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Standing Committee
on
Public Accounts

Seniors and Housing
Calgary Housing Company
Capital Region Housing

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8:30 a.m.

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Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Participants

Ministry of Seniors and Housing
Susan Taylor, Deputy Minister
John Thomson, Assistant Deputy Minister, Housing

Calgary Housing Company
Sarah Woodgate, President

Capital Region Housing
Greg Dewling, Chief Executive Officer

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[Ms Phillips in the chair]

The Chair: All right. Good morning, everyone. I'd like to call this meeting of the Public Accounts Committee to order and welcome everyone in attendance.

My name is Shannon Phillips. I'm the MLA for Lethbridge-West, and I'm chair of this committee. Ordinarily I would suggest that we go around the committee table for all participants to introduce themselves, but with participants joining us through various methods of communication, I'll just note for the record that the following members are present either via video conference or teleconference. Members video conferencing are members Rosin, Reid, Dach, Gotfried, Guthrie, Stephan, Renaud, Sigurdson. The member teleconferencing is Member Rowswell. I don't believe we have any committee members in the room.

Aaron, if you can shake or nod.

Mr. Roth: We do not, Chair.

The Chair: Okay.

Members present, we don't have any members substituting today although we are joined by Member Sigurdson as well. As always, members who join us are welcome to do so. They may ask questions; they may not vote.

Also joining us today are some officials from the office of the Auditor General. We have Doug Wylie, Auditor General; Rob Driesen, Assistant Auditor General.

From the Legislative Assembly Office we have Philip Massolin, clerk of committees and research services; Aaron Roth, committee clerk.

We also have with us via teleconference officials from the Ministry of Seniors and Housing, Capital Region Housing, Calgary Housing Company, and Alberta Social Housing Corporation. Welcome to those officials.

What I will do is that I will now read into the record the names of the officials that have joined us today. When you speak, if you can just introduce yourself for *Hansard*. When that time comes, that'll be sufficient, but you don't necessarily need to go through all of the names of the people joining you in the introduction because I'm doing it right now. But just when you speak, for the benefit of *Hansard* say, "Oh, it's, you know, Greg Dewling here" or whatever if that is okay with you.

We have Seniors and Housing. We have Susan Taylor, who is deputy minister; John Thomson, assistant deputy minister of housing; Evan Romanow, assistant deputy minister of seniors services; Darren Baptista, the senior financial officer; Suzanne Anselmo, ADM of strategic services.

From the Calgary Housing Company we have Sarah Woodgate, who's the director and president. We have Jana Tchinkova, corporate finance and risk officer; Claire Nobel, strategic business analyst.

From Capital Region Housing we have Greg Dewling, CEO.

Welcome to our guests. Thank you for making the time, and thank you for your flexibility in joining us in these various methods of communication. So far we've found that it's worked pretty well.

I'll go through the business of some of the housekeeping matters right now for your benefit and those members who are joining us from the Public Accounts Committee. All members participating via video conference or teleconference, please ensure that your microphones are muted unless you are recognized to speak. Once you unmute your microphone, please just wait a couple of seconds to ensure that our audio captures what you're saying and you begin

speaking. Remember, you're being live broadcast on LAO TV as well as through the Skype for Business platform, that we all see each other on. Please try to mute any notification alerts from your electronic devices as they can be distracting when your microphone is unmuted. I think they put that note in for me, but it might apply for you as well. Please avoid typing or texting while speaking. Please look into the camera while speaking.

If you wish to be placed on the speaking list, for the MLA members please utilize the group instant message screen created by the committee clerk. Please remember that all members on the group chat can see that chat, and if you need to send a private message, use a separate chat window, text, or do whatever you're going to do. If you wish to abstain from a recorded vote, please send the committee clerk a private instant message, e-mail, or text. The audio- and video stream and transcripts of meetings can be accessed via the Legislative Assembly website. For the members' benefit, it's in the bottom left-hand corner of your Skype for Business screen, where there's that little chat icon so that you can pull the conversation up in your left-hand sidebar.

We'll now move on to approval of the agenda. Are there any changes or additions to the agenda?

Okay. Seeing none – and Aaron, if I might. Just before – sorry; I should have said this earlier. Can you just pop the agenda, like you did the previous chat, into this one so that members have it for their reference? That would be helpful.

Would a member like to move that the agenda for the May 12, 2020, meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be approved as distributed?

Mr. Reid: So moved.

The Chair: Sounds to me like, I think, MLA Reid moved it. Thank you, Roger.

Is there any discussion on the motion?

Before the committee moves, I will ask all members to unmute their microphones, and I'll just call for all in favour. Are there any opposed? Okay. Well, that motion is carried. Members, if you could please remute your microphones. Thank you.

Moving on to item 3, members, we have minutes from our meeting on May 5, 2020. Do members have any errors, omissions to note in regard to the meeting minutes?

If not, would a member move that the minutes of the May 5, 2020, meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be approved as distributed?

Mr. Dach: So moved.

The Chair: Okay. Any discussion on the motion?

Seeing none, if we could all unmute our microphones. Are all in favour? Are there any members opposed? Thank you. That motion is carried. Please remute.

We'll now move on to our guests for the day. We have the Ministry of Seniors and Housing, Capital Region Housing, Calgary Housing Company, and Alberta Social Housing available to answer questions today, and we are going to be considering the office of the Auditor General's outstanding recommendations and the ministry's annual report from '18-19.

I will now turn it over to ministry officials to provide opening remarks. If those remarks could not exceed 10 minutes. The timer will be run as always by Aaron Roth. Last week sometimes people heard the timer and sometimes people didn't in terms of the beeping. If you'll forgive me, I seem to always hear it, so I will interrupt you when your time is over if you don't hear it. I'm not being rude; I'm just being a beeper.

With no further ado, please go ahead, ministry officials.

Ms Taylor: Thank you, Chair, and good morning, ladies and gentlemen. It is my privilege to appear before the Standing Committee on Public Accounts on behalf of the Ministry of Seniors and Housing. This is Deputy Minister Susan Taylor. Thank you as well to the Auditor General for this report and for your support while we work to improve the delivery of our important services to Albertans. Before I begin my remarks, I would like to again acknowledge the senior officials that are in my boardroom with me today, that the chair has already introduced, as well as Greg Dewling, CEO, Capital Region Housing, and Sarah Woodgate, president of Calgary Housing Company. For the record myself, John Thomson, assistant deputy minister of housing division, and Darren Baptista, our senior financial officer, are also board members of the Alberta Social Housing Corporation.

Our ministry provides support for those most in need of seniors' programs and services and vulnerable Albertans in need of affordable housing. We deliver our programs and provide housing to three divisions of the ministry: housing, seniors services, and our strategic services division. Our ministry also includes the Alberta Social Housing Corporation, in which housing programs and capital are provided. Seniors and Housing is responsible for Alberta's seniors' lodges and for the delivery of affordable housing. We deliver affordable housing through our ongoing partnerships with provincial housing providers. This includes 99 housing management bodies, who operate housing programs for the ministry throughout the province along with municipalities and nonprofit and private for-profit housing providers. During 2018-19 more than 110,000 lived in 65,000 government-subsidized housing units.

8:40

In 2018-19 the ministry worked to ensure a sustainable housing system through three funding envelopes: capital maintenance and renewal; climate leadership; and family, social supports, and housing. We invested \$114.4 million in Alberta Social Housing Corporation assets and spent \$57.4 million in capital grants. This capital spending included \$128 million for the development of 43 projects, which added 790 housing units to the supply in 11 communities: Banff, Calgary, Edmonton, Fort Macleod, Lethbridge, Magrath, Medicine Hat, Rimbey, Smoky Lake, St. Albert, and Vermilion.

Capital spending also included \$39.6 million through the capital maintenance and renewal program. This included \$24.3 million towards the maintenance of Alberta Social Housing Corporation owned buildings and \$15.3 million towards the maintenance of properties that are owned by housing providers and municipalities. This program supports the continued functional viability and condition of assets in the housing portfolio.

As of March 31, 2019, 27 projects were in progress to build 2,072 units, and planning work was under way for a further 16 committed projects for the construction of an additional 778 units. In March of 2019 the Alberta Social Housing Corporation entered into a bilateral agreement under the national housing strategy to access \$339 million of federal funding for housing in Alberta over the next nine years.

There were two rounds of applications for the indigenous housing capital program in 2018-19. A crossministry panel evaluated the applications each quarter. Government approved two construction applications for \$10 million and shared letters of intent with the successful applicants. We provided funding grants to nine indigenous organizations for just over \$700,000.

Now I will turn to our seniors services division. Our ministry serves Alberta's senior population with a number of financial assistance programs. They include the Alberta seniors' benefit, the supplementary accommodation benefit, the special needs assistance

for seniors program, the seniors' property tax deferral program, and the seniors' home adaptation and repair program.

The Alberta seniors' benefit provided a monthly financial supplement to more than 160,000 eligible seniors with low income to assist with living expenses. The special needs assistance for seniors provided financial support to about 34,000 eligible seniors with low income for personal and health needs, including certain appliances. Our seniors' home adaptation and repair program provided approximately 540 loans and 230 grants in 2018-19 to allow eligible seniors to finance home repairs and adaptations to their homes so they may stay in their chosen community. The seniors' property tax deferral program provided more than 2,200 low-interest loans to allow eligible senior homeowners to defer all or part of their property taxes.

Our seniors services division is also responsible for developing policy and engaging with seniors, community stakeholders, and communities to support diverse senior populations. The division also works to address ageism and recognizes seniors' vital contributions to Alberta.

In 2018-19 key initiatives included continued participation in the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers Responsible for Seniors Forum, the aging well in community grant program, mental health first aid seniors training, and a Seniors Advisory Forum. Through the federal-provincial-territorial forum we helped develop resources regarding social isolation and the labour force participation of older workers. These resources provide customized information about social isolation and other segments of the aging population to encourage better responses to the specific needs and issues of these groups of seniors.

The aging well in community grant program funded 28 projects to promote seniors' issues. Nine of these grants focused on social inclusion and diverse populations. The government of Alberta provided free mental health first aid seniors training to more than 900 people in 37 communities across Alberta. In 2018-19 we hosted two seniors' advisory forums to hear from stakeholders on a wide range of topics, including caregiver support and elder abuse prevention. To recognize the contributions of seniors, we also partnered with stakeholders to deliver events such as Seniors' Week, the Grey Matters Conference, and the minister's seniors service awards. We also marked the Day of Older Persons on October 1.

Now we would like to turn to the OAG report and its remaining recommendation to Seniors and Housing. The recommendation concerns ways to improve the measures used to assess the effectiveness of the seniors' lodge program, to obtain information to set the minimum disposable income used as a basis for seniors' lodge rent charges, and to improve processes for identifying the increasing care needs of seniors' lodge residents and to consider this information in plans for the seniors' lodge program. We also engaged Alberta Health and Community and Social Services to identify care needs. We continue to meet with lodge providers to ensure the long-term sustainability of the seniors' lodge program. We have worked hard to address this one outstanding but important recommendation. The ministry has submitted the seniors' lodge evaluation report and all documentation that responds to the OAG recommendation. The OAG is currently reviewing this file.

To conclude, I want to emphasize the commitment and dedication of our ministry to provide quality programs and services to seniors in our province along with affordable housing that meets the needs of Albertans. Thank you for the opportunity this morning to address the committee.

The Chair: Thank you, Deputy.

Just a couple of reminders for folks. If you are speaking, if you could reinitialize your video, that is helpful to the folks in the room,

to the Legislative Assembly broadcast staff, and just in general to the committee. Same goes for deputies. It is good to have you on video because then we are more closely approximating a usual meeting of the Public Accounts Committee, and we can, I think, better undertake our jobs that way.

Now we will move on to five minutes from the Auditor General for his introductory comments on Seniors and Housing and the annual report.

Mr. Wylie: Thank you, Chair, and good morning, Members and management. I'd like to thank the deputy for summarizing our outstanding recommendation. We are currently following up that piece of work, and we will be reporting in early fall of this year, so I'll leave it there. The deputy did a great job of summarizing the points included in our recommendations. Back to you.

The Chair: Okay. Well, very good.

Then what we will do is that we'll proceed to questions from committee members for our guests. As a reminder, because our guests have graciously agreed to stay the extra half hour so that we can have a full two-hour meeting, the first and second rotations will be 10 minutes each for the Official Opposition and government members. Our third rotation will be five minutes each for the Official Opposition and government members.

Oh. The first rotation is 15 minutes. I'm sorry. I must be reading off the previous draft. I will get this right eventually, friends. The next three are 10 minutes – I will make sure that I have the right rotation in front of me – and then the final rotation is our three-minute time slot for folks, opposition members first and then government members afterwards, to read questions into the record.

Let's start with our first rotation. We'll start with the Official Opposition at 15 minutes each rotation, and when we come back, I will review what the correct rotation is. Thank you, friends. I believe it's Member Sigurdson who is to lead off.

Ms Sigurdson: Yes. I believe I am first to go. Thank you so much. Hello. Good morning, everyone. It's my pleasure to be here to discuss the annual report of the Ministry of Seniors and Housing in this sort of a new format. We'll see how this goes.

I'd like to start first with the seniors division of the ministry. Of course, we know that our seniors population is growing much higher than the general population of Alberta is growing right now. I think it's about 14 per cent of the overall population, the seniors population, but it's going to double, more than double, actually, by 2035, and that will mean 18 per cent of our population will be seniors. I'll certainly be among them much before 2035. Right now we have about 605,000 seniors in our province. Of course, this is a significant group of people who have contributed significantly to our province for their lifetimes, and having strong public programs is very important to making sure that seniors retire in dignity with the supports around them that they need.

8:50

I'd like to begin my questioning just talking about, in the time frame of this annual report, Bill 26. That's the bill that was brought in. It's An Act to Combat Poverty and Fight for Albertans with Disabilities. Certainly, the indexing of the Alberta seniors' benefit, the special needs assistance program, supplemental accommodation benefit was put into legislation, and that was indexed to the consumer price index. This legislation became in effect on January 1, 2019. Of course, it's the latter part of this time frame that we're reviewing now. My question. I know it's not a significant amount of time, but I would just like the ministry officials to address what

impact this change had on Albertans receiving the increase. Whoever would like to answer that, I'd be happy to hear.

Ms Taylor: Thank you, MLA Sigurdson. It's Susan Taylor, deputy minister. As MLA Sigurdson mentioned, on January 1, 2019, indexing was implemented for the Alberta seniors' benefit, our special needs assistance programs, and our supplementary accommodation benefit. Benefits provided under those programs were increased by the 2.1 per cent amount based on the change to the Alberta consumer price index, that you had referenced. The additional cost to implement indexing in the last quarter of the fiscal year, January 1, 2019, to the end of March, was almost \$2 million for that indexing portion.

As MLA Sigurdson mentioned, certainly our seniors population is on track to exceed over 1 million by 2035. As a result, demand for and cost to provide seniors' financial assistance programs continue to increase. That indexing, of course, was paused at the end of 2019-20 fiscal year, and we are continuing to maintain those current benefit levels at that indexed amount in 2018-19.

Ms Sigurdson: Okay. Thank you. I mean, we know that oftentimes supporting people who are often low income, vulnerable with, for example, the Alberta seniors' benefit, supporting them through these financial resources does actually make a big difference in other, you know, demands that are made on other aspects of our public system; for example, other social programs, other health programs, sometimes the criminal justice system. Sometimes we talk about these as the costs deferred, or sometimes it's called costs of poverty. Certainly, we know that when people have the wherewithal, the means to be able to care for themselves, they are able to live much independent lives with dignity.

Certainly, I mean, one measure that we hear about and is certainly well established is that, you know, the higher your income, the higher your health outcomes. You're healthier, generally, if your income is higher. I guess I just want to dig down a little bit more on this one, and I just wondered what kinds of things the department is measuring, perhaps along with colleagues and other ministries, regarding costs deferred in this regard. Is that an ongoing exploration that the ministry is doing? If you're investing up front, then you're not paying oftentimes a significant amount more at the end. I'll leave that with you.

Ms Taylor: Thank you for that question. Again I would emphasize that our seniors' financial assistance programs, the five that I mentioned in my opening remarks – I'll just reinforce those again: the Alberta seniors' benefit, which is our core financial benefit; our supplementary accommodation benefit; special needs assistance program; our seniors' home adaptation and repair program; and our seniors' property tax deferral program – continue to be provided through our ministry. Those also are augmenting and supplementing the federal financial benefits – old age security, guaranteed income supplement, Canada pension plan – for seniors that would be eligible for that program. We are continuing to provide those financial assistance programs to seniors across the province to support the federal benefits they receive.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you, Deputy Minister Taylor. I guess it was something that I remember, having been in the chair of minister some time ago, that that was something that we talked about, certainly: what are the costs deferred and the costs of poverty? I know there was some exploration of that. I don't want to belabour it at this moment, but if there's anything that you can provide in writing about what kind of movement was made on that during that time frame – I believe a researcher was hired – I'd really appreciate

it. Maybe you could just provide that in writing to us. That would be appreciated.

I'm just going to move on now, and I'm going to look at the Seniors and Housing annual report, page 16. It's talking about – it's again about, you know, finances – the performance indicator 1(a), seniors income relative to population. There's been an improvement of about 2.1 per cent from 2015 to 2016, and, you know, that seems like quite a bit of a jump in how much that has gone up. I'm just wondering if you could speak a bit about what you feel created that increase for Alberta seniors. I guess I'd like to focus mostly on, because I know it also covers federal programs, just if there are any programs that you feel the provincial government had that helped increase that.

Ms Taylor: Well, I don't have direct evidence to identify what that increase would be attributed to. I would assume that, of course, the continuity of the seniors' financial programs, that I mentioned earlier, that the province delivers, of which Alberta has one of the highest levels across the country, supplemented, again, by the federal benefits that are provided, would be, I think, an important contributor to seeing continuity of a person's overall seniors' income staying relative but also a small increase or bump to that respect.

Ms Sigurdson: Okay. Thank you for that.

I just want to move on now. I know that the Seniors Advocate was, you know, operational at that time. There was an office set up for an advocate that reported to the minister at the time and had annual reports, had various responsibilities in the support of seniors in our province. I just want to ask how the office of the Seniors Advocate contributed to decisions that the ministry made. How were her findings and her reports integrated into the day-to-day work of the ministry? Just if anyone could speak on that.

Ms Taylor: As you mention, the Alberta Seniors Advocate did report through to the Minister of Seniors and Housing. In 2018-19 the office of the Seniors Advocate had reported in their annual report 1,217 new client cases that they had been supporting: 95 per cent of those were resolution cases, which basically means that seniors, of course, were looking for information and support in resolving concerns related to government and/or community programs and services, and 5 per cent were what had been categorized as feedback cases. In that respect it was information or comments that seniors would have been providing regarding experiences or issues that they were having, again, with community, government, or other services.

9:00

To your other part of the question, their proportion in their 2018-19 report to the Minister of Seniors and Housing had identified that about 25 per cent of their support to seniors was focused on income and financial support, 21 per cent was on housing and home support, 26 per cent was related to social support, and about 28 per cent was focused on health care and related supports.

Ms Sigurdson: Okay. Thank you for that. Also, nice to see you, Deputy Minister. We can see you now.

I also just wanted to say – so, I mean, the office of the Seniors Advocate did a significant amount of work, the casework that you have already sort of articulated, what percentage and which areas, how they were helped, plus I know there were information sessions, you know, public presentations. A significant amount of work was done to support seniors or people who are working with seniors. I'm just sort of wanting to get affirmation that that office provided valuable support to the services of seniors and seniors themselves.

Ms Taylor: Good to see you as well.

I would say that the office of the Seniors Advocate, one of their most important functions, of course, is to be able to be available and accessible to seniors, first and foremost, and I think that was the original intent of the Seniors Advocate, that if there was, of course, need for seniors to be asking for assistance and seeking information, they would be supported to do so. Certainly, the recommendations of the office of the Seniors Advocate have provided and focused very much on those kinds of services I mentioned earlier, helping seniors navigate and get through some of the government systems and community systems as well, looking at ways in which we could alleviate some of the administrative processes that seniors would experience as they were looking for information or applying for provincial or even other federal benefits. So that was a valuable service provided, to assist seniors get the supports they needed.

Ms Sigurdson: Yes. Okay. Thank you.

I'm going to move on now. The Auditor General had a – you know, I remember that outstanding recommendation from quite a long time ago, and certainly in this annual report it's indicated that the outstanding recommendation was addressed and it was completely implemented in 2019. I'm just wondering when exactly in 2019. I know there are just a few months there with the '18-19 fiscal year, so just which month was it implemented?

Ms Taylor: The office of the Auditor General's recommendation included a number of different aspects to it, again focusing on looking at ways to improve processes to evaluate overall the effectiveness of the seniors' lodge program and to look at identifying, of course, the core needs for residents in future planning. There was a number of pieces of that, if you will, that were recommended and implemented as key to that work in 2018-19. To the provincial affordable housing strategy, there was much focus on looking at the long-term sustainability of the seniors' lodge program. [A timer sounded]

The Chair: Thank you, Deputy.

Ms Taylor: I'm sorry. I should – oh, right. That's the beeper. Okay. Sorry. It sounded like a bird chirping.

The Chair: That was the beeper. I don't know if you were able to hear it. Sorry to interrupt you, but that was the end of that first 15-minute rotation for the Official Opposition.

We will now move on to the government members for their 15-minute rotation, and it is beginning with Member Barnes, please. Do we have Member Barnes there? Maybe he's having a hard time pulling it up. I'll just give him another minute here, and then maybe what I can do is move on to the next person in the government caucus speaking list and then get back to Member Barnes.

Mr. Gotfried: Madam Chair, we'll move on to Member Toor, then. Maybe there's a technical glitch.

The Chair: Okay. Very good. Member Toor, please.

Mr. Gotfried: Member Toor, can you just unmute?

The Chair: Member Toor, if you could enable your – click on the video icon, start "my video," and then unmute yourself. I'll just give you another minute. If not, then it is on to Member Gotfried. We've just heard from him, so we know he's available.

Mr. Toor: Can you hear me now, Chair?

The Chair: I can hear you now. Can you enable your video, friend?

Mr. Toor: Yes.

The Chair: Okay. We won't start the clock until you are seen to us all so that we don't take up your speaking time with technical stuff.

Mr. Toor: Well, thank you, Chair, and thank you to the ministry . . .

The Chair: Member, can you try to enable your video? Can you start your video?

Mr. Toor: I did, but somehow – can you see me now?

The Chair: I can't.

Mr. Toor: No?

The Chair: No.

Mr. Toor: Okay. Just give me a moment.

The Chair: Member Toor, why don't you just – oh, there you are. You've popped up. Please, go ahead.

Mr. Toor: Well, thank you, Chair, and thank you to the ministry for coming today. Of course, they are doing an excellent job. When it comes to social isolation, that's never been easy, especially when it comes to seniors, so my question to the ministry: what initiatives has the ministry undertaken over the past year to address the issue of social isolation for seniors?

Ms Taylor: Thank you for that. In 2018-19 the aging well in community grant program, which I'd mentioned in my opening comments, provided \$1.6 million in funding for 28 projects to prevent and address elder abuse, support aging in communities, and address ageism and social isolation. Nine of those grants focus specifically on social inclusion and diverse populations.

I also mentioned in my opening comments that on a federal-provincial-territorial level the Ministers Responsible for Seniors Forum had released tool kits to support community organizations in addressing social inclusion, needs of several subpopulations of seniors, immigrant and refugee seniors, indigenous seniors, and LGBTQ2S-plus seniors as well.

Mr. Toor: How does the department ensure that it is effectively measuring success in this area?

Ms Taylor: The department measures social isolation by looking at data from Statistics Canada, their annual Canadian community health survey, specifically Alberta seniors' responses related to sense of well-being in their local community. In 2018 74 per cent of Alberta seniors reported a sense of belonging to local community – that was a somewhat strong or very strong measure – whereas only 64 per cent to 70 per cent of those in the 18- to 64-year-old age group reported a sense of belonging to local community. In 2015 71 per cent of Alberta seniors reported a sense of belonging to local community whereas 63 per cent to 72 per cent of those in 18- to 64-year-old age groups reported a sense of belonging to their local community.

This data suggests that seniors' sense of belonging is increasing, especially when compared to adult Albertans in other age groups. While this data was not included as an indicator in the department's 2018-19 annual report, it will be used as an indicator for 2019-20 as a proxy for social inclusion and community connectedness. It ties directly to the ministry work that's being done on social isolation.

9:10

Mr. Toor: When you look at page 4 of the annual report, it states that the ministry achieves their goal "through partnerships with

other orders of government and civil society organizations." Can the ministry explain how it works with civil society organizations and the value they bring to the table?

Ms Taylor: We have a very strong and long history of working with civil society organizations in certainly the work that we do, and we have two of our very close partners attending Public Accounts this morning. We work with our nonprofit housing operators to help provide more housing to more people. Civil society organizations, including our nonprofit housing providers, bring specialized expertise in working with people who are more difficult to house and enable government to support their services for Albertans who do have low incomes. The ministry has numerous existing grant agreements in place with nonprofit housing partners, who are required under the terms of the agreements to charge below market rent to Albertans with low income.

On the broader civil society organizations throughout the province I mentioned that they provide valuable supports and services to seniors in their communities. Our ministry recognizes and supports the importance of these organizations. They help seniors live with safety and security in their chosen communities. They're a very important partner for us to ensure, again, that seniors are getting the types of services and supports that they need.

The Seniors Advisory Forum was also established for the Minister of Seniors and Housing to receive input on matters relevant to Alberta seniors and to build relationships and enable collaboration between government and our seniors-serving organizations. There were meetings that were held in June and November of 2018. Some of the specific discussion topics that had been discussed at those forums included caregiver supports, which is a very important element of supporting caregivers who are tending to seniors in their lives; financial supports for seniors' diverse populations; and elder abuse prevention. Obviously, the information from those kinds of forums helps determine some of the programs and services that government contemplates in their services that they provide.

We also provide, I mentioned earlier, a number of community grants to community organizations to do that important work. The ministry provided funding to the Kerby Centre in Calgary and SAGE seniors association in Edmonton to provide important information on programs and housing services for seniors. The ministry also provided a \$60,000 grant to SAGE, Carya, Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council, and age-friendly Calgary to develop a community-based seniors-serving sector to better deliver integrated social and health services for seniors.

I mentioned earlier as well the aging well in the community grant program, the \$1.6 million that had been provided in 2018-19 to 28 different civil society organizations. Again, just to remind, the areas of focus were ageism, aging in communities, elder abuse prevention, and social inclusion. Of course, we continue to acknowledge the work of civil society organizations through special events throughout the year: our Seniors' Week – that happens in June – the Grey Matters Conference, and our minister's seniors service awards.

Mr. Toor: Thank you.

Chair, I think Member Barnes joined us, and I'll pass my time to Member Barnes.

The Chair: Yes. Member Barnes, if you would, you're up next.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. Can everyone hear me?

The Chair: Yeah.

Mr. Barnes: Wonderful. Thank you. I'll just go this way.

First of all, thanks to all the officials for all their work for Albertans and being here today. I'm especially happy to be here today. Medicine Hat has been such a great leader. We defined eliminating homelessness years ago, and we've had tremendous success in that way. Our people from Medicine Hat housing authority, Jaime Rogers, and many, many others work very, very hard. We also have great, great housing for seniors. We've got a real nice mixed base of private providers, not-for-profit providers, and public providers, so I'm so glad for that.

To the officials, I want to start by talking about red tape. Of course, there's a direct link between red tape and financial costs. The more red tape there is, the higher the cost, and, of course, the higher the cost, the fewer services that we can provide for Albertans. In the housing industry I've heard that in brand new housing red tape and bureaucracy may cost as much as \$140,000 on each new house, so I'm wondering if the ministry can tell me, please: what have you done to eliminating or reducing red tape in 2018-2019, please?

Ms Taylor: Thank you for the question. I've had the privilege of working with Jaime Rogers for many years on the homelessness file, so I appreciate the acknowledgement of their Medicine Hat housing authority and the excellent work that they do.

In respect to red tape in 2018-19, the focus being on continuous improvement to programs and processes and finding efficiencies and cost savings, those remain important priorities for our ministry. Of course, we're always looking for ways that we can reduce those administrative barriers for Albertans, first and foremost, make it easier for people to be able to apply for the benefits and services that they need – that includes, you know, Albertans who are needing to access affordable housing – make it easier for our housing providers, again, to do the work that they need to do, which is to focus on tenants, and to support seniors and organizations as well.

For example – I think it was mentioned earlier, one of the questions – of course, Alberta and all jurisdictions across the country are experiencing a growing seniors population, and with that comes greater caseload pressures. Administrative costs, however, have been held flat by leveraging technology and increasing automation, really looking again at ways that we can minimize costs even though we've got an increased caseload and need and demand for our services. As well, our performance measurement evaluation and our quality assurance reviews are demonstrating where results have been achieved and where further improvement can be made to improve outcomes for the people that we do serve.

In January 2019 we changed the reporting and our payment process related to our rental assistance programs, and we implemented a more efficient quarterly reporting and a sample audit process to reduce the administrative burden on our housing operators. The department also eliminated hours of processing tasks for the department and housing operators by changing administrative and reporting provisions related to our annual rent increase process for more than 400 affordable housing grant agreements.

The Chair: Thank you, Deputy.

Seeing no follow-up from Mr. Barnes, I believe we have Mr. Gotfried on the speaking list next.

Mr. Gotfried: No. I believe Mr. Barnes has additional questions.

The Chair: Oh. Sorry.

Mr. Barnes: Yeah, I do. I do. Thank you. Okay. Basically, municipal partners: municipal partners are hugely crucial in this to deliver more services. What have we done, working specifically with municipalities, to reduce red tape, reduce bureaucracy, and to get more value for Alberta seniors and Alberta taxpayers?

Ms Taylor: As you mentioned, our work with municipalities is very important because we are often looking at partnerships to undertake housing development and to meet demands of the need for housing in those communities. We are, of course, continuing to look at ways that we can minimize... [An electronic device sounded] Sorry. I'm hearing somebody typing on the phone. Thank you.

We are obviously still working very closely with our municipalities in the planning of housing and looking at ways that we can reduce administrative requirements. A lot of that work focuses on working with Municipal Affairs because, of course, they have some responsibility with bylaws and things of that nature that, of course, impact municipalities as well as our planning process for new development and renewal of housing. We work closely with them to plan and co-ordinate new housing projects and with other orders of government, levels of ministries here so that we can support, again, reducing red tape as it is reflected on that housing development and the permit approval processes.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. Thank you.

I'd like to switch gears a bit to more supportive living styles. My belief is that we need strong components of all three providers – private providers, government-public providers, and not-for-profit – to make sure that we always have lots of options for seniors and their needs. Does your department have a matrix, a way of looking at that? Do you share that belief that we should have strong components of all three, and do you make sure that that happens?

Thank you.

9:20

Ms Taylor: Yes. We do see the importance. All the work that we do on the housing file is about partnerships. We need to have different levels of government in terms of their funding commitments and their understanding of the housing needs in our province. We need to have the partnerships that we've talked about with municipalities that enable us to actually do the planning and to work with those processes to get housing on the ground. We need to have the partnerships with our housing providers and operators because those are the folks that tend to be doing the design and bringing the housing to reality and doing all the work to have tenants move in.

I would say that our work to date has involved, of course, private operators to bring their development and their rental market expertise as well as to act as, you know, private financing. Government wants to ensure that, again, those partnerships are reflective of commitments financially and to minimize the cost to just one arm of that partnership. They bring the opportunity to leverage efficiencies if affordable units can be included in market developments that they are pursuing, so that's a very important element as well. Our private operators are usually most interested in partnering on housing projects that will house people whose, of course, interest is on housing affordability.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. Well, thank you.

Back to MLA Toor's question about isolation and safety for senior...

The Chair: Thank you, Member Barnes.

My apologies, Deputy. That was me. I'm 2 for 2 now in chairing these meetings between two different computers and forgetting to mute myself. Maybe by next meeting I will have figured it out. My apologies for that.

We're now going to go back to the Official Opposition for our first of the 10-minute rotations. I believe that we are going to begin with Member Sigurdson, please.

Ms Sigurdson: Yes. That's correct again. Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to go back a bit to some of the comments that Member Toor made. He was talking about the aging well in community grants. I mean, those grants made some big difference in communities across Alberta. They helped local agencies manage elder abuse, social isolation, that was mentioned. There were supports for specific populations that, you know, may be disadvantaged like – and the deputy spoke about this – the LGBTQ community, newcomer Canadians that are seniors. Those are very important. That program, I know, certainly has ended, but that made a significant difference in, like, a grassroots local agency.

I'm going to go back to the lodge program, which we had just sort of begun, and we want to look at the outstanding recommendation of the Auditor General. I was asking specifically: what month in 2019? The report indicates that it was implemented in 2019, so was it January, February, March? Which month was it? And what specific changes were implemented to address those issues that the Auditor was concerned about?

You know, jumping ahead to today, in the COVID-19 world, I know that so many seniors' lodges do not just do that independent living piece. They also do higher level because that might be the only facility in town, and we want people to stay in their communities, of course. That has caused difficulties, I know, for sure. Anyway, coming back to the time frame that we're talking about, just what exactly is being done to assess that, and is there more flexibility for communities to have seniors needing higher level care in those independent living facilities? And then just some of the information about the effectiveness of the program.

I understand, too, that the Auditor General will do a follow-up audit; possibly October, is what I understand. This might be something too technical for this committee, so I wonder if maybe some of those questions that I just presented could be answered in written form. Is that possible?

Ms Taylor: It is, MLA Sigurdson, to put that information in writing for you. Thank you very much.

Ms Sigurdson: Okay. Super. I appreciate that very much.

Let's move along, then, to – I have some housing questions, and then I do have a question for the housing management body, so I want to be quick in my 10 minutes to get everything in. One of the things – I think it's on page 9 of the annual report – is just talking about, you know, how many housing units were supported and each type of housing. Certainly, we have the rent supplement program, community housing, seniors' lodges, special-needs housing, affordable housing, capital grants, that kind of thing.

I guess something that I am interested in and that I see is missing, really, is just about: okay; this is how much we're providing, but what's the need? Like, how much is needed? How many people are going without housing that may qualify for it, that are eligible? You know, like, I guess I'm asking about wait-lists and things like that. I know that we have a lot of need in our province for affordable housing, and I know that the ministry, along with its partners, does tremendous work, but I just would sort of like an accounting of what kind of information is gathered about the need and not just how many units are provided.

Ms Taylor: Thank you. As you mentioned, MLA Sigurdson, regarding the wait-list, the number of households that have applied and who have been found to be eligible for affordable housing has increased over the last number of years. We're continuing to see that need and that demand. Approximately 18,000 households were on wait-lists for those housing units and programs as of March 31, 2019. That change was an estimated 150 decrease from the beginning of the fiscal year, but again we are continuing to see ongoing need and demand. In the 2018-19 budget there was an \$11.2 million increase to the housing management bodies' operating budget to support and maintain those existing units.

Ms Sigurdson: Yes. That was a significant increase. I know that, certainly from my conversations with housing management bodies, they were able to do repairs that had been outstanding for such a long time, so that's a significant and important investment for the ministry to have followed through on.

I guess another question that I have, too, is just the rent supplement program. Specifically, let's dig down a little bit on that one. It does say that it's providing 11,500 units, about 18 per cent of the total units the province delivers. Can we talk specifically about that program? I know you talked in general about 18,000 people on wait-lists. Can you separate that out and see how many people are on just this wait-list for the rent supplement program?

Ms Taylor: MLA Sigurdson, I'm advised that we do not have that detail available at this time.

Ms Sigurdson: If it's accessible later, then perhaps that could be provided in writing also. Thank you.

That program, of course, is a unique program in that it's not about Albertans coming and living in a housing facility that is, you know, a subsidized facility. It's actually portable, so it's great for rural Alberta because sometimes they don't have the facilities, and they can work with a local landlord so that they can have that rent supplement so that they can pay their rent when their incomes are not able. Like, they're in poor housing need, for example. That program is, I would just say, a very important program that we have and is something that we need to support Albertans with, certainly, in the diverse province that we are in. Do you have any clarity about where in our province, you know, there would be the most need or the need in general for affordable housing?

9:30

Ms Taylor: Our allocation of our rental systems program in 2018-19 was \$67.6 million, and the majority of that, the largest proportion of that funding, based on need of individuals requiring affordable housing, is in urban centres in the province.

Ms Sigurdson: Okay. Thank you very much for that, Deputy.

I want to move now to the CEO of Calgary Housing Company, Sarah Woodgate. Hi, Sarah. You know, I know that one of the things that Calgary has been working on and is a pilot is just the one-window approach to affordable housing in your city. I just wondered if you could just expand a little bit about that and tell us how that program is working.

Ms Woodgate: Hi there. I can't get my camera to work.

I would love to talk about one-window. Calgary Housing Company partnered with the city of Calgary in working on an idea to have a one-window application program that was run by a nonprofit, and we did quite a bit of work working with all of the nonprofit providers, 85 different providers in Calgary and 35 different wait-lists. What happened is that we worked with the community to bring forward a recommendation for a new way to

reduce red tape and make it so much easier for people to apply for housing. What was proposed was that we recommended the creation of a nonprofit organization that would have a single-entry access for the affordable housing application process so that individuals don't need to go to every organization and to know about every organization. It would be a seamless application process in which that nonprofit would be focused on getting people in housing. That was recommended. City council supported that. They actually funded a fair amount of the start-up funds to get this going. The proposal is still available if there was interest and available funding to pursue it.

Ms Sigurdson: Thanks, Sarah. I know that the province contributed to that as well. Would you see this – I know it was started as a bit of a pilot . . . [A timer sounded] Oh, shoot.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now move on to our next 10-minute rotation for government members with Member Barnes to begin, please.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you again, Madam Chair. On page 8 of the annual review and as we were just hearing from Sarah in Calgary, it states that there are 100 housing management bodies and another 350 housing providers. From experiences in fiscal 2018-19 has the ministry identified potential efficiencies, potential areas where we need to, you know, enhance collaboration into the housing management sector and actually providing services?

Ms Taylor: Thank you. The 100 housing management bodies that have been referenced refer to the number of boards that are overseeing operations of housing management bodies on behalf of member municipalities and other community organizations. There are fewer than a hundred administrative structures supporting those 100 boards. For example, the chief administrative officer of Bethany Care serves seven different boards. The amalgamation of operations under boards is driven through a combination of local support and as recommendations come out of compliance reviews that are done by the department. These administrative amalgamations will produce some financial savings, but the real benefit lies in the increased capacity of operators to serve the boards and the tenants. The department is always looking for opportunities to promote amalgamation of boards if there is municipal support since municipal members sit on those boards.

You know, the department also promotes shared services between the boards and the operators to increase efficiency and capacity and, of course, to try and minimize administrative costs for the board operations.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you. In the past I have heard about some facilities with vacancies and other facilities with waiting lists, and I sometimes wondered if a lack of communication, a lack of collaboration and efficiencies was the issue. Is that something your department looks at to ensure maximum support and maximum value for tax dollars?

Ms Taylor: I'll have John Thomson, our ADM of housing, respond to that.

Mr. Thomson: Hi, everyone. In answer to that question, generally the vacancies in buildings are due to choice of the applicants and where they're willing to live as opposed to barriers between operators in placing people. As Sarah Woodgate mentioned, there are conversations about whether there are efficiencies that could be gained per applicant in only applying to one list, but operators do

share their vacancies. We have actually had some partnerships between operators in Edmonton and operators around Edmonton in seeing if applicants in Edmonton who are waiting are interested in going into facilities outside of Edmonton.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. Great. Thank you for that answer.

In your ministry's annual report it provides a breakdown of revenues on page 26. Can the ministry please explain how it's adapting to the reduction in revenue from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation as is reflected under federal and other grants? It looks fairly significant.

Ms Taylor: Thank you. The Canada Mortgage and Housing funding does decrease as per the social housing agreement schedule that we have in place and other temporary agreements such as the federal social infrastructure fund for capital projects. The federal operating revenue was stable. However, at \$87.4 million, compared to \$88.8 million from their prior year as per the existing agreement, the actual revenue from the federal government was lower than budgeted in 2018-19 because of a change in accounting for capital investment from the IAH program, the investment in affordable housing fund. Instead of immediately recognizing the federal revenue from the capital investment project, the federal capital revenue was deferred over multiple years. The cash was mainly received as planned, but their revenue will be recognized over multiple years.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. I see. Thank you.

It looks, though, like there are a lot of variations and variability on your funding. The one that I want you to speak of specifically, though, is on page 26. Miscellaneous revenue reflects an actual of \$1.3 million but budgeted was \$8.9 million. Can you speak, please, to the unexpected variance? Is that a volatility that's there a lot?

Ms Taylor: Overall, no, we do not have a great extent of volatility in our revenue. In terms of your particular question on this area of the report we had anticipated about \$10 million of other revenue at a higher level, which includes \$8.9 million for miscellaneous and \$1.2 million for gains on disposable tangible capital assets. The \$8.9 million is budgeted as miscellaneous, but it correlates to the typical recoveries of expenditures from housing providers as well as other miscellaneous revenues.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. Is that a pretty ongoing process between the department and housing providers, a back and forth of tracking assets, collecting revenue, making sure of maximum effectiveness?

Ms Taylor: It is. We have a number of processes throughout the year that we have with our housing management bodies and our operators to monitor expenditures and to recover funds that are not spent.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. Has your department ever looked at ways to streamline that, or are you happy with the process?

Ms Taylor: The process that we have in place: we continue to feel that it is providing us the information that we need from our operators to identify, again, their expenditures. Our staff work very closely with our housing management bodies to be able to monitor those expenditures.

9:40

Mr. Barnes: Okay. Have you ever polled or done a satisfaction survey with the providers? Are they happy with the process?

Ms Taylor: We've not done a specific survey. I would say that for the most part our housing management bodies would probably say that we require too much information, but you have two housing management bodies online this morning, Calgary Housing Company and Capital Region Housing, that may be able to speak to that from their perspective.

Mr. Barnes: That would be great.

The Chair: Okay. I think we are now recognizing Member Gotfried for a follow-up.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the ministry officials for joining us and also for our representatives from Calgary Housing Co. and Capital Region Housing as well.

On page 13 of the annual report mixed-income models are referenced, stating that they "will allow for greater revenues to offset costs and allow for the development and replacement of aging housing stock." Can the ministry further explain this? Specifically, how will mixed-income project revenues and economics support and help to build the development and replacement of aging housing stock in Alberta?

Ms Taylor: Thank you. Mixed-income or, perhaps more appropriately, mixed-rent buildings present an opportunity to introduce more diversity of tenants. The opportunity of mixed income, of course, is that there are different rent bands so that tenants who are experiencing more or less income don't necessarily need to move buildings, which is important. As well, the mixed-income model supports housing operators for their sustainability of the overall operations if they've got different levels of income coming into the operations of that building.

The Parkdale redevelopment in Edmonton is an example that was completed in 2018-19 of a mixed-income housing project. It replaced an aging building with 12 deep-subsidy units – so this is where government expenditures would be far greater – within a 70-unit building that includes 14 deep-subsidy rentals and the rest near-market rentals. This model also removes the need, as I mentioned, of the government to provide maintenance funding for the building in the future. The project supported refinancing on the property, freeing up capital that is planned for Capital Region Housing's next redevelopment.

Mr. Gotfried: Excellent.

I think my time is almost up, so I'll probably continue this and include our housing management bodies in the next round.

The Chair: There you go. Thank you.

We'll now move on to our second of the 10-minute rotations, and we are going to lead off with Member Renaud. Member Renaud, your 10 minutes start once you've got your video and audio enabled, and then we'll start the clock.

Thank you.

Ms Renaud: Thank you very much, Chair. I just want to quickly follow up on some questions from Member Sigurdson. I imagine this level of detail isn't readily available, so I'm happy to get this in writing. You mentioned that there are 18,000 families on wait-lists. I'm just wondering if you could provide us with the number of these families that require accessible housing, so wheelchair-accessible housing or universal design. If you don't have that number, I'm happy to get that at a later date.

I want to talk about the number of units and types of housing that are supported by the housing divisions, two in particular: special-needs housing, which is defined as for people with physical

disabilities or people leaving family violence situations, and also community housing, which focuses on low-income and special-needs housing. Altogether I think there are about 13,000 units, so less than 20 per cent of this portfolio. I'm wondering if you could tell me how many of these units are wheelchair accessible, are barrier free, or comply with universal design. If you have that, I'm happy to hear it now, or I'm happy to get it in writing.

Ms Taylor: MLA Renaud, unfortunately, we do not have that level of detail for this morning's committee. We will need to follow up in writing on that.

Ms Renaud: Okay. Thank you very much.

In the annual report it notes that a total of \$205 million was expended on 15 projects, so that's 2018-2019. Fifteen units were regenerated, and 773 units were built. I'm wondering if you could give us a breakdown of the investment in energy efficiency in that work. What was the value of that, and also what was the value of the regenerated units in terms of the retrofits made to meet barrier-free design?

Ms Taylor: Apologies for the delay. We're just trying to find information that we may have accessible here for this morning's committee meeting. I think, again, we may need to follow up with you on that.

Ms Renaud: Okay. Yup. That's great.

I'm going to move on a little bit to some of the states of the properties. The total number of affordable housing units supported by the ministry in 2018-19 was over 65,000 units. Now, most social housing, as noted, is over 40 years old, so built in the '80s, and I understand that the condition is monitored every five years. In the report I note that 67 per cent of the facilities are in fair condition, which actually means there are aging components nearing the end of the life cycle. Four per cent were in poor condition, don't comply with minimum codes and standards. I mean, in total these two categories put it at close to 50,000 units that are really problematic, I would assume, and there are only 19,000 in this portfolio that are considered in good condition. I'm wondering in terms of the target of meeting the growing need – obviously, there's a growing need; there are huge wait-lists – if this ministry is on track to meet the maintenance needs. What are the deferred maintenance costs, and what is the plan going forward based on the information in this report?

Ms Taylor: Thank you. I would say that, as you mentioned, the majority of our buildings are aged buildings built in the '80s. We're looking at, you know, an average age of 35 years, so we do have increased maintenance costs. Again, I know that the two operators that are joining us this morning could confirm that. That remains an area of interest and focus for us. The capital maintenance and renewal program that I mentioned earlier supports, of course, the ability to look at functionality and viability and condition of assets in our overall housing portfolio to ensure that Albertans are provided with adequate housing options. We do track, as you mentioned, the physical condition of the housing units to try and, again, target our resources for those that are in greatest need of maintenance and prioritize those.

As you mentioned, in our performance measure overall the majority of our housing stock has a good and fair ranking. We do work to improve and renew our aged buildings. The facility condition index that you referenced helps us, again, do that, to prioritize, to triage . . .

Ms Renaud: I'm sorry. If I could just interrupt for a second. I'm confused about that. I think the majority of the units are in fair condition, certainly, but I think that label might be a tiny bit misleading because to be labelled as "fair" means that the components in the housing unit are aging and nearing the end of the life cycle. I think that with 44,000 units in that category and then another 3,000 in poor condition, my question is: is this ministry on track to meet the growing needs not only of people requiring this housing but the decline of the condition of these units given the increased demand for them?

Ms Taylor: I would say that of course we will continue to have challenges to meet the increasing demand of people who require affordable housing. It's important for us to look at partnerships that will enable us to try to respond and meet that growing demand. As well, with your question regarding facility conditions and our capital maintenance, again we are challenged to be able to fully have a robust capital maintenance budget to do that, and that's why we need to prioritize those buildings of greatest need.

Ms Renaud: Just to follow up a little bit, if units are condemned or no longer habitable, are they included in the poor category or are they recorded somewhere else? Do you know?

Ms Taylor: If those units are condemned, they would not be considered to be, of course, viable units, so they would not be included in here.

9:50

Ms Renaud: So is there a number per year that your ministry would have access to to be able to track how many units have sort of slipped below poor and are no longer habitable?

Ms Taylor: The tracking that we are using to do that is through the facility condition index, which is used across government, so in other government departments as well.

Ms Renaud: Okay.

I'm going to switch over a little bit to the Seniors Advocate. I understand the Seniors Advocate was, you know, the dedicated advocate. Certainly, there are concerns. Seniors worry about the loss of a team dedicated to combatting systemic ageism, which really meshes with the desired outcomes for this particular ministry.

Given that, you know, just one reporting body like protection for persons in care, which would cover housing that falls under SLALA or lodges – there were over 350 reports of abuse in this particular reporting year. I'm wondering: given that in the last report I saw from the Seniors Advocate only 30 per cent of the files or the casework were health related specifically – and it seems to me that the premise of moving the Seniors Advocate to Health was because the majority of those concerns with that casework was health related – can you explain what measures are in place for this growing population that is very vulnerable, how the ministry is going to ensure that the work of the Health Advocate picks up the slack that I think the Seniors Advocate was very positioned to focus on?

Ms Taylor: I think my response is like earlier, when MLA Sigurdson had asked this question. Really, we're focused, again, on the 2018-19 time period and the focus that the advocate of the time had on the areas of support needed by seniors. Of course, we will continue to work very closely with the Health Advocate to ensure that seniors' needs are being considered as they move forward with that transition.

Ms Renaud: Okay. MLA Sigurdson touched on the indexing of benefits, and I know there's a close link between the Ministry of

Community and Social Services and this particular one in terms of housing and supports. When CSS benefits were deindexed, they also made a payment date schedule change, but that schedule change was not made for seniors. I'm wondering if you could tell me why that is.

Ms Taylor: We did not make a payment schedule change in our ministry. I can't speak as to CSS and their rationalization for that, but we did not make a schedule change in our ministry.

Ms Renaud: Okay. The rationale was to make life better for Albertans, so I'm wondering why the seniors ministry did not do that as well.

Ms Taylor: Again, I don't see where that is included in the 2018-19 annual report.

Ms Renaud: Okay. So is there anything . . .

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now move on to the government side with Member Gotfried leading off, please.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you again to our presenters. To the ministry. You've spoken quite a bit about and we've just gone into the maintenance, renovation, renewal, and replacement of some of the housing stock. My question is: what models have been successfully implemented in the past with respect to engaging those mixed-income models to perhaps accelerate some of this renewal, how is that impacted in the affordable rental and possibly attainable home ownership, and what have we learned from those that we can apply possibly going forward?

Ms Taylor: Thank you again for that question. As we mentioned, the existing housing stock is an average of – I think I said 35 before. I stand corrected; it's about 40 years old. The capital maintenance and renewal project – they're completed each year – again, uses that prioritization method I spoke about primarily to address health and safety items that could impact tenants and/or the building systems.

In 2018-19 the Alberta Social Housing Corporation spent \$24.3 million to maintain the properties it owns and \$15.3 million to help operators maintain properties they owned for a total of \$39.6 million for capital maintenance. The condition of properties owned by the Alberta Social Housing Corporation, as we just mentioned earlier, is assessed on a five-year cycle, and these facility condition reports are used to prioritize, again, maintenance projects most in need to keep tenants safe and protect the housing assets.

Mr. Gotfried: Okay. Thank you, Deputy Minister.

Maybe I can just flip this. We have our two guests here from our Capital Region Housing and Calgary Housing Co. Could I ask for maybe just a quick response in terms of how the mixed-income model has worked for you? Maybe we'll start with capital region and then move to Calgary Housing Co., please.

Mr. Dewling: Hi. It's Greg Dewling from Capital Region Housing. Thank you, MLA Gotfried. We have two projects that are mixed income. One, of course, has been mentioned by the deputy minister, the Parkdale project. That's been operational now for two years. We opened it during the 2018-19 fiscal period, and it is a sustainable model in which we require no ongoing capital maintenance from the government; nor do we require any operating dollars for that project. We were able to secure debt against the property as well, which has been invested in future affordable housing projects.

Secondly, during the '18-19 budget year we also had operational a private-sector joint-venture project called Pine Creek. That

project did not have any investment by the government of Alberta. It was an initiative by Capital Region Housing in partnership with RMS Group to build a 174-unit, two-building apartment in the southeast area of Edmonton. We have integrated 45 subsidized units into that project, and it is subsidized by the profit that is generated on our side of the balance sheet. The market developer is made whole, and we take our proceeds and then reinvest that into a subsidy, so those tenants are receiving a subsidy of approximately \$350 per month on their rent in that project. It's sustainable. It is generating a small surplus even with challenges on rent-up. It is still paying the bills. It is servicing the debt with a small surplus as well.

Mr. Gotfried: Before we move to Calgary Housing Co., Mr. Dewling, could you maybe comment on the potential for replication of this model that you've already used?

Mr. Dewling: Yeah. We recognized that we have a very large waiting list and wanted to target those that tend to drift towards the bottom third of our waiting list, that have moderate income but nonetheless do qualify for affordable and subsidized housing and would not normally under our points-based wait-list system ever rise to the opportunity to move into a social or community housing unit. We see this as an opportunity, for a very low capital investment, to help these families get stable. We recognize that stable housing – when you eliminate that need in a family's life, they are able to work on many other things. We believe that for a very low capital investment we can replicate this repeatedly. During the past two years, in particular during the budget '18-19 year, we would have sometimes weekly offers from private-sector partners to develop such models.

Mr. Gotfried: Excellent. The sustainability and, obviously, the mixed-income model is allowing you to leverage those partners, so that's great news.

Moving over to Calgary Housing Co., Sarah Woodgate, could you please comment on perhaps some good examples from your backyard as well?

Ms Woodgate: Sure. I'm really excited to talk about this topic. Calgary Housing Company is unique. We provide 10,000 homes, and many of them are mixed-income housing. Over 3,000 units are mixed-income housing. We've been providing mixed-income housing since the 1990s.

On the 2018 income statement we actually returned \$1.5 million to the city of Calgary from revenue surplus after reserves to invest in new affordable housing developments. That's revenue from our mixed-income properties. These properties actually rent for as low as \$350 a month, including utilities, very similar to community housing. The maximum rents are around \$1,200 a month, so the entire building is actually affordable and a product that would not be provided by the private sector. We're able to do that with capital grants, and it does not require operating subsidy.

Lots of progress. In 2018 we opened another new building. It's on a small infill lot, very replicable. We have, actually, quite a few of them that we've opened. Forty-eight units in the community of Wildwood were opened that year, and it was another building that was added to the inventory.

We're also re-enveloping and renovating existing buildings and moving them into the mixed-income portfolio. We can renovate for about \$50,000 a unit, the entire unit, the entire building, and then double the life cycle of that aging infrastructure. That's a really good investment. The new development, Wildwood, was built for \$150,000 a unit, and that's very good value. We really were able to leverage the downturn in the marketplace and have really favourable costs in that year.

10:00

The other thing is that in 2018 we also entered into a framework agreement with the government of Alberta to look at what we're going to do with the community housing that is facing expiring operating agreements with the federal-provincial governments, so we began a journey to actually look at transitioning the community housing to a mixed-income portfolio as well.

One more thing is that we have a plan in place for 1,000 new units. This was really solidified in 2018 with federal and city funding and an opportunity to grow the portfolio. One challenge with mixed-income is that you need more housing to provide the same amount of housing, so growth is a big focus in 2018 and today.

Mr. Gotfried: Great. Thank you, Sarah. That's some encouraging news.

Just moving quickly, with respect to some of the other principles around mixed-income housing, obviously partnerships with the private and nonprofit sectors are also very effective in leveraging public dollars for a greater variety of housing options while also reducing the burden on taxpayer-funded capital investment. Can the ministry explain what expertise, cost savings, and reduced risk that private and nonprofit operators are able to bring to the table? To the ministry, please.

Ms Taylor: Yes. Thank you. We had mentioned earlier that private operators – and I think the way that Sarah and Greg had explained their particular projects: private operators bring development and that rental market expertise as well as access to private financing. They also bring opportunity to leverage efficiencies for those affordable housing units that can be included in the market developments that are being pursued. As I mentioned earlier, private operators are usually most interested in partnering on housing projects that will house people, you know, who principally have a challenge with affordability of housing, so I think there's much interest and willingness from private operators to get involved and support the need that we talked about earlier regarding affordable housing in the province.

Mr. Gotfried: Excellent.

I think we're time challenged, but I'm going to hand on to MLA Stephan for the next rotation, please. MLA Stephan, are you there?

Mr. Stephan: Yes, I am. Can everyone see me and hear me? Hello?

Mr. Roth: Yes.

Mr. Stephan: Oh, great.

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Stephan: Thanks, Madam Chair. How much time do I have?

The Chair: Less than a minute, my friend.

Mr. Stephan: Okay. Well . . .

The Chair: Okay. That concludes our second round of 10-minute rotations.

Just a couple of things, friends. I'd just like the indulgence of the committee if we do need to go a few minutes past 10:30. Various technical things and so on have pushed us a little over time, so if there's any objection to going a couple of minutes over 10:30, please say so now.

If not, we will move on to our third rotation, beginning with the Official Opposition. We are beginning with Member Hoffman.

Member Hoffman, your time starts when we see you and you start talking for the last of the 10-minute rotations.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much. I'd like to ask a few questions to the housing management bodies in attendance today, and they stem from comments that they've given previously as well as comments from the deputy minister. The 18,000 applicants on the wait-list were identified as the most recent measure on that. I'm wondering if each of the housing management bodies can tell us how many applicants are on the wait-lists for the two that are here today.

Mr. Dewling: Yes. Thank you, MLA Hoffman. It's Greg Dewling from Capital Region Housing. As of March 31, 2019, we have 5,036 families on our wait-list.

Ms Woodgate: Hi. It's Sarah Woodgate. We had a 24 per cent growth of our wait-list between 2013 and 2018. In 2018 we had 4,153 households on the wait-list. However, the need is much, much greater than that: 44,000 households were spending more than 50 per cent of their income and had low and moderate income, and 1 in 5 Calgarians, 81,000 Calgarians, were struggling to pay shelter costs. The wait-list is an indicator based on community housing criteria. The need is much greater. In Calgary in 2018 we were working on a strategy that we would need to double the nonmarket housing supply to become average with average cities in Canada, and that would require about 15,000 new units while keeping all the units that were in existence at that time.

Ms Hoffman: Thanks for that context, Sarah. So only about 10 per cent of those who were actually in need of affordable housing are even bothering to apply in Calgary, is the summary that I think I heard there. If you disagree with that summary, let me know.

Greg, would you say that it's similar in Edmonton, in the capital region?

Mr. Dewling: Yes. That growth and those that sit on our wait-list would be very similar to Calgary.

Ms Hoffman: Okay. Thanks for that information.

Of the lone-parent families – it was identified in the LAO report that lone-parent families, which are considered to have core housing need, are currently in unsuitable, inadequate, or unaffordable housing. What would you say is your strategy around addressing that, and what could the government have done in the last fiscal year to help you meet your goals?

Mr. Dewling: Thank you, MLA Hoffman. What we do to address the needs at Capital Region Housing is that any of our new construction is focused on our actual wait-list. We take a percentage basis of our wait-list, and if it's a breakdown of, you know, 10, 20 per cent of the demand, one through five bedrooms – and we do build one through five bedrooms – we will construct based on that. So the funding that is allocated during the '18-19 fiscal year has enabled us to build a number of projects and begin a number of projects in which we have the latitude to build one to five bedrooms.

Ms Woodgate: To follow up on that, similar to Greg we're focused on families. Calgary Housing Company provides homes to 10,000 children. Of 25,000 residents 10,000 were children in 2018. We are one of the only providers, the largest one, definitely, in southern Alberta, providing homes to vulnerable families, and we have over 150 partnerships with different agencies. While we focus on poverty and homes, we partner with agencies to provide supports to families, and we have quite a few different programs in order to do

that. In 2018 we actually had 100 families move into home ownership through some programs that we have. Some of those are lone parents as well. We work with families to help them achieve their full potential, and that is a huge focus for our organization.

Ms Hoffman: That's great. Thank you both for that. You've talked about the number of people on the list; can you talk about the average wait time, both for families and for singles, if you have an average or if you have other ways of measuring how long typically people are on the list?

Mr. Dewling: Thank you, MLA Hoffman. It's Greg from Capital Region Housing. It is difficult to measure in the fact that our wait-list is a priority wait-list, so those with the highest need do move in first regardless of their application time. It is not chronological. If you do apply and you are at the top of the wait-list, typically you move in within two months. Unfortunately, there are those that are very low on our waiting list, that have low point scores, that have been there for a number of years. We typically have families that, as their need increases, move in within two years.

Ms Woodgate: I would like to add to that. Similar to Greg is that the priority list is based on people's qualifications and experience. It's not a time-based wait-list.

However, one of the things about affordable housing is that in Alberta we do have quite a bit of turnover. Calgary Housing Company provided 1,400, almost 1,500 homes to new families in 2018. The average stay is quite variable, but it's about four and a half years. People move into Calgary Housing Company, and they establish their foundation, and they're able to move into private housing. That was the average, about 1,500. The more that we can work with individuals to stabilize those families and have this broad spectrum of housing, the more we can contribute to helping people move in faster because we also have that turnover. So that gives it kind of an idea.

10:10

But some people will be on the wait-list and never achieve a home. They'll qualify for what we call affordable housing, but their priority score is way too low. They will never actually move into a community housing unit because there's not enough housing and there are many people waiting for them in the list that reach higher priority.

Ms Hoffman: Thanks for that. Knowing that only about 10 per cent who are actually meeting the criteria of being in need of affordable housing since they're paying in excess of 50 per cent of their income for housing – I think that speaks to the fact that even those who are on the list, who are already among the most probably in need, don't meet the criteria to achieve housing, which I think is something that we should all aspire to, meeting the basic needs of all of our citizens that we have the honour of representing.

If you were to assess what the gap is between where you're at today and, you know, if there were the right amount of resources to help you house everyone who is in need in your communities, how many additional units would you estimate both of your areas would need?

Mr. Dewling: Thank you, MLA Hoffman. As I stated earlier, our wait-list at the end of the fiscal '18-19 year was just over 5,000 families. Through the various programs, whether it's new units that we would manage or through rent subsidy programs, those obviously would be the ones that we would directly serve. If we were to address the need throughout the entire Edmonton region, you would be looking at – somewhere in the tune of 25,000 to

30,000 households would be in need of some help in order to appropriately live in the marketplace.

Ms Woodgate: Similarly, there are about 44,000 households that require housing, that are in significant need over spending. The Calgary community has identified a goal of 15,000 units to double the nonmarket housing supply and become average with Canada's big cities, so 15,000 units – not only community housing; that's across the spectrum. There were some questions about supportive housing: that's a community-wide target for the city

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, both.

I know that we have less than two minutes remaining, and I just want to touch a little bit on communal areas that you have in your facilities, and if the deputy – one minute – wants to elaborate on that as well once the two housing management bodies have gone. I know that we're looking backwards, but given the urgency of COVID-19 I'm wondering what kind of initiatives you've taken to ensure safety of your residents, particularly when it comes to common areas.

Mr. Dewling: Thank you. I'm happy to answer the current question. We have increased cleaning and monitoring inside each and all of our communal areas throughout our portfolio.

Ms Woodgate: Currently there's a visitor policy at Calgary Housing, and all of the common areas are closed for use. There are a few agencies using them for specific services, running a lot of food programs. Regularly we have resource rooms on Calgary Housing properties, and a lot of the older properties didn't have common areas or places for community development, so we have tried to . . .

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, both. We got a lot in there.

The Chair: All right. Thank you.

We'll now move on to our 10 minutes for the government side, leading off with Member Stephan, please.

Mr. Stephan: Hi. Can everyone hear and see me? Great. Thanks. I just want an opportunity to ask some questions about the Alberta seniors' benefit program. I know it's over 50 per cent of the ministry's budget. Looking at page 24 of the annual report, it indicates that we spent \$390 million on providing this benefit, and we budgeted \$371 million. Looking at the prior year, it was \$367 million. We budgeted for a \$4 million increase, and we actually had a \$19 million increase, so I'm just wondering why we were so far off on our budget.

Ms Taylor: Thank you, MLA Stephan. As you mentioned, the Alberta seniors' benefit program is our largest proportion of the budget and a core benefit to low-income seniors. The program is income tested, and again its intent is to help protect seniors most in need by supplementing the federal income support programs, that I spoke about earlier, for seniors who have lower incomes. As a regulated program, eligible seniors who apply for that program and are deemed eligible will be provided assistance.

That \$19 million: the overrun reflects caseload growth that we've all been talking about in terms of the growing senior population. There was also, I think, the dynamic of a slower recovery from the 2016 economic downturn, so that has resulted in a larger number of seniors with low income being eligible for our Alberta seniors' benefit program. Certainly, we have very strong forecasting of our Alberta seniors' benefit program. Generally all of our financial programs have come in line for the most part for the forecasting

models that we have in place. We're certainly going to be looking at enhancing those forecasting models as we know that our continued senior population will double by 2035.

The last portion of that budget increase, the \$19 million, I just want to comment on. As we spoke about earlier, it was the addition of the indexing legislation on January 1, 2019, which also increased costs to our Alberta seniors' benefit program by about \$1.5 million for the last three months of that 2018-19 fiscal year.

Mr. Stephan: Thank you, Deputy Minister. It sounds like we do have probably, from this experience, some opportunities for improvement in the accuracy of our forecasting. We were more or less more than four times off in terms of what we thought the increase would be.

With the increase to \$390 million this year versus \$367 million in the prior year, that's more than 6 per cent in only one year. How is the ministry going to ensure that there's sustainability for this benefit for those who need it most going forward?

Ms Taylor: Again, as I mentioned earlier, all of our seniors' financial assistance programs are income tested, so we will be looking at ensuring that those programs, you know, stay in place based on income-tested eligibility criteria as well as again forecasting, as you've mentioned, the growing population of seniors, that we know will be doubling by 2035.

Mr. Stephan: Thank you for answering those questions. It's such an important benefit, and we need to strive as good as we can to maintain sustainability of that program.

I'd like to turn the rest of my time over to my colleague Member Reid. Thank you.

Mr. Reid: Thank you, Member Stephan, and thank you, Chair, and thank you to the officials in the room today. I appreciate all the information. It's been a good background on a broad file. I guess – well, I don't guess; I know that I want to focus a little bit on the needs of rural seniors. I noticed, reading through the annual report, that I don't think the word "rural" even shows up in the report. I just have a couple questions about plans moving forward. We've said a number of times through the meeting today that, you know, we're seeing the number of seniors double. Of course, those of us that serve in rural Alberta: our populations are on average much older, so we are already dealing with a large number of seniors. Can the ministry speak to any work being done to enhance access to transportation for seniors living in rural Alberta?

10:20

Ms Taylor: Thank you, MLA Reid. Transportation, of course, is an important element for all seniors and their ability to stay connected and to be mobile, particularly in rural Alberta, so thank you for raising this question. The special needs assistance program, that I'd mentioned earlier, is one of our financial programs that our ministry provides, and it includes assistance with the cost of medical trips for eligible seniors that are travelling greater than 80 kilometres round trip to see a medical specialist or for medical testing or treatment. In February 2019 the ministry provided an organization called Drive Happiness, which many people are likely aware of in terms of the work that they do, a \$100,000 three-year aging well in community grant to provide assisted transportation services in the counties of Strathcona, Parkland, Sturgeon, Leduc, and Brazeau.

Mr. Reid: Thank you for that.

Can the ministry also speak to any other specific incentives, initiatives for seniors in rural Alberta and how they are measured

for effectiveness, again, making sure that we're spending money wisely so it has the best impact for my rural seniors?

Ms Taylor: Thank you. In 2008 the Seniors and Housing ministry provided \$3.2 million in grant funding to the Medically At-Risk Driver Centre, known as MARD, to research and develop initiatives that were focused on alternate transportation services specifically for rural Alberta. The MARD Centre uses the funding to enhance the safety and mobility of medically at-risk drivers and to research options to keep drivers on the road as long as it is safe and reasonable to do so.

Some of the MARD Centre initiatives include a provincial transportation needs assessment, a provincial listing of alternate transportation service providers, a tool kit to support development of alternate transportation services, and projects established to address alternate transportation for seniors in Big Lakes county, Sturgeon county, and West Yellowhead region. MARD was able to extend these funds beyond the term of the original grant, and that funding is now going to the end of September 2021.

The rural transportation pilot project announced by the Ministry of Transportation in the summer of '18 also improved transportation projects for seniors. That was covering rural areas of Camrose, my hometown; and Grande Prairie, Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Red Deer, Springbrook, Penhold, and Innisfail.

Mr. Reid: Thank you, Deputy Minister. I appreciate that. I want to switch over now just to some questions about affordable housing [inaudible] about the need for more affordable housing by our community's Lodgepole Center. What kind of preliminary work or initiating work has the ministry done to allow us to grow the number of available affordable units in rural Alberta?

Ms Taylor: Chair, if I may, could I ask MLA Reid to repeat his question? At our end he was breaking up, and we could not hear the question.

Mr. Reid: Apologies. That's rural Internet for you. I apologize for that.

I was just wondering about what kind of preliminary work or initiating work the ministry has been able to do to meet some increasing needs for affordable housing in rural Alberta. I remember groups like FCSS speaking to me directly about the need for affordable housing in rural communities.

Ms Taylor: MLA Reid, I'll ask John Thomson, ADM of our housing division, to speak specifically to that question.

Mr. Thomson: Thank you. There's an annual planning process that we undertake with the housing management bodies wherein they provide us information on the needs in their community and they propose capital projects that can be pursued in their communities based on demand and based on the need to regenerate infrastructure that's already in their community. So that feeds into our capital planning process, which we then use to propose projects to be funded by the government.

Ms Taylor: I may add to that comment, if we still have time remaining – thank you, Aaron – that both Community and Social Services and our ministry also work with Alberta Rural Development Network there because they're focused on . . .

The Chair: Thank you.

What we'll do, because we had some technical difficulties there, is that if the government caucus would like to follow up with a written question from Member Reid with some more of the details

that he was trying to get out but his technology was failing him – I think that would be appropriate. If the ministry could just respond to that question in writing, I think that would be a fair thing to do.

Now we are moving on to our final rotation of reading questions into the record. We will start with the Official Opposition side, and it's a very quick three minutes. If Member Dach would like to pull up his video and audio, we'll start the timer when you are ready, Member Dach.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Chair. I think I'm broadcasting. I have questions for both housing management bodies, including as well the deputy minister, regarding our dedicated nonprofit agency that was a pilot project for one-window application processing. Is that something that both housing management bodies wish to pursue, and if so, would it have the support of the ministry? How long would it take to actually implement so that we get this process in place to streamline the application process?

Secondly, I have a question about the mixed-rent model. I know I had some experience with that through the City of Edmonton Non-Profit Housing Corporation. One end piece to that would be selling units eventually, possibly to even renters so that they can enter the housing market so that you will renew your housing stock in that way. Is there a plan to eventually sell units to individuals so that you can then renew and reinvest in other buildings, and if so, which housing management bodies have started to do that? Of course, that would involve strata titling your units when you actually buy them. That's a quick question I had there.

The final question is about SHARP. Regarding SHARP, the seniors' home adaptation and repair program: is it fully subscribed? This, of course, allows seniors to stay in their own homes longer. What number of seniors who stayed out of long-term care or government-subsidized housing – how many seniors has that allowed to stay out of government-subsidized housing? Based on that, what savings to the government have resulted from those seniors not having to go to government housing and staying in their own homes? Therefore, the cost of the program compared to the savings: was it good value for money? Is SHARP, in other words, meeting its desired outcomes?

Thank you. I'll cede my time to another colleague.

Ms Sigurdson: Yeah. Okay. I'll go ahead, then. The first question I have is for the housing management bodies. Just based on the resources that you have, how many units are closed and remain closed and can't be used for households who need accommodation because you don't have enough funds to actually renovate them and do that? That's one question.

A second question. You know, the affordable housing strategy: you have a stakeholder advisory structure that met. I'm just wondering: what are the next steps coming out of that?

And just the indigenous housing capital program: I'd just like to know a little bit more of the outcomes described.

I believe Marie has a question, too.

Ms Renaud: I do. Thank you. I just wanted to know if you could explain how this ministry is going to align itself with the federal legislation called Accessible Canada Act. Obviously, there's a partnership between the province and the feds in terms of accessibility standards going forward, so if you could just explain sort of the work being done.

The Chair: Very good. We'll now turn it over to the government caucus members for their three minutes of reading questions into the record, please.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll move on quickly. On page 24 of the annual report under ministry financial highlights there is reference to \$5.4 million of debt servicing for the Alberta Social Housing Corporation. What is that debt related to, and how is your ministry managing the debt?

Secondly, I'd like to ask about the federal national housing strategy. What plans are in place with respect to that, in reflecting back on those announcements over a year ago, in terms of leveraging that for opportunities for adding additional affordable housing to the Alberta housing stock?

Thank you. Passing over to Member Reid.

10:30

Mr. Reid: Thank you. I have a question related to highlights from the revenues and expenses that are found on page 25 of the annual report. The last point under expenses states that "ASHC's \$28.2 million increase in expenses from the budget was due to one-time funding that was re-profiled from capital investments to fund additional capital grants for non-government owned projects." My question is: can the ministry explain what it means exactly as far as reprofiling goes, and could the ministry also explain to me what "non-government owned projects" means?

Thank you.

Mr. Gotfried: I think we have Member Toor in rotation as well.

I will take that round. With respect to elder abuse, which is, of course, an unfortunate situation that many seniors find themselves in, on page 12 of the annual report it states that preventing elder abuse is an ongoing priority for the ministry. Can the ministry speak to what initiatives are under way to help prevent and address elder abuse, can the ministry tell us how much was spent on the issue of elder abuse in 2018-19, and can the ministry explain in detail how many cases of elder abuse are reported each year, how many are investigated, and the qualitative and statistical results of those investigations?

Thank you.

Madam Chair, I think that's the end of our read-in round. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Well, thank you, then, members.

I'll move quickly on with the agenda. Thank you to ministry officials for joining us. We ask that any outstanding questions be responded to in writing within 30 days and forwarded to our committee clerk.

We'll move now on to other business, item 5 on our agenda, friends. The subcommittee on committee business met on May 8 to discuss the schedule for upcoming meetings. Pursuant to the motion

passed by the committee on April 27, the subcommittee agreed to invite the remaining ministries and entities that were already on our schedule to appear before us in June, starting with the Ministry of Transportation on June 9, Children's Services on the 16th, and Treasury Board and Finance and ATB on the 23rd.

In addition, the subcommittee is proposing eliminating our premeeting briefings for committee members in the morning before we meet in favour of the caucus research briefings held one week prior to the meeting. This will allow our regular PAC meetings to be two hours in length as opposed to the 1.5-hour meetings. Is there any discussion on these two topics?

Seeing none, given that the committee seems to be unanimous in this, I'd like to note for the record that we have received written submissions to questions asked of the Ministry of Health and Alberta Health Services at our February 11 meeting. As per the normal practice these will be posted to our external website.

Are there any other items for discussion under other business?

Mr. Gotfried: Madam Chair, for the change in the meetings do you need a mover on that, or are we okay just doing this as an administrative decision?

The Chair: It appears to be an administrative decision. I'll just have a look over at Aaron to confirm that.

Mr. Roth: Yes, Chair. That would be more administrative. Yeah.

The Chair: Okay. So just for the record, then, our Public Accounts meetings will be two hours in length regardless of whether the Public Accounts Committee is meeting while the Legislature is sitting or not. For the foreseeable future, while we don't know our confirmed sitting schedule, Public Accounts Committee will begin at 8:30 in the morning, but when we are sitting in the House, they will begin at 8. We will make sure that there is sufficient notice to committee members, to caucuses, and to the public when those meeting starting times change.

Our next meeting will be Tuesday, May 26, at 8 a.m.

I will call for a motion to adjourn. Would a member move that the meeting be adjourned?

Mr. Gotfried: So moved.

The Chair: Very good. Thank you, Member Gotfried. All in favour? Are there any opposed? Seeing none, thank you. That motion is carried.

Thank you, everyone, for your time. We will see you all next week.

[The committee adjourned at 10:35 a.m.]

