



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 28th Legislature  
First Session

Standing Committee  
on  
Families and Communities

Ministry of Service Alberta  
Consideration of Main Estimates

Monday, March 18, 2013  
7 p.m.

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**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 28th Legislature  
First Session**

**Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Quest, Dave, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (PC), Chair  
Forsyth, Heather, Calgary-Fish Creek (W), Deputy Chair  
  
Brown, Dr. Neil, QC, Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (PC)  
Cusanelli, Christine, Calgary-Currie (PC)  
DeLong, Alana, Calgary-Bow (PC)  
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
Fritz, Yvonne, Calgary-Cross (PC)  
Goudreau, Hector G., Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (PC)  
Jablonski, Mary Anne, Red Deer-North (PC)  
Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (PC)  
Jeneroux, Matt, Edmonton-South West (PC)  
Kang, Darshan, Calgary-McCall (AL)\*  
Leskiw, Genia, Bonnyville-Cold Lake (PC)  
Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND)  
Pedersen, Blake, Medicine Hat (W)  
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Towle, Kerry, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)  
Wilson, Jeff, Calgary-Shaw (W)  
Young, Steve, Edmonton-Riverview (PC)

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**Also in Attendance**

Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND))  
Fox, Rodney M., Lacombe-Ponoka (W)

**Support Staff**

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Tracey Sales	Communications Consultant
Liz Sim	Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

## **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

### **Participants**

Ministry of Service Alberta

Hon. Manmeet Singh Bhullar, Minister

Hon. Donald Scott, QC, Associate Minister, Accountability, Transparency and Transformation

Althea Hutchinson, Senior Financial Officer and Executive Director, Strategic Planning and Financial Services

Brent McEwan, Assistant Deputy Minister, Consumer Services

Kate Rozmahel, Assistant Deputy Minister/Corporate Chief Information Officer, Enterprise Services



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[Mr. Quest in the chair]

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**The Chair:** All right. Well, good evening, everybody. We'll call the meeting to order. We could have probably used just a slightly larger room, but everybody will get to know each other a little better by the end of the evening, so that's great. The committee has under consideration the estimates of the Ministry of Service Alberta for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014.

I just want to remind all of our members that the microphones will be operated by *Hansard*, so if you could just keep your Black-Berrys off the table, that would be helpful.

I'd like to have everybody around the table introduce themselves, and, Minister, if you could introduce your staff for us, that would be great. We'll start with the deputy chair, to my right.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Hi. I'm Heather Forsyth, Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Goudreau:** Hector Goudreau, Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley.

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

**Mr. Jeneroux:** Matt Jeneroux, Edmonton-South West.

**Mr. Wilson:** Jeff Wilson, Calgary-Shaw.

**Mr. Pedersen:** Blake Pedersen, Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Kang:** Darshan Kang, Calgary-McCall. Good evening, everyone.

**Mr. Bilous:** Good evening. Deron Bilous, MLA for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Scott:** Good evening. Don Scott, Fort McMurray-Conklin, associate minister for Service Alberta.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Good evening. Manmeet Bhullar. I'm the Minister of Service Alberta. With me we have Althea Hutchinson and Kate Rozmahel.

**Mrs. Jablonski:** Good evening. Mary Anne Jablonski, Red Deer-North.

**Mrs. Towle:** Kerry Towle, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Ms Cusanelli:** Christine Cusanelli, Calgary-Currie.

**Ms Jansen:** Sandra Jansen, Calgary-North West.

**Mr. Fox:** Good evening. Rod Fox, Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mrs. Leskiw:** Genia Leskiw, Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mrs. Fritz:** Yvonne Fritz, Calgary-Cross.

**Dr. Brown:** Neil Brown, Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

**Ms DeLong:** Alana DeLong, Calgary-Bow.

**Ms Rempel:** Jody Rempel, committee clerk, Legislative Assembly Office.

**The Chair:** Dave Quest, Strathcona-Sherwood Park, and chair of this committee.

Members, as you know, the Assembly approved amendments to the standing orders that impact consideration of the main estimates. Before we proceed with consideration of the main estimates for the Ministry of Service Alberta, I would like to review briefly the standing orders governing the speaking rotation.

As provided for in SO 59.01(6), the rotation will work as follows. The minister or member of the Executive Council acting on the minister's behalf may make opening comments not to exceed 10 minutes. For the hour that follows, members of the Official Opposition and the minister or member of Executive Council acting on the minister's behalf will speak. For the next 20 minutes the members of the third party, if any, and the minister or member of the Executive Council acting on the minister's behalf may speak. For the 20 minutes following that, a member of the fourth party and the minister or member of the Executive Council acting on the minister's behalf will speak. Following that, for the next 20 minutes the private members of the government caucus and the minister or the member of the Executive Council acting on the minister's behalf will speak. Any member may speak after that.

Members may speak more than once; however, speaking times are limited to 10 minutes at any one time. A minister and a member may combine their time for a total of 20 minutes. Members are asked to advise the chair at the beginning of their speech if they plan to combine their time with the minister's time.

Once the specified rotation between caucuses is complete and we move to the portion of the meeting where any member may speak, the speaking times are reduced to five minutes at any one time. Once again, a minister and a member may combine their speaking time, this time for a maximum total of 10 minutes, and the members are asked to advise the chair at the beginning of the speech if they wish to combine their time with the minister's time.

Three hours have been scheduled to consider the estimates of the Ministry of Service Alberta. With the concurrence of the committee I will call a five-minute break near the midpoint of the meeting.

Committee members, ministers, and other members who are not committee members may participate. Members' staff and ministry officials may be present, and at the direction of the minister officials from the ministry may address the committee.

If the debate is exhausted prior to three hours, the ministry's estimates are deemed to have been considered for the time allotted in the schedule, and we will adjourn; otherwise, we adjourn promptly at 10 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 in the Assembly for the benefit of all members.

Vote on the estimates is deferred until consideration of all ministry estimates has concluded and will occur in Committee of Supply on April 22.

There is at least one amendment, so an amendment to the estimates cannot seek to increase the amount of estimates 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.

Vote on amendments will be deferred until Committee of Supply on April 22. Written amendments must be reviewed by Parliamentary Counsel prior to the meeting at which they're going

to be moved, and 25 copies of the amendments must be provided at the meeting for committee members and staff.

Just one other note. I'm sure everybody will be on their best behaviour. We did have one incident the other night that probably shouldn't have happened, and something like that is not going to happen again, so we'll just stay focused on the task and the business at hand this evening.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Can you make sure you ask people to speak directly into the mike, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** Okay. As Mrs. Forsyth has just said, just make sure that you speak directly into the mikes when you're speaking.

I'd like to invite the Minister of Service Alberta to begin your remarks, please.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Thank you very much. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Madam Vice-Chair. Thank you for the opportunity to present the 2013-14 estimates for the Ministry of Service Alberta.

I would be remiss if I didn't start off by saying that I am reminded of last year, when I was seated next to a fine individual who has since passed and who served Service Alberta and the government of Alberta very well. We take a moment to pay tribute to Doug Lynkowski, the former deputy minister for Service Alberta.

I would like to introduce some of the department officials who are here with me today. In the audience we have my deputy minister, Jay Ramotar; Dean Screpnek, assistant deputy minister for business services; Kate Rozmahel, the corporate chief information officer, seated here at the table with me; Dennis Mudryk, the assistant deputy minister for registry services; Brent McEwan, assistant deputy minister for consumer services; and Althea Hutchinson, our senior financial officer, who is seated here next to me at the table.

Before getting into the financial figures, I'd like to talk more broadly about the ministry's focus this coming fiscal year and mention a couple of highlights from the fiscal year coming to a close. It is notable to mention that in 2012-13 Service Alberta launched the online expense disclosure website for cabinet and senior officials, a policy and a website that has been seen as being the gold standard and an example for other governments to follow. For example, we've actually had consultants that are helping other countries develop such policies get in touch with us to see what they can learn from our process.

We've increased high-speed Internet access for rural Albertans through the second phase of the final mile rural connectivity initiative.

We introduced the Public Interest Disclosure Act to protect public-sector employees who report wrongdoing.

We initiated a province-wide condominium consultation to improve protection for consumers and raise standards in the industry.

In 2013-14 we will continue improving our consumer protection, streamlining government services to reduce costs, and taking the necessary steps to make government more accountable and transparent.

Mr. Chairman, the budget for Service Alberta supports the government's theme of building Alberta. Many of the services that are important to Albertans are facilitated or supported by my department. Service Alberta touches the lives of Albertans every day, whether it's through providing services directly to Albertans or through the critical support we provide to other government ministries. Our work is often behind the scenes, but it has a significant impact on the day-to-day lives of Albertans as well as

the ability of the government as a whole to operate efficiently and effectively.

**7:10**

Programs the ministry delivers for Albertans include registries, business licensing, landlord and tenant dispute resolution services, vital statistics, consumer protection, and many, many others.

In May of last year Associate Minister Don Scott was appointed to help our department strengthen accountability and transparency specifically by reviewing legislation and introducing new pieces such as the ones I discussed earlier.

Services provided to government include but are not limited to technology support, procurement services, interdepartmental mail and courier services, payroll, accounts payable, records management, and even government libraries.

The ministry's vision is clear: one government, one enterprise, one employer driving innovation and excellence in service delivery. I am proud of the work done by the ministry to support Albertans. The steps we are taking this year will support our vision to provide even better services for Albertans and our internal government clients.

Service Alberta's business plan outlines goals and priority initiatives for the next three years that link closely with the priorities assigned to me by our Premier as well as the government's overall strategic plan.

A large part of our ministry's work involves protecting consumers. This year we plan to modernize the Condominium Property Act to enhance consumer protection and stimulate a vibrant condominium industry in Alberta. I would like to mention that since we launched our condominium consultation, we've had nearly 3,000 submissions with about 75 per cent so far being from everyday condo owners. I have personally met with many stakeholders and individual condo owners and witnessed tremendous interest in a wide range of subjects. This is a very important topic for Albertans, and we want to have their input.

In addition to the condominium consultation we will continue to protect consumers by investigating and prosecuting cases of unfair practices. I'm very pleased that we were able to last year increase fines up to \$300,000 now for violators of the Fair Trading Act, and I'm very pleased that we will now have the ability to sanction individuals through administrative penalties as well. This is a very significant step forward in the interest of consumer protection. These are very, very important tools for us.

We have initiatives planned for the next three years to ensure Albertans have access to convenient and efficient services. Included in that is working with our registry partners on finding ways to improve registry services for Albertans, which includes expanding online delivery of registry services.

We're going to continue to increase high-speed access to the Internet for rural Albertans through the final mile rural connectivity initiative and look at further ways to open government information and data and make it more accessible to Albertans. These are just a few examples of how we will continue improving services for Albertans.

Last year one key priority mandated to me was to work with the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development to improve access to high-speed Internet for rural Albertans, and I'm proud to say that we have delivered on that commitment.

Service Alberta also provides core standard shared services to ministries. Ministries rely on our services for daily operations. For example, we do the very glamorous task of delivering mail, we ensure that the computer networks are running, and we provide the best deals to purchase goods and services. We do things that help government function effectively and efficiently. The ministry

works across government to facilitate government program and service delivery, reducing the duplication of services, which ultimately better serves the public.

In the business plan there are a number of priority initiatives related to shared services over the next three years. Government contracts will continue to be simplified and improved. By implementing strategic sourcing, we will improve efficiency, reduce duplication, and align more consistently with a one-government approach to purchasing goods and services. As part of the procurement process we will consult with ministries and stakeholders to help find the products and vendors that best meet the needs of our government of Alberta employees.

For example, by standardizing wireless contracts for mobile devices across government, we are saving taxpayers up to \$8 million annually. Service Alberta has hundreds of standing offers for everything from IT equipment and office supplies to uniforms and tires. These offers were negotiated to provide savings to government and are also available to nearly 300 public-sector entities across the province.

We will continue to implement sustainable ways of accommodating demand for core shared services, including standardizing services, maximizing efficiencies, and managing risk across the government of Alberta. Mr. Chairman, these are important initiatives that Service Alberta will work on over the next three years. These changes will lead to better services for Albertans and will help make government more efficient.

Now let me move to the estimates. At the onset of the discussion I would like to say that Service Alberta is a net contributor to the province's general revenue fund. The work that is done by my department contributes \$679 million in revenue. That revenue is offset, obviously, by our expenses of about \$357 million, for a net contribution of \$322 million to the bottom line. I just want people to know that Service Alberta adds value not only in the services we provide to Albertans but fiscally, and we will continue to do so.

I will now outline . . .

**The Chair:** We'll be going to questions now, Minister.

**Mr. Bhullar:** I guess I won't outline.

**The Chair:** How much more time do you need?

**Mr. Bhullar:** I've got a few pages, sir.

**The Chair:** Okay. All right. Well, the standing orders may allow for an extra couple of sentences, but certainly we're going to have to carry on.

For the record Mr. Steve Young, the MLA for Edmonton-Riverview, has joined us.

With that, we'll go to Official Opposition questions for one hour. The first question is from Mr. Fox.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Are you going to go back and forth, or do you want to go with your 10 and 10?

**Mr. Fox:** We'll go back and forth.

**The Chair:** You're going to go back and forth with the minister. Okay.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. First, I'd like to thank everybody for attending today. I know that the Service Alberta deputy ministers and staff have worked very hard in preparing for their

estimates session today, and I thank them for attending to add their knowledge to this discussion. Thank you.

Hon. minister, I'll be up front with you. Most of my questions today will focus on performance measures, oversight, accountability on spending, value for tax dollars spent, and I will also be asking on the ministry's capacity to perform the priority initiatives assigned to it.

Let's start with a quick look at the funding for your office and your associate minister's office. The estimates indicate that funding for your office is increasing by 19 per cent this year. I'm curious as to why this is the case when everyone else is tightening their belts. What justification is there for a 19 per cent increase in the minister's office? Also, can you provide me with some details on the reason for \$255,000 of funding for the associate minister's office? I'll get more into detailed questioning on the value of spending on the associate minister's duties and the implementation of the whistle-blower protection legislation, but for now I'd just like to hear the information on the spending inside the office.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Well, thank you very much for those questions. The increase in the minister's office budget is due to the fact that we have a new role and a new employee within our office, and that is the press secretary. That's something that's new and something that's been added. With respect to the associate minister's office the budget is \$255,000, which covers a couple of staff and some dollars for standard operational expenses that one would anticipate are necessary to have an office function. That would include everything from administrative and stationery supplies to perhaps travel.

7:20

**Mr. Fox:** Well, with the associate minister now being part of the ministry, I'm curious what economies of scale could be derived from that. I mean, you're now sharing the workload with another office and with more staff, so I'm sure that there would be some economies there. If you have the added manpower of an associate minister within your office, there should be some efficiency there.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Well, thank you for that question as well, hon. member. I'd like to state that we are, you know, searching for those efficiencies. Quite frankly, I think we're executing on a lot of them. A simple example is the sheer fact that we've got one press secretary between the two of us, theoretically, one communications person between the two of us. That's a simple example.

The associate minister position is a very important one that's aimed to not just add to the work that Service Alberta does, but it also has a very important role to really seek out other areas of focus that have traditionally, perhaps, not had one particular house in government: not one home, not one place, or one ministry to call home. I think that's a very, very important piece. In the past you could have had accountability- and transformation-related initiatives tied up in many ministries. You could have FOIP in one area. Treasury Board could have dealt with a lot of initiatives and directives and the like. It really could have been tied up in many, many different areas. Now what you have is one office that works with Service Alberta but is not just limited to the mandate that Service Alberta has, right? It has a mandate of accountability, transparency, and transformation. So it encompasses more than what Service Alberta has as a stand-alone ministry.

**Mr. Fox:** All right. Thank you, Minister.

Well, let's get into the fun stuff here now. Let's talk about the priority initiatives within your business plan. There are 22 of them listed, but when I checked your ministry's work, there are only 12

performance measures listed within the business plan. Can you explain the disparity? If there is a lack of oversight and accountability at the top of the ministry, doesn't it concern you that there may be problems found deeper within the ministry?

**Mr. Bhullar:** You know, hon. member, we obviously have a number of initiatives that we list here. Some of these initiatives are initiatives that are executed and completed within a year, some are six months, and some of these are initiatives that'll take more than one year. I mean, this is a three-year business plan, right? As you progress on these initiatives, you start checking them off and you start adding more and more performance measures for the others. I think it's a very important tool to ensure that you have a variety of priorities that you list here, but you also need to understand the fact that these are three-year business plans. That's something that I think provides a lot of value and stability to the public, to know where our focuses are going to be and what things we're going to be looking at.

On the accounting perspective I'll ask Althea to provide some more input.

**Ms Hutchinson:** As you will see, our performance measures actually are not tied specifically to the initiatives. They're actually tied to our goals. If you take a look at it, we have listed out four goals, which is actually more goals than we had in our previous business plan. We do recognize the need to continue looking in terms of our performance measures to make sure that we're providing good value and that we're measuring what we need to measure. To that end, we've actually added a new performance measure this year, 2(a). We've also reintroduced a couple of ones that used to be in our business plan around FOIP, sort of refocusing in terms of FOIP being in our business plan at this point.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you.

Hon. minister, Service Alberta is a very broad and encompassing ministry, as you know, that affects Albertans daily. With all the priority initiatives there is no estimate listed as to their costs or their estimated costs, what part of ministry resources will be allocated, or how they will be completed. It doesn't appear to be wholly transparent for any of these items to be listed on the business plan with a budgetary line item or even linked to a relevant portion of the estimates, so maybe the associate minister can elaborate on the transparency of the document.

**Mr. Bhullar:** I'm going to have Althea provide some comments first.

**Ms Hutchinson:** Just to kind of give you a bit of a layout in terms of how the estimates link into the goals, what we've actually done with our goals is that we've taken our goals and the process that we went through this year was to determine: what are the initiatives, what are the really important strategic initiatives that we want to achieve as a ministry? I can provide you with some general guidance in terms of what lines in the estimates link up to the goals if that's what you're looking for.

For example, goal 1, which talks about registries, links directly into the estimates. If you look on page 196 of the estimates, that's basically elements 2, land titles; 3, motor vehicles; 4, other registry services; 5, which is registry information services. In terms of goal 2, which talks about accountability and transparency in government for Albertans, the focus there is right around sort of consumer protection, so that links back into 6 and 7. As well, if you go to goal 3, there's also another theme that pulls over in

terms of consumers and protecting consumers, so that is linked into 6 and 7 as well.

**Mr. Fox:** Would it be possible to get this in writing?

**Ms Hutchinson:** Of course.

Just to finish the last question, though, so you are aware. For goal 4 it's basically for business services and technology services, which are elements 8 and 9. So that's how they align.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you.

Now we'll get right into the priority initiatives here. You'd started with 1.1, so that's a good place for us to start. That reads: "Continue the modernization of the land titles registry system to meet current and future service requirements." Minister, what is the estimated completion date of this project? You know, there is some information that I'm sure Alberta taxpayers would like to know up front, which is: how much was spent on the modernization last year, how much will be spent this budget year, and what will the total scope and cost of the project be upon completion?

**Mr. Bhullar:** Thank you. All good questions. Obviously, the land titles system is a very, very important system for us. I want to quickly mention that the land titles system also generates, I believe, \$87 million in revenue. It's a net contributor to our bottom line, so it's a very important system.

Now, this system is something that was written in a fairly old programming language, so it's not snap your fingers and you get something new overnight. In addition to that, this system is one that has a very, very large and important set of stakeholders that work with the system on a regular and consistent basis. So not only does the system need to change, but as a result of any potential systems changes that may take place, you also have a variety of other stakeholders and, subsequent to that, forms and processes that also need to change.

This is a change that from beginning to end can take four to five years, but that doesn't mean there won't be changes in process before that. So we'll have a phased-in approach to this change. It'll be a change that happens on a step-by-step basis to ensure that we don't disrupt services because there are so many people that rely on this service on a daily basis. So it will be a step-by-step process. In the present fiscal year I believe we've got \$8 million allocated to this. Now, it's also important to note that when you're looking at capital expenditures, if we have \$8 million allocated for this this year and if we find that some of the work for some reason or another is happening a little bit slower, what may happen is you may end up spending \$6 million of that and rolling \$2 million into the next year, right? So we're looking at about \$8 million this year. As I said, it's a process that will take anywhere from four to five years.

Althea, do you want to provide some comments on last year's?

7:30

**Ms Hutchinson:** Yeah. In terms of 2012-13 we're forecasting at this point to spend \$5.6 million towards the land titles initiative.

**Mr. Fox:** Do you have any idea what the cost will be of the total project upon completion?

**Mr. Bhullar:** Yeah, we do. At present it looks as if the total capital cost for this will be about \$29 million. That's the total capital expenditure devoted to this. Now, keep in mind that this is a system that has millions upon millions of records in it, and the system is absolutely critical for our land titles. It's something



that's guaranteed by government. I mean, we guarantee the accuracy of that title that individuals get.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, and thank you, Minister.

Now let's move on to your priority to expand the online delivery of registry services to Albertans. You had made reference to that in your opening remarks. You know, a lot of my questions you're going to find structured in a similar manner because I do believe that Albertans deserve to know this information in relation to the cost of these programs not only today but what they will cost over the entire lifetime of the project.

What services is this government now planning on delivering online that they aren't already delivering online, what is the detailed estimated cost of this project, what is the time frame of the project, and what are the estimated ongoing costs associated with the completed project such as maintenance and scheduled upgrading?

**Mr. Bhullar:** We've got cost, time frame, ongoing costs, and which services?

**Mr. Fox:** Yeah. Which services are you going to now be offering online?

**Mr. Bhullar:** Okay. Again, good questions. I'll start with which services, and I'll ask my staff to supplement as well. Right now we have a variety of services that are offered only in person, so only through our physical registry locations. I would like to see as many services as possible being offered online. Albertans are busy people, engaged with what's important in their lives, and that's their children, their . . .

**Mr. Fox:** Would this be things like vehicle registration, licence renewal?

**Mr. Bhullar:** Absolutely. Absolutely. I'd like to see more and more services, everything from vehicle renewals to, as you said, licences. What today you can get through a physical agent I'd like to see us eventually be able to do online.

Now, there will be some cases where, because of the security checks that are required, some services will always only be provided online, but I think we shouldn't set ourselves up to say: here's the only set of services we want to provide online. We should be very robust in what we want to do with that. That's essentially offering online services in our five key areas: motor vehicles, vital stats, personal property registry, corporate registries, and land titles.

Now, with respect to cost, hon. member, my hope is that this will cost very little. I actually hope – not hope; I know it will – that this will be a very significant revenue generator for us. I mean, the fact of the matter is that there are millions of transactions that are completed every single year, and I believe a lot of these transactions can take place online. From a net-benefit perspective I think the government of Alberta stands to gain very significantly by having online registry services.

**Mr. Fox:** So more revenue into the government through online services. Then you would have the opportunity to generate more revenue and have less overhead with offices. Is that what you're getting at?

**Mr. Bhullar:** Well, what we can do with online is, first of all, more revenue and, secondly, streamline processes, streamline the behind-the-scenes processes that today could be very time intensive.

You asked about land titles earlier. The changes that we're going to make to land titles could and should and will result in operational savings. Right now we're spending about \$12 million a year on the funding of our operations of the land titles system. Well, through these changes that will eventually come down very significantly. I don't want to throw out a number right here on what my prediction is, but let's just say that I think that through changes and automation they'll come down very significantly. I look to the same piece. I look at the same model for online services. With respect to time frame I am hopeful and gearing towards some step in this direction within the next few months.

Now, I should be honest and tell you that we're looking at RFPing this. We're looking to go out to the private world and say: tell us what you have to offer. I think that's something you would favour, wouldn't you?

**Mr. Fox:** Well, I like competition.

**Mr. Bhullar:** There you go. I thought I'd get a smile on your face from that.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, hon. minister. Yeah, you did get a smile on my face.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Just one last piece on the ongoing cost. I guess I should be cognizant of the fact that if we are RFPing, I may not want to talk about all of this right now. I'll leave it at this. With respect to ongoing costs for us to get a good, competitive bid, those ongoing costs won't be our costs. The only thing ongoing will be our profits.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, Minister.

This project of expanding the online delivery of registry services to Albertans reasonably will put the government of Alberta in competition with the Alberta registry agents. As you know, they're already suffering under static service charges and stifled demand, so how are you planning on dealing with that aspect of offering the services online?

**Mr. Bhullar:** Can I just ask a clarifier? What do you mean by stifled demand? I don't quite follow.

**Mr. Fox:** Well, there are places where these offices want to expand out; in Blackfalds, for instance. If you're taking transactions out of that marketplace and having them online, it will create a stifled demand in that market. I mean, there already are issues around whether or not an office could be viable in Blackfalds. By opening this up to online, you're actually competing with those registry agents and perceived new offices within rural Alberta.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Okay. Look, I am quite certain that as Alberta continues to grow and progress, transaction volumes are doing nothing but increasing. Transaction volumes are not going down. Transaction volumes are increasing. We see that. To give you an example here – let me see – registries processed 8.3 million transactions in the last fiscal year.

**Mr. Fox:** Would it be possible to give me those numbers just as a written submission?

**Mr. Bhullar:** Well, which numbers as a written submission?

**Mr. Fox:** The transactions that you're speaking of now.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Well, I can attempt to get you some of this, but some of this would be private information that's withheld for the business. I just want to give you the sense that the fact is that demand is increasing. To say that the business is stifled is, I think, completely inaccurate. The fact is that it will have an effect on businesses, and that's why we're working with the registry agents. We're working with them to come up with ideas on how we move this forth. That's why even on the expansion policy we're working with the registry agents.

7:40

We want people to be able to access service all over the province. We want people to be able to have timely access to a physical location if they need it or to an online service if they need it.

Well, I guess I should ask. We know that online services are important. The public of Alberta demands them, and we know it can be a significant revenue prospect for us. We know that potentially those online services can take away some business from a physical location. Does that mean that we don't provide the service that Albertans expect?

**Mr. Fox:** There are ways of providing a service while still generating those transactions within those registries.

Anyway, our time is running short here, so I kind of want to move on and get some more of the questions answered here.

Let's move on to priority 1.4, which is the initiation of the modernization of the motor vehicle registry system to meet current and future service requirements. Again, Minister, what does this mean in terms of current and future needs for our province? What do you see that this program needs to be able to do in the future? Also, I know I seem to be asking the same question over and over, but what's the funding projection on this project? How much is it going to cost over the life of the project, and how much are you budgeting for this year?

**Mr. Bhullar:** Thank you. Another good question. The MOVES system is a very important system. This is the one that houses all of our vehicle information. This is a critical piece of IT infrastructure that we have. Now, to just replace this system today could cost as much as a hundred million dollars. What I'm looking to do: I'm looking to see how we can move forward with modernization by capitalizing on outside investment perhaps. I'm looking to rethink the model, to rethink ideas on redoing some of our IT infrastructure.

Our IT infrastructure provides a very, very important backbone of support and services for Albertans. The fact is that it's not a school that an Albertan family gets to walk their child to, so they don't think about this. They don't think: hon. member, I'm sending you to Edmonton to make sure all the IT infrastructure in the province is top notch. As a result of that, we've got to think very, very strategically on how we find ways to modernize a lot of this IT infrastructure.

Right now we're in the planning and strategic development phase of this to see what types of initiatives we could move forth with. The technology that this platform sits on is technology that some of our banks still run on. They have found ways to use this technology and provide a modern front end for it. Again, we're going to need to be incredibly strategic and thoughtful in how we move out with this, how we move forward with this. Right now the money that we have allocated to this would just be seed money for the strategic development and, really, the planning processes.

**Mr. Fox:** All right. Thank you very much, Minister.

Moving on to goal 2 under your business plan here, accountability and transparency for Albertans, I have a few questions for you, Associate Minister. Priority 2.1 deals with FOIP. As we all know, FOIP is very important. It compels the government of Alberta to release information to Albertans. I'm curious: Associate Minister, how much money was spent specifically refusing to provide answers or documents under FOIP requests, excluding reasons such as the information being requested was already publicly available? I'm also interested in what goals you have, if any, on broadening the ministry's open-data policy, furthering the goals of transparency, and reducing the burden on interested parties paying for their FOIP requests.

I'm also wondering how you can justify charging interested parties for their FOIP requests. What are the costs of last year's requests, and what would be the estimated cost to the ministry to not charge for FOIP requests going forward?

**Mr. Bhullar:** I'm going to start that off. With respect to FOIP requests every department has individual FOIP co-ordinators, so you would need to pose that question to every single department to see what their individual costs around FOIP are. I've actually heard from some local municipalities, to be quite honest with you, that have said, "Hey, we need to jack up our FOIP fees." The amount of manpower that is being devoted to comply with FOIP requests, they said, is affecting their productivity. That's a question I'd have for you. Unless they have the ability to hire new people to help meet these FOIP requests, they're saying: "We can't meet timelines. Either you let us charge a lot more, or we're not going to be able to make these timelines anymore."

**Mr. Fox:** The Edmonton city council went to this open-data policy, and a lot of this information is just publicly available online through the city itself. It actually has reduced the number of FOIP requests for that data. That's why I was asking about the open-data policy.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Sure. I'm glad you brought up the open-data policy. Open data is a very, very important tool in our modern world, right? Data and using data effectively can make a lot of changes. I'm very proud of the fact that we brought in an open-data policy with respect to expense disclosures. I mean, it's in machine-readable format. It's electronic. It provides more records than any government, not only elected officials but people all the way into departments – executive directors, assistant deputy ministers, deputy ministers – and it goes to our agencies, boards, and commissions. That's an example of open data.

Quite frankly, we had a lot of individuals that sat around doing nothing but FOIP requests. You know, I think that this was a smart policy on our part. We brought it forth. We have, I think, one of the most robust expense disclosure policies and the portal to support it. We are moving forward in a direction of open data. A lot of our ministries are posting a lot more data online available in machine-readable format. There's no question that this is a direction that we're pulling in. There's no question that this is something that can lead to a lot of benefits for Albertans.

To be quite honest with you, will it get rid of all the FOIP requests in the world? Absolutely not. We know there are people that live in basements that spend all their time thinking: "Who can I FOIP next? What can I do next?" You know what? My suggestion to all those folks is to come out into the real world, have some fun, and really take a breath of fresh air in the real world and see that there's more to life than FOIP requests. We're embracing open data. I'd say: embrace the open air. Embrace

those beautiful mountains right behind the chair and the vice-chair. It's beautiful, isn't it?

**Mr. Fox:** Hon. minister, I did do some checking around on this. The reason I'm asking about the justification for charging interested parties is that the federal government doesn't charge for access to information requests.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Hon. member, do they charge for – and I'm asking you because, to be quite honest, I don't know the answer up front. If they don't charge for the initial request, do they charge a whole bunch of fees afterwards? I know a lot of jurisdictions, sir, that say: hey, our initial fee is only six bucks or \$5 or \$3. But they have a whole bunch of other charges; like, a photocopy costs a buck for a single page.

**Mr. Fox:** Minister, with the federal government it's a \$5 initial fee, and then there is nothing after that. There is no charge.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Well, you know what, sir? That's fine if they do that. You know, we have a very significant cost that's associated with freedom of information requests, but we are moving forth in open data. Quite frankly, I welcome everybody to follow our lead. The fact is that the federal government doesn't have a robust expense disclosure policy like we do. They don't have a web portal for expense disclosures that allows you to see individual, itemized receipts in machine-readable format. You know, we've taken the lead on this, so they're welcome to follow.

7:50

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, Minister.

Priority 2.2 is the recently passed whistleblower protection act, and specifically that priority deals with the implementation of it. This was a piece of legislation that we talked about at great length. I'm curious if the associate minister can help me find the estimates and full costing information within the business plan for what it will take to implement this act.

**Mr. Scott:** Well, what I can tell you first of all is that we are in the process of starting the regulation development process for the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act. What we are planning on doing is creating very robust, very thorough regulations. We are very anxious to see the act enacted and fully implemented, so we've been looking at that and going through that process.

I might have to refer to the staff to identify the exact amount. I believe it's just part of the overall budget. I doubt that there's a line item that singularly identifies how much it's going to cost to implement a single set of regulations. It is part of my ministry's mandate to make sure that we are doing it, so it's part of our overall budget, but the staff might want to supplement that.

**Mr. Fox:** Do you have an estimated implementation cost?

**Ms Hutchinson:** Mr. Scott is correct. We actually have an area called policy and governance, and they work not just on the public interest disclosure, but they work on all of our – I think we have 35 acts and 84 regs. Their job is to actually just work continuously around those acts and regulations, and this will just be a portion of the work that they do.

**Mr. Fox:** Okay. Thank you.

Do you have an estimation of what the ongoing cost of the commissioner's or ombudsman's office that will operate under this act?

**Mr. Scott:** We've been operating to date on estimates that we've been putting together, but in a practical sense we're still developing the procedures and what that office is specifically going to be doing as far as staffing is concerned. There has been some preliminary work done, but we're still in the development stage in making sure that we have a robust office.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Sorry, hon. member. Just to supplement that, it's very important to note that that responsibility will sit with an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. That independent officer can come to the Legislative Offices Committee of the Legislative Assembly and seek additional funding if they feel that's absolutely necessary for them to carry on their responsibilities.

In my estimation, you know, it'll probably take them a little bit of time to see what types of systems they require within their offices to execute the ambit of the legislation, so I think they would be back at the Leg. Offices Committee seeking additional funding.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, Minister.

Moving on to priority 2.3, it reads: "Support the goals of accountability, transparency and transformation by establishing standards for information and data sharing, a data portal, and a plan for expanded and additional data sharing services." This brings to mind a few questions for me. What concrete solutions is the ministry developing to accomplish this objective? How can the ministry ensure across-the-board, complete, and effective participation of all the ministries with this endeavour? What performance measures will be included in your business plan going forward so Albertans can hold the ministry accountable for the work done on this?

This is a very important issue, Minister. Recognizing that Service Alberta has faced and is still facing issues with across-the-board ministry participation on other endeavours of yours, I'm curious how you will get them all to comply.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Sure. We're moving forth with the development of a portal as we speak. I think it's going to be a very exciting initiative that we launch in the next little bit, if that's precise enough for you.

I'm going to ask Kate Rozmahel, our chief information officer for the government of Alberta, to supplement that answer as well.

**Ms Rozmahel:** Certainly. Thank you very much. We have been working across ministries on the development of an open data portal. We've had good representation from all ministries and good support. I think that when we do get to the position of launch, we'll have a variety of data sets that represent all the different sectors that the government represents, and it's going to be a fairly exciting time. I do think the ministries, as I've mentioned, recognize the importance of this initiative. One of the things that's important to know is that any time you open or launch these types of data portals, sometimes the biggest users of these portals are actually inside government itself.

Similar to what other jurisdictions have done, we will offer a cross-section of data sets to Albertans. We will have things like a licence that is consistent with other Canadian jurisdictions, and we will be able to do things like launch mobile applications from the data sets that we publish.

**Mr. Bhullar:** You know, just as Kate mentioned, one of the great values of these types of data sets is to get government and

government stakeholders to work together with data and to make better decisions as a result of data. This is part of our commitment, as I said.

Now, it's important to note, you know, that we are working closely with the federal government on their open-data, open-government initiative as well. You brought up their FOIP charges. It's my understanding that five hours are free, and after that point there are charges. I don't think it's completely free, but maybe somebody over there who has a little more experience federally with FOIP may have an answer.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, Minister.

You know, since we're back on FOIP, I want to talk about the performance measures under 2(d), percentage of FOIP requests handled without complaint to the Information and Privacy Commissioner. You've got 97 per cent, and that's a good number, but I'm curious about the other 3 per cent. What were the top reasons for those FOIP complaints to be lodged with the OIPC? What was the breakdown on outcomes for those complaints handled by the OIPC? What costs are incurred by the ministry for the complaint process.

**Mr. Bhullar:** You know, I think a lot of those answers would also rest with individual ministries. They all have individual reasons why a specific FOIP request may not have gone through. It could be as simple as personal information. I know that people try sometimes to do a FOIP request seeking people's personal information. That's just not permissible. So it could be a wide range of things, but again that's something that you would need to discuss with every single ministry to see why specific requests in their case have been denied.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you.

Is there a reason why we don't have a centralized point for collecting these statistics on FOIP requests?

**Mr. Bhullar:** We do have a centralized point that gets us this data. I mean, that's how you have the 97 per cent number. But the reasons for which something moves forward to the commissioner can vary, right? It's 3 per cent. Ninety-seven per cent are handled without going to the commissioner. So it's 3 per cent. That 3 per cent can happen for a variety of different reasons, as I said. There are a lot of legislative parameters, a lot of legislative reasons why you don't need to release some information.

It's also very important to note that we very much respect the individuality of our FOIP co-ordinators within the government of Alberta. We don't think that those are processes that people should be interfering with. Our FOIP co-ordinators are independent, and individuals don't have the ability to intervene.

**Mr. Fox:** Okay. Thank you, Minister.

Moving on to priority 4.4, a continuation to migrate government ministries onto technology infrastructure and standardized technology services, this is one that the ministry has been working on for a number of years now. What is the ministry's status with bringing the ministries of Energy, Education, and Enterprise and Advanced Education onboard the Service Alberta system? What are the difficulties in getting this finished? What action is being taken with Human Services in integrating their systems? What are the estimated cost savings of this program, and how will they be reported? If the benefits are so prominent, is there a plan, either through regulation or some other vehicle, to compel participation of all other ministries in this project? What is the anticipated end date of this project?

**8:00**

**Mr. Bhullar:** Thank you, hon. member. I think there are about 10 or 12 questions in there. I'll try to remember them all with my very precise memory.

Okay. Look, we want to bring everybody onto the government domain. It makes a lot of sense to get everyone on the government domain, but there's also a cost involved in moving people over, and the cost can be significant to move infrastructure over. I'll ask Kate to provide details of that in just a second.

There is a cost to move people over onto the government domain, so you do need upfront capital. That does lead to savings afterwards. For example, on some specific contracts like for support services or help desks having everybody on one domain will lead to savings in the out-years. But that requires significant upfront capital investment.

We are committed to strong infrastructure spending. We think that, you know, IT infrastructure is critical. We think it's important, and we are moving forward with this. I'd like to have it all done tomorrow, but the fact is that we don't have unlimited sums of money for infrastructure. As we know, not everybody likes to spend as much money on infrastructure as we feel is necessary anyhow, but it's very important that we continue to build to make these investments because, quite frankly, these investments today are going to save us more and more money in the future as well.

I'm going to ask Kate to supplement some of that as well.

**Ms Rozmahel:** Thank you very much. Just to maybe provide a little bit of background to help with the answer that I'll provide, when we talk about the corporate technology infrastructure, what we're talking about is everything from shared data facilities, networks, servers, storage, utility services, desktops. It's also about how we service end-users that are on the infrastructure with help desk and desktop management. So it's a fairly broad and comprehensive scope.

As mentioned by the minister, it's fairly heavy lifting to get folks from their current infrastructure onto the corporate infrastructure. We have been working at it for a number of years. We have about 80 per cent of the end-users on the corporate infrastructure, and we continue to migrate ministries across piece by piece.

The four ministries that you've mentioned have been active participants in results-based budgeting. This particular aspect, which is the consolidation of infrastructure, is right in cycle 1 of our RBB review. I'm very pleased with how responsive those ministries have been to talk about the concept and to consider moving on.

There is the issue of cost upfront. There is time because it takes time to do this work. There's also the issue of winding down any kind of contractual obligations we might have in those ministries because some of them are being supported by other outsourced vendors, and we need to wind down those contracts, you know, with some diligence.

Just in terms of what kinds of services, we have about 28 different shared services offered through the corporate infrastructure. Of course, we've put in place a number of standards to help further streamline costs on the infrastructure as well.

**Mr. Bhullar:** I forget to mention the fact that through our results-based budgeting process we actually have 21 different reviews going on to see what we should bring forward first, what changes we should make in what stages. So 21 different areas of our IT infrastructure and a lot of our other business services processes and so on are currently under review.

I am very, very optimistic about that process. Everything we see happening so far shows that this is going to be a very robust re-engineering process for government. It will allow us to make really significant changes to consolidate, to increase the use of shared services. But at the end of the day, hon. member, I want to state the fact that there will be capital costs required upfront to move everybody onto the system. Those are infrastructure capital costs that we will need to invest, but that will lead to savings though.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, minister.

While we're here and talking about security of data and IT services of the government, what measures has the ministry taken to ensure that Albertans' vital data is not put at risk again and is easily accessible in another case like the Shaw Court fire? The province also has numerous other servers at other locations. I'm curious how you feel about the security of the data at those locations. So if you would, please.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Sure. It's really important to note that – I mean, imagine driving down a highway at a hundred kilometres an hour and having somebody throw your car into park as you're driving. That's what happened at the Shaw fire. There was a fire – it was caused by nothing any of us had anything to do with – and that fire led to the shutdown of our system while it was running at a hundred kilometres an hour.

Here's the most amazing part. Not a single piece of data was lost. We brought our systems back on, and not a single piece of data was lost. I think that shows that our disaster recovery plans worked. I think that shows, quite frankly, that we've got a good system in place.

I will mention, hon. member, that although no data was lost there, all of this IT infrastructure is very, very costly. Should we want to have the Cadillac of all data centres? Should we want to have the Cadillac of all backup systems? We can, but that'll mean a very significant increase in infrastructure and capital spending. That will mean folks that oppose that, quite frankly, will need to change their minds. It's very important and critical infrastructure.

Our systems worked. Not a single piece of the millions upon millions of records in that data centre, not one, was lost.

I'll ask Kate to supplement that as well.

**Ms Rozmahel:** Yes, that's correct. You know, it was an unfortunate incident that happened at Shaw Court, but we worked well with the teams across the government of Alberta and with our vendor, quite frankly, to get those systems back up online. It really is a good statement in terms of our ability to bring systems up to say that we didn't lose an ounce of data in that effort.

I would also say that, in fact, we have a very robust corporate security program in place for systems. We have won awards, actually, with that particular program. Over the course of the last five years we've done a number of things to really put in place a best-in-class corporate security program for the government of Alberta.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you.

We only have about 10 minutes left here, and I've got quite a few questions left. So if the Minister would be happy with this, I would hope that I could read in my questions to you and have you reply in writing back to the committee.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Are you tired of hearing my voice already?

**Mr. Fox:** I'll take that as a yes. Thank you, Minister.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Well, we'll do our best, dependent on the types of information.

**Mr. Fox:** All right. Well, thank you very much for that commitment.

On business plan priority 4.5, continuing to apply the greening government strategy to various aspects of the ministry's services, what is the main objective of the strategy? What costs are you anticipating for the strategy this year? What is the anticipated total cost of the strategy upon complete implementation? What is the time frame? Has the ministry undertaken any impact assessments to determine what results have been achieved so far? If so, what are they?

On the digital framework we have:

Develop a Digital Framework . . . that leverages enabling technologies to foster innovation in how services are received by Albertans and delivered by government, and establish a strategic vision and direction for the SuperNet beyond 2015.

Since we are only two years away from 2015, what is the ministry's progress on this initiative? What are the performance measures that are going to be used? I'm curious to know if you have a costing and forecasting of the ministry's planned revenue and expenses related to the development of this project that you could share going forward.

On the final mile initiative I would like to know what the current top five not-completed priorities on this project are? What is the total estimated cost of this project, not including ongoing maintenance? How much are you planning to spend on this project this year? What are the estimated ongoing short-term and long-term maintenance costs on this program? What have been the biggest problems so far as far as dollars or frequency in implementing this initiative? How does the project compare with other similar projects in other jurisdictions on costs incurred and value delivered? Has the ministry partnered with any other levels of government in this initiative? What has that cost-sharing arrangement been?

**8:10**

Under your performance measures for goal 4, measure 4(b), percentage of internal clients satisfied with services received from Service Alberta, who are your internal clients? Why are so many of them dissatisfied? The rate of dissatisfaction was 23 per cent in 2011-2012, and it's estimated to be 20 per cent this year. How is that a reasonable target? What are the most common complaints that you get from these internal clients? What actions do you have under way to improve the satisfaction rating?

**Mr. Bhullar:** For a point of clarification, Mr. Chair, the member asked some questions on things like final mile that I think are a little out of scope. I mean, those aren't infrastructure investments that we're making, so I'm not quite sure how we would respond to all of those in writing.

**The Chair:** Minister, I believe you said that you would try, so it's really up to you. If you'd like to address some of those questions right now, then go ahead. You two made a choice at the beginning that you'd combine your time, so this is a conversation back and forth. If you'd like to respond, Minister, please do.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Your questions on final mile, for example the top five pieces that are still to do and so on, I don't think there are five pieces left to do. I mean, we're going to move forward with another set of announcements with Agriculture and Rural Development, and from there we'll reassess.

With respect to greening the government fleet and so on, where applicable we'll buy vehicles that are greener for the environment.

For the SuperNet and the digital strategy, hon. member, that's a really important piece of infrastructure that the government of Alberta has, the SuperNet, and we want to see how we can leverage that SuperNet to achieve a lot of great things in the future. What we want to do right now is come up with a strategy. What we want to do right now is seek input from stakeholders, from everyday Albertans. You know, this is something that we'll do in the next year or so, come up with how we're going to use the SuperNet to move Alberta's digital economy into the next realm. That doesn't mean that we have a strategy in place today that we can outright come out and share with you. That's the process we're under now.

And we want to look to see how we can better possibly financially leverage this great piece of infrastructure we have, look at this from a few different angles, not just as the valuable tool that it is to connect Albertans but also look at this as a very powerful financial tool for the public of Alberta. That's a very important piece.

Internal customers and their satisfaction. Well, sir, I'm not going to make a bad joke, so I'm going to ask Althea.

**Ms Hutchinson:** In terms of performance measure 4(b) we take a look at quite a number of our clients. I can give you a list. We look at the individuals who accept e-mail from us. We have libraries. About five or six of our accounts are in the financial area. That would be the accounts payable area, the cash office. Payroll and benefits are also included. We've also included fleet services, some of the ones around our systems. So they are ExClaim, the P-card, fleet management as well as the electronic payment system. Those are just a few. There are quite a large number.

In terms of the percentage that's there, what you'll notice is that it is 80 per cent. That's basically a performance measure that's quite standard because it means, basically, 4 out of 5 people are satisfied with your service. So it's just another way of taking a look at it. Our actuals are 77 per cent.

What do we do with that information? That information, all of it, is gathered. A report is prepared. It's distributed to all the executive committee members. We use the verbatim feedback to kind of take a look at if there are any trends, and we do use that information to see what we can do in terms of bettering our services going forward.

**Mr. Fox:** All right. Thank you.

**Mr. Bhullar:** A lot of those processes as well, hon. member, are things that we are revisiting, revising, potentially restructuring, re-engineering, essentially, through the results-based budgeting process. We're working with all of our stakeholders, our partner ministries, in some cases even our agencies, our boards, and commissions to see how we can provide these services better so that more individuals use them and so that it's a more effective use of time and resources, including financial resources.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you, Minister.

I guess we'll get this one on the record. Hopefully and you can reply to it in writing. I am looking at the capital spending that you're going to be doing. I have a question on the business services line, 2011-12. In that year \$4 million was spent. In budget year 2012-13 the ministry budgeted for \$3.7 million, but the forecast is for \$7 million spent. I'm curious why there's a large difference.

I also noticed that the estimate for 2013-14 is almost double what it was last year. I'm curious about what this is being spent

on, what specific line items, and if we could get a breakdown of what this money is going to be used for.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Some of that money was actually operating money that was moved over to capital because of how the purchase of vehicles was budgeted for. I'll ask Althea to expand on that.

**Ms Hutchinson:** As the minister indicated, from the budget to the forecast the increase has to do with the fact that we basically had a need in our capital area to purchase vehicles. We had some funding on the operating side. It's an accounting thing where if you're purchasing anything over \$5,000, it's a capital expenditure. We went forward to Treasury Board and asked for their approval to move the funding from operating to capital. That explains the increase between the budget and the forecast.

As for what makes up the \$13 million in '13-14, again, we've got \$12,050,000 in there for vehicles as well as another million dollars for sort of general capital. Those would take care of sort of break fixes for things like racking at our Alberta Records Centre, forklifts, just general capital items.

**Mr. Fox:** Thank you.

**Mr. Bhullar:** With respect to vehicles the government of Alberta has about 3,100 vehicles in its fleet. These are vehicles for departments like SRD and Transportation and, you know, the Alberta sheriffs department. It's quite a significant fleet of about 3,100 vehicles. As you know, there is a life cycle on these. After a point if you don't end up replacing some of them, the repair because of the usage on them ends up costing you more. That's part of the reason why we have that need today.

This is also an area where we're going to be looking to see how we can maximize our procurement. We're looking at some ideas, again, through results-based budgeting to see how we can potentially do some things differently. We've moved forward, really, with a policy where if individuals drive past a certain number of kilometres, it's much, much cheaper to provide them with a vehicle as opposed to charging mileage.

**The Chair:** All right. Well, thank you, Minister, and Mr. Fox.

We're going to move on now to questions from the second party. We'll invite Mr. Kang. We'll take those questions for 20 minutes, and then we'll take a five-minute break after that. Mr. Kang, if you're ready.

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you, sir.

**The Chair:** I'm sorry; did you want to go back and forth, or did you want to do your 10 and 10? Back and forth?

**Mr. Kang:** That'd be good.

**The Chair:** Agreed? Okay. Back and forth it is.

**Mr. Kang:** Mr. Minister, goal 1, 1.2, says, "Harmonize corporate registration requirements between Alberta, British Columbia and Saskatchewan as part of the New West Partnership Trade Agreement Initiative." How much is this initiative going to cost? Is it included in the \$20 million you were talking about? Is there any cost put on this, and what will be the recovery time, you know, if you put that much money into this initiative?

**Mr. Bhullar:** Thank you for that question. This particular initiative will cost about \$400,000 and should be completed within the '13-14 fiscal year, so it's something that I think we're moving really close to the finish date on now. It's something that has been

going on for, I believe, three years. We're getting right to the tail end of the initiative now, where we'll essentially have everything completed, the forms and so on all harmonized.

8:20

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you. Coming to performance measure 1(c), the percentage of Albertans who are satisfied with the timeliness of government of Alberta services and information biennial survey, in 2010-11 it's 73 per cent, and the 2014-15 target is 80 per cent. Don't you think that's a little bit optimistic? What are we doing to bring it up to 80 per cent?

**Ms Rozmahel:** Well, thank you for the question. We do a biannual survey of Albertans. We have an outside firm that goes out and does the focus groups. We have them seeing a steady increase, actually, in the delivery of the results that we get in terms of delivery of our services. We are getting particularly high marks in the area of our call centres and also improvements in the area of online services. Since this survey was last done, we, the government of Alberta, have been putting more effort into our online services and our programs and services on the websites. While the survey is currently out right now being done so I don't have the new results, we are confident that we're going to see an increase.

**Mr. Bhullar:** I think you're also sort of implying that it's a big jump to go from 73 to 80 per cent. You know what? I think we're up to the challenge. You know, call centres are another piece that we're looking at through results-based budgeting to see how we can possibly consolidate more of them and, I would think, even look at things like how we can ensure that individuals in call centres maybe even develop really specialized knowledge in specific areas because that may then offset the need for more front-line, face-to-face interaction.

To give you an example of what I mean there, there's a major Canadian corporation that now has found that when they start receiving more consumer issues through social media, they're able to respond and deal with the problem at a fraction of the cost of doing it either through a call centre or doing it through a face-to-face sort of retail environment. These are tricky, tricky consumer-related issues. I also want to apply that lens of service delivery to some of what government provides to see how we can eventually start to move forth and see how we can get people's feedback, solve their problems through newer means. That, I think, will then result in very, very high levels of satisfaction, I'm hoping. I think that's why we've set a pretty ambitious target of 80 per cent.

**Mr. Kang:** Okay. That means the same goes for performance measure 2(b). It was 68 per cent in '10-11, and now it's 80 per cent. That's quite a bigger jump than the other one.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Yeah. Look, some of the things that we're doing today are working really well, and we want to rethink other ways of potentially providing Albertans with access to the answers and the solutions that they're seeking. So absolutely that's partly how we have that 80 per cent number for that target as well. I think that it's probable and it's realistic.

I think it's also incumbent upon all of us to remember now that citizens – so Albertans, right? – today don't necessarily look at government and rank their dealings with government in comparison to their dealings with other levels of government. They rank their dealings with government just the same as they do their dealings with a store they may shop from or a company they may get services from. We in government have to rethink the way we're providing services because of that. We have to rethink the

way that our government culture works. We have to rethink the way that we're actually reaching out to people to connect with them, to provide them with services and provide them with solutions.

That's partly what we're trying to embed here, the simple fact that we're going to think outside the box. We're going to realize that everyday Albertans don't see government any differently than they see any major corporation or company or other service delivery firm that they deal with on an ongoing basis. I think we're up to the task, and it's up to us to make sure that we reach those high levels of service.

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you.

Goal 4, continue to apply the greening government strategy. Mr. Minister, you said that there are 3,100 vehicles. How many of them are hybrids? What is being done to have them all be hybrid? You know, is there a time frame, or is there any cost?

**Ms Hutchinson:** The total number of vehicles that we have that are hybrids is actually 78 at this time in the government fleet. In terms of wanting to have more hybrids, hybrids don't necessarily work in every single situation. Our strategy has always been to push the envelope in terms of providing hybrids and supporting that. But, again, you have to take a look at – I'll give you a good example. A hybrid wouldn't necessarily work out in the forests for Environment and SRD. That's not necessarily going to work for them. What we have done is push it forward in terms of, you know, providing it as an option.

We do support the green strategy, and we are continuing to suggest those. But, again, you have to take a look at the situation and what vehicle is actually required in that situation, making sure that you're always keeping in mind the safety and health of the Alberta public service that is actually using the vehicles.

**Mr. Kang:** Yeah. But, you know, I have been hearing that line for the last five years. The number of hybrid vehicles I don't think is going up. The number is going down. If anything, it should be going up. We don't use all of the 3,100 vehicles – SRD doesn't use them all – in the bush. So giving me that 78 as the number I don't think really makes sense.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Just for the record, hon. member, my personal vehicle is now a hybrid.

**Mr. Kang:** That's only one of 78.

**Mr. Bhullar:** I thought that would bring a smile to your face.

**Mr. Kang:** I'm really concerned about the environment, sir.

**Ms Hutchinson:** Just to kind of put it in context, the minister has previously spoken about the ministries that we support, right? I'm just going to give you some numbers to kind of give you an idea of this. Environment and Sustainable Resource Development account for about 26 per cent of the fleet. Justice and Sol Gen, keeping in mind that they transport prisoners in a lot of these vehicles, account for about 21 per cent of the fleet.

I know it's probably something that we have been saying for quite some time, but it is situational. You have to take a look at the situation that's involved, and you have to take a look in terms of what's available in the market for our hybrids. I think that as time goes on, you will find that there will be more vehicles coming out on the market. It is definitely something that we look at in terms of our purchasing. However, at this time the situation doesn't necessarily fit what's available on the market.

**Mr. Kang:** Thank you.

Coming back to Shaw, as we saw in the Shaw Court fire incident of last summer, there are serious issues surrounding business continuity and the disaster recovery planning within the Service Alberta ministry. As well, those departments that rely on Service Alberta's ability to maintain integrity and improve redundancy were severely impacted. What measures are being taken to ensure future business continuity or disaster recovery? Are the other departments meaningfully engaged in these decisions? Where is the disaster planning for the IT of our government services?

**Mr. Bhullar:** I'll start off, and then I'll ask Kate to supplement as well. The Shaw issue continues to come up. Let's look at the facts. The first fact is that there was a fire. Fires are rare occurrences, and they do happen from time to time in our world. There was a fire.

Secondly, the floors on which the government of Alberta's vendor had their data centres were lower floors. As a result of the sprinkler system going off on the higher floors, water trickled down, and a lot of it rested on the floors on which our data centres were located. That's the second piece.

8:30

The third is the fact that we didn't get access to the building for 36 hours after the incident. Power was not restored for 42 hours because of all the drying they had to do and all the moisture and so on. All of that happened, yet within 48 hours 70 per cent of our services were back online. Within 48 hours. Power wasn't restored until after 42 hours, right? I think that shows that disaster recovery planning worked.

Something that I think is also very important is our business continuity planning. See, what we moved forth on immediately because of planning was that when we found that there were going to be some longer term challenges to the Shaw centre, to getting power back on and so on, we immediately started moving on other processes that we could take action on to help alleviate the burden people were feeling. We extended the expiry for registrations. We allowed people to use in-transit permits, so if they were buying a new car, they didn't have to go and get a set of plates right away. The in-transit permit was something that they could use while all this was going on. Those are all examples of planning, of execution, of providing Albertans with reasonable solutions in these rare instances and occurrences.

The fact is, hon. member, that in a world with absolutely unlimited resources, where you didn't have people wanting to reduce infrastructure spending, and even if you had hundreds of millions of dollars, you can't get the cadillac of all backup systems for every single system government has, right? You can't. Disaster recovery planning is critical, but the business continuity planning is also very, very important to ensure that should incidents happen, we have the ability to move to manual processes and bring in other changes so that the effect on Albertans is minimized.

I'm going to ask Kate to supplement on some of the work that she's been doing since then as well.

**Ms Rozmahel:** Yeah. Certainly. Just to sort of wrap up, we have continued to upgrade these systems since the incident. Many of these systems had mirroring technology and, in fact, were brought up in the backup site within 24 hours of the site going down. We did utilize sort of state-of-the-art technology to bring many of these systems up, and we continue to upgrade these systems so that they can all do the same thing.

Also, just to let you know, the vendor who provides us service at that particular site has done a number of things as well. They've since provided us with a written assurance from a third-party assessment company that has gone in and taken a look at the site that the site is fully functional. They restored all the backup and utility power to the site that was initially lost in the fire, and they've made some upgrades to the floors themselves so that they can drain better so that we don't end up with the same type of flooding that the minister had mentioned.

I should just also point out that this was the first major incident of that data centre, which has been in play for almost 15 years in that particular building. The data centre to this point now, even after the Shaw fire, continues to function as a fully functional data centre, and we're pleased with that.

**Mr. Kang:** My concern was that the minister said that they took 48 hours to bring everything back on track. That was my concern. Next time we should be prepared, so we shouldn't have to wait for 48 hours.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Hon. member, if I can add there, that 48 hours is not us. The 42 hours for which there was no power in that building had nothing to do with us, right? There's a fire, there's water damage, and the landlord as well as other inspectors and the like say: hey, hold on a second here; there's no way this place is safe enough for anybody to be sticking a plug into the wall because there's moisture in the walls. I understand what you're saying, but at the same time you've got to note that those 42 hours are 42 hours that we don't have control over.

**Mr. Kang:** But, Mr. Minister, that's where we have plan B.

**The Chair:** If I may, just a reminder that we're talking about the budget estimates for the upcoming fiscal year.

**Mr. Kang:** I'm coming to that.

**The Chair:** You're coming to that? Very good. You've got about two minutes to come to it.

**Mr. Kang:** That's my next question. That's related to this.

Okay. I see there's an increase here, roughly \$6 million being spent under business services, procurement and administration. These capital expenditures are typically the purchase of hardware and equipment for other departments. What projects are reflected in these purchases, and where's the accompanying operational expense appearing for this implementation? You know, I thought that maybe with the \$6 million, somehow there was some money in there for the Shaw incident. That's where I was going.

**Ms Hutchinson:** I will address that question. Just to clarify, you are talking about the business services line, correct? The increase from the 2012-13 amounts to the 2013-14: that actually is for vehicles. We're expecting to spend an additional \$6 million in terms of vehicle replacement. There is nothing associated with that for the data centre or the Shaw Court in that particular line.

**Mr. Bhullar:** A lot of the line items under business services are services that we provide for other ministries.

Kate, do you want to add about that piece on Shaw?

**Ms Rozmahel:** Certainly. I would just say that we continue to fortify our systems and our data centres. We have a program under way this year to improve our backup sites in the Calgary data centre for our corporate data centre, but all the ministries are working diligently to do a complete review of all their systems,



both their critical and their vital systems, just to ensure that they have the right disaster recovery technologies in place. Some will need to be upgraded accordingly.

As mentioned, sometimes it can be expensive to do those types of upgrades, so you have to always weigh the benefits of doing the upgrade with the business risk, and sometimes you have to rely on your business continuity plans as your fallback plan versus putting in expensive technology.

**Mr. Kang:** Coming to freedom of information and privacy, the Newspapers Canada National Freedom of Information Audit 2012 gave Alberta a grade of B for how quickly it responds to information requests but only a D for completeness of disclosure. The audit also flagged Alberta as having the third-highest proportion of information requests, 25 per cent to be exact, and that generally is fee estimates. Does the Associate Minister of Accountability, Transparency and Transformation accept the findings of this audit, and is he satisfied with the grades given?

**The Chair:** All right. Thank you, Mr. Kang.

Minister, you can decide if you want to respond to that in writing or not, but that's all the time allocated for the third party in this section.

We're going to move on to the break, which is going to be brief. We'll reconvene here at exactly 8:45.

[The committee adjourned from 8:39 p.m. to 8:48 p.m.]

**The Chair:** We're going to get started.

All right. Minister, if you and your folks are ready and, Mr. Bilous, if you're ready to go, I invite you to get started. You've got 20 minutes. Did you want to go 10 and 10, or do you want to go back and forth?

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I prefer just for the time to be lumped together, and we'll go back and forth if that's all right with the minister.

**The Chair:** Okay. All right. We'll combine for 20 minutes of Q and A whenever you're ready. That's agreeable to you, Minister? You're good to go? Very good.

**Mr. Bilous:** I'm going to put you on the spot immediately. During last year's estimates debates for Service Alberta you, Minister Bhullar, said that the language on marriage certificates would be changed on exactly May 14, 2012. The marriage form and marriage certificate linked on the website as of today, March 18, 2013, still use the traditional language of "bride" and "groom." Last year the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona talked about changing these to be appropriate for today's couples in Alberta. You gave a specific date, Minister, of May 14, 2012, when it would be changed. My first question, with a comment, is that, first of all, the delay is unacceptable, disrespectful of same-sex couples getting married in Alberta. When will this be changed, and when will you confirm with my office that it's been changed?

**Mr. Bhullar:** Are you referencing the forms, or are you referencing the certificate?

**Mr. Bilous:** These are the forms.

**Mr. Bhullar:** We went through a regulation change last year, and that's why we gave that date.

**Mr. Bilous:** Yes. However, this was pulled off today.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Okay. The regulation change that I speak of was doing exactly what we just discussed or what you mentioned, so if that, in fact, is not reflected on the website, then we will have that looked at and changed. That was a regulatory change. As I said to your colleague last year, that was a regulatory change we were making last year, and it would have taken effect on May 14, you said?

**Mr. Bilous:** I have *Hansard* from last year's debates with me.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Then that's when the regulations took effect. We'll get back to you with the specifics of what happened here with respect to what's still on the website. But the regulation was passed, so that should not be the case.

**Mr. Bilous:** Okay. Well, you just need to be clear that there are some very unhappy Albertans in that this still hasn't changed. It's now been about three and a half years.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Well, are you saying that you have heard from Albertans specific to this or that you have just seen this through the website?

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, this is from the website. However, last year the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona . . .

**Mr. Bhullar:** I'm well aware of that, but what I'm saying is: have you heard from Albertans since last year saying that that's not been changed? What I'm trying to identify right here and now is . . .

**Mr. Bilous:** Where that is coming from?

**Mr. Bhullar:** Yeah. I'm trying to see if this is just an issue that's limited to the website, or if this is an issue that you've heard about from the public. It sounds as if it's just a website issue as of right now. We'll look into that and ensure that it's changed.

Quite frankly, that's something I took great pride in, to change those regulations. You know, in our government, in our party we take great pride in ensuring that all Albertans have freedom and equality with respect to the law. That's something that we take seriously, and I'll have an answer to you, looking back at my folks here, very quickly.

**Mr. Bilous:** Okay. Thank you, Minister.

I'll move on to my next question. Again, going back to estimates debate last year, you spoke about a law wherein utilities must not be shut off between November and April, a level that must be kept on to ensure the safety of Albertans in the cold winter months. During debate you went on to mention to the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona that your department was working on a strategy to ensure that people whose utilities were disconnected were reconnected again very quickly. That was a pilot project that you referenced last year. I'm wondering what the status of the strategy is that you referred to in last year's debate. Is it functioning in any capacity at this time, and if so, how many incidents of utilities reconnection have taken place under this strategy?

**Mr. Bhullar:** Thank you. Actually, I remember that discussion. That's a fairly innovative program that we have. I'm going to see if I have specific numbers here for you as well. Well, a few things that I remember off the top of my head right now: I've got some numbers. We had about 1,400 names of people that were disconnected, contacted as many as possible, but the sheer number of

people that were reconnected was not very high. One of the problems with that was the ability to contact and connect people.

One of the challenges we have found with that program is the fact that there are a large number of people that you have a very difficult time reaching, connecting, and finding a solution for. Although this was a program that I thought would have a lot more success because of the added proactive steps we were taking to reconnect people working with the UCA – these are proactive steps we were taking; we were not bound by any authority to do this; we were doing this as a proactive measure – still the number of connections was not as high as I had hoped.

**Mr. Bilous:** Do you have that number, Minister?

8:55

**Mr. Bhullar:** I'll get you specifics on that, but I believe it says that a dozen or so were negotiated repayments, so people negotiated their payments. Almost three dozen reconnected straight away, between 25 and 30 went to third-party agencies for help – they needed some sort of outside intervention – and over 50 worked with the UCA directly for help. Consider the fact that we contacted over 1,400 names and pieces of contact information, I guess, or households, and this is the number of connections. It wasn't an issue of effort on our part. It was an issue of perhaps some systemic issues that prevented reconnection for some folks.

As you mentioned, we do have a number of months in which a utility cannot be disconnected. I believe we've changed the dates now. It begins on October 31 and runs till May 15 if I remember correctly.

**Mr. McEwan:** Well, we just ended the project here in late February. It's over the coldest winter months.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you. I'm going to continue on although, hopefully, the coldest winter months have passed.

Last year during budget estimates, again, Ms Notley asked for some high-level information regarding the number of investigations undertaken by the Utilities Consumer Advocate. You mentioned to the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona that the figure from the previous year was a total of 42,000 investigations – that was 2010-2011 – but you were unable to provide at the time detailed information regarding an overall picture. The member also recommended the advocate be asked to provide an annual report on the investigations undertaken. You said to Ms Notley, "We are having the dialogue on how we can create further awareness of the types of things that people can expect help for as well as reporting mechanisms."

The first series of questions. Can you provide the number of investigations conducted by the Utilities Consumer Advocate for the past year? Has this number increased or decreased from the previous year? How is the advocate managing the difference in the number of calls in terms of human and financial resources?

**Mr. Bhullar:** In 2012 the Utilities Consumer Advocate received over 40,000 phone calls from consumers. Now, of those 40,000, there's a wide spectrum of engagement that was required. Obviously, some just needed a basis of very simple information, and others required more diligent work. In addition, the website had over 230,000 visits. The UCA, I think, is doing a lot of engagement and a lot of work with Albertans.

What was the other number that you had asked for?

**Mr. Bilous:** I can see whether it's gone up or down, but do you know the number of investigations that remain unresolved?

**Mr. Bhullar:** What do you mean when you say investigations?

**Mr. Bilous:** Okay. Sorry. I'll back up. Looking at calls related to contracts, I know that it's broken down into electricity and natural gas – you know what? I think that question doesn't even belong with that category, to be honest. Do you have the specifics as far as the breakdown for electricity and natural gas?

**Mr. Bhullar:** Not offhand.

**Mr. McEwan:** We'll have to get back to you on that.

**Mr. Bilous:** Sure. That's quite all right.

Okay. So at the moment there are no statistics. Sorry. You wanted to comment?

**Mr. Bhullar:** Yeah, just on that piece. We are working with the UCA to develop and implement an interactive website to provide energy consumers with information and tools to make more efficient choices about the products and services they need. This really goes to the root. The UCA finds and we find through our department that we really need Albertans to know a little more in this area. Knowing more in this area helps them make better choices, more informed choices. It really helps them to be able to make decisions that affect them and helps them have a healthier bottom line.

The UCA does have things like actual mediation teams, which assist consumers with their concerns and complaints about retail service and answer their questions about consumer choice. They have actual teams of people that do this. What I'm hoping we'll do in the next year is actually develop that online, interactive, digital interface where people will be able to get a lot of the information and services at their fingertips.

**Mr. Bilous:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Bilous, I'm just going to interrupt for a second. I think we've had three questions now that were year-over-year comparisons from 2011-2012, and we're here talking tonight about the budgets for the upcoming fiscal year. Carry on, but I would certainly encourage you to focus on the upcoming budget estimates.

**Mr. Bilous:** The purpose of these questions, Mr. Chair, is because there were commitments made by the minister last year, which I'm merely following up on to see if the ministry has in fact produced these results or fulfilled the commitments that they've committed to. So all my questioning does end up with this year's budgets and what we'll be doing moving forward.

**The Chair:** Okay. Carry on.

**Mr. Bilous:** The question regarding the number of investigations that are unresolved: that is with the advocate. I can appreciate your giving me, you know, the numbers for the amount of phone calls that have come in, et cetera, but for the Utilities Consumer Advocate there are obviously requests for action. I'm wondering how many of those are still currently unresolved and if you can get those numbers.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Okay. Yeah. I just want some clarity on the number that you're seeking, though.

**Mr. Bilous:** Sure.

**Mr. Bhullar:** A request for action can literally mean somebody saying: hey, I don't understand what X means on my bill. And

somebody spends some time with them, explains it, and that request is then fulfilled. Is that what you're asking?

**Mr. Bilous:** The unresolved, unfulfilled requests that are before the consumer advocate. I would assume that they would have access to this number.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Yeah.

**Mr. Bilous:** In addition to that, I'll ask if you would consider a commitment to an annual and public reporting by the consumer advocate. Again, that was requested in previous years, and you said that you would consider it. I'm just wondering where you're at with that decision as far as an annual report produced by the consumer advocate.

**Mr. Bhullar:** As you know, the Retail Market Review Committee had a lot of thoughts on the Utilities Consumer Advocate as well. This is an area where we're looking to see how we can make some changes to better protect consumers. We know education is an important piece. We also know that the mediation-type services the advocate provides is also instrumental. I believe that we will see some changes in this area in the upcoming year. I'm trying to recall last year's request made by your colleague. I think it was for stats, right?

**Mr. Bilous:** I can get you those requests.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Okay. Yeah. We can endeavour to get you numbers. Because of the nature of what you're asking for – you're saying an action request. An action request can be literally anything under the sun. We will endeavour to get you some numbers, but I can't promise that you're going to get every precise phone call that has yet to be returned.

**Mr. Bilous:** Okay. I would settle for a number in general.

I'm going to jump to the Condominium Property Act. Goal 3.1 is to modernize it to enhance protection and support development of a vibrant condominium industry in Alberta. During the debate on Service Alberta estimates last year you anticipated and hoped that the new condominium act would be passed that year, back in 2012. The public consultation process took place just this year, with the deadline for responding to the consultation paper being April 2. Can you provide a revised timeline as to when your department plans to bring forward this legislation in response to the condominium consultations? Will it be this sitting, fall sitting, or next year? Can you give a specific answer?

**Mr. Bhullar:** Sure. This is a piece of legislation that affects thousands and thousands of Albertans, as you know. The response has been quite overwhelming. I mean, as I said, we've got about 3,000 submissions in some form or another already in, and with the sheer volume of individuals that I'm hearing from that are saying, "Hey, we have some ideas," I'm actually considering whether or not we want to continue to seek their input and extend that date a bit. I am hoping that we will compose this information and the feedback we get from Albertans and seek selected specific dialogue with Albertans on maybe one or two issues after that if we need to.

9:05

With respect to changes: in an ideal world, this fall. Ideal in my world is always a get 'er done tomorrow kind of thing. But it may end up taking till next spring simply because this piece of legislation allows a body to essentially tax and collect revenue from every single person living within that complex, so this is a piece

that we have to get right. I'm very encouraged by the number of people that are responding, very, very encouraged by the fact that I've been really seeking input from everyday condo owners and some 75 per cent of respondents so far are everyday condo owners, which I'm thrilled with.

As I said, I'm hoping that if the changes and the feedback we get require very significant changes to the legislation, then we may be looking at spring of next year, but if there are some pieces we can knock off sooner, then we'd be looking at the fall.

**Mr. Bilous:** Okay. A closing comment on that, Minister. With all due respect, last year, looking at *Hansard*, I know consultations had already been taking place for a year and a half. It was actually the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek who pointed out: at what point do we get action? I mean, consultations are important, but we could consult for the next five years. That's the reason that I'm asking for a date.

I'd like to move, briefly because I don't think I have much time left, to the Fair Trading Act just to point out that at the moment there are no statistics on the number of prosecutions or investigations initiated under the Fair Trading Act in your ministry's last annual report. I'd like to know what these figures are and how they compare to previous years, please.

**Mr. Bhullar:** I'll see if we have some of that information here.

**Mr. McEwan:** We don't have the number of prosecutions. We do have the number of investigations that were closed, 940, and that's as of March 15. Last year's total for the fiscal year '11-12 was 800. The amount settled for '11-12 was in the range of \$869,000. This year's total is about \$714,000.

**Mr. Bhullar:** I think that in 2012 there were 316 pending charges. Because I was able, first of all, to increase the fines for violations under the Fair Trading Act and, secondly, because we were able to bring forth administrative penalties, this is an area where I think our enforcement tools are now much stronger. I'm really proud of the fact that we were able to get that through, really proud of the fact that we were able to move that along. I think that over the course of the next year we're going to see numbers that are, I think, a lot more aggressive because I was able to make those changes.

**The Chair:** All right. Well, thank you, Minister, Mr. Bilous. That concludes the 20 minutes for the fourth party.

Now we'll move to 20 minutes for private members of the government caucus, and I'd like to recognize Ms Jansen.

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Minister. I think I want to deal a lot here with online registries. It happens to be an area that is a big concern in my constituency, and I've gotten quite a few questions on registries, both online and physical registries themselves. I'm hoping that you can start by painting me a picture, first of all, of the online registries and the move towards that and the kind of cost that is going to be involved.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Thank you very much for that question, hon. member. The hon. member did actually ask me a question in the House about a related topic as well. It was a very lively exchange between the two of us.

**Ms Jansen:** Where you pointed out my advanced age.

**Mr. Bhullar:** No, ma'am, I did no such thing. In fact, all I pointed out was the fact that a young man living and growing up in

northeast Calgary – anyway, I'll stop. Let's just say that I'm very proud to be working with the member who used to be on 2&7.

**An Hon. Member:** The young member.

**Mr. Bhullar:** The young member, yes, very young. Well, she's got less grey hair than I.

**An Hon. Member:** How would we know?

**Mr. Bhullar:** I don't think our commitment to accountability and transparency requires me to disclose the number of grey hairs on my head, hon. member.

It's very, very important that we provide services to Albertans through the tools and the mechanisms they find the most useful, right? In this day and age people can do transactions from hundreds of dollars to millions of dollars online. It's really my hope that they will be able to do more of their transactions with government online, so we're going to move forth this year with changes to this.

At present you can renew things like your class 3 passenger vehicle and motorcycle registrations online and pay your traffic fines online, but I think that two services online is far too few. My goal and my hope is to provide an IT infrastructure base that will allow us to provide registry services online, that will allow us to provide, you know, as I said, motor vehicles, vital stats, personal property, corporate registries, and land titles services online. And I'm going to ask Kate to supplement on this particular topic about the ID management piece. From there we can also use that base of identification management to then add on other services that people can access online through this base of IT infrastructure that we develop.

From there, to be quite honest, I think the sky is the limit. I mean, we have an incredible amount of information that people require from the government, anything from someone that went to high school in Alberta that ends up needing their high school transcript even 10 years after they graduate. They need to access that. How can we help provide that in a convenient mechanism?

Kate, if you want to add something about the identification management piece that we were speaking of.

**Ms Rozmahel:** Certainly. Just to supplement what's been talked about here with registries, it's a much bigger question, really. It's about online government. Really, we're looking at how we can implement corporate solutions so that all of the GOA can begin to take their business online in a new digital way. To do that, it means that you have to be able to offer Albertans a secure way that protects their privacy but encourages them to want to do business with government online, and that's not just urban Albertans but rural Albertans as well. We're working on a program now to take a look at digital identification. How do you have a digital ID, and how do you support the assurance that the person who goes online can assure that they are who they are? By doing that, we've seen in other jurisdictions where you begin to have a lot of increase in the amount of online traffic that you can generate for government business online.

We're working on that program. We're working with our ministry partners, not just Service Alberta and registries but health care, even services like campground registrations or hunting and fishing licences. All are types of things that Albertans want to do online versus going to an in-person office or going on the phone.

**Ms Jansen:** You're looking at an injection of capital, though, to get that in place. I mean, clearly, it's a massive job. Is this something you look at spreading out over a number of years, or do you

bite the bullet and try to, you know, set yourself some tight timelines so that you can get it done? I'm just wondering. I think we've had this discussion many times over about the need to put money into capital right away so you save money in the long term.

I would assume that when you move a lot of services online, eventually the cost savings can become pretty significant. At what point in this process do you have a situation where you have made back your capital spent and are now earning money on it?

9:15

**Mr. Bhullar:** Thank you for that question. As I spoke of a little earlier, I'm going to address this in a couple of different ways, and I'm going to have Kate supplement the one piece that we have under construction, if I can call it that, right now. That's the identity management piece.

When you're looking to see what types of services you can provide online, you look at a wide range of things. You look at identifying what Albertans want to see online, identifying the digital identity access and business requirements to ensure the security and privacy of Albertans' information in using the online service – that's what Kate was referring to, that identity management piece – and then look to see what's going to be a good fit for online delivery by looking at the volume of transactions, by looking at the level of authentication required, the complexity of the online service transaction, and developing, really, a strategy to move forward with this on the procurement side.

Now, with respect to the identity management that's something that we are working on in our budget now. That is something that we have some capital dollars allocated to right now to begin testing and seeing how we can put this platform together.

With respect to the delivery of online services for registries we are going to really think outside the box and seek the private sector's innovation. We're going to go out with the requests for information or what have you and seek the most innovative proposals that we can get. Proposals can deal with the capital investment that people are willing to make into the systems, the amount of revenue that they are going to forward to the government as a result of these transactions.

Something else. You know, I alluded to this before, and what I'll say is that we have IT infrastructure, and our IT infrastructure has a lot of demands and a lot of needs. It's really capital intensive. Just like a school is not cheap to build, IT infrastructure is not cheap to build and maintain. So I want to seek the private sector's innovative ideas on how we can build and maintain IT infrastructure in new and innovative ways.

I mean, you know our government's commitment to building Alberta, to building the capital that we need, to ensuring that Albertans have the services they need, but at the same time we know that we live an environment where you have a limited supply of capital dollars. We are really going to seek and I am really going to seek the innovation that we can get from the private sector to see how we can maximize the assets and leverage the service we want to provide with the capital required to invest and make this happen.

I'm going to ask Kate to supplement on the identity management piece, which is something that I think is incredibly exciting.

**Ms Rozmahel:** Certainly. Maybe just to answer the question about the cost, we know that when you do things online, it's a fraction of what it costs to do something in person, a fraction of what it costs to do something over the phone. The most important thing, though, is that the public is beginning to demand this, and we see this through some of the survey results that we have. We

also see it in some of the programs we're doing like open government and open data, where we're being asked to put data sets out, not just to access them but to build mobile applications using that type of data, right? So it's certainly a trend. It's very, very prevalent in the private sector, and it's certainly here and in the public sector as well.

With respect to the program we are building the base infrastructure. What it will do is enable citizens and stakeholders – we have stakeholders in our supply chain that rely on us as well – to access government programs online. They'll be able to do that securely and with an element of privacy, which is important.

This infrastructure will be the base infrastructure that programs and services across government can rely upon. In the past, when we've done these types of things, every program and service tried to set this up independently. You had to have a password for this program and a password for that program, and before you knew it, you had 10 different ways to get into the government to have 10 different services, which were all delivered completely differently. What we're trying to put in place is a corporate solution so that an Albertan can come in, can register once, and can have access to government services across the sector.

The other key part to this particular service is that Albertans are also Canadians, so we're working with our pan-jurisdictional partners in other provinces to have a solution that enables us to have identity across the union, not just inside the province. It's a very big program. It is pushing the edge a little bit, but I think all of our ministries have come to the table and have been joining us and supporting us in trying to put the foundation in.

**Ms Jansen:** Now, along with the online registries – and this is one of the issues that I certainly get calls about in Calgary-North West – are physical registries. I know that it's been a very long time since a new registry office licence has actually been granted to anyone. I think that's a concern. I've had numerous phone calls from people saying: "We need a registry in Calgary-North West. We have an auto mall in there. We have 10 auto dealers." People are asking that question. So the first question I would ask is: why so long since a registry office licence was granted?

**Mr. Bhullar:** You know, that's a really good question. Right now we are working with our stakeholders the Association Alberta of Registry Agents as well as the AMA to establish a framework for expansion. The expansion involves what we've been talking about, the online services, as well as physical expansion. There are some jurisdictions where, really, adding another registry agent will put people out of business. We're not going to do that. But there are other jurisdictions where the transactions and the volumes have gone up so much and the jurisdictions have grown so much that there's desperate need for more, so in those jurisdictions we will add more.

We're working very closely with the Alberta Association of Registry Agents to come to a solution on the expansion model. We're working very closely to seek their input. I'll say that this will see some changes coming forth soon. On top of that, there will be a little bit of innovation in this process as well because it's very important that Albertans get the service that they want when they want it and, hopefully, close to home.

What's also important is the fact that these individuals are running a business that essentially provides a service for us. That's a very important piece that we're looking at to see how we can find some innovative methods to expand on.

**Ms Jansen:** It's funny. The first member began to speak about what he saw as problems with registries. I feel like my situation in

my community is the complete opposite. First of all, people are saying: we want more registries, not fewer registries. They're frustrated. You know, I've heard people say that it's been 20 years since a registry licence was handed out. It just seems like a massive amount of time. Do you have a sense of the ebb and flow in the different registries and where the need is greatest? Do you have that information?

**Mr. Bhullar:** Well, there's no question that the transaction volumes have gone up very, very significantly in our urban registries. There's absolutely no question. I mean, in some of our urban centres, you know, the average number of transactions that they do in just the five registry areas could be over 70,000. That's just in the five main registry areas.

Now, in some of the rural communities it could be much, much less. It could be 5,000 or 10,000 or 15,000 transactions relating to those five main registry areas. There is a wide range of transactional volumes that are taking place. But there's no question that we have seen unprecedented growth. We've seen a lot of growth. We have seen expansion of cities. That means some people have to travel further to reach a location, and that's why we're working with our stakeholders right now to see how we can expand the model. We'll probably have an expansion model that deals with population growth. I think it'll be rooted in something like population growth, and that's something we're working on as we speak and something that we will have decisions on within months.

9:25

**Ms Jansen:** Just understanding the sensitivities of areas where, you know, that business has gone down or the registry office isn't getting a lot of customers, what do you do in a situation like that? Or is there anything you can do?

**Mr. Bhullar:** Well, you know what? It's important to also remember the fact that I think over – what is it? – the 19 or so years that we've had this model, a very, very small number of registry agents have actually closed shop because of viability. Even the ones in the rural centres, that may not have a very significant amount of volume, are very often attached to another business. It's that combination with another business that allows them to be sustainable.

**Ms Jansen:** I just have a very brief period of time left, and I wanted to just segue out of that and ask a question about FOIP. I actually had a constituent ask me a question this week – and I was curious about it – about FOIP requests. I have to say honestly that if a FOIP request – is it twenty-five bucks or more?

**Mr. Bhullar:** Yeah, but you have to compare apples and apples here, right? There is an upfront fee, and then after that, there can be the costs involved with compiling all of those documents.

**Ms Jansen:** My constituent was concerned about the number of FOIP requests that they had heard were coming in. I'm just wondering, you know, and I'm throwing this out there. Is there potential for a mischievous opposition member to decide that they're going to hamper the process and throw out a bunch of FOIP requests if they don't have to put a lot of skin in the game to get it going? I'm just wondering what your thoughts are on that.

**Mr. Bhullar:** You know, I shared earlier that I've heard from municipal leaders saying that the number of FOIP requests they're seeing in their jurisdiction is incredible. There's no question that it takes a lot of resources to be able to comply with them.

**Ms Jansen:** Is it costing your ministry a lot of money?

**Mr. Bhullar:** Well, it's costing, I think, a lot of government a lot of money. There's absolutely no question of that. But freedom of information is something we're committed to, and the associate minister will be commencing a review of the freedom of information act shortly as well. It's a very important piece of legislation. I mean, we're proud of the fact that we have it. It's a piece of legislation that's changing societies and democracies around the world, but there are legitimate expenses associated with it.

**Ms Jansen:** Man-hours?

**Mr. Bhullar:** Man-hours but actually digging through records. I mean, there are some IT systems that require people to potentially hire the service provider to go back and dig through years of e-mails. That stuff is not cheap. There is a cost involved in that. To get somebody to go back and pull logs on the e-mails or what have you can be a very significant cost. At the end of the day that can be a cost that continues to increase and put a very significant demand on public services. There's no question of that.

**Ms Jansen:** Is it starting to take a real chunk out of your budget?

**Mr. Bhullar:** You know what? I think individual ministries are the ones that see the effects on their individual budgets. In our area do we get a lot of FOIP requests? Yeah, I think we do just as much as anyone else.

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** All right. Thank you, Minister and Ms Jansen.

Okay. We're going to move now to the five-minute questions and five-minute answers, or you can combine your time with the minister. I've got a list that, frankly, is going to take us well past 10 o'clock, so we won't get through the whole thing.

Next up is Mrs. Forsyth.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Can I just get clarification on the time? Is it a total of 10 minutes now, or is it 20?

**The Chair:** No. It's five and five.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Okay. As I brought up here at the beginning about a notice of a motion, I'd like to move a motion, firstly, if I can, please. We've got the required number of copies. I move that the estimates for the minister's office under reference 1.1 at page 196 of the 2013-14 main estimates of the Ministry of Service Alberta be reduced by \$255,000 so that the amount to be voted at page 195 for operational is \$302,063,000.

I understand it's nondebatable, but we've provided the amount of copies. Thank you.

I'm finding it interesting, Minister, if I may, please, the conversation with the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka when you talked about the responsibilities of the associate minister. I was comparing him to the balance of the other associate ministers and the cost of ministries. Your ministry, you explained, was for a press secretary, I believe. You've got \$100,000 more, from \$510,000 to \$610,000. I think you said that's a new role for a press secretary. When you look at some of the other associate ministries – you know, Human Services is a good one – his ministry went down \$127,000. You talked about the new role of a press secretary. If you could provide me that information, please, by written response.

**The Chair:** Sorry. I'm not sure that I had clarified. Are you going back and forth and sharing your 10, or are you going five and five? Do you want to go back and forth?

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Well, back and forth if the minister is fine with that.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Yeah.

We have a \$100,000 or thereabout increase to support the role of a press secretary, and we've got an associate minister position that's been created. Now, that money in the current fiscal year was found within the department. We didn't go to the Treasury Board saying: please provide us with additional funding to resource the new position or find additional money for the associate minister's office. That was all money that was found within the department through internal adjustments.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you.

I asked you a question last year on the RFP on wireless and obtaining a new contract, and you said, "When fully implemented, [we] will save \$6 million to \$8 million." How much have you saved?

**Mr. Bhullar:** We've begun the implementation of that process. I don't have numbers on how many people have moved over and how many have not yet. I predict that with the fact that on one of our new contracts we pay 1 cent a minute and, I believe, data is capped at \$10 a month, we're already saving a heck of a lot of money.

You know, the wireless contract is a very important piece, but we're looking to see how we can do that in some other areas as well. I believe we have – what? – 14,000 users. Some, depending on dates and times of when their specific devices were provided to them and so on – this isn't: everybody send me your BlackBerry or your iPhone, and I'm going to send you a different one out overnight. I mean, it may be a bit silly to get everybody off of their existing contracts overnight and the existing devices they're using, forgoing some of the investments they have made. These types of implementations don't happen overnight. I believe there are 14,000 users, so it will take a little bit of time to get everybody on the new contracts.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thanks.

You know, I'm going over comments that you made in *Hansard* last year. You said: "We have obtained a new contract that, when fully implemented, will save \$6 million to \$8 million." You go on further to refer to the savings on a specific piece of equipment and the dollars. What are the cost savings to date?

9:35

**Mr. Bhullar:** As I've mentioned, I don't have the exact numbers in front of me. I can endeavour to see what I can provide.

I also want to point out something that was not accounted for in that estimate of \$6 million to \$8 million, and that was the fact that now over 50 other organizations are taking advantage of our lower prices as well. Other sectors – agencies, boards, commissions, schools, universities, colleges, and hospitals – are able to take advantage of this and are starting to take advantage of this. Some, I believe, started last year. Others are implementing as they go. As I said, there are contracts that people have to live by. As we discussed earlier, even on IT implementation sometimes when you try to leave a contract, there are penalties to pay. It's best to wait

out a contract, allow it to expire, and then move over to the new one. We've taken this particular offer to our municipalities, to our agencies, boards, and commissions, and over 50 of them have already taken it up and are taking advantage of these new, lower prices.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thank you.

Maybe you can have your staff look at *Hansard* from last year where you were the one that was talking about cost savings of \$6 million to \$8 million.

**Mr. Bhullar:** When implemented.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Yeah. I'm just trying to find out as of a year later how much of a cost saving there's been to date. Well, if it's not fully implemented, I certainly understand that. But if it's half implemented, then is it \$4 million, or is it \$5 million? Thanks.

I want to talk to you briefly about the Information and Privacy Commissioner and about the breaches. You had talked in *Hansard* on record about the penalties. I wonder: have you amended the Personal Information Protection Act so that there can be charges on the breaches?

**Mr. Bhullar:** No. We haven't made any amendments to the Personal Information Protection Act.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** In *Hansard* you said that you thought that was a good idea and you'd be moving forward on that, so I was wondering when you were going to implement it.

**Mr. Bhullar:** You know what? We have a lot of ideas, a lot of really good initiatives like the Condominium Property Act consultation, like the 21 areas that we're currently reviewing for results-based budgeting to see what kind of efficiencies we can find. So we have a heck of a lot of work that we're doing on a wide range of policy and legislative changes. Not everything will be done immediately, overnight.

We are one of the few jurisdictions that has mandatory breach notification when a private organization breaches or loses somebody's private information. We're one of the very few jurisdictions that has things like mandatory breach notification. We're one of the few jurisdictions that actually brought this legislation forward in the first place.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Our time is limited. Can you please tell me how you're doing on the central security office?

**Mr. Bhullar:** Yes. That's a great question on something that I think we've done very well. I'm going to ask Kate to supplement that.

**Ms Rozmahel:** Sure. Yeah, I would like to supplement that.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Sorry. We have less than a minute. You know, I'd like to hear the good news. Could you provide it to us in writing?

**Ms Rozmahel:** Certainly, we can. You know, you're right. It is good news. The office has progressed well, and we've done a number of things, including establishing an office and having security directives and putting in place technologies. The program has been very successful, and the Auditor General has certainly provided us positive feedback on the last set of recommendations that they made. In fact, they closed the recommendations that were directed towards us on this particular file.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Thanks. That's great news. If you can just provide us with all the information in regard to . . .

**Mr. Bhullar:** Is there something more specific than that that you want?

**Mrs. Forsyth:** Well, just that, you know, it's fully implemented, as she said, and the progress to date on that. When we talked about it, you had just started to create it.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Yeah. It's fully implemented.

**Ms Rozmahel:** Correct.

**Mr. Bhullar:** We expect the Auditor General to actually take it off.

**Ms Rozmahel:** He already did.

**Mr. Bhullar:** They already took it off the books, saying: fully implemented; well done.

**Mrs. Forsyth:** I want to talk briefly on FOIP. I know we're going to run out of time. You said that you're going to make recommendations and amendments. Can you update me on how and when in writing?

**The Chair:** Okay. Very good.

Mrs. Fritz, do you want to go five and five, or do you want to combine 10 with the minister?

**Mrs. Fritz:** I'll combine, please, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Very good.

**Mrs. Fritz:** Thank you. Mr. Minister, my questions for you tonight are on Service Alberta's business plan on page 63. I know that you had questions about this earlier, but it's really important, I think, that there be more on the record about changes that you're expecting would be made, and that's under 3.1, modernize the Condominium Property Act to enhance consumer protection and support development of a vibrant condominium industry in Alberta. My hope is that the word "modernize" really means that you're going to make significant changes. I think that that is the direction you're taking, from talking to you earlier in the Assembly, and I'm looking forward to what those changes would be.

That act is very, very interesting to read. I don't know if all the members here have read the act. With the Condominium Property Act being embraced by the community, you mentioned that over 3,000 people have already participated and that you're thinking of extending it. I'm looking forward to hearing from you tonight just briefly about what the number one issue is that people are bringing to your attention.

Also, the incident that I'm going to relate, that I know you're aware of it, is at a condominium that's very close to your constituency. It happens to be in mine, but it's really adjacent to our constituencies. It's a large, large condominium. We had a fire in the condominium, a small fire, and the firefighters came. The condominium has mainly older seniors. After the firefighters left, the seniors gathered in the lobby area and sat on the furniture and whatnot. The board took the furniture away because they didn't think the seniors should be loitering. After they'd taken the furniture away, two of the seniors – one was a 91-year-old gentleman – went around with a petition to get the furniture put

back. Anyhow, the board levied a \$500 fine on each of the seniors. I know you're aware of that.

Many boards are excellent in the good work that they do and in how they set the bylaws, but some boards become really well established with their members. I think they become very powerful, and with that power they don't necessarily make the best decisions. I had a member just around this table tonight telling me that in their condominium the board levied a \$750 fine for people just taking furniture in the elevator without having made an arrangement to have the elevator blocked off. You can't take a chair down to your car, for example.

You know, these fines are high. I'm hoping that some of the people that have brought the issues to your attention will have brought what is happening in this area.

I have many questions, but I'll just ask you a couple here tonight because the time is so limited. Is there an appeal mechanism that you're considering through your consultation process? Under section 35 of the act – I read that earlier – it states that sanctions that are imposed may be general or specific in their application, which means that that's just broad, that the boards can do whatever with these bylaws. Anyhow, I wondered if you'd consider having different classes of offences with limits on them and not unlimited fines.

Also, the rules that are made, that we had discussed earlier as well – under this bylaw the reason that the senior gentlemen who went around were fined by the board is because they were being charged with soliciting. Solicitation is not in the bylaws, in reading the bylaws, but what they had done was create a special rule, and then they didn't post the rules.

I know that you're hearing many, many things out there. I'd just like you to comment on what I brought forward to you.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Well, thank you. We've spoken at length about some of this. I appreciate your bringing that forward to my attention. Quite frankly, I mean, that's part of the reason I'm so adamant that we get feedback from everyday Albertans living in condos, right?

That's one of the reasons why we're doing everything we can to connect with everyday Albertans, that typically may not take the time to get involved in government engagement, government consultations, and the like, but it's so important that they do because this legislation has such an impact on their daily lives. Right?

9:45

You touched on a whole bunch of different things, but let's start with issues of transparency with respect to boards. An issue that I'm hearing about quite regularly is the fact that not all the information for condo owners is made available to them. As a result, they're living without knowing the rules. Now, ignorance of the law is in law not a defence, but it's absolutely absurd to think that people can change a major rule within a community and not have the membership know of that change. What's insulting on top of that is for people to demand money from somebody living in that community to get a copy of the rules. That is something that I'm most definitely going to address in the legislative changes that we bring forth. I think that's something that is an absolute must. Rules must be transparent, the people must know what they're living with, and the people must not have to pay to get a copy of those rules. I think that's just a given.

Related to that are other documents. Now, there are a lot of very complex documents that people sometimes require when they're

moving into a condominium. Some of those documents do have costs involved. I mean, if you're photocopying a 600-page document, there could be a cost attached. We are seeking the public's feedback on whom they think should be responsible for that, should the fees be set out, and so on.

The other point you made is on different classes of fines. The current act does say that fines need to be reasonable to the offence, but by way of example, in some of the things that you've just described, obviously reasonableness may not always prevail. The different classes of fines are something that we'd be more than happy to evaluate should we get that feedback from the public, and I encourage people to provide us with that type of feedback.

Lastly, you spoke of the appeal mechanism, I believe. One of the issues that I find I hear about regularly and one of the issues that I'm really seeking people's feedback on is that right now people are left to litigation when they have an issue. Some boards have well-developed processes for appeals, but a lot don't, so you're left to litigation. If you don't like a ruling – you know, it may be a \$400 ruling or a \$500 fine – you're left to essentially challenge that in courts.

One of the things that I'm seeking is people's feedback on: how should we facilitate mediation, or should it be an ombudsman? I mean, I'm leaving the door open there to get feedback from Albertans, to say: you tell us what you think would work. Is it a mandatory mediation process? Should it be the residential tenancies dispute resolution board that hears these matters? I'm really leaving the door open to everyday Albertans to see what they say. I know that we have to have a mechanism. I'm open to suggestions on what that mechanism looks like.

**Mrs. Fritz:** Well, I appreciate hearing that because that, as you know, is exactly where this gentleman is now, before the courts.

Another area that I thought, too, that you might consider – it's within the rules as well or could be placed in the rules – is that in order for a board to institute a fine, usually the quorum is 30 per cent. It's quite low for the board to institute the fine. I think that they should have to send around a petition to get a two-thirds majority if they're going to institute fines. That's just coming back from the community, so that is just on the record for you to consider as well, Mr. Minister.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Well, you know, that's an interesting suggestion as well. Let's look at one of the root problems with this. One of the root problems is the fact that a lot of condo boards really can't even get enough people to show up to a meeting. So when you hold a high threshold for changes, a lot of condo boards come back and say: "No way. We can't even get people to show up to a meeting. We can't get enough people to sit on our board." But when something happens, then everybody runs to it.

**Mrs. Fritz:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you, Minister.

We're going to go with Mr. Bilous, followed by Mr. Young if time permits.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, I just wanted to ask you briefly about residential tenancies and to find out what the current financial allocation is, first of all.

**The Chair:** Mr. Bilous, just to clarify, you want to go back and forth, then, not five and five?



**Mr. Bilous:** Oh, yes. Sorry, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Very good. Thank you.

**Mr. Bhullar:** The current financial allocation for the residential tenancies?

**Mr. Bilous:** The allocation for residential tenancies, and if you can refer to which line that fits under, please.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Sure. That fits under line 6, consumer awareness and advocacy, and it's \$1.9 million.

With respect to the volume of issues they hear, because I bet that's where you're going . . .

**Mr. Bilous:** Yes, sir. If you could look for the number of complaints filed and then also the number of disputes resolved, please.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Okay. In the '11-12 fiscal year there were 8,045 applications received, and there were 6,574 hearings conducted. In '12-13 – and this is current as of March 8 – there were 6,937 applications received and 6,839 hearings conducted. This is a very, very highly sought-after service. I've got some . . .

**Mr. Bilous:** If I could just interject – sorry, Mr. Minister – do you have a number on how many were actually resolved or how many went through a full dispute resolution process?

**Mr. Bhullar:** Well, that's the hearings conducted number.

**Mr. Bilous:** That is? Okay.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Yeah. The hearings conducted number means the parties got together and there was a hearing conducted, and somebody said: all right; here's what I think you need to do. So 6,839 as of March 8, 2013: I think that's a very, very significant number. The amount settled, which is another interesting number: 714,000-plus fined, 170,000-plus – oh, sorry. I'm reading investigation services. Disregard those two numbers. But the 6,000-numbers are correct.

**Mr. Bilous:** The last request, because I'm going to ensure that the member beside me has a chance to ask you questions. Is it possible to get a written response on the nature of the resolutions? I mean, do you have access to a breakdown of the resolutions?

**Mr. Bhullar:** There are a variety of resolutions, right? It can be anything from, "Yes, you must evict, and you must evict within three weeks" to "No, this person is entitled to stay." There are a whole variety of resolutions. Can I try to lump that sort of together for you? Is that what you're seeking?

**Mr. Bilous:** I'd rather it not be lumped. I would love to get access to or to see it broken down. You know, I think that for myself and likely the other opposition parties to be able to see how well it's working or not working and to see the nature of the disputes, the resolutions, in order for us to have a better sense, that breakdown would be greatly appreciated. If it could be sent to us in a written form, I'd prefer that.

**Mr. Bhullar:** If we have a breakdown – and consider the fact that the reasons why somebody may go to this service could be very, very varied. I'll do my best to see how I can provide you with a breakdown.

**Mr. Bilous:** On the number of the hearings, not on the number of cases filed if you could.

9:55

**Mr. Bhullar:** Hearings are held for dozens upon dozens of different reasons, right? It can be somebody saying, "You know, I was evicted because I ended up getting a bigger pet than I started with." The landlord originally said, "Yeah, the little doggie is fine." They end up getting a bigger pet, and the landlord says, "You're moving out," and they go to the board.

**Mr. Bilous:** But is the nature of resolutions not tracked by the ministry currently?

**Mr. Bhullar:** Well, they are tracked to a degree. I don't know if we have them tracked to the type of detail that you're looking for.

**Mr. Bilous:** I'd be satisfied if we could start with the degree that the ministry is tracking, and I'm sure we'll follow up.

**Mr. Bhullar:** Well, I'm glad to hear that you will be satisfied.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Minister.  
I'm finished, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Okay. Mr. Young, you've got about four and a half minutes, so I imagine you'll want to alternate.

**Mr. Young:** All right. I'll speak really quickly.

With the understanding that Service Alberta is sort of the procurement stewards for the government and that governments around the world are embracing the concept of open government or open data, which has been discussed previously, another global movement that is different but related to open data is data exchange standards that enable interoperability, not only exchanging data with government but also within government. Has your ministry been working on the establishment of a data exchange standard to advance interoperability?

**Mr. Bhullar:** Thank you for that question. I know this is something that you're very passionate about, which I was a little surprised about. This is something that we've had multiple discussions on. I'm actually going to ask our chief corporate information officer, Kate, to provide some detailed information on the use of some of the standards because we're really using about four standards right now.

**Ms Rozmahel:** Well, just to sort of clarify, we are actively supporting the NIEM standard, which is, I think, the national exchange standard for data. We are actively working with our pan-jurisdictional partners in other jurisdictions. This movement isn't just something inside our jurisdiction; it's something across Canada. In fact, it's across North America. It's a way to interoperate, you know, policing systems, for example, and move information across those systems. We are actively supporting it. We do contribute to the committee that's looking at how to implement these standards across Canada, and it also was part of the work we're doing around some of the enterprise bus solutions that we're putting in place for our different sectors.

**Mr. Young:** Is this the FTP working group?

**Ms Rozmahel:** There is an FTP working group, and then there's a working team underneath that.

**Mr. Young:** Okay. It's more than policing.

**Ms Rozmahel:** It is, but they're the big driver to start.

**Mr. Young:** Yeah.

The other question I have, if I have a minute here: in terms of the security office are we going to implement, at least provincially if not nationally, globally understood metadata across federated systems?

**Ms Rozmahel:** Well, we have a variety of metadata standards already in place. In fact, you know, the whole open data portal that's being put together is all based on metadata standards. So we do have a number of standards already in place for metadata, and we need to continue to expand that work.

**Mr. Young:** But you mentioned earlier that, depending on every system, like we all experience, there are a billion passwords, and they all require different formats and 1s at the ends and no capitals and everything else. Is there a globally managed identity and privilege management system that is part of this interoperability piece. GFIPM is what they call it.

**Ms Rozmahel:** Yeah. Actually, the work that we're doing from a pan-jurisdictional perspective is on setting up a common trust framework between the jurisdictions. How the Alberta government may determine someone to be a level 1 or a level 2 assurance needs to be consistent with how Saskatchewan does that and Ontario and Quebec so that you're not just an Albertan, you're a Canadian, and you can access systems and programs and services across Canada.

**Mr. Young:** Has Alberta declared NIEM – you mentioned NIEM – as the data exchange standard and included that in the requirements of our going-forward procurement?

**Ms Rozmahel:** I would say that at this point we haven't gone that far. We're certainly working to help our ministry partners understand the standard and how it can be implemented in their new system development. We have a lot of systems already in place in the government of Alberta, so there's the standard you may set for new systems, but there's also the need to continue to interoperate what we currently have established as well.

**Mr. Young:** Do I still have time?

**The Chair:** You have about 30 seconds.

**Mr. Young:** Who is managing the governance around extending the data standard in terms of the XML extension where it's unique to Alberta?

**Ms Rozmahel:** Well, we have a standards group that is cross-government, and we have a working committee that's made up of ministry partners, and of course the CIO council across the government also has sign-off authority through myself as well for those standards.

**Mr. Young:** Okay. Thank you.

**The Chair:** All right. Well, thanks, everybody. I must advise you that the time allotted has concluded. I'll remind all of our members that we're scheduled to meet tomorrow, the 19th of March, from 3:30 to 6:30 to consider the estimates for the Ministry of Education.

We are adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 10:01 p.m.]



