

Title: **Monday, May 5, 1997**

Date: 97/05/05

8:10 p.m.

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

**Subcom.C: Public Works, Supply & Serv.**

**Subcommittee C – Public Works, Supply and Services**

Tannas, Don, Chairman  
Fischer, Mr. Robert, Deputy Chairman  
Clegg, Glen  
Evans, Hon. Iris  
Gibbons, Mr. Ed  
Klapstein, Mr. Albert  
Leibovici, Karen

Marz, Richard  
McFarland, Mr. Barry  
Nicol, Dr. Ken  
Pannu, Dr. Raj  
Paszkowski, Hon. Walter J.  
Shariff, Shiraz  
Soetaert, Mrs. Colleen

Stelmach, Hon. Ed  
Stevens, Ron, QC  
Strang, Ivan  
Thurber, Mr. Tom G.  
Trynchy, Peter  
Woloshyn, Hon. Stan

THE CHAIRMAN: I'd like to call the subcommittee to order. The subcommittee is reminded that we have under consideration, then, the main estimates of the Department of Public Works, Supply and Services, and therefore we'll call on the minister. Hon. minister.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and welcome to the subcommittee. What we'll do, if you're in favour, is: I'll make probably 15 or 20 minutes' worth of remarks relative to the department, field your questions either individually or in groups or whatever is more to the liking of the committee, and whatever I am unable to answer or we don't have time for, I'll take it on ourselves to give you an answer in writing either tabled in the House or to the member individually, whichever is more appropriate.

At any rate, Mr. Chairman, it's nice to be up in room 512, because then we'll get the undivided attention of the whole committee as opposed to the one-on-one interaction downstairs.

I'd like to start off by saying that you won't find it in the business plan, but all of these ladies involved with the Leg. Assembly are going to be very happy come tomorrow afternoon.

The mission of Public Works, Supply and Services is "to facilitate government program delivery by providing quality, cost-effective common services and professional expertise." As outlined in our 1997-2000 business plan, we continue to recognize the importance of customer service, accountability, and cost reduction. We've also developed new goals to reflect the increased need for development of our employees and investment in our systems and procedures.

Public Works, Supply and Services is a central agency responsible for providing capital infrastructure, accommodation, air transportation, information technology, telecommunications, and procurement services to support government program delivery. These services are provided through three major business units: property development, property management, and information technology and supply. Our customers include departments, boards, and agencies of the Alberta government, regional health authorities, and the Alberta Treasury Branches. Our stakeholders include suppliers, consultants, contractors, and professional associations.

Between 1992-93 and '97-98 our proactive efforts to streamline services have led to significant reductions in expenditures. Our operating budget has been reduced by some 23 percent, or \$135 million, and our capital investment budget has been reduced by some 37 percent, or \$30.7 million. I think I would be remiss in not acknowledging the two previous ministers who were largely responsible for that and who are on the committee, Mr. Fischer and Mr. Thurber.

Some of the program highlights for '97-98 include \$108 million, including \$3 million in additional funding over '96-97, to regional health facilities. This includes \$83 million for major capital projects and \$25 million for capital upgrading projects; \$16.5 million will be allocated for the renovation of seniors' lodges in compliance with established standards. In 1997-98 the department will continue to undertake additional capital works on behalf of the lodge foundations in conjunction with our own lodge upgrading projects; \$33.2 million will be allocated to water management projects; \$25.7 million will be allocated for maintenance projects, general government construction, and accommodation projects; \$97 million will be allocated for the operation and maintenance of facilities to support ministries' program requirements; \$79 million will be allocated for the leasing of space for departments and eligible boards and agencies. Approximately \$24.6 million will be included for the operation of the government's share of telecommunications networks. Another \$22 million will be allocated for the operation of centralized data processing facilities on behalf of government ministries.

As I just mentioned, we've allocated \$108 million to the health care facilities program for '97-98; \$25 million of that will be for capital upgrading, \$21 million for new major capital projects, and \$62 million for ongoing major capital projects. These projects have been included in our budget based on priorities established jointly by the departments of Health and Public Works, Supply and Services as well as the regional health authorities.

Capital upgrading initiatives are construction projects with funding valued at less than \$1 million which are required to address deficiencies and minor program changes in the health care facilities. Major capital projects are construction projects with total funding requirements of \$1 million or greater.

Some examples of the major capital projects identified in the 1997-98 estimates to continue with the modernization and restructuring of the health facilities include the following: \$16 million in funding to complete three major health restructuring consolidation projects at the Foothills, Rockyview, and Peter Lougheed hospitals in Calgary; \$3.4 million in funding to commence construction of the \$18.9 million Children's health centre project at the University of Alberta. This facility will consolidate most acute in-patient and out-patient pediatric services for the region. This centre will function as a major provider of secondary and tertiary pediatric care for the region and as a single tertiary level referral centre for northern Alberta. The multiphase project is scheduled for completion in the year 2000. Approximately \$4 million in funding for the design and initial site preparation work on a \$27 million Peace River health centre replacement project and a \$26 million Drumheller regional health centre project. The centre in Peace River will provide that region with 30 acute beds, 50 long-term beds, and expanded community health services. The replacement facility in Drumheller will provide 49 acute and 88 continuing care beds and space to accommodate community health services and regional administration offices.

In addition to these ongoing projects, two new projects were

approved for the Capital health authority on the 10th of April by Treasury Board. One project is at the University of Alberta site, \$7.9 million in total provincial support to develop an adult critical care unit at the Walter C. Mackenzie Health Sciences Centre. The other is the Royal Alex hospital, \$8.5 million for the neonatal intensive care unit.

Going on to water management, \$33.2 million for the design and construction of four major water development and rehab projects; \$10.5 million will be used to support the \$42 million Pine Coulee project near Stavely. Once completed, the project will help to secure water supplies, improve water quality, and provide recreation and irrigation opportunities for the area. The project has received the required regulatory approvals and is now in a construction phase. Completion and the first filling of the reservoir is anticipated for 1999.

Five million dollars has been allocated to the \$53 million Little Bow River project near Champion. The project will provide water for municipal, domestic, livestock, and irrigation purposes. Preliminary engineering design is nearing completion, and the environmental impact assessment for the project has been completed and filed with the regulatory authorities. A Natural Resources Conservation Board hearing is expected soon. Subject to regulatory approval of the project, construction could proceed in 1998.

Fifteen million dollars has been allocated for the replacement of the St. Mary dam spillway of the Waterton-St. Mary headworks system. This system provides water to approximately 500,000 acres of agricultural land in four districts, to a number of municipalities for a variety of industrial, domestic, and other uses. The existing spillway requires replacement as it is in dangerously poor condition and undersized by present day dam safety standards.

The fourth project is the replacement of the East Arrowwood siphon, which is part of the Carseland-Bow River headworks system. This system primarily provides water to about 205,000 acres of agricultural lands in the Bow River irrigation district and the Blackfoot reserve, to a number of municipalities for industrial, recreational, domestic, and other uses. The 1997-98 budget of \$2.7 million will allow us to complete the design of the replacement siphon and commence construction.

PWSS is also providing accommodation for government departments, and we also maintain all the government facilities. Over the past few years downsizing throughout government has provided us with the opportunity to identify and eliminate underutilized pockets of space. In consultation with our client departments, my staff has been aggressive in their efforts to consolidate departmental office and warehouse space and dispose of space surplus to the government's needs. For example, my staff is currently working with Environmental Protection officials to develop plans to consolidate their operations in a way that is consistent with their business plan objectives and that will allow us to remain within our fiscal year targets. Through our efforts to consolidate space, my department has reduced government leased space by approximately 150,000 rentable square metres between April 1, '93, and March 31, '97. Over the next three years we expect to decrease leased space by an additional 30,000 rentable square metres. In addition, approximately 100,000 gross square metres of owned space have been disposed of between April of '93 and March of '97, and an additional 125,000 gross square metres of space is presently approved for disposition.

8:20

During 1997-98 the PWSS general revenue fund will receive an additional \$3.5 million to fund these cost-effective space consoli-

datations and to support reinvestment and maintenance of government facilities. These additional funds will enable us to proceed with some of the maintenance work we have been deferring over the past few years. While our buildings have been generally well maintained, there are a number of areas where we have deferred maintenance. We will be addressing deferred maintenance over the next three years as well as focusing on improvements to our long-term preventative maintenance programs. The department owns over \$2 billion in real estate assets, and these improvements are necessary to continue to maintain and protect our assets for the longer term. The need for this reinvestment and maintenance work becomes quite apparent when you visit the odd building. You can see, for example, as I did in Fort McMurray, things that are obvious, such as rugs and carpet that were in dire need of replacement, some attention.

As you are also aware, PWSS is involved with the information technology end. There are two or three areas that we're going in here. The one that is of notable interest will be the year 2000. We are going to put up a test facility so departments can verify that their computer applications have been modified correctly. The initial reviews are still preliminary, but we have identified a number of critical systems which are not year 2000 compliant. Departments are still working on their detailed budgets and resource plans. The team is also co-ordinating acquisition of year 2000 resources needed on a cross-government basis and the purchase of third-party vendor hardware and software. As you know, my department in conjunction with the chief information officer and a small advisory council of departmental chief informational officers will continue to oversee our strategy to identify and deal with the issues involved.

We are also, as I indicated, quite involved with the health authorities and other groups, trying to get them on to a communications network, and that process is also working very well. There are some issues that have come along, but through co-operation and identifying needs, we are doing quite well on that.

Mr. Chairman, I believe I have almost taken my time on that. I'll conclude my opening remarks on that, and I'd be pleased to answer any of the questions as I've outlined earlier, if that's the wish of the committee.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MS LEBOVICI: Thank you for this opportunity to ask questions of the minister of public works. At the outset the minister indicated that if there were any questions he could not answer, he would be sending the replies to the individuals that asked the questions. I've got a request right off the bat for the minister. Out of courtesy, could he also send a copy of those questions that he hasn't been able to answer in this two-hour segment to myself as the critic for the area? It saves me the trouble of having to round them up from the individuals that have asked the questions.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: We'll be glad to comply and co-operate. No problem.

MS LEBOVICI: Thank you. I knew that I could count on the minister to be, if nothing else, gentlemanly in his response.

I've had an opportunity to look at the estimates that have been put forward in the budget documents, and much like the minister in that this is a new area for himself, this is also a new area for myself as the critic so if you will, Mr. Minister, bear with some of the questions that I am asking, as this is the first time I've had the opportunity to look at this particular department.

One of the questions I have right off the bat is that when I look at last year's business plan summary and this year's business plan summary, the mission has changed. The goals seem to have changed as well, and the major strategies have been added onto. I'm wondering if the minister would be able to respond as to what the difference is between last year's mission and this year's mission, why in fact there have been changes made, and with regards to the changes that were made, with whom the consultation occurred, so that we can be sure these changes are in fact meeting the needs of this fine chart that's on page 235 of the postelection update document.

When you look at the mission statement from last year, it talked about minimizing "the costs of common services needed to support government program delivery." This year we're facilitating "government program delivery by providing quality, cost effective common services and professional expertise." Again, if I can learn what the differences are and why there needed to be a difference.

When we look at the major strategies from last year – and it's interesting that this year there's no mention made of that, other than to piggyback, as it were, on last year's major strategies – what is talked about is "privatization and outsourcing of departmental functions which can be more effectively delivered by the private sector" as well as "organizational restructuring and downsizing with an emphasis on retaining and developing employees," presumably that are left after the restructuring and downsizing have occurred. My questions are: what departmental functions are left to downsize and outsource, and how are those decisions being made? As well, which staff, if any, are being looked at to be restructured and downsized? It's interesting to note that in terms of major strategies the first goal is to train the staff. The question is: how many will be left when we finish with the major strategies from last year?

There are some other general questions that I have as well. Though the documents have a lot of figures within them, there are some figures that I think are missing out of the particular documents that I'm sure the Alberta taxpayer would like to know. One is: what is the total value of assets that have been disposed of by the government, and how much in fact has the government received back from the assets that were sold? You know, right off the top of my head I think of the Calgary warehouse that used to house the liquor when we did have an ALCB, and it's my understanding that that \$10 million building was sold basically for about \$10,000. There's a question with regards to what is happening with the St. Albert plant, that I think is being leased out, though I'm not sure what the story is. If it is gone, then when did it go, how did it go, and how much did the taxpayer actually gain for that particular building? What kind of deal was made to let it go?

There are other issues that I have as well, sort of general issues with regards to tendering, what the tendering processes are. We had a prime example of that last Thursday, when a question was asked with regards to Credit Counselling Services, that received a contract of a million dollars from this government. In the response that I saw from the Minister of Municipal Affairs, it appears that a group of individuals decided they were going to start up a volunteer organization and that that volunteer organization was given a million dollars of government money. I would have imagined that if we were looking at outsourcing counseling services, that outsourcing would have occurred with some kind of tendering before that happened. So I have some questions as to exactly how this tendering occurs. Who's the ultimate authority in the signing of the contracts? Does that sit within the realm of the minister of public works? Where does the buck stop when we

ask those questions on the tendering?

On the issue around community-operated facilities, I'm looking at the core businesses – that's where some of these questions have come up – where it talks about property management, operating and maintaining government properties. On community-operated facilities, which seems to be the trend that this government is moving towards – I believe there is a Bill on the Order Paper right now, Bill 8, that deals with some of those issues. Who ends up managing those, and again, if there is a problem with those kinds of facilities, where does the buck stop? Does it stop at your door, or do individuals and taxpayers have to try and figure out where in the department there's accountability?

### 8:30

Goal 1 of the department, page 236. I found that this was a very interesting goal. It's not that I have problems with employees being considered a priority within the department, but it seems that the number one priority of public works is to train and develop employees. When I look at the components of that training, to me at least it begs the question: what has PAO been doing for the past number of years? Should not PAO have been already developing job competency profiles, employee competency profiles, succession planning, performance measurements? How do you decide what your employees are worth if you don't have a performance measurement or an employee feedback process in place right now?

Goal 2: "refine the responsibility and accountability framework for common services." I notice that there is an item that's called incentive-based programs. Is one of those incentives the ability to carry over dollars? In other words, if an area has been able to maintain and have some savings as a result of them being good managers, are they able to carry over those dollars, or are those dollars then whisked away into some revenue fund somewhere? I think the greatest incentive would be for organizations, for departments to be able to carry over dollars.

Under goal 3 – and this I find interesting, having dealt with Executive Council – where it talks about continuing "effective administration of records and information management." I'm beginning to worry when I look at what I see within this department and some of the other departments. I look at the goal of the CIO, which is the central information office, that has just been allocated \$500,000 of taxpayer money to do records management and to set up computer systems throughout government services. Here we have a goal that has dollars addressed to it, I am sure, to deal exactly with those issues that the CIO out of the Premier's office is mandated to do. I'm beginning to worry about there being an overlap between services within government, and I would think that as a minister within this particular administration, that prides itself on no overlap, this would be something that will, as it has, raise an eyebrow and will be a question that needs to be answered not only for myself and the taxpayers but also for yourself in terms of intradepartmental management.

Performance measures. I have to indicate to the department that your performance measures are a lot better than some of the other ones I've seen. The other ones seem to ask the question, "Are you satisfied with the way I look?" as opposed to being actual measurements of performance. When you look at last year's performance measurements and the actual targets, in some of these areas they seem to have changed. I don't quite understand how an actual performance measure that was reported in last year's budget changes from one year to the next. For instance, if I look at page 237, customer satisfaction with capital project delivery services – it was page 350 of last year's I believe – the actual in '95-96 was 3.5, and in '95-96 the target is 3.5. The

target is the same in '96-97, so that one doesn't seem too bad. Well, actually, no, it has changed. When you look at the actual last year, it was 3.5; the actual this year is 3.6 in '95-96. It's out by .1, but the reality is: how can it be out? It either is the same or it is not the same. The targets have changed as well, and my question is: why would the targets change?

When I look at customer satisfaction with procurement services – and again that's on page 350 of last year's, I believe – the target for '96-97 is four this year. Last year it was 3.8. Next year it's 4.2, and last year was 3.85. So my question is: how can that change? There's another one very similar on page 239 of this year's budget document, and it's the operating cost per square metre. Now, what's interesting is the definition. Even though the title is the same, I think the definition has changed, and again I'd like to know why there has been a change in the definition. Who asked for that change? How do we, then, know that the government is accountable in terms of the performance measures if we keep shifting what those measures are from year to year?

Now, when you look at last year's operating costs per square metre, what they said last year was an actual and what was a target, last year the actual for '92-93 was \$49.09. This year the actual is \$51.29. It's nice that it's gone down, but I'd like to know why it's gone down. If it's a matter of calculating things differently, then why are we calculating things differently? Is it to make the government look good in terms of their operating costs per square metre? If it is, well, you might as well let us know that that's what the intention is. So I'd like some answers as to why that's happening.

There's an issue, going back to page 236, where we talk about the “administration of records and information management.” Now, as I was sitting with Executive Council, the Premier made it quite clear as to a question from my colleague from Calgary-Buffalo, and I'm sure there are no surprises to what that question was. It was around freedom of information and records. Basically, what the Premier assured us was that there would be no sale of government information, electronic records, or information security. I look at page 236, and we have got:

- develop information management policies to address emerging issues such as the sale of government information, electronic records and information security.

I would ask that the minister of public works assure my colleague from Calgary-Buffalo and all Albertans that this is not so, that we are not looking at selling information that is in any way confidential.

Another issue around the surveys and the performance measures is: who was asked, and how many individuals? What were the questions that were asked? Was it only those that actually got government contracts? If that is the fact, then of course we would imagine that they would be very happy with the government services. Or do you also track those individuals that did not get government contracts?

The issues around tendering, goal 6: “Ensure a fair and accessible procurement system.” Can the minister let us know what percentage of properties are not currently occupied and what is the cost to the taxpayer of those departments that are not occupied? I believe that's probably under section 3, page 317, management of properties. There are three categories there, and for the amount of money that's involved in this particular program, it would be quite useful to have more details.

With regards to the leases are these leases that are managed by other firms? If so, who are those firms, and what is the amount of leases that they have under their management? In terms of property management operations, is that dealing with the overhead and the cost of managing different buildings that are government

property but are either leased or nonleased? And it would be helpful to have a breakdown of those properties.

8:40

One of the properties – and maybe I'm stealing the Member for Calgary-Buffalo's thunder here. This also has to do with McDougall House. I know we've asked over and over again: what is the actual cost of McDougall House, and what's the cost to the taxpayer? I know I've had constituents who have been very surprised that we're not allowed to access McDougall House and therefore would like to know what the cost is to themselves as a taxpayer, because as Edmonton area taxpayers they do pay for the costs of maintaining McDougall House. So that's a very serious question, as to the cost of that.

Property management business support. I would like a little bit of information as well, if possible, as to what that is. What does that cover? Just a bit more of a breakdown in terms of this whole area.

If we backtrack to page 314, the minister can hopefully help me out here as well. There is a discrepancy – and I know discrepancies do occur – between the comparable '96-97 forecast and the comparable '96-97 budget under capital investment. It's quite a large discrepancy.

MR. WOLOSHYN: What page are you on now?

MS LEIBOVICI: Page 314, capital investment, in the estimates. I jumped around; sorry. Then there's quite a substantial increase in '97-98, and I think the minister addressed some of that when he indicated that it's now time to reinvest in some of the buildings that have not had their infrastructure looked at for a significant period of time. I'm wondering if the minister can explain that \$10 million differential between the '96 forecast and budget.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, hon. member.

Hon. minister, do you wish to answer right away? Okay. Hon. minister.

MR. WOLOSHYN: I will have to go to *Hansard* to get all of the questions, because we did travel throughout the department very well. I do appreciate all of the positive questions, without any nasty innuendos. I thought that was very good.

Actually, the comment that I found most surprising was the negative reaction to our goal 1. I've always felt that all people, legislators included, would put a high priority on staff. What we've done is: the downsizing of the staff component has basically met its goals. If you've looked at last year's goals and where our numbers are, you'd see the numbers are there. Please don't ask me to be specific, but there are roughly 1,400 staff left.

With some of the new directions we have taken in terms of the services we deliver and with the restructuring of how the department interacts with other departments within the government as well as the outside associated agencies and some of the new fields we're taking on, which is primarily in the area of information technology, we felt that a few things had to be done.

First of all, there was going to be a reallocation of staff to meet the needs within the department. One of our priorities was to give the greatest opportunity to existent PWSS staff to stay within the department. In order to do that, you do have to identify what the competency profiles are, if you will. You have to have in-house proper training and development programs in order that these employees who are wanting to go across the department in fact are given all of the possible support we can give to them. So that whole area with respect to goal 1 is to ensure that existing

staff within our department are utilized to the best level possible, which would give returns to the taxpayers through their performance, which also, hopefully, would give them an indicator that we care as we always have about the staff and that the ones we do have are going to remain with the service for as long as they want. I was actually quite surprised that you would go after that goal. I thought I would get accolades from you for putting people first. However, we'll go with that.

I wish that we had a multiminsty response here, because there are a couple of areas that I think should be clarified. For example, Public Works, Supply and Services gets involved in disposing of property when it becomes deemed surplus and becomes assigned to the department for disposal. The ALCB warehouses, both in Calgary and in St. Albert, are managed by and sold by ALCB. So public works does not have anything – consequently, I wouldn't get into that one too much, although we could assist them in the listing and things of that nature, which is a service. The same would apply in terms of the credit counseling service. I don't believe, really, that we had anything to do with that. That was strictly with the department involved.

One of the other areas that you showed some strong interest in was the tendering process. In terms of procurement on an individual level for departments and whatnot, I believe we've upped it to \$2,500 that nothing can be done straight overboard without going through the department. We get our supplies, if you will, for the most part – they're all tendered openly. We have very frequently pretending to ensure, for example, that if you're going after copier paper, you don't throw it wide open because with some papers, as you well know, if you get the wrong quality, your copier dies on you. Just sticking to that example for a moment, in order to ensure that the product we're getting meets the needs of the government, then we would have what is referred to as a prequalifier; in other words, to ensure that the product meets the specifications. After that's done, then you would have the bid on it. And once that's done, then you'd have basically a set price from the supplier for a year.

On construction projects, which is a different realm but we're into that one, that is strictly an open bid process. It's all there; the bids are opened in public. People bid on them, we have the specs and whatnot going with it, and away you go. For the most part, if you will, for pretty well all of it unless there's a good reason for it, the tendering on getting services and supplies is very open.

In our business management, for example, for some of the facilities that we have tendered out for being taken care of, we have to ensure that the caretaking companies are in fact able to look after the buildings so that we don't end up with a bigger problem after the fact. So those are prequalified, and occasionally we do get some concerns from people who feel that they haven't been given a fair chance. You have to weigh what their track record is as to what you're after and ensure that you get the best bang for the taxpayer's buck.

Those are some of the ones. There were a few other comments that we'll get through, hopefully when I go through *Hansard*. I do gather from your colleagues that there was a little bit of crossing over, so perhaps we'll pick up some of those. Certainly, then, I'll let the members go back to the questioning.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

8:50

MR. DICKSON: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. I in fact have got a couple of questions that haven't been asked already, so I think I'll pursue them in this order.

Firstly, I'm interested in finding out what's happened – the \$900,000 that have been part of the freedom of information unit have been packed up and moved with the unit to the Department of Labour, Mr. Minister, through the Chair. Since your department still drives information management systems throughout all government departments, I'd like to ask: what price is going to have to be paid in terms of a lack of co-ordination by now having the freedom of information unit not absolutely integrated with your whole information management system but in a stand-alone position over in another department? I'm interested in terms of the specific reasons why that was hived off the responsibility of your department, because it just seemed like such a reasonable, rational decision to have the two there together.

Moving on, I've got some specific questions in terms of the Chief Information Officers' Council. I am particularly interested in page 234 of the business plan update where you say expressly that you have a core business of “exploiting information technology and telecommunications for government ministries.” What that typically translates into is selling data that Albertans have loaned your government to use for purposes of different government programs. I'd like you to indicate, since the freedom of information group has been hived off and moved to a different department, what sorts of safeguards are built in to ensure that when information technology issues are being looked at in terms of exploiting a possible sale of equipment, that the appropriate safeguards and protection are in there for Albertans.

With respect to some of the specific elements, I refer you to page 326. The capital investment which appears at element 4.12.42, court facilities: if you can indicate which court facilities are referred to there. Also, if you'd give me some particulars with respect to 4.12.39, accommodation projects. Now, that's a capital investment in terms of planning and implementation.

I then look over at page 321, and in terms of operating expense my attention is attracted to element 4.12.10, the \$250,000 in terms of Provincial Court, Calgary. What I'm interested in knowing – there's been a long outstanding problem in the Calgary youth and family court with judges who have to, when they're gowned, walk through the mass of people they've either just sentenced or may be about to sentence to get into the courtroom. There are some obvious security concerns there. This has been on the list of projects to do for a very long time, and I'm interested, Mr. Minister: are we making any progress on that? It doesn't appear to have been picked up. You might give me some particulars in terms of what those items are that I've identified, what kind of work that covers, and why it is that we seem not to be able to address what I'd call a safety/security issue in the Calgary youth and family court.

The other thing I'd ask is if you can give particulars in terms of the operating expenses, 4.12.39, 4.12.41, 4.12.42, court facilities, and particularize what projects are involved with those specific elements.

Also, in terms of page 325 I'm interested in the AADAC facilities, element 4.4.46, if you can particularize the capital investment that's shown on that page.

MR. WOLOSCHYN: What page was that again?

MR. DICKSON: Page 325. Sorry, Mr. Minister. I think I've had an explanation at one point, but for the benefit of all members if you can before we finish this evening explain what's referred to by the line item “accommodation projects,” which appears routinely in the different votes.

The other thing I wanted to ask about was program 2.0.1, information management and technology, and we see there a very

substantial increase. Mr. Minister, can you confirm Mr. George Samoil's information council or whatever the appropriate label is? Is the entire budget for that coming out of this department, or is part of it coming from this department and the balance from the Executive Council budget? This was discussed. It certainly appeared to appear in part in the Executive Council budget. So perhaps you can clarify that.

I'd ask you, as well, since it appears that Mr. Samoil's group is working principally with resources from your department, why it is that there are no formal linkages between the FOIP co-ordinators governmentwide and that information council. What's apparent from the business plan that we spoke of a moment ago – if you're in the business of exploiting information, typically that means selling information that, as I said before, Albertans have lent you. It just seems to me that it would make so much sense to fully integrate it with the freedom of information regime and the FOIP co-ordinators, who have a specialized knowledge, who have been working hard for two years to facilitate the movement of information from departments out to Albertans, which ought to be a pretty important goal in itself.

Page 318, Mr. Minister, through the chair, element 4.2.1, AVC, Calgary: if you can indicate the kind of work involved in that particular item. You were in the process of turning over, I thought, all of the Alberta vocational colleges to separate government, so I'm interested in terms of what particular work is being done there.

Also on page 319, just across the page, if you can particularize the \$520,000 expenditure to the Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium, 4.4.8, I'd be grateful.

The other question I'd ask is in terms of looking at your business plan summary, Mr. Minister, where you talk under goals about providing "services that meet or exceed customer requirements." What I'd ask of you, as I do every minister when I get the chance, is how many applications have been received by your department under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act for general information as opposed to personal information? How many applications have, in fact, been responded to positively? How many applications were deemed abandoned subsequent to delivery of a fee estimate in those cases where fees were going to exceed \$150? I'm interested obviously in monitoring the role that the very high fees in this province play in terms of what impact they have on demand by Albertans for general information. So if you can provide me with those particulars, I'd be appreciative.

**9:00**

That just about deals with all of the questions I had except in terms of the health facilities. I'm looking specifically at page 320, element 4.11.19, the Tom Baker cancer centre. Can you particularize the work that's covered by that item? I think the other ones we have some information on already, although you might particularize 4.11.3, which simply refers to health facilities projects and no designation in terms of what community, where those are being undertaken. I'd appreciate that, and look forward, Mr. Minister, to your responses.

Thanks very much.

MR. WOLOSZYN: Thank you. I will try to get some of these. I'll start with Tom Baker. That, as you know, is a \$29 million project. It's the expansion of the cancer centre itself, and it includes massive renovations. It also includes the construction of a three-storey addition to provide an expansion in radiotherapy. They're going to have four linear accelerators and so on. So that's strictly a very vast improvement, which would make

southern Alberta in all likelihood probably the centre of cancer treatment, if you will, second only to Edmonton. I have to keep watching that one.

I'll jump all over here and see how many I can hit right off. With respect to your AVC, Calgary, it is at, I believe, \$250,000. That's for planning, for renovations, and for mechanical upgrades. With respect to the property going over, what you'll find is that we're going to ensure that the transition is smooth. So public works will be maintaining responsibility for the property until such time as the AVC boards are comfortable. This won't in any way, shape, or form impede their program, but we want to ensure that they don't get too much dumped on them at once. Consequently, they'll take over the program delivery. When they have that under control, then we'll be moving into transferring the facilities over. So it's not that we're doing a sudden spending on AVC, Calgary, or any other one for that matter, but it's a matter of ensuring that the facilities will be, you know, at a standard that we would have maintained for ourselves.

For a couple of those you mentioned – I didn't get them all. The Calgary court strategy. I'm sure you could give me a history lesson in the safety there. It's not been swept under the rug. It's not been set aside. As you're quite aware, there is an emergent safety issue that's going on currently with respect to the movement of both the public and the justices, the people who visit there. That's being looked at, and we should have some interim – by interim I mean a solution that would address that problem specifically but not necessarily impact on the future of that particular facility with respect to its being used as a court facility.

As well, you're probably aware that Calgary has been in need of some upgrades to their court facilities, and we have been and will continue to be looking at that particular matter and hopefully coming up in a realistic time frame with a solution to the overall thing. So on that one I can't give you a specific time when the safety issue is going to be completed, but I can assure you that you'll likely be hearing about this. It's being addressed very quickly. It's one aspect to just go ahead and do it, but we also have to have the judges concur in the plans we have, and those discussions are currently going on.

Initially in your opening remarks you had some references to FOIP and its movement to the Department of Labour. I think you are totally aware that freedom of information and the management of that particular bit of legislation does not necessarily tie in with information management systems. What we are looking at through freedom of information – usually when the Act works at its best, it's when we don't have requests. The Act was implemented, and until this last one it was under public works to administer, if you will, but the actual using of the Act and the interacting of it – and as you indicated, when you say you ask every minister what the usage has been, that usage goes client to department to individual. So where you might place the particular responsibility for the legislation is quite frankly immaterial.

I will, however, assure you that we're not looking at pirating and selling information under the table or any of those other aspects. However, if we do have government information, especially that we are responsible for in the information technology field, if that should become available – and we should be able to do a return for the taxpayer – we should have the ability to do that. It's not a matter of looking to raise revenue from FOIP requests.

What's happened to the FOIP? As you're aware, the budget dollars and the personnel, whatever, were transferred as a unit to ensure there was continuity.

The involvement of the co-ordinators. You're more familiar with that, I'm sure, likely better than I am. That's to ensure that

the system works within the departments and there is a degree of consistency across the government.

With respect to the number of requests, I don't have the numbers. We can get you those. The numbers that public works gets is very, very small. Occasionally we will get a request. I think we got a couple from you, as a matter of fact. Those were perhaps the most major ones. The problem that we run into with public works in some of our requests is that it does create a bit of a time problem. As you can appreciate, we're always dealing on the third-person level. Although from a department or a ministerial perspective I'd just as soon chuck the stuff in an envelope and fire it off to the requester, we have to be quite careful that we do not in an inadvertent fashion or an intentional fashion end up giving out information that one of our clients feels is confidential to their doing business. I'm quite conscious and would like to err on the side of protecting that, if there's going to be error at all, to ensure that we have the confidence of the people that we do business with so that we don't end up with an aspect of: "Well, if we bid to public works, they're going to farm it out through freedom of information to our competitors." We do try to make, through whatever processes available to us, information available through the FOIP co-ordinator. As you can appreciate, at the request of the public they can go in and view it. That's at no charge.

I can rely on a bit of my short involvement with the freedom of information and indicate that I do take a bit of a disagreement with you on the basis of high cost. Alberta, as you know, has got one of the lowest actual costs for accessing information. Your initial \$25 fee may be higher than Ontario's \$5 fee, but that \$25 buys you automatically \$150-plus worth of work, whereas in other jurisdictions you put the fee down . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: That's an excuse.

MR. WOLOSHYN: It's not an excuse; it's a reality.

. . . and then the clock starts to tick on it. There's also, as you know, the fact that when you are giving out information that is readily available, it's given freely, so consequently the number of people who actually get information without having to go to FOIP far outnumbers anything they've got through that end. I don't care to – and it would be inappropriate for me to speak on behalf of other ministries, but from your own reaction to this, you haven't been totally happy with what you did and didn't receive. We tried to meet your requests, and where we couldn't meet them, you were given a very straightforward reason as to why not. I believe, if I'm not mistaken, we were upheld by the commission on that particular one. It wasn't a matter of being miserable. We felt that within the legislation itself, it wouldn't have been appropriate to give that. So I would say that with respect to public works per se, we try to comply with the spirit of the Act and give out, you know, as much as we possibly can.

With some of those other specific questions you had with respect to budgeting, we'll go through those and give them back to you in writing, if you're comfortable with that.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, hon. minister.

We'll now call on the hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert.

**9:10**

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you. Thank you for this opportunity. I want to thank your staff for sitting through this process tonight. We appreciate the work that you do. I want to make it known that I strongly dislike this room. I think it's far too close, and it

makes me uncomfortable. However, that being said, I want it on the record that the minister loves this room. I hate it.

The minister was talking about something, and that's why I wanted to see the Blues right away. You were speaking so eloquently, of course, but I wanted to get one of the things you'd said. Of course, we won't get the Blues until tomorrow. That's another limitation of these double committees. That being said, I still want to ask the minister . . .

MR. WOLOSHYN: Well, what do you want: a question or the Blues?

MRS. SOETAERT: Well, if I read your speech, I'd get the information.

You mentioned that there's a new facility coming up for something, a test facility for something that's going to be constructed this year. You mentioned that near the end, I think. Am I wrong?

MR. WOLOSHYN: That's to do with Project 2000.

MRS. SOETAERT: Project 2000.

MR. WOLOSHYN: We're going to implement a facility, if you will, to ensure that we can test the technology.

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister and hon. member, there's nothing wrong with give and take as long as you realize that once we start going back and forth, then somebody else can come in.

MRS. SOETAERT: I lose my time. Okay.

THE CHAIRMAN: Do you want the answers as you go, hon. member?

MR. WOLOSHYN: I apologize to the member. I jumped in when I should have saved it.

MRS. SOETAERT: That's okay. I asked for an explanation. That's my fault. I wanted an explanation of what that was.

THE CHAIRMAN: You're asking; it should go through the chair.

MRS. SOETAERT: I guess he could explain that later. It's a facility that's going to be built, if I'm understanding this correctly. So here's my plug for Spruce Grove-Sturgeon-St. Albert. There's not one provincial building in my riding, not one. Isn't that shameful, Mr. Chairman?

MR. THURBER: That's good.

MRS. SOETAERT: That's good, says Mr. Drayton Valley over there.

So if the minister is looking for a location – and of course the minister knows Spruce Grove extremely well – if you're looking for a prime spot with a wonderful community that would definitely support that kind of project, please look at Spruce Grove. When the ribbon-cutting comes, I'd clap for you and say what a wise move it was on the part of the minister and his department. Truly, I mean, it's a good idea. I hope the minister will put that in his little bag of tricks, and I'll give him credit for it out in Spruce Grove. I'm hoping he'll think about that one. So if you can explain what that facility is and where you want to build it, unless of course it's using some other facility that's being

renovated or changed. That's probably it. That's question one.

The Sturgeon general hospital, the old one: was that within your domain or not? Maybe you could explain what's happened there. [interjection] It's not?

MR. WOLOSZYN: That's, I believe – oops.

MRS. SOETAERT: Oops. We'll get to that later.

MR. WOLOSZYN: Sorry.

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you. Sorry, that's my fault.

Stony Plain: is that hospital in the works? Is that budgeted for? What's happening there? We've heard rumours for . . . You're shaking your head. Not you; your neighbour there is. However, I've had questions raised about that: if that's going to happen, if it's an election promise every four years, or if it really is something that's going to happen out there.

Something was mentioned about rentable space in your first speech, as I recall. The government space that we rent out: is it space that we rent or that we don't rent anymore? [interjection] All of it? Okay.

Now, is Pine Ridge nursery within your domain?

MR. WOLOSZYN: Partly.

MRS. SOETAERT: Partly. I guess I'd like to know what's happening there. Is it being sold off? Rumours out in the paper say that we're going to lose a fair chunk of coin on that, so I guess I'd like an explanation about what's happening there, which ties in with that other nursery, the Tree Nursery and Horticultural Centre in Edmonton. There's no budget for that. What does that mean when there's no expenditure there? Like, I don't get why it's mentioned, but there's no money there. Pardon my ignorance on that, but maybe you could explain that to me.

Now, I heard Lakeland College is being closed. Right after the election, what was happening up there? The programs out of Lakeland College were being stopped; is that true? If so, what's happening to that facility? You didn't hear that? I read that, and I hope it's a lie. We're zipping our lips.

MR. WOLOSZYN: I don't want you to lose your spot.

MRS. SOETAERT: What's the school in Stony Plain called?

MR. WOLOSZYN: Westerra.

MRS. SOETAERT: Westerra. What's happening there? I get asked that lots. What can that facility be used for? I hate to see it just wasted. Maybe there's something in the works there, something planned? That is a fairly nice facility. I'd like to see what is planned for that.

I also noticed there are some extra legislative dollars as compared to the previous year, and I guess I'm just wondering what renovations are happening or what's being done there. I know the sign on the washroom won't cost that much – which, by the way, I'm grateful for. Speaking on behalf of the women in our caucus, thank you for the other washroom. Big cost. There is a big cost. Is that in the budget plan?

Vote 4.14.56, fuel dispensing systems and site restorations. I looked at that. Is that those storage tanks that have to be changed because of environmental issues? So are private owners getting – it's not private owners, it's the government that owns those. We're playing charades here back and forth, Mr. Chairman.

However, I'll appreciate an explanation of that one, because I thought it had something to do with private owners and their storage tanks. It doesn't? So where are those? Do we have lots of those around here? I guess I'd like an explanation of that just so I understand. Of course, being from a riding that doesn't have any, you know, provincial facilities, I have to grope at some of these issues.

My last point for now – and I'm hoping I might get another opportunity – is the lodges. I actually just came back from a meeting with a few people who are on the Sturgeon Foundation, and I think some of their concerns are cross province. So I'll generalize some of my concerns there. I guess the role of the lodges is changing. Certainly we have people who need more health care than ever before. People going into those are much older than they used to be. They really aren't, though they should be, for independent living. It ends up that they're not always able to live independently, and then people help them or somebody's dispensing pills that really shouldn't be, and then they're going to be liable, though when people see that somebody needs help, they're not going to not help them. I have grave concerns that, I don't know, maybe we look at operating dollars for those that have to increase or the health needs that need to be addressed with those lodges. You may say: hey, they're just buildings. But the reality is that when they come out of hospital, they need more health care than just the visiting nurse. So are you looking at operating dollars and changing somehow what is happening in lodges? Certainly the health care needs are higher there than they were before.

And with the lodges, how do you prioritize the expenditures on each of the lodges? Do they submit what they want done, and then you prioritize? Or does each area – is it like transportation, where they submit what they want, and then you figure out which one that is and what's being done? Those are my questions on lodges.

For now, maybe the minister could answer some questions, and then I can come back to those later if there's an opportunity. I'll let the minister answer, if that's okay with the chair.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. minister.

MR. WOLOSZYN: First of all, I thank you for bringing to my attention my being remiss in introducing the staff.

MRS. SOETAERT: I aim to please. I'm always helpful.

MR. WOLOSZYN: I really appreciate that. Paul Pellis is ADM of finance; Denine Krieger – put your hands up so they know who you are – is my EA; Dan Bader is deputy minister; Bob Smith is ADM of property management; and the lady at the other end works in the CIO's office, Lisa Bowes. My apologies, folks, twofold: one for not introducing you when I should have and, secondly, for your having, as the member said, to bear with us.

9:20

I do want to thank you for raising the year 2000 thing once again. I'll take some time to comment on that because I think it's extremely important. As everybody knows, the computers that we've had around are not year 2000 compliant, and all sorts of things can go wrong if when the year 2000 kicks in, the computer doesn't recognize it. In July of last year we established a committee, a year 2000 committee, to come up with a strategy within government to address the technical and policy issues for ensuring that all of the government systems are year 2000 compliant. There's an awful pile of them across the whole

government. The ministry of public works was identified by the government in response to the Auditor General's report as having the lead responsibility for developing and implementing a government plan to ensure that the information technology for year 2000 is compliant.

As well, the Auditor General advised the government that ministries are to assist their extended stakeholder groups with the year 2000 compliance. We're talking about RHAs and so on. PWSS works very closely with the office of the CIO – CIO is the policy arm, as you know from the Executive Council budgets, if you will – the CIO council, and all the rest of the ministries to develop strategies to address, if you will, all of the aspects of information compliance. We have to monitor these strategies. We're addressing, hopefully trying to discover the issues that will arise as a result of putting in the strategies, and ensuring that ministerial plans are comprehensive to meet the goals. Then we also have to look at whether in fact the budgets allocated from various departments through this group are sufficient and that the time lines are, if you will, reasonable to get the changeover done.

I referred to the test facility. I'm sorry; I inadvertently misled you on that one. I'm very sorry. No matter how hard you lobby, Spruce Grove does not get a provincial building out of this because the year 2000 facility is only a computer in our data centre at the PWSS building, and that's to test the software after we've got it updated for the year 2000. My apologies. I do appreciate the efforts you've made, and I'm sure the *Hansard* mailouts to Spruce Grove will go out very well with your lobbying to get them a provincial facility. I tried that, and Spruce Grove is such an affluent town that really they just don't need any government facilities.

MRS. SOETAERT: Oops. I'll let you retract that if you want.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Well, I will stay with the statement that Spruce Grove is one fine community.

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you.

MR. WOLOSHYN: I'll alter the statement by saying that at the time we're downsizing government, it's difficult to add a facility in there. If there was a need to add in the area, I'm sure Spruce Grove would be very high on the list of considerations.

MRS. SOETAERT: Thank you.

MR. WOLOSHYN: The Sturgeon hospital, I do believe – and if I'm wrong, please forgive me – is under the Capital health authority. I'm pretty sure on that. I know that at this point we do not have anything to do with it; however, for example, the Charles Camsell hospital is a piece of real estate that public works is responsible for now. So depending upon the . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: What's happening there?

MR. WOLOSHYN: It's up for sale, the Charles Camsell.

The Stony Plain hospital: I don't know if you're aware or not that they had one proposal in, they had a needs assessment, which seems to have been done very well across the region, and they're progressing with their planning. I'll tie in another thing with them, so they're hopefully moving on to get something going.

I'll make comments at this point on Westerra. What has happened? The site that was allocated for the Stony Plain hospital: if you read the local paper, there was a trade done with public works for a piece of Westerra property to compensate

Stony Plain for the hospital site. So the hospital site is tied down; it's there for real now, which wasn't the case before.

With respect to the building itself, if we haven't already, we'll shortly have ownership of it. I think it hasn't quite happened, and that's to do with NAIT. There was a trade involved. NAIT will be occupying the building until September of next year, 1998. In the meantime public works is working with the town of Stony Plain to see if we can get a viable use for that facility, because we certainly don't intend to have it go unused. I've made various suggestions from having it as a very broad municipal centre to whatever. If there is a private-sector interest in it, as happened in Spruce Grove – as you know, you ended up with a pretty good honey processing plant in that building. I wouldn't go out trying to get that particular processor out there, but hopefully there's something along the same line. That's what we're trying to do with Westerra. Our intention is to somehow keep it occupied and being used until such time as its final owner comes about.

The Pine Ridge nursery. As you're aware, the department of the environment is getting out of raising seedlings. There was a request for proposal that went out for that particular facility. What the outcome of that is I don't know at this particular time. The two departments will be reviewing it. I just can't give you an answer because I literally don't know what the outcome will be.

Are you referring to the tree horticulture centre?

MRS. SOETAERT: Yeah. I just looked at that and was wondering what that was about.

MR. WOLOSHYN: I believe we've got zero in there now. That's because that has been rented out, if you will, to different operators, and public works is not responsible for running that. If you look at the tree nursery, we do have some staff, costs and whatnot, that are going on. So we're out of that picture as a ministry. The building has been leased out.

MRS. SOETAERT: Does that show up in revenue?

MR. WOLOSHYN: It would go straight to general revenue. It's not in ours. You'd have to check with agriculture – don't hold me to that, because I'm getting into their program and plans. Talk to agriculture for more detail on the status of that thing.

With Lakeland College, if there are program changes or whatnot that are happening, rumours out there, I really would be surprised, because there's nothing that I'm aware of. As in any college I wouldn't be surprised if Lakeland may be adding or deleting a program here and there. They're run by a board. They're a stand-alone institution. I haven't heard of them having any kinds of problems. What the fuss would be around Lakeland – I'd be surprised if there is any problem at all there.

The fuel systems that you referred to are government-owned fuel systems. Government owned is an interesting thing. I'll focus you on transportation. As you know, a lot of transportation facilities have been leased out and sold and whatnot. Virtually every one of those facilities had fuel tanks in them. That's what this is dealing with. Also, of a minor nature, we'd also be responsible for hospitals, where you have auxiliary generators and whatnot. I don't have the numbers off the top of my head, but most of them have been done. I believe there are over a hundred sites yet that are of a lower priority to address. That's what that particular thing is. It's nothing to do with the orphaned sites or anything like that. That's stuff within our inventory that we're looking after.

The lodge program. As you know, Municipal Affairs has the

lead on that, and we do the evaluations of it. To put it in a nutshell, it is to upgrade the existing facilities. It's not to renovate and apply a change of function to them, if you will. If there are those changes, that change of function would likely be going through the RHA with which they contracted, and we'd get in it. So the renovations are there. What we have, then, is that some of the lodges have come up with extra moneys to do extra things on their own. They have been very pleased with how public works has been managing the projects. In some cases it goes beyond the scope of the money allocated, but that's money from the lodge foundations. We manage it as a part of the upgrade program. Your observation in terms of the needs being there: that's something that Health, I'm sure, is going to be addressing in a continuing way as we shift on it. I guess the building is one thing; the program within it is another. I don't think anybody would argue with you that the activity in the lodges is going more towards a greater level of care. At some point that will be getting addressed somewhere, but we wouldn't be doing construction to facilitate that at this time.

MRS. SOETAERT: Good. Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: I'll call on the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

9:30

MR. GIBBONS: I'll start off with praise. I just want to thank you for the money earmarked for the northeast community health centre. A question at the same time coming from out in that area is: what's happening in and around Alberta Hospital? What is happening, if anything, with basically shutting down and mothballing the Alberta Hospital tree nursery, and is it being looked after? We've got farmers that own their own land right next to it who are complaining about backing up of water and flooding their places and that they can't get on it right now.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Give me some more detail on that particular thing, because it's a side issue that maybe we should be looking at.

MR. GIBBONS: Just go and blow up some beaver dams.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: On the site?

MR. GIBBONS: Yeah.

A lot of the questions have already been gone through, but I'm going to get more specific. That's on pages 332, 333 under key performance measures. You have eight performance measures outlined in the business plan on this particular item, and I'm going to start with 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, which are performance measures: customer satisfaction with capital project delivery services, information technology services, telecommunication services, procurement services, and property management.

Question one. It follows through the points here 1 through 5. What types of questions are asked in this when you're going out and doing your studies? How often are the surveys conducted? This leads into the supplemental questions. Who is being surveyed? How many government employees in other departments are being surveyed? Is the survey conducted anonymously? The next supplemental is: are there any nongovernment employees that take part in the survey? Supplemental four: who conducts the survey, and what costs are associated with them?

These are the types of questions I'm not expecting you to rattle off tonight. This is something that Karen has asked for follow-up on.

Under performance measurement 6, which is operating cost per capita, question 1 is: how did the minister determine that \$44.63 per square metre was an ideal cost for a target for this year? The supplementary question to that is: why did the minister feel that these figures cannot be improved upon, and in fact why does the minister anticipate that the operating cost per square metre will increase over the next two years to \$45.64? A supplementary question to that one also is: does this cost measurement include space that may be standing empty due to cutbacks, or does it include space that is occupied?

Under performance measurement 7, a question to that is: what other options other than the open bidding services do companies have if they want a government contract? Supplementary to that, are there alternatives for them to an open bid for all companies? That means: who wants government contracts forced upon open bidding services and so on? Supplement three to that one is: why not survey companies that use an open bidding service to ask if they are satisfied with the department's performance in this regard?

Performance number 8 measures efficiency in procurement services. The only question on that one is: why is the target for '97-98 higher than what the department actually achieved in '94-95? Just adding to that: what is the reason for the fairly wide margins of functional and actual results in the performance measures in the past few years?

My final question – and if there's time, I'll come back to a couple of other ones. As a new MLA it seems – and maybe it's something that can be passed on or that we can be educated on in some way. If we take over offices, maybe the previous MLA bought laptops that do not correspond with what the government has – or I take them in to have inserted into them whatever they need to be compatible. I'm being told that I cannot trade that in. I have to take it back through your department, and it has to be sold. Why is that? Now, most of us are businessmen that can do quite well on trade-ins. There are other items. I've taken over an office where the equipment is way behind. So it's something that's been bothering me for the last few weeks as I've been changing offices and getting settled in and so on. That's all I have there.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: I think the question you raised with respect to your office equipment is a very good one, certainly for new members. I think what most people don't appreciate is that no office owns any equipment. That equipment in the case of your constituency offices is owned by Leg. Assembly. So if you don't need it, if you can't use it, you turn it back, in effect, to Leg. Assembly. It may or may not be deemed surplus at that point. They may reassign it somewhere else. Just because you can't trade it in doesn't mean that that piece of equipment is going to be junked or sold or anything else. It just gets turned back to the central pool.

What we've found and have tried to accommodate quite frequently is that a lot of this equipment becomes very user friendly when the previous user wants to keep it. Wherever feasible we try to accommodate those wishes. However, if it's a new piece of equipment and somebody wants to get a super deal yet the equipment could be used elsewhere, the request is denied. Generally speaking, if you've been around for a while, the equipment is used, and if it seems reasonable to sell it off, we do that. So on the surface you can appreciate what could happen, too, if every office, all 83 MLAs, ended up starting to make deals on their own and buying equipment through Leg. Assembly. We'd have chaos in the whole thing. So it's a large system. You factor it through Leg. Assembly, whether it's computers, fax

machines, whatever. They look after it. We only come into the equation when the time comes that it's declared surplus. It's a little bit quicker if you've not a lot of furniture and things of that nature, for example. Then you'd likely get it through Leg. Assembly. You'd be able to save going through the department.

MR. GIBBONS: I see. Can I just throw something at you?

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Sure.

MR. GIBBONS: If the computers are not compatible . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: Are you finished, hon. minister?

MR. WOLOSHTYN: No. I'll go on with a supplemental. You made mention of the business of the tendering and the open bid system. If you look in the business plan on that one, you'll notice that that is a service we provide to give the users of that opportunities across the board, a lot of federal work and whatnot. So that's just a service that we provide. It seems to be very well received, and as you know, some of the interprovincial trade arrangements are being made, that local authorities are going to have to do – forgive me; I don't quite know the threshold. If they're going to have to do the tenders virtually across Canada, it's a lot of work. These are things that have been negotiated through the federal government with other provinces, and that's an ongoing process. I could get you some more detail on that if you're really interested in the interprovincial agreement there.

**9:40**

You're absolutely right: I indicated in my opening comments that when I walked through Fort McMurray and places like that, I was not too pleased with the fact that some of the stuff was deteriorating, such as carpets, and painting was required. Those are factored into our operating costs, so we are assuming that now that we're getting back into bringing these buildings up to par, that's going to be reflected in the operating costs to some degree. Hence you'll see that little dip in there, and you can attribute that to a higher level of maintenance or preventive maintenance, whatever you want to call it. So that's the reason for that.

Some of the others that you have there, I'll have to go through and get back to you with a little bit of the specifics.

With respect to your comments, however, on Alberta Hospital, that's currently going through where health is, and where that's going to end up at I'm not certain, as nobody is at this particular point. I don't know, but if you're doing the Health estimates, that would be a good question there. I am a little bit concerned, however, if some activity or inactivity on the grounds, whichever way you want to place it, is negatively impacting the farmers in the area, and I would appreciate a note from you identifying that problem.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Minister.

I call on the hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MS LEIBOVICI: Thank you for the opportunity to continue with some of the questions that I have with regards to this particular budget. The minister perhaps misunderstood my comments with regards to goal 1, which was training and developing employees to meet business needs. Of course I understand that without the employees the department would not operate. The reality is that over the last three to four years we have seen, I believe, anything but a consideration of the importance of employees within this government given the heartlessness with which this government

has downsized and outsourced employees within the government sector. So I found it rather ironic that here we are, a year within which negotiations are to occur with AUPE, and we have goal 1: "train and develop employees . . . to meet business needs."

The other issue that I have with regards to this goal is: is it really a goal, or is it a strategy to meet a goal? Is not the overall goal of the department, the first goal, perhaps goal 5, "facilitate effective government program delivery," and/or goal 6, "ensure a fair and accessible procurement system"? The way to achieve those goals is through the strategy of having employees develop to function to the best of their abilities. But given that it is goal 1, my question is: what is the dollar amount that's provided for this training? How will this training and development occur? Over what period of time will this training and development occur? What is the breakdown of employees by area? We have a gross number of FTEs, but we do not have, I believe, a breakdown of what the area is, what the employees are within each particular area.

I believe one of the measurements within the document is to ensure that there is increased productivity amongst the employees. That's on page 241, PWSS streamlining, under "minimize the cost of common services." The streamlining will "support improved decision making and increase productivity by implementing a new human resource and financial information system." Again it's ironic to me that we value employees but we're still talking about streamlining yet increasing productivity. I'd like to know what the measurement is for that increased productivity.

We've talked a fair amount and there have been some questions on the issue of computers and the information technology and supply program. As the information is forthcoming, it begs another question. A large number of departments have outsourced computer services. When I look at the department of transportation and when I look at the department of social services, just to name a couple of them, there are no longer computer operations per se. There may be word processing, but the majority of computer work that is being done within those particular departments has been outsourced is my understanding.

If, in fact, that is the case, then how is the Department of Public Works, Supply and Services interacting with the outsourced computer companies? What will be the cost of ensuring that those companies do in fact manage to have the same technology requirements, especially as we go towards the year 2000, as is within the government sector of those computers that are left? Do the dollars that are allocated for the program, which looks to be about – well, it's divided in two here, so \$40 million, \$41 million between operating and capital expense for information, technology, and supply. Do those dollars take into account the outsourced companies? If they do not, what is the total amount of the contracts with the outsourced companies? What will be the total amount of the dollars with the outsourced companies with regards to renegotiating those contracts to come into compliance with what needs to be done between now and the year 2000? Obviously, if we're in a bit of a pickle with that situation, then so are those outsourced companies, and there have to be some costs. Someone has to pay for it, and generally that comes through the cost of the contract that we then pay for those privatized areas. Has there been any cost analysis done to ensure that those areas that we have privatized have in fact reaped the benefits that we have been told there would be?

When I look at tendering, just to go back to that issue as well – I believe it was last year that I brought up an issue with regards to occupational health infractions and whether companies that had occupational health infractions were in fact taken off the list of companies that could bid on a government contract. Given the

question that was asked in the Legislative Assembly today by the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, if we know there is a company that has infractions with regards to employment standards, what steps does public works take with regards to ensuring that that company meets the standards and, if they do not meet the standards, that they are then taken off the list of companies that receive government dollars? That's a policy, I guess, that I would like to actually see, if there is a written policy somewhere. If there is not, what is the government doing to address that particular issue?

Again, on a policy level in a sense, I just happened to be flipping through the paper and noticed that the province is being blamed for the flood in Peace River. It appears that the reason for that is that there was a dike, and the government refused to fund construction to close the gap within the dike, and as a result there was water rushing into downtown Peace River. My question is not so much around the decision that was made to not put those dollars forward – we know that over the last three years dollars have been tight within the province – but is whether or not there has been a lesson learned. Sometimes moneys should be spent wisely in order to save dollars in the long run.

9:50

I'm assuming it's public works that's involved with this particular decision. If it is, what actions are put in place so that you don't have this kind of situation occurring again? I notice when I look at the budget that there are no dollars allocated, unless I've missed it, which is possible, to the Peace River area for increasing the height of the dike. As we are led to understand, the floods will occur on a more and more regular basis in the future. Is it not worthy of some expense at this point in time to increase the level of the dike in the Peace River area?

Another question that I have is with regards to government buildings. There was some talk about whether or not there should be a government building in Spruce Grove. My question centres around whether there are government buildings currently in Alberta that are empty as a result of the downsizing that's occurred in different areas, whether it's in agriculture or in the economic development department or in other areas. It's also my understanding that if there's a government department, the government does not pay taxes to the municipality but in fact pays a grant in lieu of those taxes. Again, I could not find it here, but I'm wondering what the amount is that we're paying and what percentage of that is allocated towards buildings that are empty and what steps the government has taken to try to lease the buildings in order to get value for our dollars within those particular buildings.

What would be helpful – and I don't know if the department has thought of this at all – is if it were possible to do a bit of a spreadsheet. Obviously we know what the amount of the buildings is that are under the government's jurisdiction, but it would be nice to have a spreadsheet that gives us the value of the buildings, the amount we got on buildings that were sold, the amount we have right now that we get in rent, on leasing for the buildings, what the total cost is of the buildings with regards to, as I indicated, the grants in lieu or any other costs that we have, just so that we could have an itemized line item. If that is not somewhere within the department at this point in time, perhaps we would be able to have it for – I don't know – some time in the next few months, because I don't quite understand how decisions can be made without having a spreadsheet of that sort somewhere within the department. It must be there so that we know what the value is and how much we're losing.

The other question with regards to the sale of government-

owned buildings is: what is the bottom dollar that we will sell for? You know, with ALCB it sounds like 10 cents on the dollar. Do we go below 10 cents on the dollar? Do we take whatever it is, if it's 1 cent on the dollar? Is there some line at which we draw that line and say that we will not sell, that we will hold onto this property? Where is that break-even point where the decision is made as to whether to sell, to keep, to lease, and at what point do we take our losses?

Another question on page 239, where we talk about future measures and it says: office space utilization. Could the minister please explain what that is. We've got "operating cost per square metre," but I'm not quite sure what "office space utilization" is. Perhaps that's part of that spreadsheet I'm asking for, as to what percentage of the offices are actually being utilized and what it costs the taxpayer to not have offices utilized.

Also, what is a "building condition rating distribution"? I assume – and perhaps I shouldn't – that that is an indicator as to whether this is a building that's in fairly good condition, whether this is a building that requires repairs within the next five years, whether this is a building that's going to fall down and maybe we should send in the demolition team. Again I wonder on what basis decisions have been made in the past if this is what we're looking at as future measurements.

A couple of specifics if I can find it here. On page 320 I notice that the Carewest Alzheimer care centre in Calgary has received some funding over the last number of years.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Which one?

MS LEIBOVICI: Under Health, 4.11.11. It's in the government and lottery fund estimates.

THE CHAIRMAN: Are you finished?

MS LEIBOVICI: No. I'm just waiting for the minister to find the page.

There are some dollars that have been allocated to building or expanding. I'm not quite sure what those dollars are for. I know that within my constituency we are also building an Alzheimer centre on the site of the Misericordia hospital, and I notice that there are dollars allocated to the Misericordia. Do those dollars include the Alzheimer care centre or not? And if not, why not, I guess is the question there, if the dollars are required? I don't know; I'm just asking the question at this point in time.

The other question that I had is on page 330 in that same document. It talks about the highlights for '97-98, and it indicates that there is going to be

an \$18.9 million redevelopment at the Walter C. Mackenzie Health Centre . . . to consolidate most acute pediatric care programs in the region and develop a tertiary care centre.

Is this the Children's hospital within a hospital?

MR. WOLOSHYN: It's not written up as such. There's been no decision.

AN HON. MEMBER: No.

MR. WOLOSHYN: Oops. Yes.

MS LEIBOVICI: This is very good, you know. The back and forth: I quite appreciate that. So that's my question there.

MR. WOLOSHYN: The answer's yes.

MS LEBOVICI: Okay. If we're funding the hospital within the hospital, I notice that the Children's hospital has engaged in quite an active fund-raising program for equipment and other improvements I guess to the facility, and my question is: should not the department, or the Department of Health perhaps more rightly, also be providing the other items that are necessary to run a hospital? It seems like a half measure, that we go only so far and then the rest is up to the Alberta taxpayer to fund out of pocket as well.

I'm sure there are a number of other questions that are within these pages, but I guess I will provide some time for the minister to respond. We may well be sending other questions in writing to the minister.

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister.

10:00

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Okay. Thank you very much. I'll jump around here and there.

The government buildings that are empty: I don't believe we have very many left. The grants in lieu of taxes that you were asking about are paid by Municipal Affairs. That's why you don't see it in our budget.

The other aspect is: how do we sell them? What's the bottom dollar? The bottom dollar is market value with the right of first refusal to the municipalities in all cases. So if there is some arrangement that can be done with the municipalities that would benefit the taxpayers, that's entered into firstly, again at market value or as close as is reasonable. After that, it's put on it, and we don't dump the properties per se. You can appreciate that there is the original cost of a building, the depreciated cost of a building, the written-down value of a building, the book value of a building, and unfortunately in government we don't have the privilege of doing something called – you lower the value of it as you use it. Everybody looks at it.

AN HON. MEMBER: Depreciation.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Depreciation. Thank you.

So to look at what a building may or may not have cost and what it is sold for, that's a reflection of the real estate market at the time, and we're certainly not into dumping for two reasons. One, we want to maximize the return to the taxpayers, as you can agree with, and secondly, we don't want to have an impact on the real estate market in any given area. That's why we schedule the buildings and the land out in such a way that they won't impact that. I think you'd find, if you look into it, that the way we dispose of buildings, questions in question period notwithstanding, is in a very professional and prudent fashion.

You asked a couple of questions. One was with respect to the Carewest Alzheimer care centre. I believe that the Calgary health authority is in the process of trying to get a site. When they get that done and a cost share of some description, we'll have probably \$5 million into it.

The Misericordia, the one in your constituency, which is having a bit of a celebration on Wednesday, the Capital health authority are the ones who build it. The Misericordia doesn't get into that one, so that would be through the Capital health authority, the site being in the Misericordia hospital.

The Peace River dike . . .

MS LEBOVICI: Why are there no dollars here?

MR. WOLOSHTYN: Well, had you asked me first, hon. member,

you'd have got some information. Number one, public works doesn't build dikes; Environmental Protection does. However, having said that, in order to build a dike or a structure of any kind, you have to have the people who want it in compliance and the people who own the land on which you want to put the structure ready to sell the land.

With respect to the hole in the dike at Peace River, my understanding is – and if I'm wrong, I'll apologize to you – that the town of Peace River has had difficulty in acquiring from private landowners the land needed to plug the hole in the dike. It wasn't the height of the dike, hon. member. It was the fact that the dike wasn't quite completed, whatever was there. The fact is that the town of Peace River works in conjunction with Environmental Protection, and the town was, up to this point at least, unable to get permission to go ahead with it. I'm sure that if you'd check with Environmental Protection, had they been able to, they certainly would have built the dike.

I would like to direct you back to that whole program 2, which is where you'd had some comments. I'll just make a few brief comments, and if you have further questions, feel free to ask them. You have to appreciate under the information and technology end of it that we provide leadership and management in the use of information technology, management and use throughout the government through planning and policy, and we do the interdepartmental sharing and so on. That's straight across the government. We co-ordinate the central records management storage – and we don't sell these things; don't get all up into that one – and disposal. We administer these services on behalf of the government as a whole. Also, that particular part supports PWSS's internal information networks also.

On the supply end of it, that's where we get the information technology, via the open-bidding practice. You heard me allude to Alberta's interest and involvement in external and internal trade, and it also comes under that one. We also do the courier through that, and we do the disposal of surplus equipment.

Telecommunications. As you know, we have access to a provincewide telecommunications network, so that's the one we have under telecommunications. That does the networks, the shared services, the telephone, mobile, radio, video, data communication, consulting, central supply, management: the whole ball of wax. So you have to look at that whole thing as a total package. If you want some further information on that at some point, I'd be glad to give you whatever you require on how that whole outfit operates.

You had some question on page 239 to do with future measures. I've forgotten what the question was.

MS LEBOVICI: Basically what the question . . .

THE CHAIRMAN: If we go right back to other questions, I have other people on the list.

MR. WOLOSHTYN: I'll get you an answer to that one.

Okay. That would be about it for now, I gather.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Next on my list is the hon. Member for Little Bow.

MR. McFARLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As the Member for Spruce-Sturgeon-St. Albert did earlier, I would also like to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to your staff, Mr. Minister. I've had more than cordial and pleasant working relationships with some of your staff for the past five years, and I think you should be proud of the people you have with you.

AN HON. MEMBER: You have provincial buildings in your riding.

MR. McFARLAND: No, actually.

Mr. Minister, you can put the pen away, because I just thought it was important to congratulate some staff once in a while, and I'm glad they took the time to be here tonight. As the chairman knows, your department, I believe, gets the pleasure of putting up with other people's problems even though you end up building hospitals for Alberta Health and you put up dams for Alberta Environment. In the meantime, you take all the flak, and sometimes it takes 20 years to get these things done. Some of us are appreciative of the work your staff have done.

MRS. SOETAERT: Question.

MR. McFARLAND: I don't have any questions. Given the time,

I would like to move that the committee now rise and report.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Little Bow has moved that subcommittee C now rise and report. All in support of that motion, please indicate by, I guess, raising your hand or saying aye.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

THE CHAIRMAN: The subcommittee is adjourned, and we'll reconvene downstairs in Committee of Supply.

[The committee adjourned at 10:08 p.m.]