Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Third Session

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Seniors and Housing

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Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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Darren Baptista, Senior Financial Officer
John Cabral, Assistant Deputy Minister, Seniors Services
John Thomson, Assistant Deputy Minister, Housing
MaryAnne Wilkinson, Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Services

8:30 a.m. Tuesday, December 5, 2017

[Mr. Cyr in the chair]

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

My name is Scott Cyr. I'm the MLA for Bonnyville-Cold Lake and chair of the committee. I'd like to ask that the members, staff, and guests at the table introduce themselves for the record, starting on the right. Mr. Deputy Chair.

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

Mr. Gill: Good morning. Prab Gill, MLA, Calgary-Greenway.

Mr. Gotfried: Good morning. Richard Gotfried, MLA for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Cabral: Good morning. John Cabral with Seniors and Housing.

Mr. Baptista: Good morning. Darren Baptista with Seniors and Housing.

Ms Armstrong: Good morning. Kim Armstrong, Deputy Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Mrs. Wilkinson: Good morning. MaryAnne Wilkinson with Seniors and Housing.

Mr. Thomson: Good morning. John Thomson, Seniors and Housing.

Mr. Wylie: Good morning. Doug Wylie with the office of the Auditor General.

Mr. Saher: Merwan Saher, Auditor General.

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

Mr. Nielsen: Chris Nielsen, MLA, Edmonton-Decore.

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

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

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

Mrs. Littlewood: Good morning. Jessica Littlewood, MLA for the beautiful rural constituency of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Mr. Malkinson: Brian Malkinson, MLA for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Carson: Good morning. Jon Carson, MLA for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

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

Mr. Roth: Good morning. Aaron Roth, committee clerk.

The Chair: The following member will be teleconferencing: Mr. Rick Fraser.

The following substitutions are noted for the record: Ms McKitrick for Dr. Turner, Mr. Gill for Mr. Barnes, Mr. Nielsen for Ms Goehring, Mr. Carson for Mr. Westhead.

A few housekeeping items to address before we turn to the business at hand. The microphone consoles are operated by *Hansard,* so there's no need to touch them. Committee proceedings are audio- and video streamed live on the Internet and recorded by *Hansard*, and the audio- and video stream and the transcripts of the meetings can be accessed via the Legislative Assembly website. Please set your cellphones and other devices to silent during the duration of the meeting.

Mr. Panda, can you announce yourself?

Mr. Panda: Good morning. I'm Prasad Panda, MLA, Calgary-Foothills.

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

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Chair, I'd like to ask for leave to introduce a motion under other business.

The Chair: Under other business, sir? Okay.

Are there any further additions to the agenda? Okay.

Seeing none, would a member like to move that the agenda for the December 5, 2017, meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be approved as amended? Mr. Gotfried.

Mr. Dach: Just a question. There's going to be another motion added, or Mr. Gotfried is going to be specifying a motion?

The Chair: Under other business, I believe.

Okay. All in favour? Any opposed? Nobody on the phone yet? Okay. Thank you. The motion is carried.

I will leave 10 minutes in additional time for other business at the end of the meeting so that we can deal with the added agenda item.

Moving on, approval of minutes. Do members have any amendments to the November 28, 2017, minutes? If not, would a member move that the minutes of the November 28, 2017, meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be approved as distributed? I believe you're not a member, Mr. Panda. I apologize. I thought you had substituted out for somebody. My apologies, Mr. Panda. Apparently, it was a late night last night. Mr. Nielsen. All right. Any discussion on the motion? All in favour? Any opposed? Thank you. The motion is carried.

I'd like to welcome our guests, who are here on behalf of the Ministry of Seniors and Housing to discuss the ministry's annual report for 2016-2017 and the outstanding recommendations of the Auditor General. Members should have the research report prepared by research services, the Auditor General's briefing document as well as the status of the Auditor General's recommendations document completed and submitted by the ministry.

I invite the deputy minister to provide opening remarks not exceeding 10 minutes. Ms Armstrong, if you could please take the floor.

Ms Armstrong: Thank you, MLA Cyr, and good morning, ladies and gentlemen. It's my privilege to appear before the Standing Committee on Public Accounts on behalf of the Ministry of Seniors and Housing. I value the work of the Auditor General and their interest in the delivery of quality services for Albertans and, particularly, Albertan seniors.

Before I begin my remarks, I would like to more formally introduce the senior staff that are here with me today from my ministry. MaryAnne Wilkinson is our assistant deputy minister of strategic services. John Thomson, to her right, is our assistant deputy minister for housing. John Cabral, two to my left, is our assistant deputy minister of seniors services, and Darren Baptista is our senior financial officer.

The mandate of our ministry is to provide a wide range of supports to seniors along with safe and affordable housing for Albertans. We deliver our supports and provide housing through the three divisions of our ministry: the housing division, seniors services, and strategic services.

Our ministry also includes the Alberta Social Housing Corporation, ASHC. The ASHC is a government agency created under the auspices of the Alberta Housing Act, and it owns the government of Alberta's social housing stock and land. It also manages the provincial debts and intergovernmental agreements associated with these assets.

Seniors and Housing supports Alberta's seniors' lodges and is responsible for the development and oversight of affordable housing. We accomplish much of this work through our ongoing partnerships with provincial housing providers. These providers include 102 housing management bodies, which we refer to as HMBs, that operate housing programs for the ministry throughout this province, along with more than 350 municipalities and nonprofit and private, for-profit housing providers. During 2016-17 supports were provided to approximately 70,000 Alberta households.

We spent most of 2016-17 engaging with our housing partners on a review of our regulations and the development of the new provincial affordable housing strategy, which the government unveiled this past June. Affordable housing creates an opportunity for people to build even more successful lives, and the strategy increases asset limits so that people can stay in their homes while saving for things like education or a down payment for their own home.

It also introduces a mixed model that bases rent on household income. In this model rents can be adjusted over time as incomes change, and tenants who can afford to pay higher rent offset those who pay less. This flexible model allows tenants to seek higher paying employment without fear of losing their home, which is particularly important for families, for example, whose children are well established in a nearby school.

This new strategy will lead to many more Albertans having safe and suitable places to call home, and it will guide the development of an affordable housing system that is effective and sustainable to meet future needs. Actions under the strategy include investing $1.2 billion over five years for housing, capital needs, and reviewing and updating the Alberta Housing Act regulations. Over a five-year period we will create more than 4,000 new or regenerated affordable housing units.

Some of our upcoming areas of focus include working with housing providers to find a better way to resolve disputes with tenants and to help housing providers integrate community supports for tenants into their services.

We have reviewed and updated the Alberta Housing Act regulations and upgraded fire and safety systems that help seniors remain safe and secure and independent in their homes. The government also committed $80 million to fund the installation of fire sprinklers and upgraded fire safety systems in government-owned or -supported seniors' lodges or facilities, and installations are expected to be completed by mid-2018.

8:40

Now a few words about our seniors services division. Alberta is home to more that 550,000 seniors, and our department provides support to these seniors through a number of programs and services, programs such as the Alberta seniors' benefit, which provides an average of $140 to 150,000 seniors with low incomes each month, and the supplementary accommodation benefit, which provides financial support to seniors with low incomes who reside in designated supportive living and long-term care. In addition, we have programs such as the special-needs assistance program, the seniors' property tax deferral program, and the seniors' home adaptation and repair program. Together, these programs provided support to approximately 172,000 Alberta individual seniors in 2016-17.

In particular, the seniors' home adaptation and repair program, which we call SHARP, has been up and running for approximately 15 months, and the response from our seniors has been excellent. It was developed to help seniors remain in their homes by financing repairs or adaptations through low-interest, low-equity loans. The response shows that there was a strong need for the program. We receive about six applications a day for this program, and the most common repairs or adaptations include roof repairs, bathroom adaptations, new furnaces, and new windows.

The division is also responsible for developing policy and engaging with seniors, stakeholders, and communities on issues like age-friendly communities and elder abuse. Preventing and addressing elder abuse is a priority of our ministry. Alberta Seniors and Housing works together with other government ministries and other levels of government, with community partners and Albertans to prevent and address elder abuse, and we continue to support the development of community response models through a province-wide grant program. The total program funding is $3.7 million over three years, and the number of community response models throughout the province has increased from seven to 31.

We also partner with stakeholders to deliver events like Seniors' Week, the Grey Matters Conference, and the minister's seniors service awards, which we celebrated last October. The seniors service awards were held in Calgary, and I'm happy to say that they were a tremendous success. We presented the inaugural Alice Modin award, named in honour of someone who helped pave the way for Seniors' Week in our province. The Alice Modin award will be presented annually to a person who's volunteered for a significant length of time and whose efforts have had provincial impact.

I'd also like to acknowledge the important work of the office of the Seniors Advocate. The advocate, Dr. Sheree Kwong See, was appointed in September 2016, and her office provides information to seniors and their families about government programs and services. She also advises government on seniors' issues.

Now I'd like to turn to the OAG report and its five recommendations to Seniors and Housing. The Auditor General's report talks about an improved monitoring process and the development of an evaluation system to deliver affordable housing grants. Enhanced monitoring procedures are being refined, and an IT system has been developed to support program monitoring, and we are conducting data entry and validation testing over the coming months. An evaluation of the program was completed to help us better report on the housing grants programs.

The report said that ASHC should consider changing its IT management control procedures. The ministry has documented and implemented a revised control process for the housing division, and we've conducted internal testing to confirm its effectiveness. The report also recommended a review of the ASHC's cash reserve policy. Our ministry has surveyed the housing management bodies to assess whether the policy is meeting the short-term operational cash-flow requirements of our HMBs, and we're analyzing the results.

Finally, the report recommends measures to address the effectiveness of the seniors' lodge program. Specifically, it references improving ways to identify the increasing care needs of lodge residents and ensuring that there is sufficient information available to set the minimum disposable income of seniors, used as a basis for lodge rent charges. This work is part of the provincial affordable housing strategy implementation, and we have established a seniors' lodge program working group that will focus heavily on aspects of the lodge review and OAG recommendations.

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Armstrong.

I will ask Mr. Fildebrandt to announce himself for the record, please.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Derek Fildebrandt, Strathmore-Brooks.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Fildebrandt.

I'll turn it over to the Auditor General for his comments. Mr. Saher, you have five minutes.

Mr. Saher: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The deputy minister in her closing comments there mentioned the recommendation that the office made with respect to the seniors' lodge program. I'd just for the record like to read in a little bit of the data on that recommendation. It was first made by the office of the Auditor General in October 2005 and then repeated in October 2014 as recommendation 20 on page 183 of that October report. The recommendation was headlined Effectiveness of the Seniors Lodge Program and Determining Future Needs. For the record let me just read the recommendation in full.

> We again recommend that the Department of Seniors [and Housing]:
> - [firstly,] improve the measures it uses to assess the effectiveness of the Seniors Lodge Program and obtain sufficient information periodically to set the minimum disposable income of seniors used as a basis for seniors lodge rent charges,
> - [and, secondly,] improve its processes for identifying the increasing care needs of lodge residents and consider this information in its plans for the Seniors Lodge Program.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Saher. I would like to thank the Auditor General for his comments.

We will follow our usual time allotment format of a one-and-a-half-hour meeting for the questions from committee members. The first rotation will be 10 minutes each for the Official Opposition and government members. The second rotation will be an additional 10 minutes each for the Official Opposition and government members, followed by five minutes for independent committee members. The final rotation is five minutes for the Alberta Party, Liberal, PC, or any independent members in attendance who wish to participate. Any time remaining will rotate equally amongst the Official Opposition and government members, with the final few minutes designated for any outstanding questions to be read into the record and to consider any other business which may be brought forward.

We ask that officials at the table as well as those seated in the gallery provide their names before responding to questions. This is for the benefit of those listening online and for the *Hansard* recording as well as for those who are on our phone.

I will now open the floor for questions from members. Mr. Gill.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and once again thank you very much – good morning, everybody – for being here with us today. I have lots of questions, as you can imagine, and with all due respect I would ask if you can just be specific so that we can get through all of the questions as much as we can and cover this within the 10 minutes Mr. Chair has given me.

As you were mentioning, page 9 of Alberta Seniors and Housing 2016-17 annual report refers to the province committing $80 million to install sprinklers in government-owned and -operated seniors' lodges and continuing care spaces. The upgrade project began in 2015-16, so I have a few questions about that. Can you please tell me how many seniors' lodges needed sprinkler systems at the beginning of the project in 2015-16? Just a number, please.

Ms Armstrong: Just give me one second.

Mr. Gill: Yeah.

8:50

Ms Armstrong: I'm advised that there were 80 lodges that required sprinklers – sorry. My apologies, sir. Thirty-eight lodges required sprinklers at the beginning of the time period which you reference.

Mr. Gill: And how many have been upgraded?

Ms Armstrong: Currently we have 36 which have been completed.

Mr. Gill: So you've got only two left, basically.

Ms Armstrong: That's correct.

Mr. Gill: Okay. Very good.

How many continuing care centres, that house some of our most vulnerable citizens, do not have sprinklers today?

Ms Armstrong: I don't have data, sir, in relation to continuing care facilities for '16-17. That data, I believe, would be contained within the Department of Health's information.

Mr. Gill: Okay. And the $80 million fund that was allocated for this: do you know what portion of that would be allocated to this part? Or is that also part of that data?

Ms Armstrong: The province committed $80 million to address fire code and safety issues, including the installation of sprinklers and associated fire alarm systems in government-owned and -supported seniors' lodges and continuing care spaces.

Mr. Gill: Okay. So we don't know, like, how much of the $80 million total was committed to this project, the continuing care?

Ms Armstrong: I don't have that information.

Mr. Gill: Okay. On page 13 of the report, at the start of the project in late 2015 42 per cent of lodge residents lived in a structure with a sprinkler. Two years later the figure has only grown by 9 per cent. My question is: how many people today are living in lodges without sprinkler systems?

Ms Armstrong: My information is that there are two lodges that currently do not or will not in 2018 have sprinkler systems. One of them has 10 units, and one of them has 82 units. For the one that has 82 units, the replacement of the facility itself is currently ongoing, and it's expected to be completed within 18 months.

Mr. Gill: Okay. The next question. According to page 13 only 50 per cent of lodge residents are protected by sprinklers, which the department admits on page 14 is far below the 2016-17 target of 65 per cent. How have you decided which lodges would be completed first? Is there a priority pattern?

Ms Armstrong: While the 51 per cent actual result does not meet the target of 65 per cent for government-owned and -supported lodges for 2016-17, progress was made in making accommodations safer for residents. In the first year of the program the ministry concentrated on assessment of needs and project prioritization, developing contracts with housing management bodies, and awarding contracts to industry. Variables such as capacity within industry to complete the work, weather, the availability of skilled labour, and municipal services such as water pressure and well services impacted the delivery of the program. It is expected that the government-owned lodges identified for installation will be completed in 2017-18, as earlier referenced, with the significant portion of government-supported and continuing care spaces also completed.

Mr. Gill: Okay. More than 70 per cent of lodges are located in rural Alberta, which experiences longer fire response times. What priority is given to lodges located in the rural areas?

Ms Armstrong: My understanding is that the remaining 34 government-supported lodges will be completed in 2018. I don't have for you an itemization of the exact order, nor do I know that I could provide that, because it will be dependent on factors such as working with the HMB to get the contracts, having folks come in to do the work. So I don't have a specific listing broken down of the time frame within which each one will be done.

Mr. Gill: Okay. Do you know how many lodges in rural Alberta are still waiting for sprinkler systems?

Ms Armstrong: John?

Mr. Thomson: John Thomson, assistant deputy minister of housing. There's one rural facility that won't have sprinklers installed. The remaining of the Alberta Social Housing Corporation owned lodges have sprinklers installed. They are in various stages of testing. I don't have the exact number of which ones are fully active right now, but there is only one lodge in rural Alberta that currently is not going through the process of having a sprinkler installed, and that's a 10-unit lodge.

Mr. Gill: Okay. So it's one of those, like you were saying: one is 10 and one is 82?

Mr. Thomson: Yeah.

Mr. Gill: Is there any priority list? Again, going to that question for rural Alberta, it's going to tie it to the same thing. It depends on the different factors.

Ms Armstrong: Right. That's correct.

Mr. Gill: Performance measure 1(a) indicates that Alberta's building codes require sprinklers in all seniors' lodges. Page 14 of the annual report indicates that all lodges will have sprinkler systems installed before the end of 2017-18. I have a few questions on this. How many projects have been completed so far this year?

Mr. Thomson: We currently have 33 of the 34 that are completed and in testing.

Mr. Gill: Okay. I mean, we have only one lodge remaining? You said that 33 out of 34 are completed?

Mr. Thomson: That have been installed and are in testing, yes.

Mr. Gill: So we have only one left, basically.

Mr. Thomson: There's Winfield and – two, yes.

Mr. Gill: Okay. How many lodge units does that represent of the total number of units in the entire province that are completed?

Mr. Thomson: I'm afraid I don't have that information.

Mr. Gill: Okay. Before the end of this fiscal year do you think we will have that one lodge which is not complete? Will that be completed within this fiscal year, or will it probably go after, next year?

Mr. Thomson: No. It won't be complete. That's the one, as the deputy minister said in her opening remarks, that will be completed in the middle of 2018. We're running into problems with water pressure issues.

Mr. Gill: Okay. Thank you very much.
Any direction from the minister regarding the priority of this project? Have you received anything?

Ms Armstrong: Well, certainly, I can answer that. Just to step back a second, because this was a little bit confusing, I want to reiterate for you that 36 of the 38 lodges owned by the Alberta Social Housing Corporation that did not have sprinklers are participating in this program, and of the 36, 34 have sprinklers installed and 33 have operational systems. One was recently added to the program – this is the one John was just referring to – with water pressure issues, and we will be completing that one in 2018. It's absolutely a priority of our minister to ensure that the safety of residents in seniors' lodges is attended to, and we are working as diligently as we can with housing management bodies across the province to have this . . .

The Chair: Thank you, Ms Armstrong.

Mr. Gill: Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Carson.

Mr. Carson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and thank you, all, for being here today. First of all, I just want to say thank you to your ministry for the historic level of investments that we've seen in affordable housing. When I go through my community and I speak to the seniors that are dependent on this affordable housing, I mean, it can't be overstated how important it is. I have the pleasure of representing many lodges as well as continuing care facilities, whether it be long-term care or supportive living, and I can't imagine, if we didn't have programs like the Alberta seniors' benefit and some of the other programs that your ministry offers, what position they would be in. It reminds me that when we look at the Misericordia and the emergency room and the issues that we have there in terms of wait times – thankfully, we will also be investing in that in the near future – it will only be worse if we are not making these investments, so I just want to thank you for that.
I'm hoping, just along the lines of the Alberta seniors' benefit, that, first of all, you can tell the committee how many seniors currently are accessing this benefit.

9:00

Ms Armstrong: Sir, may I ask a question? Do I also announce my name before I speak? I apologize for not doing that previously.

The Chair: I believe you're okay. But those around you, if they wouldn't mind.

Ms Armstrong: Okay. Thank you, sir.
To respond to your question, the program provided payments to approximately 150,000 Alberta seniors on a monthly basis, and over the course of the year it provided assistance to more than

172,000 seniors. The program expenditures totalled $270.9 million in 2016-17.

Mr. Carson: Thank you.

Just one follow-up: can you tell me about the metrics that you use to measure this program?

Ms Armstrong: Yes. We use a variety of means to ensure that our program supports seniors to live safely and independently in their chosen communities. The ministry regularly scans other financial assistance programs within the province and across Canada to identify areas where programs could be enhanced in ways to support seniors to live safely and independently in their chosen community. One recent example of this is that we identified in July 2017 that an enhancement to the special-needs assistance programs benefit for medical appointment travel was appropriate, and the required distance of travel was reduced from 100 kilometres to 80 kilometres round trip. The accommodation rate for overnight stays was increased from $75 to $100.

We look at things like 2016 census data to see that Albertans have a higher median income compared to seniors nationally, and Alberta has the lowest proportion of seniors in low-income households across all provinces. We regularly review external statistical data such as the Statistics Canada census data to look at how our seniors are doing in comparison to seniors across the country. The income supplement that ASB, the Alberta seniors' benefit, provides to seniors in Alberta contributes to the significantly lower number of seniors with low income in Alberta as well as our higher median income.

Our ministry has also developed a performance measures framework that requires client and stakeholder data that will be gathered through surveys. We just completed in November 2017 a series of client surveys, randomly sampling ASB and SHARP clients as a means to establish their perspectives on our programs and whether they are helping them meet their basic needs and remain in their homes longer. Baseline results from these surveys are targeted for inclusion in our 2018-19 annual report, and preliminary analysis demonstrates that a large majority of those surveyed agree that ASB helps them meet their basic needs and that SHARP helps them remain in their homes longer.

In 2018-19 client surveys will be completed with a random sample of clients for the special-needs assistance program as well as the seniors' property tax deferral program, once again to help establish measures of client satisfaction and, in that case, for inclusion in the 2019-22 business plan. SNA, special-needs assistance, and seniors' property tax deferral surveys completed in 2018-19 will then be included in the 2019-20 annual report.

Mr. Carson: Thank you.

I would like to move on if that's possible.

Ms Armstrong: Sure.

Mr. Carson: Thank you. You did mention SHARP there, the seniors' home adaptation and repair program, and once again I've had many conversations. Last week I just did a tour of many of the seniors' communities in my constituency, and SHARP comes up a lot as a program that is ensuring that seniors are able to age in place and making sure that the affordability is still there as well and that they're able to stay in their communities. First of all, I guess, once again I will just ask about the metrics that you're using to measure the benefits of the SHARP program.

Ms Armstrong: Thank you for the question. The seniors' home adaptation and repair program, which I'll refer to as the SHARP program, received over 1,000 applications between July 2016 and March 31, 2017. The average SHARP loan was approximately $13,000. Additionally, the program provided more than $350,000 in grants for basic and essential home repairs to seniors with low income who were not eligible for the loan portion of the program. In 2016-17 just over $7 million in loans were disbursed in addition to the $350,000 in grants.

Mr. Carson: Thank you. I just want to once again say thank you for that program as well as the special-needs assistance program. I mean, I have a place in my constituency called Westview Village. It's a manufactured home community. The housing stock there is aging quite rapidly, but these programs, the two themselves, have ensured that people are able to continue living in their homes and that they're able to stay in their communities.

I have one final question. I'm just wondering how your department is ensuring that seniors in Alberta are aware of the programs that you have to offer.

Ms Armstrong: The seniors services division, under the very capable leadership of my ADM John Cabral, works in partnership with Alberta Health to ensure that Albertans are aware of the programs and services that exist for seniors. Some specific examples. Three months before an Albertan turns 65, they will receive an information package. That package explains the provincial programs available to them and includes a seniors financial assistance application form. All seniors eligible for the Alberta seniors' benefit also receive a pamphlet of information about seniors' programs mailed to them in July of each year.

Seniors can download various types of information and forms from our website, and should seniors have a question, they are certainly able to contact the Alberta Supports contact centre, which will assist them with understanding the benefits they're eligible for. Additionally, I'm very proud of the fact that we have a series of stakeholder engagement advisers located in different parts of the province from that division, and they work with a network of seniors' organizations throughout this province, providing information and doing training sessions on the various programs that are available to seniors in Alberta. We have a vast network of seniors' organizations and centres that have information, materials, and application packages available to talk about Alberta's seniors' programs.

Mr. Carson: Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to hand it over to MLA Miller, please.

The Chair: Ms Miller, you have one minute.

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chair. While Alberta is one of the youngest provinces in Canada, our population is aging rapidly. What is the government and ministry doing to prepare for an aging population?

Ms Armstrong: Thank you for that. The ministry regularly conducts research and reviews promising practices from other jurisdictions to inform its work. Particularly, we are an active participant and contributor in the federal-provincial-territorial forum for seniors, where ministers and public servants with responsibility for seniors across this country work together to share ideas and plan for issues of common interest. In recent years this group has developed public-facing resources particularly to support aging in place, informal caregiving, and social inclusion, and research has been conducted on promising practices to promote the labour force participation of our older workers. We are actively involved in the development of strategic planning across government departments to ensure that seniors' needs are considered.

The Chair: Thank you.
Mr. Gotfried.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I apologize, but I'm just going to jump quickly back to the sprinkler issues. My information here indicates that there was $80 million that was committed to housing management bodies and continuing care for a total of 6,500 units. Of those 6,500 units, about 4,700 in total were considered to be supported or owned lodges by the government, of which 1,750 were the owned units, so 75 per cent owned or supported units. We've talked about 38 here. Could you give me a complete wraparound? How many of the 4,700 total units, that were either owned or supported lodges, have sprinklers been installed in – I just want to get full, comprehensive information on this – not just the 36 that are owned but those that are owned and supported, as was announced with the program originally?

9:10

Ms Armstrong: I'm sorry. I don't have the level of detail that you have requested, but I can certainly . . .

Mr. Gotfried: If you could provide that to us in writing, that would be awesome.

Ms Armstrong: I can certainly provide what the Department of Seniors and Housing has in relation to a response to your question. We will do so, sir.

Mr. Gotfried: Okay. Thank you.
Just a little more clarity on that.

Ms Armstrong: Yes.

Mr. Gotfried: I think what we were referring to before were those that are owned by public ownership, not those that are owned and supported by, which were all part of the program if I'm not mistaken. Is that correct?

Ms Armstrong: You are correct in that regard.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you.

Ms Armstrong: Yes. And I will endeavour to provide the information you requested.

Mr. Gotfried: Yeah. I think we need clarity on that. Thank you.
I'd like to move over to the ASLI program, Mr. Chair, the Alberta supportive living initiative, which was initially introduced under the previous government. Under key strategy 1.4 on page 18 of the annual report it states that your department will "support Health in the creation of 2,000 public long-term care spaces over the next three years." The text states that Seniors and Housing is still responsible "for reporting on projects that began under the ASLI program and are still in construction." My question is: how many ASLI beds have been built and completed to date under that program?

Ms Armstrong: What I can advise you is that the affordable supportive living initiative, or ASLI program, was transferred to Alberta Health effective April 1, 2016. The Ministry of Seniors and Housing, which previously held this portfolio, has been involved in tracking a number of projects from previous years' allocated ASLI funds prior to the transfer to Alberta Health.

Mr. Gotfried: But in your report it says that you're still responsible for reporting on projects.

Ms Armstrong: In 2016-17 the Ministry of Seniors and Housing was involved in tracking projects totalling 160 units, that would fall under the DSL and LTC categories. Those units are broken down as follows: in Canmore, 60 units; in Boyle, 22 units . . .

Mr. Gotfried: You know what? I don't need the details on that. How many ASLI beds have been built to date out of the 2,000 that were – actually, it was 2,612 originally. Now it's 2,000 in adjusted numbers. And the number of total ASLI beds built today?

Ms Armstrong: The only part of the information that you're asking for, sir, that I have is the information with respect to the projects that the Ministry of Seniors and Housing was tracking, and that is the 160 units that I have just referenced. The other information that you've requested would be with Alberta Health.

Mr. Gotfried: Okay. Are there any net new beds being built through this program which were not scheduled to be built by the previous government?

Ms Armstrong: I'm not in a position to answer that question. Again, sir, I would ask that you defer that question to Alberta Health.

Mr. Gotfried: So none of the beds that are being created under the ASLI program are under your purview anymore?

Ms Armstrong: I'm sorry. I'm not trying to be confusing. My apologies if I am.

Mr. Gotfried: I'm just looking for clarity. Thank you.

Ms Armstrong: We still have the 160 units that we are tracking, that I have referenced earlier, and that is all that we are tracking in our ministry.

Mr. Gotfried: So only 160 of the 2,000 that were announced?

Ms Armstrong: Yes. That is correct.

Mr. Gotfried: Okay. How many beds were built under the original scope of the program? So 160 is all you're responsible for, and that's all you're able to report on. Is that correct?

Ms Armstrong: Correct, sir.

Mr. Gotfried: Okay. So we'll just move on.
I guess with respect to ASLI, the Alberta supportive living initiative, is there an ASLI 2.0 or some other incarnation of that considered with respect to capital funding or granting that would be affecting housing under your authority?

Ms Armstrong: I have no information, sir, that I can report to you in response to that question. Once again, I would defer you to Alberta Health.

Mr. Gotfried: No. I'm asking for similar types of programs, capital funding programs that might support some of the facilities that were under Seniors and Housing. Is there consideration of another ASLI program? I'll call it ASLI 2.0, or it might have some completely different acronym. Is there something you're looking at – the reason I'm asking that is that we are in a bit of a downturn, and there are some value opportunities here with respect to construction and land opportunities to provide additional seniors' housing in today's marketplace.

Is there another program that might be considered now that could be an evolution of the ASLI program to take advantage of the slow economic conditions to provide greater housing for Albertans in need, particularly given that we are moving towards a doubling of the seniors population in the next 14 years?

Ms Armstrong: With respect to your references, sir, to ASLI I think you called it 2.0 or something to that effect, I have no information on that. In our department we do not have anything that I would equate to what you're describing.

Mr. Gotfried: Okay. So no current capital initiatives or funding options for RFPs of any sort that you're looking at at this point in time?

Ms Armstrong: Okay. I'm going to pause you there because we have a number of capital initiatives that are ongoing in our department, so I'm happy to talk about them. The government of Alberta is investing $1.2 billion in affordable housing capital needs over five years. Capital funding is a critical part of this government's commitment to a sustainable, affordable housing system and providing safe, affordable homes for Alberta's families. Capital projects that are complete and occupied range from the Bar-V-Nook Manor phase 1 in Smoky Lake, which is 40 seniors' assisted living lodge units, to the Bethany seniors' home in Edmonton, which is 62 seniors' self-contained units, to the Big Knife lodge in Forestburg, which is 21 seniors' lodge units.

Mr. Gotfried: Okay. Yeah. Those are all available on the website.

Ms Armstrong: I have pages of these. There are many, many examples of completed construction.

Mr. Gotfried: Okay. So, again, the evolution of that is the capital program under the affordable housing strategy.

Ms Armstrong: Correct, sir. Yes.

Mr. Gotfried: The minister has publicly stated that the government has a preference for government-owned and -operated housing units. Will there be any future partnering with the private and nonprofit sectors in terms of – I mean, obviously, you've got some moving ahead, but is your preference still, as stated by the minister, for publicly owned, or are partnerships with the private and nonprofit sectors considered equally to those of public ownership?

Ms Armstrong: I'm going to start responding to that, sir, and then I'm going to ask my ADM to pick up where I may have missed. Certainly, the government is committed to a sustainable, affordable housing program moving forward. We absolutely have to be looking towards sustainability in the long term.

Mr. Gotfried: Of course.

Ms Armstrong: Accordingly, there absolutely is an interest in having equity and investment in our housing stock. Now, there is no absolute prohibition that I am aware of that says: you cannot do this, or you cannot do this. It is a preference, it is a way forward, it is a guideline, it is a principle that we are following, and we are actively involved in talking to our housing providers across the province.

Mr. Gotfried: So the preference is for public ownership. Is that correct? That's what was stated by the minister.

Ms Armstrong: That's a correct statement, yes.

Mr. Gotfried: Okay. That's fine.

I'd like to move on to more affordable housing, which, obviously, addresses some of the capital initiatives. Under Capital Initiatives on page 9 of the annual report new affordable housing supply is a listed category. How many net new affordable housing units were delivered during the 2016-17 fiscal year?

Ms Armstrong: Just give me one second.

Mr. Gotfried: Maybe you could deliver that to me at a future date in writing.

Ms Armstrong: Certainly.

Mr. Gotfried: And how many net new affordable housing units will be delivered this year? Maybe that might be also best put to a written response.

Ms Armstrong: Yes. I will undertake to respond to that.

Mr. Gotfried: All right. In the affordable housing strategy it calls for maintaining and operating 4,100 affordable housing units by 2021. How many of those 4,100 will be upgraded, and how many units will be net new units? The number 4,100 was noted as net new and upgrading.

Ms Armstrong: John, can you respond to that?

Mr. Thomson: John Thomson responding. Currently we are tracking . . . [A timer sounded]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Gotfried: Can he be allowed to finish his answer?

Mr. Thomson: . . . approximately 2,900 net new, 1,900 regenerated.

Mr. Gotfried: Okay. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Ms Miller.

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Elder abuse is a subject I hear about a lot in the media and in my constituency. Our Golden Circle seniors' centre in Red Deer frequently has grandma or grandpa or mom or dad dropped off on a Friday and just left, so the community got together, and there are two fully sponsored elder abuse suites in Red Deer. I also understand that other communities such as immigrant or indigenous communities have this same issue, and it needs to be addressed differently. What has the Ministry of Seniors and Housing done to address elder abuse in Alberta and in some of these specific communities?

9:20

Ms Armstrong: During 2016-17 staff from our ministry delivered customized workshops for a number of indigenous communities, including the First Nation communities of Beaver Lake Cree Nation, Cold Lake First Nation, Frog Lake First Nation, and others as well as several Métis settlements.

Also, in 2016-17 the taking action – this is a long name . . .

The Chair: Excuse me. Sorry. I hate to interrupt.

Mrs. Littlewood: Oh, no. I just wanted to be added to the list.

The Chair: Okay.
Please continue.

Ms Armstrong: Thank you. This is a long name; we love acronyms in government. The taking action against elder abuse co-ordinated community grants response program, so the elder abuse grants program, provided $1.2 million in grants to 25 communities across the province to develop or enhance a co-ordinated community response model to address and prevent elder abuse at the local level. I won't read the list of all the different communities that receive these grants, but it's quite broad and diverse throughout the province. The grants end at the end of December 2018. Again, a total of $3.5 million will have been disbursed at that time.

Elder abuse prevention materials, including videos, publications, and web resources, have been developed and distributed across Alberta, and I'm also delighted to say that they've been translated into 10 different languages. They're available on our ministry website or by calling the Alberta Supports contact centre.

Ms Miller: Thank you.
I'm going to pass the remaining time on to MLA Littlewood.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you very much. Transportation remains a huge issue for seniors in Alberta, especially in rural areas. I'm wondering how your ministry is assisting with supporting seniors in transportation.

Ms Armstrong: It is indeed a critical issue for Alberta seniors. In 2016-17 the grant funding from the ministry to a centre called the Medically At-Risk Driver Centre, which is also known as MARD, supported projects in the communities of Wetaskiwin and Pincher Creek. The Wetaskiwin project involved implementing ride-sharing software, and the Pincher Creek project validated the tool kit which is called the alternate transportation for seniors tool kit, which can be used by communities across the province to provide feedback on its utility.

We've also provided grant funding to the Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council to provide leadership to the Drive Happiness co-ordinating committee in their efforts and to develop a centre of excellence and collaboration hub. We've also provided $500,000 in funding through the special-needs assistance program to support rural transportation options.

Lastly, and also critically important, we're actively engaged with our colleagues in the Ministry of Transportation in their development of a draft public transportation strategy for Alberta to ensure that the needs of seniors are addressed throughout the implementation of that strategy.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you very much.
The government had passed a budget that this year had added $200 million to home care. I'm wondering what your Ministry of Seniors and Housing is doing to also support seniors staying in their homes and communities.

Ms Armstrong: We have a number of different initiatives ongoing that fall under the rubric of supporting individuals to stay in their homes and communities, and I'll just reference them quickly.

There's something called the age-friendly communities initiative. The lovely thing about this is that it's a grassroots, community-driven process that involves the active participation of citizens of varying ages and abilities in the planning and designing of policies, services, and structures related to both physical and social environments to help seniors age actively. This initiative encourages and supports Alberta communities across the province to be more inclusive and welcoming for aging populations. Our ministry helps facilitate the creation of these environments through the sharing of information and resources and through our age-friendly Alberta recognition program, that acknowledges communities taking steps to become more age friendly.

I also think it's important, when you're talking about helping people to stay in their homes, that we look at things like the SHARP program, which I've already referenced. The seniors' property tax deferral program allows seniors to defer all or part of their property taxes through a low-interest home equity loan with the government of Alberta. And the special-needs assistance program provides financial assistance to seniors with expenses like household items or lift chairs in order to be able to remain in their homes. We've also got the supplementary accommodation benefit, that I referenced earlier, and the Alberta seniors' benefit. So we have a whole plethora of different programs and services that are focused on and concentrated on helping seniors to stay in their homes.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you very much.
I just wanted to thank you as well as the government for the funding that has been going to these programs, that are funding programs where communities can lead their own methods of taking action against elder abuse. The community response system that had been rolled out across a number of regions: there was a grant of $50,000 that went to the Lamont region that has been very successful in reaching out to a lot of different individuals. So I just wanted to thank you for that program.

I will cede the rest of my time to Ms Luff.

The Chair: Thank you, Mrs. Littlewood.
Ms Luff.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you again for being here. Affordable housing is something that I really care about a lot, and it's something that comes to my attention fairly frequently in my office. Unfortunately, wait-lists for affordable housing in the province and in Calgary in particular are still really long. I have people come into my office and want my help in applying for affordable housing, and I always have to tell them how long the wait-list still is.

You know, I do appreciate that we have put in $1.2 billion over five years, which is the same amount the previous government put in over a much longer period of time. Calgary city council has mentioned that they haven't had any new money since 2011. So to finally get going on this is really wonderful. But I'm just wondering what specifically your ministry is doing to diminish the wait time for households to get into affordable housing. Do you have particular goals or timelines or any sort of performance measures on this particular metric?

Ms Armstrong: As you've already referenced, the $1.2 billion commitment is a significant part of our effort to reduce wait-lists because it's going to lead to regeneration of units and new units. We've had a discussion earlier today about the breakdown between those two groups. This commitment will indeed help us assist in the creation of over 4,000 new or regenerated affordable housing units over the next five years. It is anticipated that over 1,000 new units will become available within the next year, which will help address wait-list pressures across the province. So 1,000 new units will become available within the next year.

Ms Luff: That's good news.
The Alberta Social Housing Corporation is mainly responsible for affordable housing in Alberta and is mentioned in several spots

in your annual report. I'm just curious as to how you find it's performing. What steps does the government take to ensure that it's performing well?

Ms Armstrong: The ASHC – that is how I'll refer to it – as you indicated, holds the housing assets for the province. It has operated within its budget, and as you can see from our financial statements, revenues generated by the corporation are reinvested in affordable housing. So, in that respect, not only is it performing well, but it also allows us to ensure that our investments in affordable housing continue to go toward affordable housing now and in the future.

There are advantages to the current structure of the ASHC, which include financial flexibility; increased efficiencies, with only government employees as board members; and also that they support an appropriate level of autonomy with HMBs, the housing management bodies, on operational matters.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, Member.

We will now move on to Mr. Gill.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: You have three minutes, sir.

Mr. Gill: Okay, sir. I will try my best.

My question is regarding the Alberta seniors' benefit program. Key strategy 1.3 on page 16 of the annual report addresses the Alberta seniors' benefit program. I've got a few questions, one of which is: how many seniors received support through the program in 2016-17? The number, please.

9:30

Ms Armstrong: Okay. In 2016-17 we had approximately 151,000 of our 550,000 seniors receiving financial assistance through the seniors' benefit program.

Mr. Gill: Okay. How many seniors . . .

Ms Armstrong: Sorry, Mr. Gill. I need to clarify. That was on a monthly basis, and over the course of the year assistance was provided in total to 172,000 seniors. My apologies.

Mr. Gill: Okay. How many seniors received support from the Alberta seniors' benefit program the year prior to that, '15 to '16?

Ms Armstrong: I do not have that number available.

Mr. Gill: Okay. How many seniors applied to the program in '16-17 for support?

Ms Armstrong: I don't have the number of applicants versus the number – do you want to say your name?

Mr. Cabral: John Cabral, ADM, seniors services. We don't have the exact number, but we do track the numbers that don't apply by percentage. As the deputy indicated in the preamble, we provide information and applications to individuals three months before they turn 65. We get a very high return on those applications, 99.1 per cent returned.

Mr. Gill: Okay. What's the average time for an individual taking assessment for the seniors' benefit program in '15-16 and '16-17, two separate years?

Ms Armstrong: We don't have the numbers for '15-16.

Mr. Gill: Can you give me '16-17, please?

Ms Armstrong: You're looking for the time to process the application?

Mr. Gill: That's right. The average time for assessment.

Ms Armstrong: Okay. It's 10 weeks for '16-17.

Mr. Gill: Ten weeks. Okay.

How many seniors are waiting for assessment for the program today? We have heard of wait times of 20 to 25 weeks, which is contradictory to what you're saying at 10 weeks. Are these numbers correct, 20 to 25 weeks?

Ms Armstrong: Let's just take a quick look.

Mr. Gill: Thank you.

Ms Armstrong: You're looking for current numbers?

Mr. Gill: That's right.

The Chair: Thank you, sir.

If you could respond to that in writing, I'd appreciate that.

Ms Armstrong: We will. Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Malkinson, you have three minutes, sir.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much. My constituents want to see government departments less siloed. How are you working with Alberta Health and Community and Social Services to address the OAG's recommendations?

Ms Armstrong: I'm also a big proponent of the breaking down of silos across government because Albertans are individuals. Although we address their different needs across different departments, I think it's absolutely critical that we collaborate effectively and constantly. Alberta Seniors and Housing has a strong relationship with Alberta Health, with Alberta Community and Social Services, and with Alberta Municipal Affairs. We're all interested at all levels – ministerial, deputy minister, officials levels – in committing to collaboration to best serve Albertans.

Examples of the work that we're doing right now include responding to the valuing mental health initiative. As part of this initiative we are working together to offer mental health first aid for seniors training – that started this November across the province – for individuals and service providers to better understand how to address and identify mental health issues and concerns in seniors.

We've also collaborated with Community and Social Services in their work on the prevention of family violence with our departmental work that we have discussed today on addressing elder abuse.

I can also advise you that the three departments I've referenced – Community and Social Services, Alberta Health, and Seniors and Housing – are actively working together to do integrated planning for capital initiatives moving forward. In particular, with respect to the OAG recommendation on lodges representatives from all three departments are working collaboratively in relation to identifying better ways to address care needs as well as set minimum disposable income levels. In our working groups that we are actively facilitating, we have representatives from the different departments working with us.

Mr. Malkinson: To carry on with that, regarding the AG's recommendation to improve the effectiveness of the seniors' lodge program, who exactly is undertaking that work, then?

Ms Armstrong: There is a group. I'm going to give them a name. It's the seniors' lodge working group, and they were set up under the provincial affordable housing strategy. Their purpose is to provide advice on the implementation of the response to this recommendation relating to the lodge program.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.
Thank you, Mr. Malkinson.
We'll move on to questions read into the record for a written response from the ministry. I would ask that if any members have a question, please submit them now.

Mr. Gill: The ones for written response?

The Chair: Yes, Mr. Gill. Go ahead.

Mr. Gill: Okay. Yeah. Of the written responses we are looking for, the first one is: for the seniors' tax deferral could we obtain the annual household participation broken down from its inception in 2013 to the present?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gill.
Is there a government question that they'd like to have read into the record?
Seeing none, Mr. Gill, you have another question?

Mr. Gill: The seniors' home adaptation program is addressed on page 16. Could we please obtain (a) a monthly breakdown of applicants who have received funds since its inception in July 2016, (b) total funding that has been allocated since its inception, and (c) the department's annual target year and whether it is meeting the target?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gill.
Is there a question from the government side? No? Okay.
Does the opposition have another question?

Mr. Gill: Yes. The seniors' benefit program questions I asked: I want, actually, written responses for all of them. What is the average wait time for an individual seeking assessment for a seniors' benefit program in 2016-17 compared to '15-16? How many seniors are waiting for an assessment for the program today?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gill.
I'm going to keep asking: is there any government question? No? Okay.
Please continue, Mr. Gill.

Mr. Gill: Yes. We heard that the wait time is 20 to 25 weeks. Please elaborate on that in a written response as compared to your question. How many seniors received this support through the Alberta seniors' benefit program in 2016-17 and '15-16? If we can get written responses to that. Also, the third part of the same question is: how many seniors applied to the program in 2016? If we can get the written responses to those, that would be great.

The Chair: Okay. I think, Mr. Gotfried, you have a question?

Mr. Gotfried: Yes. We've heard with respect to some of the capital renovations for some of the lodges, the supported but not owned lodges, that there have been some requests for handing over of ownership to the public, public ownership. Could you please explain the objectives behind that request to some of those lodges?

The Chair: You'll have 15 seconds, sir.

Mr. Gotfried: Okay. With respect to private and nonprofit partnerships versus public ownership could you explain to us or provide us with information on the cost per door, the cost per bed of public ownership versus the nonprofit and private ownership partnerships that you have as well?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gotfried.
I'd like to thank the officials from the ministry who . . . Mr. Malkinson.

Mr. Malkinson: Are there any questions for reading into the record?

The Chair: I have been offering, but we're over the three minutes. I see that we monopolized it with the opposition, so if you'd like an opportunity to do that . . .

Mr. Malkinson: I've got one more quick one.

The Chair: Please, Mr. Malkinson, but be brief.

Mr. Malkinson: Absolutely. The effectiveness of the lodge program is dependent on being able to meet the changing needs of seniors in communities, so I would like to know how the new lodge buildings are taking this AG recommendation into consideration.
Thank you.

9:40

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Malkinson.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: I'd like to thank the officials from the ministry who attended today and responded to the committee members' questions. We ask that the responses to outstanding questions from today's meeting be provided in writing and forwarded to the committee clerk within 30 days.
We'll move on to other business. An item was moved earlier to the agenda. Mr. Gotfried, do you have a motion you wish to move forward?

Mr. Gotfried: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd just like the committee's consideration for a motion. I move that

> the Standing Committee on Public Accounts invite the Alberta Social Housing Corporation to attend a future meeting to be scheduled in 2018 to answer follow-up questions arising from reports from the office of the Auditor General and from the December 5, 2017, meeting.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gotfried. All right. Now we can move on to other discussions regarding this motion.
Mr. Gotfried, can you please explain your intent in the motion?

Mr. Gotfried: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. The seniors' lodge program was originally addressed by the Auditor General in 2005, which we heard today and the follow-up to that as well. The Alberta Social Housing Corporation was not ready for a follow-up audit despite the fact that these recommendations are getting on to 12 years old. The ASHC is ready for follow-up audits on two other recommendations that were made years after the recommendations for the seniors' lodge program, which is positive. They're ready for follow-up, so that's positive news for us.
The government has invested $140 million in 2016-17 to regenerate and renew facilities within its housing portfolio, which includes the seniors' lodges. That's a positive move, and we're very appreciative of that. But when the government is spending over $100 million, this committee should be able to directly question the

entity responsible, especially when that entity does have outstanding recommendations, some as old as 12 years.

Further, the vast majority of the report from research services deals with the seniors' lodge program. That's obviously become a bit of a focus with respect to the outstanding recommendations but also in terms of some of the materials that we've received. Research services' deep dive into this has really focused much attention on that.

Again, it was originally addressed in 2005, 12 years hence, so I think it's an opportunity to allow us as a Public Accounts Committee – this is our job, to ensure that there's accountability in these programs, as directed by the Auditor General – to do our job here to ensure that these programs are being well administered, well addressed. Particularly when we have recommendations from the Auditor General, it's a concern for me that past governments and current governments – we are now 12 years old on some of these recommendations. An update, an opportunity, certainly, for – we're hearing that some of those recommendations are ready for reporting, so I think it would be a great opportunity for us in 2018 to actually speak directly to the Alberta Social Housing Corporation.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Gotfried.

Mr. Malkinson.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. With this motion I think back to a very extensive discussion we had quite recently on the work that we voted on, that was based on the work that the working group of this committee did, as far as our upcoming schedules for the Auditor General reports that we will talk about in this committee. I am wondering if perhaps it would make sense to defer a decision on this motion or refer it to the working group when we talk about the fall schedule. I think that would make the most sense because I believe the committee has already voted on our schedule for upcoming AG reports that we're going to review for at least the next little while. Like I said, I ask the hon. member: is that what he's asking, to have this considered when we redo our next schedule for the fall?

The Chair: Mr. Gotfried, if you wouldn't mind responding.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the member for that comment. You know, we've had lots of opportunities and the working group as well. I think I'm seeking direction here from the committee.

You know, we've had some situations where decisions on who we should be seeing come back to the committee in any case. This is really just saying: could we ensure that this is added to the schedule as a direction from this committee, that it be added to the list? Certainly, in terms of scheduling, I would be more than happy to leave that in the hands of the chair and the working group. But I think that if we can provide direction that this is a really important issue, as highlighted by the Auditor General, that would be a clear direction from all of us in this committee to ensure that we can address what appears to be a long-outstanding issue. I think it might actually accelerate things in terms of the opportunity for the Auditor General to address this and give us an opportunity in this committee to also address this issue.

Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. I'm just trying to bring clarity to this motion, Mr. Gotfried. Are you asking that we hold the meeting before December 31, 2018?

Mr. Gotfried: Schedule it in 2018: that would be correct, yes.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Malkinson: What I'm hoping to put forward is, you know, that I would be comfortable with this if we defer this until the planning meeting for the fall round and let the working group implement Mr. Gotfried's recommendation into our schedule at that point. Sorry. I don't have the written motion in front of me to refer to, but that would be what I would be happy to support and is, I think, what I'm interpreting Mr. Gotfried as saying.

The Chair: I'll read the motion again for those that don't have it in front of them. I apologize. I move that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts invite the Alberta Social Housing Corporation to attend a future meeting, to be scheduled in 2018, to answer follow-up questions arising from the December 5, 2017, meeting.

Mr. Gotfried: Actually, there were some additions to that added in: "arising from reports from the office of the Auditor General and from the December 5, 2017, meeting," Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Gotfried: Having said that, I mean, I know there's no such thing as a friendly amendment, but, you know, I think we would be amenable to that, Mr. Malkinson.

Mr. Malkinson: Yes. I would think that if we could amend it that we would send this to the working group so that it be considered for the fall planning session of the PAC committee, I would be very happy to support that. So if you're amenable to that, I think you would find support for that all around.

The Chair: Can you please just give us a couple of minutes for the clerk to come up with a new motion?

Mr. Malkinson: Absolutely.

The Chair: I'll just have the clerk read it into the record.

Mr. Roth: Hopefully, this captures your intent, Mr. Malkinson. Basically, to amend the motion by striking out all the words after the words "Public Accounts" and substituting:

> instruct the working group to consider scheduling in 2018 the Alberta Social Housing Corporation to attend in 2018 to answer follow-up questions arising from the reports of the office of the Auditor General and the December 5, 2017, meeting.

Mr. Malkinson: That sounds like it. I believe our schedule only goes to about midway through 2018 – correct? – that we currently have for the working group. Then I think we'd be good. Mr. Gotfried? Perfect. I think we can vote on that.

9:50

The Chair: Any further discussion on the amendment? Okay. All in favour? Any opposed? Okay. The amendment is carried.

Any further discussion on the motion on the floor as amended? All in favour? Any opposed? Okay. That amended motion is carried. Thank you very much.

Pending the completion of session, the committee meets next on Tuesday, December 12, with Treasury Board and Finance. The committee meeting is scheduled from 8:30 a.m. to 10 a.m. The pre-meeting briefing will begin at 8 a.m.

Would a member move that the meeting be adjourned? Ms Miller. All in favour? All opposed? The motion is carried.

Thank you very much.

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

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