



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Standing Committee
on
Public Accounts

Children's Services

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**Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session**

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (UCP), Chair
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP), Deputy Chair
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP), Acting Chair

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Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (NDP)
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (NDP)**
Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (UCP)
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* substitution for Scott Cyr

** substitution for Jon Carson

Also in Attendance

Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Conklin (UCP)

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Support Staff

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Janet Schwegel	Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Participants

Ministry of Children's Services

Darlene Bouwsema, Deputy Minister

Mahmud Dhala, Acting Executive Director, Corporate Finance, and Senior Financial Officer

Mark Hattori, Assistant Deputy Minister, Family and Community Resiliency

Gloria Iatridis, Assistant Deputy Minister, Policy, Innovation and Indigenous Connections

Chi Loo, Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Services

Jon Reeves, Provincial Director, Child Intervention Delivery

8:30 a.m. Tuesday, November 27, 2018

[Mr. Gotfried in the chair]

The Acting Chair: I'd like to call this meeting of the Public Accounts to order and welcome everyone in attendance.

My name is Richard Gotfried, MLA for Calgary-Fish Creek and committee member acting as chair for today's meeting. I would ask that members, staff, and guests at the table introduce themselves for the record, starting to my right with the deputy chair.

Mr. Dach: Good morning, everyone. Lorne Dach, MLA, Edmonton-McClung, deputy chair.

Mr. Barnes: Good morning. Drew Barnes, MLA, Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Hunter: Good morning. Grant Hunter, Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Panda: Good morning. Prasad Panda, Calgary-Foothills.

Ms Goodridge: Good morning. Laila Goodridge, Fort McMurray-Conklin.

Mrs. Aheer: Good morning. Leela Aheer, Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mr. Clark: Good morning. Greg Clark, MLA, Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Dhala: Good morning. Mahmud Dhala, acting senior financial officer, Children's Services.

Mr. Loo: Good morning. Chi Loo, ADM, corporate services, Children's Services.

Mr. Hattori: Good morning. Mark Hattori, ADM of family and community resiliency, Children's Services.

Ms Bouwsema: Good morning. Darlene Bouwsema, Deputy Minister of Children's Services.

Mr. Reeves: Good morning. Jon Reeves, the provincial director for child intervention delivery, Children's Services.

Ms Iatridis: Good morning. Gloria Iatridis, the ADM of policy, innovation, and indigenous connections with Children's Services.

Mr. Wylie: Good morning. Doug Wylie, Auditor General.

Mr. Ireland: Good morning. Brad Ireland, Assistant Auditor General.

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

Ms Kazim: Good morning. Anam Kazim, MLA for Calgary-Glenmore.

Ms Littlewood: Good morning. Jessica Littlewood, the MLA representing Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Dr. Turner: Bob Turner, Edmonton-Whitemud.

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

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

Mr. Nielsen: Good morning, everyone. Chris Nielsen, MLA for Edmonton-Decore.

Dr. Massolin: Good morning. Philip Massolin, manager of research and committee services.

Mrs. Sawchuk: Karen Sawchuk, committee clerk.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, and welcome to everyone. I'd also like to recognize that we have two new members of the committee, Anam Kazim and Brandy Payne, so welcome to the committee. Thank you, of course, to our departing members for their service to the committee as well.

We also have two substitutions: Mrs. Aheer for Mr. Cyr and Mr. Horne, who has not joined us yet, for Mr. Carson.

I have a few housekeeping items to address as well. Please note that the microphones are operated by *Hansard*. Please set your cellphones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting. Committee proceedings are being live streamed on the Internet and broadcast on Alberta Assembly TV, and the audio- and video stream and transcripts of the meeting can be accessed via the Legislative Assembly website.

First, I'd like to move to approval of the agenda. Are there any changes or additions to the agenda? Seeing none, would a member like to move that the agenda for the November 27, 2018, meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be approved as distributed? MLA Panda. Any discussion on the motion? I don't think so. Any opposed? I don't think we have any on the phone. Mr. Horne has not joined us there. Thank you. The motion is carried.

Approval of the minutes for the November 20, 2018, meeting. Do members have any amendments to the November 20, 2018, minutes? If not, would a member move that the minutes of the November 20, 2018, meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be approved as distributed? MLA Payne. Any discussion on the motion? All in favour? Any opposed? Thank you. The motion is carried.

We also have the minutes of the November 21, 2018, meeting. Do any members have amendments for the November 21, 2018, minutes? If not, would a member move that the minutes of the November 21, 2018, meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be approved as distributed? MLA Hunter. Any discussion on the motion? All in favour? Any opposed? Thank you. The motion is carried.

I'd like to extend a welcome to our guests who are here on behalf of the Ministry of Children's Services to address the outstanding recommendations from the office of the Auditor General as well as the ministry's 2017-2018 annual report. Members should have the research report prepared by research services, the Auditor General briefing document as well as the status of Auditor General recommendations document completed and submitted by the ministry.

The committee welcomes opening remarks not exceeding 10 minutes. Ms Bouwsema, the deputy minister, will you be taking the lead in this respect?

Ms Bouwsema: Yes, I will.

The Acting Chair: Please go ahead. Ten minutes.

Ms Bouwsema: Thank you very much. I'm pleased to be here today to represent Children's Services and speak to our work in 2017-18. I would just like to introduce once again the members of my team who are here to support me. At the table is Mark Hattori, assistant deputy minister of family and community resiliency; Gloria Iatridis, assistant deputy minister, policy, innovation, and indigenous connections; Chi Loo, assistant deputy minister, corporate services; Jon Reeves, the provincial director of child

intervention delivery; and Mahmud Dhala, acting senior financial officer.

The past year has been a very busy one for Children's Services. We moved forward in a number of important areas and recognized progress towards our goal of ensuring that all children, regardless of where they live, are able to reach their full potential within healthy, resilient communities. Today I will talk about the continuum of services provided by Children's Services to support children, youth, and families. At the beginning of the continuum we provide universally available programs and services like regulated child care or parent link centres. We also invest in providing more targeted prevention and early intervention programs to increase protective factors and prevent child maltreatment. And, finally, we offer the most specialized interventions and support through legislated child intervention services.

I'll provide you with a brief overview of key work that's being undertaken every day by Children's Services, beginning with some of the universal supports. In 2017 there were an estimated 330,816 children under the age of six in Alberta. Supporting families means ensuring these young children have access to quality, affordable child care. In Alberta our child care system provides parents with the choice of unregulated options, licensed centre-based care, or approved family day homes. We support families through a child care subsidy that assists low- to middle-income families with funding to offset the cost of child care and accreditation funding that promotes excellence in child care and helps parents choose high-quality child care options.

Both the provincial and federal governments' investments in child care focus on affordability, accessibility, and quality, supporting 122 early learning and child care centres. These centres offer \$25-per-day child care and quality enhancements based on an early learning and child care curriculum framework. The expansion created approximately 7,300 new, quality, affordable child care spaces across Alberta and saved families, on average, \$430 a month in child care fees. In some cases, for families who receive full child care subsidy, child care fees in early learning and child care centres have been reduced to zero. We have heard from many families that ELCC centres are making a real difference in their quality of life. We will continue our work to thoroughly evaluate the pilot program and improve as we move forward.

Every parent wants to be able to provide their kids with the opportunities to thrive and reach their highest potential. In 2017-18 the Alberta child benefit provided direct financial assistance to approximately 135,000 lower income families with children under 18. This meant families had additional dollars to meet more than their basic needs, with access to items such as winter boots or more nutritious food or dance lessons. A child's early years are crucial in laying the foundation for a successful future and preventing vulnerability later in life.

In 2017-18 we invested \$24.5 million in operational grants to support 57 parent link centres across the province, serving nearly 113,000 Albertans. These centres provide parents and caregivers with a network of services, free resources, and supports like teaching parents to work with children to develop crucial skills through play-based activities and peer interaction. For vulnerable families with one or more risk factors such as poverty or a history of abuse or neglect, we support more targeted programs. This includes home visitation services, where a worker visits the family's home and works with the family to provide targeted supports. In 2017-18 we invested \$10.6 million in this program to help vulnerable families get back on track and build their capacity as parents.

The ministry also initiated a process to redevelop the prevention and early intervention framework to reflect current and emerging

trends, research, and indigenous world views and to help families become more resilient and support them in coping with trauma and reducing child maltreatment. Our goal is to provide targeted supports so parents are equipped to keep their children safe in a nurturing, stable environment that preserves the family unit. That is why it is essential that our staff have the very best tools and training to be able to make accurate assessments about when the safety and well-being of children can be maintained at home and when it cannot, which brings us further along the continuum to child intervention services.

8:40

Efforts are under way to make positive change in every area of service delivery in child intervention. We are working to make child intervention stronger through the implementation of the child intervention practice framework and Signs of Safety initiatives. We have also developed provincial delivery models for each of the specialized areas aimed at building capacity for equitable and accessible service delivery regardless of geography.

One of the most important areas of focus has been our work with indigenous partners to put practices in place that keep indigenous children safely with their families. There is nothing more important than the safety of children and youth receiving services across Alberta. The Ministerial Panel on Child Intervention was formed in 2017 to support families and children by improving the child death review process and strengthening Alberta's child intervention system as a whole. They completed the first phase of their work in April 2017. This led to the Child Protection and Accountability Act, which was passed in June 2017 and made the death review process more transparent, accountable, and effective. The panel heard from indigenous leaders, people with lived experience, front-line staff, and the public. In March of this year they delivered 26 final recommendations that included a wide range of actions to improve the child intervention system. Work began immediately to address these recommendations.

A Stronger, Safer Tomorrow: A Public Action Plan for the Ministerial Panel on Child Intervention's Final Recommendations was released in June. The plan highlights 39 actions, including 16 to be completed this fiscal year. We also engaged with indigenous community partners, thought leaders, and knowledge keepers as well as designated First Nation agencies to guide us in the development of our indigenous cultural understanding framework, which we also released in June of this year.

The panel also identified the need for expanded access to culturally appropriate preventative mental health and addiction services for children, youth, and families. Work began on a youth suicide prevention plan in August 2017 and has engaged with over 600 stakeholders, including elders, indigenous people and communities as well as over 300 youth. Because indigenous youth have a much higher rate of suicide than the general population, in partnership with Alberta Health Services and indigenous communities we will be working to support the development of indigenous, community-led youth suicide prevention plans. We expect the plan to be completed early next year as part of our public action plan.

The work we completed in the 2017-18 fiscal year has influenced the continuum of Children's Services program delivery and helped us in our core business of making lives better for children, youth, and families in Alberta. Thank you for the opportunity to highlight some of the work of the Ministry of Children's Services in the 2017-18 year. I look forward to providing more information in my responses to your questions.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, Deputy Minister Bouwsema.

I will now call on the Auditor General for his comments. You have five minutes.

Mr. Wylie: Thank you, Chair. It's great to be with you again this morning. I will take a couple of minutes to provide a bit of an overview of the audit that we completed that relates to the systems to deliver services to indigenous children. I'd like to acknowledge the real sense of contribution by the indigenous communities. When we did this audit, we had an opportunity to meet with the communities, and we really appreciated their support during the audit, so I'd like to acknowledge that. I'd also like to start by acknowledging that we are meeting on traditional land of Treaty 6, and I'd also like to recognize the Métis people of Alberta, who share a deep connection with this land.

Chair, our report concluded that indigenous children in care experience less favourable results than nonindigenous children. The report highlighted three important findings for the Assembly and for Albertans. First, the department did not have a clear, co-ordinated process for providing early support services to indigenous children. Prevention and early intervention are key to reducing the number of children who require long-term care. Effectively delivering early supports to indigenous children requires recognizing the unique needs of indigenous communities. A blanket strategy for all children fails to fill the gap between indigenous and nonindigenous children's experiences for support.

Second, within the department's regional offices indigenous children had less frequent contact with caseworkers than nonindigenous children and, further, had care plans reviewed less often than nonindigenous children. We also found that the department did not set targets specifically aimed at improving planned results for indigenous children.

Third, the department's training on intercultural understanding was insufficient and needed improvement. First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples living in Alberta each have their own approach to caring for their children ingrained in their cultures and history and ways of being. The term "culturally appropriate" pervaded the department's documentation, indicating the department recognized the need for awareness about cultural differences. However, the department provided little guidance on what that term meant.

At the time of our audit, although only 1 in 10 children in Alberta was indigenous, 69 per cent of the children in care were indigenous. Indigenous children receiving services experience greater risk, and there are significant long-term social costs as well. Chair, I'm sure that few would argue that the continuum of care provided to the most vulnerable Alberta children and their families is vital work, and the consequences are tragic when the system fails. That's why we will work with the department as they work to act on our recommendations.

Thank you, Chair.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, Auditor General, for your comments.

I'd like to give an opportunity for MLA Horne to introduce himself for the record.

Mr. Horne: Yes. Thank you. Trevor Horne, MLA for Spruce Grove-St. Albert, substituting for Member Carson.

The Acting Chair: Great. Thank you, MLA Horne.

The committee will follow its usual time allotment format for questions. The first and second rotations provide nine minutes each for members of the Official Opposition and for government members, followed by four and a half minutes for the third-party member. The third rotation provides five minutes each for members of the Official Opposition and government members. Time

permitting, following these rotations we will hear from the independent, FCP, Liberal, and PC members in attendance wishing to participate. If none are in attendance, this time will rotate equally amongst the Official Opposition, government members, and the third-party member, with the final few minutes designated for any outstanding questions to be read into the record and to consider other items of business.

We ask that officials at the table as well as those seated in the gallery provide their names before responding to questions. This is for the benefit of members who may be participating via teleconference, for those listening in online, and for the *Hansard* recording.

I will now open the floor to questions from members. MLA Aheer.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. Thank you so much to everyone for being here. I'm just going to start off with the second phase of the child intervention panel. There are 26 recommendations that are broken out, and 16 of those need to be completed, from page 39 of the Children's Services annual report. Is the ministry on target to meet all 16 of those recommendations within the deadline of the fiscal year?

Ms Bouwsema: Thank you for that question. Yes. The panel, as you know, was formed in 2017, and we are on track with the 16 recommendations that we committed to by the end of the fiscal year and have started work on some of the short-term actions for the following year.

Mrs. Aheer: How do you measure your progress on that for keeping on track?

Ms Bouwsema: We have performance measures we're developing for those. It really depends on which action you're talking about. Some of them are creating advisory committees, and that's either a yes or a no. It really depends on which of the actions you're talking about, but we do have measures where everyone would be able to say: yes, that was done.

Mrs. Aheer: I have a question about one of the actions. One of them is to "establish three new advisory bodies, including an indigenous advisory body to oversee implementation." Have those been created?

Ms Bouwsema: The indigenous advisory body is just in the process of being stood up now. The grandmothers' wisdom circle has already been put together, and we have an elders' wisdom circle that is already in place. The last one would be our youth advisory committee, and that will be in the new year.

Mrs. Aheer: How are you selecting your participants for this?

Ms Bouwsema: We're looking at geographical representation, cultural representation. Of course, you know we have a number of First Nations communities throughout the province and Métis people, so we're trying to get a wide range of representation from across the province and across our different nations.

8:50

Mrs. Aheer: Okay. Do you have a cost associated with how the groups have been put together and the selection committees and all of that?

Ms Bouwsema: The cost is minimal because for the most part it's a few staff to support the work of the committee: take minutes, do

meeting agendas. I don't have that because they're not all up and working, but I will have that next year.

Mrs. Aheer: Okay. Thank you so much. Action 12, one of the actions, is to "clarify the First Nation Band Designate role to support children and families receiving services." I would imagine that would take a substantial amount of consultation. Would you be able to update us on sort of the consultations and your feedback so far?

Ms Bouwsema: We have been working extensively with a number of groups on that issue. We feel that it's a very important role that we need to provide more clarity to, so we have been working with the existing band designates, the designated First Nation agencies. We have been talking to the chiefs and councils. We have been talking to the directors in child intervention. We will continue that work as well. We've also received some proposals from the existing treaty areas. We have one from Treaty 6 on their view of what that role would look like, and Treaty 7 and Treaty 8 are just in the process of providing us proposals as well.

Mrs. Aheer: Are the designates part of the indigenous advisory body? Will they end up being part of that?

Ms Bouwsema: No, they're not part of that, but they do sit at the table with regional child intervention directors, and they meet on an every-second-month basis with the department to share, you know, practice challenges and what's working and what isn't working and how we can do things better together.

Mrs. Aheer: Okay. When you have a director and a designate, how are you delineating between the two? Does one sometimes take over for the other?

Ms Bouwsema: No. They're really partners. It's just that the designated First Nation agencies work on-reserve, and the regional directors are provincial staff.

Mrs. Aheer: So they're not necessarily – okay. Thank you for clarifying that. Action 10, one of the actions, is to "pilot a holistic kinship assessment tool to increase the number of safe providers and ensure the safety and well-being of children." What does that tool entail? That's a very broad-spectrum statement.

Ms Bouwsema: Yes, the kinship tool. As you know, kinship care in Alberta is grounded in the belief that, whenever possible, children should live with extended family or someone they feel very connected to. Maintaining those connections really helps to reduce the impact of coming into care and promotes the well-being and resiliency of children and youth. We have been working to come up with a model that does a better job of assessing homes when we go into them and identifying the resources and supports that are required by that family for that individual child. We have got a draft pilot in place. We've been bringing people in to review that. In the new year we will be actually piloting the new program in various communities across the province, with the intent to roll that out province-wide in the new fiscal year. We are on track for that, and we're very excited about it.

Mrs. Aheer: Okay. And then what do you mean by "holistic"?

Ms Bouwsema: It's the whole child. It's their mental, physical, spiritual, emotional well-being.

Mrs. Aheer: So in the actions. Okay. Again, it's a really broad statement. Action 1, amend the act, Bill 22. The mandatory

notification of the band council is obviously an important step toward ensuring that First Nations have an opportunity to have voices, but my question actually is: when you have a person of authority in conflict situations like this, are there safeguards in place in the legislation should there be a conflict between maybe the band and the family or the band and the child, under those circumstances? As we all know, in authoritarian positions in any particular situation this could be a problem, so I was just curious. What would be the continuum of care in that particular situation?

Ms Bouwsema: On the ground in practice we work extensively with the band and the families long before it ever gets to court. By the time First Nations or families are in front of a court, there's been extensive work done between the department, the caseworkers, the family, the child, sometimes even the office of the youth advocate if an advocate was assigned to the child. So it is not the first time that people are seeing or meeting each other or that we may be aware of any conflicts or not. You know, I think that there is always the potential for conflict if people aren't all onboard with the solution going forward, but that's where the courts then get involved.

Mrs. Aheer: So how is it, then, that you came up with the mandatory notification? I'm assuming that if they're spending time together already, they would know if the child is going to court.

Ms Bouwsema: They do know, but currently they don't have standing in court, so they don't have the opportunity, necessarily, to make representations in court if they choose to.

Mrs. Aheer: Okay. Thank you so much for that clarity as well. You previously stated about the trilateral partnership with the federal government and the First Nations communities and the action plan from April 2015, which stipulated that the priority of a strategy was "to register all eligible First Nations children in care for Indian status." You noted the last time you appeared at the committee that you had been "making good progress on that recommendation." I believe that's in *Hansard*, page PA-333. How is this work going? Is that completed? Do you expect it to take longer? Have you had challenges with that?

Ms Bouwsema: Well, that work is ongoing, right? As you have children coming in care, it's always part of our practice to check to see if they're registered or if they're able to be registered. I would say that our process is in place and that it's working very well with the First Nations, but it's not like that's a process that will ever end. Part of doing business when we have a child that comes to our attention is to identify whether they are registered or have the ability to be registered.

Mrs. Aheer: Okay. I'd like to move on to the manageable workloads for caseworkers and the real-time access to information, being the two key priorities for children. Would you mind telling us a little bit about the specific resources they've put in place?

The Acting Chair: Thank you, MLA Aheer. You'll have to provide that, perhaps, in your follow-up questions or in writing at a later date.

I'd like to now move to a rotation for the first government members, and I think I'm recognizing MLA Payne.

Ms Payne: Thank you. I'd like to switch gears a little bit and chat about child care. Affordable child care is referenced on page 23 of the annual report. Of course, the issue of affordable, quality child care is one that's particularly top of mind for parents but I think one

that's really important for all Albertans to consider, particularly with all of the research that is out there about the impact of those early years on children.

I have to comment that it was just really impressive to hear that families who are receiving a full subsidy and are enrolled in an early learning and child care centre are able to have zero fees, and I was just thinking about the impact that that can have on a low-income family and the choices that they make and perhaps the parents' decision to return to work, in the first place, or perhaps pursue an education and, you know, continue to make some decisions about the future of their family, not just that day-to-day survival.

I've been lucky to have two of the centres located in my riding, and I was able to visit each of them. It's just so wonderful to see children and caregivers thriving in that kind of environment. One of the two is located in a subsidized housing community with priority registration for members of that community, so I know that that's making a difference.

I was wondering if you could tell us a little bit more about the work that the ministry is undertaking to create more access for Albertans on these programs as well as some of the highlights of what the ministry is hearing back about these programs.

Ms Bouwsema: Thank you. The creation of the ELCC centres is our first step towards developing a new system that supports children and families to access affordable, quality child care. As you know, we have been taking a measured approach, starting with 22 centres, then adding another 100 centres, for a total of 122 centres, and part of those phases has been to ensure that we're evaluating the results as we go. The ELCC centres, we believe, lay a foundation from which we can build a sustainable system in the future.

From our interim evaluation so far we certainly have been hearing from a number of parents about how it truly has changed their lives, single moms who have said that they now can get dental work done for themselves because it's freed up enough money. So this woman, who had been suffering from tooth pain for over a year, was finally able to get her tooth done.

9:00

Other families now have money to put their kids in extracurricular activities, which we know is also an important part of building healthy, resilient children. So we believe that the interim evaluation is demonstrating that this is laying the foundation that we wanted to lay and that it is making a difference in the lives of both parents and children. A number of parents have also said that it's freed them up to go back to work or to go back to school to make a better life for themselves.

I'll just ask Mark if there is anything else. That falls in his area.

Mr. Hattori: Hi. We did an interim evaluation from the period of April 1, 2017, to March 31, 2018, and that was an evaluation of the 22 initial pilot centres that were put up. Including what the deputy has already said, I guess, one statistic that I'd like to highlight is that there are about 346 net new licensed child care spaces created out of that. That increased enrolment in those centres or across the system from about 771 to 1,133 net new kids enrolled into those centres. The interim evaluation pointed to the fact that, as a consequence of the pilot work, around 260 or so parents were now able to enter or re-enter the workforce, so it's making a substantive difference from both a qualitative and quantitative perspective. Mind you, it's an interim evaluation of 22, so I'd just like to put that on the table.

Ms Payne: Thank you. I'm glad you touched on the evaluation framework. That was going to be one of my next questions.

Now, the program is relatively new, and, of course, it's limited to 122 centres at the moment. Could you perhaps comment a little bit about what the ministry is doing to help with child care for Albertans who are unable to access the early childhood programs?

Ms Bouwsema: For Albertans who have not been able to access the ELCC centres, of course we have the Alberta child benefit, which helps to reduce child poverty in Alberta by providing direct financial assistance to lower income families. In 2017-18 Children's Services dispersed \$158 million to 135,000 Albertan families to help them make ends meet. The Alberta child benefit, as you know, helps lower income families to provide a better quality of life for children and youth and helps them to provide opportunities that they need to thrive. The benefit that each family receives depends on household income and the number of children in the family. This benefit can provide up to \$2,820 for families with four children or more. In addition to that, we also have the child care subsidy for parents who have their children in child care but not in one of the ELCC centres. Alberta has the highest subsidy level compared to other jurisdictions. You can make up to \$50,000 and still receive subsidy.

Ms Payne: Thank you. That answers my questions, so I will cede the rest of my time to MLA Littlewood.

The Acting Chair: MLA Littlewood.

Ms Littlewood: Thank you, Chair. The work around this is so incredible. We just saw the opening of some space in Fort Saskatchewan, and while we have a very young population there, it still continues to grow and have needs. It does have some complex needs in that, you know, not everybody can afford child care and there is still that ask from families to have access to affordable, quality child care. That is what I heard over and over again.

There is a family that I met where both parents have jobs where they make minimum wage, and they were able to move from a centre where they could not afford the fees to the \$25-a-day child care, which is so incredible. I know that a lot of families' reality is that they have to find jobs where they work separate shifts, and that makes it very difficult for parents to actually have time together with each other, with their child. It's incredibly meaningful, so thank you.

I'm just wondering if you could just give us the numbers of how many child care spaces are outside of Edmonton and Calgary, in rural Alberta, and if you could just put a little bit of information for myself on the record about the spaces in Vegreville and Fort Saskatchewan, I'd be grateful. Thank you.

Ms Bouwsema: Thank you. Yes, we're very pleased about the increase in spaces that the ELCC centres have brought to the system. With 122 centres we've seen an increase of 7,797 children accessing the system, and it's been an increase of just over 1,800 new spaces to the system as a whole. I can give you the breakdown per region. I don't have individual municipalities with me, but I can get that to you.

Ms Littlewood: If you could provide the rural numbers in writing, I would appreciate that. Thank you.

The Acting Chair: Thank you.

I'd like to now move to the third party. I'd like to recognize MLA Clark.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, all, for being here. As someone who spent a year and a half of my time in the Assembly

as part of the child intervention panel – it was a very good process – I want to thank each of you and those in your ministry and everyone who offered support for that process. I've said it before, but I'll say again that I think that government in general would be well served if processes like the child intervention panel were far more common. I guess I say that as much to my colleagues on the other side of the table here as I say it to you. It was a good process.

Given the importance of what we're talking about here in terms of child intervention and the complexity of what we're dealing with, working with children who are the most at risk in the entire province, government on behalf of Albertans has an obligation to look out for those children. I guess what I would advocate and ask you about is the importance of transparency going forward. This process has been a very good one because of that transparency. Maybe just let me ask a philosophical question. One of the things we talked about on the panel was a shift from a primarily rules-based approach, which has led to 1,000-plus pages of a procedure manual, which of course we can't abandon, to focusing on more of a principles-based approach, and that's what I see in Bill 22 that's before the Legislature now. Would you agree that that is a shift that is happening within your ministry?

Ms Bouwsema: Thank you for that question. I would absolutely agree that that's a shift that's happening within the ministry, and I would say that the demonstration of that shift is with our adoption of Signs of Safety, which is all about meeting the family where they are coming from, building on the strengths that exist, because there are strengths that exist within every family unit, both the core and extended family, and with our foundations of caregiver support, which is really looking at things from a trauma-informed and cultural lens, and from our family finding and our practice framework. All of those are premised on spending time with the family to understand where they're coming from and what best meets their needs as opposed to: here are our rules, and everyone has to go by our rules. The outcomes have been tremendous.

Mr. Clark: That's what I'm interested in. You have done some public reporting of tracking against the recommendations. I guess the question I have is: given the complexity and some of the challenges on the front lines and in the real world you need to adapt to very complex and dynamic situations. But, also, the Auditor General is in the room, and they have a job to do in terms of reporting against standards and making recommendations. To me, the bridge between those two things is public reporting even when the reporting doesn't show positive things. Is that something that you're committed to going forward?

9:10

Ms Bouwsema: Absolutely committed to, going forward. As part of Bill 22 that's been tabled in the legislation, we have a commitment to reporting on deaths and serious injuries and incidents going forward. We have statistics on our website, where we report on how we're doing against our standards of practice that we strive for throughout the province. We have real-time reporting in a system that we call TAPIS. If you want to know exactly what that means, I'll have to refer to Jon, but it does give us real-time reporting, where we can view how we're doing against our own practice standards. As part of the work on the Auditor's recommendations we implemented some new standards around indigenous children in care.

Mr. Clark: Sorry. Can I just pause briefly? I've got, like, 15 seconds. I've heard from some indigenous stakeholders that they are concerned there's no funding supporting that court process or

other aspects of Bill 22. Is there funding available either for that process or others?

Ms Bouwsema: I would say that the funding that's available for . . .

The Acting Chair: Thank you. Perhaps you could provide the response to that in writing to the member.

I'd like to move to the second rotation. From the Official Opposition we have MLA Goodridge.

Ms Goodridge: Thank you. As of March 2017 there were approximately 2,600 licensed and approved child care programs and about 15,000 certified child care staff in Alberta. What are you doing about concerns about how many private operators can continue to operate as the new ELCC centres become operational, and how many get crowded out? Are you guys tracking this?

Ms Bouwsema: We of course license all child care providers in the province. Right now it's about a 60-40 split; 40 per cent not-for-profit, 60 per cent profit. We have not had any centres close down since we started ELCCs. There is demand for all the spaces that are there, and we support all centres through our accreditation process, which is unique to Alberta because we tie our funding to quality framework implementation in those centres.

Ms Goodridge: Excellent. Subsidy amounts are based on household income, region in the province, the number of children, their ages as well as the type of program, daycare versus day home. The larger subsidies are for infants in daycare. The internal procedure manual does not list the algorithm used. What formula does the government use to calculate subsidies for child care subsidy programs, and would we be able to get this in writing?

Ms Bouwsema: Absolutely. We can provide that to you in writing.

Ms Goodridge: Fantastic. Daycare operators are struggling with Alberta's increasing minimum wage. It's already very difficult to find and retain quality staff and qualified staff. With the minimum wage being so high, there is a concern about there being little incentive for child care workers to further their training. Does your department know about this issue, and what are you doing to address it?

Ms Bouwsema: As I spoke about earlier, our accreditation program – and about 95 per cent of daycares and day homes are accredited. What that funding provides is top-up wages for the workers, and it does provide also money for continuing education for those child care workers to continue to support their own education and development.

Ms Goodridge: Wonderful. To move topics a little bit, I will go on to adoption. What deadline has the department been given to complete the necessary consultations for the regulations of private member's Bill 206, the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Adoption Advertising) Amendment Act, 2017, so the bill can be proclaimed?

Ms Bouwsema: We have been working with our stakeholders on that issue. There are a variety of people that we are looking to consult with. It's a significant issue for all of our stakeholders, and we're working very hard to make sure that people have an opportunity to have their voice heard in that process.

Ms Goodridge: All right. What consultations have been done so far, and who has the ministry contacted for stakeholders? Can you provide us this?

Ms Bouwsema: There is an organization that oversees . . .

Ms Littlewood: Point of order. Can we find out where this is tied in to the annual report or the Auditor's report?

The Acting Chair: Could the MLA please provide reference.

Ms Goodridge: Page 9 of Children's Services annual report, adoption specific to child intervention. Thank you for asking.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, MLA.
Please proceed.

Ms Bouwsema: We have been consulting with the Foster Parent Association, with the adoption organization, with the public at large, people with lived experience who have been adopted, so there are a number of groups that we are consulting with.

Ms Goodridge: Okay. Do you think that you could provide this in writing, the list?

Ms Bouwsema: Absolutely.

Ms Goodridge: Wonderful. Thank you. Could you please provide any concerns or issues of note that have been highlighted through these consultations that you've placed on this bill?

Ms Bouwsema: We are in the process of gathering that, so we haven't summarized that information yet.

Ms Goodridge: Fair enough. I'll share the rest of my time with MLA Aheer.

The Acting Chair: I recognize MLA Aheer.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you so much, Chair.

Thank you, again. I'd like to jump to just talking about the youth suicide committees you talked about. I was just curious. What are they compromised of, and how does that mandate work with the committees that are dedicated to that? You had mentioned that in your opening remarks.

Ms Bouwsema: What I said is that we are developing a youth committee, not a suicide committee. The youth committee, again, will be comprised of youth with lived experience, those who have been a part of the system. What I also tried to address in my comments is that we have been consulting with youth across the province, particularly indigenous youth, as we work to develop our youth suicide prevention plan. That's been in conjunction with Alberta Health Services, and we expect to launch or implement the plan in the new year.

Mrs. Aheer: I can't imagine that that's been very easy. It's probably been quite the process, I'm sure.

I actually had a question. You had something in the document about a literature review about preventing youth from committing suicide. How is that relevant to this? Can you explain a little bit about that?

Ms Bouwsema: Often when we're doing these kinds of evaluations and work, it's just part of looking to see what other jurisdictions are doing. Are there best practices that maybe other jurisdictions have that we have not implemented at this point and trying to gather wisdom from other places around the globe and other jurisdictions. This is not an Alberta problem on its own.

Mrs. Aheer: I believe that. How are we looking at it with the numbers this year? Are we seeing decreases in youth suicide? Are you able to update us on that a little bit? I think we saw a decrease in 2016, the last one that was released. Are we seeing that decrease continue?

Ms Bouwsema: I don't have the numbers. I'm not sure if we have them for this year yet, but if we do, we will provide them in writing to you.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you so much. You previously noted between April 2012 and 2016 that you saw a 16 per cent reduction, so that was what I was talking about there. I think it's page 54 of the annual report. Is there any initiative specifically that you notice?

Ms Bouwsema: That stat was referring to a decrease in bringing children into care, and that really was when we started implementing Signs of Safety and our new way of working with families, of meeting them where they're coming from, not where we're coming from, and really incorporating a trauma-informed view and taking much more of a cultural approach with families. It made a huge difference in the number of children that we were bringing into care.

Mrs. Aheer: Okay. Then that's just part of the prevention piece of it. Okay. You had previously stated that you'd been working with AUPE and a technical consultant to identify workload benchmarks and coming up with a system that would help address caseload issues, including travel time, documentation, and all the other duties that caseworkers have. I think you were in the middle of piloting your workload assessment management system and expected to implement it throughout the province throughout 2017. How is that implementation going?

Ms Bouwsema: We did implement the workload assessment model that we did develop with AUPE. We're actually just at the point again where we're looking at those benchmarks to see if they still make sense, which is phase 2, and we've just started that process with AUPE. As part of the ministerial action plan, a stronger safer tomorrow, one of the recommendations there is to work with AUPE again on doing a workplace review. We are just in the process of finalizing the terms of reference with AUPE to talk to staff about workplace issues. So we're doing very well on that.

9:20

Mrs. Aheer: Oh, good. How is it going with the contact compliance rates? Have the compliance rates improved since last time? It was one of the issues, right? The other thing is that you were just talking about the AUPE . . . [Mrs. Aheer's speaking time expired] Thank you. I'll write it out.

The Acting Chair: Thank you. Again, if any written responses could be provided to the member through the clerk.

We'd now like to move to the second rotation for the government side, recognizing MLA Kazim.

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much for your presentation today. My question is in regard to page 26 of the annual report. It talks about enhancing and promoting community-based early childhood services, parenting resources, and supports. What is going to be achieved out of this?

Ms Bouwsema: We are committed to ensuring that Alberta's children and youth have a strong foundation on which they can, you

know, build successful futures and prevent those vulnerabilities later in life. In 2017-18 we invested \$24.5 million in operational grants to support 57 parent link centres across the province, which provide parents and caregivers with a network of services, free resources, and parenting supports. Parent link centres also provide caregivers with services like the triple-P positive parenting program, which really provides targeted supports based on individual needs of the family. It's available to those with children under the age of 12. Work has also begun to redevelop our prevention and early intervention framework, which will guide the ministry in the development and delivery of services and support that reflect those indigenous world views and are based on current and emerging knowledge.

Ms Kazim: Thank you. My next question is in regard to page 25. It talks about families being able to access affordable child care no matter where they live. What is Children's Services doing to support the delivery of licensed child care on reserves?

Ms Bouwsema: In September of 2017 we opened the first-ever provincially licensed on-reserve child care centre in Alberta. The Kapawe'no First Nation community in Grouard in northern Alberta approached government, and we worked very hard in collaboration with their community to make this centre a reality. Families attending the centre are now eligible for provincial child care subsidies because they are a licensed centre. Staff at the centre are also receiving those wage top-ups that I talked about and the money for professional development. Not only does Kapawe'no daycare benefit the community, but the program is also very close to Northern Lakes College, and students attending that college can now apply for provincial subsidies to help with their costs and worry less about having to find care for their children while attending school. We're also in discussion and working with other First Nations to duplicate this model on other First Nations.

Ms Kazim: All right. That's very good. Thank you very much. I would like to pass it on to MLA Renaud.

The Acting Chair: Recognizing MLA Renaud.

Ms Renaud: Thank you very much, and thank you for being here this morning. I'm really happy to hear you talking about the parent link centres. I think they are vital, and they provide a support for families and children in the community, actually. I just wanted to for a quick moment mention that St. Albert is actually in one of the top 10 in terms of size of cities in the province and actually one of the only ones in that top-10 group that does not have a parent link centre. I know that they sort of put together services to meet the need, but it is a community that is the destination, I think, for Sturgeon county, for other little communities around St. Albert as well as for military families. I just wanted to say that we do recognize the absolute value of parent link centres and thank you for talking about that.

Going back to my question. On page 28 of the annual report one of your key strategies involves partnering with Health to improve addictions and mental health supports for children. What are you doing specifically to achieve this, and how will you measure the success of this work?

Ms Bouwsema: Thank you. Improving the mental health, well-being, and resiliency of Alberta's children and youth is certainly a priority of both our ministry and our government, and we're committed to making sure that children and youth receive counselling and those other mental health support services in their own communities in a timely way. In our lifetime 1 in 5 people will

experience a mental illness, and as many as 10 per cent of people over the age of 15 battle alcohol and drug dependency, so we're working to improve services and mental health and addiction supports to change those statistics.

While Alberta Health Services and Alberta Health are responsible for those tertiary level clinical services, we're all responsible to support children and youth and families to get the necessary mental health services they need, and we're working together to increase those mental health supports across the province.

Signs and symptoms of mental illness often appear in childhood. Traumatic experiences such as abuse and neglect impact a child's cognitive, social, and emotional development and may result in those lifelong negative impacts we're trying to prevent. Providing children, youth, and families with supports that will help prevent and reduce child maltreatment and ensuring children and youth are able to access interventions early are vital in supporting the best mental health outcomes.

Ms Renaud: Okay. Thank you. On page 29 of the annual report you talk about the Children's Services opioid response plan. What are you doing to prevent children and young people from becoming addicted to fentanyl and other opioids, and what are you doing to help those who are struggling with this addiction?

Ms Bouwsema: As with all of government we've been working on our opioid response in the province as a whole. We have done significant training for our staff on recognizing those signs and symptoms in families as they're working with their children and families.

As you know, Alberta and Canada as a whole are experiencing a serious and growing crisis, and across the country it's having devastating effects on families and communities. Certainly, our priority is the safety of family and children and our front-line workers. We continue to work very closely with all of our partner ministries, and we've implemented a number of substantive actions, that being that we've established a substance use response working group in Children's Services to respond to ongoing and emerging substance use and misuse issues.

We've distributed a number of personal protection kits to Children's Services and contracted agency staff to protect themselves when they go into homes. We've also developed training, tools, and resources to help staff manage opioid exposure and better support children, youth, and families. We've developed and piloted training for caregivers related to opioid abuse and misuse and how to respond appropriately to suspected overdoses. We are committed to continuing this work with our ministerial partners at Alberta Health to ensure that the government of Alberta responds appropriately to the OCYA's recent investigative report called focus on youth opioid use in Alberta.

This also provides a more effective way to address any barriers, implement solutions, and ensure that, you know, the rights of First Nation children are always considered.

Ms Renaud: Okay. Drilling down a little bit, how are you ensuring that the supports are available to children, youth, and families on- and off-reserve? If you could expand on that a little bit.

Ms Bouwsema: We are working with our trilateral partners on making sure that resources and supports are available and as close to home as possible. We've been working with our delegated First Nation agencies across the province throughout this whole process to ensure that everyone who has a role in supporting children and families, regardless of where they live, has access to resources and supports that they need. We're also working across government and

with Alberta Health Services, with municipalities, with agencies, and communities.

9:30

The Acting Chair: Thank you. Again, if there are any supplemental written responses through the clerk, that would be appreciated.

Recognizing the third party, MLA Clark.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to talk about that \$25 daycare program. First, I want to preface it by saying that I'm very much a big believer in the broad strokes of the program in allowing parents to work and ensuring their kids have high-quality child care, but I'm also a big believer in ensuring that the people we help are the ones who actually need the help. I guess what I'm curious about is: of the 7,300 spaces – and correct me if that number is wrong – what percentage of the total population does that represent? If you don't have it right at your fingertips, you could just perhaps respond in writing on that. I'd really appreciate that.

Ms Bouwsema: We will be happy to respond in writing.

Mr. Clark: Yeah. I'm trying to just get a sense, given the investment, of: how much are we returning?

The other question I'm really interested in is: it's a universal program. Is that right? There's no means testing.

Ms Bouwsema: That's correct.

Mr. Clark: Do you have any data which shows how many families who are currently taking advantage of this program make \$100,000 a year or more?

Ms Bouwsema: No. We don't collect that number.

Mr. Clark: Is there any way of knowing that? I mean, if you ask for it, obviously, right?

Ms Bouwsema: Right.

Mr. Clark: You said that there was, you know, an average of \$430 a month in savings. You said that some pay nothing, so clearly there's a process by which people need to prove need.

Ms Bouwsema: If they're applying for a subsidy.

Mr. Clark: If they're applying for a subsidy, right?

Ms Bouwsema: Yeah.

Mr. Clark: So I just wonder if that could be expanded, applying for a subsidy, at all. Here's my concern. Some of these facilities – I believe 122 – are in places where parents would make \$200,000, \$300,000 a year. We've heard those stories. What I'm really interested in is: how widespread is that? I've got to tell you that there are folks who I've talked with who are in the \$25-a-day daycare but feel really terrible about it. That's where their kids happen to go because that's where they happen to live. But they've said to me: I don't need this help; I'm taking something from somebody who, frankly, needs this a lot more than I do. What I really want to dig into is: how widespread is that? And if we were to impose some kind of reasonable means test, how many more people could we help with the scarce resources that we're deploying on this program? That's what I'm interested in.

Ms Bouwsema: At this time the daycares themselves don't collect that information either on what your family income is. We collect

data if people are applying for a subsidy. As you already indicated, I guess we could ask, and people could or could not give that information. That would be their choice.

When we launched the \$25-a-day early learning and child care pilot, the pilot was designed to test the viability of affordable quality child care in Alberta so that we could learn and subsequently expand access to the program, moving towards universally available \$25-a-day child care. We know there has been significant interest in the ELCC centre initiative, resulting in limited space in the ELCC centres that are offering that \$25 a day. If there's no space currently available at a specific location, parents can request to be placed on waiting lists, or they can contact other ELCC centres, and if they're unable to find a space in the ELCC centres, they can also contact child and family services to get assistance on that.

Mr. Clark: Great. Thank you. Can I just ask: what is the total annual budget for the \$25-a-day daycare program?

Ms Bouwsema: Forty-three million dollars.

Mr. Clark: Forty-three million. Okay. And do you have a list of where the centres are located, of those 122 centres? Is that publicly available somewhere I can find online right now, or is that something you would need to file or table with the committee?

Ms Bouwsema: It is publicly available online, but we're also happy to provide it in writing.

Mr. Clark: I appreciate that. I can do a bit of research there and see what I can find.

Just in my last 20 seconds, then, I would really appreciate – back to the intervention panel, the recommendations. You've got your website here tracking progress. It's fairly general. It would be really nice if there was some follow-up in terms of status reporting on each one of the recommendations. The 16 recommendations, in particular, that are to be done this year would be helpful.

Thank you.

The Acting Chair: Thank you.

Again, written responses through the clerk, please.

Now moving to the third rotation, which is five minutes for each of the Official Opposition and the government. I'd like to recognize for the Official Opposition MLA Hunter.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and through you thank you for coming. I have just a quick question for you. Does the department align planning and performance measurement with financial planning?

Ms Bouwsema: Yes. As part of the business plan process we have performance measures for each of the goals in our business plan.

Mr. Hunter: You align the planning and performance measurements with financial planning?

Ms Bouwsema: I'm not sure if I'm understanding the question. I'm sorry.

Mr. Hunter: I'll tell you what. I'll leave that question with you. If you could think about it and get back to us on your answer on that, that would be great.

Ms Bouwsema: Okay.

Mr. Hunter: Your ministry has an outstanding recommendation from 2014 concerning improved access control processes for technology. The 2014 report found "terminated employees with

continuing access to six business and financial applications, including the contract management and child care information systems.” It also found that the department does not regularly and periodically review user access of in-scope systems and business applications to mitigate the risk of inappropriate and unauthorized access, which could lead to unauthorized individuals manipulating critical personal, business, or financial information. Now this recommendation is four years old, so my question is: why has this recommendation not been implemented yet?

Ms Bouwsema: Thank you. We understand and respect the requirement for stringent access control processes within our ministry, and work began immediately to assess and document access control processes within the ministry and to ensure all of our systems and data are properly authorized for new and existing Children’s Services employees, and that access is promptly disabled upon termination.

Orientation for supervisors and managers, including those required processes for transferring and terminating employees, was delivered in September, and another session is planned for 2019. We’re just in the process of finalizing designating information controllers for all information systems to manage employee access changes in terminations, and this recommendation is expected to be implemented by March 31, 2019.

Mr. Hunter: So at that point we’ll no longer have any breaches in this issue?

Ms Bouwsema: I’m not aware of any breaches, but by that point we will have completed the actions on this recommendation.

Mr. Hunter: Maybe you can provide some examples of what information an unauthorized user would have access to in six business and financial applications. Is there an example there you could give me?

Ms Bouwsema: It would be personal data on individual clients within the system.

Mr. Hunter: Okay, and you have no record of this?

Ms Bouwsema: No record of any breaches.

Mr. Hunter: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Chair, I’ll cede my time to my colleague Mrs. Aheer.

The Acting Chair: I recognize MLA Aheer. Thank you.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Chair. I just wanted to go back to the caseworker contact compliance piece. In 2014-2015 the compliance rate for the caseworker contact standard was 16 per cent. Are we seeing an improvement in that?

Ms Bouwsema: We have been seeing an improvement on that. That’s part of that real-time reporting system that I mentioned to you, so it is something we’re focused on quite significantly, and we’ve seen tremendous improvement.

Mrs. Aheer: The labour laws. Because we’re talking about caseworkers and their loads and all of that, the new labour laws: have they affected the caseworkers’ ability to take needed time off in lieu? In the past caseworkers were able to take time in lieu, and now with the new changes in labour legislation that’s not always possible. So how is that impacting their ability to do their jobs?

Mr. Reeves: Actually, through the master agreement we have processes in place that allow workers to take time off, and they track it. It’s how they’re compensated for that time.

Mrs. Aheer: Are we able to see that?

Mr. Reeves: Oh, sure. Yeah. The master agreement is public.

Mrs. Aheer: Wonderful. Thank you so much. So in 2015-16 – this is what we were just talking about – the key areas of practice that would be focused on in measuring would be monitoring face-to-face contact with a child, accurate placement information, and accurate legal authority information. You’d stated that you’d created a real-time reporting piece on that, that identifies an electronic system, where it’s missing or where there’s incomplete data. Can you speak again to the implementation of that and how far you are along in that and, again, to some of the results you’ve seen in the outcomes for children in care?

Ms Bouwsema: It is implemented across . . .

9:40

The Acting Chair: Thank you.

Now moving on to the government. Five minutes, please. Recognizing Dr. Turner.

Dr. Turner: Thanks, Chair, and thank you very much to the ministry staff. This has been a really informative morning, and I’m really proud to be part of the government that’s dealing with this. But I’m also aware that we’re dealing, actually, with Children’s Services in relation to our First Nations, and I had one small question. You mentioned the multitude of First Nations as well as the Métis people. It’s my understanding, actually, that Edmonton has either the first- or second-largest concentration of Inuit in Canada, and I was wondering how your ministry is dealing with that?

Ms Bouwsema: Overall in the province we have a very low number of Inuit people, but certainly they are part of our trilateral working groups and, you know, part of the groups that we consult with as we move forward on doing things like our cultural understanding framework and making sure that staff have the training that’s specific to that cultural group. They are part of the trilateral tables, the protocol tables, that we have focused on women’s and children’s initiatives. So we do include them as part of all of our trilateral working groups, the Métis, the First Nations, and the Inuit.

Dr. Turner: Thank you. The cultural understanding framework, as I understand, is the basis for all of this, and there’s intercultural understanding. I understand that there’s been a lot of training going on for all of the government staff, not just Children’s Services. I can tell you that as a physician working for AHS, as a health care worker working for AHS, I’m actually required to go through that training, and I think it’s been very useful.

The other thing that I’m aware of is that you are dealing with a lot of intergenerational trauma from the residential school situation as well as, well, the other aspects of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. One of the things that arises from that is Jordan’s principle, and I was pleased to hear you mention that in there. You know, on page 48 of the annual report you say that you’re going to strengthen relationships with indigenous communities and talk about the ‘60s scoop apology engagement. Why is it important that we deal with that?

Ms Bouwsema: Thank you. The '60s scoop refers to a period of time in Canada when an unknown number of indigenous children were taken from their parents, families, and communities by children intervention services and placed mostly with nonindigenous families, sometimes as far away as overseas. Because of that '60s scoop many people lost touch with their families, communities, culture, and traditional language. This caused lasting and negative issues and with all of the mental, spiritual, emotional, physical health and well-being issues being caused. Survivors of the '60s scoop and their families and communities are still feeling the effects of that '60s scoop today, so we felt that a meaningful apology was an important step for the process of healing and reconciliation for both individuals and communities.

Dr. Turner: Thank you. What steps have you been taking to ensure that the survivors are honoured and are being listened to?

Ms Bouwsema: We did extensive consultation, again, in collaboration with the '60s scoop organization, and we used the input that we received through the engagement process to inform a meaningful and long-overdue apology from the government of Alberta to those survivors of the '60s scoop and their families. You know, on May 28 Premier Notley stood in the Legislature and delivered an apology that acknowledged the heartbreak, the loss of language, culture, identity experienced by families and survivors. As a province it was essential that we stand and acknowledge the injustices and work to make sure that it doesn't happen again. Listening to those survivors is what made the apology possible, and we know that healing can only begin when the full impacts are fully acknowledged and addressed. That's what we were told by survivors. We're very thankful for the engagement of those participants for sharing their stories and experiences with us.

Dr. Turner: Thank you.

The Acting Chair: Thank you again.

We have time for a last two-minute rotation for each of the government, the Official Opposition, and third party. Included in that two minutes will be your opportunity to read up to two questions as well for the record.

I'd like to recognize MLA Aheer.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Chair. I would just like to ask: with respect to access to prevention and early intervention how it is that that is reconciled with the idea of advancing futures bursaries? How does that work together? It seems a little bit of a conundrum.

Should I just ask my second question, then, right away?

The Acting Chair: If you'd like to read those in quickly as well.

Mrs. Aheer: Yes. Thank you. With respect to Jordan's principle which ministry is responsible for those initiatives? Then with respect to the measure of success on that how is it that the applications are being processed, and how are you doing that within 48 hours?

The Acting Chair: So the first question is the one that you would like to have answered?

Mrs. Aheer: Yes, please. Thank you. The first question was with respect to advancing futures bursaries and how that is reflected in prevention and early intervention program services.

Ms Bouwsema: The advancing futures bursary is, again, a unique program to Alberta. It's part of the work that we do to transition

youth successfully from Children's Services into productive adulthood. It's an opportunity for them to get postsecondary education or upgrading to prepare for postsecondary education. We provide a lot of mentoring and support while they're going through that, like any young adult who has many questions about: "Am I doing the right thing? Oh, I failed an exam. What do I do now?" We have been very successful in that program in the number of young people who apply for it and then successfully graduate from whatever program that they have chosen. It's about an 85 per cent successful graduation through that program. We're very proud of the work that we're doing in that program to help the children in our care successfully transition into adulthood. We just had our first doctor graduate as a result of that program.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you very much.

The Acting Chair: All right. Thank you.

Moving to MLA Horne, two minutes, including up to two questions to be read into the record, please.

Mr. Horne: Yes. Thank you. On page 34, on the ministry's annual report key strategy 2.1 talking about implementing reforms to the child intervention system, I was wondering if you could provide some specific examples of reforms that have been implemented.

Two questions for the record. The ministry's annual report talks about implementing reforms to the child intervention system. How have you engaged with indigenous peoples and stakeholders about these as well as other changes? On page 50 of the annual report it references improved outcomes for indigenous children in care by ensuring they're connected to their family, culture, and community. I was wondering what you're doing to support indigenous families and communities so that these children don't need to be taken into care in the first place.

Ms Bouwsema: To the first question on reforms, we continue to improve the child intervention practice through the implementation through our competency in Signs of Safety and the child intervention practice framework. We've worked to create better alignment of specialized services across the province through the development of provincial delivery models for each of our specialized areas aimed at building capacity for that accessible service delivery regardless of geography. We have updated the child intervention case information online system to streamline the workflow for caseworkers and increase access to information. We created the foundations of caregiver support education models to help those caregivers understand the effects of trauma, loss, and grief and to incorporate an indigenous perspective into our care.

The Acting Chair: MLA Clark, two minutes, please.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. The total program cost for the \$25-a-day daycare is \$43 million. You said that the average is \$430 a month in savings, but \$43 million by 7,300 spaces would be a \$490 subsidy by my arithmetic. I don't expect you to necessarily follow my hand-waving math. That would give us about a \$4.2 million difference. Is that \$4.2 million the administrative cost of this program?

Mr. Hattori: Hi. I can't comment exactly on what your math is. However, there is an administrative portion built into the ELCC pilot, so part of it would be that.

9:50

Mr. Clark: So maybe can I just ask you, please, if you can, to table the administrative cost of the \$25 a day daycare.

Ms Bouwsema: Part of that would also be the evaluation we're doing to make sure we're getting the outcome that we wanted from the pilot program.

Mr. Clark: Sure. Maybe I'll ask more broadly if you can table a breakdown of how much of that goes to subsidizing spaces and how much is other expenditures, whatever those may be.

Ms Bouwsema: Absolutely.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much.
That's all. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Acting Chair: Thank you to members. I'd like to thank the department officials who attended today and for their thoughtful

responses to members' questions. We ask that responses to outstanding questions from today's meeting or those read into the record please be provided in writing and forwarded to the committee clerk within 30 days.

Are there any items for discussion or other business today?

If not, then the committee meets December 4 with the Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance. The committee meeting is scheduled from 8:30 a.m. until 10 a.m., and the committee's premeeting briefing is scheduled for 8 a.m.

Would a member move that the meeting be adjourned? MLA Payne. All in favour? Any opposed? Carried.

Thank you, everyone, for your attention and diligence today.

[The committee adjourned at 9:51 a.m.]

