



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
First Session

Standing Committee
on
Public Accounts

Arts, Culture and Status of Women

Tuesday, May 6, 2025
9 a.m.

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**Legislative Assembly of Alberta
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First Session**

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UC), Deputy Chair

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de Jonge, Chantelle, Chestermere-Strathmore (UC)
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Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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Ministry of Arts, Culture and Status of Women

Kim Capstick, Deputy Minister

Jeff Dumont, Assistant Deputy Minister and Senior Financial Officer

Nilam Jetha, Assistant Deputy Minister, Status of Women and Creative and Community Development

Rheal Poirier, Executive Director, Francophone Secretariat

Matthew Wangler, Acting Assistant Deputy Minister, Heritage

9 a.m.

Tuesday, May 6, 2025

[Mr. Sabir in the chair]

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

My name is Irfan Sabir, the MLA for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall and chair of the committee. As we begin this morning, I would like to invite members, guests, and LAO staff at the table to introduce themselves. I will begin with my right.

Mr. Rowswell: Garth Rowswell, MLA, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk, MLA, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Mr. Dyck: Nolan Dyck, MLA for Grande Prairie.

Mrs. Johnson: Jennifer Johnson, MLA, Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Poirier: Rheal Poirier, executive director of the francophone secretariat.

Mr. Wangler: Matthew Wangler, acting assistant deputy minister of the heritage division.

Ms Capstick: Kim Capstick; deputy minister; Arts, Culture and Status of Women.

Mr. Dumont: Good morning. Jeff Dumont; senior financial officer; Arts, Culture and Status of Women.

Ms Jetha: Good morning. Nilam Jetha, assistant deputy minister for status of women and creative and community development.

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

Mr. Driesen: Rob Driesen, Assistant Auditor General.

Mr. Schmidt: Marlin Schmidt, Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Ms Renaud: Marie Renaud, St. Albert.

Mr. Ellingson: Court Ellingson, Calgary-Foothills.

Ms Robert: Good morning, Nancy Robert, clerk of *Journals* and committees.

Mr. Huffman: Warren Huffman, committee clerk.

The Chair: Thank you.

I will note for the record the following substitutions: Mr. Dyck for Mr. Lundy and Mr. Yao for Ms de Jonge. Mr Yao is not here.

A few housekeeping items to address before we turn to the business at hand. Please note that the microphones are operated by *Hansard* staff. Committee proceedings are live streamed on the Internet and broadcast and Alberta Assembly TV. The audio- and videostream and transcripts of the meeting can be accessed via the Legislative Assembly website. Please set your cellphones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting. Comments should flow through the chair at all times.

I would invite Member Chantelle de Jonge to introduce herself.

Ms de Jonge: MLA Chantelle de Jonge from Chestermere-Strathmore.

The Chair: Thank you.

Hon. members, are there any changes or additions to the agenda? If not, would a member move that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts approve the proposed agenda as distributed for its Tuesday, May 6, 2025, meeting? So moved. Any discussion on the motion? All in favour? Any opposed? Thank you. The motion is carried.

We also have minutes from the Tuesday, April 29, 2025, meeting of the committee. Do members have any errors or omissions to note? If not, would a member like to move that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts approve the minutes as distributed of its meeting held on Tuesday, April 29, 2025? Moved by MLA Rowswell. Any discussion on the motion? Seeing none, all in favour? Any opposed? Thank you. The motion is carried.

I would like to welcome our guests from the Ministry of Arts, Culture and Status of Women, who are here to address the ministry's annual report '23-24, responsibilities under their purview during the reporting period, and relevant reports of the Auditor General. Before I invite ministry officials to provide opening remarks, I would ask MLA Myles McDougall to introduce himself.

Mr. McDougall: Myles McDougall, Calgary-Fish Creek.

The Chair: Thank you. Deputy Minister, you have 10 minutes for your opening remarks.

Ms Capstick: Thank you very much. Good morning, everyone. I appreciate the opportunity to be here today to discuss the Arts, Culture and Status of Women 2023-24 annual report. As noted in introductions, I am joined at the table this morning by members of the ministry's executive team. There are also several other department officials in the gallery.

As noted in our annual report, Arts, Culture and Status of Women consists of the department, the Alberta Advisory Council on the Francophonie, and the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. We have a broad portfolio of programs and services focused on growing the province's creative and cultural industries, supporting Alberta artists and arts organizations, strengthening the nonprofit sector, expanding government services in French, engaging Alberta's 2SLGBTQIA-plus community, and increasing gender equality. The ministry also operates a network of provincial heritage sites and museums, including the Royal Tyrrell Museum of Palaeontology in Drumheller and the Royal Alberta Museum here in Edmonton, the Provincial Archives, and the province's two Jubilee Auditoria.

During the 2023 fiscal year our provincial museums welcomed thousands of guests, with more than 526,000 visiting the Royal Tyrrell alone, which was a record for the museum. This was due in part to exciting new exhibits, including a display at the Royal Tyrrell featuring Canada's largest, most complete triceratops skull, which was unveiled in October 2023. The Royal Alberta Museum opened its first international feature exhibit in several years, in February of 2024, with *Angkor: The Lost Empire of Cambodia*, and many other sites welcomed visitors from around the world as well, including the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village, which provided complementary admission to hundreds of Ukrainian newcomers. The Northern and Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditoria also welcomed more than 543,000 people in 2023-24, hosting 355 performances between the two facilities.

Through the Francophone Secretariat work continues to expand services available in French, with support and advice from the Advisory Council on the Francophonie. In 2023-24 the department successfully negotiated increased federal funding to support these

efforts and to implement Alberta's French policy and related action plan. Within the department new French services were added to support community grant applicants. Additional bilingual staff were hired, including at the Provincial Archives, and work continued to expand French services at our museums.

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts provided approximately \$19.4 million to approximately 625 arts organizations across the province in '23-24 as well as approximately \$2.7 million to individual Alberta artists to grow the sector. In April 2023 the government also named Sharon Rose Kootenay as the fourth artist-in-residence for the province.

The ministry hosted a variety of events throughout the year, including Alberta Day celebrations in both Edmonton and Calgary in recognition of the 118th anniversary of Alberta becoming a province. Grants were also provided to support 33 other municipalities across the province to host events in their local communities, and Alberta Culture Days provided Albertans with a wide range of activities to enjoy, with more than 1,000 events in 59 communities.

The department also continued to support the province's nonprofit community both with various grant programs as well as with training and other resources. In 2023-24 \$50 million was invested in nonprofit capital projects through the CFEP program, supporting community halls, playgrounds, art venues as well as indoor and outdoor sport and recreation facilities. In addition, through the government of Alberta's capital plan various arts, culture, and heritage infrastructure was supported through both the support for cultural infrastructure program and the investing Canada infrastructure program. This included investments in the Glenbow in Calgary, the Lindsay Park Sports Society MNP Community Sports Centre project, the Sam Centre at Telus Spark, and the renovation of Edmonton's Citadel Theatre.

In 2023-24 the department also invested more than \$12.8 million in 345 nonprofit organizations through the community initiatives program as well as \$495,000 in matching grants through Crowdfunding Alberta. The department also supports the nonprofit sector in several other ways beyond the community grants programs. This includes promoting and celebrating Alberta volunteers, with the northern lights volunteer recognition program and the stars of Alberta volunteer awards as well as the national volunteer week grant in partnership with Volunteer Alberta.

In addition, the department provided targeted grants to Volunteer Alberta and the Boys & Girls Clubs Big Brothers Big Sisters of Edmonton & Area to fund a two-year research project to better understand the evolution of volunteerism in the province and to the Calgary chamber of voluntary organizations, now called the Nonprofit Chamber, to conduct a workforce feasibility study for the sector.

In addition, a new online tool was launched in October of 2023 to streamline access to nonprofit resources and grants, making it easier for Alberta's 26,000 nonprofit organizations to access supports and services available.

9:10

Arts, Culture and Status of Women also works to help women in Alberta have access to good-quality jobs and fulfilling careers and supports 2SLGBTQIA+ Albertans and organizations to build safe communities where individuals feel free to be themselves.

In 2023-24 the department awarded the women in STEM scholarship to 90 students pursuing careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics and awarded another 40 students the Persons Case scholarship. The department also expanded the rural sexual assault support project, which trains rural health care

providers to perform sexual assault evidence collection, ensuring assault survivors can receive this service in their community.

Finally, during the 2023-24 fiscal year the department began work to develop a 10-year strategic plan to end gender-based violence in Alberta, launching extensive stakeholder engagement. As part of this work, the ministry also negotiated a four-year bilateral agreement with the federal government for an additional \$54 million to support Alberta's ongoing work in this area.

The department also continues to support the growth of the province's local film, television, music, and publishing sectors. The department provided grants to 47 Alberta book and magazine publishers valued at approximately \$1.5 million as well as four sound recording agencies. In support of creating more music spaces, the province invested \$1.25 million in the National Music Centre in Calgary to support exhibitions, education, performances, and artist development opportunities. In addition, targeted investments were made to promote Alberta musicians and authors, both domestically and internationally.

Year 2023-24 was a particularly exciting year for film and television in Alberta. Arts, Culture and Status of Women supports this sector in multiple ways, including targeted grants to support local script development, local productions, postproduction, visual effects, and digital animation through the Alberta media fund. This complements the film and television tax credit offered through Jobs, Economy and Trade by developing the crew depth needed to support international productions. This work was enhanced in 2023 with the establishment of a new training and mentorship incentive program that provides funding for both mentor and mentee roles on set.

Our Alberta Film Commission further supports the growth of Alberta's film and television industry by promoting Alberta as a world-class film location, encouraging external investment. This important work was recognized in 2023 when the Alberta Film Commission in collaboration with Calgary Economic Development, and Edmonton Screen Industries Office received the outstanding film commission award at the 10th Annual Location Managers Guild International awards. The award specifically recognized Alberta's exemplary support for *The Last of Us*. Alberta-shot projects such as *The Last of Us* and *Prey* also went on to receive Emmy nominations, further elevating Alberta's global profile in the world of film and television.

At the time of the annual report being discussed here today, the department also had responsibility for supporting sport in Alberta. In 2023 the department introduced the every kid can play program, making access to sport, physical activity, and recreation more affordable. This responsibility and the program was transferred to Alberta Tourism and Sport in June 2023.

To close, I will note that the ministry has no recommendations from the Auditor General from the 2023-24 fiscal year. With that, I thank you for the opportunity to present Arts, Culture and Status of Women's 2023-24 annual report this morning. I would be happy to answer any questions that members may have.

The Chair: Thank you, Deputy Minister.

I would now turn it over to the Auditor General for his comments. Mr. Wylie, you have five minutes.

Mr. Wylie: Well, thank you, Chair, members. It's good to be with you. My comments will be brief given the intro by the deputy. I maybe will indicate though that we do audit certain transactions at the department as required to issue an opinion on the consolidated financial statements. We do some financial work at the department as well as we audit the financial statements for the Alberta Foundation for the Arts.

As the deputy indicated, we have no recommendations relating to our work in fiscal 2024, and we have no outstanding recommendations related to our work on AFA as well as any past work that we've done.

Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: Thank you. That was quick.

We will now proceed to questions from committee members and we will begin with the Official Opposition. You have 15 minutes.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you very much. Given that grants account for 70 per cent of the ministry's expenses and that there are no performance measures for grants in the annual report, can the deputy tell the committee how the effectiveness of these granting programs is measured?

Ms Capstick: Certainly. We have a variety of community grants through our community and voluntary support services branch, the most significant that I mentioned in the opening statements being CFEP and CIP. All of those programs require applicants who are successful in receiving a grant to provide reporting to the department on how that money was invested in community. We use that to ensure that the programs and services that nonprofit organizations propose to develop through their application processes are, in fact, what the money is invested in. We also use those reports to ensure that the match funding that is required for nonprofits is consistent with what was included in applications.

Mr. Schmidt: I appreciate that, but does the department set any outcomes at the outset of the program? When you're opening up a round of CIP or CFEP applications, does it say, you know, "We're targeting accessibility things in community halls" or a particular type of cultural offering? Does it set those at the outset of an intake and then select – because you get more applications than you can grant, how do you select the winning ones?

Ms Capstick: You are absolutely correct. The programs are oversubscribed. I would say that for the CFEP program, which includes both a small and a large stream, as well as the CIP project grant, which supports a variety of programs and events, we very intentionally don't set specific areas of focus for those grants. They are open to all nonprofits that are in good standing in the province, as I mentioned in my opening comments, 26,000 or so at any given time according to our registry information. We very intentionally leave it to the nonprofit community to determine what their priorities are and bring forward that as part of their applications. We certainly do consider a variety of criteria, including the match funding and the fiscal and operational health of the organization, project readiness, when we are considering which programs would be recommended for approval. The exception to that is the CIP operating grant, which is more focused on supporting vulnerable Albertans. That is a smaller subsector of the nonprofit community that would be eligible for that particular grant.

Mr. Schmidt: On that, then, do you have any measurements of effectiveness or targets or outcomes for the CIP operating grants? You said that it's targeted towards vulnerable Albertans. How well is that program working? How would Albertans know if that program is working or not?

Ms Capstick: The CIP operating grant is meant to provide one-time operating support to those organizations to either expand programming or do developmental work as an organization to be self-sustaining. We do, as with the other programs that I mentioned, receive reports on a project-by-project basis of the programs that we support to ensure that the program outcomes that the nonprofit

organization has established for themselves in the community are met and that the outcomes that were included in the application are met.

Mr. Schmidt: Now, when our government was elected in 2015, we ended the practice of allowing private members of the government caucus to direct funds in the CIP and the CFEP programs. Did the department resume that practice in '23-24? Do private members of the government caucus have input into the awarding of CIP or CFEP grants?

Ms Capstick: The department prepares grant recommendation documents that are shared with the minister, and the minister makes the final determination.

9:20

Mr. Schmidt: Talk to me about – this is my favourite program in all of government – other initiatives. You know, tell Albertans why this isn't just a pork barrel line in Culture's budget.

Ms Capstick: The other initiatives program is designed to be able to support nonprofit programs and activities that may not be eligible for the other grants that are available through the department. This can sometimes include things like emergencies. It can include support for one-time events that may be happening or opportunities for artistic events. It can include the research program that I mentioned with the Nonprofit Chamber to do a workforce feasibility study on behalf of the nonprofit sector, the work that we are doing in relation to trying to understand the impact of declining volunteerism. Those are the kinds of programs that would be eligible under the OIP program.

Mr. Schmidt: Is there a document that sets out eligibility for other initiatives? Is there any policy that establishes other initiatives eligibility grants?

Ms Capstick: It is open to nonprofits that are in good standing as per the other grant programs, but its intent is deliberately left broad to ensure that it can capture those kinds of activities.

Mr. Schmidt: Who makes the ultimate decision, then, as to the awarding of those grants? Is it also the minister?

Ms Capstick: The minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Okay. So it is a pork barrel. It's a pork barrel line.

Now, originally in the '23-24 estimates it was voted to be \$3.2 million. There was an excess of \$367,000 spent in that. Can you tell us specifically why that extra \$367,000 was needed to support other initiatives in '23-24?

Ms Capstick: We could look that up for you if you want to go to the next question.

Mr. Schmidt: Sure, and if you can get back to me at some point during the meeting, that would be great.

Ms Capstick: Yeah. Absolutely.

Mr. Schmidt: Now, in the fall of 2023 I asked the minister in question period to provide additional provincial grants to keep the flying canoe festival afloat, a festival that's in my riding that occurs every year. This grant is discussed on page 20 of the annual report. Unfortunately, not every festival in the province has an MLA who can stand up and embarrass the minister into providing additional funding when the federal government pulls their funding. I wonder

if the department can tell the committee how many other festivals like flying canoe had federal funding cut in '23-24.

Ms Capstick: I wouldn't be able to tell you the list of the federal funding decisions. That would be something you would need to speak to the federal department about.

I can say that between both the community grants programs, CIP project in particular, as well as the Alberta Foundation for the Arts programs we support a wide variety of festivals and events throughout the province every year.

Mr. Schmidt: So the department didn't monitor the amount of federal dollars that were cut from festivals in the process of Alberta in '23-24. Is that correct?

Ms Capstick: We would not have it on a per festival basis because we . . .

Mr. Schmidt: Okay. Do you have an idea of what the aggregate amount of federal funding cuts to festivals was in '23-24?

Ms Capstick: I don't have that.

Mr. Schmidt: You don't have that either. Okay.

I certainly heard from a number of other festival organizers in '23-24 about the impact of federal cuts, wondering what they could do to advocate to the province for making up that shortfall from the federal government. Did any other provincial festivals in '23-24 get additional funding, like the flying canoe festival, to make up for federal shortfalls in funding?

Ms Capstick: Well, certainly, through the application process we do request information about other sources of funding, and we would have some awareness at the program level of what was provided from other levels of government as part of an application. We issue probably almost a thousand grants a year. I don't have the full list in front of me to tell you whether or not any of them had a change in their federal funding.

Mr. Schmidt: Why did you point out flying canoe in particular, then? Like, was it just an example, or was it the only one that provided funding? Just give us a sense of why that festival was singled out.

Ms Capstick: Flying canoe is relevant in a couple of different ways to us as a department, both because of its, obviously, nonprofit and arts focus but also its focus on the Francophonie community, making it particularly relevant to us with our portfolio.

Mr. Schmidt: The department doesn't track federal funding to festivals. It doesn't have any information on the amount of the federal cuts or the impacts. Do you have a sense of the overall state of health of festival organizations in the province as a result of these federal cuts? Did you monitor whether any festivals had to cancel or downsize because of federal cuts?

Ms Capstick: Certainly, we are aware that arts and culture festivals, like many in the arts sector and in the nonprofit sector, frankly, are struggling. This is due to a variety of reasons. Certainly, funding is relevant to that, as is dropping volunteerism rates, as is changing consumer behaviours around arts and culture events. So we are certainly well aware that the community is facing some cumulative pressures, whether it be festivals or other kinds of arts organizations. Both the department and the AFA are working to make sure that we understand what those challenges are as well as

make sure that we're able to provide support and adjust programs as necessary to be able to meet those changing demands.

The AFA did some work with the arts sector in particular to try and better understand what that changing consumer behaviour looks like and what that means for organizations in the way that they reach out to community. Obviously, a big part of them being successful is being able to have people be able to participate. Certainly, we are aware of those compounding challenges.

Mr. Schmidt: Yeah. Don't shy away from the details. What did the department find out in '23 and '24? What were the challenges specifically? You said that the department was adjusting programs and how they're delivered and the kind of supports. Give us some examples of changes that you made in '23-24 to better support festivals.

Ms Capstick: Some of the changes that we would have noted through the work of the AFA included things like a change in relationship with arts organizations. For example, demographically, we understand that younger Albertans tend not to buy a subscription to things like the theatre. They will tend to look for a variety of opportunities across a variety of different types of art and types of organizations. That very much changes the relationship an arts organization has with its community.

We're seeing that same sort of behavioural change happen in volunteerism in that, as opposed to more exclusive relationships with a particular sector or organization, volunteers are looking for more drop-in, one-time opportunities. Again, that requires arts organizations and nonprofit organizations to really adapt the way that they reach out to their audiences as well as their volunteers.

Organizations have shared with us changing behaviour with regard to donations as well, which is part of the reason why the department created Crowdfunding Alberta.

9:30

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now proceed to questions from the government side. MLA Johnson.

Mrs. Johnson: Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. Through you to the team, thank you for all the work that you do and for joining us here this morning. On page 19 and 20 of the annual report it speaks to the government of Alberta's capital plan, which supported investment in infrastructure across the province, including arts, culture, and heritage facilities. These are essential investments for our communities, and I do commend the ministry for all of your work in that process. To the deputy: what projects were supported in 2023 and '24? How did these capital grants enhance Alberta's quality of life and stimulate economic activity?

Ms Capstick: As part of the annual budget process the government of Alberta develops a capital plan that outlines the various infrastructure programs that we would support across the province. This would be in addition to the capital projects that are supported through the community facility enhancement program, the CFEP program, that I mentioned earlier.

Budget 2023's capital plan included funding for eight nonprofit infrastructure programs. The Badlands Amphitheatre in Drumheller received support to renovate their lower bowl. Calgary Zoo received support for the Canadian wild redevelopment program. The Citadel Theatre, which I mentioned in my opening remarks, received support for their renewal, as did the Glenbow in Calgary, which is part of an overall government commitment of \$40 million to substantially redevelop the Glenbow and open up the entirety of the building to galleries and exhibition space. The MNP Community and Sport Centre, formerly known as the Repsol sport

centre, received funding to modernize and expand its facilities. Calgary Stampede Foundation received support for the Sam Centre as well as Telus Spark for gallery development, and the WinSport day lodge renovation project was also supported.

The department also supports programs in partnership with Alberta Infrastructure as part of the investing in Canada infrastructure program, and one new program was approved for funding under ICIP, and that was Camp Chief Hector.

Mrs. Johnson: Great. Thank you. Actually, hearing all that makes me want to go to each one of those and take part in each one of them.

Ms Capstick: They're very worth it.

Mrs. Johnson: Yeah. Thank you.

Can the ministry please confirm that all capital funding commitments from the 2023-24 reporting period were fulfilled without any cancellations? Can the ministry please confirm that these projects are projected to be completed on time and on budget?

Ms Capstick: I can confirm that all of the funding commitments made as part of Budget 2023 were fulfilled. Several projects have now been completed, including Calgary Zoo, Telus Spark, the MNP sports centre, and the Sam Centre. Others like Citadel, the Glenbow, Camp Chief Hector, and the Winspear, who also received funding through 2023, are ongoing, and we continue to monitor those programs very carefully.

Mrs. Johnson: Great. Thank you.

I'm going to go more into some women's issues here. Key objective 1.6 on page 22 of the annual report demonstrates the ministry's ongoing support for women's participation in Alberta's economy. This includes supporting women that pursue careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, STEM, which are traditionally underrepresented. Can the ministry provide additional insight into the supports for women's leadership and economic participation?

Ms Capstick: Certainly. The department works regularly with economic development leaders from across the province to understand how we can continue to support and encourage as well as advance opportunities for Alberta women. Ensuring women have access to good-quality jobs and can succeed in fulfilling careers is crucial to the success of our province and our economy. One of the ways that we are helping women is by supporting them to enter into high-paying fields where they are currently underrepresented, and that is certainly going to include STEM roles. That is the purpose of both the women in STEM and Persons Case scholarships that the department offers. We also work closely with partner ministries, and there are several others that provide funding to groups like Women Building Futures, that are focused on supporting women who are looking to enter into the trades.

The government of Alberta also funds organizations like Calgary YWCA and the Calgary Immigrant Women's Association, who are working to support women who are looking to enter into the child care sector in particular. This is particularly important as we look to develop the 10-year strategy to end gender-based violence. We know that financial independence for women opens up opportunities and choices for women.

I can also say that the private sector is also improving. We are pleased to see that 100 per cent of Alberta-based companies that form part of the TSX 60 index have two or more women on their board – that is something that we monitor – and 89 per cent report

that they have at least one woman in their executive ranks, which is progress. We're not quite there yet, but progress.

Mrs. Johnson: Well, thank you through you, Mr. Chair.

I think you touched on this a little bit, but I'm going to maybe go a little bit deeper. Maybe you can expand upon it. How is the ministry breaking down barriers to allow more opportunities – and you touched on some of those opportunities there. But how are you breaking down these barriers to allow for this, for women's participation in these underrepresented fields?

Ms Capstick: As I mentioned, one of the programs that the – the department has various roles when it comes to the status of women portfolio. One of them is that certainly we support other departments who are doing their work, but we deliver directly the two scholarship programs. Maybe I'll expand there. The women in STEM scholarship, in particular, provides \$2,500 scholarships to 50 women each year who are looking to study in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. These scholarships help women to pursue postsecondary education needed for in-demand careers like computer sciences, biological sciences, energy development, and much more.

Then, in addition, we offer the Persons Case scholarship, which provides \$2,500 to 40 students per year studying in the arts, humanities, or social sciences fields that are specifically about advancing gender equality or who are studying in a field where their gender is underrepresented.

Mrs. Johnson: All right. Thank you.

I will cede my time to my colleague Member Armstrong-Homeniuk.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Thank you, Chair, through you to the deputy minister. First of all, I want to thank you for all the hard work you do and all the good work that is done at the Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village. Of course, you probably can figure that's near and dear to my heart. I know that my ancestors are resting well knowing that their home is looked after very well. I do remember when my baba donated a bunch of artifacts to the place, particularly the Pylypow House. At a time before it was government, when it was private, she was wondering if it was really ever going to happen. She didn't live to see it, but I'm really glad that it's carried on very well. You're doing an excellent job there. Also, if anyone gets a chance, go to the school there. The teacher there is quite authentic to the era.

I have a question to ask you, obviously, Chair, through you to the deputy minister. We'll stay on the women's issues right now if that's all right with you. A follow-up on key objective 2.3, which also showcases the ministry's expanded support of the rural sexual assault support project. I understand this involves support training for health care workers in rural and remote communities, but I'd like to explore this a little bit more. Deputy Minister, could you provide some examples of the types of support provided to health care workers in these areas?

Ms Capstick: Certainly. In 2023-24, as noted, through the rural sexual assault support project the department worked with Northwestern Polytechnic to develop targeted training for health care professionals serving in rural communities related to forensic evidence collection and trauma-informed care for individuals who have experienced a recent sexual assault.

9:40

The course focuses on the unique role and responsibilities of health care professionals in this situation in assessment, intervention, evidence collection, and court testimony. Relevant

medical professionals, including physicians, nurses, nurse practitioners, paramedics, and midwives, working in rural and remote settings can access the training free of charge, and in-person training is also being offered for nursing students in postsecondary institutions. More than 350 medical professionals and more than 30 nursing students have taken the training, helping to ensure that sexual assault survivors get the help that they need in their community.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Thank you. This is such an important initiative, and I thank you for continuing it and supporting it. It is very important, especially in the rural and remote communities, where there are not the services like there are in the city. Thank you very, very much for that.

Chair, through you to the deputy minister, on page 17 of the annual report key objective 1.4 speaks to enhancing the capacity of nonprofit organizations and promoting the importance of volunteerism. These two goals strengthen community resilience, expand vital nonprofit services Albertans engage with every day, and empower citizens to make a lasting impact where it is needed most. Deputy Minister, could you please explain what initiatives were supported during the 2023-2024 reporting period?

Ms Capstick: As noted, the community grants, programs, and other resources that the department offers provide nonprofit organizations – are designed to strengthen these organizations and support their growth and self-reliance. One particular way that we do that is through the enhanced capacity advancement program, or ECAP. Through ECAP the department provides multiyear operating grants to overarching nonprofit organizations that are working to strengthen the nonprofit sector as a whole. The enhanced capacity advancement program provides up to \$225,000 per year, and for the 2023-24 year the department invested \$1.23 million in the program to support eight organizations.

Another program of note that is now complete is the creative partnership program. This was a one-time program designed to strengthen the partnerships that nonprofit organizations have with the private sector to diversify revenue sources. The program, which had a budget of \$2.3 million a year for four years, funded a variety of different partnerships, including Innovate Calgary to work with nonprofit organizations to be investment ready, the United Way Calgary to teach innovation and design thinking for nonprofits, and Flourish Alberta to help nonprofits find funding for new initiatives.

In addition to these grants, the department also offers facilitation support directly for nonprofits. Our staff offer a wide variety of training programs for nonprofits and a variety of other information resources through our online Alberta Non-profit Learning Centre. The community grants team offers live webinars training courses, information resources on how to fill out grant applications, board development, those kinds of things. In October 2023 the department also launched a new grant search tool that makes it easier for nonprofit organizations, many of which are volunteer run, to navigate the various grants that are available to them and the various resources offered by the ministry. The web tool includes information, program supports, as well as resources to start, manage, and end nonprofit organizations in the province.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Thank you.

Chair, I see that there are 19 seconds left, so I guess I'll . . .

The Chair: I think that's not enough for a good question.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: I'll pass it on to you. You can sing us a song or something.

The Chair: Thank you.

How about we hear from the Official Opposition for 10 minutes?

Mr. Ellingson: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm sure you could have squeezed in another question in 19 seconds.

Thank you to the team for joining us this morning. Through the chair, I'm going to ask some questions about reporting and the data that we see in the report. I'm looking at page 33 of the report, and I'm looking at the analysis of performance indicator 2(b), the rate of police-reported intimate partner violence for Alberta women per 100,000 population. We can see that the data here is drawn from Statistics Canada, and appreciating that it takes time to gather and report on data – I have lots of experience working with StatsCan. I know the stuff doesn't come quickly, and I expect that, at the time of producing the report, the 2023 data wasn't yet available. Perhaps you could tell us today the numbers for '23-24.

Ms Capstick: I don't have those with me right now, but as you note, the statistics that we use from Statistics Canada are delayed. The other thing that I would note is that while the rate of police-reported incidents is an important number for us to track, we understand that this is a crime that is vastly underreported, so we fully recognize that these statistics are not a complete story of the situation. That is something that we heard a lot about through . . .

Mr. Ellingson: Have you already put another plan in place to gather other points of data?

Ms Capstick: As noted in the annual report, we began work on the 10-year strategy to end gender-based violence during the '23-24 fiscal year. Certainly, one of the things that we heard during the engagement, during that time was the importance of data and gathering more data to better understand the situation.

Mr. Ellingson: But individual police departments maybe have that data on their own of the calls that come in to them reporting violence against women, that you could use to report on?

Ms Capstick: Certainly, I think that the issue at hand is that it's not being reported at all, so the Statistics Canada data or police data in general is an underrepresentation.

Mr. Ellingson: On that, I completely concur, but I think we can probably do a little bit more to gather the data that is actually there.

With respect to the table that you do present and not having the 2023 data, I did some googling around. That Statistics Canada table apparently is no longer available, the one that was drawn from for producing the report. There are other data points now available from Statistics Canada. They're now reporting police-reported intimate partner violence 2018 to 2023. The numbers aren't comparable to what we see in our report on page 33, so, again, I appreciate the challenge of, like, data points kind of moving over time, but what it does show is that Alberta's numbers are higher than the Canadian average and they're higher than Ontario and British Columbia. So I'm wondering, in the reporting on performance indicator 2(b), we are already acknowledging that the trend line isn't statistically significant, and it also doesn't present a target for the performance measure. Governments do frequently look at crossjurisdictional analysis. I'm wondering: why is there no target for this performance measure?

Ms Capstick: This is, as I mentioned, an indicator of trends and, as you note, an incomplete indicator of trends related to gender-based violence, both because of the underreporting issue that I noted earlier, but also . . .

Mr. Ellingson: When you drew from that StatsCan table to present in the report, did you also look to see whether or not Alberta's numbers were higher than other provinces?

Ms Capstick: Yes. And the fact that Alberta's numbers related to intimate partner violence and gender-based violence of all kinds is one of the primary reasons that we have been working to develop a 10-year strategy to end gender-based violence.

Mr. Ellingson: Do you think it would be worth while to be reporting on those comparator numbers?

Ms Capstick: Certainly. That is something that, as I noted, we heard during the engagement period for the 10-year strategy and that we will look to do more work on in the future.

9:50

Mr. Ellingson: Now, also understanding that the data – and I'm just going by what is presented, so I can only go by the report that I've been given to read. In noting that the trend is statistically insignificant, knowing that violence against women is wildly underreported, how do we know, then, whether or not the programming is effective? How do you know, then, whether or not the programming that you offer is having a positive influence on reducing the rate of gender-based violence?

Ms Capstick: Again, I think during the fiscal year that we are talking about here today we engaged or began the engagement process for the 10-year strategy to end gender-based violence. We heard from more than 500 individuals and organizations who are impacted by that violence, as part of that engagement, and the need for better data to track both the ...

Mr. Ellingson: When you update – that 10-year strategy: you mentioned in the report that it would be released this year, in 2025.

Ms Capstick: Correct.

Mr. Ellingson: Are we still on track for 2025?

Ms Capstick: Yes.

Mr. Ellingson: When that is released, then, will we see like new data points that are going to be gathered for us to understand what's happening in gender-based violence?

Ms Capstick: I certainly wouldn't want to presuppose the final strategy that will be released. It will be released this year. What I can say is that the need for a data strategy and for better measurement was something that we heard very clearly from community.

Mr. Ellingson: I'll certainly be hoping to see that as part of the strategy, as somebody who has worked on writing a number of strategies about economics, not about gender-based violence, but, obviously, having data points to know whether or not the programming is effective is important. It's important to know whether or not those data points can be gathered in a timely fashion, so when you're reporting in an annual report, maybe you can include data that is actually from that year and not from a year or two ago. I think that would be really helpful for all Albertans. I think everybody wants to understand, on this topic in particular, and when you talked about volunteerism, I think this is also an area where many Albertans are probably stepping forward to volunteer with a lot of not-for-profits to help out there.

I'm wondering with respect to that strategy, can you tell us how much you spent on the strategy in '23-24?

Ms Capstick: In the '23-24 year, that was the year that the department developed the federal bilateral agreement with the federal government. So a portion of the first year's dollars were invested in both the engagement process that I outlined, meeting with ...

Mr. Ellingson: Do you know how much was apportioned to those engagement sessions?

Ms Capstick: I can get the specifics for you of the engagement sessions.

Mr. Ellingson: You can report back also.

The ministry also notes that \$7 million was allocated but through both the department directly as well as through other ministries. Can you tell us, of the funding that's spent on gender-based violence, how much is in this ministry specifically? How much is in other ministries? And maybe tell me about the programming in those other ministries.

Ms Capstick: Certainly. Just give me a moment. As I noted, Alberta received \$6.9 million as part of the bilateral agreement in '23-24. The remaining three years of the agreement would see \$15.7 million in each year. The 2023 federal funding supported a variety of initiatives, as noted: the engagement process for the strategy development as well as \$2 million in gender-based violence prevention grants, prevention and support programs at postsecondary institutes to address sexual violence on campus, a family violence public awareness campaign.

The Chair: Thank you for that.

We'll move back to the government for 10 minutes. MLA Dyck.

Mr. Dyck: Excellent. Well, thank you, Chair. I really appreciate this, and thank you, everyone, for being here today.

Interestingly, I appreciate film. I was once in a film in little, tiny Sexsmith. I got to be a town councillor there for all of 45 minutes to an hour. It was great; good little film. We just got pulled in, basically, off the street for it. It was kind of fun.

I have a couple of questions here. On page 10 of the annual report, the Alberta Film Commission along with Calgary Economic Development and Edmonton Screen Industries Office. They received an award, which is fantastic, the outstanding film commission award, on some pretty cool work, but also on the Emmy award winning *The Last of Us* television series, which I think many of us have seen; a pretty fantastic series to be filmed here in Alberta. Can you expand, just some more detail, on what the award given to these commissions was for?

Ms Capstick: Certainly. The location managers guild international award honours outstanding and creative contributions that are made by location professionals in film and television as well as commercials, and it considers film commissions from around the world. The Alberta Film Commission is essentially a conduit between producers and all that we as a province have to offer to them, and our film commissioner provincially works very closely with regional partners like Calgary and Edmonton and those film commissions. Film commissioners would support producers in finding locations, advising on available programs that are available to support them, incentives available, and also assist in finding crews, which we are very grateful to have a lot of in the province of Alberta.

The nomination in particular was for the work around *The Last of Us*. As you can imagine, there was a vast number of locations required for that particular production, and it was a significant

milestone for us as a province and our screen industry as well as for the commission, and several members of the Alberta crew were also ultimately recognized for the work on that program.

Mr. Dyck: Interesting. Can you just explain as well just how some of the skills demonstrated through this award benefit Alberta's film industries? Are there further skill sets that are developed that we didn't have before? Can you just expand on that, what the benefit is for Albertans on this?

Ms Capstick: Certainly. Awards like the outstanding film commission award demonstrate the calibre and professionalism that we are very grateful to have within our own film commission as well as within our regional partners.

I think the other value is the reputational gains on the international scene from having that kind of award and recognition. It brings greater awareness of Alberta as a film destination, in that we not only have the crews and locations and incentives to support large studio productions, but that we also have a film commissioner that can provide supports directly. So the award really draws attention to those international location professionals, that they can reach out to Alberta, and we can provide them with the kinds of supports that they need. I'm very proud of the continued work of the film commission in that regard.

Mr. Dyck: I have a follow-up question on this, too. You mentioned reputational gains; can you expand a little bit on what that looks like practically? Who, maybe, are we gaining reputation with? Is it smaller film producers? Is it some of the majors? I know we mentioned *The Last of Us*. Also, I think there's *Prey* mentioned in this as well. What does this kind of scope of reputation growth look like?

Ms Capstick: I think it is fair to say that we are gaining a reputation as being a destination of choice for a wide variety of producers. If you look at the media festival that is held annually in Banff, where we bring the world to Alberta and have the opportunity to show producers and decision-makers from all of the large studios as well as small indies as well as Canadian and international indies. The value of that is that it offers us a wide variety of work for the crews in our sector. Certainly, the international productions like *The Last of Us* are significant and we're very proud to be able to support those, but other programming and other smaller productions, local productions, are also very important to be able to give crews the experience they need and to continue to work.

10:00

Mr. Dyck: Tying that in with what you just said, key objective 1.1 is to "grow Alberta's cultural industries over the next decade through targeted grants to the film and television industries to develop home-grown content, supporting local communities and economic diversification," which I know you know probably very well. In advancing the objective of growing our cultural industries, could you please give some highlights on that? Then, what are some of the action steps that you've been able to take in order to do so? It's actually quite interesting to expand the economy into film, so if you can maybe highlight a few ways that that's happened, specifically economically, and maybe give some context of what kind of jobs might be wrapped around a film production. I think oftentimes everyone just leaves the credits at the very end. You quickly glance through, and you're like: okay; I don't really recognize people. But those are all important jobs on a set, so maybe you can expand a little bit on some of those items as well.

Ms Capstick: Certainly. In 2023-24 the Alberta media fund was allocated an additional \$4 million. The Alberta media fund is designed to support local production, smaller budget local productions in particular. We provide dedicated grants in relation to project script development, production as well as postproduction. The reason that it is so important for us to develop that local crew and local skill set is, as I mentioned, that it does indirectly support the larger investments as well. Large-scale producers are looking at locations for a variety of reasons, one of which is that they can hire people who know how to do the thing that they need to do, so certainly that's a big part of that. But it isn't just, to your point, actors and directors. It is construction to build and design sets. It is the hospitality industry. It is hair and makeup design. It is costuming. The peripheral sector for film and television is quite vast, and when productions, both large and small, come to a community, they have a really expansive economic impact.

One of the things is, I think, that there's a lot of potential with film and television for Alberta. A significant amount of the film and television programs operate outside of Calgary and Edmonton in smaller communities, so that economic impact for the whole community can be felt very directly. Again, hotels that the crews and actors stay in, the restaurants that they eat in: it has a pretty profound economic impact.

Mr. Dyck: Thank you for that.

I guess just a further question on supporting local communities. Have there been any local communities that have drawn in and really started grabbing ahold in '23-24 just that economic diversification piece? Have there been any communities that have really jumped on board with this? And then, also, for you in the budget: in your analysis has it come down to that some of these communities are gaining other support from you and reputation because they're a destination for some of these film producers?

Ms Capstick: Certainly I would say that there are a number of communities across the province who have recognized the potential around film and television for that economic diversification that you mentioned. We've seen new regional film commissions be established, in southern Alberta for example, which has been incredibly valuable. I think the other piece that is worth noting is that when these film productions have the ability to go out into these smaller communities and find these interesting locations and get the exposure to the kinds of . . .

The Chair: Thank you.

We'll now move back to the Official Opposition for 10 minutes.

Mr. Ellingson: Thank you, Chair. If you ever want to talk more about film and television, I'm happy to do so. My time at CED gave me a pretty deep dive into that sector.

We were talking about the \$6.9 million from the feds in 2023, that \$2 million was going into prevention grants. You were beginning to give a list of, like, where that went. I'd like to hear some numbers. How much of those prevention grants would have been allocated from this ministry, and how much would have been allocated from other ministries?

Ms Capstick: Certainly. The \$2 million prevention grants specifically were allocated from Arts, Culture and Status of Women, and that was in addition to \$72,000 that was invested in the engagement that I mentioned in the development of the report. Advanced Education would have been responsible for the postsecondary programming that I mentioned regarding sexual

assault, in particular awareness on campus. That was a \$625,000 investment.

We work closely with Children and Family Services. There was \$2.5 million invested with them, and that supported, as I mentioned, a public awareness campaign on family and sexual violence. It also supported specialized support for the domestic abuse response team. Bystander training with the Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services, offender support, and men's programming received \$350,000. Work with the women's shelters to develop culturally responsive programming received \$74,000. There was some increase to existing culturally related programming as well for \$810,000. Strengthening the transportation options for individuals who are experiencing gender-based violence, again with Children and Family Services, for \$156,000.

We worked closely with Indigenous Relations. They were provided a total of \$700,000 for programs related to implementing the work of the Premier's council on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls as well as an Indigenous data initiative, as per your earlier questions. To bring more awareness, an analysis of how gender-based violence impacts Indigenous communities . . .

Mr. Ellingson: Now, I'm going to say thank you. It sounds like the list is long . . .

Ms Capstick: It is.

Mr. Ellingson: . . . and I do have other questions although I would love to hear the remainder of the list. Maybe you can submit the rest of the list after the meeting.

The ministry also says that it works with and supports 2SLGBTQIA-plus Albertans to build safe communities in which all individuals feel free to be themselves, yet there are no programs or initiatives listed in the annual report that speak to this commitment, and further this government is currently deliberately undermining and defunding legal programs delivered to support community members experiencing acts of violence. So I'm wondering if the minister can explain what programs and initiatives are in place to support the queer community.

Ms Capstick: The department has a variety of ways in which we support the 2SLGBTQIA-plus community. Certainly, one of the ways is through the community grants programs that I've spoken to, CIP and CFEP. For example, in 2023 the department provided \$80,000 to 2SLGBTQIA-plus organizations and initiatives, including Calgary Pride and Grand Prairie Pride, as examples. The department also held several different engagement sessions with community in 2024, specifically designed to better understand how we could work with community.

10:10

Mr. Ellingson: Was the community included in that broader, like, 10-year strategic engagement process?

Ms Capstick: Absolutely.

Mr. Ellingson: We've talked a little bit already about performance metrics and how problematic they are. Do we have any metrics to understand gender-based violence in the 2SLGBTQIA-plus community? Is it increasing or decreasing? What do we know about what's happening there?

Ms Capstick: As per my earlier comments, I would just caution to say that the statistics that we have for any community related to gender-based violence are likely an underestimation because of the lack of reporting. But we absolutely understand that various forms of gender-based violence impact various communities differently;

2SLGBTQIA Albertans are at risk of gender-based violence at a greater degree than others.

Mr. Ellingson: I'm going to say that indeed they are. That just happens to be a community that I'm intimately familiar with and connected to, so I appreciate any work that is happening there, and more than happy to, you know, be of support in any engagement that's happening with that community.

I'd like to talk also a little bit about the STEM programs. On page 35 about the additional performance metrics with respect to STEM: the data in the chart on page 35 is even more out of date, with the most recent year being '21-22. I'm curious why we're reporting such stale data. Do we not have '22-23 or '23-24?

Ms Capstick: Again, at the time that the report would be issued, this would be the most recent stat that we have.

Mr. Ellingson: Do you have that information now?

Ms Capstick: I don't have it with me today.

Mr. Ellingson: Would you be able to provide it after the meeting in a follow-up?

Ms Capstick: I can do that.

Mr. Ellingson: Thanks.

This indicator tracks the number of women in STEM programming. It displays it, if I'm correct, as a percentage against all women in postsecondary programming. In '21-22 there were 15,000 women involved in STEM programs. Does the department feel that the funded programs that are provided that support approximately 90 women a year are significant when there are 15,000 women already in STEM programs?

Ms Capstick: I think, certainly, what we are tracking with the indicator is to – as you note, we track both the number of enrolments and the number of enrolments proportionate to population to try and understand how increases in enrolments may be – while it may look like there's an increase in enrolments proportionately, it's flat.

Mr. Ellingson: Out of those 15,000 across, you know, our 27 postsecondaries in Alberta, are there specific programs? You talked about, like, the four subareas in STEM. Since grants are given to a relatively few number of people in these overall numbers of programs, are we targeting specific programs? Do we notice out of those subgroups specific programs that are underrepresented by women, and then that's what you target with the grants?

Ms Capstick: The eligibility is not specified to a particular program in that way. I would say, certainly, one of the programs that comes to mind that we receive a number of applicants from every year is engineering. Vast opportunities in this province for engineers, as one can imagine.

Mr. Ellingson: Do the grants focus in another way, like women that are facing other additional barriers, other than just women accessing STEM or entering STEM, other barriers that women may be presented with in accessing education, persons with disabilities, you know, women of colour, from specific cultural groups?

Ms Capstick: No. I would say that what we would look for as we review those applications for scholarship would be things like the individual's involvement in supporting other women who are seeking careers in related areas. That that would be the kind of additional information that we would consider as part of those

applications, whether it be mentoring, volunteering, those kinds of things.

The Chair: Thank you. We'll move back to the government caucus for a 10-minute block. MLA McDougall.

Mr. McDougall: Thank you very much for being here today.

I'm going to start off with objective 1.2. It states that the ministry's goal is to stand up for Albertans by advocating for equitable funding from the federal government with respect to the arts, culture, sports, and heritage sectors. It also mentions federal funding for the provision of government services and programs in French. Well, I guess the question is about "disproportionate," as you highlight the "disproportionate share of federal... funding" coming to Alberta compared to other provinces. What exactly is that disproportionate amount? If you can give me an indication of what we're talking about here in terms of relative funding.

Ms Capstick: Certainly. For arts funding a significant amount of federal funding would flow through to provinces from the Canada Council for the Arts, which is a federal agency. This is not dissimilar to the way that we would provide support through the Alberta Foundation for the Arts. In 2022-23 Alberta received only 6 per cent of Canada Council for the Arts funding despite being home to 9 per cent of the nation's artists. Alberta also received the least funding if you look at it from a per capita point of view, receiving about \$4.80 per capita compared to the national average of \$8.54.

Sort of regardless of how you look at it, arts funding is disproportionately being invested in the province. That is something that Minister Fir continues to advocate to her federal colleagues for, more consistent funding in that regard to address that funding disparity. She also has directed the Alberta Foundation of the Arts to advocate directly to Canada council to determine why there is the disparity that there is and to work on with the AFA to ensure that it gets addressed.

Mr. McDougall: That's interesting. I myself and many Albertans have been concerned by the reality that in many cases Alberta contributes much more to fiscal federalism than what we get back. This is another example. From a total dollar amount it's probably not, you know, that material relative to some of the bigger programs or bigger transfers. I guess I'd be interested to know: is there a rationale, is there a logic that has been determined as to why we're underperforming in terms of what we're getting from the federal government in that discussion that has happened with the federal government on this?

Ms Capstick: Certainly that's one of the things that the Alberta Foundation of the Arts is working closely with Canada council to understand. Why is it that Alberta artists are not being supported? Is it that programs are too difficult to access? Is it that they're being turned down? These are application-based programs for the most part. The work is to try and understand what it is that is the problem with the federal program that needs to be addressed as well as ensuring that Canada council is taking the time to promote programming in Alberta to make sure that Alberta artists are aware of the various programs that they may be eligible for.

Mr. McDougall: Okay. So work is in progress then, I guess, and we're still not totally understanding why it is.

Can the ministry provide some additional – you know, regarding the work, what is being funded by the federal government? What are they providing to Alberta?

Ms Capstick: In addition to arts funding through Canada council one of the other programming agreements that we have with the federal government that is particularly important to us as a ministry is in relation to French services.

10:20

Having the Francophone Secretariat within our department, we have historically been – that is another example of an area where we have as a province been underfunded compared to our population. The Canada-Alberta agreement for French language services was recently renegotiated, and I am pleased to report that we are starting to see that be corrected.

Alberta has the third-largest French speaking population outside of Quebec and our francophone communities continue to grow. As I mentioned, despite this until recently Alberta was receiving the second-lowest amount of federal funding amongst all the provinces and territories. The department was successful in negotiating an increase in federal funding in 2023-24, securing \$2.25 million annually through 2028. This is what used to be a \$650,000 per year investment, so that's a significant increase for us.

That federal funding will support the implementation of our French policy action plan, which is an action plan that is developed with the francophone community based on advice from our advisory council and others and it includes a variety of actions from across government to be able to increase French services.

It has also enabled us as a department to increase and continue to grow the French services that we provide directly, whether that be through our museums, through the Provincial Archives, as well as with partner ministries through Alberta Health Services, the courts, et cetera, and the Francophone Secretariat also works to ensure that we are actively promoting the French services that are available to French-speaking Albertans to ensure that they have an awareness of the programming that is available and the added programming that we add on an annual basis that is available to them in the language of their choice.

Mr. McDougall: Okay. Thank you very much on that.

Change of pace here. On page 31 of the report under performance measure 2(a) I can see a percentage of adult Albertans who have visited a heritage facility in the province, and it's outperformed the target set for the reporting period. These facilities, of course, include museums, visitor parks, visitor centres operated by the ministry and include federal, provincial, municipal, and nonprofit spaces.

Now, I noticed that the target was set at 20 per cent. The previous year was 16 per cent, much lower, and we actually achieved 59 per cent. It seems that our target was way, way too low and maybe based on COVID-type numbers, is that correct? Maybe you can explain this difference there.

Ms Capstick: Yeah. I think that certainly heritage visitation attendance grew significantly in 2023-24 at arts and culture activities across the province, both within our own museums and heritage sites as well as other arts and culture centres across the province. I think it, to your point, shows that Albertans were eager to re-engage with the arts and heritage community, and the community was eager to welcome them back.

Another factor is that as we did the questioning for this, one of the things that we noted and it was talked about earlier is that one of the most widely attended arts and culture events in the province are the festivals that we all enjoy across the province, which can include theatre, dance, performances, artists, lectures. To your point, I think it was very much a community eager to return and the sector very, very eager to welcome them back.

Mr. McDougall: Thank you.

Perhaps, you know, can you give me an idea what are the big draws here? What are the main facilities that people are going to in Alberta?

Ms Capstick: I can speak to our own facilities, perhaps. The Royal Tyrrell Museum in Drumheller, of our suite of provincially operated museums and heritage sites, is our most significant draw. As I mentioned in my opening comments, more than half a million guests in that fiscal year, a new record, and they are coming from around the world for the Royal Tyrrell.

The Chair: Thank you, Deputy Minister.

We'll move back to the Official Opposition members for 10 minutes of questions.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Chair. On that note, page 22 of the annual report talks about the academic work that the Royal Tyrrell Museum does, noting, I think, that they published 17 review papers in the '23-24 fiscal year. I'm wondering: does the department have any targets for publishing from the Royal Tyrrell Museum?

Ms Capstick: Not a specific target per se. I think the Royal Tyrrell Museum is at the forefront of research in a variety of areas because of the vast collection that we are fortunate to have at the museum, and we prioritize the research component at the museum as part of that work. It not only benefits the research community as a whole; it also often serves as a draw for people to come and visit the museum.

Mr. Schmidt: Sure. There's no measurement, I guess, that the department does of the academic impact that the work done at the Royal Tyrrell Museum has. Is that correct?

Ms Capstick: As noted, we track and report the number and frequency of research papers that are published, but there's no target for the number of publications.

Mr. Schmidt: Okay. Can the department tell us what – you know, every research paper has an impact score. Is the work that the Tyrrell Museum is doing being published in high-impact journals, low-impact journals? How many citations are they getting? Give us a sense of how valuable this work is to the broader academic community.

Ms Capstick: I don't have the impact scores with me today. I can tell you that the invitations and international attention that these research reports often get for the researchers would be evidence of the value and the significance of the find. As you mentioned, there were 17 scientific papers published in 12 publications related to the Royal Tyrrell in particular. That research, as I mentioned, is valuable also because we at the Tyrrell have access to such a wide variety of very important finds. The skull that I mentioned, that was recently . . .

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you. That's okay. I'm just wondering how the Royal Tyrrell Museum compares to other similar museums on the measure of research output. Do you do that kind of comparison?

Ms Capstick: I don't have that comparison.

Mr. Schmidt: You don't have that comparison, or the department doesn't undertake to look at those comparative museums?

Ms Capstick: I would have to do a follow-up to determine how we do that comparison.

Mr. Schmidt: Okay. Thank you very much. If the department could respond to the committee in writing, I would appreciate that.

Because a lot of the researchers who work at the Royal Tyrrell Museum are cross-appointed at the University of Alberta in particular, has the department undertaken any kind of impact assessment of cuts to operational funding at the University of Alberta or other research institutions in the province of Alberta on the work that the Tyrrell Museum has been able to do?

10:30

Ms Capstick: No.

Mr. Schmidt: No.

Are there any trends in the amount of research that the Tyrrell museum has done? So 17 papers in '22-23: is that more than previous years? Less? About the same?

Ms Capstick: I would have to undertake to get that information for you.

Mr. Schmidt: Okay. So no idea.

Now, according to page 74 of the annual report the Royal Tyrrell Museum received \$513,000 less than budgeted. I'm wondering if the department could tell the committee why that was the case.

Ms Capstick: Can you tell me the page number again? I'm sorry.

Mr. Schmidt: Page 74 of the annual report.

Ms Capstick: That would be mainly just vacancies being open longer than anticipated.

Mr. Schmidt: Do you have an understanding of what kinds of vacancies those were?

Ms Capstick: I don't have the list of the specifics.

Mr. Schmidt: You don't. Okay. Could you respond to us in writing with that information?

A similar line of questioning on the Royal Alberta Museum. Again, the report notes that it published 12 review papers and two peer-reviewed book chapters. What's the nature of the academic – the Tyrrell museum is pretty straightforward, a paleontology focus. What is the research focus for the academic publishing and research at the Royal Alberta Museum?

Ms Capstick: I'll ask Matthew to supplement. Certainly, to your point, the collection at the Tyrrell is much more focused than the collection at RAM. We have collection and expertise at RAM regarding plants and flora, insects from Alberta. It is not only artifacts that we would have expertise in.

I'd ask Matthew to supplement that, please.

Mr. Wangler: Yeah. There's a broad range of research that happens at the Royal Alberta Museum. We have, as the deputy has noted, both curators in the natural as well as the human history fields, and they undertake a wide range of research in any given year. Some of it is somewhat opportunistic. It may be related to exhibits that they have going on or conference presentations that they're planning to provide. So it ranges year over year, but they do exceptional research, just like the good folks at the Tyrrell.

Mr. Schmidt: Okay. On that note, if it's exceptional, what are the targets for publishing or measurement of impact of the publications that are happening at the Royal Alberta Museum? You say it's exceptional. How are you measuring exceptional research at the Royal Alberta Museum?

Mr. Wangler: Well, I would suggest that for the Royal Alberta Museum as a public institution their primary concern is benefit to Albertans, and that can break down in a couple of ways, so . . .

Mr. Schmidt: No. Sorry. I'm just looking for an answer to my question. You said that the research is exceptional. Now tell this committee how exceptional it is. Like, it's pretty straightforward. The number of publications, the impact that those publications have: it's well understood in the academic world that that is how you measure exceptional research. Does the department track those things, and can you provide that information to the committee?

Ms Capstick: We can undertake to get you more detail on that.

Mr. Schmidt: Okay. Thank you very much.

Now, how does the Royal Alberta Museum compare to other like museums across Canada, around the world in terms of its academic output and the quality of its academic output?

Ms Capstick: We can undertake to get that comparative for you as well.

Mr. Schmidt: You don't have that information with you today.

Ms Capstick: I do not.

Mr. Schmidt: Okay.

Now, again according to page 74 of the annual report the Royal Alberta Museum received \$1 million more than budgeted in the fiscal year. Can the department explain why that was the case?

Ms Capstick: That was primarily in support of the international exhibit that I mentioned, the Angkor exhibit, which was the first exhibit that we had in the Feature Gallery for several years. Those are particularly important exhibits for a museum like the Royal Alberta Museum because it gives local museum visitors a reason to return, so it's an important part of the work we do to increase visitation to the program.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you very much.

Did the department have any kind of plan to attract academics to either the Royal Alberta Museum or the Royal Tyrrell Museum as a place to conduct their research?

Ms Capstick: Certainly, we would be positioning the access to collections as a significant benefit to researchers that would be . . .

Mr. Schmidt: How would you do that?

Ms Capstick: Well, when we are filling positions at the museums, that would be part of it.

Can you talk a little bit about the most recent Tyrrell researcher that joined?

Mr. Wangler: Yeah. What I would say, particularly with respect to the Tyrrell, is that it is a destination of choice for paleontologists for two reasons. One is because it does do internationally recognized research but perhaps as importantly, its collection of specimens is really unmatched. So that is a natural draw for the institution for academics.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will move back to the government caucus for 10 minutes of questions. MLA de Jonge.

Ms de Jonge: Thank you, Chair, and good morning, everybody. I'm looking at page 27. It talks about arts activities and events and

the attendance at these events. I attend a lot in my constituency that are hosted by community and cultural associations, a lot of nonprofits, libraries, ag societies, artist guilds, theatre groups. I love going to these events. They're extremely rewarding. They really showcase all the talent and the cultural diversity of my constituency and across Alberta. It really brings people together, and right now, looking across Canada, I think that's important, bringing people together. This is one way that we do this in our communities, and I love that.

There are a lot of volunteers that step up and make this possible. I know this is something that you look at through your ministry, and you celebrate volunteerism through different awards and recognition programs. None of these events would happen without volunteers that step up to serve on boards and then, of course, in hosting these events just to make everything possible. There's so much that goes into running some of these events, and none of it would be possible without the generosity, the time, and the talent of Albertans.

Performance metric 1(a) specifically indicates and talks about the percentage of Albertans attending and participating in these types of events. I was interested to read in your report the steady increase in attendance from earlier years. I think that's something that I've noticed sort of anecdotally out in the community over the years, that attendance has grown. You know, probably since COVID as well people want to get out and go enjoy these different events.

It's interesting to see this, so I'm wondering if the ministry can share some of the factors from the ministry's perspective and research that have contributed to this increase in attendance. What's the general impact on these results, and how will the performance in this reporting period be carried on into the future? I think that's something we definitely want to see, the success of these events scattered across the province to continue. I'm wondering if you could share a bit about that.

Ms Capstick: Absolutely. In 2023-24 we did see attendance at arts and culture activities and events increase significantly from the previous year. As I mentioned, part of that I think is Albertans seeking to re-engage with the community and the community welcoming them back.

I think another significant factor there is the vast variety of opportunities that are available for Albertans to enjoy arts, culture, and heritage programming. I noted earlier that there are thousands of different arts, culture, and nonprofit organizations in the province that are supporting events every year. The Alberta Foundation for the Arts provided more than 600 grants to arts organizations in particular. We know that a big piece of the reason that Albertans will seek out these opportunities is just the variety of opportunities they offer for them and their families. The variety is certainly part of that.

I had mentioned earlier that festivals and fairs tend to be the most popular, whether they be related to art or dance or theatre or craft. But there is a vast variety of different arts programming that is available so that regardless of a person's interests in arts and culture there really is an opportunity, and that certainly contributes.

10:40

I think one of the other things that contributes and one of the things that is particularly important to Minister Fir is maintaining affordability for these programs, whether that is through our own programs, whether it be Alberta Day, that I mentioned, or our museums and heritage sites, making sure that those free events are available to Albertans but also making sure that we're supporting with community grants to ensure that costs can be kept low for those who are attending these kinds of events.

Ms de Jonge: I appreciate that, the point you made about affordability. Certainly, the cost to just host these things has risen, and we want to make sure that all Albertans can access these types of events and activities. A number of organizations in my constituency have applied to the different funding programs through your ministry and have been successful in those applications. It's made a huge impact in our community, so I really appreciate that those are available and the work that you do in supporting these arts events and activities throughout the province.

Turning back to page 21 of the annual report, key objective 1.5 talks about the ministry's strategy to invest in cultural heritage sites and to showcase our unique heritage to Albertans but also to international visitors. We've talked a bit already this morning about some of the draws that we have in an international audience, and I think that's fantastic. I know that the Minister of Tourism and Sport is working on drawing more visitors to the province, and that provides a great revenue stream, it provides great jobs for Albertans, and it's definitely a strategy that I'd like to see a continued focus on. I'm wondering if the ministry can provide some additional details on that strategy and how that contributes to Alberta's very rich history and heritage.

Ms Capstick: I was mentioning earlier that we are very fortunate to welcome guests from all over the world to our museums and heritage sites. In Drumheller alone we welcomed guests from 151 different countries. Dinosaurs are very popular around the world. As I mentioned, we operate 20 museum and heritage sites across the province, many of them being in rural communities so that they offer that rural tourism draw as well as sharing and telling the cultural history of the community. We have facilities like our two Royals but also Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Village, which was mentioned earlier, Rutherford House, Fort George and Buckingham House as historic structures. So we have a wide variety of opportunities for our guests, and we work very hard to make sure that we are maintaining the sites as well as the exhibits within them to make sure that there's always a reason to return and visit our sites.

Ms de Jonge: I've been to a number of these museums, and they're fantastic. Again, like you said, they really make a big difference in rural communities and draw visitors out to rural Alberta. I find that as I represent a community that has both sort of an urban part and a more rural part, I love being able to encourage folks closer to Calgary to take a road trip out to the prairies and to Drumheller to see the Royal Tyrrell. I recommend that to so many of my friends and neighbours in Chestermere-Strathmore, and they always enjoy the road trip, so I'll continue to do that.

I see in the annual report that in 2023 the Royal Tyrrell recorded its highest number of visitors ever – I like to think that a lot of those are from Chestermere-Strathmore, but I know it's a lot of international visitors as well – totalling an impressive 526,000 visitors. As part of your overall strategy that you talked about, I'm interested to know what investments and initiatives contributed to that record number. I know we've talked about the Royal Tyrrell for some time already this morning, but I'm interested to know specifically what investments and initiatives are driving that attendance growth.

Ms Capstick: I think, in the case of the Royal Tyrrell in particular, I've talked about the exhibits and refreshments of exhibits that we have done to give people a reason to return. I think the other thing that's really important there is we work very closely with the local community as well as with Travel Alberta to make Drumheller not just a destination for Albertans looking to visit the museum but a

destination internationally and going out to community, being able to spend some time in the Drumheller community and be able to ensure that the community gets the economic benefit of that increased traffic that is a draw.

The Chair: Thank you.

Before we move to the fifth and final rotation, I will invite Member Tany Yao to introduce himself.

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

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Yao: I love committees.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will move to the final rotation for this one. Members have three minutes to read in their questions.

Ms Renaud: Thanks. Merci, M. le Président et le comité. Ça va aller vite. Je vais parler en anglais pour le *Hansard*. My questions are: how much did the ministry spend in this fiscal year, not including any federal transfers, on French language policy and francophone programs?

My second question: can the ministry confirm if they do or do not provide any funding for the French policy, or is funding solely from the federal government?

My third question: given there are no performance metrics for objective 2.5, how does the ministry measure effectiveness of its efforts to support or engage the Alberta francophone community?

Fourth question. Actually, let me skip that one. The annual report on page 26 talks about successful products to provide meaningful information to French language Albertans, including 250 tweets at Bonjour Alberta, tax tips, budgeting 101. My question is: what else is the department doing to encourage French speakers to participate in democracy? Is there *Hansard* translation, bill translation, what-we-heard documents translated into French? Anything like that would be most helpful.

Let me try another one. I note the department discusses French policy awareness and training resulting in training of 90 participants in 18 ministries. With over 27,000 employees in 20 ministries, is the ministry satisfied with this level of engagement? Does the ministry have any targets or plans to improve? Given the federal investment of over \$11.2 million through a Canada-Alberta agreement on French language services from '23-28 what specific initiatives have been implemented to enhance French language services in sectors like health, justice, and education, and how are those impacts being measured?

Thank you.

Mr. Ellingson: With respect to women in STEM how does Alberta compare to other provinces with respect to the percentage of women in STEM or enrolment in STEM?

I'm curious. What is the gender balance between men and women in the identified STEM programs? I'm curious what percentage of women in STEM secure work-integrated learning positions or what percentage receive meaningful related employment after their education. Is there any data on gender pay equity in STEM-related fields, and are there any programs or initiatives that the government has to address gender pay inequity?

The Chair: That's all?

We will move to the government caucus for three minutes.

Mr. Rowswell: Okay. Thank you. Some of these have been brought up through discussion, but I just want to add some component of it

that I thought didn't quite get covered as we were going. Could the deputy minister please explain how the ministry promoted the importance of volunteerism through volunteer recognition programs, and how did Albertans across the province benefit from these programs?

The new artist in residence or arts ambassador was announced in April 2023. Could you report to the committee about the artist and how she has promoted the value of arts in Alberta?

10:50

On page 25 of the annual report the Alberta Foundation for the Arts has provided a significant number of grants to artists and art organizations in order to grow the Alberta arts sector to an even greater degree. Can the ministry expand on the process of how an individual organization qualifies for a grant under the AFA? Can the ministry provide some specific examples of how recipients have benefited from these grant programs?

Key objective 2.3 on page 24 of the annual report indicates that the ministry supported victims of domestic violence through the implementation of the national action plan to end gender-based violence. Can the ministry provide some additional details on the national action plan and how the Ministry of Arts, Culture and Status of Women works with other ministries to carry out the plan? Does the ministry have plans to target issues specific to Alberta with regard to gender-based violence?

I think that one was fairly well covered in questions by the opposition, so I don't think I need to do it.

That would wrap up the ones I wanted to bring forward.

The Chair: Thank you.

I would thank the ministry officials and the office of the Auditor General for their participation. We ask that any outstanding questions be responded to in writing within 30 days and forwarded to the committee clerk. Within 30 seconds or less ministry officials may leave, and we will continue with other items of the agenda.

Sure. We can take a quick break. People need to use the washroom.

[The committee adjourned from 10:52 a.m. to 10:58 a.m.]

The Chair: The Canadian Council of Public Accounts Committees is a group of legislators and staff from federal, provincial, and territorial Public Accounts committees across Canada that meets every year simultaneously with the Canadian Council of Legislative Auditors to discuss matters relating to financial accountability. This conference provides an opportunity to meet PAC members from other jurisdictions to discuss best practices of Public Accounts committees. It has been the practice of this committee to send the chair, the deputy chair, the committee clerk, and a committee research officer to attend. Previous committees have also identified two or three alternative members should any approved delegate be unable to attend.

Last September the conference was held in Quebec City and was attended by the chair, deputy chair, and two LAO staff. This year the conference is scheduled for September 7 to 9 but not in Quebec City; in Regina. I would suggest that we send the same group to represent Alberta again.

If there are any comments or questions. Member Schmidt.

Mr. Schmidt: Yeah. Thank you. Can anybody on the committee tell us what the cost of sending a delegation to Quebec City was?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Huffman: Thank you. I don't remember the cost of the flights off the top of my head. I know that registration for the conference,

I think, was \$500 a person. Then the additional cost would just be the flights, hotels, and per diems.

Mr. Schmidt: It seems like a pretty big – what's the estimated cost for sending the delegation, then, to Regina this year?

Mr. Huffman: Give me one second. I'll look. Actually, I don't know if that information has come out yet. I don't think that's come out.

Mr. Schmidt: No, no, no. But, like, flights and hotels: you know, if we're going to be voting on sending this, it would be nice to know how much it's going to cost the taxpayers before we vote on this.

Mr. Yao: You sound like a fiscal conservative. I love it.

Mr. Schmidt: Yeah. There we go. See? We've got crossparty support here.

The Chair: We can go to the vote. Let's see.

Mr. Yao: Chair, can I ask a question on this?

The Chair: You're asking a question?

Mr. Yao: It builds off the previous member's question.

The Chair: Sure.

Mr. Yao: What are the guidelines regarding the LAO and how it purchases things like tickets and stuff like that? I'm assuming there's no first class or anything like that. Like, there are rules and guidelines around that so there's no abuse, I guess, of the . . .

The Chair: It will follow just regular government practices.

Mr. Schmidt: Mr. Chair, while the committee clerk is looking up an estimate of cost, I'm wondering if the chair or the last delegation can tell us what outcomes were achieved from attending the last conference and what the targets and measures of success for attending this conference will be.

The Chair: I think, as I said, that it's an opportunity to hear from other PAC members. Usually it starts with every PAC chair providing some brief report of what they did in the year before. That's always helpful to hear from other members. And then Auditors General from across the province are there. There are panels that discuss how to bring accountability. Out of those discussions, we were able to bring back the audit-focused meeting that was not generally the practice here.

I can go on, but if there's anything . . .

Mr. Schmidt: Yeah, please do. Like, before we vote to send you guys, you know, not only do I want to know how much taxpayers are going to be on the hook for; what can they expect as far as improvements to the work that Public Accounts does after your attendance at the conference?

The Chair: I think it will improve the Public Accounts Committee's role in ensuring accountability. As I mentioned, we brought some changes, those audit-focused meetings, which I think were a good addition.

Ms Robert: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is just an estimate on costs. I just quickly did a bit of a google on flights to Regina. Estimating \$500 return tickets, economy to Regina times four people is \$2,000. I would estimate hotel is probably about \$200 a night in Regina, so \$800. And then assuming a \$500 registration fee, if it's similar to

last year, that's \$2,000. So that's \$4,800 plus per diems for food. Some meals are provided. Just an estimate, but I would say probably \$5,500 to \$6,000 for four people total.

Mr. Ellingson: Would the delegation consider writing a report of their experience and what they learned and a summary to present back to us when you come home?

The Chair: We can certainly do that if that's the wish of the committee.

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah, I guess I'll just say a few words. Like, I didn't know what to expect when I went there last year. It did spark, you know, what other PACs were doing across the province, and even federally they were there and represented as well. Then we had great conversations with the Auditor General and his team on how we can work together to make it more effective and get to the root of what he's trying to accomplish.

One of the things is getting on the audit-focused ones, to get them closer to when he releases them instead of two years after he's done it. If we can do that, we can be more effective holding departments to account or the way we do things like some of the east coast ones, how effective they were. They actually had 50 meetings in a 12-month period. Now, I'm not advocating for that, but they had a lot, you know . . .

Mr. Ellingson: Did you say five-zero?

11:05

Mr. Rowswell: Five-zero in a year.

Part of it was because – and this is some of the audit-focused ones – they'd have a topic that they'd have, and then it wouldn't be just one meeting. It might be stretched over three or four – right? – to get a more in-depth analysis of that. I'd like to dig a little deeper into that part of that and see how they go about that. I'm hoping to learn some stuff there.

The Chair: MLA Renaud.

Ms Renaud: Oh, thank you, Mr. Chair. Just to add on to what my colleague said, a report would be lovely, but you know what would be even nicer? Just hearing the two of you talk. If there's a way we can have a special meeting with an audit, maybe there's some time we can set aside for you both and also the AG to talk about the conference and for us to ask questions. I would find it quite enlightening.

Mr. Rowswell: We could do that even at our first audit-focused meeting in October and just report back to you.

Ms Renaud: I think that's great, actually. Okay. Thanks.

The Chair: We can add an hour to the first meeting. Will the member be agreeable to that? Anybody opposed to that?

Add an hour to the first meeting in October. I will go to the question, but that's, I guess, a decision point. We are adding an hour to the October meeting to hear from us.

Mrs. Johnson: I was just going to say that I think that's a fabulous idea, more than the written report. A written report goes out, and who has time to read it? But to sit and hear a discussion I think is so much more effective. Thank you for bringing that up, and I would totally support that so that you don't need to do a written one.

Thank you.

The Chair: I'm all for it. We already added an hour.

And write some speaking notes for me, at least 45 words.

Now the motion on the floor will be here. Can a member move that

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts approve the attendance of the chair, the deputy chair, and two Legislative Assembly Office staff at the 2025 CCPAC-CCOLA . . .

That's the name of the conference.

. . . from September 7 to 9, 2025, and that select committee members be identified as alternatives and their names provided to the committee clerk.

Can a member move that motion? So moved. Any discussion on the motion? All in favour? Any opposed? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Subcommittee on committee business report. The subcommittee on committee business met on April 15 with the Auditor General to make recommendations about the committee's meeting schedule for the 2025 fall session and to recommend audit reports of the Auditor General for the committee to review for its upcoming audit-focused meetings. The subcommittee's report was posted on the committee's internal site for review prior to today's meeting. Do members have any questions or comments to offer with respect to that report? Thank you.

Another item. I would like to remind members that when the committee first considered conducting audit-focused meetings, the subcommittee recommended holding two meetings in the 2025 spring session and one in the fall session. Last week we conducted our first audit-focused meeting, and the subcommittee has recommended that the second be held in October before the start of the fall session. The subcommittee further recommended that at the meeting the committee review the report of the Auditor General titled Process to Assess and Manage the Condition of Affordable Housing, released in November 2024, and invite officials from the Ministry of Seniors, Community and Social Services and the Alberta Social Housing Corporation to respond to questions from the committee.

The deputy chair and I can speak to this recommendation. However, it's pretty straightforward. Are any questions, concerns with respect to that?

Mr. Rowswell: Should we make a motion to . . .

The Chair: No, not yet.

Mr. Rowswell: Fair enough.

The Chair: Okay. We have a proposal for the committee to consider that we hold that outside-session PAC meeting on October 14, and if that's agreeable to the committee, we have a possible motion for some member to move. We can put the motion on the screen. The motion is that

the Standing Committee on Public Accounts (a) review the report of the Auditor General entitled Processes to Assess and Manage the Condition of Affordable Housing released in November of 2024 at the meeting to be held on October 14, 2025, and (b) invite officials from the Ministry of Seniors, Community and Social Services and Alberta Social Housing Corporation to address the report and present their respective action plans if available.

Can a member move that motion? Member Schmidt.

Any discussion on the motion?

Seeing none, all those in favour of the motion? Any opposed?

Motion is carried.

As we did in preparation for our first audit-focused meeting, if the committee wants to provide direction for any additional research requests for the second audit-focused meeting, they should

be received early so that the research services have enough time to work on it. I would suggest to please bring any request for research forward to our meeting on May 13 as that may be our final meeting before October and the only opportunity for the member to make that request.

The subcommittee has also recommended that the committee's third audit-focused meeting be held during the fall session to review the Auditor General's anticipated report on Alberta Health Services procurement processes if it is available. If it's not, the recommendation is that the committee instead review the Auditor General report on DynaLife procurement and contracting practices, which is expected to be available soon, and that the committee should review the AHS report once it's available, possibly during 2026 spring session.

First I will ask the Auditor General if he could speak to the timelines, if possible, on when he expects both this report to be completed and then available for the review.

Mr. Wylie: Thank you, Chair. I don't have the exact timelines. My suggestion would be, though, given the latest information I have, that DynaLife will be done first and that in the order of timing of this committee you'd likely probably want to bring that up as the first of those two reports. We're anticipating, if things go well, that the AHS examination would be done in the late fall of next year. That's kind of the best information we have right now. Things might change. It's very fluid. So take those dates with the best estimate in mind, but certainly we do believe that DynaLife will be done first. However that plays out with the committee's scheduling, you might want to factor it that way.

The Chair: Did you say the next one will be available next fall?

Mr. Wylie: We're hoping. You mean the AHS examination? Yeah. We're planning to have that done late fall of next year.

An Hon. Member: Of 2025 or 2026?

Mr. Wylie: Twenty twenty-five.

The Chair: This year.

Mr. Wylie: Yeah. I'm sorry. I was thinking of spring because you'd mentioned '26. Spring of '26 or fall of '25, right?

The Chair: Yeah.

Mr. Wylie: Yeah.

The Chair: Thank you.

With that information, I would suggest that if the AHS report has not been tabled by, say October 10 – or you want it earlier? – the committee will opt to review the DynaLife report instead and schedule the review of the AHS report once it's tabled. This would give everybody enough time to prepare for the meeting. Do members have any questions, comments?

If not, we have a prepared motion. Let's put that on screen. Can a member move that

the Standing Committee on Public Accounts at its 2025 fall session audit-focused meeting review the Auditor General's anticipated audit report on Alberta Health Services procurement practices if it is tabled on or before October 10, 2025, or, if the report is not tabled by that date, review the Auditor General's anticipated audit report on DynaLife procurement practices and invite officials from the Ministry of Health and any other entities as appropriate, as determined by the chair and deputy chair, to

speak to the report under review and present their respective action plans, if available.

Can a member move that motion? Member Schmidt.

11:15

Any discussion?

Seeing none, all those in favour? Any opposed?

The motion is carried.

Again, in order for there to be enough notice for the research staff to conduct proper research, if the committee wants to provide direction of any additional research requests for this third audit-focused meeting, those requests should be received early, so I suggest that any requests be forwarded to the clerk prior to the start of fall session on October 14.

Ms Robert: If I may, Mr. Chair?

The Chair: Yeah.

Ms Robert: For the fall audited-focused meeting on either AHS or DynaLife any additional research requests would need to come in the form of a motion at the October 14 meeting of the committee so that there would be then three weeks to prepare that research and get it to the members, because the meeting would take place November 18.

The Chair: Okay. Everything that Nancy said.

Fall meeting schedule. Finally, the subcommittee has recommended a fall schedule with four meetings for the committee to review ministry annual reports as well as one audit-focused meeting. There are only four sitting weeks since the fall session is scheduled to end before Tuesday, December 2. If the committee chooses to follow this recommendation, the proposed meeting with the Ministry of Justice would be the first meeting the committee meets with in 2026. The subcommittee proposed meeting schedule is Indigenous Relations, October 28; Advanced Education, November 4; an audit-focused meeting, November 18; Mental Health and Addiction, November 25; and Justice on a date to be determined later. The committee clerk has prepared wording for a potential motion. Can we put that motion on the screen? The possible motion is that

the Standing Committee on Public Accounts invite the following ministries to appear before the committee to respond to questions regarding each ministry's most recent annual report, responsibilities under their purview during the reporting period as well as relevant reports of the Auditor General and allow one spot, as indicated, for an audit-focused meeting with the relevant ministries and entities: (1) Indigenous Relations on October 28, 2025; (2) Advanced Education on November 4, 2025; (3) audit-focused meeting on November 18, 2025; (4) Mental Health and Addiction on November 25, 2025; (5) Justice on a date to be determined later.

Can I ask a member to move?

Mr. Schmidt: I'll move that.

The Chair: MLA Marlin Schmidt.

Any discussion?

Mr. Schmidt: Yeah. Mr. Chair, just noticing the deputy chair's enthusiasm for holding more meetings, I'd like to amend this motion to add 35 more meetings in the calendar year.

Mr. Rowswell: That'd be a tough one to get passed.

The Chair: The deputy chair is not that enthusiastic.

Mr. Schmidt: I'll withdraw the motion.

The Chair: That's good.

Any other discussion?

Seeing none, all those in favour? Any opposed?

The motion is carried.

Are there any other items for discussion under other business?

The next meeting of the committee will then be on May 13 with the Ministry of Transportation and Economic Corridors.

At this point I will call for a motion to adjourn. Would a member move . . .

Mr. Yao: Right here.

The Chair: First hear the motion.

Would a member move that the Tuesday, May 6, 2025, meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be adjourned? Member Yao. All in favour? Any opposed?

Thank you. The meeting is now adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 11:20 a.m.]

