



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
First Session

Standing Committee
on
Families and Communities

Ministry of Service Alberta
Consideration of Main Estimates

Wednesday, November 4, 2015
9 a.m.

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The 29th Legislature
First Session**

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Chair
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W), Deputy Chair

Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)*
Bhullar, Manmeet Singh, Calgary-Greenway (PC)**
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)***
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (ND)
Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (PC)
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)
McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (ND)
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)
Payne, Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

* substitution for Mark Smith

** substitution for Dave Rodney

*** substitution for Sandra Jansen

Also in Attendance

Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W)

Support Staff

W.J. David McNeil	Clerk
Robert H. Reynolds, QC	Law Clerk/Director of Interparliamentary Relations
Shannon Dean	Senior Parliamentary Counsel/ Director of House Services
Philip Massolin	Manager of Research Services
Stephanie LeBlanc	Legal Research Officer
Sarah Amato	Research Officer
Nancy Robert	Research Officer
Giovana Bianchi	Committee Clerk
Corinne Dacyshyn	Committee Clerk
Jody Rempel	Committee Clerk
Karen Sawchuk	Committee Clerk
Rhonda Sorensen	Manager of Corporate Communications and Broadcast Services
Jeanette Dotimas	Communications Consultant
Tracey Sales	Communications Consultant
Janet Schwegel	Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Participants

Ministry of Service Alberta

Hon. Danielle Larivee, Minister

Mark Brisson, Assistant Deputy Minister, Service Modernization

Tim Grant, Deputy Minister

Sonja Johnston, Acting Assistant Deputy Minister, Shared Services

Cathryn Landreth, Assistant Deputy Minister, Open Government

Ed Ryan, Assistant Deputy Minister, Registries

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Wednesday, November 4, 2015

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**Ministry of Service Alberta
Consideration of Main Estimates**

The Chair: Good morning. I'm Heather Sweet, and I am the chair of the Families and Communities Committee. I would like to call the meeting to order and welcome everyone. The committee has under consideration the estimates of the Ministry of Service Alberta for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016.

I'd ask that we go around the table and introduce ourselves for the record. Madam Minister, if you could please also introduce your staff when it's your turn.

Mr. Ellis: Mike Ellis, MLA for Calgary-West.

Mr. Cyr: Scott Cyr, MLA, Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Orr: Ron Orr, Lacombe-Ponoka.

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

Mrs. Pitt: Angela Pitt, Airdrie.

Mr. W. Anderson: Wayne Anderson, Highwood. On my right is my assistant, Andrew Koning.

Ms Larivee: Danielle Larivee, Minister of Municipal – of Service Alberta. Excuse me. That was last night. To my right is my deputy minister, Tim Grant. To his right is Mark Brisson, assistant deputy minister for service modernization. To my left is Balraj Sangha, the manager of financial planning and analysis.

Mr. Shepherd: David Shepherd, Edmonton-Centre.

Ms McPherson: Good morning. I'm Karen McPherson, MLA for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Mr. Hinkley: Bruce Hinkley, Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Westhead: Cameron Westhead, Banff-Cochrane.

Mrs. Littlewood: Jessica Littlewood, MLA for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Ms Payne: Good morning. Brandy Payne, Calgary-Acadia.

The Chair: Thank you.

Please note that the microphones are operated by *Hansard*, and we'd ask that BlackBerrys, iPhones, et cetera, be turned off or set to silent or vibrate and not placed on the table as they may interfere with the audiofeed.

Speaking orders and times. Hon. members, the standing orders set out the process for 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 Standing Order 59.01(6), the rotation is as follows. The minister or the member of 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, the Wildrose, and the minister may speak. For the next 20 minutes the members of the third party, the Progressive Conservatives, if any, and the minister may speak. For the next 20 minutes the members of any other party represented in the Assembly or any independent

members and the minister may speak. For the next 20 minutes private members of the government caucus, the New Democrats, and the minister may speak. For the time remaining, we will follow the same rotation just outlined to the extent possible; however, the speaking times are reduced to five minutes as set out in Standing Order 59.02(1)(c).

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

If members have any questions regarding speaking times or the rotation, please feel free to send a note or speak directly with either the chair or the committee clerk about the process.

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. The clock will be stopped for the break, and the meeting end time will be adjusted accordingly to accommodate this. Is there concurrence? Any disagreement? Thank you.

Committee members, ministers, and other members who are not committee members may also participate. Ministry officials may be present, and at the direction of the minister officials from the ministry may address the committee. Members' staff may be present and, space permitting, may sit at the table or behind their members along the committee room wall. Members have priority for seating at the table at all times.

If 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 will adjourn at 12 noon or shortly thereafter if a break is taken.

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

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

The vote on the estimates is deferred until consideration of all ministry estimates has concluded and will occur in Committee of Supply on November 23, 2015.

If there are amendments, an amendment to the estimates cannot seek to increase the amount of the 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. The vote on amendments is deferred until Committee of Supply convenes on November 23, 2015. Amendments must be in writing and approved by Parliamentary Counsel prior to the meeting at which they are to be moved. Twenty copies of the amendment must be provided at the meeting for committee members and staff, and the original must be provided to the committee clerk.

I would now like to invite the Minister of Service Alberta to begin with her opening remarks. You have 10 minutes.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Chair. Good morning. As the new Minister of Service Alberta I am pleased to present estimates for the 2015-16 fiscal year. With me are some of my staff to help me provide specific information and answer any questions you may have. As previously indicated, seated beside me are my deputy minister, Tim Grant; Balraj Sangha, the manager of financial planning and analysis; and Mark Brisson, assistant deputy minister

for service modernization. Behind me are my department's executive team, who will introduce themselves if they are asked to address the room.

Service Alberta provides a broad range of services to benefit and protect Albertans. We manage the government call centres, that are often people's first contact with their government. We manage registering vehicles, obtaining marriage licences, registering the birth of children, and registering land titles. We protect consumers with legislation, information, and investigations.

Our other client is government. We provide centralized financial, technology, business, and administrative services to all ministries. We manage a fleet of more than 3,700 vehicles for use by Alberta sheriffs, forestry and court workers, social workers, and occupational health and safety inspectors.

Our administrative services include mail and courier, procurement, printing, telecommunications, and surplus sales. We manage accounts payable and receivable, employee pay and benefits, and support the information technology systems used to deliver these services across government. We drive modernization efforts that foster the efficient delivery of government programs, services, and information both inside government and to Albertans. These and other centralized services help government operate as a single entity for easier public access to services.

A look at the scope of our work shows that we provide tremendous value for our budget. We are on track to complete nearly 18 million registry transactions in the coming year. We handled 16.5 million envelopes and packages and sold more than 86,000 surplus items. Consumer protection investigations resulted in more than \$1 million in fines to businesses and more than \$990,000 recovered for consumers. As a result of consumer protection work there are 1,173 charges before the courts against those who are alleged to have defrauded Albertans. We processed more than 168,000 IT requests from 22,000 government computer users. We do all this with fewer than 1,400 people and a budget that represents only .6 per cent of the total government budget.

Now let me speak to Service Alberta's vision. Because my ministry is so many things to so many people, every area of responsibility almost needs its own vision. You have my commitment as minister to provide the quality services Albertans and their government need in a way that provides the best value for taxpayers' money. I also am fully committed to supporting the three pillars of the budget: stable public services, a move toward a balanced budget, and job creation in a diverse economy.

My business plan consists of four key outcomes, which are enhanced consumer protection, transparency within government and safeguarding Albertans' information, modernized government technology infrastructure and effective use of government resources, and ensuring Albertans have quality interactions with their government.

Now I'd like to discuss the details of my budget. Earlier I mentioned how my department works to provide great value with a small budget. That budget shows three areas of expenses: operating expenses, capital investment, and financial transactions.

9:10

My ministry's proposed operating expenses for 2015-16 are \$315.7 million. That reflects an increase of \$19.2 million over the last fiscal year so that we can maintain the SuperNet contract and honour negotiated increases in salaries and benefits.

Looking at capital investment, almost a third of our modest \$45 million budget is dedicated to replacing aging vehicles in the government fleet. This is a necessary cost as these vehicles may soon present a safety issue for our employees, who spend a great deal of time travelling across the province throughout all seasons.

The next-largest capital investment is to modernize the registry systems for greater automation. The balance of the capital budget is for systems to better serve vulnerable Albertans, migrating systems to a standard IT platform, upgrading aging IT infrastructure, routine maintenance, and digital identification and authentication for public users.

The third area of expenses is financial transactions, which includes two types of inventory, the postage we buy from Canada Post at a reduced rate and products sold by the Queen's Printer.

My department brings in revenue that is more than twice our budget. This year we expect to generate \$668 million from fees, licences, and other services to drivers, homebuyers, and businesses and publication sales through the Queen's Printer. That means that my ministry will be making a net contribution of \$361 million to the government's bottom line, which will mean more funds to stabilize core services that Albertans count on for themselves and for their families.

This is a very reasonable budget to support work that is essential to how Albertans live their lives and to how government meets their needs. I ask you to vote in favour of the Service Alberta estimates. Your vote will let us continue the good work we are doing and help us do even better moving forward. I'm thankful for all of the hard-working people at Service Alberta, and I now welcome your questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

We will now move on to the Official Opposition, for which I believe Mr. Anderson is going to be asking questions of the minister. Would you like to do a full 10 minutes, or would you like to go back and forth?

Mr. W. Anderson: Back and forth.

The Chair: Minister, that's okay with you?
Please go ahead.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you. I want to thank the minister and her staff for being here. Obviously, it's a very busy time for Service Alberta. I know a new government and a new minister to this department is quite a bit of a task, considering your other ministry as well, so I thank you.

First, I want to personally thank the minister for taking time earlier this week to visit my constituency, particularly High River, and visiting with the mayor of High River and the business manager and the mayor of Okotoks as well and the MD councillors and the DRP advocacy group. I much appreciate that.

Minister, we have a lot of ground to cover today. If at any point I have asked a question and I do interject, please don't take offence to that. It's simply that I've gotten the information that I want, and in an effort to get as much information out of your team today as possible, I may ask you to allow me to move on if that's okay with you.

The referenced documents are pretty straightforward: your government estimates and the ministry's business plan. In the business plan, page 96, priority 1.1 states:

Develop an Alberta consumers' agenda that enhances consumer protection, especially for vulnerable members of society, and enables consumers and businesses to operate in a fair, efficient and openly competitive marketplace.

Has a consumers' agenda been completed, is it currently being developed, or is it ongoing?

Ms Larivee: Thank you for the question. Certainly, we have made it a priority to enhance consumer protection. Albertans deserve that respect in order to ensure that when they make a purchase, they get

the value that they deserve for what they're doing. We have been working on a number of areas with that, including looking at payday loans and the lenders there and ensuring that Albertans are protected from being taken advantage of when they are vulnerable. We're also looking at legislation around condos in terms of ensuring that as Albertans are purchasing condos, they don't end up caught in some of the nightmare stories that have ended up in the news over the past several years. There are actually 11 acts and 44 regulations that cover consumer protection, so it really is very broad, but we're committed to piece by piece moving through those to do our best to enhance that protection for consumers.

Mr. W. Anderson: When you talk about your agenda, how would you measure success? What's your metric for measuring success?

Ms Larivee: If you do look at the estimates, we do indicate that the performance measure is in progress at this point because it is a new indicator for us. Certainly, again, the goal is to enhance consumer protection, and hopefully we end up with fewer numbers of those people who are being defrauded.

Mr. W. Anderson: Okay. That answers my question about the Fair Trading Act as well because it looks like you're looking into the priority and speaking to the review of the payday loans.

Priority 1.2. When you talk about ensuring effectiveness and relevance, can you provide your vision for what this means, and how are you planning on measuring this as well?

Ms Larivee: Once again, it is a new outcome and priority initiative related to consumer protection. I mean, we're certainly committed to that enhancement of consumer protection and look forward to providing new information to you as we move forward with that.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you.

Priority 2.1, again, refers to ensuring effectiveness and relevance of legislation, this time referencing FOIP, the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and PIPA, which is the Personal Information Protection Act. Is the ongoing review of PIPA by the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future fulfilling this priority?

Ms Larivee: Well, certainly, one of the key outcomes that we're committed to is transparency within government as well as balancing that with safeguarding the information that Albertans have. Things have changed so much in terms of technology. It is important to review that and ensure that we can safeguard Albertans' information, and I believe PIPA will be moving forward on that review. Also, we have done a number of things to enhance transparency within the government, including certainly sharing all of our political staffers' salaries as an example of that.

Mr. W. Anderson: When you talk about priority 2.1, is actually new legislation being planned for that? You mentioned relevance of legislation.

Ms Larivee: Again, it's more about ensuring that the acts that are currently there are actually accomplishing the goals of both allowing adequate transparency for the government as well as safeguarding Albertans' information. It'll be looking at the legislation that's currently there.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you.

As mentioned before, there's an ongoing PIPA review being done. Is there any or has there been any discussion on conducting a comprehensive review of the FOIP process?

Ms Larivee: FOIP was reviewed by committee under the previous government. There were a number of recommendations that were put forward, none of which were acted on at that time. We certainly will be looking back at those recommendations and making a decision as to whether we're going to proceed on that.

Mr. W. Anderson: So are there plans to act on it?

Ms Larivee: At this time we're certainly committed to being open and accountable and protecting those, so we will be looking at the recommendations that were there and making a decision as to whether to proceed. We are implementing the open-government policy. We have the open-government website and all those things in terms of ensuring that we have a strategy that makes data access easier for individuals. Work is under way to determine the best approach to make the FOIP Act more user friendly by ensuring clear processes, clear roles and responsibilities for applicants and FOIPs. As we make any decisions on that, I look forward to informing you of any changes we're going to move forward with.

Mr. W. Anderson: I appreciate it, Madam Minister.

The business plan again, page 96, priority 2.1. I'm sure you're aware that the Privacy Commissioner is currently investigating the government of Alberta for political interference in the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, an act that Service Alberta is responsible for. Is Service Alberta co-operating fully with this investigation?

Ms Larivee: Absolutely. As previously stated, we are committed to transparency within the government and to doing what we need to do in terms of Albertans having access to that information and that we do safeguard it. Service Alberta is committed to that, and interviews are ongoing in terms of that with the Privacy Commissioner.

Mr. W. Anderson: Any chance that you might be increasing the fees for FOIP?

Ms Larivee: No. At this point that's not under consideration.

Mr. W. Anderson: Okay. Currently the government of Alberta charges \$25. The federal government of Canada charges \$5. Can you explain the justification of the difference?

Ms Larivee: Yeah. That was a decision by the previous government. I'm going to assume that it has to do with the workload involved with gathering and dispersing that information.

Mr. W. Anderson: Okay.

Ms Larivee: At this point we're not reviewing the fees.

Mr. W. Anderson: Okay. Just now to estimates, page 219, capital investment, line item 3, motor vehicles. The ministry invested \$225,000 in motor vehicles last year. Looking at the business plan on page 99, we see the department has nothing budgeted for the next three years. Can you explain how the department budgets for replacing its motor vehicle fleet and provide a breakdown of exactly what the \$225,000 was spent on last year?

9:20

Ms Larivee: That line 3 under capital investment is not for the replacement of motor vehicles.

Mr. W. Anderson: Okay.

Ms Larivee: The \$13.5 million to replace aging vehicles in the government fleet falls under procurement and administration services, so that would be where the \$13.5 million is accounted for.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you.

The business plan, page 96, priority 2.1. The government of Alberta underwent a three-year review of results-based budgeting and how the government does business. Did Service Alberta find any ways of doing business better or any ways of saving money? Can you provide an update for us on this, please?

Ms Larivee: Give us just a moment.

Mr. W. Anderson: No problem.

I apologize. We've got the wrong reference number. We'll leave that one for now. We'll get back to a different reference number. I apologize.

There's something coming up. The business plan, page 96, priority 1.1 again. Consumer protection is the ministry's first priority, but I was watching *W5* recently, and it showed that the Alberta Motor Vehicle Industry Council, which is in charge of protecting auto consumers, appears to be failing to do its job. Can you comment on that, please?

Ms Larivee: Thank you for the question. Certainly, Albertans do deserve to be protected when making a big purchase like a vehicle, and I do expect that AMVIC will be doing its job by effectively regulating that industry. I am concerned with some of the things that I've been hearing about AMVIC, and it's clear that there have been a number of challenges with AMVIC's operations for years. Unfortunately, due to the way the PCs set up AMVIC, currently I have very little legal power to actually enforce needed changes. So we will be taking steps to increase the government's power to hold AMVIC accountable and ensure we're supporting Alberta families by protecting them when they buy or sell a vehicle.

Mr. W. Anderson: Well, there was an internal review of AMVIC done by Service Alberta. Can you provide us an update? Some of the allegations in there contained in the report by your investigators: do you know if they're accurate?

Ms Larivee: I'll have the deputy minister take that question.

Mr. Grant: As you mentioned, there was a report done by Meyers Norris Penny. The AMVIC is working to implement the 16 recommendations of that report. They have recently provided us an update on that. We're going through it at the current time. The minister will be meeting with the chair of AMVIC in the coming weeks to go over that report to determine if they are actually making progress on the Meyers Norris Penny report and those 16 recommendations.

Mr. W. Anderson: Is that report public?

Mr. Grant: Yeah. The Meyers Norris Penny report is on, I believe, the Service Alberta website.

Mr. W. Anderson: One of the focuses of the *W5* program was on the auto dealer in Calgary. The owner was licensed to sell cars, but he had been convicted of stealing cars in Alberta and British Columbia. How was this operator able to obtain a licence to sell cars given his conviction?

Ms Larivee: As you likely will understand, any issue that's before the courts I'm actually not allowed to comment on.

What I can say is that Albertans do deserve to be protected when making a big purchase regarding a vehicle, and we are taking steps to ensure that the government's power to hold AMVIC accountable and that we're supporting Alberta's families is improved with that.

Mr. W. Anderson: Given that, you're sure that consumers who purchase automobiles are safe to consume and purchase automobiles?

Ms Larivee: As I said, there are a number of challenges with AMVIC's operations. At this time I have very limited power to actually enforce that. I am meeting with them. I am expecting them to hold that accountable. I look forward to seeing them soon, and we will move forward with steps to ensure that that protection is greater than it has been in the past.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you. I appreciate it.

According to Service Alberta's business plan, page 95, fourth line, a key focus of the department is modernization of government technology infrastructure and effective use of government resources. My first question is related to cellphones. The government of Alberta currently has 20,000 cellphones. Alberta Health Services was in the news earlier this year for their lack of control over their cellphones. At the time there was this article that stated that Service Alberta had changed its policy to avoid massive monthly bills in 2012. However, I know there were four- and five-figure cellphone bills that were paid by taxpayers in 2013 and again in 2014, as reported in the *Calgary Herald*. Are four- and five-figure monthly bills for cellphones and tablets still being paid for by taxpayers, or has there been any change?

Ms Larivee: Service Alberta provides a lot of support to a variety of different ministries, and we provide the information that they need to move forward with those things. However, it is up to the departments to implement the recommendations that we give them.

Mr. W. Anderson: In other words, Alberta Health Services is on the hook for that?

Ms Larivee: Feel free to bring that issue up if you would like.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you.

Ms Larivee: Having said that, again, that is in the past, and we look forward to moving forward in a new and improved way of fiscal responsibility.

Mr. W. Anderson: Great. Well, given that comment, page 97, priority 3.1. Given that priority 3.1 is to "advance the strategic vision and direction for SuperNet," can you provide me an update on the current status of SuperNet?

Ms Larivee: Well, SuperNet does provide the high-capacity backbone to enable access to Internet across the province. We, you know, recognize that rural communities need that in order to build economic development and retain their youth and talent. We are reviewing at this time our vision for SuperNet and developing a digital strategy to support the delivery of government services, improve rural Internet for Albertans, reduce existing obligations, and maximize the government's investments.

Mr. W. Anderson: How do you plan on improving the rural service? That's a big issue where I live.

Ms Larivee: Right. Absolutely. We are aware of the challenges due to, basically, the growing demands that have occurred for increased

capacity, quality, and price equity across the province. As stated, we're reviewing at this time our vision for SuperNet and developing a longer term digital strategy to support that delivery. Internet connections for Albertans are delivered through the private sector. We provide, again, the backbone across the province that serves the public and private sectors there. Communities, industry, and other government departments are working with us to create opportunities to improve rural Internet access.

Mr. W. Anderson: Just give me a brief overview, then. What is the strategic vision for the last mile? SuperNet has been around for about 15 years.

Ms Larivee: You are right. Certainly, we do have some contracts which were entered into by the previous government by which we are tied, so as we move forward into negotiations, we will look to new contracts that will better meet the needs of Albertans in the future.

Mr. W. Anderson: I appreciate that.

In the business plan, page 97, priority 3.2 says: "Improve the government's productivity through enterprise and shared services." What do you mean by enterprise? Is it enterprise infrastructure, enterprise application, enterprise consulting services?

Ms Larivee: All of the above.

Mr. W. Anderson: Okay. For shared services what are the current applications that are being shared? What's the goal, and how do you plan on measuring it?

Ms Larivee: Sorry; can you just clarify again which page you're referencing?

Mr. W. Anderson: Page 97, priority 3.2.

9:30

Ms Larivee: In terms of moving forward, some of the issues that we're dealing with are delivering shared services such as mainframe application hosting, desktop supports, the service desk, hosting legacy applications, supporting service, and data centre options.

Certainly, Mark would be willing to provide more details for you if you would like those.

Mr. W. Anderson: Are we still using mainframe?

Mr. Brisson: We still have a large mainframe footprint. Mainframe works in many instances across government for large processing, so we're looking to maintain the stability of those systems as well as looking across government to where we can utilize shared services to do things once for government in the IT world and reduce duplication across the enterprise.

Mr. Grant: Another example is that we're in the process now of consolidating all departments onto the GOA domain so that we all use a common look and feel Outlook system for e-mail services, which at the end of the day will save significant funds, not running disparate programs throughout government.

Mr. W. Anderson: Priority item 3.3 is to "modernize the government's technology infrastructure and business applications to realize efficiencies." Can you please be a little more specific on what you mean by modernizing technology infrastructure? What is the current status of your technology infrastructure? You talked about mainframes. Are you considering centralization, decentralization, or just upgrading the infrastructure?

Mr. Brisson: All of the above. We are looking for opportunities where we consolidate data centres, for example, where we don't have disparate smaller data centres. I think we can move them into larger ones for economies of scale and better value for the dollar that we're spending. We're looking at different business applications across government so that we're not duplicating and are still meeting the business needs of the different ministries but looking for common shared opportunities, where we can roll it out once and they can use it many times.

We have a number of applications across government where we achieve that, and we're always looking for opportunities where we move forward. Talent management will be a good example of a system that we're looking at moving forward once across government and not doing it many times in each of the ministries.

Mr. W. Anderson: You know, you talked about that. The cost associated with this is planned modernization. Where is it in the budget?

Ms Larivee: I did reference that in the speaking notes in terms of that being in our capital budget. We'll find the line item for you.

The Chair: Mr. Anderson, that is your first 20 minutes. You do have more time, but just to let you know, you've had 20 minutes.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you.

The Chair: Minister, if I could just remind you to please introduce your staff when they answer questions.

Ms Larivee: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Ms Larivee: A couple of different line items reference it. In terms of modernizing our registry system, it's page 219, line 5. That's one of the items. Also on page 219, technology services, all of line 9.

Mr. Grant: If I can, Minister. There is an operating expense for technology services, that essentially Mark Brisson deals with as ADM for service modernization, and there's also capital investment in the order of \$25 million. That would be used for a number of things, including modernization of registry systems, systems in Human Services and the like. So there are both a capital investment and an operating aspect to the improvement of IT services in government.

Mr. W. Anderson: This brings up another point, Mr. Deputy Minister, when you talk about operating expenses. I'm assuming that you have contracts with several technology vendors, including software vendors. Do you regularly meet with these vendors to go through their licensing contracts to look for areas of mitigating not only risks but reducing the costs and overhead of dealing with them, either maintenance costs or licensing procurement costs?

Ms Larivee: Would Mark want to take that? Mark is one of my ADMs.

Mr. Brisson: We meet on a daily basis with our vendors from an operating perspective. We have service-level agreements in our contracts for the modernization opportunities that are here. So we have daily contact. We have monthly assessments of the contracts, of the costs and expenditures going forward. Then we annually look at all our contracts to make sure that they're meeting the business needs and the original outcomes that we were trying to achieve.

Mr. W. Anderson: Do you utilize outside resources to go through those contracts, or is that all internal?

Mr. Brisson: We use a blend of outsourced contracts for large opportunities where economies of scale make sense. We do have some niche IT consultants in place to help us in areas where it's difficult to find that resource, and they understand the technologies more effectively for us. We have some insourced staff as well.

Mr. W. Anderson: How often do you review your SLAs?

Mr. Brisson: We review our SLAs monthly at our manager meetings to make sure that we're meeting those SLAs and are able to communicate to our consumers how effectively we are doing.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thanks, Mark. I appreciate it.

The business plan, page 97, priority 3.4. I'd better check to make sure that I've got this right.

The Chair: Mr. Anderson, if I could please remind you to just direct the question to the minister, and then she can decide who can answer it.

Mr. W. Anderson: Yes.

The business plan, page 97, priority 3.4, Madam Minister, says: "Migrate ministries into the shared technology infrastructure and standardized technology services." Can you describe your migration strategy for me? Does it include hardware applications? Who's managing this migration project? Is it internal or external?

Ms Larivee: Right. Certainly, that is in terms of moving towards a more efficient use of our resources, and I'd be happy to defer to Mark for further details for you.

Mr. Brisson: We are migrating ministries onto our utility services for network access, file management, Outlook mail, those types of things. We have an external partner, an outsourced company. Two or three of them are working with us in that migration. The migration into the ministry is managed by internal staff. So we manage it from a project perspective, and our vendors work with the ministries in migrating them over to shared infrastructure.

Mr. W. Anderson: Are you able to tell me the names of the outsourcing partners?

Mr. Brisson: Compugen and Acrodex would be two examples of migration partners.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thanks, Mark.

Can you actually break down the costs associated with this planned migration? Is it in the budget for this year, and if so, where is it reflected in the budget? What's the timeline to complete this project?

Ms Larivee: Okay. Thank you for the question. For migrating the government of Alberta to a standard IT platform for the year 2015-16, we have \$5.839 million allocated to that. So work is under way to complete migrating Human Services and Justice and Solicitor General in that year. If you refer to page 219, line 9.2, enterprise services, that is the line to which you would refer; it's included within that. The work will be completed by 2017-18.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you.

Madam Minister, on page 97, priority 3.5 says: "Adopt innovative practices in how government procures such as electronic procurement." Please describe what you mean by innovative procurement practices? Are there expected savings attached to this, and if so, where are they reflected in the budget?

Ms Larivee: Certainly, we are constantly looking for efficiencies within the government in order to provide quality technology and effective use of government services, so within that, it is a priority initiative to move forward on that, and again I will defer to Mark for details on that.

Mr. Brisson: We have looked at different electronic procurement processes working with vendors so that we can reduce the amount of time it would take us to procure goods and services. Mostly services in the IT space would be a good example, where we've reduced the time of roughly 16 weeks to bring someone in to do a piece of work through an open tendering process to roughly under three weeks to do that. So we've seen significant cost savings in that. We've also been able to standardize some of the pricing that we're getting back as part of that electronic procurement process, as an example.

9:40

Mr. W. Anderson: Does this priority include, Madam Minister, e-cards, P-cards, or are these in place already? Who manages it? Who is actually responsible for that?

Mr. Brisson: We do have a P-card process within the ministry. It is managed internally by in-house staff. These cards are part of a process where we have one bank that we work with that distributes and manages the costs for us, and we reconcile them back in the ministry through our financial processes and practices. We have seen efficiencies using that with staff.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mark.

Mr. W. Anderson: Madam Minister, when your assistant talked about a threshold of vendors, is there a certain amount or a threshold that's listed before you go to RFP, or do you just go to sole-source contracts?

Ms Larivee: Thank you for the question.

Mr. Brisson: Following the current procurement practices we have with the Treasury Board directive, we have a number of thresholds that we follow when we're going to either a sole-source contract or going out to an open procurement. We follow those practices as part of policy across government in general.

Ms Larivee: Okay. The deputy minister would like to add to that.

Mr. Grant: Given the current Treasury Board directive that we work under for sole-source contracting, any sole-source contract has to be approved by the deputy of the department. There is a process in place where the deputy can only approve sole-source contracts in certain instances, and those exceptions are clearly laid out. All of those contracts are then published quarterly on a government website, so there's clarity on all the contracts that have been put out. But sole-source contracts have to be approved by the deputy by exception.

Mr. W. Anderson: Again, my question. I'm not sure it was clear, Madam Minister, with one of your assistants. Is there a threshold amount, anything below or above, like a \$10,000 or \$20,000 limit, before you can . . .

Ms Larivee: In terms of the Treasury Board directive?

Mr. W. Anderson: Yes.

Ms Larivee: The Treasury Board directive on procurement and sole-sourcing requires quarterly public disclosure of all sole-source

service contracts over \$10,000 but less than \$75,000. Disclosure of sole-source contracts above this threshold has been identified as a best practice requirement for all departments.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Minister.

Again to you. Page 97, priority 3.6: “Leverage government buying power by working with ministries and other levels of government to deliver best value in the procurement of goods and services.” I take this to mean that Service Alberta is responsible for managing crossministry procurement practices. Is that true?

Ms Larivee: I will ask one of my team, Sonya Johnston, to come forward and speak on this as she is best placed to discuss that topic.

Ms Johnston: Thank you. I am Sonya Johnston, assistant deputy minister of shared services.

In terms of joint procurements we’ve done a few innovative things over the last few years. One example, in particular, is related to fleet procurement. We went forward with an initiative with B.C. and Saskatchewan as a joint procurement initiative to be able to procure fleet vehicles more effectively and efficiently.

In addition, just to supplement an earlier question, we are working with B.C. and Saskatchewan looking at e-procurement opportunities for joint procurement initiatives and online tendering.

Ms Larivee: In addition, Service Alberta has initiated a number of projects to better leverage our buying power, including developing and implementing the government-wide procurement and sole-sourcing policy that we referenced as well as applying strategic sourcing strategies to services that are commonly required across government, completing selected collaborative procurements with other public-sector organizations, proposing a strategy to automate all aspects of the procurement cycle, which we spoke about already, and proposing the use of a limited amount of government procurement spending to support regional economic development, diversification, and innovation.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Minister. Thank you, Sonya.

To the minister: the business plan, page 97 again, goal 4. One of the issues I hear in my communities is that while registries are privately owned, Service Alberta still holds court on where the registry can be located. Many of these communities want a registry. In some cases there are people willing to open a registry in the community, but because of Service Alberta’s policy or regulations they are unable to do so. Given that one of the ministry’s stated goals is for Albertans to have quality interactions with the government of Alberta, is this policy something you will commit to reviewing?

Ms Larivee: Thank you for the question. We are going to do a registries review because, once again, that’s part of ensuring that we can provide high-quality services to Albertans.

Again, my staff member Ed Ryan is here and can provide some additional details on that.

Mr. Ryan: Good morning. I’m Ed Ryan, ADM, registries. We are currently reviewing the way that registry services are delivered to Albertans. That includes looking at things like the number of registries that a particular organization could own. It’s slated now at two. We’re going to look at changing that and recommending changes to that. The relocation and expansion policies are going to be examined also to see whether they meet the needs of Albertans and how that dovetails into an online presence, where members of the community can order and receive registry products through the online portal.

Mr. W. Anderson: Madam Minister, this review that you’re going through: are you including or involving people from the registry’s constituency? Are you talking to some of the owners themselves, or is this strictly an internal process?

Ms Larivee: As we move forward on the review, we’re committing to consulting with all stakeholders that are affected by that.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you.

To the minister: again on page 97, priority 4.1. Priority 4.1 states: “Expand and enhance online delivery of government services by using secure digital identity and e-commerce technologies.” Can you provide me some examples of what you mean by online delivery and secure digital identity and e-commerce technologies? How do e-commerce technologies work with the digital identity?

Ms Larivee: Okay. Thank you for the question. MyAlberta digital ID was made available on July 8, 2015. Citizens can now register for their own MyAlberta digital ID by accessing the website at their convenience any time from anywhere using Internet-accessible devices. This initial release supports citizens; support for businesses will be coming in future releases. MyAlberta e-services was launched at the same time and is the first online service to leverage MyAlberta digital ID. MyAlberta e-services is an e-commerce portal that will provide citizens and businesses with a single platform to pay for government services online.

The department is modernizing our existing registry systems to enhance service delivery to Albertans. For example, the land titles office will be accepting fully electronic registration documents using digital signatures by 2016. Service Alberta is also exploring ways to improve vital events registration; specifically, online birth registration through a convenient, secure online birth registration portal, where parents have the ability to provide birth registration information online directly to government.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you.

In the business plan, the same page, priority 4.2 talks about: “Improve Albertans’ access to affordable registry services by using innovative service delivery [models], including leading-edge technology.” Can you explain what “leading-edge” refers to? Are these internal or external applications? How is it going to integrate with your current comment on e-commerce?

Ms Larivee: Thanks so much. That’s exactly what we’re referring to, e-commerce and the online presence in terms of allowing people that expanded access and ability to access those services.

Mr. W. Anderson: Priority 4.3: “Advance the open government initiative to improve the way government shares and receives information with and from Albertans.” Can you provide a bit of an update on the open data portal? How effective has it been, and how have you measured its success?

9:50

Ms Larivee: Thanks for the question. The open government program launched the open government portal in August of this year to include government data and publications. The open government portal is an improvement from our previous open data portal in that it includes not only data sets but also government publications. Apps for Alberta was an apps competition that we also did that ran from February to August and encouraged developers and citizens to develop apps based on the government of Alberta data. That was an exciting initiative.

Projects to be completed moving forward: a data analytics strategy to ensure that data can be used for better policy decisions, program delivery, and opportunities for innovation and economic diversification. The performance measure is on page 97, and the measure has increased as a result of the new and improved open government portal that was launched. As I stated, it now includes government data and publications. As a result, we were able to identify a much greater volume of data sets than previously anticipated. As of October this year the number of data sets in the open government portal was 1,929, and the number of government publications was 2,200.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Minister.

Now I'm going to talk a bit about the financial statements if I may. In the business plan, page 99, under revenue, line item 1, motor vehicles, I notice that in your revenue stream you say that motor vehicles is budgeted for nearly \$30 million in increase in revenue over the next three years. How can you explain this, and how did you arrive at that?

Ms Larivee: Can you just re-emphasize that page number?

Mr. W. Anderson: Sure. You've got your revenue stream, line item 1, motor vehicles. In 2014 your actuals were \$516 million, your estimates were \$525 million, but by 2017-18 you've got a target of almost \$550 million. That's quite an increase. How do you account for the increase?

Ms Larivee: Our estimate is based on projected economic indicators such as population growth.

Mr. W. Anderson: So we can rule out any increase in fees?

Ms Larivee: That was not included in any projections. That was based solely on economic indicators such as population growth.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you. I appreciate that.

Again, page 99, line item 3: the same question with regard to an expected increase in revenue for other premiums, fees, and licences.

Ms Larivee: The 2015-16 estimate does include the fee increase for corporate registry on October 5, 2015. The impact of that fee increase is expected to be approximately \$3 million.

Mr. W. Anderson: The business plan, line item 4, the Utilities Consumer Advocate. The UCA was created in October 2003 to represent the interests of electricity and natural gas consumers in Alberta. The UCA team works to ensure consumers have the information, representation, and protection they need to help them make informed choices in Alberta's deregulated electricity and natural gas markets. My question is with regard to: how is revenue generated by the UCA? I think you've got listed a comparable here of \$7 million, and you've got \$9.1 million projected for '17-18.

Ms Larivee: Right. Okay. Thanks for the question. The UCA is fully funded by industry, 80 per cent from the electricity Balancing Pool and 20 per cent from natural gas companies with the exception of the Transmission Facilities Cost Monitoring Committee, which is a hundred per cent funded by the Balancing Pool. A variance exists between the '15-16 estimates and the '14-15 actuals because historically the UCA's estimate is set at \$9.2 million. Actual expenditures, however, are dependent heavily on the number of interventions the UCA participates in in a fiscal year.

Mr. W. Anderson: Okay. Thank you.

On page 99, under expense, line item 3, motor vehicles is set to reduce its costs by \$4 million by 2017-18. Is this simply due to expected efficiencies, and if not, can you explain where these savings are coming from?

Ms Larivee: It's an adjustment from the actuals for last year.

Mr. W. Anderson: Okay. Under expense, line item 5, the same page, Madam Minister, registry information systems. Expenses are increasing this year. One of the priorities of the ministry is to realize efficiencies. How do realized efficiencies result in an actual increase in expenditures?

The Chair: You have one more 20-minute set.

Ms Larivee: Sorry. Can you clarify again the line for that one?

Mr. W. Anderson: Page 99, line item 5, registry information systems. Your expenses are increasing, but you're talking about increasing efficiencies.

Ms Larivee: In comparison to the 2014-15 actuals the 2015-16 estimate decreases by \$2.3 million because included in the 2014-15 were one-time costs related to strengthening the disaster recovery plan for the five registry systems.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you. We're getting close to the end.

I'm going to refer now to the minister's office estimates, page 218, operating, line item 1.1. Last year the minister's office spent \$900,000, \$280,000 over its original budget. Can you please provide justification for spending that amount, and how did you arrive at this year's budget of \$785,000?

Ms Larivee: The minister's office's budget, as you are probably aware, not only covers my office expenses, which are shared between Service Alberta and Municipal Affairs, but it also needs to cover the salaries and expenses of the previous government and the severance and vacation payouts related to the previous government's political staff. That would be the variance that you're concerned about.

Mr. W. Anderson: That makes sense.

Madam Minister, on the same page, 218, under operating, line item 1.3, the deputy minister's office spent less than was budgeted. It now expects to spend \$200,000 more than was budgeted for in 2014-15. What's this money going to be spent on?

Ms Larivee: The increase in the 2015-16 estimate from the 2014-15 budget represents a change in the staffing complement of the deputy minister's office to undertake the agencies, boards, and commissions review. It's related to that review.

Mr. W. Anderson: Just a point of clarification, Madam Minister, again on page 218, under operating, line item 3. I notice motor vehicles pops up a couple of times here in estimates and under operating expense and capital investment and then twice in the business plan and the statement of operations. Is this referring to the registry aspect of motor vehicles, the government fleet operations? Can you provide an explanation on each of these items, please?

Ms Larivee: The motor vehicles program delivers services such as vehicle registration renewal notices, operator licences, identification cards, personalized plates, and driver abstracts and includes the Support our Troops specialty plates. Transaction volumes have increased year over year due to population growth,

and in 2014-15 Alberta experienced a 2.9 per cent population growth.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you.

Just going back, a question. We talked about joint projects and shared services. Are there any projects between departments within Service Alberta, in progress or planned, that are not disclosed in this budget; for instance, the Ministry of Justice?

Ms Larivee: I will defer to my deputy minister to provide some details on that.

Mr. Grant: As part of e-commerce digital identity there are some discussions going on with Justice and Solicitor General about the potential to pay things like traffic tickets online, but those are the only discussions that I'm aware of that are ongoing right now.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you.

Estimates, page 218, operating, line item 9.3. In the entire government's network services operating costs the budget is significantly higher than the 2014-15 actuals. My question: why the \$14 million increase? That's line item 9.3 on page 218.

Ms Larivee: That cost is due to the costs that were contractually obligated related to the SuperNet, to the provincial broadband service we have across Alberta. As indicated, that contract was entered into by the previous government, so we are obligated to move forward with the costs associated with that. Also, there are the salary increases that we are contractually bound to as well.

Mr. W. Anderson: Just a question. I may have asked this before; I'm not sure if I received the answer. Is the SuperNet contract currently under review?

Ms Larivee: The contract runs until 2018. At this time we certainly are moving into review of how we will proceed in the future with a long-term strategy to best meet the needs of Albertans in terms of Internet access.

10:00

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Minister.

Madam Chairman, I've concluded my questions, but I'd like to turn the floor over to one of my colleagues, who has a question.

Mr. Orr: Thank you very much, Madam Minister. Just a riding-related question. The village of Clive in my riding is converting a fire hall to a new library. They're right beside each other, basically, with only an alley between them. The SuperNet is in the town hall, but in order to get it to the library, it's costing them well over \$20,000. This had to be financed, of course, by fundraising and a corporate grant and a number of other things, and they and, I guess, I feel, although I don't really know the details, that to move the SuperNet basically a hundred feet into a new building at a \$20,000 bill is extremely prohibitive for small communities, with the need to fund raise and all the rest of it. I just wonder if that's a reasonable price in your mind.

Ms Larivee: I would happily look into and investigate that particular incident.

Mr. Orr: Please. Thank you. I appreciate that.

Ms Larivee: Please provide all the details regarding what happened there, and I will look into that for you. Thank you for the question.

Mr. Orr: Okay. That's it.

Mr. Cyr: To the minister. This new traffic ticket payment system: can you explain how that's going to work? What's involved with that?

Ms Larivee: Okay. Thank you for the question. At this point, as indicated, we are in discussions with Justice on that. Again, they are primarily discussions, right?

Do you have any further details, Mark?

Mr. Brisson: We've built MyAlberta digital identity and MyAlberta e-services portal. It's up and going on the government site. It gives us the ability to look at traffic tickets and other payment services to government. Beyond that, there are many different types of e-commerce services in line and that we're considering. Traffic payments are but just one of them. It'd be similar to just paying anything online as we move into the e-commerce age.

Mr. Cyr: Right now do registries take payments for traffic tickets?

Ms Larivee: Yeah. At this time registries do take payments, or you can pay at the provincial courthouse.

Mr. Cyr: Okay. How is that going to affect our local registries when we go online with this system for traffic tickets?

Ms Larivee: Well, certainly, as we move forward with the registries review, as indicated, we will be consulting with all affected stakeholders, and we look forward to having those conversations with them.

Mr. Cyr: Are our local registries going to lose revenue? I guess I should – sorry, Minister. Are they going to lose revenue on this, or is it going to go to the closest registry to your home? How does this work if we do it online?

Ms Larivee: As indicated, we are just in the process of doing the registry review. None of those details have been worked out at this point. Part of that will be involving the stakeholders in terms of having those conversations.

Mr. Cyr: Okay. This Alberta digital identity: is this just internal so far, or is this already on the website?

Ms Larivee: No. That's fully up and running and available. Some of the services are available already. Mark can certainly provide some more details on that.

Mr. Brisson: It's fully online. Albertans are able to go in and get a digital identity, and it'll help them in two instances. One, you'll be able to purchase services, pay fines, those type of things with government, but we're also looking to the future, whether the digital identity will help us engage in programs and services such as potentially getting access to your health care as part of the provincial health portal. So it's two sides, interacting with government on the administrative side and also being able to access programs and services seamlessly across government.

Ms Larivee: Right. We continue to explore all the various options, and there are a number of things in line to consider with what we can do with that identification.

Mr. Cyr: You're looking to incorporate our health care system into this digital identity? I'm sorry if I misunderstood.

Ms Larivee: It's certainly one of the areas that we are considering moving forward in order to best provide services to Albertans in an

efficient and effective way. Again, it's all about providing as high-quality a service as we possibly can, so we explore all those options.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you.

Mr. W. Anderson: Madam Chairman, I have another colleague who would like to ask a question if time permits.

The Chair: Mrs. Pitt? Yeah. Please go ahead.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you.

Mrs. Pitt: All right. Thank you. Unfortunately, I'm no stranger to fine payments. Actually, this is more of a suggestion. It's also no secret that I don't like debt, so Visa debit is a really great option for many, especially for young people as well. Now, that's currently a payment that's not accepted through the online payment system. Maybe that's something that would help make the system more accessible to more Albertans. That's just a suggestion.

Ms Larivee: Okay. Thank you for the suggestion, and you'll be happy to know that that is in progress.

Mrs. Pitt: Yes. Thank you.

Just for clarification. Network services, line item 9.3 on page 219, which I understand is the SuperNet line item. Is that correct?

Ms Larivee: Uh-huh.

Mrs. Pitt: There is zero capital investment for 2015-2016. Does that mean that the SuperNet is not going to grow? I'm just trying to understand.

Ms Larivee: Right. We pay for the SuperNet through operating, not through capital.

Mrs. Pitt: But does capital mean that the services – sorry; not the service. The service will continue. But does it not grow? Is there no growth? Will you not be laying any more lines down? I guess that is the question.

Ms Larivee: Yeah. I will defer to Mark on that.

Mr. Brisson: Due to the nature of the contracts that we have with our providers, we pay, in essence, operating to the providers to deliver the service. The relationship in the contracts with the two different providers is that one provides the infrastructure base across the province – and they continually update and expand that infrastructure base – and the other one provides the service back to customers.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. So then both of those are on page 218, 9.3. That includes both. No?

Mr. Brisson: No.

Ms Larivee: I'll defer again to Tim for some details on that.

Mr. Grant: If you look at it from the standpoint that – if we did it all ourselves, we would have both operating and capital, but because of the nature of the contract we only pay folks operating to run the system. The individuals who actually manage that system for us are investing capital dollars of their own to upgrade it, so electronic boxes and those kinds of things. If we did it, they would show up under a capital line item, but because we only pay operating due to the way the contract was written, all that shows up in our line item is operating. There's no capital cost to us at all.

Mrs. Pitt: Okay. That sounds great.

Ms Larivee: Under the network services line.

Mrs. Pitt: I like that system. And I – actually, that's it. That's all I have. Thank you.

Mr. W. Anderson: How much time?

The Chair: You have six minutes left.

Mr. W. Anderson: Perfect.

Health care online systems were mentioned. Are the health care records or health care information currently online, or are they planned to be online?

Ms Larivee: Yeah. I mean, again, Mark is our technology expert, so I will defer once again.

Mr. Brisson: We have been having discussions. As they've been moving forward one of their advancements around a personal health portal and looking at how they can provide health data back to individuals across the province in a safe and secure way, we're looking at integrating these two initiatives such that we use the digital identity for individuals so that they can access that data through one health portal. It's an opportunity that we're looking at right now and is still under development with the Department of Health.

I used it as an example. I perhaps shouldn't have. We want to be able to access programs and services as well as the administrative side of government. It's not just about paying fines; it's about accessing and opening up services to government online anywhere, any time.

Mr. W. Anderson: Minister, maybe to your assistant, is there a timeline for this to be completed? Is there a completion date, or is it just still in an exploratory stage?

Ms Larivee: Thank you for the question. Mark.

Mr. Brisson: I would have to defer to the Health department as to that time frame. We're in discussions with them right now, and we're trying to align how we would work together to bring efficiencies to government.

10:10

Mr. W. Anderson: Speaking of health care, I don't know if you're aware – I understand it may not be correct – but there was a data centre procured in the new south Calgary health campus, but apparently the data centre is sitting completely empty. Is that correct, or do you know?

Ms Larivee: Thank you for your question. That would be in reference to Health and their specific programming, so you can refer that question to them.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you.

In my remaining time I just want to propose an amendment. I know it's a tough time, and you're looking at procuring services and looking for efficiencies within your organization. I've got copies of an amendment I wish to propose, a notice of amendment, to the 2015-2016 main estimates for the Ministry of Service Alberta. I move that

the 2015-2016 main estimates of the Ministry of Service Alberta be reduced for the minister's office under reference 1.1 at page 218 by \$164,000 so that the amount to be voted at page 217 for expense is \$315,582,000.

Thank you. That concludes my questions, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Anderson.

We do have a few extra minutes, so we will move over to the third-party opposition.

Before I ask Mr. Ellis to start, Mr. Bhullar has joined us, so if you could introduce yourself, please.

Mr. Bhullar: Good day. Manmeet Bhullar, MLA for Calgary-Greenway.

Ms Larivee: Okay. If I just may ask the chair: is there any information in terms of the rationale and where the expectation is in terms of that amendment?

The Chair: The amendment has been tabled. It will be provided to your office, and then it will be discussed when we go back into committee on the 23rd of November.

Ms Larivee: Okay. Thank you for that clarification.

The Chair: It's just read for the record here.

Mr. Ellis, were you going to be asking questions of the minister today?

Mr. Ellis: Well, I will be, but at this time I'm going to defer to Mr. Bhullar.

The Chair: Okay. Mr. Bhullar, would you like to go back and forth, or would you like to just take some time?

Mr. Bhullar: I think back and forth is fine.

The Chair: Minister, you're in agreement? Okay. Please go ahead.

Mr. Bhullar: Great. Well, good morning. Thank you very much for being here. I've got a series of question, a lot of, really, update items. I'd like to see where money is allocated for projects that were started in some cases many years ago. I'd like to see what the minister intends to do on these projects and if there's money allocated to them specifically.

We'll start off with the registry service model. Minister, I heard one of your officials speak about the expansion and relocation policy, and that's still something being considered. What specifics can you provide about the expansion and relocation model? Number one: do you plan on issuing new RFPs for registries? Number two: if there are new RFPs for registries, will they include essentially a net present value that the public will actually bid on to ensure that it is a transparent process by which those who bid the highest amount will actually be able to get a registry? Number three: can you provide me with the volumes of transactions that are taking place in registries today with the comparison of the volume of transactions that took place in registries when the model was introduced and the number of registries then and the number of registries now? We'll start with that.

Ms Larivee: Well, thank you for your very detailed questions. I would like to ask Ed Ryan to come up again to comment on the study that was done and where we currently are with that at this time.

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you.

Mr. Ryan: Thank you for your question, sir. With respect to new RFPs for new registry offices I'm pleased to be working with the community of Wabasca in northern Alberta to develop a new office, a new registry agency, in that community. That has been under way for some time. The registry strategy, the move, the look forward is

going to be predicated on working with Mr. Brisson and the online presence to see the uptake of Albertans to register and reregister their vehicles online. That will really have to be balanced with the number of new registry offices that may be offered to the public.

In terms of volume of transactions we are just past 9.2 million transactions for fiscal '14-15.

The number of registry agents since day one: in 1993 we were established at about 232, 233 at that time, and we're sitting at 225 at the present time. Now, that said, the population of Alberta has of course increased quite substantially during that time, and the number of transactions enjoyed by each registry agent has grown in a similar fashion.

Mr. Bhullar: I take it I continuously go to the minister?

The Chair: Yes, please.

Mr. Bhullar: Okay. Perfect. Well, thank you very much. Great responses, Mr. Ryan.

So 9.2 million transactions so far in the '14-15 budget year: how many of these transactions would you think are on the capped fee side, and how many of these are the open ones? I'm just trying to build a bit of a basis of understanding of the types of transactional volumes and dollars that move through this model.

Ms Larivee: Thank you for your question. Once again I will defer to Mr. Ryan, the expert on the registries.

Mr. Ryan: Capped fees, which are specified under regulation, make up approximately 80 per cent of the total transactions that go through registry agents. The remaining being uncapped, the registry agent is free to charge an Albertan whatever the market will bear at that particular time for that transaction.

Mr. Bhullar: Minister, the capped fee at present is what?

Ms Larivee: Okay. Thank you for your question. It is \$9 for motor vehicles.

Mr. Bhullar: Perfect. So that can provide us with a ballpark estimation.

The next piece that I will go into from here, then: what I think I heard is that the determination of whether or not the registry system will be expanded – it is a system that has 225 agents at present. When it started, it had 232 agents. The volume is 9.2 million transactions in the '14-15 year, 80 per cent of which are done at a fee of \$9. If I heard this correctly, the decision on whether or not new registries will be issued is going to be determined by the uptake of online services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you for your question. As we discussed previously, we are undertaking a review of registries, and we will be engaging all the affected stakeholders to look into that review to ascertain the best choice moving forward for Albertans to receive the quality service they deserve in terms of registries.

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you. I look forward to hearing details of the review.

Minister, when previous RFPs have taken place for registry agents, for new registries, is your department able to provide us with specifics of the results of the RFPs with respect to something that was instituted where – I mean, this is a business that somebody's bidding on, so the thought process was: you know, if you're buying a franchise for any other business, you would pay a fee to become a franchisee. The thinking was: well, if there are new registries coming aboard, people should be paying to become a

franchisee of the government, essentially. Those are taxpayers' dollars. Can your officials provide us with numbers? What were the numbers per new registry that were generated?

Ms Larivee: Thank you for your question. Once again I will defer to Mr. Ryan to answer those questions.

Mr. Ryan: Those numbers were posted on the Alberta purchasing connection. There has just been one organization who has successfully completed their RFP and is under way, in Chestermere, and those numbers were public at the time. Continuing with that initiative is something that will be a part of further discussions and further review as we go forward with the strategy to determine what registry services are going to look like in the future, and we'll do that in conjunction with the Alberta Motor Association and the Association of Alberta Registry Agents.

10:20

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Ryan.

I just want to clarify that being a new government, we are doing the review because the system was set up by the previous government. We actually do look forward to modernizing it and improving it so that everyone can have a more efficient system.

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you very much. That's good to hear, Minister.

Now, we spoke of online services, Minister. Can I get a commitment from you today that if a third party will be operating online services for registries, there will be an open, fair RFP process by which a third party is selected to operate registry services? Now, what I mean by this is quite simple. To be able to provide online services: if the government provides it, it's their right. It's their right to provide that service and to collect fees. If a third party is providing that service, the question is: where do those fees go? My belief is that the fees should come to the government. The third party should be determined by an open, fair, competitive RFP process, and whoever incents the greatest dollar value for the public of Alberta should be the winner of that. Can we have a commitment to have an open, fair, transparent online RFP process?

Ms Larivee: Well, thank you for your question. We're actually not looking outside the government at this time; we're not planning to involve a third party. Certainly, in all our business dealings we're looking to, you know, achieve open and fair transactions with businesses, and we will continue that practice of being open and transparent in our engagement with any RFP in terms of getting the best deal for Albertans in the most open and transparent way. You absolutely have that commitment from me today.

The Chair: Mr. Bhullar, if I could just remind you to please tie it back to the budget and not to policy.

Mr. Bhullar: Oh, yes. That's a very valid point.

With respect to the budget, what specifics are allocated in this budget for consumer protection, and what enhancements in the area of consumer protection will be taking place in this year's budget? What specific action items are attributed in this year's budget on consumer protection?

Ms Larivee: Okay. Thank you for the question. Consumer awareness and advocacy functions include programs aimed at promoting, regulating, and enforcing fair market practices through consumer awareness activities; the administration and enforcement of consumer-related legislation; monitoring the marketplace; investigating fraud and consumer complaints; and supporting regulatory bodies that administer consumer legislation. We are

continuing to provide access and privacy legislation support, program compliance and accountability, department legislative planning, support for requests made under FOIP and open government, and to support the 310 citizens' services call centre and the residential tenancy dispute resolution services.

Moving forward, we will be making initiatives or we have already implemented initiatives in terms of reviewing payday-loan legislation to ensure that Albertans are protected with that. There were a lot of concerns that maybe vulnerable Albertans were being taken advantage of, and there was an important step to be taken in terms of enhancing protection of those consumers.

We also are reviewing the condo regulations. Again, there were a number of Albertans who made that large purchase of a condominium and were hurt by that, you know, because of not enough protection there based on previous legislation established by the previous government. So we are looking at enhancing that consumer protection in a very open way and are happily engaging all stakeholders in that moving forward.

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you very much.

I'm looking for specifics. The specific I'm looking for, number one, is with respect to the condominium regulations: when, according to this budget, are you going to move forward with condominium regulations? Number two, when will a tribunal that was supposed to be established for condominium disputes be established? Is that, in fact, still going to be established? Are there dollars in this budget to have that established? Let's start with condominiums.

Ms Larivee: Okay. Regarding the tribunal, phase 3 should be complete by fall 2016 moving forward.

Mr. Bhullar: Sorry. By phase 3 you mean . . .

Ms Larivee: If you would like to provide some details.

Mr. Grant: Minister, what we've done, because there are a large number of regulations that are associated with . . .

Mr. Bhullar: Former minister.

Mr. Grant: Oh, sorry. Yes. Mr. Bhullar. My apologies. Old habits die hard.

Because there are a large number of regulations that are associated with Bill 9, we've taken the approach of breaking them into three parts. The first part really deals with the initial purchase of the condo, the second piece will deal with board governance and the interaction between owner boards and condo managers, and the third piece will be, essentially, setting up the tribunal that you mentioned. Essentially, we're trying to follow the life cycle of condominium purchase and ownership. That phase 3, that the minister referred to, for the set-up of the tribunal is the last piece we will do, and that will be probably in the fall of 2016. The initial phase: the draft regulations are already online. We're getting comments from Albertans, and that will allow us to finalize those, hopefully, in the coming couple of months.

Ms Larivee: Right. Just to be clear, we did publish the first phase of those regulations for Bill 9, for the Condominium Property Act. It was online for public feedback, and that was open until October 30 to view and comment on those draft regulations. We continue to take a very open and public, consumer rights-based approach as we move forward on those important regulations.

Mr. Bhullar: Sure. Thank you.

Now, moving to the next area of consumer protection, I believe members of the Official Opposition mentioned this report. I'm just curious to know how that report was actually commissioned.

Ms Larivee: Sorry. Can you clarify which report you are referring to?

Mr. Bhullar: The report on the review of AMVIC.

Ms Larivee: Oh, AMVIC. Okay. The MNP report containing the 16 recommendations is on our website. Oh, it wasn't. Okay. Our report containing the 16 recommendations is on the website. MNP's function was to provide a road map to fully implement the 16 recommendations. Sorry; their report isn't on there. Certainly, we have asked them to provide some clear evidence that they're moving forward on those recommendations, and I look forward to meeting with them soon to get some feedback on how they're doing on that.

Mr. Bhullar: Wonderful. I just wanted to make the point, because it's often very easy to blame predecessors, that the fellow that somebody is trying to throw under the bus is actually the one that moved forward on that report, that's leading to change. I just wanted to make that point for the record to our members in the Official Opposition.

Ms Larivee: It is unfortunate that AMVIC is not very accountable at this point, so we are looking forward to increasing our power over them in order to better protect consumers.

Mr. Bhullar: You know, Minister, that is good to hear. With that, I would ask if anybody there can remember how strength over the AMVIC board was put in place. I recall that they only used to have one public member, and then there was somebody that found a way to increase the public members on that board.

Ms Larivee: Well, at this point we continue to see challenges with the operations of AMVIC and inadequate protection for Albertans with major purchases such as a vehicle, and we are looking forward to moving forward with changes to make them more accountable, to better protect consumers here in Alberta.

Mr. Bhullar: Wonderful.

The Chair: Mr. Bhullar, can you please refer back to the budget or the estimates?

Mr. Bhullar: This is a great point from the budget because, obviously, the budget has to support the work that the minister is speaking of. So congratulations there, Minister.

I do want to quickly come back to consumer protection more broadly. Specific to consumer protection, do you have money in the budget to increase the capacity of Service Alberta's – gosh, I'm just going to call them the peace officers right now, the consumer protection branch, the guys and gals that are out on the street investigating consumer complaints with respect to the consumer protection legislation. Do you have any money in this budget to increase the number of people you have on the street fighting for consumer protection?

10:30

Ms Larivee: At this point we've not increased the funding available to have any more investigators than were previously present for consumer protection.

Mr. Bhullar: Okay. So no money for new investigators?

Ms Larivee: Not for new investigators, no.

Mr. Bhullar: That, Minister, is something that I think, unfortunately – I'll be very blunt in saying this – has not had the attention it needs to have in a long time. I will always support increased capacity for consumer protection enforcement.

Ms Larivee: Well, thank you for pointing out the failings in the previous planning. I will certainly look forward to investigating that. Thank you very much.

Mr. Bhullar: Yeah. Minister, something that you may want to see, that's very important, is the fact that sometimes dialogue is actually quite important.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bhullar. Your time is up.

Mr. Bhullar: I thought I had 45 seconds.

The Chair: Not according to our clock.

Mr. Bhullar: According to mine I did.

The Chair: Moving on now to the government caucus, you have 20 minutes. Mr. Shepherd, are you going first?

Mr. Shepherd: Sure. Yeah.

The Chair: Will you be going back and forth with the minister?

Mr. Shepherd: Yeah. I'd like to go back and forth with the minister, and I'll be sharing questions with Member McPherson if that's all right.

The Chair: Thank you. Please go ahead.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Minister. I appreciate the opportunity. Thank you to the previous members for their questions. It's been very informative to have a chance to hear some of the information that's coming back.

Let's see here. I'm just looking where to begin. Just give me one moment. I'd like to start by going back to talk a little bit about the Condominium Property Act. Of course, for myself here in Edmonton-Centre this is something that's a fair concern for me. We've got a large number of condominium properties here. Certainly, I've had a number of condo boards, developers, et cetera, that have come to talk to me about this, so I am very interested in sort of how this process is going. Now, I didn't see any specific mention of the Condominium Property Act in the business plan, so I was just wondering if you could give a bit of comment, again just to clarify, on the work that's going to be undertaken going forward. Since it has been given royal assent, I guess we've got a bit more information about the timeline. Is there anything else you can tell us about how that's going to be proceeding?

Ms Larivee: Okay. Thank you for the question. Bill 9, the Condominium Property Amendment Act, 2014, received royal assent in December 2014 and contained more than 50 amendments to the existing legislation. Most of the amendments require corresponding regulations to expand and clarify policy concepts framed in the act and to establish the operational details of those policies. As previously indicated, we are committed to a very open and transparent process in terms of communicating with all the stakeholders that are involved. We are proceeding with a phased approach to implementing Bill 9, the sections and corresponding regulations – my deputy minister did provide details on that –

including a stand-alone regulation establishing the workings of a dispute resolution tribunal.

The regulatory work does require further consultations with stakeholders within the condominium community to ensure that policy details are well balanced, practical, and function to serve the needs of the various affected parties. Phase 1 of Bill 9 regulation implementation is nearly complete. Regulations have been drafted, and the online survey was used to gather feedback on the proposals.

Thank you.

Mr. Shepherd: Excellent. I appreciated that process, Minister. I had the opportunity to speak recently with some representatives from AREA who had come to see me back in June about this issue. They reflected that they were very happy to see that a number of their recommendations were part of the first regulations that were put up for consideration. They've got a few more that they'll pass on to me. I'll be sure to pass those on to you.

Ms Larivee: Thank you.

Mr. Shepherd: We're moving on, then, I guess, to phase 2 and phase 3. Is the intention to continue with the same method of consultation for the next two phases?

Ms Larivee: Right. We will continue to take a very open, public, and consumer rights based approach to completing these important regulations. We are an open government, a government that values the thoughts and opinions of condo owners, and I'm proud of the steps we've taken in putting the draft regulations online.

Stakeholders within the condominium community, including unit owners, will be consulted during the additional phases of regulation development. The primary means of consultation is face-to-face meetings with key organizations, including the Canadian Condominium Institute, the Canadian Home Builders Association, Alberta Real Estate Association, the Insurance Bureau of Canada as well as interested condominium unit owners. Outreach, though, to condominium owners at large will be achieved primarily through online surveys.

In addition, Service Alberta is working with community agencies such as the Centre for Public Legal Education to provide information for purchasers, unit owners, and boards regarding their rights and responsibilities.

Mr. Shepherd: Excellent. Thank you.

I certainly appreciate the work that was done by the previous government in bringing this legislation forward and, certainly, very much appreciate the work you're putting in to develop the regulations to flesh that out and ensure we've got protection there. So thank you.

There have been some questions raised about the fees. I was just wondering. On page 225 of the government estimates – if we could head there, and I'll just get there myself – there are the combined revenues that are related to registry services for motor vehicles, land titles, other premiums, et cetera. I see that's increasing by \$11.1 million from the 2014-15 actuals. I'm just wondering: how much of this is related to the proposed changes in fees that are listed on page 115 in the fiscal plan?

Ms Larivee: Thank you for your question. The impact of the fee increases as listed in the fiscal plan, as previously stated, is \$3.4 million, so \$3 million for corporate registries and \$400,000 for caveats. The annual average number of transactions impacted by the increase in fees is 1.2 million transactions for corporate registries and 73,000 transactions for caveats. The \$3.6 million reflects implementation partway through the fiscal year.

Mr. Shepherd: Okay. Thank you. That clarifies that nicely for me.

Just one other question here, and then I'll turn things over to Member McPherson for a few questions. If we can for a moment just go back to the business plan, I do note that there are a number of the department's priority initiatives that basically seem to be a repeat from previous business plans. For example, goal 1, that citizens and businesses have quality interactions with the government of Alberta, appears to be the same as this year's desired outcome 4. Goal 2, effective and efficient government program delivery, is pretty much the same content as this year's desired outcome 3. Can you give us a bit of context on why that's just being carried over directly?

Ms Larivee: Our department's core programs and desired outcomes continue to be very relevant for Albertans: focusing on taking better steps to better protect consumers, using technology and a one-enterprise approach to improve the quality of Albertans' interactions with government, and working to use taxpayer resources more efficiently. Certainly, that continues to reflect our priorities.

Our priority initiatives reflect a thoughtful approach to ensuring that decisions made by government have a lasting effect on the well-being of Albertans. For this reason, some of our priority initiatives appear over several years as the department must collaborate and consult with a wide range of partners and stakeholders to find the right balance and bring forward the best solutions, that take into account the impact of those solutions on vulnerable Albertans. A priority initiative might have several projects under it, and those projects can change or new projects can be added to meet the ever-changing landscape of Alberta.

Thank you.

Mr. Shepherd: Well, with that in mind, then, I'm looking at priority initiative 4.2, "improve Albertans' access to affordable registry services by using innovative service delivery methods, including leading-edge technology." Now, you did get into this a bit earlier, but I was wondering: are there any further details that you can give us, then, on any projects, initiatives, anything that you're working on to help support that?

Ms Larivee: As previously discussed, through MyAlberta digital ID and MyAlberta e-services citizens will be provided access to certain government services online using a one-window approach comprised of a common user name and password and a single e-commerce portal. Some registry services will be made available on this website.

Service Alberta is reviewing the current registry services delivery model in light of the changing technology of our times and Albertans who are asking for easier, faster, affordable access to registry services and products. The strategy will address the registry agent ownership expansion and relocation as well as incorporating present and future technologies to provide more registry services to Albertans in a secure and more customer-centric environment.

10:40

The department is also modernizing our existing registry systems to enhance service delivery to Albertans. For example, the land titles office will be accepting fully electronic registration documents using digital signature by 2016. Service Alberta is exploring – again, exploring – ways to improve vital events registrations, specifically online birth registration, through a convenient, secure online birth registration portal where parents can have the ability to provide birth registration information online directly to government.

Mr. Shepherd: Cool. Thank you.

I can certainly appreciate that that's something that's going to take some time. I remember working at the Canada Revenue Agency when they were first rolling out a lot of their online access. I know there are a lot of challenges involved when you're working with these kinds of secure digital information and ensuring that there's protection for Albertans in accessing that. Is that something that we're working with any external groups on for providing that digital security, or is that sort of all internal?

Ms Larivee: Service Alberta is collaborating with and participating in federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal working groups to ensure that MyAlberta digital ID works with a cross-Canadian approach to digital identity and authentication. This will allow the government to partner with those other governments – federal, provincial, and municipal – to adopt a common approach to digital identity.

Additionally, the government is working with other Canadian jurisdictions to identify potential opportunities for using MyAlberta digital ID to access services at the municipal, provincial, or federal levels. Other municipalities: we're talking to them about leveraging the digital ID and e-services, moving forward to one view for Albertans to access government services across the spectrum.

Mr. Shepherd: Excellent. I'm glad to hear that we're having that collaboration. I'm sure that's something where we can realize some efficiencies by sharing those best practices with some other folks who've already trod some of that ground ahead of us.

Just supplementary to that, then, priority initiative 4.3, advancing the open government initiative to improve the way government shares and receives information: can you give us any more details, then, on the role Service Alberta is going to play in that or sort of anything else that's coming up with expanding that open government portal?

Ms Larivee: In terms of the projects that have been completed already in 2015, as previously stated, the open government program launched the open government portal in August 2015 to now include government data and publications. The open government portal is an improvement from the previous open data portal in that it includes not only the data sets but also government publications. We did talk about that already.

As well, another project, as previously discussed, that we did was to do the apps for Alberta project, which encouraged developers and citizens from across the province, from February to August of this year, to develop apps based on the government of Alberta data to see how much we can encourage those people to help leverage how that will provide services to Albertans.

Moving forward, we are working on a data analytic strategy to ensure that data can be used for better policy decisions, program delivery, and opportunities for innovation and economic diversification.

The FOIP review includes considering ways to enhance and align with increased openness to release information outside of formal access processes under the act.

Mr. Shepherd: I'm just curious about the apps for Alberta project. Did anything come out of that that proved to be useful for government, anything that we could make use of ourselves, then, for Albertans?

Ms Larivee: Thanks for the question. We actually have Cathryn Landreth here, who did run that project and will be happy to share some details on that for you.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you.

Ms Landreth: I'm the ADM of open government. The apps for Alberta project engaged probably over a hundred developers from Canada, North America, and internationally. There were several categories. There were three successful applications. All three of them were Alberta companies, which was wonderful. They did some very creative things around using geodata, allowing us to understand what's happening. One of the applications identified, if you were going hiking in a certain place, where there were reports of bears or cougars or good fishing. You know, that's not specifically helpful for government but, certainly, useful for Albertans. One of the useful applications actually took all of the learning data from all of the high schools and ranked it in terms of accomplishments against the standards established by the Department of Education.

So there were a couple of very effective tools that were made available to Albertans. Those were the winning ones. There were a couple of other ones that were also very interesting and useful, and we have connected with those application developers in terms of some other opportunities that exist within the open-government, open-data environment to look at new visualization opportunities for government data.

Mr. Shepherd: At this point I'd like to hand it over to Member McPherson, then. She's got a few more technical questions, I think.

Ms McPherson: Thank you.

Good morning, Minister Larivee. How are you?

Ms Larivee: Good. Thank you.

Ms McPherson: Good. Thanks for the opportunity to ask you some questions. My first question is in regard to the Auditor General's report. In response to the July 2012 fire at Shaw Court in Calgary there were a number of government entities that were unable to provide continuous service on all of their critical applications, and the Auditor General recommended to Service Alberta to "improve recovery of critical information technology applications." This is page 41 of the report. What are Service Alberta's plans to address the Auditor General's recommendations?

Ms Larivee: Thank you for your question. In spring 2015 Service Alberta worked with departments to validate the list of ministries' and public agencies' critical and vital applications. Through that process over 300 critical and vital applications were identified along with the disaster recovery plans for those applications. Service Alberta continues to work with departments on updating and increasing the number of applications included in the disaster recovery plan, and we'll be completing a disaster recovery test for all departments in early 2016. Service Alberta continues to provide status updates to the office of the Auditor General on the work under way and will engage the Auditor General in terms of an approach to verify that we have fully implemented his recommendations.

Ms McPherson: Thank you. As a business continuity consultant before this job it makes my heart happy to hear that.

Also, in the October 2014 Auditor General's report Service Alberta had two outstanding recommendations from October 2008. The first recommendation – it's on page 346 – regards access and security monitoring of the revenue application systems. It recommends adequate logging and monitoring processes be put in place for all revenue applications and systems hosting or supporting financial and Albertans' personal information, very similar to the

requirements that we would see in the private sector under federal Bill 198. The second recommendation, in regard to the system-conversion process, can be found on page 349 and recommends that Service Alberta document testing procedures and adhere to the approved test plan for system migration. What steps does the department intend to take to address these two outstanding items?

Ms Larivee: Okay. Thank you for the question. Prior to this fiscal year the challenge in addressing these two outstanding recommendations was resource constraints in terms of addressing the access and security monitoring recommendation. There were projects under way in the department that could be used to demonstrate how the department would address the Auditor General's recommendation on system conversion. In 2015-16 the department asked the Auditor General to do his follow-up on the system-conversion recommendation during this upcoming audit cycle on an update to the government's capital assets module and to review the work under way to implement an IT solution which will address the access and security recommendation as full implementation of the solution is now scheduled for 2016-17.

Ms McPherson: Great. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Member McPherson, if I could just remind you to please make sure it ties in with the budget or the estimates, please.

Ms McPherson: Okay. Is priority 2.2 on page 96 of the business plan, "ensure the confidentiality, integrity and availability of Albertans' information," related to the Auditor General's access and security monitoring of the revenue applications systems? If yes, then how, and what steps will Service Alberta be taking to address the recommendation?

10:50

Ms Larivee: The answer is yes. We continue one of our priorities, which is to safeguard Albertans' information and to be transparent ourselves. Service Alberta is implementing a plan to monitor registry agents and manage the risks associated with their access to and release of registry information. A freedom of information and protection of privacy, or FOIP, e-learning course directed at registry agent staff will be developed and must be completed, when that's done, by all registry staff before they receive access to registry systems and databases.

Service Alberta has also put in place additional information technology systems that will monitor, track, and audit registry agents' use of the motor vehicle system and allow comprehensive agent risk management through the integration of monitoring information from all registry services.

Ms McPherson: Thank you.

Mr. Shepherd: How much time do we have remaining?

The Chair: We have 25 seconds.

Mr. Shepherd: Twenty-five seconds. Okay. I have a feeling we're not going to get much of an answer in that time, so perhaps, then, we'll yield and move on to the next.

Ms Larivee: Thank you for your questions.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will now stop the clock and take a five-minute break.

[The committee adjourned from 10:51 a.m. to 10:58 a.m.]

The Chair: We'll call the meeting back to order, please. Thank you so much.

We will now be moving into our 10-minute cycle. We will be starting with the Official Opposition. Do you have any questions that you'd like to ask the minister? Mr. Orr, would you like to go back and forth again?

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Chair and Madam Minister. Just one brief clarification for the record, for my understanding more than anything. With regard to registries again and the commitment to speak to stakeholders, will that be defined to also include municipal governments, community stakeholders, or only invested partners?

Ms Larivee: We haven't even proceeded to the point with the review in terms of defining who those stakeholders are. However, we certainly are open to anyone who considers themselves to be a stakeholder on the issue, so municipal governments that would be interested in providing feedback on that issue would be certainly open to discussion with us.

Mr. Orr: I appreciate that answer. Yeah, I do think they should at least be given the opportunity, so thank you.

The Chair: No other questions? Thank you so much.

We will now move on to the third-party opposition. Mr. Ellis, would you like to go back and forth again?

Mr. Ellis: Yes, please. Thank you.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you very much. Minister, just a question here in regard to registry agents. My understanding is that there was really no consultation prior to the decision to reverse a \$1 fee increase that they were scheduled to receive. Is there any particular reason for that? I know it was a budget that was rejected by Albertans – we don't need to get into that – but certainly they were supposed to be given a \$1 increase, which is something that they asked for, and then it was taken away.

Ms Larivee: Right. That was a proposal put forward when the previous government put forward their budget on that. That was never approved, so we did not move forward with that. We did not feel that that was in the best interest of Albertans at this time.

Mr. Ellis: Okay. Thank you.

I just want to be clear. The online registries are currently up and running?

Ms Larivee: No, not at this point. We are looking forward to exploring the option of moving that forward as part of the e-services that we have available, and we look forward to being able to provide that increased access to Albertans, but that's not defined at this time.

Mr. Ellis: Okay. I really just have one more question here just in regard to MOVES. MOVES is the Alberta motor vehicle system; you're all familiar with that, at least. What are the plans for dealing with the challenges of MOVES, and how much money is actually being allocated to fix the problem? Stakeholders have been indicating that there's a problem with the MOVES system, actually, specifically many of the policing agencies, so I wonder if there's going to be a direction to try and answer their questions.

Ms Larivee: Absolutely. MOVES is a very old system, and it needs to be upgraded. We certainly are planning on that and exploring options at this time in terms of moving forward.

Do you have any details to add?

Mr. Grant: I would only add that we're looking at all the options right now, but there has been no money allocated specifically as a line item in this budget to that. Without question, it is old. It's a legacy system. It's complicated and fragile and necessary, and we need to do something because it's critical to the running of government registries.

Mr. Ellis: I think it's critical to all areas of Alberta to get MOVES up into a modern day . . .

Ms Larivee: We certainly recognize that it's archaic and that change likely should have happened a very long time ago. We look forward to moving forward with that.

Mr. Ellis: Well, I've only been here less than a year, before we start throwing me under the bus, right?

Ms Larivee: Well, your member next to you was here a little longer.

Mr. Ellis: Well, Mr. Bhullar can speak right now.
Thank you very much for your time.

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you very much. The minister will learn that political potshots only get people so far. This is a committee of estimates and – anyways, it's no use arguing things like that.

Minister, how much do you think it will cost to redo MOVES?

Ms Larivee: You know, that is certainly something at this point . . .

Mr. Bhullar: You. I'd love to know how much you would think it would cost.

Ms Larivee: Well, thank you for the question. As previously indicated, we are exploring those options to move forward with that, and we do recognize that it is a necessary thing to happen. As soon as we have any details on the options available, we'll be happy to discuss them with you.

Mr. Bhullar: Minister, can you name one jurisdiction that has redone their motor vehicle system and how much it cost?

Ms Larivee: Saskatchewan redid theirs for about \$35 million.

Mr. Bhullar: Are you able to connect with Saskatchewan to adopt their system?

Ms Larivee: Yeah. We've already talked to them about that possibility.

Mr. Bhullar: We talked to them about that possibility three years ago.

The Chair: Mr. Bhullar, can we go back to estimates and budgets, please?

Mr. Bhullar: Of course. Minister, how do you plan on solving this problem if you don't have a single capital dollar allocated to redo MOVES?

Ms Larivee: Well, thank you for the question. Again, we are looking at the various options there, and we look forward to some action on this, that obviously didn't happen in the three years

previous in which it was looked into. We do have planning dollars allocated because, of course, it's important to actually look at things and find the information you need before moving forward on action.

Mr. Bhullar: How many planning dollars do you have, and what are they specifically allocated to? What specific planning within MOVES are they allocated towards?

11:05

Ms Larivee: All of the planning dollars are held by Infrastructure, and we will be applying to use those to move forward with that.

Mr. Bhullar: Yeah. Infrastructure has a \$4.4 billion slush fund, if you want to call it such, where they plan on spending nearly a billion dollars this year. You talk about planning and infrastructure, but you have a new \$4.4 billion fund, and you plan on pumping \$800 million out of that fund in one year. How can you possibly plan for that?

Ms Larivee: I would definitely direct you to refer to the Department of Infrastructure on that question as that would not be within the estimates for this budget.

Mr. Bhullar: But how can you plan to change the MOVES system within a cycle of this three-year budget plan that you have produced without knowing that there's a specific allocation in that Infrastructure pot for MOVES?

Ms Larivee: Right. Proper planning will allow us to identify the amount of capital that's needed, so we're not speculating at this point. We look forward to in future years providing you with that information.

Mr. Bhullar: Minister, how much data is now provided on the open data portal?

Ms Larivee: Give me one moment. I did have those numbers handy a moment ago. Thank you for the question. As of October 2015 the number of data sets in the open government portal was 1,929, and the number of government publications was 2,200.

Mr. Bhullar: Minister, why was the list of school construction projects removed from the open data portal earlier this year?

Ms Larivee: Well, thank you for the question. I mean, we were providing that information on behalf of Infrastructure and Education. Again, the open government portal provides information for a variety of ministries, and you would have to ask details specifically about the information that those ministries would like to share.

Mr. Bhullar: Okay. You have no knowledge as to why it was taken down from your portal, though?

Ms Larivee: Again, that question, not pertaining to estimates in any way, shape, or form, is not related to the Department of Service Alberta.

Mr. Bhullar: Minister, relating to your estimates, what specific allocations do you have to provide new open-data initiatives to be made available?

Ms Larivee: Give me one moment.

Mr. Bhullar: In the meantime, Minister, I'll ask: do you have any plans to reverse services that have been privatized and now bring them in-house, into government, such as registry services?

Ms Larivee: Thank you for the question. Certainly, as previously indicated, we are looking at offering registry services online through the portal we've created in order to provide that access to Albertans. We have no intention at this time of that replacing the registry offices that are there but instead of working in parallel and enhancing the services for Albertans.

The Chair: Mr. Bhullar, I will remind you again that we're not talking about policy; we are talking about estimates, please.

Ms Larivee: In terms of open government projects there is a budget assigned to that division. There are no specific dollars assigned to ongoing projects; however, we do have a general line item for our open government department.

Mr. Bhullar: Minister, the pot for infrastructure on IT projects: has that sum of money now been transferred to Infrastructure as opposed to the proposal in March that was going to have that money stay with Service Alberta?

The Chair: Thank you very much. Your 10 minutes are up.
We will now move over to government caucus. Member McPherson.

Ms McPherson: Thank you. In the business plan, priority initiative 4.1 on page 97 references digital identity, the MyAlberta digital ID. What is the department's strategy regarding digital identity, and how would this enable citizens and businesses to have higher quality interactions with the government?

Ms Larivee: Okay. Thank you for the question. There is a shift in the preference of Albertans from the traditional in-person or telephone service delivery channels to the Internet. Certainly, in the private sector it's already very commonplace in order to offer services online to meet the demand of Albertans and people across the world, in fact. This shift in preference is creating new expectations as well as opportunities for the government to deliver programs and services online and for the government to provide preferably one digital identity for Albertans to use in accessing programs and services.

MyAlberta digital ID is an online identity management service that simplifies and improves the experience of obtaining online services and information across all ministries by using a single user name and password. In the future MyAlberta digital ID will allow the government of Alberta to offer online services that require a high level of identity assurance such as programs that provide health information.

Ms McPherson: Thank you.
This is the second year for the digital identity, and it's been identified as a priority initiative for Service Alberta. Understanding that this is a three-year business plan, when does the department anticipate rolling out digital identities to Albertans?

Ms Larivee: Thanks for the question. MyAlberta digital ID was made available to the public on July 8 of this year. Citizens can now register for their own MyAlberta digital ID by accessing the website at their own convenience any time, anywhere and using any Internet-accessible device of their choice. This initial release supports citizens, and as previously stated, support for businesses will be coming in future releases.

MyAlberta e-services was launched at the same time and is the first online service to leverage MyAlberta digital ID. MyAlberta e-services is an e-commerce portal that will provide citizens and businesses with a single platform to pay for government services online.

Ms McPherson: Do we have a list of what those services are right now?

Ms Larivee: As we move forward, certainly we're looking at integrating registries into that, and there are a number of services that are on the long list of possibilities to integrate with that.

Perhaps Mark could provide some additional detail on that.

Mr. Brisson: Right now we have a couple of online services. We've been working with Environment and Parks on any products and services that they want to promote to Albertans in purchasing commodities. As well, we've been working with them on ski passes, as just a simple example, purchasing them online and then being able to just remit them when you get to the ski hill. Those are two simple examples. We're working with Health and Education and Human Services on other integration pieces as well.

Ms McPherson: Do you have, like, a project plan for this?

Mr. Brisson: We have a prioritized list of initiatives that we're working with and engaging the ministries on for opportunities where it helps improve back-end efficiencies and front-end service to Albertans. That list will go forward as we have the right budget with the different ministries and the right stakeholders involved.

Ms McPherson: Great. Thank you.

I have one more question. Is the government working with other jurisdictions on digital identity, and if yes, how does what Alberta is doing tie in with what's happening across the country?

Ms Larivee: Okay. Well, thanks for the question. We did actually discuss this already, and as stated, we're looking at co-operating with the federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal working groups to look at an approach that's cross-Canadian in terms of digital identity and authentication. We're hoping for a common approach across the spectrum, working with potential opportunities to use MyAlberta digital ID to access services at the municipal, provincial, or federal levels. For example, municipalities were looking at the options in terms of e-services to have a single access to government services online.

Ms McPherson: Thank you.

11:15

Mr. Shepherd: All right. If we could take a look at page 219 of the government estimates, the section on acquisition of inventory, line 8.1. I just want to check here. I see that we have a \$15 million budget for the acquisition of inventory. I was just wondering if you could give us a bit of detail about the type of inventory that the department would be purchasing and how that inventory would be supporting government programs and services. What is that \$15 million going towards?

Ms Larivee: Thank you. The acquisition of inventory estimate is used to purchase two types of inventory, products available from the Queen's Printer and postage. The Queen's Printer provides access to Alberta's legislation, standards, codes, and selected department publications and specialty items that feature the distinctive symbols of Alberta. The Queen's Printer's products are considered inventory, which it sells to the public.

Service Alberta on behalf of all of government purchases postage from Canada Post at a reduced rate. The department records that as postage inventory, which it resells at cost to departments and select groups of agencies, boards, and commissions. The bulk purchase of postage is a prime example of how government can leverage its

purchasing power to secure better rates and provide a more cost-effective program for Albertans.

Mr. Shepherd: So just on that, with postage, then, I mean, we are looking for ways that we can improve efficiencies, that sort of thing. I know that in my time at the Canada Revenue Agency they were in the process of trying to move away from postage and towards digital delivery on as many fronts as they could; for example, going completely cheque free, going to all digital transfers on that front. Is that something that we're looking at with Service Alberta as well, areas where we can transition away from having to make use of postage and go to digital delivery?

Ms Larivee: Certainly, we continue to look at efficiencies and incorporating new technology as we move forward. An example of that would be for a reminder on the renewal of your driver's licence. We're looking at maybe delivering that by e-mail instead of the traditional mail system. That would be a significant cost savings and still provide quality service to Albertans.

Mr. Shepherd: So that would be something that involves the digital ID system. People would have to voluntarily sign up for that, and then they could make the request to receive those reminders by e-mail as opposed to by mail.

Ms Larivee: Thank you. Digital ID is voluntary. It's something that Albertans have to go and register for, but certainly that would allow them to access a variety of information and provide them convenient and efficient access to their information regarding government services anywhere, any time, from any device that they want to use to access the Internet.

Mr. Shepherd: Absolutely. Yeah. I think that's an excellent program. Certainly, as you said, it is sort of the wave of the future, the direction things are going.

As part of that, then, I guess, obviously there's going to be a bit of a transition period. It's going to take some time to bring people over and, I guess, inform them about the availability of the new service. Is there anything in the current estimates, then, for marketing that or bringing that out to the public, letting them know that this is available?

Ms Larivee: Thanks for the question. I'll defer to Mark on that detail.

Mr. Brisson: We do have some operational dollars assigned to a promotional campaign, which we're working through on how we'll roll this out further when we identify some of those candidate programs to make announcements.

Mr. Shepherd: Okay. So it's a question that as more content is developed for me to use with the portal and available through digital ID, we'll put more programs in place then, too.

Ms Larivee: Right. As each service is available, we look forward to letting Albertans know about the availability and access of programming that, hopefully, will allow them better access, again, anywhere, any time. It's certainly, like you said, the wave of the future, and we're excited to roll that out to Albertans.

Mr. Shepherd: Is that something that we'd be working in partnership with the registries on, or is the notification system, the reminder system, just something that's completely within Service Alberta and doesn't involve the registries and their work?

Ms Larivee: Actually, that notification system has always existed within Service Alberta. That is an efficiency in terms of how we provide service but also, hopefully, enhance the experience of Albertans moving forward.

Mr. Shepherd: Okay.

Ms Larivee: Mark, did you have additional details?

Mr. Brisson: Yeah. Adding on the benefits of the digital ID and the e-services piece, if we work to roll registration services into that, we would be able to combine and bundle services. So your reminder renewals would be there as you're paying for services, and other services from government could be sent to you to give you an indication of, oh, campground registrations, 20 per cent off, those types of things. So ease of access, of pushing information down to the consumer or citizen.

Mr. Shepherd: Okay. Excellent. I know that if I go online right now to . . .

The Chair: Thank you, Member.

We have some additional time to continue with the rotation. To the Official Opposition: any additional questions at this point?

Mr. W. Anderson: Not at this time, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you so much. We will then go to the third-party opposition member.

Before we start, just a reminder to the minister as well as the member that if we could just focus on the estimates and the budget and maybe refrain from some of the rhetoric around past governments, just to keep this a little bit more civilized, if that would be possible.

Mr. Bhullar.

Mr. Bhullar: Of course, Madam Chair. Thank you very much. I am a guest in your committee today, so thank you.

Minister, why is there an increase from the March estimates for technology services of \$54.4 million?

Ms Larivee: Can you refer to a specific page and line item? Thank you.

Mr. Bhullar: Technology services. That's the line. I didn't write it in my notes. From the March estimates – so this is something that I don't know if you have in your documents – technology services as a lump-sum total is going up by 13.1 per cent over the next three years.

Ms Larivee: Okay. Again, can you refer to a specific page and line item?

Mr. Bhullar: Item 9, lines 9.1, 9.2, and 9.3.

Ms Larivee: Okay. Thank you for the question on that. Previous to your arriving, we had addressed this already. The increase in that is due to a variety of different things. You're looking at different items. In terms of technology operations and infrastructure, line 9.1, that includes salary increases as negotiated with the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, and the responsibility for certain functions has been moved, leading to an internal reallocation of funds to technology operations and infrastructure. So that accounts for line 9.1.

In terms of 9.2, enterprise services, the 2015-16 estimate increase over the actuals is due to the AUPE negotiated salary increases. Now, the big portion that I think you really want some information

on is that the increase in the 2015-16 estimate from the previous relates to contractual obligations related to the long-term contracts for the provincial broadband service, or the SuperNet. We are tied by the contracts entered into by the previous government, and that included a contractual obligation that we were obliged to pay moving forward.

Mr. Bhullar: Minister, what are your thoughts on bringing capital expenditure for IT under one roof in Service Alberta as opposed to it being in Infrastructure?

Ms Larivee: Thank you for the suggestion. I'd be happy to think about it from that perspective and consider that moving forward. Thank you for the question.

Mr. Bhullar: With respect to IT contracting what services within the department do you foresee being able to contract out that you're presently providing in-house? So what services are you providing in-house today through the public service that you feel you may be able to contract out to a private provider?

Ms Larivee: Okay. Thank you for the question. I mean, we continually, in terms of our services, look at providing our services in the most efficient and effective way, being very respectful of the fact that Albertans expect us to be fiscally responsible. Included as part of that is continually evaluating the services that we provide to ascertain if they're relevant and continue to be the best way to deliver services and make those choices, including whether they're provided internally or externally. At this particular point there's nothing which we're looking to contract out. However, we are continuously analyzing that in order to make the best decisions on behalf of Albertans.

11:25

Mr. Bhullar: Minister, the Utilities Consumer Advocate budget is at \$9.165 million. Given that your government – well, I don't know if it's a government policy or if it's just a party idea – is not in favour of privatized utilities, what role do you see the Utilities Consumer Advocate playing perhaps in a larger capacity? Is that why you've given it an increase of a couple of million dollars?

Ms Larivee: In terms of what the estimate is, it's that the UCA is fully funded by industry. Historically we placed the estimate at \$9.2 million because actual expenditures vary greatly, depending on how heavy the number of interventions are in terms of the Utilities Consumer Advocate and how many interventions they participate in in a fiscal year. Again, there's a lot of variation in that. However, being fully funded by industry moving forward, I don't see that as a significant variance within the budget.

Mr. Bhullar: Do you see how you may want to potentially change the operations of the Utilities Consumer Advocate given perhaps an ideological pursuit to move away from privatized utilities?

Ms Larivee: Well, we continue to support the UCA in providing Albertans with the information, representation, and protection they need in Alberta's current electricity and natural gas markets. We want to continue to move forward with our outcome of enhancing consumer protection, so we are definitely looking at some ideas around enforcing the consumer information portion of the UCA.

Mr. Bhullar: Minister, how many ministers have government-owned vehicles at present? How much money is allocated in the budget for government-owned vehicles?

Ms Larivee: Thank you for the question. Give us a moment to find the details on that.

We currently have \$1 million in capital for the executive fleet.

Mr. Bhullar: Of that \$1 million, how many ministers actually take government vehicles, just out of curiosity?

Ms Larivee: Well, I do know that they are strongly encouraged to take the government vehicles because it is a more efficient use of government funds to do that. Currently there are 54 executive fleet vehicles.

I'll defer to my deputy minister to provide a few more details on that.

Mr. Grant: Mr. Bhullar, since the new government has taken over, there have been no additional vehicles purchased for ministers. They have used vehicles out of the fleet. My understanding right now is that all ministers, perhaps less the one on my left, have a fleet vehicle, but they were not purchased new for them. They were taken from existing stock.

Mr. Bhullar: Well, all I wanted to know was how many actually have that today. Thank you very much.

Minister, what are your personal thoughts on that program, just out of curiosity?

Ms Larivee: Absolutely, there is good reason to have fleet vehicles. They have been shown to be a more effective use in terms of funding transportation for the ministers, so we continue to support that program moving forward.

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you very much, Minister.

Minister, what would you cite as your biggest priority in remapping business services as they're provided by Service Alberta to other departments, and what budget allocations do you have for that?

Ms Larivee: Thank you for the question. In terms of my own priorities, certainly, we continue to work with all the various ministries in order to provide services more efficiently in terms of the cost of them but also to provide better access to Albertans. The prime example of that, that we have talked about many times today, is digital identity, moving forward with that to offer cost-effective services to Albertans in a more accessible way, which meets their needs and demands at this time.

Mr. Bhullar: That is a very noble pursuit, something that requires a transformative approach, and one that takes a long time to implement. It's been going on for some time, but I'm glad to see that you're enthusiastic about that.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Bhullar.

Moving on now for another 10 minutes to the government caucus, are there any questions?

Mr. Shepherd: Yes. Thank you. Minister, just returning to the earlier question I was asking about the acquisition of the inventory estimate, you mentioned then that the Queen's Printer products are considered inventory, which it sells to the public. Could you just clarify for me what sorts of items from the Queen's Printer we are selling to the public?

Ms Larivee: Thanks for the question. As previously addressed, the public does have access to Alberta's legislation, standards, codes, selected department publications. All of those things are available to the public via the Queen's Printer online. Those are all public

documents. As well, there are some specialty items that feature the distinctive symbols of Alberta that are available to Albertans.

Mr. Shepherd: Okay. So there are just some branded items that are available for sale to people.

Ms Larivee: Right.

Mr. Shepherd: Are they able to order those online, or is it something that's going to be part of sort of the new things that we're putting in place?

Ms Larivee: No. The Queen's Printer does have their items available online.

Mr. Shepherd: Okay. Excellent. Thank you.

Just speaking of that, in terms of this work that we're doing, then, that I see we've budgeted for here, I know right now that if I need to go and make a payment for, say, a fine or something on the provincial level, I do have to do that through a registry website, and I am charged a fee for doing so. If we're going to move those payments, then, over to be part of my digital ID and that system there, would that then be a fee that would come to government, or would that be something where, like the Canada Revenue Agency, we would choose not to charge people fees to make payments to us through our own system?

Ms Larivee: Thank you for the question. As indicated previously, we are doing a review of registries and looking at how we will roll that out. We are exploring a variety of options around that in terms of how we deliver that service, but it is not determined at this time.

Mr. Shepherd: Okay. So it's still under consideration, depending on the consultation, et cetera. Is there anything set aside in the budget, then, specifically for those consultations or as part of that process?

Ms Larivee: No. That is included as part of the budget for the ADM responsible for that program area. They're expected to accommodate that within the budget they've been assigned.

Mr. Shepherd: Okay. So they'll work within the dollars that are allotted to them already to accommodate anything that needs to come forward.

Ms Larivee: Right.

Mr. Shepherd: Excellent. Thank you. I appreciate that clarification.

We've been discussing vehicles a bit. I just wanted to clarify on page 219 of the estimates, element 8.1, the 13 and a half million dollars in the capital budget for procurements. Again, as we've discussed, that's apparently for purchasing vehicles for the government fleet. Is that correct?

Ms Larivee: That's correct. A financial review in 2011 found that purchasing vehicles was 44 per cent less costly than vehicle leasing on a total cost of ownership basis. This review also noted that the government can and often does retain and use vehicles beyond their average seven-year minimum, 180,000-kilometre life, resulting in additional cost avoidance to government. A 2013 review to look at the relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency of the government's fleet management services re-examined the above findings and confirmed that the government should continue to acquire vehicles by means of purchasing versus leasing.

Mr. Shepherd: So they basically found that we are saving money if we purchase as opposed to leasing?

Ms Larivee: Correct.

Mr. Shepherd: Okay. Then, as you mentioned earlier, that's something we've been starting to partner with some of the other provinces on? You mentioned, I think, B.C. and Saskatchewan. We did some bulk buys with them.

Ms Larivee: Right, in terms of partnering with B.C. and Saskatchewan to move forward with, particularly, the purchase of light trucks.

Mr. Shepherd: Light trucks. Okay. There are some savings here, then, by going through this method and doing the purchases as opposed to leasing. Are there some savings that are realized as well by perhaps recouping some costs by reselling these vehicles after they've sort of reached their useful life for our use?

Ms Larivee: Through Service Alberta we do the sale of surplus items, so we do sell all of those vehicles through surplus to recoup whatever costs we can at the end of that.

11:35

Mr. Shepherd: Cool. Is that folded in through the online system as well, the resale of those vehicles?

Ms Larivee: Surplus sales is not online at this time.

Mr. Shepherd: Okay. Is that something that we've considered? I know the federal government does do that for their procurement with vehicles and such that they have for sale.

Ms Larivee: We've done a pilot with some of them, similar to eBay, where you would bid on the items, but at this point we don't have any plans to roll that out widely.

Mr. Shepherd: Okay. So it's still sort of in a pilot stage, investigating?

Ms Larivee: Absolutely.

Mr. Shepherd: Quite a bit of the digital is there, I guess. But that, again, makes sense. We want to make sure we're getting it right before we put it online. We don't want to make any sort of mistakes.

Member McPherson, did you have any further questions on that?

Ms McPherson: Sure do. Thank you.

On page 113 of the fiscal plan it shows a reduction of 10 full-time equivalents with the explanation of cost-containment measures. What initiatives or programs are impacted by these cost-containment measures?

Ms Larivee: Thank you for the question. The department is engaged in a project to modernize the land titles system. This project will result in automating a number of manual processes and increasing the online delivery of the service. The resulting efficiencies from the project will mean a reduction in the number of staff required for the program, and the reduction will be handled through turnover and attrition.

Ms McPherson: Thank you.

Does this tie into the MyAlberta digital ID by any chance, or do we know that at this point?

Ms Larivee: It's a separate program, so at this point it does not tie into that.

Ms McPherson: Okay. Thank you.

I do have another question. As far as MyAlberta digital ID, what security measures are being considered to ensure the safety of Albertans' data?

Ms Larivee: Okay. Thank you for the question. I'll defer to Mark as the expert on that to provide you with those details.

Mr. Brisson: We work closely with the Privacy Commissioner in putting forward our privacy impact assessment of rolling out this type of technology. We follow international security standards in deploying online services, and an individual's digital identity is anonymous from the actual unique electronic identity behind it in the system that basically identifies who they are. We have state-of-the-art infrastructure to support no intrusion to the system, and we've also been using privacy practices to make sure that the process that we're following in signing up individuals follows the OIPC's recommendations and approaches.

Ms McPherson: Great. Thank you.

How has the ministry budgeted for meeting the UN declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, as the Premier directed all ministries to do over the summer?

Ms Larivee: We have been very excited to move forward with a review of all of the programs and services that we offer in terms of looking at possible ways of implementing the UN declaration. We have not at this point decided exactly how we're going to move forward with that, it having only recently been done. So we look forward to making those decisions and moving forward with that in order to meet that obligation, from my perspective, to those people.

Ms McPherson: Thank you.

Do you have any other questions?

Mr. Shepherd: Yeah. Certainly.

Minister, if we could just return to our discussion from earlier on the Condominium Property Act. I'm just wondering: have you given consideration, I guess, to any other further associated costs related to the implementation of those regulations? I know we're still in the midst of the consultation, phase 2 and phase 3, I guess, looking particularly at phase 3, the implementation of the tribunal. Have we come up with any estimates or budgeted for the costs that are going to be involved with putting those in place?

Ms Larivee: As you stated, that is the third phase in particular, you know, that you're mostly referring to with that. We look forward to presenting those numbers in Budget 2016 once we've had the time to review it, to make the plans, and to decide how we're going to move forward with that.

Mr. Shepherd: I understand. It's still in development.

I am just curious. With that tribunal, then, is that something that's going to be required to be budgeted for as part of Service Alberta? Will that be part of future budgets, or is that something that's going to stand as an independent board or commission?

Ms Larivee: At this time we've not made a decision on whether or not it would be a stand-alone tribunal or if it will be incorporated with the current residential tenancy.

Mr. Shepherd: Okay. So it's something that's still under consideration. I'll look forward to continuing to be involved in that process and seeing how that comes out.

On page 97 of the business plan I do notice that the performance measure for open government has dropped a bit, well, dropped considerably, I guess, from the actuals in 2013-14. Oh, pardon me. Not dropped. I apologize. I was looking at the wrong sheet there. So page 97 of the business plan . . . [A timer sounded] We'll come back to that later.

The Chair: Thank you, Member.

Moving on again to the Official Opposition, any new questions?

Mr. W. Anderson: Not at this time, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you so much.

Moving on to the third-party opposition, to Mr. Ellis this time. Go ahead.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you. I guess I have a question here just in regard to consumer protection. I think we're all on the same page in regard to protecting consumers. Of course, the hot topic throughout Alberta, especially in the two larger cities of Calgary and Edmonton, has to do with Uber. Has your department had any discussions or maybe put some money aside to discuss such a hot-button topic, especially when it comes to consumer protection?

Ms Larivee: Thank you for the question. Certainly, it is a topic of interest, which is why Transportation is taking the lead on that issue. We do have an ADM group who is working together on that. However, Transportation would be the group to address that with.

Mr. Ellis: So will there be some crossministerial co-operation, hopefully, to deal with this?

Ms Larivee: Absolutely.

Mr. Ellis: Okay. That's great to hear.

Just one more question before I pass it on to my colleague here. This has to do with something you said previously, and this is in regard to the \$1 fee increase that we previously discussed for the registry offices. You indicated that it was not in the best interests of Albertans. Could you just maybe elaborate as to why that would not be in the best interests of Albertans?

Ms Larivee: Well, there were a number of fee increases that were addressed in that budget, and that was only one of them that at this point in time we chose not to move forward with.

Mr. Ellis: Okay. Thank you very much.

I'll defer to my colleague here.

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Minister, the specialty licence plate program is a bit of a lighter topic, but I want to bring this up for a specific reason today. Could I find out from the department how many people have subscribed to a specialty licence plate; specifically, the Support our Troops plate?

Ms Larivee: Thank you for the question. At this time there are over 18,000 Albertans who have chosen to subscribe to that program and get the Support our Troops plates.

Mr. Bhullar: Thank you. As the chair points out, it has to relate to the budget, so what revenue has that brought into the government?

Ms Larivee: To date over a million dollars have been raised to support Alberta's serving and retired servicemen and -women and their families for that program. I look forward to connecting with Kent Hehr, the new Veterans Affairs minister, in terms of connecting on support of our troops.

Mr. Bhullar: What organizations are the proceeds going to, the \$1 million?

Ms Larivee: Where are the proceeds going?

Mr. Bhullar: Yeah.

Ms Larivee: Those proceeds are to support Alberta's serving and retired servicemen and -women.

Mr. Bhullar: I know, but through which organization?

Ms Larivee: I will defer that, specifically, to my deputy minister for details.

Mr. Grant: An arrangement was put in place that the money would be moved through National Defence headquarters and the Canadian Forces fund that deals with all injured and needy soldiers who have left the forces. That is disbursed on our behalf by an organization in National Defence.

Mr. Bhullar: Wonderful. You know, as you can see, Minister, simple initiatives like that bring a fair amount of revenue not only through the government but also to very worthwhile causes and allow us to really show our support for certain initiatives.

11:45

I'd just like to take half a second here, Madam Chair. Just half; I promise. I remember – and I have to state this for the record today – when I had a conversation with General Wynnyk. When we were starting this plate, he said, "Minister, why are you interested in doing this?" and I said: "Because I'm so proud. I'm so in awe of a fellow named Harjit Singh Sajjan, who was the very first turbaned Sikh to serve in the Canadian Forces since I believe it was World War II." Today that same individual has been named Canada's newest minister of defence. So I just wanted to say that and put in history forever, in Service Alberta history, that that was a great motivator, and I'm so, so enthused that Service Alberta got to do a little something to support such incredible people.

Your thoughts on that, Minister, relating to the budget?

Ms Larivee: I certainly, again, support our troops, and I'm thankful that we do have that portion in Service Alberta. Not everything from the previous government was bad. There you go. You can even have that on record: not everything.

Actually, my deputy minister would love to add some details on that.

Mr. Grant: In a previous life I actually had the opportunity – when my regiment was serving in Bosnia, Harjit actually was a liaison officer in my reconnaissance squadron, so I know him very well, and he is a brilliant officer who went on to serve as well in Afghanistan. You're right; he is a great Canadian and a wonderful individual, a proud veteran.

Mr. Bhullar: You know, the most brilliant thing about all of this is – I'm sorry; you won't be able to rein us in now – that he joined the Canadian Forces at a time when the national discussion in this country was about whether or not the turban should be allowed in the RCMP. This guy quietly joined the forces wearing a turban. I can say it; he went to hell and back because there was discrimination in those days, and he's one of the most accomplished soldiers at such a young age.

Ms Larivee: Absolutely. Discrimination is something that we actively hope to fight against. Inclusion is a key priority of the NDP government, and we will look forward, hopefully, to your support

in any measures as we move forward in terms of supporting inclusion and dealing with discrimination.

Mr. Bhullar: But how are you doing that in the budget?

Ms Larivee: Well, that would not be Service Alberta, and that would be something often attitude based.
Any further questions on estimates?

Mr. Bhullar: I think we'll leave it at a high point.

The Chair: Thank you very much.
The member of the government caucus.

Mr. Shepherd: Sure. Picking up, then, where I left off, page 97 of the business plan. Again, I just noted that the performance measure for open government has increased quite a bit from the actuals in 2013-14. I was wondering if you could give us a bit of information about why that's jumped, where that jump came from, that increase, and, if you have that information, what's the current number of data sets and publications that are currently on the open-government portal? I think you gave us a bit of breakdown earlier.

Ms Larivee: Okay. The measure has increased as a result of the new and improved open-government portal, that was launched in August 2015. As previously discussed, the portal now includes government data and publications, and as a result we were able to identify a much greater volume of data sets than previously anticipated. As also indicated before, as of October 2015 the number of data sets in the open-government portal was 1,929, and the number of government publications was 2,200.

Mr. Shepherd: In what way do those government publications, I guess, differ from those that are regularly available just through the regular website?

Ms Larivee: In terms of accessing them, it's a one-stop shop in many ways to access those things, so you can go to the portal to access those in an easier fashion. It just makes them a little more accessible.

Mr. Shepherd: Okay. So it's not a matter of making any new documents available in terms of the government documents that weren't. It's just consolidating them in one location.

Ms Larivee: Right. Actually, there were a number of historical documents that may not have previously been available online but now have come online due to the newly improved portal.

Mr. Shepherd: Are there any additional costs accounted for or budgeted for, then, in terms of making more of those available in terms of historical documents, I guess, having to scan those to make them available online?

Ms Larivee: Those costs are part of the regular operation of that department and are just part of the routine budget.

Mr. Shepherd: Okay. Thank you.

Just returning, I guess, we were talking a bit there about some of the surplus sales, so things like vehicles and other things. I assume that Service Alberta handles the sale of other surplus items as well, furniture and other items that are not longer in use, those sorts of things.

Ms Larivee: Yes. That's correct. We handle all surplus sales for the province.

Mr. Shepherd: There are probably a large number of things from the former building we were in before the federal.

In that case, then, when we're selling these, is government making a profit on those surplus sales, and if so, I guess those are part of the revenues that are shown for Service Alberta?

Ms Larivee: Right. There is some revenue that goes into the general revenue fund from the sales of those surplus items.

Mr. Shepherd: Okay. Have you given any thought to perhaps adding a small percentage on top of that to help deal with the deficit?

Ms Larivee: No, actually. We've not considered that potential option at this point.

Thank you.

Mr. Shepherd: No problem.
Member McPherson.

Ms McPherson: Sure. On page 96 of the business plan, priority 1.1: "Develop an Alberta consumers' agenda that enhances consumer protection." What are the costs associated with a consumers' agenda, and do you see those rising in the future?

Ms Larivee: Okay. Well, what a consumers' agenda means is that we prioritize protecting the consumers in Alberta. It is one of our key outcomes and across much of what we do, we want to enhance consumer protection. A big part of that is looking at, moving forward, reviewing the acts and regulations involved. As previously stated, there are 11 acts as well as 44 regulations that address consumer protection, so we look forward to looking at those to determine how we can better enhance consumer protection for Albertans.

Consumer protection is part of our core business. There are existing consumer awareness programs, so the budget for that would fall within our day-to-day business of that. We look forward, again, to enhancing payday loans at this time as well the condominium regulations, and we'll move forward in other areas as well to ensure Albertans are protected as consumers.

Ms McPherson: Okay. Thank you.

What is Service Alberta's long-term records management plan? With advances in technology and digitization – that's a mouthful – in this area, is this somewhere we could see future cost savings?

Ms Larivee: Thank you for that excellent question. I will defer to Cathryn as the expert in this area to provide you with further details on that specific question.

Ms Landreth: We have an information management strategy for the government of Alberta which we are moving forward with, which will allow us to identify standards and governance necessary across government to deal with records management. We like to manage information as the greater value set for the government and records being a subset of those. We have governance for records management.

We are moving towards managing records in a digital environment because most of our records have been created in a digital environment over the last 20 years, working collaboratively with service modernization and with our colleagues across government to develop a set of rules and standards that allow ministries to make the appropriate business decisions so records that demonstrate government decisions and policies are preserved appropriately and disposed of appropriately when they should be

disposed of. Keeping records longer than they should creates risks for government and for citizens.

Making sure that we create them in an appropriate way, identifying them so that we can find them, putting them in a place where we can use them, disposing of them when they should be disposed of, and sending them to the archives if they have enduring value for government: we'd like to do that all within a digital environment and stop churning out the paper we've been churning out. We have reduced our paper holdings in the Alberta Records Centre by 20 per cent over the last two years using our information management strategy, so we're making headway.

Ms McPherson: Thank you.

Mr. Shepherd: Regarding the vehicle purchases you were talking about earlier and the amounts that have been set aside there in this budget, what are the criteria we're using to determine, then, when we're moving ahead with vehicle replacements? Is it a set number of years, a set number of kilometres? What are the metrics that Service Alberta is putting in place to ensure that we're getting our best value on those?

11:55

Ms Larivee: Okay. Certainly, each vehicle is assessed individually. The government can and often does retain and use vehicles beyond their average seven-year minimum, 180,000-kilometre life. We look at avoiding unnecessary cost to government and using our resources as efficiently as we possibly can in order to be fiscally responsible for the Albertans we represent.

Mr. Shepherd: Okay. So we just have regular reviews, then, keep an eye on those kilometres and the age, and just make sure that we're turning them over at appropriate times.

Ms Larivee: Right.

Mr. Shepherd: I appreciate that.

Talking again about some of the consumer education programs I was talking about earlier – I apologize if I keep yammering on that. I have a communications background, so I always have an interest in how we're putting things forward to the public and keeping them informed and letting them know about some of these services that are available. I think the more we can educate the public about, I guess, their rights and some of the things that already exist, then the more we can put those into use and perhaps have to spend less on trying to implement new measures rather than being able to make use of what we've got in front of us.

With that in mind, I know you've indicated somewhat, I guess, that some of these numbers are just baked into the standard operational budgets for some of these areas, but do we have sort of an idea how much Service Alberta is currently spending towards consumer education programs?

Ms Larivee: Being one of our key outcomes, it is disbursed throughout the programs and services we offer. We do have seven dedicated staff in communications who work directly on consumer awareness programs specifically. That would be the one area where there's a clear and definite assignment of costs.

Mr. Shepherd: So these are communications staff that are directly employees of Service Alberta, or are these folks that are seconded from the Public Affairs Bureau?

Ms Larivee: Directly employed by Service Alberta.

Mr. Shepherd: Okay. Excellent. Again, they'd be part of the standard operational budgets for each of the individual areas?

Ms Larivee: That is correct.

Mr. Shepherd: Okay. Excellent. What are we using to measure that those objectives are being met? What metrics are we using to, I guess, determine if these public education programs are in fact being effective, that we're getting good results for the dollar?

Ms Larivee: Well, we're moving forward with enhanced programming in terms of consumer protection, so we're still looking at creating some outcomes to reflect those changes. In our business plan we continue to develop metrics for some of those items in terms of our enhanced protection.

Mr. Shepherd: Okay. So that continues to be sort of ongoing in light of the principles that are set out in the business plan.

Ms Larivee: Yes.

Mr. Shepherd: Okay. Thank you.

I was wondering. Moving back to FOIP, then, which we discussed a bit earlier, one of the members previously did ask, I guess, about the cost, the \$25 for a request. Do we have an idea of what the costs actually are to fulfill a FOIP request? Do we have any numbers that sort of indicate . . .

The Chair: Thank you, Member.

Mr. Shepherd: I'll come back to that.

The Chair: Because I've seen that the Official Opposition and the third-party opposition passed on their questions, I just want to clarify: do any members have any other questions they'd like to ask? Mr. Ellis.

Mr. Ellis: Yes. Thank you, Chair. Just going back to records management, are you expected to possibly implement or at least have discussions regarding regulations or legislation to deal with records management?

Ms Larivee: Thank you for that question. Again, I will defer in terms of our ongoing strategy to Cathryn.

Ms Landreth: There is a records management regulation under the Government Organization Act. We are currently reviewing it. We have had discussions although we have not had the opportunity to have a discussion with the minister in the last week, since she's come into her role, over the opportunity for Alberta to introduce an information management act in the government. We are one of the only jurisdictions that doesn't have one. Currently we manage this information via the records management regulation. The minister has that accountability under the Government Organization Act for the government, and we therefore set the standards and policies that the rest of the government is supposed to follow.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you.

Just going back to the licence plates and the veterans, Minister, obviously I was really, actually, very pleasantly surprised to hear how many people have these veterans licence plates and, of course, about the value that it actually brings to the ministry itself, the \$1 million, and that it, of course, goes to the veterans. Are there any other initiatives – I noticed that even in Saskatchewan they have, you know, Saskatchewan Roughriders licence plates – maybe even on the horizon or worth discussing about any other types of licence plates that could possibly bring in revenue?

Ms Larivee: Thanks for the question. There are no plans at this time to expand specialty licence plates to other causes or sporting groups.

Mr. Ellis: Okay. Thank you very much.

Actually, I have no further questions unless my colleague does.

Mr. Bhullar: You sent me that nice note. For that reason I'll call it 12 o'clock.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak? No? Okay.

Seeing none, then pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(8) the estimates of the Ministry of Service Alberta are deemed to have been considered for the time allotted in the schedule.

I would like to remind committee members that we are scheduled to meet again today from 3:30 p.m. till 6:30 p.m. to consider the estimates of the Ministry of Education.

Thank you very much.

[The committee adjourned at 12:01 p.m.]

