



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Third Session

Standing Committee  
on  
Families and Communities

Ministry of Service Alberta  
Consideration of Main Estimates

Wednesday, April 12, 2017  
9 a.m.

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**Legislative Assembly of Alberta  
The 29th Legislature  
Third Session**

**Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND), Chair  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W), Deputy Chair

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)  
Cyr, Scott, Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W)\*  
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)\*\*  
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (ND)  
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (ND)  
Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (ND)  
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)  
McKittrick, Annie, Sherwood Park (ND)  
Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)  
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)  
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Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
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\* substitution for Angela Pitt

\*\* substitution for Dave Rodney

**Also in Attendance**

Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)

**Support Staff**

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Shannon Dean	Law Clerk and Director of House Services
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## **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

### **Participants**

Ministry of Service Alberta

Hon. Stephanie V. McLean, Minister

Mark Brisson, Assistant Deputy Minister, Service Modernization



9 a.m.

Wednesday, April 12, 2017

[Ms Goehring in the chair]

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

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

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

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

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Wayne Anderson, Highwood.

**Mr. Gill:** Prab Gill, Calgary-Greenway.

**Mr. Cyr:** Scott Cyr, the MLA for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

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

**Mr. Clark:** Good morning. Greg Clark, Calgary-Elbow.

**Ms McLean:** Good morning. Stephanie McLean, Minister of Service Alberta and of Status of Women and Member for Calgary-Varsity. I have with me at the table, to my left, Mark Brisson, assistant deputy minister of service modernization; to my right Althea Hutchinson, senior financial officer for Service Alberta; and to her right Colin Lloyd, our assistant deputy minister of consumer services.

Thank you.

**Mr. Hinkley:** Good morning. Bruce Hinkley, MLA, Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

**Drever:** Good morning. Deborah Drever, MLA for Calgary-Bow.

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

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

**Ms McKittrick:** Bonjour. Annie McKittrick, MLA, Sherwood Park.

**Ms Luff:** Robyn Luff, Calgary-East.

**Mr. Shepherd:** David Shepherd, Edmonton-Centre.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I'd like to note the following substitutions for the record: Mr. Gill for Mr. Rodney and Mr. Cyr for Mrs. Pitt.

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

Hon. members, the standing orders set out the process for consideration of the main estimates. Before we proceed with the consideration of the main estimates for the Ministry of Service Alberta, I would like to review briefly the standing orders governing the speaking rotation. As provided for in Standing Order 59.01(7), the rotation is as follows. The minister or the member of Executive Council acting on the minister's behalf may make opening

comments not to exceed 10 minutes. For the next 50 minutes members of the Official Opposition and the minister may speak. For the next 20 minutes the members of the third party, if any, and the minister may speak. For the next 20 minutes the members of any other party represented in the Assembly or any independent members and the minister may speak. For the next 20 minutes private members of the government caucus and the minister may speak. For the time remaining, we'll follow the same rotation just outlined to the extent possible; however, speaking times are reduced to five minutes as set out in Standing Order 59.02(1)(c). The speaking rotation is set out in the standing orders, and members wishing to participate must be present during the appropriate portion of the meeting.

Members may speak more than once; however, speaking times for the first rotations are limited to 10 minutes at any one time. A minister and a member may combine their time for a total of 20 minutes. For the final rotation, with speaking times of five minutes, once again the minister and a member may combine their speaking times for a maximum total of 10 minutes. Discussion should flow through the chair at all times regardless of whether or not speaking times have been combined. Members are asked to advise the chair at the beginning of their rotation if they wish to combine their time with the minister's time. If members have any questions regarding speaking times or the rotations, please feel free to send a note or speak directly to either myself or the committee clerk about this process.

A total of two hours has been scheduled to consider the estimates for the Ministry of Service Alberta.

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

Ministry officials may be present and at the direction of the minister may address the committee. Ministry officials seated in the gallery, if called upon, have access to a microphone in the gallery area. Ministry officials are asked that they please introduce themselves for the record prior to responding to a question. We have pages available to make deliveries should any notes or other materials need to pass between staff in the gallery and the table. Members' staff may be present and seated along the committee room wall. Space permitting, opposition caucus staff may sit at the table; however, members have priority for seating at the table at all times.

If debate is exhausted prior to two 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 this morning at 11.

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

Any written material 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 April 19, 2017.

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

amendments, including the original, must be provided at the meeting for committee members and staff.

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

**Ms McLean:** Hello and thank you. It's my pleasure to speak to Service Alberta's budget for 2017 by presenting my ministry's estimates for the 2017-18 fiscal year. Just to recap, to help answer your questions, I have with me Colin Lloyd, ADM; Althea Hutchinson, senior financial officer; and Mark Brisson, ADM. Behind me I'm pleased to note other members of our executive team at Service Alberta and thank them for joining us today.

As we all know, the primary theme of Budget 2017 is how the government is working to make life better for Albertans. At Service Alberta we have a unique role in supporting that aim. We oversee legislation covering consumer protection in the economy, from buying a vehicle or home to hiring a contractor to build your deck to renting an apartment and buying electricity and natural gas. We are the ministry to come to when you need to register a life event, landownership, or a business or charity. If you're a driver, you can't be on the road without registering your vehicle or getting a driver's licence through us. We also help connect schools, libraries, hospitals, and other public-sector facilities spread across all parts of the province to the Internet through SuperNet. Then there's the work we do for other ministries, everything from IT services to ensuring transparency and accountability, and because we manage the government's call centres, we make sure that Albertans can get connected with the programs, services, and information they need to improve their lives.

In our business plan for 2017 to 2020 we talk about how our ministry has a role within government to drive modernization and to help bring about the effective, efficient delivery of programs, services, and information. Our pathway to success involves hitting four desired outcomes. Outcome 1 is to ensure that consumers are protected. That's a big task because the marketplace is becoming more and more complex for a number of reasons. There are more open markets that Albertans can access to buy or sell goods and services. There's ever-changing technology, more convenient ways of accessing and paying for goods and services online, and the need to assess more complex information in making purchasing decisions.

We will continue to protect consumers, especially those who are vulnerable members of society, and ensure that businesses operate in a fair, efficient, and openly competitive marketplace. We're also working to protect businesses by levelling the playing field so that honest companies can succeed. In the last year alone we've watched out for consumers by bringing major changes to the payday loans industry, and we banned door-to-door sales of energy contracts.

Looking ahead to the next year, we're also going to focus on increasing the amount of protection that buyers of condominiums have. Condominiums are among the most popular types of housing options for many Albertans. New condo developments are being built all over Alberta. We've been busy working on regulation that will safeguard buyers, enhance governance and insurance, and establish a better dispute resolution process. We're working towards the possibility of piloting a condo dispute resolution tribunal in 2018.

We want Albertans to know that we have their backs, but we also help Albertans watch their own backs. We are working to get more consumer information out to Albertans so that they're empowered with accurate information before they buy something. With so many consumer transactions taking place online and with smart phones and tablets, that just makes good sense.

Outcome 2 is continuing to work to ensure that government is transparent and information is secure. Albertans aren't just consumers of material goods or homes or services; they're also consumers of information. Our ministry is always looking at ways to make information more open, accessible, and user friendly. We administer the FOIP Act, which enables government transparency while also protecting the privacy of Albertans' personal information. We also administer the Personal Information Protection Act, which protects Albertans' personal information in the private sector.

On FOIP there is no question that there have been challenges in recent years due to a dramatic increase in the volume and complexity of requests. Across government requests are up by 43 per cent in three years, and we've seen a 225 per cent increase in required consultation with third parties over the same period. Despite the challenges, our government has been making progress and is starting to get better results on processing times.

**9:10**

I'm proud of the work we're doing, and there's no question that it's going to take additional resources, not cuts, to continue making progress. That's why our Justice ministry has increased the number of full-time FOIP employees to 18 and Executive Council has added two staff from other departments to help address the backlog.

We can also increase processing times by funding other ways of releasing and disclosing information. That's why our government is proactively putting more information into our open government portal. The open government portal is the largest subnational open government portal in Canada, with more than 7,700 publications referenced and more than 2,300 open-data sets. Albertans can use the content available on open government portal for research, to make business decisions, and to help make informed choices in their everyday lives. The most popular information on the portal includes public spending, demographics, environment data, public health indicators, and mapping data.

Recently Service Alberta's vital statistics program began posting interactive charts and graphs on the open government portal. These visuals help explore and understand vital statistics, including birth, death, and marriage event statistics. There are currently about 40 vital statistics data sets on the portal.

In addition to overseeing administration of the FOIP Act and supporting all provincial government departments, Service Alberta will continue to provide resources and guidance for the FOIP programs of all public bodies in the province. We also remain on our path of continuous improvement by exploring best practices and listening to Albertans about how they want to interact with their government and its various types of information.

The third outcome we want to achieve is that of further modernizing government. Albertans expect a government that's efficient and effective in how it delivers programs and services. That's something that we know is very important as our economy recovers. Government is a major client of my ministry. We provide centralized financial, technology, business, and administrative services to all ministries. 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. These and other centralized services help government to operate as a single entity, and they give us a big role in helping all departments achieve value and control of their costs through economies of scale.

Looking ahead, our strategies to support government modernization all revolve around a central theme: finding new ways to make things more efficient. Organizing government IT systems effectively results

in better services for Albertans. One project that we've been working on is migrating all of the government of Alberta under one domain. Service Alberta has developed a common environment to provide standardized and efficient services for all ministries, including e-mail, desktop support, file and print services, and remote access.

Human Services, the largest of our migration projects with more than 10,000 user accounts, was migrated into the GOA domain over the last year, bringing the total number of migrated user accounts to just under 40,000. We've completed this phase about one government domain initiative, and the next step in the migration project is to further consolidate the remaining application environments residing within individual ministry data centres. By consolidating IT environments, we'll save money, reducing the need for infrastructure and operations support. We can also modernize government by further exploring electronic procurement by leveraging government buying power to get us the best deals on goods and services all while ensuring that Alberta businesses are treated fairly.

We will also review our next steps on SuperNet. As you know, SuperNet is the government's digital highway, actively providing service to more than 3,300 schools, hospitals, libraries, municipalities, and government offices in 429 communities across the province. The contract with the company that provides SuperNet expires in 2018, and my colleagues and I are currently discussing the approach for the future. Our number one job is ensuring server continuity for our schools, hospitals, libraries, municipalities, indigenous offices, and government facilities across the province. We fully understand that citizen expectations for access to quality and affordable broadband Internet are continually growing, especially in rural Alberta, so we are looking at what role, if any, the new model for SuperNet should play in supporting rural broadband in Alberta within our existing budgets, of course.

Our fourth outcome is improving service delivery. Albertans want it to be easier to access information and services. They expect many of our services to be available any time, anywhere using their smart phone or tablet. We want to expand and enhance online delivery of government services by using secure digital identity and e-commerce technologies. Through the MyAlberta e-services website people can sign up for their own digital ID that will give them secure, easy access to a range of government services. These include electronic reminders to renew their driver's licence, vehicle registration, and identification cards. As of today more than 140,000 Albertans have signed up for the government of Alberta's renewal reminder services offered through my MyAlberta e-services.

One of the other goals identified in Budget 2017 was the need to limit the growth of government spending. As you'll see in our budget, we're asking for more money this year, about \$58,000. However, we're actually helping the government save about \$5.5 million this year. Here's how we're doing it. We've saved about \$2.7 million by finishing off the GOA's domain migration project, that consolidated IT infrastructure into a common environment. We saved about \$1.3 million by negotiating less expensive service deals for SuperNet.

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

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

**Mr. Cyr:** Flow without interruption, please.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

A reminder that members are asked to advise the chair at the beginning of their rotation if they wish to combine their time with the minister's time, and meeting participants are reminded to address their questions and responses through the chair and not directly with each other.

Mr. Cyr, would you like to combine your time?

**Mr. Cyr:** If it's okay with the minister.

**Ms McLean:** That's fine. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Go ahead.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Minister and the ministry staff, for coming today. I appreciate you taking the time to go through the important Ministry of Service Alberta. I do apologize that we'll probably be clipping along fairly quick, so if we can keep our answers short and precise, I'd appreciate it.

Now, Minister, I would like to start with page 129, outcome 2, that government is transparent and information is secure, specifically about FOIP. Under your business plan, outcome 2, there are no specific key strategies to improve FOIP. Please explain how you're making this a priority.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you for this question. Certainly, as you know, access to information and transparency are extremely important, something that our party has advocated for, as you know, over the years. To that end, we also know that it must be done right because with FOIP, while it talks about freedom of information, certainly the last letter is also relevant, the P, privacy.

We also know that government holds a large amount of personal information of Albertans, whether they're vulnerable Albertans accessing AISH or they're your neighbours or perhaps your grandmother accessing the health care system. Also, in vital statistics I can say that we hold a large amount of Albertans' private information as well: their marriage certificate, changes of name. In some situations changes of name can be done for protection of someone if they're fleeing domestic violence or otherwise, so it's important that we get it right. There's a balance to strike.

We do know that improvements do need to be made, so while there's more to do, I'm pleased with the progress that we're making. There's no question that there have been challenges in recent years, and there were delays in terms of reporting as well to the House, so we've been catching up. We were able to release the data that we had available in the last session, and we will be catching up this session as well. You know, with the complexity of requests and having had the number of requests go up 43 per cent, we know that additional resources are needed to tackle this problem. That is certainly information that's come from the OIPC as well.

With that knowledge, we have ensured that there are additional FOIP officers where needed, and that's allowed us to ensure that FOIP requests for Executive Council, which have tripled since 2015, are finally starting to see some better processing times. Those processing times are down dramatically from 12 to 15 months to just three to six months for Executive Council requests. That is largely due to increased determination to ensure that we have better processing times but also ensuring that we have sufficient resources to tackle the complex and large volume.

9:20

We also know that the requests to Alberta Justice in particular have significantly increased as well. That's why in Justice we're increasing the number of full-time FOIP employees to 18, I believe, from 12. So there's a significant increase in that department as we

know that there's a particularly high demand in that area. You know, anecdotally, Justice does deal with some complex requests because they, too, hold information of Albertans, and that's one particular area where certainly, as in all, we do need to make sure that we get it right. I'm sure your constituency offices, just like mine, receive inquiries with respect to maintenance enforcement files, divorce proceedings, family law, litigation over children, and we need to make sure that safety and privacy are also paramount factors. It needs to be done right when that information is being vetted.

**Mr. Cyr:** Minister, just to sum up – and I apologize for interrupting – your whole strategy is just to add a few new staff?

**Ms McLean:** I would say that that characterization would not do justice to the work that we're doing. Transparency and accountability are a big part of making sure that government information is open and accessible. We take our responsibilities for oversight of FOIP seriously. We've had communications across government, with the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, to determine ways to ensure that we're improving and complying with the intent of the legislation and ensuring that mechanisms are in place to access information.

But there is more to it than that. We can also ensure increased transparency and that processing times go down through our modernization efforts. We have ensured that there is more information available proactively online than has ever been before with respect to data the government of Alberta holds. For example, we have posted all sole-source contracts over \$10,000 online. We have also posted the employee contracts for all staff in the Premier's and ministers' offices – that's the salaries and contracts – and we are certainly in the process of reviewing the categories and types of information we hold in order to make determinations about other areas where we can readily, proactively disclose information, where we know that there are common requests and where it's a noncomplex issue.

But, you know, a lot of this work is certainly newer for the GOA since 2015. It was very important to us that we ensure there be additional transparency, and that's also why we took action with respect to the sunshine list of government employees making over \$125,000 a year. We posted that information proactively online as well. We're confident that through strategies like modernization we can bring down processing times and that we can have information proactively released so that a FOIP request in and of itself will not even be required.

**Mr. Cyr:** I think that you've answered my question. Thank you, Minister.

Under performance measure 2(b) you use the percentage of FOIP requests handled without complaint to the Information and Privacy Commissioner as a way to determine success. The 2015-2016 actual for the measure was 97 per cent, but this year and your following years you set a target of 95 per cent. Shouldn't you be striving for 100 per cent or at least the current actual?

**Ms McLean:** I will draw your attention to another change that I think is worth highlighting. Where you're referring to, you can see that the number was a flat 97 per cent there, but then you can see that in 2017-18 and going forward there is a little plus sign that was not next to the 97 per cent. To us, the 95 per cent is a minimum threshold, but the plus sign indicates the desire to in fact have better results than the 95 per cent. With that plus sign, while it's small, I wouldn't suggest that it's worth overlooking by any means.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Minister, for clarifying that.

Minister, is it possible to put within the performance measures how each department is doing, breaking it down by department instead of having it as one lump sum?

**Ms McLean:** The intention with respect to how we report our FOIP statistics in our plans is to ensure that we have a one-government approach. The responsibility of departments is not one where we want to have, you know, one department out on their own, so Service Alberta assists other departments. We have agreements with other departments to do their FOIP processing for them, so we want to make sure that there is encouragement of all departments to be achieving that 95 per cent plus.

For us, it's really about ensuring that the entirety of government is achieving success and that government is viewed as a whole. I, before being elected, certainly didn't think of government in terms of any one person or any one particular department or even a program within a department. I mean, you could start down that path and start to report things in terms of individuals; you could report things in terms of program areas. It's important that we report how all of government is doing because that's how the public views us, as one.

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

When you're calculating this percentage of FOIP requests, my concern is that we could have Justice, say, at 80 per cent and the majority of the government at 100 per cent, and you're averaging all of the departments together to get to 95 per cent, where it doesn't identify that Justice is a real problem within the system. Do you have a breakdown before you of where each department is sitting?

**Ms McLean:** In front of me at this moment? No, I do not.

**Mr. Cyr:** Would you be willing to table where each department is sitting?

**Ms McLean:** We'll have to check and get back to you.

9:30

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Minister. I appreciate that.

Last year in estimates you noted that your ministry is responsible for the administration of three ministries: Agriculture and Forestry, Seniors and Housing, and Culture and Tourism. Have you looked at amalgamating all FOIP processes underneath your ministry? Now that you've got those three, are you looking at moving them all into Service Alberta or leaving them independent?

**Ms McLean:** The way that the FOIP process works within government is that it sits as a delegated responsibility at the deputy minister level. Those determinations are within the deputy minister currently of each department. That's the way that the legislation is structured, so you would have to ask that question of each individual department. Where we do represent and take care of FOIP for a department like, as you've mentioned, Culture and Tourism, that's because there has been a request of us, which really goes to the heart of what most of Service Alberta does. We don't dictate. We respond to requests and serve government.

**Mr. Cyr:** I'm hearing that you're not looking to centralize the FOIP process through your department.

**Ms McLean:** Again, the determination as to how FOIP is handled within one particular department or office is up to the deputy minister of that department, so you would have to ask each individual department through an estimates process or otherwise what their determinations are on that issue.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you.

How do you ensure compliance of the offices that you are not currently managing?

**Ms McLean:** Generally speaking, with respect to FOIP, because we are the centre of excellence, when FOIP officers have questions or concerns or difficulties, we certainly provide guidance to those officers.

**Mr. Cyr:** Okay. So guidance meaning that they use you as a resource and that you're not actually ensuring that they're following the guidelines that you set for them?

**Ms McLean:** As I mentioned, we are the centre of excellence, so we provide support to departments.

**Mr. Cyr:** Okay. Do you conduct compliance reviews on those departments, or is it just something where each department unilaterally makes decisions on how they deal with that on their own?

**Ms McLean:** Are you asking how we get to performance measure 2(a), percentage of FOIP requests completed by government public bodies within 60 days or less, or how we attempt to achieve that? I'm just trying to determine which line item.

**Mr. Cyr:** Yes. We've got best practices, obviously, or a code of conduct or whatever it is that you've got in place for each department as a goal, if you will. Now, that department takes that and uses those regulations or rules. Are you checking to see if they're following what you've outlined, and are you checking to see if they're following their own department; like, auditing them, if you will?

**Ms McLean:** We absolutely know the turnaround, whether or not requests are within the time frames by legislation. We absolutely know the percentage of requests that are handled without complaint to the OIPC. We do have that data here. Additionally, we have recently created a best practices guide and policy for the other departments, because each individual department administers their own FOIP.

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

The best practices policy guide: is that something that's public?

**Ms McLean:** No, it's not. It's advice to the delegated authority of the minister.

**Mr. Cyr:** Is that something that we can get tabled?

**Ms McLean:** I am uncertain, so I'll have to get back to you on whether or not it is.

**Mr. Cyr:** Okay. Just to be clear, we had no best practices in place until just recently?

**Ms McLean:** I know that we developed recently a best practices guide for FOIP officers. I can't speak to what occurred under the past government.

**Mr. Cyr:** That's fair. Thank you, Minister.

In what line item of your budget can FOIP be found?

**Ms McLean:** It's under program 6, consumer awareness and advocacy, which is on page 238 of the estimates.

**Mr. Cyr:** Sorry; I missed that. Which line is it?

**Ms McLean:** Page 238 of the estimates. It's program area 6, consumer awareness and advocacy.

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

What is the FTE for the FOIP office in your ministry? How many do we have?

**Ms McLean:** We don't have that level of detail with us today, so we'll have to get back to you.

**Mr. Cyr:** Okay. Would you have that level of detail for the past three years?

**Ms McLean:** We do have a by-program area, so I can tell you how many FTEs I have in the consumer awareness and advocacy program area.

**Mr. Cyr:** You want to give me all of the FTEs.

**Ms McLean:** That's the level that I have available today.

**Mr. Cyr:** If you could provide the number of FOIP staff that we've had.

**Ms McLean:** Yeah. We can get back to you.

**Mr. Cyr:** You were nice enough to show that Justice has gone up from 12 to 18. It would be nice to see if your department in FTEs has done the same and if we've had increases.

**Ms McLean:** It has gone up. We just don't know by how much.

**Mr. Cyr:** Okay. Thank you.

Are any of the costs associated with this office split out to the ministries for which you manage FOIP services? Are there transfers between, I guess, the different ministries for you giving guidance?

**Ms McLean:** We have shared service agreements with the ministries that we provide FOIP services for, and we would cost the expense back to them of that shared service agreement.

**Mr. Cyr:** So those agreements would be on the level of use of the department, or is it like a licensing fee that is calculated? How does that work?

**Ms McLean:** No. The shared service agreements are where we administer the FOIP legislation on behalf of the department. So that deputy minister has asked Service Alberta to do their FOIP processing for that department.

**Mr. Cyr:** But for the other ministries that you don't manage, there's no cost?

**Ms McLean:** There is not, no.

**Mr. Cyr:** No transfers between those?

**Ms McLean:** That's correct. That's the part that is within Service Alberta.

**Mr. Cyr:** Okay. Thank you.

Yesterday the Privacy Commissioner released reports on her investigation in the FOIP process. She specifically asked for legislative amendments to confirm her duties. Do you plan to introduce those changes? Would there be any costs associated with implementing changes she's asked for?

**Ms McLean:** We, obviously, as you've mentioned, just received that report last night, so we haven't had time to consider it. We do take the concerns raised by the Information and Privacy Commissioner very seriously, as always, so we'll be happy to review them.

**Mr. Cyr:** Do you have any comments? Page 5 of that report was: My recent Investigation Report F2017-IR-03 of the government into the issue of delays and possible political interference in the access request response process has been thwarted by the refusal of the former and current governments to give me access to records.

Now, this seems very serious, that we're having a Privacy Commissioner putting forward that your office is blocking her. Is that . . .

9:40

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I would ask that you keep the conversation to the budget and to the business plan. I appreciate that you have important questions that you would like to ask; however, today we're here to discuss the budget and the business plan.

Thank you.

**Mr. Cyr:** I think, Madam Chair, transparency – and I believe that I labelled that in outcome 2; it fits really nicely – key strategy 2.1, enhance government transparency, protection of personal information, information management governance, and accountability to improve compliance, consistency, and cost. That would be on page 129 of the business plan.

**Ms McLean:** I believe that we certainly had a discussion about what we're doing within the context of this business plan and the reporting in order to increase transparency and our adherence to the FOIP legislation within the context of the reporting and that you had indicated you were satisfied with my answer. So I would reiterate what I had said earlier.

**Mr. Cyr:** You've hired a few people, from what I heard from your answer before, but that doesn't answer if you are intentionally blocking or interfering with the process of FOIP.

The last Privacy Commissioner review said that this was also a problem – I'm trying to remember off the top of my head – so this isn't a problem that is seeming to come out of nowhere. Are you planning on reviewing the legislation and giving the power to the Privacy Commissioner to be able to do her job?

**Ms McLean:** Again, we just received the report last night, and we want to consider the recommendations very carefully and seriously, so we will need time to do that. I know that there were two documents, and one was 55 pages in length. And while, playing with my son, I tried to have my phone in front of my face to be able to review it, I just simply was not able to multitask to that degree. Moms are pretty good but just not that good.

**Mr. Cyr:** I have to say that I commend you for trying to work and raise a young baby at the same time.

The Privacy Commissioner report highlights issues with legal privilege. Does Service Alberta pay any of the FTE costs for lawyers from Justice, advising on crossdepartment FOIP requests and otherwise provide legal privilege?

**Ms McLean:** We do not. That's covered under the Justice estimates. So if you have any further questions around the privilege aspect or the budget for Justice lawyers, it would have to fall to Justice.

**Mr. Cyr:** So you transfer no funds from your department to pay for lawyers?

**Ms McLean:** That's correct. It's all housed within Justice.

**Mr. Cyr:** Okay. Thank you.

**Ms McLean:** It's a service they provide across government. That is my understanding, anyway.

**Mr. Cyr:** Okay. To go back to the open data portal, I don't see any performance measures within this document. Do you plan on implementing a performance measure? Like, it's good to see that you're opening up the government, and it would be nice to see some sort of target, if you will, to meet or move forward with.

**Ms McLean:** If you look under performance measure 2(c), you'll notice a line that says: "number of open government data sets and publications available online."

**Mr. Cyr:** Okay.

**Ms McLean:** That is the metrics, performance measures that we report on for open government.

**Mr. Cyr:** This is what you're going to be adding every year, or this is what the total number is going to be?

**Ms McLean:** That's the total number.

**Mr. Cyr:** When did we start adding open-data sets?

**Ms McLean:** We're in our third year of implementation.

**Mr. Cyr:** So 2015-2016 was the first year?

**Ms McLean:** We'd have to check exactly because it's not in with the estimates pile of information. I don't have that data.

**Mr. Cyr:** Okay. I'm just looking at 2(c), the one that you were just referring to.

**Ms McLean:** Absolutely. I think it shows . . .

**Mr. Cyr:** It shows 7,060, Minister, and then we target . . .

**Ms McLean:** Sorry. I'm just pulling that sheet back; if you'd just give me a second. Yeah. It definitely shows and I could definitely speak to '15-16 being one of the years in which we reported.

**Mr. Cyr:** So we were able to get 7,000 data sets in for the first year and an additional 3,000 data sets for 2017-18, and then we've got 900 and then 800 following. Like, it seems to be that we've brought a whole lot in and kind of stalled after the original.

**The Chair:** Whoever's phone is ringing or vibrating: please turn it to silent.

**Mr. Cyr:** Sorry.

Did you have a response to my question?

**Ms McLean:** I'm sorry. I didn't catch the question stem. I just heard you say that we had a number of differentials.

**Mr. Cyr:** What I'm saying is that in 2015-2016 we added 7,000 data sets and publications. In 2017-2018 we added 10,000.

Then what we've got is 10,000 in the year after, so we had a leap forward, if you will, in 2015-2016 and another leap forward in

2017-2018. Then it's kind of like we're going with the status quo, if you will, going forward.

**Ms McLean:** I'm going to have my official, Mark Brisson, answer this as it's his department. He'll be able to articulate it a little bit more clearly than I probably will.

**Mr. Brisson:** The open government portal has been a project under way for several years, going back past the dates that we see in the business plan today. As such, you know, the '15-16 date that we see there is when we published a large number of data sets and made them available. There was work in prior years where data sets were being accumulated into the product, into the portal but just weren't fully released. That's why we're seeing a large number of releases there. Then, as we move forward, the target is to continue to put those out there to provide information to Albertans and to ministries and to other jurisdictions on the different aspects of delivery within the government of Alberta.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you.

Now, Minister, if we could move on from FOIP, we can go on to the SuperNet, key strategy 3.4 in the business plan. All right. This is an old strategy that was listed under your plan from the previous year. What progress has been made since the last estimates?

9:50

**Ms McLean:** Well, certainly, we know that broadband and access to online services are vital for rural communities. Our primary stakeholders in these areas are libraries, municipalities, and other government offices, so our primary job is ensuring continuity for schools, hospitals, libraries, the indigenous offices, and the government facilities. We also know that this certainly impacts communities in rural Alberta. We provide service to over 3,300 locations and 429 communities.

In the interim since last reporting, there's been additional work within the department with respect to a review of existing contracts and auditing of the SuperNet infrastructure. We do not have that reporting back at this time, so unfortunately I don't have an update on that work because it's ongoing, but we have made significant contributions.

In terms of the contract expiring in 2018, we're still determining the approach for the future, and we're doing that in consultation with municipalities and affected stakeholders. We've had discussions, many with AAMDC, AUMA, and local representatives as well as with ISPs and different service providers.

Additionally, the SuperNet Secretariat has been working with local communities and ISPs to be able to put forward good applications for the federal funds that have been released. While small, a small amount of money when you look at the scope of what that money is intended to do, we want to make sure that Albertans can access as much of it as possible. We've been working closely with stakeholders to ensure that they could put forward as successful an application as possible to be able to access those federal funds.

We've been advocating with federal groups as well on behalf of Albertans to support the important decisions that are being made in communities and by ISPs who are considering applying for the funding. We have had new information as well from the CRTC with respect to their review of broadband and Internet services for all Canadians.

We've definitely been having very thorough consultations to ensure that the right outcome is one that we get to. Thankfully, we still have a bit of time to make sure that we get things right as it's only 2017 and not yet 2018.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you.

When does that contract expire?

**Ms McLean:** In 2018.

**Mr. Cyr:** That's pretty broad. Do you know when in 2018?

**Ms McLean:** In June.

**Mr. Cyr:** In June. Thank you.

Do we have the percentage of Albertans that are currently without high-speed access?

**Ms McLean:** Ninety-eight per cent of Albertans have access.

**Mr. Cyr:** Ninety-eight per cent. That's impressive. Okay.

**Ms McLean:** Yeah. You know, it's funny. Actually, a lot of folks don't know that Alberta is actually quite advanced. I know that Internet speeds vary quite a lot and are really not what they ought to be in certain parts of the province and not what the CRTC has recently stated an entitlement to. That being said, when we look at other jurisdictions across Canada, Alberta is better off than any of the other provinces, which is saying a lot with respect to other provinces.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you.

Do you have the breakdown between rural and urban for the percentages?

**Ms McLean:** We don't have that broken down. The thing that is really salient in this is that we have some of that data, but the SuperNet, in terms of Service Alberta's piece of the puzzle, is about serving bodies of government. While anecdotally there have been opportunities for that infrastructure, that was built years ago by government, to empower the private sector, those ultimately lie with the private sector and are not services that are provided by government directly. Much of the information that I have is anecdotal.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you. "Anecdotal" meaning an estimate?

**Ms McLean:** It would be information that we're able to collect by public types of surveying, whether it's through federal government data analysis or otherwise. We certainly work with partners to make sure that we have the best information that we can, because it's good to know what's going on. Really, at the end of the day, it's the federal ministry that keeps the data, and that's where the 98 per cent came from. The federal government is better positioned to be able to answer those questions due to the CRTC and that focus.

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

What line item do costs associated with the SuperNet fall under?

**Ms McLean:** Under 9.3, network services. It's page 238 of the estimates.

**Mr. Cyr:** What portion of those network services would be for the SuperNet?

**Ms McLean:** The entire portion.

**Mr. Cyr:** Okay. So it just is the SuperNet?

**Ms McLean:** It's certainly all parts of the SuperNet . . .

**Mr. Cyr:** Okay. Thank you.

**Ms McLean:** . . . that we're responsible for, anyway.

**Mr. Cyr:** All right. Who owns the SuperNet infrastructure?

**Ms McLean:** That's a very good question and one that is complicated. MLA Clark is laughing because we've had some chats about this. The SuperNet infrastructure is currently owned by Bell, and it was sold – "sold" is probably the best descriptor; perhaps "given" is a better descriptor – or given to Bell in 2005.

**Mr. Cyr:** So Bell owns the SuperNet, if you will?

**Ms McLean:** The infrastructure. That's correct.

**Mr. Cyr:** The infrastructure. Okay. All right.

Have there been any issues with this provider, and if so, what kind of issues have there been?

**Ms McLean:** With Bell?

**Mr. Cyr:** Well, yeah, with Bell and access to the SuperNet.

**Ms McLean:** I have not received any information that there are issues with Bell.

**Mr. Cyr:** Is there now or will there be soon an RFP for this service?

**Ms McLean:** Potentially. Those are part of our consultations. That's certainly one option.

**Mr. Cyr:** When it comes to commercial use of the SuperNet, is this something that is controversial, or is this something that is accepted, that there's a commercial aspect to this?

10:00

**Ms McLean:** I'm sorry. I don't really understand the crux of your question. I can't really speak to public opinion.

**Mr. Cyr:** Well, I'm looking at a briefing here. It says that the "SuperNet is a private enterprise network for use by the Government of Alberta (GoA) and is not intended for commercial use."

**Ms McLean:** I'm sorry. Whose briefing? I just want to make sure I'm on the same page as you.

**Mr. Cyr:** This would be a 2012 briefing to the deputy minister.

**Ms McLean:** Okay. I'm sorry. I don't have information from 2012 with me.

**Mr. Cyr:** Okay. But my question is: is the SuperNet open for commercial use?

**Ms McLean:** All I can speak to is what our government portion of it is. Like I said, the infrastructure is owned by Bell.

**Mr. Cyr:** Fair enough. Thank you, Minister.

**Ms McLean:** ADM Mark Brisson has an additional piece of information that might assist in answering your question.

**Mr. Brisson:** The SuperNet is in place to allow schools, hospitals, libraries, and municipalities to connect through high-speed Internet. We also provide that access to SuperNet for ISPs to deliver services out to the private sector as well in rural Alberta. We don't see that necessarily in the urban but more in the rural context. We can have greater connectivity for Albertans in rural areas. They're allowed to access the services through that contract. Does that make sense?

**Mr. Cyr:** Okay. Just to be clear, then, even though we don't own the infrastructure, we have to give permission to a third party? I'm trying to understand how this works.

**Ms McLean:** That's correct, because we have leases to use the infrastructure.

**Mr. Cyr:** So we don't own it, but we decide what happens to it and how fast it grows?

**Ms McLean:** If you, by analogy, were leasing a house – right? – you don't own the house, but you lease it. If somebody wants to use a room in your house, you as the leaseholder have the authority to determine whether or not somebody can use a room in the house that you're leasing. Does that help provide some clarity?

**Mr. Cyr:** That's fine. Thank you.

Can we go to page 128 of the business plan, outcome 1, that consumers are protected. What types of initiatives are you currently undertaking to achieve this strategy?

**Ms McLean:** Okay. We protect consumers and encourage consumer confidence by promoting fairness in the marketplace and supporting Alberta's economy. We consistently strive to improve our services through research into emerging issues; public awareness and education; investigation of complaints; partnerships, additionally, with community organizations that represent consumers. We provide licensing in regulated industries and enforcement of legislation, including the Fair Trading Act, and update consumer protection through legislation. We provide information and investigate complaints on a multitude of topics, including contractor fraud, landlord-tenant disputes, and Internet shopping.

Advancing a consumer agenda continues to improve the Alberta marketplace by encouraging and ensuring that consumers have consumer confidence, by providing adequate protections and support within an environment that encourages honest businesses to grow and prosper, which, in turn, feeds consumer confidence and means that we have a more thriving economy. As set out in the throne speech, we will be establishing a consumer bill of rights as well.

I'm proud that my department has advanced five initiatives under the consumer agenda during the past fiscal year. They've enhanced consumer protection covering diverse areas ranging from payday loans to door-to-door sales. In addition to these initiatives, we are hard at work on others such as modernization of condominium legislation and the bill of rights which I mentioned. I'm looking forward to continuing excellent progress into the next fiscal year.

Thank you for asking.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you.

Now, with the Ecofitt contract that has been issued, concerns have come in that they're now potentially breaking your Fair Trading Act. Is this a concern for your ministry? Is this something that you've worked around or considered?

**Ms McLean:** To be clear, we have a consumer investigative unit, and we also operate the government's call centre, and I can tell you that I have no information as to that concern coming forward from a member of the public. Certainly, I know it's something that your party has raised when you say that there are concerns coming forward, but in terms of concerns from the public, I have no information as to concerns from the public with respect to same.

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

**The Chair:** Thank you.

At this point I would like to invite Mr. Gill from the third-party opposition and the minister to speak for the next 20 minutes. Mr. Gill, are you wanting to combine your time with the minister?

**Mr. Gill:** Please, if that's okay with the hon. minister.

**Ms McLean:** That's fine.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Go ahead.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Minister, for being here today. I'm just going to dive right into it. The Association of Alberta Registry Agents is calling upon the government to modernize the network. What they want to establish is an equitable financial model that automatically adjusts for inflation in the fees they're allowed to charge. Does the ministry have any plans to strengthen their relationship with the registry agent network by providing a means for a more responsive fee system so that they can work with the government?

**Ms McLean:** Certainly, we are strong partners with our registry agents, and we provide all of the products that are government products that are provided at registries, and we want to make sure that those products are provided to Albertans. Our primary focus in all of the government of Alberta's services and programming is, as it should be, the people of Alberta. I think you would agree. We want to make sure that those services are provided to Albertans where they're at and by the means that they want to access them. We do know that Albertans, whether they're young or old, rural or urban, want to be able to access registry services through a variety of means. They want to be able to get all kinds of things, whether it's in person over the counter or whether it's online through a tablet.

Certainly, we have ongoing conversations with registry agents, both with the network, the AARA, and individual registries, who we hear from proactively. We're constantly meeting with them and considering our modernization efforts in respect of the system as a whole. They're a very, very engaged group and engaged in the conversations that we're having. We want to make sure, certainly, that Albertans have the access that they want to registry services and that it's provided at a price point that is reasonable in the context and that is not prohibitive to Albertans being able to access the needs that they have.

*10:10*

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

As we all know, the registry agents have been affected, like all Albertans, by this government's minimum wage hike and the carbon tax, and the association has also indicated to me, because I met with them a few times, that many rural agents are losing close to \$5,000 each year. Why will your ministry not work with them and partner with them to make sure that we have these agents staying in business in rural areas? In urban areas they're doing okay, but it's just the rural areas where these agents are suffering the most. Why is the government not helping these rural agents?

**Ms McLean:** We certainly are helping. We provided a 2 per cent tax cut to all small businesses, and registries for the most part, particularly ones in rural Alberta, are small businesses. We are happy to be able to support small businesses across Alberta, and we work very closely with them. We certainly can say that we are not aware of any business failures in rural areas to this point. The information that we have is that all of our registries have been successful small businesses, and we're quite proud of that because

we know that with face-to-face services, that will enable Albertans to be able to access registry services through the means by which they want to be able to access them.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Minister. You indicated that you're not aware of any business failures. They are losing money every year, so I don't know how long they can sustain that position.

My next question is: if government is not willing to work with them, you know, in establishing an equitable financial model for these registry agents and your government is going full force on your online portal to offer government services, are you not concerned that these agents are going to suffer even more? Again, pertaining to the rural communities, our seniors and Albertans living in rural areas prefer in-person service. In providing that government portal, taking those services away from registries and with the government starting to provide those services, aren't you concerned that this is going to impact negatively the registry agents? What are your plans about that?

**Ms McLean:** I just want to clarify your question. I think there were two points in there, and I want to make sure that I address them. First, what I hear you saying is that you're of the view that we should be increasing the costs of registry products to rural Albertans.

**Mr. Gill:** No. That's not what I said. I'm just saying that the registry agents association has been asking for the model. They're not necessarily asking that we increase the fee. I think it's, like, \$9 or \$8 per transaction that they charge. That's not what they're asking.

**Ms McLean:** Sorry, Mr. Gill. I don't mean to be confusing. I heard two parts to your question, and I just addressed the first part, the second part being about modernization.

**Mr. Gill:** My point, Minister, is that I'm not asking that we should be increasing the rate for rural Albertans for registries. I'm just asking because the association is trying to get answers from the government. Like, can we come up with an equitable financial model, not necessarily that we have to increase the flat fee? It has to reflect inflation. It has to reflect the changes that the current government has made. That's all they're asking for, fairness.

**Ms McLean:** I just want to be clear. You're of the view that we should be raising the fee structure so that more can be charged?

**Mr. Gill:** They just want to work with the department.

**Ms McLean:** Sorry, Mr. Gill. I just want to understand your question. I'm being very sincere here. I'm wondering if your question is that you're of the view that we should be increasing the fee structure in rural Alberta so that additional fees can be charged to rural Albertans for registry products.

**Mr. Gill:** No. That's not the question. Maybe they're asking that it exempt them from all of those policies like the carbon tax and the minimum wage hike. The transaction fees were set, like, maybe a decade ago or something like that, that same transaction fee, \$8 or \$9 per transaction, when we didn't have the carbon tax, when we didn't have this minimum wage. Now the minimum wage has gone up, the carbon tax has kicked in, and the utility bills and inflation all have increased. The cost of doing business has increased. However, their fees have remained at the same level. The association is saying: can we work with the government so that we're not going out of business?

In urban communities they're doing okay merely because of population and the volume. We're talking about in rural communities.

**Ms McLean:** Right. So you're talking about increasing the fees in rural communities?

**Mr. Gill:** No. I'm just saying: are you willing to work with them? That's not necessarily increasing the fees. It's just like, you know, working with them and giving them the tax breaks and giving them all those things to make sure that they don't go out of business.

**Ms McLean:** Yeah. Absolutely. They do receive the 2 per cent tax break that we've given to all small businesses.

The second part of your question was with respect to modernization. I'm just hoping that you can clarify what specific modernization aspect you're asking about.

**Mr. Gill:** Well, like online renewals. There are certain services that traditionally registry agents provided, and now the government started providing the same services. So now they're feeling like, you know: we're at a disadvantage; the government of Alberta is competing with us. That's their concern. They just want fairness. They just want stability. These are the people who are literally taking the food out of their kids' mouths and investing in their business. These are the people who are creating jobs for other Albertans. So I think it's in the government's interest to protect their interests along with other Albertans'.

**Ms McLean:** Mr. Gill, I'm a bit confused as to what you're referring to because we have not put registry services online. There is one, a single exception to that. You've referred to a number of initiatives, so I'm just hoping that you can clarify what those initiatives are.

**Mr. Gill:** Just the renewal. For example, let's talk about online renewal and stuff like that.

**Ms McLean:** So that's the only thing you're talking about?

**Mr. Gill:** Let's talk about that.

**Ms McLean:** Well, I just want to be clear, so I can address your point.

**Mr. Gill:** Or like paying fines online or all those things, right?

**Ms McLean:** That was a contract that was held under Alberta Justice, so if you want to know more about the contract terms of the renewals, you would have to ask the Ministry of Justice.

**Mr. Gill:** So they fall under Justice?

**Ms McLean:** That contract that you're referring to is in respect to fines. That's all it was. That's the only thing that we've put online. You've referenced a number of other things, and none of that is online.

**Mr. Gill:** There's the renewal and the fines, but that's okay.

**Ms McLean:** No, no. There are no renewals online. You can't renew your vehicle online.

**Mr. Gill:** Isn't it in the pipeline, like, a future consideration?

**Ms McLean:** In the future if that is a program that we've put forward, then I'd be happy to discuss it at those estimates, but it's not before us.

**Mr. Gill:** The government is not considering that as of today?

**Ms McLean:** I can only speak to what's in our estimates, Mr. Gill, but certainly I can say that we've had discussions with our registry partners about different products that could be offered online and how that could be taken care of, how those products could be offered, if they are to be offered online, and whether they're to be done in conjunction or whether or not they're to be done exclusively by individual registry agents. There are a number of options in how to modernize registry products, and those conversations are ongoing.

Certainly, the only product that used to be offered with a portion of registry representatives, with the AARA – again, the AARA being only a portion of representation for registries – is the fines. To have questions about those contracts is perfectly reasonable, but those questions are suited to the Department of Justice because those contracts were never under Service Alberta.

**10:20**

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

Now I just want to go to the condo act regulations. The Condominium Property Amendment Act received royal assent in December 2014, and there was a three-phase plan established to draw up regulations for the act. Last year in estimates the department was working on the regulations for phase 1. I just want to know: what is the status of the regulations for phase 1? Like, it's been more than two years since the act was passed, and we haven't seen any regulations on that, so if you could please give some information on that.

**Ms McLean:** Yeah, certainly. We know that this is of great importance and is something that we're going to be very proud to be able to roll out. We do know that this particular item was lingering when we took office and that it certainly needed additional attention to make sure that we can roll it out. We know that this sector has steadily grown and that, you know, as our economy starts to turn around – anecdotally, I've seen reports recently about the number of new builds in Alberta increasing. That certainly speaks to where the market is going and how the economy is faring, so we do expect there to be additional condominium builds.

We have wrapped up our consultation with respect to phase 1 and have been in the drafting phase. We're thrilled that the phase 1 regulations will focus on protections for buyers of new builds of condominiums and benefit consumers by enhancing disclosures that are provided at the point-of-sale, including the date of occupancy, a realistic operating budget, and estimated condo fees; establishing remedies in connection with material changes to purchase information and occupancy delays; enhancing safeguards for monies held in trust; and ensuring that the first elected board is well positioned to take over control of the corporation from the developer-controlled board.

We expect phase 1 to certainly be in effect before the end of the year. It's really timely, and I think it's important to remember that phase 1 is not the end of the story because it really just deals with the development. In October of 2015 we did our initial online public survey to consult Albertans on the first phase; 284 Albertans participated in the consultation survey, and 75 per cent of those respondents were condominium owners.

At the same time, we are working already on phase 2, and this phase examines corporation governance, insurance, and reserve funds. The initial development has started. We're expecting to do public consultation this year, including an online survey and town hall meetings. So further work is being done already on phase 2 so that we can have this act fully ready to go as soon as possible.

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

We have a total of three phases, so when do you think we'll be done the entire regulations for this act? By 2019, 2020?

**Ms McLean:** I recall having conversations about this, but I can't recall exactly. Sorry; just forgive me. Yeah, we are hoping to have it all wrapped up by 2018, all the phases.

**Mr. Gill:** Okay. Good. Thank you, Minister.

I just want to talk about the War Amps. Last year at this time my hon. colleague Mr. Ellis raised the issue of the War Amps seeking access to data to allow them to distribute their key tag program to motorists in Alberta. Most of the provinces in Canada make allowances for the War Amps because of the public service and because of, you know, the nature of this program. You and your deputy minister both indicated last year that the department was looking at creative solutions to assist the War Amps, whose donations, especially in this struggling economy, continue to decline while they wait. I'm just wondering: where are we on that? What creative solutions has your department come up with?

**The Chair:** I apologize for the interruption, but the time allotted for this rotation has expired.

**Ms McLean:** We can follow up offline.

**The Chair:** I would now like to invite Mr. Clark, the leader of the Alberta Party, and the minister to speak for the next 20 minutes. Mr. Clark, are you wanting to combine your time with the minister?

**Mr. Clark:** I would if that's all right with the minister.

**Ms McLean:** That's fine.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Go ahead.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Minister. Thank you very much to your staff for being here. I just want to start with a thank you to you personally but also to your staff and everyone who works in Service Alberta. You've done great work on payday loans, on AMVIC, on consumer protection overall. Those are moves that on one level seem really obvious but on another level take a lot of courage and, I know, are not necessarily easy things to move through government. So I just want to be very clear in my praise. Also, I think you've done a very good job on open data. My request is: keep going on all those fronts. I think those are all very important things.

I'm going to start on freedom of information today, perhaps not a big surprise given the report we saw yesterday. I just want to pick up on the question from my hon. colleague Mr. Cyr. Further to performance measure 2(b), the percentage of FOIP requests handled without complaint to the Information and Privacy Commissioner, I just want to add my request specifically, please, for your ministry to table a breakdown of the percentage of FOIP requests handled without complaint to the Information and Privacy Commissioner by ministry and not aggregated as you've shown here. I would hope that that's information that you have. Given that we have an aggregate number, we ought to have a broken down number. I would ask, please, that you table that information at your earliest convenience in the Assembly.

Key strategy 2.3 in the business plan on page 129 is to improve the way government shares and receives information with and from Albertans. From the report issued yesterday by the Information and Privacy Commissioner – Producing Records to the Commissioner is the name of that report. It's only a nine-page report. I recognize that it came out less than 24 hours ago, and I know that you and

your team are going to have to take some time to go through it, but I just want to quote from page 5. Near the bottom it says:

My recent Investigation Report F2017-IR-03 of the government into the issue of delays and possible political interference in the access request response process has been thwarted by the refusal of the former and current governments to give me access to records.

I'd just appreciate your comments on that and a commitment, please, to look into that and to ensure that that no longer is a problem.

**Ms McLean:** You know, certainly, we take the concerns raised by the Information and Privacy Commissioner very seriously, and this is a top priority for me to look into and for our government as a whole to ensure that we do better. I believe that we have already shown through our processing times and our commitment of resources as well as our posting of information proactively, just to name a few initiatives, how seriously we take this issue. I believe that our comments in the past as well show how seriously we take this issue, and there is no reason to suggest otherwise. So absolutely, I will take the time needed to consider them very carefully.

**10:30**

You know, I appreciate that you have prepared notes and been very efficient in your use of time. I'm sure you were working late, or someone in your office was to be able to prepare questions on this matter. I appreciate that and respect that. That being said, I do believe that it's important to review all of the report, both of them in full context and not one line out of context as well.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Thank you. I appreciate that response. It is troubling when you see words like "the former and current governments." We're talking about, you know, that when an office of the Legislature uses words like "possible political interference," especially for something as fundamental as information access, that information that rightly belongs to Albertans, that's obviously a concern. I recognize that you will need some time to review that. I really do encourage you to act with some urgency.

**Ms McLean:** Certainly, I will, and I agree that what you have quoted is deeply concerning.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Further in the same document, on the next page, she makes a request for an amendment. I don't suspect that you're going to commit here and now to amend the FOIP Act as per her request, but I would strongly encourage you to do so.

**The Chair:** Mr. Clark, we're here to discuss the estimates.

**Mr. Clark:** We are. I'm talking about key strategy 2.3 on page 129 of the Service Alberta business plan, "improve the way government shares and receives information with ... Albertans," which is directly in line with the questions that I'm asking here.

**The Chair:** Okay. Because it sounds like you're referencing a report that isn't part of the budget.

**Mr. Clark:** I am, and that report speaks to improving the way the government shares and receives information with Albertans, which is key strategy 2.3 on page 129 of the business plan. I will just make that request, please, that you seriously consider amending the legislation. I look forward to debating and passing that this fall. That would help. That would be my request.

I will move on to a different topic under freedom of information. A concern has been expressed to me from postsecondary

institutions that have journalism programs or student media programs about the risk that that work could be subject to FOIP, to the point where people interviewed for student journalism publications or radio or television or web would be required to sign a consent before they're actually interviewed as part of this student process because these institutions, of course, are subject to FOIP. As much as I'd like to have our friends in the press gallery require me to sign a consent before they post anything that I say – I'm sure we'd all agree with that – obviously, that doesn't really support a free and democratic society.

Fortunately, we have an act from Ontario. Ontario has grappled with this issue. They in their Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act have explicitly said – under the section dealing with personal privacy it says simply, quote, that the act doesn't apply if the purpose of the information being collected is to create a public record, which, of course, is exactly what student journalism and all journalism does. Is this an issue that has come across your desk? Are you aware of this issue, and is this something that you would consider for future amendments of the FOIP Act?

**Ms McLean:** I would have to receive more information than what I've been shown today.

**Mr. Clark:** Okay. What I would ask, then, is that you please look at Ontario's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, section 37.

**Ms McLean:** What I can tell you that I do know is that our FOIP Act is different from the freedom of information legislation in other provinces and, certainly, is not comparable on all fronts.

**Mr. Clark:** No, it isn't, although . . .

**Ms McLean:** But I'm not as intimately aware or familiar with Ontario's as I am of Alberta's.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. What I'd say is that, you know, Ontario has addressed this. As far as I know, they are the only province to have addressed it, but I think it is an important, fundamental principle, that student journalism should not be restricted by FOIP. It's journalism. We need to be very careful about that. It's just something that I wanted to bring to your attention.

Moving on, then, to key strategy 1.2 on page 128, the condominium act. That key strategy says in part that what you will do is establish a more expedient dispute resolution process. The Condominium Property Amendment Act, 2014, received royal assent in December 2014, and I have had a number of constituents contact my office regarding implementation of that act. In particular, I understand from the Service Alberta website, it says, "Phase 4: Creation of a condominium dispute tribunal." My understanding is that there's no framework in place to handle disputes between condo owners and condo boards, and residents, therefore, are required to seek legal advice. When can my constituents and all Albertans expect this portion of the act to be implemented?

**Ms McLean:** Certainly, I will say that we expect all of the regulations to be in place for 2018, and we would hope that we would be able to have it stood up by the same time. That piece might take a little bit longer to actually stand it up, but to have the enabling pieces in place, our goal is by 2018.

**Mr. Clark:** I think that there are a lot of benefits to this, of course, in addition to just the actual benefit of a dispute resolution mechanism that condo owners and condo boards can rely on but

also reduce impact on the courts, which I know is, of course, a big concern right now in our province and, in fact, across the country.

I wanted to ask as we look at your key strategies why there are no performance measures related to the Condominium Property Act, if that's something your ministry has given some consideration to either in implementation of this act or if there are other measures that you would consider including.

**Ms McLean:** That would be because the regulations haven't been proclaimed.

**Mr. Clark:** Okay. Is that something we can expect to see in next year's budget?

**Ms McLean:** Like I said, we're expecting to be able to have that work done by 2018.

**Mr. Clark:** Okay.

**Ms McLean:** The work that I've been referring in 2018 is the regulations.

**Mr. Clark:** Okay. Thank you.

Moving on, then, to rural broadband. What's the status of the SuperNet RFP?

**Ms McLean:** As I'd previously mentioned to I believe it was Mr. Cyr, those decisions are under consideration. I certainly took your question to mean whether or not there would be an RFP, and that is under consideration. There are a number of options for how to deal with the contract expiry in 2018, and RFP is one of the considerations. We want to make sure that we make good decisions and in consultation with all of the relevant stakeholders.

**Mr. Clark:** I agree. This is a really important area and I think, you know, in a time when we need very forceful economic diversification, this seems like an area where we could make some real gains given the backbone we already have. Do we have a provincial broadband strategy in Alberta?

**Ms McLean:** The interesting thing on the history of this is that SuperNet was really set up and then just let go to its own devices. There was very little forethought previously on what the future should hold in terms of rural broadband, so certainly I'm, you know, having lots of discussions with the community. I've heard from them that they want a co-ordinated effort in government, which I think is appropriate, and that Service Alberta's focus is somewhat narrow and that work on development of rural broadband outside of our focus to serve arms of government does require discussions with crossgovernment officials.

10:40

**Mr. Clark:** I understand that, and I would hope that you can bring some of that famous urgency you brought to the AMVIC issues and payday lending and some of those things because this is a real opportunity for our province.

I understand that there may also be some federal funds available in this area under Canada 150 grants. Is this something you're aware of, and have we applied? Who's in charge of ensuring that if there are federal funds available, we're accessing them?

**Ms McLean:** There's nothing under Canada 150 that we've heard about. There are two significant broadband initiatives under way at the federal level. On December 15, 2016, the Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada announced connect to innovate, which I referred to earlier, and it's \$500 million to invest

across the country over five years with the goal of improving access for the rural communities to the digital economy. When we look at the historical cost of SuperNet infrastructure in Alberta, we can see that \$500 million doesn't stretch very far. It's a drop in the ocean. Nevertheless, we are working very hard with municipalities and ISPs to make sure that Alberta gets their fair share of that relatively small portion for the country.

Then the other is through the CRTC. They're setting ambitious speed targets and creating a fund that will invest up to \$750 million over and above existing government programs, but that has not been rolled out in any detail.

**Mr. Clark:** Okay. Thank you for that. If I can find some information on Canada 150, I'll send that your way for sure.

**Ms McLean:** Sure.

**Mr. Clark:** What are the implications of Bell owning the SuperNet infrastructure? What does that mean?

**Ms McLean:** I'm sorry; that they own it?

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. I mean, does it restrict us in any way? Is it holding us back? Are there things that we can do to change that in a way that's advantageous to our province irrespective of what happened before? I recognize that you weren't the government until two years ago, but this may be an area where there's some opportunity.

**Ms McLean:** I would suggest that the biggest issue, you know – to answer your question as well as possible and with sincerity is, certainly, what I'm trying to do here. But without sort of taking some time to sit and imagine things, I can certainly tell you that the fact that we lease it is a cost to government to the tune of – and it's significant – about \$15 million per year plus CPI, I believe, is the inflation standard. The fact that Bell owns the asset and that we pay a maintenance fee – sorry; the \$15 million is the maintenance fee associated with leasing it – I suppose could be characterized as a limitation.

**Mr. Clark:** Okay. Again, I just encourage you to be as bold as you can on this whole topic. I recognize that it's not entirely up to Service Alberta.

**Ms McLean:** Thank you for recognizing that.

**Mr. Clark:** Yeah. Unfortunately, I was out last week and couldn't ask Economic Development and Trade these same questions.

If we want to get serious about economic diversification in this province, this is it. And if we want to spend some money on something, I suspect – I can't speak for other parties, but I'd enthusiastically support it even if it looks like a big number. This is important stuff. That would just be my personal perspective.

**Ms McLean:** Noted.

**Mr. Clark:** In my last couple of minutes here I'll turn to consumer protection. Just curious about initiatives you may have to protect seniors from scams, especially Internet scams. You know, those phone calls we all get from overseas: we know what it is. A lot of seniors don't know what that is and take it seriously and can fall victim to scammers. I'm just curious: what work goes on within Service Alberta in that area?

**Ms McLean:** When we're talking very specifically about Internet and telephone scams, as you've pointed out, I am certainly, you

know, well aware of this problem. We take an education role with respect to seniors. Unfortunately, it's not an area that I can delve into. Firstly, the legislation is structured in a particular way, but also phone is regulated and fully under the federal ministries, and much of Internet transactions as well are federal. Certainly, it is an area I would love to weigh into. I would have to run federally to make that happen, though, and I'm not inclined to do so. But I would encourage folks to contact the federal government with respect to that.

We do outreach presentations, buyer consumer services. We have tipsheets and fraud awareness month. This last fraud awareness month I actually went to one of the seniors' centres and spoke about fraud awareness there and protection. That being said, I have, you know, certainly looked at both where we receive complaints, what we know about the people that are complaining about various things through our call centre, and it's quite assistive to have that information because we did know that seniors were particularly vulnerable to door-to-door energy sales and those high-pressure tactics. So that's why we took action on that.

**Mr. Clark:** Thanks.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

For the remainder of the meeting I would like to invite Mr. Hinkley from government caucus and the minister to speak. Mr. Hinkley, are you wanting to combine your time?

**Mr. Hinkley:** Yes, please.

**The Chair:** Go ahead.

**Mr. Hinkley:** Thank you, Minister, and welcome to your staff. Some of the elements of my questions have previously been touched on, but maybe we'll get some new information or some more in-depth answers.

The first one has to do with the business plan, page 128. Given that outcome 1 on page 128 outlines the ministry's commitment to consumer protection, saying that "Albertans expect a marketplace that is open, secure and fair," why has the ministry removed reference to the consumers' agenda from its key strategies for outcome 1 in the 2016-19 business plan? Is it no longer an important component to consumer protection?

**Ms McLean:** Thank you for that question. Service Alberta, as you know, is very committed to protecting consumers and encouraging consumer confidence by promoting fairness in the marketplace. We know that that supports Alberta's economy. Improving the Alberta marketplace by ensuring that consumers are provided with adequate protection and support within an environment that encourages honest businesses to grow and prosper is a mechanism for advancing our consumers' agenda. In the 2016-17 plan the department has completed five initiatives that fall under the consumers' agenda, including An Act to End Predatory Lending and the ban of door-to-door energy sales, to name a couple.

Strategy 1.1 of the business plan reads: "Improve consumer protections especially for vulnerable members of society, and ensure consumers and businesses operate in a fair, efficient and openly competitive marketplace." Service Alberta aims to continue making consumer protection a priority and, as mentioned in the throne speech, will be working on establishing a consumer bill of rights in the spring.

**Mr. Hinkley:** Well, thank you.

Moving on to page 45 of the government's fiscal plan, there is a line item called One Information Management Technology Enterprise. What is One Information Management Technology

Enterprise, and how does it support the strategic priorities of the government?

**Ms McLean:** Thank you. Service Alberta has been given the responsibility of providing oversight and governance for a number of information management and technology programs, which is IMT, and projects within the capital plan. Prior to 2016 funding for the individual projects within the program would have been allocated to specific ministries for their information technology projects. Consolidating the funds within Service Alberta will allow government to achieve efficiencies through a stronger governance model for capital spending on information technology within government. The One IMT Enterprise program is a collection of individual projects that supports numerous departments. The individual projects are aligned to the GOA's strategic priorities.

**10:50**

For example, one of the projects is Alberta e-courts. This project will transform manual processes and implement an e-filing capability for court-related documents, resulting in improved quality and consistency of court records; minimize the risk of lost or destroyed documents; and increase efficiencies by going electronic.

The program also supports the government of Alberta's strategies of cost savings and establishing efficiencies for the government of Alberta as the One IMT Enterprise approach means the consolidation of data centres; a single, secure firewall; a single e-mail system; information stored once; and business applications built once and being used by multiple ministries, which we expect will realize us a number of savings.

Timely, worthy investments in IMT infrastructure will play an important role in economic growth in Alberta IMT companies, giving job creators the stability they need to weather the economic downturn and create new opportunities for innovation, employment, and growth.

**Mr. Hinkley:** Okay. Thank you for that explanation.

Now, moving on to the estimates, page 239, the capital investment amount is \$131 million. Can you, Minister, explain what improvements Albertans will see as a result of this investment?

**Ms McLean:** Thank you for the question. These capital investments will be noticed by Albertans in several ways. Some examples are supporting jobs, economic growth, and diversification by unlocking geospatial reference data for new and existing Alberta businesses to leverage; providing Albertans access to government services any time anywhere on any device through the MyAlberta platform; enhancing employee productivity and reducing the GOA's environmental footprint by consolidating networks, data centres, and applications through the One IMT Enterprise initiative. Modernization of the land titles system will provide improved ability to handle current and periodic volume increases driven by market fluctuations, the ability to offer enhanced service offerings, reduced operational costs due to process automation, reduced risk of failure of an aging system.

Upgrading the motor vehicle system to newer technology, which, by the way, hasn't been updated since the 1970s, should lower operating costs and position government to be more responsive to how we capture and change data in the system for changes in the motor vehicle and transportation industry.

**Mr. Hinkley:** So lots of spending, yet lots of efficiencies coming out of that.

**Ms McLean:** Absolutely. These capital investments will help us realize savings across government, which is something that I think

we can be really proud of that Service Alberta can do. Through our work in certain areas we can certainly help create efficiencies and cost savings across the government as a whole.

**Mr. Hinkley:** Very good to hear.

Now, switching back to the business plan, Minister, on page 129 it contains an initiative to evaluate the approach for SuperNet, which has been discussed several times before, but where is the funding for this initiative in your estimates, and why is this work being undertaken?

**Ms McLean:** As I mentioned, it's on page 238 of the estimates, line 9.3, network services. It is that line. The government, as you know, is very committed to maintaining vibrant, sustainable communities and improving services that make a difference in Albertans' lives. We know that Albertans have benefited from government investment in SuperNet and in broadband for government purposes, that it's actually helped realize differences in the homes of Albertans. So we're definitely proud of that.

To be more specific, on June 30, 2018, the existing SuperNet operating agreement expires, so the government is definitely reviewing that approach, as I've mentioned. We know that the contracts that previously existed were poorly written. They need to be updated. We are confident that the quality of services to public-sector users can be improved, and we're definitely looking for innovative ways to assist in improving rural broadband and Internet services, not just to the public sector but to all Albertans, because we fully understand that there are high citizen expectations for access to quality and affordable broadband Internet and that those expectations are continually growing, especially in rural Alberta. We want to make sure that rural Alberta is not in the dark, that this is an area, as I think MLA Clark has mentioned, that deserves and warrants attention.

Our government is actively working with stakeholders, including municipalities and the federal government, to better understand the Internet challenges in rural Alberta so that we're better able to develop effective solutions. Our number one job, as I've mentioned, is ensuring service continuity for schools, hospitals, libraries, municipalities, indigenous offices, and government facilities across the province. As we focus on modernizing government, we also need to find efficient ways to continue to support Internet service providers that use the SuperNet to deliver Internet to Albertans in an easy and flexible way.

That is particularly the case in rural and remote areas, and I know as a representative of a rural constituency that this is something that I'm sure is close to home for you and perhaps something that you experience in your daily life as well and hear from your constituents about.

**Mr. Hinkley:** Thank you very much.

We only have a few minutes left, so I'm going to share the remaining time with my colleague MLA Trevor Horne, and he will ask you some questions.

**Ms McLean:** Sounds good.

**Mr. Horne:** Yes. Thank you, Minister. I was wondering. On line 5 on page 239 of government estimates it shows that Service Alberta is making a \$9 million increase in its capital investment, specifically in the registry information system. While I understand that the ministry's various registry programs provide services, data, and information to individuals and businesses, can the minister explain the significant increase for this line item and how this supports the ministry's strategic context?

**Ms McLean:** The funding under registry information system is used for significant automation of business processes and major upgrades to applications used to deliver motor vehicles, land titles, corporate registry, personal property, and vital statistics registry services.

As Service Alberta continues to strive to modernize government in 2017-18, we're focused on two major projects – I've mentioned them briefly before – ALTA 2 and MOVES. ALTA 2 aims to modernize the existing ALTA registry system – and this incorporates the spatial information system, most widely known by realtors and lawyers as SPIN – to make it available 24/7, which is our goal, and provide electronic functionality. This project is close to completion and will be winding down in the next year, I'm happy to report.

The MOVES project, as I mentioned to your colleague MLA Hinkley, is a very old platform, and this project aims to upgrade the technology platform, remaining consistent with the aim to modernize. This project has been in the planning phases, and we'll be gearing up this year as we proceed to full implementation so that we can move MOVES into this century.

**Mr. Horne:** Okay. Further to that, outcome 3 on page 129 of the business plan: it's ensuring that government is modernized, something that you were just touching on. The business plan

correctly notes that “government faces high expectations for increasingly efficient and effective ways of delivering programs and services in Alberta’s evolving economic landscape.” Can the minister speak to how Budget 2017 is supporting this outcome?

**Ms McLean:** Absolutely. Budget 2017 prioritizes moving services online through MyAlberta e-services to provide citizens with a convenient and efficient way of interacting with government. I'm very proud to be responsible for this. As the youngest member of cabinet, I think the only millennial, I would do a disservice to my generation certainly if I didn't have a focus on e-services. I'll just go over a little bit about it, but MyAlberta will be focusing on MyAlberta verify . . .

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

I apologize for the interruption, but I must advise the committee that the time allotted for this item of business has concluded.

I would like to remind committee members that we are scheduled to meet tomorrow morning, April 13, 2017, from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. in the Rocky Mountain Room to consider the estimates for the Ministry of Seniors and Housing.

Thank you, everyone. This meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 11 a.m.]









