



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Third Session

Standing Committee
on
Families and Communities

Ministry of Status of Women
Consideration of Main Estimates

Wednesday, April 5, 2017
3:30 p.m.

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Third Session**

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

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

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Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Participant

Ministry of Status of Women
Hon. Stephanie V. McLean, Minister

3:30 p.m.

Wednesday, April 5, 2017

[Ms Goehring in the chair]

**Ministry of Status of Women
Consideration of Main Estimates**

The Chair: I would like to call this meeting to order and welcome everyone. The committee has under consideration the estimates of the Ministry of Status of Women for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2018.

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

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

Mrs. Aheer: Leela Sharon Aheer, Chestermere-Rocky View.

I'd also like to introduce my researcher, Maureen Gough.

Ms McLean: Stephanie McLean, MLA for Calgary-Varsity, Minister of Status of Women and Service Alberta.

Seated next to me are Deputy Minister Kim Armstrong; the assistant deputy minister of gender policy, strategy, and innovation, Lisa Tchir; and the senior financial officer, Kevin Peterson.

Ms Miller: Barb Miller, MLA for Red Deer-South.

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

Drever: Deborah Drever, MLA for Calgary-Bow.

Ms Jansen: Sandra Jansen, Calgary-North West.

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

Ms McKittrick: Bonjour. Annie McKittrick, Sherwood Park.

Mr. Shepherd: Hello. David Shepherd, MLA for Edmonton-Centre.

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

The Chair: I'd like to note the following substitution for the record: Mr. Fraser for Mr. Rodney. Mr. Fraser, go ahead and introduce yourself.

Mr. Fraser: Rick Fraser, Calgary-South East.

The Chair: Thank you.

Please note that the microphones are being operated by *Hansard*, and the committee proceedings are being audio- and video streamed live. Please set your cellphones and other devices to silent for the duration of this meeting.

Hon. members, the standing orders set out the process for consideration of the main estimates. Before we proceed with the consideration of the main estimates for the Ministry of Status of Women, I would like to review briefly the standing orders governing the speaking rotation. As provided for in Standing Order 59.01(7), the rotation is as follows. The minister or the member of Executive Council acting on the minister's behalf may make opening remarks not exceeding 10 minutes. For the next 50 minutes members of the Official Opposition and the minister may speak. For the next 20 minutes the members of the third party, if any, and

the minister may speak. For the next 20 minutes the members of any other party represented in the Assembly or any independent members and the minister may speak. For the next 20 minutes private members of the government caucus and the minister may speak. And for the time remaining, we will follow the same rotation as just outlined to the extent possible; however, speaking times will be reduced to five minutes as set out in Standing Order 59.02(1)(c).

The speaking rotation is set out in the standing orders. Members wishing to participate must be present during the appropriate portion of this meeting. Members may speak more than once; however, speaking times for the first rotations are limited to 10 minutes at any one time. A minister and a member may combine their time for a total of 20 minutes. For the final rotation, with speaking times of up to five minutes, once again the minister and a member may combine their speaking times for a maximum total of 10 minutes. Discussion should flow through the chair at all times regardless of whether or not speaking times are being combined. Members are asked to advise the chair at the beginning of their rotation if they wish to combine their time with the minister's time. If members have any questions regarding speaking times or the rotation, please feel free to send a note or speak directly with myself or the committee clerk about this process.

A total of two hours has been scheduled to consider the estimates of the Ministry of Status of Women.

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

Ministry officials may be present and at the direction of the minister may address the committee. Ministry officials seated in the gallery, if called upon, have access to a microphone in the gallery area. Ministry officials are asked to introduce themselves for the record prior to responding to a question.

We have pages available to make deliveries should any notes or other materials need to pass between staff in the gallery and the table.

Members' staff may be present and seated along the committee room wall. Space permitting, opposition caucus staff may sit at the table; however, members have priority for seating at the table at all times.

If debate is exhausted prior to the two hours, the ministry estimates are deemed to have been considered for the time allotted in the schedule, and we will adjourn. Otherwise, we will adjourn today at 5:30 p.m.

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

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

The vote on estimates is deferred until consideration of all ministry estimates has concluded and will occur in Committee of Supply on April 19, 2017.

If there are any amendments, an amendment to an estimate cannot seek to increase the amount of the estimate being considered, change the destination of a grant, or change the destination or purpose of a subsidy. An amendment may be proposed to reduce an estimate, but the amendment cannot propose to reduce the estimate by its full amount. The vote on amendments is deferred until Committee of Supply convenes on April 19, 2017. Amendments must be in writing and approved by Parliamentary Counsel prior to the meeting at which they are being moved. Twenty copies of amendments, including the original, must be provided at the meeting for committee members and staff.

I will now invite the Minister of Status of Women to begin with her opening remarks. You have 10 minutes.

Ms McLean: Thank you very much, Chair. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the 2017-18 estimates for Status of Women. This is a year of green shoots starting to emerge in Alberta's economy, and we see the same in our pursuit of gender equality. I'm happy to have the next two hours to talk with you about this important work.

Should we need their technical expertise, I have with me some of my department staff. I've already introduced, next to me, my deputy minister, Kim Armstrong; the assistant deputy minister of gender policy, strategy, and innovation, Lisa Tchir; and the senior financial officer, Kevin Peterson. Behind me also are members of the department's executive team: Maryna Korchagina, the executive director of gender equality and advancement; Sonya Thompson, senior adviser, business planning and administration; and Olga Michailides, communications director.

Last year was our first full year as an operational ministry. We set out with ambitious plans even knowing that the work to achieve gender equality will take time. Still, with a small team and a relatively small budget we were determined to do more. That is how we've been able to train about 1,500 more government staff to use gender-based analysis plus in their recommendations to cabinet and in their day-to-day work, bringing the total number of GBA plus trained staff up to 2,300. It's how we were able to work closely with departments to make sure that their policy and program work reflects the needs of more Albertans, like with the child care pilot. Input from Status of Women made sure parents can find the quality, affordable care they need to be part of the workforce.

We worked with Labour to ensure that women's needs are heard such as with increases to the minimum wage. As we've often discussed, it has disadvantaged too many women. They are overrepresented at the lowest levels of pay and overrepresented in poverty stats.

It was also an important year for learning what we don't know, and this will help guide our actions going forward. Gender-based analysis helps us see how people experience our policies, programs, and laws differently. When we do our job right, we look at all the factors that influence those experiences besides gender.

For indigenous women the likelihood of their safety or economic security is lower than it is for most nonindigenous women. That's why I'm proud that Status of Women has been involved with initiatives that will lead to change for indigenous women.

Without a tool like GBA plus in use across government, our opportunities to increase gender equality in Alberta become harder to see. We are supporting government to recommend mindful policies and programs, and we are helping to evaluate them for success. All of our behind-the-scenes work has the GBA plus theme, and our efforts to expand its use across government are panning out.

Lowering incidents of gender-based violence is a primary focus of my ministry. Helping more women and girls know they can be safe in their homes and in public spaces means that half the population can be free to fully participate in society. That's the ultimate goal. Since we are focusing on Budget 2017 in this conversation, I can tell you that there are cost savings to reducing violence. We would need fewer shelters, tie up fewer law enforcement and judicial resources, ease the burden on the health care system, and keep more women working instead of coping with preventable barriers. Budget 2017 is about making practical changes that are making life more affordable for more Albertans, and it's about doing the things that Albertans need for a better life here. Status of Women is an important, integral part of that goal.

When women weigh the safety and security of their children against the prospect of work that pays more but requires more of their time, we have to look at the options available to help them make that decision. As such, I'm proud of our work with Children's Services to improve outcomes for the women who need child care so that they can be economically secure and for child care workers, most of whom are women, whose job it is to care for the children.

Our ministry is small. We know that to advance gender equality, we need to work closely with others. We have made it a priority to stay closely connected across government and also with community organizations, many of which have been working toward gender equality in Alberta for decades. We have a lot to learn from each other.

3:40

That is why the Status of Women granting program is so important. Besides being one of the ways we can connect more directly with the public, we can help organizations fund the projects they know are going to make lives better for more women and girls in Alberta. In Budget 2016-17 we dedicated \$500,000 to grants. We were careful stewards of taxpayer dollars and had more left over at the end of the year, so we made a decision to put more dollars into the hands of those hard-working Albertans who are helping survivors of sexual violence, who are encouraging women to raise their voices as leaders in their organizations or in political careers and who are supporting advancements in women's economic empowerment. I will be talking more about our successful grant recipients in the weeks and months to come, and I trust you'll join me in celebrating the excellent work that they do.

For the last few years we have all been a little more careful with our dollars, knowing they'll have to stretch a bit further. For part of Alberta's population, people who are paid little for their time and effort, that's been a way of life for them for a long time. It's easy to forget that things like choice don't always factor into the way that we experience the world. When you think of a single parent raising children, does a man or a woman come to mind? In Alberta, most single-parent households are led by women, and about a third of those are living in poverty. Even those women without children or with a partner are more likely to be working for minimum or low wages. They may have to take on extra work to ensure that there's enough left over at the end of the day.

Status of Women has worked closely with Labour to be sure that our government's phased increase to the minimum wage is helping to lift more women out of poverty, but the work doesn't end there. We have partnered with stakeholders to help them help more low-income women file their taxes so they can access provincial and federal credits that might be available to them. We know we can help more women do their best with the right resources around them. The work we've done to use GBA plus and to teach others to use it during this last year has been immensely helpful. It's helping us to further our work in violence prevention so that we can bend the curve on those stats that are too high, and it's helping us think about how to better connect women with the resources they need to not have to worry day after day about how to pay the bills.

What we have also learned is that there are too many data gaps right now. Although government and other organizations are collecting data to help make informed decisions, we are not currently asking the questions that help us understand how different people are experiencing our policies, programs, and our services. We support evidence-based decision-making. To get there, we need to collect gender disaggregated data, which is seriously lacking. Having more data that better clarifies outcomes for women versus men will help us to deliver even better policies that can help government save on costs over the long term. We need to fix this if

we are going to help shape government direction in meaningful ways. Our budget is very reasonable for the value it brings in support work that is essential to how Albertans live their lives and to how government meets their needs, making lives better for Albertans.

I ask you to vote in favour of the Status of Women estimates. Your vote will let us continue the good work we are doing and help us do even better. On behalf of all the hard-working people at Status of Women I thank you for your support.

The Chair: Thank you.

For the next 50 minutes members of the Official Opposition and the minister may speak. Mrs. Aheer, would you like the timer to be set for the first 20-minute interval so that you're aware of time, or would you prefer to let the full 50 minutes flow without interruption?

Mrs. Aheer: Twenty minutes would be lovely. Thank you.

The Chair: You're welcome. And would you like to combine your time with the minister?

Mrs. Aheer: Is that all right with you, Minister?

Ms McLean: Whatever you prefer.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. Yes, please, I'd like to combine.

The Chair: Wonderful. Thank you. Go ahead.

Mrs. Aheer: Okay. I just wanted to first of all thank the minister and the ministry staff for being here and for your time. I'm so honoured to participate in the estimates for Status of Women. This is my very first estimates in this portfolio, so it's really wonderful to be here. The responsibility of seeing all the ministries and policies with a woman's lens is an immense opportunity, and the idea of bringing in that collaboration advances gender equity.

If you don't mind, I'm just going to dive right into the estimates part of it, into the budget lines. I'd just like to take a look for a moment at page 250, budget lines 1.1 to 1.4 under operating expenses. You mentioned this last year, Minister, that you knew that there would be quite a large increase coming based on the fact that the ministry was just starting last year. So we're looking at a 400 per cent increase and with that, with the \$5 million that is with the salaries and wages and benefits, we have \$2 million to supplies and \$1 million to grants. That's the breakdown that we have that's written as we can see it. It's an interesting breakdown of the funding, which looks like it's going towards the staffing and not so much to the grants that are used to support the activities that are through those grants.

Obviously, I understand that the increase represents that the ministry just began two years ago. Would you mind explaining or could you give a breakdown of each of the categories: salaries, wages, and benefits; supplies; and grants?

Ms McLean: I'm sorry. I'm going to have to ask you to . . .

Mrs. Aheer: That's from the fiscal plan, page 250.

Ms McLean: Yes. I'm on 250, but I just want clarity as to whether you're talking about a particular line item. Are you talking about 1.1?

Mrs. Aheer: Well, if you look at page 123, budget lines 1.1 to – oh, sorry. The expenses in the fiscal plan, page 123.

Ms McLean: Okay. We're turning to that.

Mrs. Aheer: Then we're looking at just right under Status of Women. I guess it's about three-quarters of the way down on page 123. Sorry; I gave you the wrong number and pages at the beginning there. This is in the fiscal plan, page 123. Right about three-quarters of the way down there's Status of Women. I believe they're organized alphabetically. If you look under Salaries, Wages and Employee Benefits, we're at \$5 million there, under Supplies and Services it is \$2 million, and then the capital grants to others. I'm just wanting to understand how that's broken down just because it seems disproportionate to the dollars that are going into the programs. Just maybe if you could explain that.

Ms McLean: You're talking about the operating expense for ministry support services?

Mrs. Aheer: Uh-huh.

Ms McLean: Okay.

Mrs. Aheer: Well, it's in the fiscal plan. Would you like me to table the question?

Ms McLean: Yeah. We'll have to get back to you because I'm failing to – I mean, I understand what you're referring to, but you're asking about multiple line items at the same time.

Mrs. Aheer: Well, actually, it's listed right across in the fiscal plan there.

I'll go on to my next question if that's all right.

Ms McLean: Okay.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you very much. I think you answered this in your opening remarks, but I just wanted to clarify that you had said that you've brought forward 1,500 people into the ministry. Is that correct? Is that how many people are employed with the ministry now?

Ms McLean: No.

Mrs. Aheer: What was that in regard to? Would you mind clarifying?

Ms McLean: That was training for gender-based analysis across the Alberta public service. We've trained an additional 1,500 people on GBA plus analysis across ministries within the public service. So that brings our total at the time of these figures to 2,800 trained since 2014. We've been able to provide training and support through GOA. Actually, specifically, the number – I was just rounding – is 1,541 in '16-17 that received GBA plus training. We've also been able to, with our limited capacity, provide some GBA plus training to support arm's-length bodies such as the city of Edmonton and the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association. We've trained those folks, and we also provide analytical support to other GOA ministries and departments, but the expectation is that we set up centres of excellence and that then those centres of excellence have the capacity to not only carry out gender-based analysis but also to train additional people.

Mrs. Aheer: By analytical support you mean, like, with regard to all the other facets with regard to GBA plus training? What do you mean by analytical support? How does that work?

3:50

Ms McLean: I mean that when a policy is being developed or comes forward, certainly our goal is to build up capacity within ministries to be able to do the gender-based analysis on their own,

but we are more than happy to provide additional analytical support in the development of their policies as we are the ultimate centre of excellence.

Mrs. Aheer: I imagine that now you're probably able to reflect quite a lot based on what's happened within the ministries intergovernmentally. That would probably be a very good sort of, I guess, barometer as to what you're looking for with other services. How many are employed within the ministry itself?

Ms McLean: We have 36 FTEs.

Mrs. Aheer: Okay. Thank you so much.

How many of them are directly employed from the ministry, then, to implement the GBA plus program to the 2,800 or so people that are involved with it?

Ms McLean: We have four in that unit that is responsible for the training.

Mrs. Aheer: Okay. Thank you so much.

Do you also, then, have an approximate dollar figure for the costs directly related to the staffing of the GBA plus program?

Ms McLean: It's \$568,000 in salaries and \$74,000 in supplies and services.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you.

Within the ministry itself did you have a plan, or how did you decide what the best tool was to use? Within the GBA plus how did you end up developing the tools, going forward, in order to train the folks that you have out in the field?

Ms McLean: Essentially, this is not something that we are solely responsible for developing. This is a tool that is used across governments. It's certainly a tool that is used by the federal Status of Women as well. It's an international tool, and it has international standards, so we certainly didn't reinvent the wheel in the development of our program. We've certainly taken the opportunity to mould it for an Alberta-specific context. We are constantly improving the tool. It's an analytical tool, so we're constantly improving it.

We recently got additional feedback from Indigenous Relations and from the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women on the tool after we went through a training session with them. They gave us very valuable feedback that we've since incorporated, so it's something that we initially as a spring-off point used, the international standard for gender-based analysis that is also used by Status of Women Canada, but we are constantly reviewing it to ensure that it meets the needs of Albertans and the Alberta context, which is again reflected in the work that we did with the Institute for the Advancement of Aboriginal Women. Indigenous peoples of Alberta, you've probably heard before, have Alberta-specific concerns and Alberta-specific traditions, so that kind of information will certainly make our GBA plus training more specific to Alberta and will set it apart slightly from what you would see in other areas.

Overall, the basis of GBA plus training, which I've undergone myself as well, is something that has standards that are repeatable across anywhere that it's being used.

Mrs. Aheer: As you were going through developing the standards, I imagine there were many other programs that you looked at, like you were saying. Did you find any ones that particularly had gold

standards that we're trying to get Alberta to? You were saying that you took the GBA plus training yourself as well. How did you find that that impacted, like, how you ended up putting your programs forward? I imagine, you know, that within the GBA plus training you're looking at so many factors, right? It's not just gender, obviously. We're looking at geography and religion and culture and so many other things. Did you find that that made a tremendous amount of impact on your decisions going forward with the development? Who would you look towards as being some of the top standards going forward and, obviously, with sensitivity for the needs of Alberta with regard to indigenous people and even just the culture of Alberta, I would think, too?

Ms McLean: First, I'd like to certainly point out that we are not in the substantial development phase of GBA plus. This is now the second year of this ministry, but there was a unit within Human Services prior to the development of this ministry that was initially responsible for the development of implementing GBA plus and what it would look like. We've obviously expanded on that work. They have additional capacities to be able to expand on that work as well. I was not part of the development of GBA plus, and furthermore, like I said, it's an international standard. So it was not something that we developed in-house, but it's something that we expand upon to ensure that it reflects the Alberta context.

Perhaps it will be useful for me to just expand a bit on what it is and how it helps government, to ensure that we're all on the same page. As I mentioned, it's an internationally recognized policy and research tool that helps to advance equal outcomes for women and girls by identifying who benefits and who is excluded. That's the lens that we use to review our decision-making so that we can better understand the outcomes of our work. We believe that it is the right perspective to apply.

As something you've hit on, the "plus" in "GBA plus" is noteworthy because it expands our scope past gender alone to include sexual orientation, ethnicity, geography, income, gender identity and expression. Basically, it helps make sure that we can clearly see if any group benefits from our policies, programs, and legislation and who might be left behind.

Mrs. Aheer: Minister, I have a question, then, if you don't mind. So you're saying that there's not been substantial development of the GBA plus program as you see it so far within – I have "wide." I think that was your word. I'm not sure if I'm quoting you correctly. Maybe you can clarify what you meant by that. You said that there's not substantial development of GBA plus.

Ms McLean: No. I said that we're not in the substantive development phase. We're rolling it out.

Mrs. Aheer: You're rolling it out. Okay. As you're rolling it out . . .

Ms McLean: We're not in program creation here.

Mrs. Aheer: Pardon me?

Ms McLean: We're not in program creation. The program is running.

Mrs. Aheer: The program is running because it was there before you came into it.

Ms McLean: Yeah. The program creation did not occur under me.

Mrs. Aheer: But you're rolling it out as we speak.

Ms McLean: Of course.

Mrs. Aheer: Okay. As I understand it, the Status of Women uses the GBA plus to review policies, programs, and legislation across government, right? So the tool shines a light on how different populations are affected by government work, and it helps make sure that we can see clearly if any group benefits more than others. With respect to that, are you starting to see any of those numbers roll in with the rollout of the program? Are you starting to see any changes or things that are impacting the decisions of how you use GBA plus?

Ms McLean: Well, yeah. I'm happy to give you one example, certainly, that I have off the top of my mind, and that's with respect to our boards, our public boards. I'm just going to get the numbers for you to make sure that I have it accurate.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you so much.

Ms McLean: As we know, Alberta is home to visionary, accomplished, and well-educated women, and certainly when we apply a gendered lens on boards, we can see and certainly we did see that there was a discrepancy in the Alberta context.

4:00

Mrs. Aheer: Specifically to gender, Minister, or is this with regard to GBA plus and all the other factors that go along with that?

Ms McLean: With respect to gender. With respect to gender the public appointment system, the actual way that appointments were being done, we certainly analyzed through a GBA plus lens. It's clear that it was leaving women behind. Since we've provided that input, we've increased the number of women on our public boards.

Mrs. Aheer: How did you do that? How did you increase the number of women on boards?

Ms McLean: Okay. I'll reiterate.

Mrs. Aheer: Yeah. Sorry; just I'm asking the question.

Ms McLean: Sure. Yeah. A GBA plus analysis is done to multiple policies and programs. The way that board appointments were done was certainly analyzed through a lens by us. Our input was taken in the development of how we now recruit for agencies, boards, and commissions, all the way from where postings are done to the wording on postings themselves to ensure that they more reflect what women might see of themselves in a board appointment opportunity. Since we have made those changes, we have seen an increase in the number of women appointed to boards. We've also seen an increase in applications from women. In September 21.6 per cent of submitted applications were made by women, and in February 34.8 per cent were made by women.

Mrs. Aheer: Okay. That's good.

So you've changed, sort of, the way that you're posting and all of that. Are there also criteria that are involved with that as well that would – like, are there specifics that help along with the language as well as criteria that would help draw in women or specifically towards the other GBA plus aspects that help draw people into that? I understand you're laying it out through language. But are there also criteria specifically that are directed at that to make that more welcoming?

Ms McLean: Not necessarily. Certain board appointments – you're talking specifically with respect to boards?

Mrs. Aheer: Yeah. Well, with boards. I suppose it probably goes right across the board – sorry for that – right across all aspects of

this. I imagine that along with language, criteria can sometimes be a bit of a barrier if they're not put into a mechanism in a way that is inviting, particularly in gender, right? Obviously, you're saying you've seen an increase through language usage. I'm just wondering if that also is with criteria in respect of the job, that you're looking to open up and dissolve some of those barriers.

Ms McLean: Certainly, with certain board positions it requires a certain set of skills or expertise. You know, we may require an accountant or a lawyer in a particular position, and there's no getting around certain criteria, obviously. But with respect to the analysis done of past wording for the descriptions for the appointment, we found that something like volunteer experience was not valued or listed as a past experience that might make you a qualified applicant. Not every board position requires a managing partner at some top-five Canadian law firm. A lawyer who is a mom, who sits on her PTA and has community association experience may very well be quite qualified, but she didn't see herself in that position because we didn't list things like volunteer experience as being an asset to the position.

Mrs. Aheer: That's exactly what I was asking. Thank you so much.

Can you adapt the tools that you're speaking about to use online to meet the needs of – for example, if we're talking about GBA plus, as you were talking about with our First Nations and a lot of people who are actually living outside of city centres. For a lot of people we're going to need to have tools that are online to meet rural and remote communities who may not be able to come in for face-to-face training initially or may be looking to expand upon particular jobs or instances in those areas. How are you working with that?

Ms McLean: To be very clear, the mandate of Status of Women is to train the Alberta public service to ensure that our policies and our development goes through a gender-based analysis lens.

Mrs. Aheer: Is there a reach into rural and remote areas?

Ms McLean: We've certainly done some training with arm's-length partnerships where it's been requested of us, and we've been able to find the capacity to provide that training, like with AUMA, which does represent rural communities, and also, as I mentioned, the city of Edmonton. Those were examples where we were requested to provide GBA plus training, and we found the capacity to be able to do it. The AUMA example certainly does reach into rural and remote communities, so with those elected officials having that GBA plus lens, the goal is that that would then assist with the development of their policies for their councils, which would then cause change and improvement for women in rural and remote communities. We're happy, you know, certainly, if AAMDC made a similar request of us to attempt to find capacity to provide that training for them as well.

Mrs. Aheer: Are you asking for feedback, I imagine, from them as well to see how the process rolls out in those rural and more remote areas?

Ms McLean: We always are happy to receive feedback on how people viewed the training.

Mrs. Aheer: Well, if I may suggest, I think that will be an important part. To see this ministry grow, in order to make sure that those impacts are actually being felt, you probably want those numbers, I would think, in terms of analysis and making sure that GBA plus is doing what it's set out to do.

Ms McLean: Well, we do provide surveys for our stakeholders, and AUMA is one of our stakeholders. Our surveys and our feedback, which we engage in both informally and formally through our surveys, will provide the opportunity to get that feedback, so we already do that.

Mrs. Aheer: I look forward to seeing the feedback and sharing the feedback.

Part of creating women's economic security, preventing and addressing gender-based violence, increasing women's leadership and democratic participation, and reducing the barriers that keep women from leadership roles, I'd just like to draw your attention to budget line 2, gender equality and advancement, on page 250. Would you mind explaining or describing what is included in that line?

Ms McLean: I think what you're getting at is what the division does. It develops knowledge and understanding of the gender issues that Alberta women and girls face. It also helps improve decision-making so that the government of Alberta can address these issues. Gender equality and advancement does this work internally and also helps to connect the ministry with stakeholders, and the units include gender-based analysis plus, research and analytics, community capacity and outreach. Our work includes training government employees to use the GBA plus tool to make policy and program recommendations that consider the different ways that people identify themselves and make sure that no one is left behind, connecting with data scientists in government and beyond to be sure that we can see where there are equality gaps and why, and supporting good relationships with community organizations. The division also manages the ministry's current public programs, the grants programs, and the Persons Case scholarship.

Reaching gender equality in Alberta is a huge issue, and it spans from the wage gap to gender-based violence and beyond. You know, we could stretch ourselves thin to make progress on every file and achieve only meagre results, so based on our consultations with Albertans, we are focusing our time and energy on key areas that are fundamental to equality.

Status of Women is charged with leading the government's effort towards greater gender equality. We absolutely can't do it alone, so we continue reaching out to community groups and front-line providers to make sure that we're learning from their experience and working to achieve our goals together. It's really about expanding capacity. You know, our other ministry partners are also involved in this effort. The prior human services – sorry; I think it's now under Community and Social Services – and also Children's Services together are leading the work with men and boys, and we also continue to reach out to girls through events like International Day of the Girl and other outreach about gender equality. We certainly have the opportunity to ensure that the work meets the objectives of gender equality.

4:10

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. Then in line 3, same page, gender policy, strategy, and innovation, would you mind also describing what's in that line as well?

Ms McLean: Gender policy, strategy, and innovation?

Mrs. Aheer: Yes, please. Just right below where we were at.

Ms McLean: This division is focused on improving women's economic safety and leadership outcomes, which are our mandated priorities. The gender policy, strategy, and innovation section works closely with government partners and community groups to

help women become full participants in all aspects of life in Alberta, and the units include women's economic security, violence against women and girls, women in leadership and democratic participation, intergovernmental relations, and legislative planning.

Our work includes helping other ministries to develop policy recommendations that support better outcomes for women, educating Albertans through public events such as the national day of remembrance – sorry; the national day of remembrance and action against gender-based violence is the full title – which we held on December 6 here in the Federal building, and the Ready for Her tour, which you might have heard of, as well as highlighting gaps in recent and reliable data and information. I can go further into the description if you would like.

Mrs. Aheer: No, thank you very much. You have initiatives included in this line. Were some of those initiatives that you were talking about – maybe that's where we could get a little bit more into the descriptors about the initiatives because, you know, the dollars that are going into it, I imagine, to a large degree would be put forward into initiatives in order to create the policy and the strategies that you're trying to accomplish here. Would you mind going a little bit into those initiatives?

Ms McLean: You might have heard about the Ready for Her tour. The point of this – and, you know, tour is probably inaccurate. It's probably more of a movement at this point. The goal of it is to ensure women's democratic participation at all levels of government.

We held four panels in our initial beginning of the Ready for Her initiative. We went to various areas in the province – Calgary, Edmonton, Medicine Hat – and we held panels with women who have run for elected office and won, and we had indigenous women who ran for band council, and we had women who were city councillors. When we held these panels, we actually had a number of women come up to the microphone to engage with us who had run at other various levels as well, including federal government and trustee positions. It was really an opportunity for women to have intimate conversations with the panelists, who have been there, to ask them the questions that they may not be able to find answers for online and to really deeply engage and ask questions they might not otherwise have the opportunity to ask of someone who's experienced.

Mrs. Aheer: Are these similar to some of the initiatives like the Ask Her and Equal Voice and the sort of nonpartisan groups that are working towards bringing women into the political realm? Are you working in conjunction with some of those groups?

Ms McLean: Certainly, we have worked together with those groups on these initiatives. For example, tomorrow we are really doing a community-led initiative. We're holding another panel here in Edmonton with the school boards, the public school boards, and Equal Voice has been involved in the organization of it as well.

Mrs. Aheer: Is it nonpartisan?

Ms McLean: Absolutely.

Mrs. Aheer: Right, just so you're bringing as many people as you can.

Ms McLean: Everything that is through the Ministry of Status of Women, all government programming and initiatives, is nonpartisan. We are doing this partnership one tomorrow, which is exciting. We've also, certainly, worked with Equal Voice in other

capacities, including a Stampede event last summer – I saw you there, MLA Aheer – and also went to the opening reception. Again, you were there as well. We also were at the Equal Voice campaign school kickoff in Calgary.

Mrs. Aheer: Minister, what is the cost for the Ready for Her tour?

Ms McLean: We'd have to get that specific number back to you.

Mrs. Aheer: If you wouldn't mind, I would appreciate that so much. Thank you.

There are a ton of individual reasons, history and cultural aspects, that may help or hinder seeing women excel and, more importantly, the support systems that surround them. Understanding this, obviously, can help us to encourage our girls and women to reach beyond their own expectations. The minister notes that the Status of Women is the only stand-alone ministry in Canada. Have you investigated at all why provinces and territories haven't jumped onto the bandwagon of having this really important ministry be part of what's going on in those other provinces and territories? Are they reaching out to you, I guess, too, to find out what you're doing?

Ms McLean: Well, they have now.

Mrs. Aheer: Okay. Good job.

Ms McLean: Yeah. Ontario recently launched their own stand-alone ministry for the Status of Women.

Mrs. Aheer: Ontario did?

Ms McLean: Yes.

Mrs. Aheer: Oh, my goodness. That's wonderful.

Ms McLean: During the federal-provincial-territorial meeting that we had, we certainly had the opportunity to have discussions with ministers responsible for the status of women across the country. I think when it was made known that we had a stand-alone ministry, there was certainly interest in that. There were some discussions that we had, and they asked us about why we felt it was necessary to have a stand-alone ministry and, frankly, were impressed by the machinery that we have here even with limited funds. So I am confident that with our having a stand-alone ministry for the Status of Women, you know, combined with this being, certainly, a focus politically at the moment with the federal government putting some significant attention to women's issues across the country, that Ontario responded by developing their own stand-alone Ministry for the Status of Women.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you so much.

If I could take you over to the business plan, please, on page 134. We have some interesting statistics that are mentioned such as the lower overall labour force participation for females and especially indigenous females, but the qualifier is that caring for families contributes to those numbers. Are these statistics pulled off something that has come in as a result of your rollout of this program? Are these stats that you rely on that come from those people? How do you work that out in those numbers?

Ms McLean: These are stats that come jointly from Stats Canada and the Ministry of Labour.

Mrs. Aheer: Okay. Are they a little difficult to sort of be able to break down into – are they specifically, again, gender related, or is it as a result of a combination of what we focus on with GBA plus?

Ms McLean: These results, as articulated here, come from the Ministry of Labour and Stats Canada.

Mrs. Aheer: Yes, I understand that. But is it actually broken down into aspects specifically of gender?

Ms McLean: That's what I'm saying. As they are reflected here before you, that is what we receive. We do not amend this data in any way.

Mrs. Aheer: Right. So what you're saying here is that the overall labour force for females especially – okay. Is there any movement in research or thinking forward on including caring for families as an integral part of the labour force participation?

Ms McLean: I'm sorry. I'm going to have to ask you to just repeat your question.

Mrs. Aheer: The qualifier is that caring for families contributes to those numbers. So as a ministry, I suppose, are you looking at how it is that you can incorporate that necessity in order to potentially reduce the numbers, the participation of females in both of these areas by being inclusive of caring families and spaces?

4:20

Ms McLean: What we know in part is that labour force participation being lower is due in part to having to care for children and other family members when we're talking about women specifically. So affordable . . .

Mrs. Aheer: Is it gender specific in that, like, caring for families?

Ms McLean: Oh, absolutely. Yeah.

Mrs. Aheer: Okay.

Ms McLean: Women disproportionately carry the burden of looking after and caring for children and other family members, whether it's ailing parents, et cetera. Women tend to take on the unpaid burden, or what's referred to as the double day, working an extra 35 hours per week on household duties and taking care of family while men dedicate an extra 17 hours per week to that work. So 35 versus 17. It's fairly evident that it's disproportionate.

We can certainly address their ability to participate in the workforce by addressing the barriers that contribute to that. One of those barriers, certainly, is accessible and affordable child care. That is a massive problem in Alberta. There are wait-lists across the province, and there are certainly parts of the province that are disproportionately affected, where there are longer wait-lists and where child care is more expensive. That is why we co-led the initiative that led to our announcement of \$25-a-day child care as a pilot to both consider \$25-a-day child care as a model in and of itself and to promote accessibility for low-income and all income levels of Albertans. Many families refer to daycare fees as a second mortgage, and for many families that is the case due to the cost. That is one area that certainly we can affect.

But, I mean, one of the things that we certainly plan to do is to consider innovation and test concepts like flexible child care because we also know that if you are a single mom who works shift work, maybe night shifts, or a longer workday and you can't access child care because it's the typical 9 to 5 everywhere, then that's obviously going to be a barrier to you participating in the workforce.

Mrs. Aheer: I have the *Hansard* here from last year, and I believe it was Ms Tchir – I'm sorry if I'm saying your name wrong – that

had mentioned, actually, that you had some sort of groups that you had mentioned with regard to what standard you would like to see be reached, which I believe was Finland and Sweden if I remember correctly. Have you learned anything since, or have you been able to incorporate any of the standards that you were talking about last year with regard to child care? How do you see that going forward? I mean, we've been talking about it for some time.

You've mentioned some aspects, but I just remembered – I just pulled this – that there were lessons that you said that we could learn from other jurisdictions. Going forward with that, you've stated sort of similar things. Have you seen any forward momentum or movement on this? Do you foresee when in the future we're going to see this happen? If you had your magic wand, what would you like to see happen here?

Ms McLean: Absolutely, our \$25-a-day pilot for child care is an example of exactly what you're talking about. We announced that since the last estimates, and that is one example of us working towards greater gender equality. What my ADM was certainly in part referring to was that we find higher rates of gender equality in those countries. By doing some of the things or piloting some of things that they've done to achieve gender equality, we can get closer to the same goals, and one of those goals is affordable child care.

Mrs. Aheer: What are the higher rates? Like, do you have any numbers on that, the metrics, to share with us with respect to us versus them?

Ms McLean: That's not part of my estimates, so I don't have those numbers before me, but they're certainly available online.

Mrs. Aheer: Do you know what the cost is going to be of the pilot program? Going forward, if you were to implement this, what would that look like?

Ms McLean: The actual budget line is under Children's Services, so we don't have that.

Mrs. Aheer: Which was \$10 million, I think, last year.

Ms McLean: We are the policy portion, or hand in hand the policy portion.

Mrs. Aheer: Right. But I'm sure you would know – so those dollars don't flow through that specifically?

Ms McLean: Absolutely not. That does not flow through Status of Women.

Mrs. Aheer: Okay. So you're just directing policy?

Ms McLean: We work together with them for the development.

Mrs. Aheer: Okay. Thank you for that clarification.

Outcome 1 on page 134 is to strengthen the capacity of the GOA to advance legislation, policies, and programs that promote gender equality. Gender equality, as you know, is a core Canadian value. It's entrenched in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. All people can and must be able to contribute to an inclusive and democratic society. Your key strategy 1.1 – that's on page 134, I believe, as well – is to expand the GBA plus knowledge and capacity, which you were talking about sort of closer to the end of our discussion, so that it is integrated into the policy cycle across government and to establish the GBA plus within other ministries to create accountable communities of practice. Can you describe what you mean by an accountable community of practice?

Ms McLean: I addressed this a little bit earlier. There are GBA plus centres of responsibility within each department. That is staff embedded within a particular ministry. There are now four centres: Labour, Energy, Service Alberta, and Status of Women. We continue to train them, and the goal is that they will also be able to train and share our expertise and evaluate their work.

Mrs. Aheer: Is there a line item for that, Minister?

Ms McLean: For GBA plus? We already addressed that.

Mrs. Aheer: Not for GBA plus but specifically to this. Is there a breakdown of how this works specifically for the integrated policy across government, or is that just inclusive of that one line item?

Ms McLean: It's within the GBA plus unit. It's a small ministry, so it's not like you might be expecting what you saw in Energy, where you get that kind of massive amount of detail. We're already at a point, you know, of about \$7 million. This is the massive detail.

Mrs. Aheer: Okay. Well, you're obviously working with other ministries to implement the gender-based analysis plus tool. Which ministries so far have implemented it? Has it been right across the board? Have you seen implementation right across?

Ms McLean: Absolutely, all across the board. It is a requirement in the cabinet template now for all items that come before the cabinet table. So every ministry, at least with respect to the items that come before cabinet, has had to implement the GBA plus tool for the development of their items that they are bringing forward.

Mrs. Aheer: And then do they report back to you with how that's working so that the lens is very, very obvious as to how they can improve within the ministry?

Ms McLean: It's part of the cabinet report, so we see their analysis and the outcomes of their analysis.

Mrs. Aheer: I see. Will you be sharing that analysis and those outcomes?

Ms McLean: Those are confidential cabinet documents, so obviously I can't do that.

Mrs. Aheer: Oh, okay. Even just generally, like, how those outcomes are working? I mean, I would imagine, especially if other ministries across Canada are going to be looking to you to be laying out how this ministry should run and it can impact other ministries, that they'll be very interested in your outcomes, too, I would think, especially because you are a leader in having this ministry stand alone.

Ms McLean: Yeah. Absolutely. The proof is in the pudding, so we look to the outcomes that Albertans see before them. That's where you'll find the outcomes that you're referring to. So when we see things like a \$25-a-day child care pilot or we see things like increasing minimum wage because a gender-based analysis will tell you that women are disproportionately affected and are more likely to be minimum wage earners, those policies that address those barriers and those needs are the result of that kind of work and that kind of thing.

Mrs. Aheer: Yeah. But I would think that that gender-based analysis that's happening within the ministries, too, would provide an immense amount of material and precious material. I think that Albertans just generally would like to know how that's impacting them, especially if it's going towards getting rid of some of the gaps

and the situations that occur with any particular – whether that's a corporation or the private sector or whether that's government, those numbers that you are receiving within the ministries and the information and the input would be immensely important to any future government as well to understand what worked, what didn't, that kind of thing. So just as a comment, it might be that if there's some sort of even generalized idea that you can share with us and, I suppose, going forward, share with other Canadians as these ministries come up as a result of your work here. If I could make a comment, I think that would be very worthwhile information to share.

4:30

Ms McLean: Well, certainly, you can go online to Status of Women Canada to see what the GBA plus training program is.

Mrs. Aheer: I've been on there, yeah. I'm looking for a little bit more from the government perspective.

Ms McLean: Well, absolutely, I'm happy to inform you of the outcomes. I have our \$25-a-day child care program, which I've addressed, and our minimum wage increase. There are certainly other achievements that I can let you know about that are the result of gender-based analysis.

Mrs. Aheer: Well, if you wouldn't mind. I only have three minutes left. Minister. Would you mind if I ask you one more question? I think we're down to, like, two and a half minutes.

Ms McLean: Yeah. I'm not keeping track of the time. I'm here for the whole shot.

Mrs. Aheer: One of the things that you had mentioned earlier on when you were speaking was about the elevation of boys and men, which obviously leads to better communities and support for the women around them. That inclusion of boys and men in community organizations and the private sector will see the strategies to monitor and evaluate how we are evolving as a society and how that data is being applied to the programs and how decisions are being made to address the specific issues.

I imagine you would have some sorts of descriptors as to where you started and the ability to measure those practices that you're working on, which we were just talking about. Could you give us maybe a few more examples of how you're expanding the GBA plus through knowledge and capacity and your integration into government and how that would maybe benefit other groups and associations? I know you have your 2,800 people that are out and working, but we've got an entire group of the private sector and a lot of other groups that may be able to benefit. How does that work?

Ms McLean: I'm not quite sure what you're getting at. You're asking whether or not we're training the private sector?

Mrs. Aheer: Well, I would think anybody. I mean, in order to achieve what it is that we're trying to achieve with the Status of Women ministry and in order to achieve GBA plus and to create the appropriate mechanisms so that all aspects are more open and welcoming to women, I would have assumed, maybe wrongfully, that the program would reach outside of the public sector.

Ms McLean: We would absolutely love to be able to have the capacity to be able to do training of the private sector, of the broader public-sector institutions like the universities, schools, et cetera. We would love to be able to do that, but with four people and a limited budget, certainly we don't have the capacity to do that. I mean, certainly, it's a cause to encourage you to vote in favour of our estimates given that you would also like to see it expand.

Mrs. Aheer: Right. Is the ministry, then, only focusing on the public sector? Have the dollars only been focused on GBA plus training in the public sector?

Ms McLean: To date not all of the Alberta public service has been trained in GBA plus training.

Mrs. Aheer: But it is directed specifically at the public sector?

Ms McLean: Our focus and the structure of Status of Women is largely as an internal-facing department. We're not a programming ministry. Our job is to be the influencers and to work with other ministries in the development of their policies, their programs, and their initiatives. So our focus needs to be on training the Alberta public service first, and in fact it is our mandate to do so.

Mrs. Aheer: I mean, if we're looking at the international standards – right? – the international standards go far beyond the public sector. It's about making sure that there's – we're wanting to be inclusive of women in every part of the Alberta experience, from jobs to inclusion to absolutely everything. There's a tremendous opportunity. I would think that with the dollars, regardless of the amounts that we have, we're going to want to have that reach go far beyond the public sector and make sure that . . .

The Chair: I hesitate to interrupt. However, the time allotted for this portion has expired.

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

Mr. Fraser: Yes, please. Thank you.

The Chair: Minister? That's okay?
Okay. Go ahead.

Mr. Fraser: Great. Thanks, Madam Chair. Minister, thanks for the work you do. You have some very capable people around you, and that's good to see. It's an important job and one that we all need to take seriously as we move forward.

You've mentioned a couple of ministries now where there is a GBA plus kind of component to them. That was four of them. Am I correct in that? There are four ministries that have that GBA plus kind of embedded in them right now?

Ms McLean: I believe it was four that have centres of responsibility. That was Labour, Service Alberta, Status of Women, and Energy.

Mr. Fraser: Right. I had a question around that, you know, particularly when we're thinking about girls and boys in primary education. From the very minute they're born, I mean, obviously it extends to mothers and fathers to be more aware of this issue. What are your plans to embed that inside education and advanced education, for that matter, to make sure that as a new generation comes onboard, they can carry the torch, which, hopefully, eliminates the need, that it's actually part of our culture to promote women versus having to educate them going backwards?

Ms McLean: We are going to be expanding our centres of responsibility, and our goal is to expand it to all ministries, Education certainly being one of those as well as Advanced Education, and I fully expect that the curriculum review will have a gender-based analysis plus lens on that work that is being done. I expect those outcomes.

Again, it's so hard. I mean, an MLA here was asking for the proof, and that's exactly the kind of thing that one might be looking for. We have done a lot of internal work to ensure that those policies that are done anywhere that affect children certainly have the gendered lens on them. We've established a crossministry committee on gender equality, and that is a community of practice for supporting ministries in their gender-based analysis plus accountability.

One of the things that we have certainly been partners with in Advanced Education and with postsecondary students is to have some discussions around best practices and guidelines for sexual violence on campus and addressing sexual violence on campus. A lot of postsecondary institutions are currently in the phase of developing policies for their campuses, and there are certainly some campuses in Alberta that are out ahead of the game and have taken some learnings and best practices from other parts of the country, MacEwan perhaps leading the charge in this respect.

You know, I recently met with the CAUS students and discussed with them how we can support their encouragement across university campuses and postsecondary institutions across the province, how we can encourage their efforts to develop sexual violence policies. Certainly, if a governance structure within a university institution reached out to us to request GBA plus training, again, given that that's an arm's-length government operation, we would certainly do our best to try and find it within our capacity to accommodate if we were available.

Mr. Fraser: Very good. Obviously, that's a tremendous goal, to prevent and address gender-based violence and sexual violence on campuses or anywhere, for that matter. Do you have a specific line item in your budget, spending that supports that goal?

Ms McLean: Absolutely. We have a section under our gender policy strategy and innovation, a unit that specifically addresses violence against women and girls. The total spend for that section is \$407,000. In addition to that, there is a United Nations safe cities initiative. The city of Edmonton has applied for and been successful to be part of that United Nations program, and that is an additional \$57,000 towards that initiative.

But, you know, violence against women and girls is one of those things that certainly can also be addressed by encouraging leadership, that can be addressed by dealing with economic issues as well. Part of the reason that those are our three mandate areas is because they're so interrelated.

4:40

Mr. Fraser: Right. Yeah, I'm glad that you, you know, referenced leadership and, particularly, increasing women's leadership and their democratic participation.

I was just wondering also – and I'm just assuming that it likely falls under that strategy and innovation – if you have a line item that also supports those two initiatives.

Ms McLean: Absolutely. We have a unit for women in leadership and democratic participation. We have three full-time employees in that unit, and the total spend for that is \$431,000.

Mr. Fraser: Again, just kind of a little bit around leadership. Certainly, when you were first elected and when I was first elected, when you come into this place, there's lots to learn about Alberta: its industries, its agriculture, environment, and a lot of things. You know, we quite often get kind of the 101 version of agriculture, oil and gas, and those sorts of things. Is there any initiative right now, outside of the ministries, to support or to provide the GBA plus training for legislators right here, since we are the ones that go back

to constituents, to have a better understanding of that? Is there an initiative there to do that?

Ms McLean: Certainly, it's something that I've had some chats with my department about, and we even got to the point of canvassing available dates, but wrenches kind of got thrown into the plan. But it's something that I am happy to turn my mind back to if there's an appetite.

Mr. Fraser: Very good.

Again, just kind of going back to the overall, you talked about how, basically, GBA plus is an international tool that you've adopted. Is there a specific organization that you adopted it from? When you look to certain regions, is there a region and/or an organization that has modelled everything for you? Is there, you know, one specific thing that you can point to, again, so that when we get the questions, we can refer people to that? Certainly, when Albertans are looking for outcomes, we could say: if you look at this organization, this would ideally, maybe, be the goal.

Ms McLean: Certainly, we've taken our lead from Status of Women Canada with respect to the gender-based analysis plus tool, but I think you're getting at: is there a utopia somewhere in the world? There isn't. No matter where you look in the world, women are disadvantaged. There are certainly areas that are doing better than others on certain metrics. One of those, you know, just off the top of my head, would be Sweden. One of the things that they did, though this is not at all within provincial purview, was to provide parental leave specifically for – to use cisgendered language – the father, that couldn't be transferred between mom and dad. They are confident, in their analysis, that it has contributed to improvement of gender equity. So there are definitely initiatives that we know will improve gendered outcomes.

Mr. Fraser: Right. Just kind of on the idea of the public service members and helping them achieve competencies around this issue, maybe you can speak a little bit to some of the training and how that might evolve over time. Again, from my previous experience in a union, the union oftentimes takes on a role and responsibility in training and safety and those sorts of things to help their members. Has there been a discussion with the large public-sector unions, you know, to add this to maybe some of their modules and some of their additional training and/or to bodies like CARNA or the Alberta College of Paramedics? Again, with these institutions, their role is to educate the practitioner and to have this as a part of them. That's kind of three questions in one, so I'll let you go for a bit.

Ms McLean: We, again due to capacity issues, haven't had the opportunity to work with the unions in the manner that you're talking about. Again, it's an opportunity that we would love if we had, you know, additional resources to be able to provide those services. That being said, there are definitely opportunities for private-sector or union-environment but professional regulators to get that training within their own capacity and get that training within their own infrastructure to be able to provide that to their members. Really, in no different way than we started, other organizations or groups would be able to get that capacity in-house.

Mr. Fraser: Right. Again, just kind of going back, you've spoken of not having the capacity yet, perhaps, to train or partner with some of these groups. Can you kind of give me your vision as to how you would see this evolve so that maybe this time next year we would be able to see certain things, a line item on how many people have been trained and the outcomes to know kind of what you mentioned before in terms of what works and what doesn't work, you know,

to provide some accountability and be able to highlight the good work in the ministry?

Ms McLean: Certainly, many of my goals are reflected in my business plan. Our target for the number of government of Alberta staff who attend a GBA plus training session for 2018-19 is 6,000. For '17-18 it was 2,500. So we're pretty good there. Our target is 6,000. Again, when you look at the size of the Alberta public service, that is still, percentage-wise, a fairly small number of the Alberta public service. Our ultimate goal is to have all of the Alberta public service trained in GBA plus analysis. You know, we're only in our second year of being a full ministry, so you've got to start somewhere, but our 2018-19 goal is to hit 6,000.

That's not the full story. Our number of centres of responsibility – you know, like I said, they help grow our capacity, which is fabulous. You know, once our capacity has grown to a certain level inside ministries, perhaps then we can start turning our focus more outwardly. In our last, for '16-17, we wanted to hit four, and we've done that. Our target for '17-18 is eight.

Mr. Fraser: Okay.

Ms McLean: After that, you know, it doubles again, to 16. So when we can get those centres of responsibility built up, it will help to snowball the training, certainly, as we get more hands on deck.

Mr. Fraser: Right. Do you have kind of, basically, a strategy or a flow chart that helps you maintain consistency throughout departments? I guess what I'm saying is if you've trained a particular group, how it flows down. I'm speaking just a little bit to what the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View was speaking about in terms of: what about all the service providers that are contracted to the GOA, making sure that they meet the standard? To use your term in terms of throwing wrenches into things, if you have one particular ministry and a group but they use a contracted service provider that doesn't have that GBA plus training, you know, that stops that consistency from happening.

Ms McLean: Yeah. That's certainly a difficulty at this point because we don't have the capacity built up either, you know, financially from a resources point of view within Status of Women specifically or within our centres of responsibility to be able to expand that work. I mean, certainly, this is something that we, again, would love to be able to do, and I'm confident that one day we will be able to get there.

With respect to measuring and tracking individuals within the public service and ensuring that we have folks that remain trained, because people switch around, we are certainly in the process of doing that tracking to ensure that when people move, their replacements are also trained.

4:50

Mr. Fraser: Right. I guess I have just one more question here for the rest of the time. Do you think it is possible in your ministry to create the capacity at the very least to kind of have an Alberta-made document that elected officials and their staff could have throughout their caucuses so that we can continue with some of that work and, you know, maintain some of that consistency? Do you think that that's a possible thing?

Ms McLean: Well, at this point it's something that we point to. The resources already exist, so you don't necessarily always need to reinvent the wheel. The resources for basic training exist online with Status of Women Canada, so you can go through an online module. Really, the best kind of training is one that is done in person, where

you could have a dialogue with the trainer and you can go through examples and that kind of thing. That's where you would get it to be a little bit more specific, or you might be able to ask questions and play around with examples that are specific to your line of work or your experiences. I'm not attempting at all to discount it. It's a very solid and very good tool that exists online already through Status of Women Canada, so that's where we point people. Absolutely.

Mr. Fraser: Right. Actually – sorry – I do have another question just as I'm thinking of it. There's been some talk about labour changes. Have you been in discussions? When you said that GBA plus has been embedded in labour, do you anticipate any changes to the labour code that facilitate the GBA plus model?

Ms McLean: I would anticipate that all of the changes to the labour code have gone through a GBA plus analysis.

Mr. Fraser: Okay. All right. Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: As there are currently no independent or other party members at the committee meeting at this time, I would now like to invite government caucus members and the minister to speak for the next 20 minutes.

Member Drever, are you wanting to combine your time with the minister?

Drever: Yes.

The Chair: Minister?

Ms McLean: Okay.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Drever: Well, thank you. Dare I say, this is my favourite estimates to go to.

Ms McLean: Excellent.

Drever: I would just like to thank you and your hard-working staff for the many accomplishments that your small but mighty ministry has made for women in this province. I'm just so happy that we have a stand-alone ministry dedicated to gender equality and women's issues. There have been many accomplishments and strides for women, but there is also a lot of work left to be done. Right now it pains me to say that Calgary and Edmonton rank poorly in the best and worst places to be a woman in Canada, and Alberta has one of the highest rates of domestic violence.

As you already mentioned, there is a significant wage gap for women. In Calgary alone women earn 65 cents on the male's dollar, and in Edmonton it's slightly lower, with women earning 59 cents on the male's dollar.

In regard to women being in positions of leadership, in Calgary women hold only two of the 15 seats on city council, but I know that your ministry has worked really hard to change this. I applaud your Ready for Her campaign, and because of that I know that there will be more women occupying seats in government. I know that we all want that in the end.

Having said all of that, I'd like to just now get into the budget. Outcome 1 on page 134 of the ministry's business plan: the need for the government of Alberta to advance legislation, policies and programs that promote gender equality. Of course, the ministry has been set up to advance gender equality in Alberta by applying a gender lens to its initiatives. What is the value to Albertans of supporting a separate ministry for gender equality?

Ms McLean: Well, certainly, having a stand-alone ministry allows us to have machinery in place that will ensure that all of the work that we do takes into account the diverse voices of women and girls. It's vital for women to be at the leadership tables, as you've pointed out. When we have, you know, tables where we don't have 50 per cent women, for example, making decisions for the public, for Alberta families, that means that 50 per cent of the population on the basis of gender is not represented. Women, we do know, have diverse views and experiences, are more likely to be impoverished, have to engage in more unpaid work like caregiving for children and family members. So those perspectives are invaluable at the decision-making tables. Those experiences directly provide a helpful lens.

We know that reaching gender equality has long-term benefits for the economy as well, with more women in the labour force and fewer supports necessary for survivors of domestic and sexual violence. The costs across the public sector and in the private sector continue to mount if we don't address certain issues. You know, certainly, we'll comment on the piece of legislation that you brought forward – we commend you for it – to protect victims of domestic violence. That bill very concretely took into account the economic factors that women face when trying to flee a violent situation that might otherwise hold them back from doing so. I was happy to bring that forward both as the Minister of Status of Women and the Minister of Service Alberta and to bring it into effect through regulation in conjunction with your good work.

You know, we do have a small but mighty ministry, and really the work has only just begun. Two years is certainly not long enough to create a culture shift, one that is badly needed in Alberta, as you've pointed out. The metrics for women when we compare interjurisdictionally to other provinces: here in Alberta women don't fare as well. I think that's largely attributable to the fact that there was not previously a gendered lens on the work being done by government and that there wasn't a women's machinery in place, embedded within government policy and decision-making.

Additionally, I would never discount the effect of having a feminist government, a near 50 per cent gender-balanced caucus. I think we might be up to 50 per cent now with MLA Jansen having joined us, certainly a gender-balanced cabinet. It does create an environment where women, at the very minimum, feel comfortable for their voices to be heard and to put their perspectives and views forward where they're respected. I can say confidently that our male caucus colleagues and cabinet colleagues are both allies and feminists.

Drever: Yes. I'm certainly happy to be part of a government where gender equality is top on the priority list. It is a nice change in Alberta, and I'm looking forward to seeing what new things your ministry is going to be doing for women here.

The ministry business plan outlines the three key policy areas the ministry is seeking to advance, which can be summed up as increasing economic security for women and children, reducing gender-based violence, and increasing leadership and democratic participation. Could you please discuss what your ministry is doing to improve the position and conditions for women in Alberta in these three policy areas?

Ms McLean: I would probably be here all day if I went on to the full extent that I could about those three areas, but I'm happy to highlight a few things in the work we've done in those three areas. With respect to leadership and democratic participation, you know, we were definitely part of the review for boards and commissions and had the opportunity to ensure that we have a process that increases the number of women being appointed. We've seen concrete effects of that.

5:00

We also worked very closely with Treasury Board and Finance in their encouragement of the Alberta Securities Commission to put back to their membership a vote on whether or not to require the disclose-or-explain rules in Alberta. I'm happy to say that they voted in favour of it. We have, since that was done, in Ontario certainly seen an increase in women's representation on privately traded boards. We're hopeful as well that these changes in Alberta will spur a continued increase in women's representation in leadership positions.

As you know, we engaged in our Ready for Her tour with the goal of encouraging more women to participate in the political process, whether it's to run for office or support someone running for office. We've partnered with a number of different organizations in this work, grassroots organizations, to achieve two or three of those goals, but that work is not done. We are continuing the momentum of the Ready for Her tour. I'm excited about that work.

When it comes to economic participation, certainly, we've been major advocates of the increase for minimum wage. We also know, as I've mentioned, that barriers to economic participation affect the labour force rates, they affect the ability to earn higher amounts, and they affect pensionable hours. The list goes on.

We were happy, certainly, to partner on the child care initiative.

We do work crossministry. We've, like I've mentioned, been able to set up a centre of responsibility within Labour to ensure that the policies and outcomes from that department very specifically address women. We've also had the opportunity to be engaged with other grassroots community organizations and stakeholders, for example Chic Geek, to encourage women into STEM occupations, into coding. We've definitely had participation throughout the department in community meetings and community working groups on how to get more women into STEM.

I'm also, you know, very excited about our granting program. I will be announcing recipients shortly. I think you will be able to count on seeing some very good projects out of that that will further women's economic participation and leadership.

On the aspect of violence against women and girls, we've partnered with Indigenous Relations on the missing and murdered indigenous women inquiry and with the city of Edmonton on the UN's safe cities initiative. We're supporting that. We are also still very close to providing Alberta with a crossgovernment approach to addressing sexual violence very specifically. We also worked with Minister Ganley on her legislation, that's before the House, with respect to removing limitation periods for survivors of sexual assault.

Those are just some highlights, but I certainly would be happy to give you some more information.

Drever: Well, thank you. I'm just really happy to hear that we are working really hard on these issues. I know that it is so important here in Alberta, and frankly it's about time, so thank you for all the hard work that you guys do.

I know that I personally have sat on a couple of panels with Equal Voice, and I know that a couple of other members in this room also have done that. One thing that I've heard over and over again is that women feel intimidated by getting into positions of leadership. They feel like they're overqualified or that they're not qualified enough, and often men, usually, or women will have to ask someone to sit on a board or to put their name on a ballot. It's so important to have this conversation, and I applaud your ministry for continuing that conversation and empowering more women to get into politics or to get into any position of leadership. Thank you for that.

On page 250 of the government estimates line 1.3 indicates that \$694,000 is budgeted for communications. Could you please discuss what public education work your communications branch has done in the last year, and how is this work reflected in either the government estimates or the ministry business plan?

Ms McLean: Great. I have a lot to say on this stuff as well. Certainly, you know that we have a lot of work to do before Alberta reaches gender equality and on public awareness, not just amongst stakeholders but amongst the communities they serve, about the many ways in which we need to do work to reach equality but also on the very fact that equality is not the reality.

It's surprising how many people that you talk to just anecdotally think that we have reached equality, but when you start to talk to them about the disproportionate rates of violence against women, when you start to talk to them about women being the majority caregivers for family members or children, when you start to talk to them about the gender wage gap, when you start to talk to them about women in leadership roles, then they start to get a sense of the scope of the problem that exists. It's really something we don't talk about, and it's something that the public doesn't talk about, and that does not serve our population well. That doesn't serve women well, and it doesn't serve men well. It doesn't serve our economy well.

We need to reach gender equality not just by putting money out the door, not just by training people in gender-based analysis. It's not one thing. It's about creating a culture shift. It's about these things together. It's about working with community together, building our capacity together. We know that the best change comes when you have partnership between community, grassroots organizations, and government, when they're singing from the same songbook and are able to enable each other to achieve those goals. We do that to the best of our capacity.

To this end, our communications supports the ministry by creating a lot of shareable content, certainly, through a variety of channels like our website, through Twitter, Instagram, a variety of print material, news releases, and events that we either host or participate in. The team has also supported me in particular to present to a wide range of audiences and at a wide range of events. Some examples that I've had the privilege of participating in include the Women's Resource Centre of Calgary awards. BMO has a Women in a Supported Environment meeting that I was able to participate in. The legal education action fund has an annual general meeting that I was able to participate in as well, and the list goes on. I also mentioned Chic Geek's Geeky Summit earlier.

Certainly, our communications group is busy, and we've also experienced that when we hold our own public events, there's a huge appetite from the public to participate alongside Status of Women and to join us in our work. The events that we've hosted – we had an event to mark 100 years of suffrage, where we gathered on the Legislature steps to re-enact the photo that was taken on the day that has been encapsulated in history. We also had a rugby drill with Alberta Olympian Jen Kish, and it was a great opportunity to talk about women's participation in sport and particularly sports that aren't traditionally women-dominated sports. The Ready for Her tour, which I have talked about as well, is an ongoing project or movement. I'd mentioned that we also held a vigil on the national day of remembrance and action against gender-based violence in December. Unfortunately, I was ill on that day. We also held an event for Daughters of the Vote for the Alberta delegation that was going to Ottawa to represent the Alberta seats in the House of Commons.

Even more than that, the communications branch also responds to public questions that come to the ministry through different

channels, whether it's social media, Alberta Connects, the government-wide system that routes e-mail questions from Albertans to the government so that they can reach context experts that they need. They're certainly a busy bunch.

5:10

Drever: Thank you.

I'd like to cede the rest of my time to my colleague MLA Jansen if that's okay, Chair.

The Chair: Absolutely. Go ahead.

Ms Jansen: Thank you. How much time?

The Chair: Two minutes.

Ms Jansen: Two minutes. I want to get this question in really quickly because I think it's an important one and probably, to me, one of the most important things that you can do. On page 134 of your ministry plan you talk about women experiencing barriers to economic security. I think that's huge because I hear so much about women who want access to some of those high-paying trades jobs – daycare is obviously a barrier – an opportunity for women to become more involved in the trades. I'm just wondering what kind of supports your ministry is offering to help women access those better paying jobs.

Ms McLean: Just one second. I just want to get you the best information. We're doing a number of things. Part of it is, certainly, within the Alberta public service. We have a women's economic security unit, and they play a vital role in advancing policies and programs that target barriers women face in securing their own economic well-being. We know that this is a problem. Women make up roughly half the population. However, women's hourly wages are 20 per cent less than men's, and they only earn 54 cents on the dollar of what men make. When we take into account hours of work, we see that discrepancy, certainly. They're also more likely to earn minimum wage. We have been certainly working across ministries. Other departments are primarily responsible for delivering programming that would advance women's economic empowerment.

The Chair: I hesitate to interrupt. However, the opportunity for this time has expired.

I would now like to invite Mrs. Aheer from the Official Opposition to speak for the next 10 minutes. Did you want to share your time with the minister?

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Chair, if that's all right.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mrs. Aheer: All right. I just wanted to jump back to page 134, key strategy 1.2. This is just based on some of your opening comments about being evidence based.

Create partnerships . . . to increase availability of research and data analysis that will enhance understanding of issues facing women and girls in Alberta . . . [to] create pathways with community organizations for exchanges of context, information, and data on issues affecting diverse groups of women and girls in Alberta.

Are you able to provide at this point in time some of the research that you used and the data that you've brought back from those?

Ms McLean: The way that this group largely works is in support of government's internal research, certainly, so that's a large part

of the work that is done. In fact, it's primary, certainly. But we have engaged with community researchers who are studying issues facing women and girls to align our priority areas of focus. When we have engaged most thoroughly with them, it was to ensure that we're aligning our priority areas of research so that we can ensure that GOA's policy development reflects that research.

There's a huge problem on the landscape, and that is an issue around data. We certainly don't have good-quality data anywhere, really, whether it's in the Alberta context or the Canadian context. Disaggregated data even more so is hard to come by. So our analytics unit works alongside the community to ensure that our priorities are aligned in terms of areas where we need to conduct and where we need the community, frankly, to conduct additional research. This unit is not large enough to go and collect qualitative data, for the most part, so the work that's done is to partner with community organizations that are already engaged in this research. We did a priority questions exercise and compiled a list of more than 300 researchers, academics, and community organizations to help us with information sharing and to identify research priorities.

Mrs. Aheer: Is that how you received your evidence, then, for your evidence-based analytics?

Ms McLean: Yeah. So when an item comes up and we identify that there is a lack of information or we know that something might come down the pipe – I mean, some of it's forward looking, certainly – that's when we would delve more into an area, given capacity certainly.

That scoping exercise that was done with researchers helped us to identify where the community sees a lack of information and where they would feel that it would be helpful for them to get more information. That exercise was helpful, particularly in terms of the fact that community organizations were able to hear from each other and to see where they each had problems and might be able to help each other gain additional information.

Mrs. Aheer: Did that work within the immigrant communities as well, with all of our new Canadian women and girls?

Ms McLean: Absolutely. There were a variety of community organizations involved even in the development of the list of who we engaged. Continually we provide a GBA plus lens to whomever we engage, so that would absolutely include indigenous and immigrant communities. I had the opportunity to meet with one group that coalesced for this purpose, and I can say definitely from experience that there was a diverse representation of individuals that were present.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you.

Key strategy 1.3, about the meaningful connections between government and communities, is with respect to the granting program. Can you describe a little bit about the granting program? And while you're describing it, the other questions I have might fall into what you're talking about, just about the sorts of programs and supports and about developing meaningful connections. Those would probably be my first few questions on that.

Ms McLean: I'm not sure if we're going to address that. You might have to ask those separately because I'm not quite sure how you're tying that in, unfortunately.

Mrs. Aheer: Okay. Thank you.

Ms McLean: With respect to the granting program, we developed this program with three streams, and one of them was enhancement

– oh, it was two streams. Sorry; we went back and forth, so I sometimes have trouble remembering where we landed. Yeah, there were two streams, enhancement and innovation. What it allowed for was, essentially, for lack of a better description, one-off programming or seed money to be able to create something new or expand or grow a project. We wanted to ensure that this granting program facilitated growth of projects, growth of people and knowledge, and expanding of knowledge. It would allow, certainly, for somebody to attend a conference or to host a conference in that knowledge capacity but also to expand programs.

For example, a program might exist that has already proven to be effective by a community organization in Calgary, and Edmonton would like to be able to learn from that and adopt that program and have it implemented in Edmonton.

5:20

Mrs. Aheer: Those would be some great metrics for you, too, based on programs that are . . .

Ms McLean: Absolutely. I mean, to answer that question – I think that I know where you're going – absolutely we will be tracking metrics from our granting program.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you.

Ms McLean: You know, I certainly haven't announced the outcomes of the decisions made around it, but I can tell you that it's been wildly successful in terms of interest. We received 266 applications, with requests amounting to more than \$14 million.

Mrs. Aheer: Wow.

Ms McLean: So starting out with \$500,000, you can imagine that there were a lot of people that we had to say no to and a lot of good projects that we couldn't accommodate.

Mrs. Aheer: That's wonderful. I mean, just even the people reaching out to you gives you such a well-rounded idea of what the need is.

Ms McLean: Absolutely. I think it was 30 per cent of all of the applicants who were completely new to GOA, had never applied for anything to government before. I think that also illustrates the interest in Status of Women and the fact that there has never been anything and that there is currently nothing in existence that speaks to projects or speaks to interests or speaks to programming that is currently going on at the grassroots and in the communities. There had been no government support previously for those projects or those interests and the demands from women and the community. It's been very, very cool to see this project roll out to date, and . . .

Mrs. Aheer: Minister, may I ask you just a few more questions? I think I only have two more minutes.

Ms McLean: Oh, sorry. Yeah. Go ahead.

Mrs. Aheer: No, no. Thank you so much. I don't mean to interrupt you; I just have so much that I want to ask you.

I'm going to jump back and forth a little bit, depending on my time. One really important question that I wanted to ask you is on outcome 2 on page 135 – and this is particularly important for me – which is "improved position and conditions for women in Alberta in relation to economic security, gender-based violence, leadership and democratic participation." As we've all seen and we know, we've had issues in our own RCMP and corrections. I'm just wondering: with all of that going on, have you carried out a GBA

plus analysis of these situations, and are you looking at reviewing the policy on these kinds of situations? I mean, I would think that this is very much a part of what you're trying to accomplish, especially with regard to violence and women in the workplace.

Ms McLean: Again, there's a bit of a capacity issue in terms of our ability to apply GBA plus analysis. Policing, whether it's the RCMP or local policing, is arm's length to government. Certainly, we would be more than happy . . .

The Chair: I apologize for the interruption; however, the time allotted for this portion has expired.

I would now like to invite Mr. Fraser from the third-party opposition to share the remainder of the time with the minister.

Mr. Fraser: Is that okay with you, Minister?

Ms McLean: Sounds good.

Mr. Fraser: Okay. Thanks, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Fraser: I was just wondering if you could touch on program practice and policy changes for gender-based analysis. What's your strategy for reviewing those policies and practices, to build in gender-based analysis?

Ms McLean: Are you talking about the training program or . . .

Mr. Fraser: Yeah, the training program and just the GBA program, the practice and policy changes as you move forward. Like, you know, is there a gender-based analysis for that?

Ms McLean: Oh, for tracking, like, outcomes or . . .

Mr. Fraser: Yeah.

Ms McLean: Okay. I'm going to actually turn to my deputy minister to speak to, potentially, how we track the effectiveness of our GBA plus. I mean, certainly, there are some outcomes within the business plan that are clear in terms of how many people we've trained.

Mr. Fraser: Yeah. Is there a strategy, I suppose, kind of on a quarterly basis, you know, a biyearly sort of thing, where you're tracking the progress on such an important issue? As you said, one person kind of grows the knowledge and so on and so on as you kind of develop in your ministry. How close are you tracking that in terms of the outcomes?

Ms McLean: In terms of the performance on this measure we certainly are tracking this, you know, largely as outcomes based. One of those indicators is how many people we have trained, how many centres of responsibility. As I have mentioned previously, as of October 28, 2016, all cabinet reports have required a gender and intersectional analysis on them, so it allows us to conveniently within our department see the work that's being done by other departments and the effectiveness of that training through that department. It would allow us to catch anything and then be able to speak with that centre of responsibility or the officials responsible

for the GBA plus analysis and to be able to follow up and ensure a quality of process. Right?

Mr. Fraser: Right.

Ms McLean: I think that's what you're getting at.

Mr. Fraser: Yeah. Would it be fair to say, though, that when you're looking at outcomes, you have the number of people trained but that the real outcome you're wanting to see is change in attitude? How difficult is that to track? Has there been any indication by Status of Women Canada around, you know, how difficult that may be, particularly when you go to, obviously, different groups and different heritages, those sorts of things?

Ms McLean: I think it's difficult to track societal beliefs. Certainly, there have been studies done on sort of taking a point in time from, you know, a small-sized group. We don't have the luxury of being able to afford that kind of research or analysis, so we're very outcomes based in our measurements. I can definitely tell you that we track things like how many government of Alberta policy frameworks and strategies have included a gender-based analysis in their development. Of the ones released in '16-17, it was about 25 per cent.

We do know the quantity of what's being done and who is trained in this area, and we can also track outcome metrics like women's participation in the labour force. I mean, you're going to see improved outcomes for women in many of the metrics that we're reporting on – for example, women in positions of leadership on boards, women in elected positions, women in terms of their wage earnings, how many women are in the workforce – and how these policy shifts and cultural and societal views are affecting those things.

Mr. Fraser: Okay. Thanks, Madam Chair. Thank you, Minister.

Ms McLean: Thanks.

The Chair: Thank you.

Members of the government caucus, are you wanting to use the last minute?

Ms Jansen: No. I think we're good. We've had some fantastic answers, and we thank you for your time and certainly, again, applaud the work you're doing because it's so vitally important. We're really proud of where you've moved the needle on these issues. Thank you for that.

Ms McLean: Thank you, MLA Jansen.

The Chair: Thank you.

I'd like to thank you, Minister, your staff, and all participants in today's meeting.

I'd like to remind committee members that we are scheduled to meet tomorrow, April 6, 2017, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. to consider the estimates of the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

Thank you. The meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 5:29 p.m.]

