right. I think it is very challenging to quantify underreporting. You can sort of make best guesses. I think it's hard to say in this instance.

Certainly, it is the case. I've had conversations with the RCMP. We had the opportunity to have a conversation with folks in central Alberta, the RCMP, some municipal leaders, and some crime watch agency leaders as well. Was that only yesterday? It was only yesterday. Yes, it's absolutely the case. The RCMP is aware of those reports that aren't happening. They're aware of what I would call the challenge in terms of messaging. What they actually do say – and they've been quite clear about this – is that they want people to report those crimes. The reason that they do is because with this intelligence-led policing, even if the crime happened past tense and nobody is really sure – you know, say, you've been away for a week, you come back, and something is missing – they still want to hear about it because that allows them to know where these prolific offenders are operating. That's how these crime reduction units will work. I think that everyone recognizes that some of those communications were inappropriate in terms of telling folks not to report it, because we do want them to.

Dr. Starke: Yeah. In fairness, certainly, to the RCMP in our area, they have been very consistent in saying: "Yes. Absolutely, we want these reported because it's important that we compile accurate statistics as far as the incidents go." If people don't pick up the phone and at least fill out a report and take the time to go into the detachment if need be, they won't have that information.

With that, Madam Chair, I think I'm pretty much done with my 20 minutes.

Thank you very much, Minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

At this point I would like to call the 20-minute break. We will be resuming at exactly 5:45. Thank you.

[The committee adjourned from 5:26 p.m. to 5:46 p.m.]

The Chair: Thank you. I would like to call the meeting back to order.

For the next 10 minutes I would like to invite Mrs. Pitt from the Official Opposition and the minister to speak. Mrs. Pitt, would you like to combine your time with the minister?

Mrs. Pitt: Yes, please.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Minister and Chair. Minister, my colleague asked some pretty pointed questions in regard to the 39 police officers being funded in Alberta. I say "funded." I'm a little unclear, and I need some clarification, and we need to delve into this. There's a funding announcement for 39 new RCMP officers to go into the rural areas in Alberta. Those are 39 new funded positions, but with the shortage of RCMP officers right across the country, are we actually getting additional officers? Are we transferring officers? I don't understand what's happening.

Ms Ganley: I can start, and then I think Mr. Sweeney can probably supplement. My understanding from my conversations with Deputy Commissioner Shean – and, again, it's sort of: we fund, and they fill – is that some of those positions were already being filled at the time of the announcement. We were starting to see some folks move into that. Again, like I said, there's about a 93 per cent fill of our positions in the PPSA in terms of actively working officers. There

are always going to be folks, with 1,500 people, that are coming or leaving. You know, you can't say at any one point in time that this is an exact snapshot because it will never be perfectly representative. Like, those positions were being filled already.

It's my understanding that generally the RCMP are putting folks through depot in advance of positions having necessarily been created for them because it is such a large organization and they do know that they're going to need those bodies, if not exactly where. My understanding is that they're already recruiting to those positions, that some of them are already filled.

I don't know if you have anything that can supplement that.

Mr. Sweeney: Yes, Minister. I apologize for my voice. The RCMP is currently funded for 1,560 positions. They actually are at 1,580 right now as a consequence of their anticipation of growing in the next fiscal year. The RCMP is going to put 40 troops through Regina next year. That's 36 members per troop, so roughly 1,200 new officers will be trained.

But the RCMP is also undergoing federal re-engineering, basically. The RCMP has a federal component that deals with very specialized investigations into economic crimes, cybercrime, terrorism. The re-engineering is to take civilians and put them into RM positions because they're highly technical investigations, and they can recruit out of the universities.

There are a number of sources where the RCMP can staff up the 40 troops, people coming out of other program areas or people being recruited from other police services. The conversations I've had with the deputy commissioner here – and also the deputy commissioner in Ottawa who's responsible for contract policing says that they're cautiously optimistic that they'll be able to fill all the new positions that we've identified within six months. That's what they're projecting.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. Within six months, they're projecting, we'll have the additional 38 positions filled.

Mr. Sweeney: Yes. We've already got 20 of the 39 . . .

Mrs. Pitt: We've 20 of the 39.

Mr. Sweeney: . . . filled.

Mrs. Pitt: But new positions?

Mr. Sweeney: Yes.

Mrs. Pitt: New officers?

Mr. Sweeney: New officers.

Mrs. Pitt: There's no deficit in another area in Alberta of 20 officers?

Mr. Sweeney: I don't track the federal numbers, so I don't know.

Mrs. Pitt: Sorry. Specifically for Alberta.

Mr. Sweeney: From the provincial complement there are 20 positions more than actually were funded in the last fiscal year. So we're starting the new fiscal year with 20 new officers on staff.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. And within the next four months, five months we'll have another 18.

Mr. Sweeney: That's the conversation and the commitment that they've given us.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. That's helpful. Thank you.

Mr. Sweeney: You're welcome.

Mrs. Pitt: With 1,560 officers on the ground, 7 per cent of that represents about 105 – sorry; that's of 1,500 – that are not actually working because of disabilities or leaves or whatever, as you had indicated. That's a significant amount of our police force that's not able to contribute to our policing needs. What are you doing to address this particular problem?

Ms Ganley: Well, obviously, I mean, it's difficult to speak to specifics in that instance because you're talking about people with all sorts of different reasons, like whether they're moving from one place to another, whether they're being redeployed, whether they've gone off on leave. I mean, you know, obviously, ensuring that we have proper occupational health and safety regulations in place and that those are being enforced is sort of one way of ensuring that people suffer fewer injuries at work. I mean, there's a whole bunch of sort of organizational things that one has to do in terms of: if someone is having a baby, then they're having a baby. People will go off on leaves.

The RCMP, as I understand it, strive to ensure that those things are covered and that people are deployed properly. That's one of the reasons why they would have sort of some additional folks although I think that's also from conversations we were having ongoing with them about what we were thinking. Ultimately, that's sort of an issue that they have internally. That's a management issue. They're alive to it, and I'm confident that they're looking at dealing with it.

Mrs. Pitt: I understand that, and I appreciate that. But Alberta is picking up the bill for those 105 officers. I can appreciate different sorts of leaves and HR management issues and that type of thing. I mean, if 38 new officers – am I getting this number right?

Ms Ganley: Thirty-nine.

Mrs. Pitt: If 39 new officers are going to make a significant difference to the crime reduction strategy here in the province, you could certainly infer that 105 additional officers would meet a specific need that is pressing at this moment. Additionally, we know, just in talking to police, that this is a huge problem in Alberta. We're funding a lot of these positions, yet these people aren't actually working. I think there's a responsibility for our government to assist in getting some of these people back to work – right? – getting some value for the dollars that we're putting out. With all due respect, I think Alberta does play a role in assisting our police forces to get some bang for our buck here. A hundred and five officers is significant. If 39 is going to be significant to our province, let's get that other 7 per cent working. I hope that we can see some movement on that from this government.

Ms Ganley: Well, I mean, again, that's by and large an internal mechanism of the RCMP. But I hope that you're not suggesting that because people occasionally get sick or have babies, somehow those people are no longer of value to Albertans.

You know, I think any organization would have that situation. Sometimes people are moving from one location to another. Like, there are all sorts of things that go on. That's to be expected with any organization. They manage their organization internally. They're always working on it, as anyone would. Our department is the same way. You have a large organization. People will leave, and other people will come. People will go on leaves; people will come back from leaves. I mean, that's just, I think, to be expected.

I think the point here is that these huge, sort of disproportionate numbers we're hearing, that 20 per cent of the RCMP aren't

working or 20 per cent of the positions are vacant, are not the case. They are working to address that.

5:55

Mrs. Pitt: Uh-huh. Well, you very clearly said that 7 per cent aren't working, and you're the boss. You would know.

I think it's fair to say that maternity leave is not a funded position by the provincial government. Rather, a federal program would take its place, right? You're giving me a look like I'm off my rocker here. Would a maternity leave position even be considered in this number?

Ms Ganley: It's still a position. You'd sort of recruit for it in term as a vacancy, right?

Mrs. Pitt: But a funded vacancy?

Ms Ganley: Yeah. It's considered a position.

Here, I'll pass it over to Bill. Again, most of this is internal to . . .

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms Ganley: He didn't quite make it to the microphone.

The Chair: At this point, this period of the rotation is completed.

As there are no other members in the room for their portion of the rotation, I would now ask the government caucus member Mr. Horne to speak for the next 10 minutes combined with the minister. Are you wanting to combine your time?

Mr. Horne: Yes. I believe that my colleague MLA Miller has a few questions as well.

The Chair: Thank you. Go ahead.

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Minister. Now, of course, this government has been very committed to truth and reconciliation. Of course, as we continue on that path, it is vital to take the unique circumstances of the indigenous population into account when they come into contact with the criminal justice system. Now, part of that includes the issuing of Gladue reports as per the performance measure 3(e) on page 103. Could you expand on what percentage of Gladue reports have been produced within six weeks of requests from the courts and whether or not that is a positive or negative trend?

Ms Ganley: Currently it's 91 per cent of Gladue reports that are produced within six weeks of when they were requested by the court. It's up slightly, from 90 per cent, in the last actuals, so it's a fairly high rate of success in terms of producing the reports in a timely manner. I think the reason, obviously, that that is critical is because it (a) enables the court system to sort of move along with that matter, but it also ensures the ability of decision-makers to consider the unique circumstances of indigenous individuals who are coming into contact with the justice system.

Mr. Horne: Thank you.

Moving on from that – there's certainly a lot of information I could go into there.

Ms Ganley: There is indeed.

Mr. Horne: Now, as many residents of St. Albert are aware, probation officers play a very significant role in the process of preventing recidivism amongst criminals. I can see from performance measure 4(b) on page 104 that there's quite a bit of work to be done in regard to meeting targets. Could you tell us

whether or not probation officers in Alberta are properly trained in effective intervention techniques?

Ms Ganley: Absolutely. I'm excited to talk about that. We're continuing to expand training of probation officers in effective practices in community supervision, which is an evidence-based model for supervision of clients using risk, need, responsibility principles. Research has indicated that sustained adherence to these effective practices in community supervision can play a significant role in reducing recidivism compared to traditional models. I think that at the end of the day, the goal of any really good justice system is to try to put itself out of business, so reducing recidivism is definitely a way to go.

Mr. Horne: Yeah. I certainly agree.

Now, of course, there are many challenges your ministry is facing – you know, rural crime, recidivism – and it's also very challenging with the current economic climate, but of course fiscal restraint in our current economic climate is always a priority. In the statement of operations on page 106 the budget estimate for ministry support services in Justice and Solicitor General is down for the coming year. Perhaps you could highlight how you managed that reduction.

Ms Ganley: Absolutely. I think we're very lucky here in Alberta to have a fantastic public service, and I think we work with them to continue to make every effort to cut back on unnecessary costs at all times. That includes, obviously, within my ministry although we try to balance that with increased needs of the population and being able to meet those needs. We try to be very careful in terms of our expenditures, and we understand, you know, that Albertans have those two interests as well, ensuring that we're careful in terms of expenditures but also that we're providing the necessary services. So we do our best to try to ensure that we can meet that balance and that we're not wasteful in our spending.

Mr. Horne: Thank you.

Moving on to an issue that seems to be on everybody's mind, and rightfully so, today rural crime is a complex problem that involves not only increasing policing in rural areas but also bringing the criminals to justice once they have been arrested. Now, I see that the budget line in the statement of operations, specifically on page 106, for Crown prosecutors is increasing for this year. Is that expected to do anything to help lessen rural crime?

Ms Ganley: I think it's important to be clear on this particular point. You know, our plan to combat rural crime sort of certainly involves the addition of Crown prosecutors, so we have those Crown prosecutors coming into play. We also have some more planned for in the budget, and we want to make sure that we're able to get those folks in place. We do know, again, that file loads tend to be higher in the rural areas, and I think that that's certainly something we need to look at addressing so that those people are able to do those jobs effectively. I think, certainly, we're looking to hire more Crown prosecutors in rural areas.

Obviously, we have statistics for sort of different offices, so we'll know where those people are most needed. That's to ensure that those prosecutors are in place not only to prosecute the individuals but so that when police are coming forward with information from these crime reduction units in terms of who these prolific offenders are, we're able to make appropriate applications to keep those individuals behind bars for longer. Or, in the alternative, if the problem is not one that's best addressed by the justice system, we're able to have an appropriate understanding of what supports are necessary or what diversion – for instance, a mental health

diversion – would be necessary in those instances in order to do the best job we can to increase safety for everyone.

Mr. Horne: Thank you.

I believe that MLA Miller has a few questions.

Ms Miller: Thank you. Rehabilitation and reintegration are essential elements of our criminal justice system, and the temporary absence program helps those who are incarcerated towards that path. I see that performance measure 4(a) on page 104 is already very high. Can you tell us if it is trending up or down?

Ms Ganley: Presently the temporary absence program has nearly a one hundred per cent success rate. They provide low-risk offenders with a conditional release. This rate number has been steady over the past five years, never dipping below a 99 per cent success rate. This essentially allows low-risk offenders to pursue employment or rehabilitative programming within their community while they would otherwise have been incarcerated.

6:05

I think the importance of these programs is that we know that sometimes there can be a bit of a gap, and we have sort of a navigator program that's been working on this as well. When someone is in a facility where their time is very heavily managed versus when they go back into a community, even when the individual wants to change their life, sometimes when they're put back into the same circumstances they were in before, that can be very difficult for them to achieve. Sometimes it can be hard to translate the skills they have learned into their previous environments. I think that things that we can do to help people with that are always going to be helpful in terms of sort of reducing recidivism. I think that, you know, the numbers for this program really indicate that it is quite successful.

Ms Miller: Thank you.

The safety and security of Albertans while they're at work, at home, and out in their communities is crucial to our province's well-being. In the statement of operations on page 106 there was a significant increase in public security in this budget. How will these funds contribute towards Albertans' sense of security?

Ms Ganley: Obviously, ensuring that Albertans live in safe and resilient communities and that they feel secure in their homes is one of our top priorities, whether it's in rural areas, whether it's farms throughout the province, or in the heart of downtown.

The Chair: Thank you.

For the next 10 minutes I would like to invite Mrs. Pitt from the Official Opposition and the minister to speak. Mrs. Pitt, are you wanting to combine your time?

Mrs. Pitt: Yeah.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you. I'll be really quick. Okay. Ninety-three per cent of a workforce of 1,560 people. We currently have 109 officers that have funded positions, but we are not paying. Where is the surplus in the budget?

Ms Ganley: Again I think I'm going to call on Mr. Sweeney to come up and speak to this. Again, this is a contract with the RCMP, so we pay the contract for a certain number of positions. These can be sort of temporary folks that are coming back and forth. That number is going to move up and down, as it would in any large

organization. I think we can give you some more specifics around certain instances. It's hard to describe each individual instance because everyone will be different, right?

Mrs. Pitt: Okay.

Mr. Sweeney: The number, as the minister indicates, changes daily. We get monthly reports from the RCMP. The number that we look at as being the most definitive number is the utilization rate over the course of the year. This year the utilization rate actually is what was authorized for the RCMP to spend, so there's no surplus. The numbers actually go up and down, depending on people that are on graduated return to work. Some people are injured on one day and back to work the next; others are long term. Maternity and paternity, as you indicated, is a federal cost. It's not our cost. But those numbers also fluctuate as well. The number that we focus on is the utilization rate over the course of the year, and it's 1,560.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. So we pay for 1,560 no matter what.

Mr. Sweeney: That's what we authorized last year, the last fiscal year.

Mrs. Pitt: But we're only getting about 93 per cent of that number actually working at any given time.

Mr. Sweeney: On the day that that number was generated, that was the number of people that were at work, but that changes, as the minister indicated. Some days it's more; some days it's less.

Mrs. Pitt: But we wouldn't see any increase or decrease in funding because of that number because we pay no matter what. The RCMP would see a surplus or deficit, depending on the fluctuation.

Mr. Sweeney: That's right. They bill us actual costs. They're averaged on the first three billings, but then it's reconciled on the fourth. So it's based on the actual utilization. That is what we pay for.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. It's an up to charge?

Mr. Sweeney: Pardon me?

Mrs. Pitt: We pay them up to a certain amount, right? They're given that budget for 1,560, and they get no more than that, right?

Mr. Sweeney: Well, yes, but I should – it's very complicated. If they are actually running less, we will authorize perhaps expenditures in other areas like operations and maintenance, capital. So there's a conversation with respect to the use of the budget, but we always tell them how many officers they can have and what our funding cap will be.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay.

Mr. Sweeney: If they're running lower – let's say that they ran 1,500, and they ran 60 vacancies, but they needed to buy police cars or they needed to buy ballistic vests, whatever it may be – we would have that conversation. We would authorize that expenditure. Or we wouldn't, in which case it would be a surplus.

Mrs. Pitt: So if somebody needed a new police car and were at the maximum number of officers that this department has determined, how will you get a new car?

Mr. Sweeney: We always have the conversation at the start of the fiscal year so that we know what their capital plan is, both minor

and major. Again, the capital plans are based on five years. It's a five-year capital plan, but it can be adjusted in year based on spending pressures within the province.

Mrs. Pitt: So if we have a larger need for infrastructure or capital funding for whatever reason, flooding – I don't know – will the officer cost go down? Will we have less funding for officers because there's an increase in capital funding?

Mr. Sweeney: I'm sorry. Could you . . .

Mrs. Pitt: The budget as a whole: if we need more police cars, will it result in fewer funded officer positions because of increased capital needs?

Mr. Sweeney: It's possible, yes.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. Where and how would we see that reflected in a budget?

Mr. Sweeney: Within the RCMP budget it could be reflected in a number of different ways. It could be in the capital plan itself, or it could be in division admin costs. Division admin costs: it will give you a headache to try to figure this out. We pay what are called division admin costs on an FTE basis. There are all sorts of different calculations that are used to determine what those admin costs are, including the cost of depot. That's the training facility. It's based on actual costs, so if they're training more troops in a given year, our costs associated with running the training academy will be reflected in increased costs on division admin. It's a roaming average that actually could impact.

You could look at division admin costs and drill into there to see where those expenditures are and what variances occur, or you can look directly into the capital plans, the sorts of equipment purchases that you're contemplating. So there are a couple of places to look at.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. Through the chair, would there be and are there capital costs included in the RCMP line item and the capital funding, like, I mean, not inclusive of each other but exclusive of each other? Is that double the cost? I guess that is what I'm asking. Is there spending in capital over here, and then is there also spending in the RCMP contract as a whole, that funding?

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms Ganley: I think there are a couple of things going on here. In terms of capital for the ministry those costs will potentially be located and sometimes are even located in Infrastructure if you're talking about sort of large courthouse projects, things like that. The RCMP, within the contract we provide them, will have some costs that go to things other than officers. We're saying, you know, cars, vests, guns, those sorts of things. Just like we have for the ministry and for every other ministry, they will have a plan in terms of how they're going to spend those monies. So we're not double counting them. The province contracts to the RCMP, and then the RCMP procures those specific things that they need whereas some other pieces of infrastructure would fall under the ministry to provide, and those would be sort of located in other budgets elsewhere.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. That does answer my question. That was double-dipping, I guess. Thank you.

I'll pass my time off quickly to my colleague.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Chair. Minister, regarding those 39 officers, what metrics were used to decide on that number? You know, why

not 30? Why not 50? I guess that maybe you can talk a little bit about how that number came about if you don't mind.

6:15

Ms Ganley: Mostly it was in terms of conversations with our partners in the RCMP. We were able to sort of go back and forth and say, you know: obviously, we think that this a problem. I was hearing from my colleagues, from my colleagues across the aisle, from Albertans, from municipal leaders that there was a problem. So we went to them and said, "We're hearing that there's a problem." They said, "We, too, are hearing that there is a problem." So we said: "What can we do to help? What do you think would be most effective?" The strategy was sort of evolved between us and the RCMP in terms of what we thought would be most effective. We'll continue to monitor the situation, and we'll see what the impacts of that will be and whether there's sort of a need to do other things.

Mr. Ellis: Just so I'm clear, the RCMP, obviously, in their experience made a recommendation, and you agreed. Is it that simple? I don't want to make it more complicated.

Ms Ganley: I mean, the conversations were a little bit longer than that, obviously.

Mr. Ellis: Yeah. Oh, of course.

Ms Ganley: We went back and forth a little on, "What's this, and explain how it works," that sort of stuff. I mean, basically, yes, they made the recommendation, and we agreed.

Mr. Ellis: If I could just . . .

The Chair: Thank you.

As there are no other members present, I would now like to invite for the next 10 minutes the government caucus and the minister to speak. Ms Miller, are you wanting to combine your time with the minister?

Ms Miller: Yes, please.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Ms Miller: To the minister: would you like to finish your answer on the question I asked about the public security budget line item?

Ms Ganley: Ah, right. Yes, I mean, it's definitely true that we want to ensure that everyone feels safe in their homes. I guess that's actually probably the top-line message. We wanted to ensure that, regardless of where you live, you're feeling safe.

Ms Miller: Thank you.

When Albertans are incarcerated, they don't give up their human rights and right to security. How will the increased funding in the statement of operations for correctional services ensure that these individuals are protected while incarcerated?

Ms Ganley: Absolutely. We continue to invest in correctional services at all levels throughout the province as we work to ensure that not only are those incarcerated in the facilities safe but also that the correctional officers that work there are able to feel safe and secure in their workplace. I think that those goals actually can operate together in terms of ensuring the safety of the inmates and the safety of those who are working at the facilities.

I think of one example, being the pilot project with respect to the body scanner that we announced recently. What that will do is that it enables us to detect drugs coming into the remand

facility. That's good for the folks in the remand facility, though they may not necessarily feel that it is, in the sense that you're not having drugs coming in that could potentially lead to an overdose. You know, drugs have gotten into remand facilities over sort of the course of as long as we've had remand facilities. But now drugs in remand facilities are, as they are everywhere else in the province, much, much more dangerous. Those will help to increase the security of the inmates, but they also help to increase the security of our officers who are working within the facility. It is very stressful, from a sort of mental health perspective, for them to be responding to these overdose situations on a regular basis. It also is the case that those officers could potentially, depending on what the substance is, be exposed, and that's obviously a big concern as well.

I think that those two goals can continue to work together, and we'll continue to sort of invest in that and work with our partners to ensure that we're doing the best to move that forward.

Ms Miller: Thank you.

When crimes take place, it's important not only to bring the perpetrators to justice but to account for the needs of the victims. In the statement of operations on page 106 there's an increase in budget for the victims of crime fund. Can you explain how this fund helps individuals that have suffered at the hands of criminals?

Ms Ganley: I think the victims of crime fund is ultimately a critical element in how our ministry helps those in a time of need. Crime is a complex matter, and it touches many elements of the system, and it's really important that one of those elements that we consider is the needs of victims. We want to ensure that those needs continue to be addressed, and the victims of crime fund is one way to work towards that.

It actually has two sort of main components. One is the financial benefits component. Individuals who've been the victims of crime sort of make application to an outside committee, and sometimes they receive sort of a financial payment that can help defray the costs of counselling services or time off work or any number of things. Those individuals are able to, I guess, determine what's most helpful to them.

The other is that it goes, in terms of grants, to our victims' services partners to help them provide the important services that they do, and those partners rely very, very heavily on volunteers. You see the numbers, and you see this increase reflected in the budget, but I think one of the things that you don't see is the contribution of individual Albertans, right? They are willing to come forward and volunteer their time to help those who are around them. You don't see a dollar number on that, but it's incredibly valuable for those victims, and it's valuable for those communities. I think it really speaks to – you know, Albertans make their contribution by way of the government but in other ways as well, and I think I'd really like to thank those volunteers for their contributions.

Ms Miller: Thank you.

Chair, I'm going to pass the rest of the time on to MLA Horne.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Horne: Thank you. Now, Minister, on page 100 of your business plan the first outcome talks about focusing on a preventative and sustainable model for community safety. Certainly, these are very important outcomes when it comes to justice, and I certainly agree that these should be top priorities for the ministry, so could you please expand on what that means and how it will help our communities?

Ms Ganley: Sorry about that. I was dealing with my water situation. I'll just get you to repeat that.

Mr. Horne: Of course. On page 100 of the business plan the first outcome talks about focusing on a preventative and sustainable model for community safety, so I was wondering if you could explain what that means and how it will help our communities.

Ms Ganley: Absolutely. People always say something like an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, but in the justice system I think it's very much the case. You see that to a certain degree reflected in my budget, but I think it really makes the point of how important it is to continue to invest in services in other areas. You know, those investments that we make through Community and Social Services, through Children's Services, through Education, through health care ultimately have a lot of impact on the budget you see in the justice system. I always say that the best investment you can make in the justice system is investments to try to put the justice system out of business. Not to say that I don't want to have a job, but if one day we were able to put me out of business, I think that that would be a really excellent goal to have.

Yeah, that is definitely one of the main focuses we have, and it's certainly something that we can see through my own ministry, but it's also something that we see in other areas. We certainly work through our partners in corrections, through our partners in community corrections to ensure that individuals who do want to make a different and better choice at another time are supported to do that, but I think we also need to see that through other ministries and ensure that they are supporting those individuals to be able to make different and better choices at another time in their lives.

6:25

Mr. Horne: Yeah. I imagine that a lot of the preventative measures we can take are with, you know, mental health and all the socioeconomic factors.

Looking at key strategy 1.1 on page 101 of the business plan, you talk about engaging in a more preventative approach to community safety that addresses increases in addiction and mental health. Specifically, I'm thinking about rural crime and the trend we've been seeing in some areas of the province. How are those factors going to be taken into account in relation to rural crime?

Ms Ganley: Absolutely. One of the things that the strategy we have come up with with the RCMP focuses on is the sort of specific crime reduction units. In some ways those are intended to focus on the sort of prolific offenders who are preying on the community and in being able to ensure that we're not just being responsive with them but that we're being proactive. We know what's going on with them, and we're able to build a good, sustainable case against them. In addition to those individuals, it's also critically important that we're able to identify individuals who are maybe engaging in repeat criminal behaviours but who aren't best dealt with in the justice system. If you're able to identify who those people are and what the underlying driver potentially is, you're sort of able to better stream those individuals. So these crime reduction . . .

The Chair: Thank you.

For the remainder of the meeting I would like to now turn the floor over to Mr. Ellis from the Official Opposition.

Mr. Ellis: Thanks, Madam Chair. Mr. Sweeney brought this little point up, and it just made me think here regarding the RCMP. I think he indicated that if the RCMP requested some additional funding for equipment, for instance, they would make the request, and you would supply the funding for it. Is that correct?

Ms Ganley: Generally what we do is that it's much like our own budgeting process. They make sort of predictions on what's going to be needed in-year, and that's what we fund to. Because things move throughout the year, you can see some variances, but usually they'll be – you know, they move in both directions. Do you know what I mean? Sometimes you don't wind up needing one thing, and then you do need something else. Generally you can estimate roughly the number of cars that will need to be replaced or the number of ballistic vests that you'll need, that sort of thing. We try to do our best to estimate it, but, yes, sometimes it's a little imperfect.

Mr. Ellis: Have the RCMP made a request – and have you fulfilled this if they have made the request – for the carbine for all officers to have? I mean, those were kind of recommendations that came out of Mayerthorpe, sadly, which came out of – I think there was a New Brunswick incident where officers were shot as well. Certainly, it has been a recommendation throughout police services. Hence, when I was in Calgary, some officers were equipped with the C8. My question, of course, is: have the RCMP made that request, and if so, do they have them?

Ms Ganley: Generally these things go forward by way of conversations in terms of them, you know, suggesting what they think they're going to need in any one particular year, and then we're sort of the funder. Sometimes conversations will be around finances being tight and whether things need to happen this year or whether they can happen in subsequent years. I don't know. It's difficult for me to speak to every specific piece of equipment.

Mr. Ellis: Do any of the police officers, RCMP have the carbines?

Mr. Sweeney: Yes. We've been funding them for several years, actually, but they've staged their introduction of the carbine based on their ability to train. So the acquisition and the training costs are all part of their plan.

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'd like to remind committee members that we are scheduled to meet next on Wednesday, April 4, 2018, at 9 a.m. to consider the estimates of the Ministry of Seniors and Housing.

Thank you, everyone. This meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 6:30 p.m.]

