

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, March 17, 2004** **8:00 p.m.**
 Date: 2004/03/17
 head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Tannas in the chair]

The Chair: Good evening. I'd like to call the Committee of Supply to order.

Before we recommence our debate on the interim supply estimates, I wonder if we might have permission to briefly revert to Introduction of Guests?

[Unanimous consent granted]

head: **Introduction of Guests**

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's my pleasure this evening to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Catherine Ripley. Of the many hats that she wears, she's first and foremost a parent of two children, one attending Harry Ainlay and one attending Strathcona composite high school in the city of Edmonton. Catherine is here this evening as part of the Education Watch program. She's here out of concern for the quality of education and funding for public education.

But I want to recognize Catherine Ripley as chair of the Whitemud Coalition, an organization that I've had the opportunity to work with over the past number of years to learn more about education, about the needs of education in our community, who has what I consider to be very positive input and critique with respect to what the current situation is in each of our schools in the area, someone who has put heart and soul into the education system and is also an author of children's books. Catherine Ripley is in the members' gallery. I'd ask her to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. McFarland: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This evening in the public gallery we have a couple of people who are amnesiacs. They're masochists. They work all day, and then they come here to watch us work all night. They're celebrating St. Patrick's Day. I would like the members who provided a lot of food to some of our colleagues today to please rise. Their names are Evelyn Oberg and Fran Cuglietta. Would you please rise and receive the warm welcome. We enjoyed your lunch.

head: **Interim Supply Estimates 2004-05
 Offices of the Legislative Assembly,
 Government, and Lottery Fund**

The Chair: Are there any further comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this set of estimates? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and put some questions on the record before I vote on the proposed schedule of interim supply amounts that the government has brought forward. I know that in the previous debate, on day 1 of the two-day debate – we're now on the second day – there was quite a bit of discussion about the timing of the

budget, which leads us always to the requirement or need for an interim supply. We even had participation from the Minister of Environment, which is always a special moment for us in the House. But tonight I'm just going through, raising some questions for those departments that we have not had an opportunity to examine in Public Accounts.

I would like to put some of the questions on the record when they are asking for money to be approved without any information attached to it, which tends to happen with interim supply. You literally just get a sheet with a figure, an amount next to the name of the department.

In this case I'll start from the top with Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. There's a request there for \$108,200,000. Of course, there's never any information that goes with that, so we don't know what they want to spend it on except for the sort of a blanket statement at the beginning saying: well, you know, salaries and . . . Here we go.

Operating expenses includes salaries, supplies, grants, amortization of capital assets and debt servicing costs. Equipment/inventory purchases consist of consumable inventories and movable capital assets, which are routinely moved or which may be installed as a service level improvement to existing facilities.

Then it goes on with some details about what they mean by that, but we don't actually know what's going to happen in each department.

So for those departments that we are not likely to get a chance to examine in Public Accounts, I just wanted to ask some of those questions to see if any issues that have been raised by the Auditor General have been addressed, and therefore can we move forward with confidence in approving another sum of money to be allocated to that same department?

I notice that thus far in Public Accounts this year, which only meets while the Legislature is in session, we've examined Municipal Affairs, Justice, Seniors, and this very morning Infrastructure. On the agenda upcoming is Community Development, Learning, Gaming, Health, and Finance.

The Chair: Hon. members, even with this aid it's getting harder and harder to hear the hon. member. I wonder if we could move the audible level down considerably so that whispering would be a matter of course instead of the louder conversation.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much, Mr. Chairman. A valiant job as always. Oh, Wednesday nights. Yeah.

Okay. When I examine Agriculture, Food and Rural Development in the Auditor General's report for the previous fiscal year, there is a recommendation that this department improve its performance measurement by "reviewing its goals and performance measures to ensure that they reflect the results that the Ministry wants to achieve" and "strengthening the process that the Ministry uses to compile its performance measures."

The implications and risks of not following through on this particular performance measurement – and I'm quoting directly from page 51 of the Auditor General's report, Implications and Risks – are:

If goals and measures are not carefully designed, readers will not be able to assess progress and staff may not understand critical directions. Executive, stakeholders, and the general public will not receive relevant, accurate, and timely performance information until the measurement processes are improved.

This, in fact, is sounding very like a previous Auditor General's comment on this same department, so perhaps this is sort of an ongoing working version of this, but I'd like to know where the ministry is on achieving that goal.

There's also a numbered recommendation, number 4, appearing on page 52 of the Auditor General's report recommending that "the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation award insurance benefits in accordance with its lack of moisture insurance contracts." In addition, on page 53, an unnumbered recommendation recommending that

the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation improve control over its information technology (IT) by:

- obtaining assurance on technical aspects of its computer control environment; and
- implementing appropriate controls for two of its commercial loan systems.

I believe those are the numbered and unnumbered recommendations appearing for the Agriculture, Food and Rural Development.

Mrs. McClellan: I missed the second one.

Ms Blakeman: The second one was numbered recommendation 4, appearing on page 52: "Agriculture Financial Services Corporation award insurance benefits in accordance with its lack of moisture . . ." Okay.

Mrs. McClellan: What was the one before that?

Ms Blakeman: That was performance measurements before it, and after it was another Agriculture Financial Services Corp.

Okay. Children's Services. On page 59, then, of the Auditor General's report in the Department of Children's Services, recommendation 5, that "Children's Services improve the Authorities' strategic management information systems." In Children's Services the amount being asked for as an interim supply is \$184 million, not an amount of money to be sniffed at in any way, shape, or form. But we do need certain controls and processes in place. I'm interested in hearing from whoever's speaking for Children's Services tonight whether there has been progress on addressing that concern raised by the Auditor General.

8:10

The implication of not following through on that is considerable. "Without good strategic management information, Authorities risk making improper decisions and not achieving their goals." Well, yeah, we'd like to know how well they've done on that before we approve for them another \$184 million.

There's also a key recommendation, which is sort of the gold star on the top 10 hit parade of the Auditor General's concerns. There's a key recommendation, recommendation 6, appearing on page 66 of the Auditor General's report for Children's Services recommending that the department "improve monitoring of services provided by the Delegated First Nation Agencies." The implication of not meeting that is that "the Department's review of each DFNA's compliance with standards set by the Department is not comprehensive; therefore, non-compliance with standards may occur."

I have notes in my book which tell me I probably have already asked the other recommendations that are raised here. Oh, no, I haven't. Okay.

Recommendation 7, appearing on page 68, recommending that the Ministry of Children's Services "improve its systems to recover expenses from providing services to children and families ordinarily resident-on-reserve." That's a repeated recommendation, Mr. Chairman; it also appeared as recommendation 7 in 2002. Of course, the implications there are that "inadequate cost recovery processes could prevent the Department from recovering all eligible costs."

Contract management systems. There's an unnumbered recom-

mendation that the Department of Children's Services "strengthen the processes used to award and manage contracts." Again, that's a repeated recommendation. So there is some struggle in this department that is requesting \$184 million for three months of operation to achieve this if we have repeated recommendations being made.

Another unnumbered recommendation, appearing on page 75, that the ministry "ensure that the Authorities' business plans are approved before the start of the year." Mr. Chairman, what a concept, truly what a good concept to have business plans approved before the start of the year.

I'm sure that as I move along, I will find that that same recommendation is likely appearing in the Department of Health and Wellness, where we know that the regional health authorities might have just had their business plans approved for the fiscal year that is almost done, but it's also possible that that didn't happen yet. Maybe the minister can address that.

Under the next department that I'm not likely to be able to examine in Public Accounts, we're looking at Economic Development. We have recommendation 10 recommending that the Ministry of Economic Development "revise its business plan to clearly demonstrate the desired results each core business is to achieve, and ensure its performance measures demonstrate the Ministry's contribution to results."

Now, Economic Development is requesting \$14.4 million. Last year it requested \$11.445 million, and the year before that \$8.56 million. So I'm detecting a trend here, Mr. Chairman. It seems to be that not only do we keep coming back and asking for interim supply, but every year this particular department asks for more money and with no description of what they're going to use it on other than a sort of blanket one. They seem to be having some trouble with their business plans, which is a little frightening considering that we're talking about the Department of Economic Development, which is I think supposed to be all about business plans.

Another unnumbered recommendation, also appearing on page 89, recommends that the department "expand its business plan discussion of significant environmental factors and risks, including setting out their relationship to the strategic priorities stated in the plan."

On page 90 another unnumbered recommendation, that the ministry "streamline its operational planning process and improve guidance on operational plans provided to divisions/branches."

Another unnumbered one, on page 91 of the Auditor General's report, recommends that

the Ministry of Economic Development accelerate the implementation of its internal performance measurement framework for each division and branch, including developing logic models or similar tools, and improve its internal reporting process.

The implications of not doing that are that the "business plan may not be fully achieved unless, and until, the Ministry's Managing for Results systems are more effectively implemented."

Examining the Department of Energy, Mr. Chairman, another department that just seems to want to get more, have more, spend more, in 2002-03 this particular department requested an interim supply of \$40.5 million, last year \$47.13 million, and this year \$50.2 million. Hard to rein this minister in, I tell you.

All right. We're looking at the Auditor General's comments for the Department of Energy, which, I regret, we will probably be unlikely to scrutinize through Public Accounts because, of course, the committee limits itself to only sitting . . .

Mr. MacDonald: Would you like to see the budget for Public Accounts increased for this?

Ms Blakeman: Well, Public Accounts can in fact meet outside of the sitting, but the government members continually vote not to

allow the committee to do that, so we only get through a limited number of departments every year. I feel it's incumbent upon us to make sure that we keep these very considered requests and concerns from the Auditor General top of mind as we examine any requests for future allocations of money to a department.

So on the Department of Energy I would like the minister to answer the question, please, appearing on page 95 regarding whether the recommendation that "the Department of Energy assess whether the royalty reduction programs are achieving their intended objectives" has in fact been dealt with. The implication and risk of this is that

without timely reviews, the Department cannot assess whether program objectives are being met and if royalties need to be adjusted. Timely information assists in resolving any uncertainty about the results of these programs.

A numbered recommendation appearing on page 96, Mr. Chairman, again for the Department of Energy, recommends that "the Department of Energy document and communicate the objectives of the Alberta Royalty Tax Credit program and develop measures to assess whether the program is meeting its objectives." Well, I'd like to know whether that has in fact happened. I'm sure the minister, given the amount of heckling he's doing, is going to stand up and speak, and I'm looking forward to him answering the questions.

Appearing on page 97 of the Auditor General's report is another unnumbered recommendation. It recommends that the Department of Energy

- improve the communication of its needs for assurance on well and production data to the EUB
- evaluate the extent of audit work done on well and production data by the EUB in relation to its needs.

The implications and risks of not implementing this recommendation, Mr. Chairman, are that the department "cannot be sure of the completeness and accuracy of well and production data that it uses to calculate Crown royalty revenues. Royalties may be foregone if the data used in royalty calculations is inaccurate." That means that the government does not get revenue that it was expecting, and it's going to have to get that revenue from somewhere else, probably out of the pockets of Albertans. So it's important that we have accurate data and that we get every single royalty penny that we're entitled to.

8:20

The Department of Environment, one of my best hecklers. I'm hoping he's in tonight to be able to answer the questions on the record. A numbered recommendation, recommendation 12, appearing on page 103 of the Auditor General's report, especially for the Minister of Environment, recommends that "the Ministry of Environment implement an integrated information system to track contaminated sites in Alberta." Under Implications and Risks

the Ministry has a variety of business needs for contaminated site information. Making information accessible to those who need it will enhance the management of individual sites. Individual employees with site-specific, accurate information will make better decisions about new approvals. Without a complete, accurate, integrated information system, the Ministry can only summarize or report the status of contaminated site files with considerable manual effort.

So I'd like to hear from the Minister of Environment whether he's been able to implement that recommendation.

Appearing on page 105 of the Auditor General's report under the Department of Environment a numbered recommendation, recommendation 13, recommends that

the Deputy Minister of Environment, working with the Sustainable Development Coordinating Council:

- plan and report against Alberta's Commitment to Sustainable

Resource and Environment Management annually to Standing Policy Committee; and

- complete the legislative and regulatory regime review required by the Commitment.

The implication of not implementing that is that

to realize the benefits of IRM in Alberta, the undertakings in the Commitment must be implemented.

Well, that makes perfect sense, Mr. Chairman.

Without annual planning and reporting against the Commitment,

- accountability for the IRM initiative is diminished
- key stakeholders' awareness of and interest in IRM may erode
- support decreases for the public service as they design and implement integrated and innovative solutions.

We are anticipating being able to examine Executive Council and the Premier in Public Accounts, or at least we're still hoping.

I believe that although the Finance minister was to appear before us on the 31st of March, she has rescheduled, and I will assume that we, in fact, will see her before this spring session rises. There are some really good, key recommendations in here, Mr. Chairman, some juicy, key, top 10, gold star ones, so I'm looking forward to seeing her.

Gaming we are going to examine shortly, which I'm looking forward to, of course.

Mr. Chairman, I will have to stand later and continue my scrutiny. Thank you very much.

Mrs. McClellan: I am going to just give a couple of brief responses to the hon. member's questions on the interim supply on Agriculture.

At first when I was listening, I thought: I've heard this before. "You have interim supply; what's it for?" Well, you know, we all know what it's for. In the time period between the end of this fiscal year and the budget being passed, we have wages that have to be paid. I don't think it's an unreasonable expectation that our valued civil servants get their paycheques, and I think everybody on all sides of the House agrees with that.

It's a bit hard to give detail because these are general expenses that we're talking about in ours, and I will say that in Agriculture it is primarily wages, although we do have programs that are important to be carrying out such as water programs, pumping and so on, that don't wait for anything but timeliness. We're on a season in this industry.

Then I listened carefully to the comments in the Auditor General's report, and I thought: well, you know, where are we going here? Then I thought: no; that's a very valid question because if you're going to have recommendations from the Auditor General and you're asking for money for a new year, it's a natural question to ask whether you've dealt with those issues. I'm going to deal with just a couple of them, and as always I'll give written answers with more detail.

The one that intrigues me the most is the one on performance measures. The Auditor General asked a question that is difficult, I think, to answer because of the very much a partnership relationship between our department and industry. When you look at our goals, are they actually met by the industry or by the department? Well, actually they're met by the industry in the main, so we will reflect that better in our new business plan, where the goals and performance measures that we set out are more specific to the actual department's place in that goal, which may be, for example, our value-added strategy of going to \$20 billion in value-added by 2010 or \$10 billion in primary by 2010.

It will actually be the industry that will achieve the final goal, but I think that what we have to do is measure how effective our part in that achievement is, which is laid out in the value-added strategy, as to where the department support is to the industry to achieve that

goal rather than the \$20 billion being the goal that we measure. It really will not be done by government; it will be done by industry. But we have a role in assisting the industry in getting there. So what I think the hon. member is saying and what the Auditor General said is: make sure that the performance measures you put in to measure your performance are actually your performance that is geared to assisting the industry to reach a certain goal.

We take all of the Auditor General's comments very seriously and I think to date have been very successful at implementing the changes that he's requested. We'll do that on the issue of insurance benefits and contracts. I'm trying to recall, but I believe the discussion was around a pilot project, and I will give you some written clarification on that. I'm sure that what the Auditor General is saying there is: don't make corrections, even in a pilot. The same with the technology on the commercial loans. I think that will be better answered for you in writing, where I can give you some detail.

But I did want to make some comments on performance measures and goals because I think that is an important part, and it's one that we're going to try and address much better in our new business plan. I'll look forward to the opportunity of having this discussion when that business plan is presented with our budget, and I know that we'll have a good amount of time to talk then.

Thank you.

Ms Blakeman: Thanks very much to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. I appreciate her attempts to answer some questions when we consider granting her department \$108.2 million. I appreciate it.

Just to continue on, then, with some of the other departments that we will not have an opportunity to scrutinize. That includes Government Services. There is an unnumbered recommendation appearing on page 139 recommending that "the Department of Government Services make provision for appropriate recovery facilities and equipment to resume business operations if a service disruption occurs." The background here is that there's a computerized registry system for land titles, motor vehicles, personal property. All are critical for the department, and these systems support the delivery of core programs. The department has contracted out the operation and maintenance of these to private service providers.

The implications and risks if this recommendation is not implemented are that

business operations could be severely affected in case of a service disruption. The Department could also incur significant legal liability if land title and personal property registrations are not processed promptly during a service disruption. Law enforcement across Alberta can be impaired if the motor vehicle registry is not available.

Mr. Chairman, very exciting. We have a key recommendation in Government Services. That's recommendation 19, one of the gold star, pay attention, blue ribbon, top 10 hit parade kind of key recommendations. That's recommending that "the Department of Government Services complete and approve a project management plan for the Registry Renewal Initiative." Now, that's a project to renew the systems for the land titles, motor vehicle, and personal property registries to ensure that they are capable of meeting the future growth in demand, and it's about moving to new technology. The project will cost approximately \$100 million and will take place over eight years. The department has spent approximately \$13 million on the project in this fiscal year alone.

8:30

The implications and risks of not implementing this key recommendation: "Lack of established project management processes and understanding of it by all participants, could cause significant cost

overruns, time delays and missed project objectives." That sounds kind of dry and dusty, Mr. Chairman, but in fact what it really means in layperson's terms just for people following along at home is that lots of money could get misspent if this is not implemented.

Oh, this is really an interesting department, Mr. Chairman, because in fact on page 143 of the Auditor General's report we have another key recommendation, and that is recommendation 20, recommending that "the Alberta Corporate Service Centre clearly define its performance measures and improve its processes to track and report results." Now, Mr. Chairman, this is important because this is the second time that this exact recommendation has been made, which means that there has been unsatisfactory progress on it and the Auditor General feels that he needs to bring it up again. It's so important that it's one of the key recommendations. So tsk, tsk, tsk to the Minister of Government Services for not being able to implement this.

Now, when I look at whether we, you know, should really be alarmed about this, in fact in the fiscal year 2002-03 the Government Services department requested \$48.9 million in interim money; in other words, to operate for three months. Lots of money, folks at home. The following year, last year, 2003-04, they requested \$58.2 million, \$10 million more than they'd asked for the year before. And where are we this year? Well, they're trying to rein in. They're only asking for \$59.3 million in interim supply, and that's once again for three months of operation.

The fact that we have not one but two key recommendations is significant. I think this department needs to work a little harder.

Key recommendation 20 talks about the Alberta Corporate Service Centre and performance measurements. The implications of not implementing that: "Without adequate performance measurement systems, performance information may be unreliable or lacking and may lead to poor management decisions." Implications for Alberta taxpayers: more money, money wasted, money not spent effectively, not value for money. So we need to look carefully at that.

We are expecting to examine the Health and Wellness department.

The one following that would be the Department of Human Resources and Employment, a minister who when he appears before the Public Accounts is usually very helpful in explaining where his department is going, and he does know his stuff. I am looking forward to hearing what he has to say because I don't think we're going to get a chance to see him this year.

I note that on page 168 there is a numbered recommendation, recommendation 24, recommending that "the Department of Human Resources and Employment ensure the Contract Management Administration System meets user requirements." Now, given that this department was – well, actually, they're getting better. No, not quite. In the '02-03 year, Mr. Chairman, this department requested \$318.4 million. Last year they requested – and kudos to them – less money. They only asked for \$274 million for interim supply for three months of operation. This year they weren't able to rein in quite so much. They're asking for \$286.9 million. You can see why, then, the Auditor General is trying to "ensure the Contract Management Administration System meets user requirements."

The implications and risks, of course, are that other departments are planning to implement CMAS to improve their contract management processes. It is therefore critical that inefficiencies, instability, and inability to produce management reports be corrected before CMAS is implemented elsewhere.

There is an additional recommendation in this department, I believe, Mr. Chairman, appearing on page 175, regarding the Workers' Compensation Board. Yes, I'm right. Recommendation 25: "We recommend that the Workers' Compensation Board . . . strengthen controls in its claim management system for economic loss payments." The implications and risks there are that

if [economic loss payments classification] and calculation are not accurate, the WCB may pay inaccurate benefits to injured workers and charge incorrect costs to employers.

That doesn't help especially our small business people.

The processing of ELPs also impacts the assumptions used to determine the claim benefit liability. The actuary needs a consistent history of the ELP program to make reasonable assumptions in determining claim benefit liabilities.

We were able to see the Department of Infrastructure today, in fact, although I was very disappointed in the information about P3s and no reports or cost-benefit analysis forthcoming there.

The Department of Innovation and Science. Oh, Mr. Chairman, SuperNet. Oh dear. All right. Such high hopes. First of all, we will note that this Department of Innovation and Science is restraining itself. In '02-03 Innovation and Science requested \$64 million as interim supply. Last year they only requested \$55 million, and this year going for a record. Can we do it? Yes, we think so: \$52.2 million. So the most restraint shown so far. We'll give a little gold star and send it over there to the minister.

But let's have a look at the recommendation: "We recommend that the Ministry of Innovation and Science prepare a plan for testing completed components of SuperNet." Now, what is the implication of not doing that? Well, "without an adequate plan for testing the completed network, the Ministry risks implementing a system that does not function as [needed]." I'm pretty sure I heard that little voice saying: I told you so. That would be, hmm, yes, my little voice saying: I told you so. I'm sure if we check *Hansard*, we'll find it in there a number of times, annoying and squeaky no doubt, but in there definitely on SuperNet. That one is going to come back to haunt you.

All righty. Page 199 of the Auditor General's report is recommending that

the Deputy Minister of Innovation and Science work with other deputy ministers to optimize the use of IMAGIS . . .

Implementation of IMAGIS began in 1997 and by 2001 ten modules were in use in government. However, much of the business of ministries that could be processed through these ten IMAGIS modules is processed through other applications.

So it starts and stops there, Mr. Chairman.

The implications and risks of not implementing this recommendation: "Without a structured approach, the government may fail to obtain full benefits from the IMAGIS system."

Now, on page 201, we have a numbered recommendation. The Auditor General is very thorough and predictable, which is a good thing in an Auditor General, and you do get sort of escalating kinds of recommendations from the Auditor General. The unnumbered recommendations are sort of the amber light, the flashing amber: slow down; caution, please pay attention. The numbered recommendations are much more of a full amber light, really: warning, warning. Then the key recommendations are honking big, red stop signs with full flashing lights and sometimes those little blue and white ones flashing right behind them indicating that there is serious trouble coming. So you pay attention when you get numbered ones.

8:40

The numbered one here is recommendation 29, recommending that "the Ministry of Innovation and Science formalize and implement an effective accountability framework for IMAGIS." Now, Mr. Chairman, sadly, I note that this is the second time this recommendation has been made to this ministry, was in fact also made as recommendation 32 in the previous fiscal year's Auditor General's report.

The implications and risks of not implementing this are that

without an appropriate accountability framework in place, IMAGIS may not reflect the Ministry's requirements for controls, expectations and needs.

The Ministry will be entering into a new contract with a service provider in the next fiscal year.

That would be now.

It is important that management resolve this concern before finalizing the new contract with a service provider.

So a direct question to the minister: was this implemented before there was a new contract with the new service provider? It's important that that be reconciled. I'm looking forward to having the Minister of Innovation and Science respond to that.

We also have another unnumbered recommendation appearing on page 204 recommending – oh dear, "again" recommending. Oh dear, this ministry really is struggling. So this was a recommendation from 2002, and it's being repeated. They "again recommend that the Ministry of Innovation and Science coordinate reviews of control environments at service providers."

Implications and risks: "Unless the Ministry coordinates reviews of service providers, unnecessary waste and duplication of reviews will occur." What does that mean to Alberta taxpayers? More money, a waste of money. We don't want these things to happen. So did the Ministry correct this?

Another key recommendation. Is that two in this department? Oh dear, that would be bad. No. This is the first key recommendation here. So this is recommendation 30. It is a key recommendation, one of only 14 for the entire government. They "recommend that the Ministry of Innovation and Science, with the cooperation of other ministries, implement a systems development methodology." This as well is a repeat. It was number 33 the previous year.

Implications and risks are that

without an approved set of systems development criteria, flawed systems may be developed. In some cases, they may even pose a security risk. The government will have unnecessary administrative overhead from using poorly designed and inadequately tested systems, as well as additional costs to fix the systems on an ad hoc basis.

Now moving on to International and Intergovernmental Relations. Oh dear. Well, we were doing so well with Innovation and Science. I'm sorry. That's totally reversed itself. For this small but interesting department we have a very disappointing overturn of the excellent work that had been done by Innovation and Science.

When we look at International and Intergovernmental Relations, we had in 2002-03 a request for \$1.8 million, last year \$1.9 million, and this year – I'm sorry; it's true, Mr. Chairman – \$2.3 million. That's for three months of operations. Do we have issues that need to be resolved? Do we have issues, Mr. Chairman? Yes, we do have issues, and the Auditor General has issues as well. That issue would be appearing on page 210 of the Auditor General's report recommending that "the Ministry of International and Intergovernmental Relations enhance its intergovernmental agreements systems to comply with section 11 and schedule 6 of the Government Organization Act."

Well, what does that really mean?

Section 11 requires the Minister to approve all intergovernmental agreements. Schedule 6 requires the Ministry to "be a party to the negotiation of all proposed intergovernmental agreements" and to "conduct a continuing review of all intergovernmental agreements."

All of that is in quotes.

The implications and risks of not implementing that recommendation are that

without effective systems at the Ministry to manage the intergovernmental agreements requirements of the Government Organization Act, government entities could enter into agreements that do not reflect the Alberta government's goals and principles.

So I hope that the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations can give us some answers about why that is appearing.

Public Accounts was able to examine the Minister of Justice and will be examining the Ministry of Learning, I'm happy to say. So we're moving on. Oh, my goodness, that's going to be a heavy day. That's a lot of pages. Oh my. Municipal Affairs we've also been able to scrutinize. Revenue is I hope going to be coming.

So now we're looking at Solicitor General. It's that alphabet thing. Okay. Under the Solicitor General – holy mackerel. Well, Mr. Chairman, this could be a record. I can't do the percentages fast enough in my head, but here we go. In the year 2002-03 the Solicitor General requested \$46.5 million for three months worth of operation. Last year – whoa – \$66.8 million. So a \$20 million increase for three months of operation. Where are we this year? This year the Solicitor General is requesting \$84.1 million. Whoa. This is out of control here. We're just running amok, they would say.

Seriously, Mr. Chairman, that may well be warranted spending, but when I look at recommendations from the Auditor General, I am seeing on page 272 of the Auditor General's report – oh, Mr. Chairman, it's a repeat, and it's a repeat from a long time ago, which means that they've had a long time to implement this and have not done it or have not been successful.

This is from 1998, Mr. Chairman, recommendation 34, appearing this time around on the marquis as recommendation 40: "We again recommend . . ." Now, that's kind of secret code language from the Auditor General saying tsk, tsk, tsk with all capital letters. When they say "we again recommend," it's like underlining and bolding; it really means they're serious. "We again recommend that the Department of the Solicitor General implement the plan for provincial policing standards." I will be delighted to come back to this one when I start again.

Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

An Hon. Member: Question.

Mr. MacDonald: I do have questions and lots of them.

At this time in light of the fact that the hon. Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development has answered some questions previously, perhaps I could ask her, Mr. Chairman, about the money that we're voting on here, the \$108 million. I can understand where she's coming from, the need to continue to finance government in an orderly and timely fashion. I can understand that, and I can live with that, but certainly I'm with the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods that perhaps the session should start the middle of January, and perhaps this wouldn't be necessary.

Mr. Chairman, of the \$108 million that the ag department is going to spend, is some of this earmarked for this new lab, this new level 3 lab that Alberta Agriculture is going to build? Certainly, there are monies set aside for renovations for the current level 2 lab, and it's all done, and I'm very glad to hear that that's all done. But I understand that plans are currently being developed for a new 30,000 square foot building that will house an 11,000 square foot level 3 lab. I understand that this is going to be state of the art, and it should be. It will allow Alberta Agriculture to move into higher levels of disease monitoring and allow research to be conducted on biological agents that require a higher level of containment.

8:50

Now, this level 3 lab is obviously needed to increase the province's testing capacity for TSEs. Now, what is the state of this

project? If the hon. minister could update the House on that. Certainly, I hope that this lab is handy to the constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud, somewhere down around the university so that the veterinarian pathologists would have a place to practice while they go to school perhaps. But I would like to certainly hear from the minister that it's going to be in the city of Edmonton.

Thank you. I would be delighted to hear her response.

Mrs. McClellan: Mr. Chairman, I'd be pleased to respond to the hon. member and appreciate his interest in the initiatives taken on testing. The level 2 lab improvements have been completed. The level 2 lab, in it's refurbished form and with the training of staff and some additional staff hired, has been completed. It has been operational – I'm trying to remember – for three or four weeks and now has the capability of doing up to 1,000 tests using the Bio-Rad tests. That was the test that was determined would be used here after they reviewed two or three of the rapid tests that are used around the world. So that is in place.

Actually, the improvements and renovations to that lab were done very efficiently by the Department of Infrastructure. We had to wait for formal approval of the lab by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency; they do those approvals. We received verbal go-ahead, and then we had to wait for the test kits. This is another issue, but we have those, and we're in operation.

The level 3 lab groundbreaking will occur as soon as weather permits. It will be located in the area of the Longman Building, which is our present lab facilities, which is of course close to the university. There was a great deal of consultation done as to the best location because, of course, there are some laboratory services of Ag Canada's in Lethbridge. We have some at the research park as well as at the university. It was determined that for all of the purposes of this lab the location chosen close to the Longman Building was the best.

You asked whether some of the \$108 million was for that lab. The lab actually will be built by Infrastructure, as all government projects are, but certainly operationally those responsibilities will be with Alberta Agriculture. Those will be, obviously, a part of our business plan and budget as it becomes operational. The level 3 lab is not expected to be operational until the spring of 2005. These are very complex buildings; this is a very high-level lab. But I can tell you that the design work is done, the location has been determined, and it's moving along very well. We expect to break ground as soon as weather permits. It'll be a great addition to our province, and I am extremely pleased that it does have space for research. I think that's incredibly important.

With the great research that occurs over at the University of Alberta in agriculture and in health sciences, this has an opportunity for us to attract more top scientists to our province and, again, play a leadership role in research in some animal health and, in fact, related to human health, crossover research. Whether all of that would occur at that lab, every research capability that we increase gives us opportunities for more.

So thank you for your interest. That's the best information I can give you at this time.

The Chair: The hon. leader of the third party.

Dr. Pannu: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure to rise and ask some questions about the 2004-2005 interim supply estimates before the Assembly since last night. We've spent almost three hours to this point, I guess, on discussing these estimates.

I read with some considerable interest the *Hansard* from last night, Mr. Chairman, and I find in *Hansard* that lots of important

questions have been asked from the opposition side, both by the New Democrat opposition and by the Liberal opposition, but very few answers are forthcoming. Certainly, from last night's records I notice that there are no answers provided for any of the questions that were raised then.

Today it seems that one notices a little improvement. A few questions have been answered very briefly. Very briefly. The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development has been particularly generous in answering some of these questions. The rest of the government continues to be silent.

Mr. Chairman, I didn't have a calculator at my disposal, but I noticed that for the two months of the next fiscal year, for the months of April and May, until May 31, close to \$5.5 billion are being asked for by way of this interim supply estimate. Now, if you sort of prorate it on a yearly basis, \$5.5 billion for two months multiplied by six, I think it would bring the budget to more than \$32 billion. I'd like to ask the government whether or not it's appropriate to base our estimate of the overall budget for the next year on the request that's been brought before us for two months of the next year by way of this estimate here.

If that is the case, then surely the important question to ask, I guess, from my side is: what's the revenue picture? Thirty-three billion dollars of projected expenditures based on the two-month estimates presented to the Assembly that we're debating tonight is close to, I believe, \$10 billion more than the 2003-2004 budget. So the question is: where are the revenues going to come from?

I know that \$500 million have been requested by the government to be transferred by way of a bill on which I've spoken before from the sustainability fund over into the general revenues for the government to spend. But \$500 million won't pay for the implementation of the Learning Commission's report, which I believe this government is seriously committed to implementing. Also, it will need some revenues to meet the expenses that it's going to incur to give the tax cut gift of \$106 million starting April 1 to corporations of this province.

9:00

So it has an interesting sort of balance sheet. It wants to spend more and at the same time wants to tax more in some areas but also spend more on tax cuts to certain entities and corporations in this province. It's a confusing picture. I'd like to have some answers to it. Where are the revenues coming from in order to meet, according to my estimate, \$33 billion, a budget that seems to be, by implication at least, being rejected for 2004-2005?

Mr. Chairman, then, of course, there is the question of priorities of the government. If the government is going to spend \$161 million on corporate tax cuts in the new fiscal year, why would it not consider in fact using some of that money, rather than spending it on this gift to corporations, to provide relief to seniors by eliminating their health taxes, which are called premiums in this province? Seniors certainly would greatly appreciate this. The cost would be much less, and a lot more people would be served by that. So that's one question there.

I'm curious about one item here. The Department of Finance is asking for \$18.5 million in operating expenses and/or equipment inventory purchases. Compared to that, the next department on the list, Gaming, is asking for \$50.5 million for the same item. My understanding is that the Gaming department is much smaller than the Department of Finance yet is asking for almost three times as much in interim supply estimates. Maybe the Minister of Finance can solve this riddle for me.

The Department of Finance is clearly one of the most important departments. I'm sure they've got lots of staff, lots of salary bills to

pay, yet the Gaming department is asking for three times more money in these estimates. I hope I'm not just asking the government to satisfy my idle curiosity about it. It's a real, substantive question: why this discrepancy between these two departments? One tiny one, which doesn't really produce any goods other than to encourage and promote gambling in this province to make more Albertans addicted to this what I call social disease, asking for more money from this Assembly for the next two months just doesn't make much sense.

Also, Mr. Chairman, there is some answer on page 1 of this little booklet that we have here before us, lottery fund payments. The Gaming department is asking for lottery fund payments to the tune of \$313,600,000. There is some attempt to explain where this money will go. On the first page it says, "Lottery Fund payments consist of the transfer of lottery proceeds to departments for selected projects."

So I'm sure that the government knows, the Minister of Finance would know, what these selected projects are. Would it be impossible for the Minister of Finance to simply list these projects for the attention of the Assembly by way of justifying the request for \$313,600,000 in lottery fund payments under Gaming? Again, I think it's a legitimate question. I am sure that the Minister of Finance will consider it an appropriate question and do her very best to provide this simple, factual information that's absolutely essential for the Assembly to have before it votes on these estimates.

In the same manner, Mr. Chairman, I again find on page 1 under Capital Investments some reference to oil, gas, and electricity transmission facilities for which, I think, capital investment funds are being asked. I wonder if the Minister of Energy, who is asking for 50 plus some million dollars in interim supply estimates, would please share with the Assembly some information with respect to where some or all of this money is going to be spent. Is some of it going to be spent on these oil, gas, and electricity transmission facilities? If that is the case, then I think surely this Assembly is rightfully in a position to ask what amount of that \$50 million would be spent on oil, gas, and electricity transmission facilities.

So these are some of the general questions, Mr. Chairman, and I have some other questions here which I would certainly like to have addressed. I'm sure that the ministers and the government are anxious to answer these questions as best they can and do so with the utmost earnestness. The Minister of Justice is surely asking for some money, so I'm sure he'd be happy to address some of these questions related to his own ministry and perhaps to other departments as well.

But here is the question for the Minister of Finance that I believe is certainly her bailiwick, her territory. In the last two budgets school property taxes have been allowed by this government and by this ministry to increase along with the increase in Alberta's property tax base, breaking a promise made by this Minister of Finance in April 2001, as a freshly-minted Minister of Finance at the time, coming out of the election, to freeze school property taxes at a constant \$1.2 billion. We're talking about freezing the absolute amount of taxes to be collected from property tax. But the minister broke that promise last year. Does the minister and the government plan to do the same all over again this coming year?

What about the motion that was passed two weeks ago to phase out property taxes by this Assembly? The motion was sponsored by and shepherded through this Assembly by government backbenchers, and it passed. I'd like to hear what the Minister of Finance's position is with respect to the Assembly's decision to vote for that motion. Is the minister now going to be guided by the passage of that motion by this Assembly and stop levying any property taxes for school funding purposes?

9:10

Another set of questions, Mr. Chairman, in the area of the Ministry of Learning. How much more funding can school boards reasonably expect?

How will funds be allocated to implement the Learning Commission recommendations?

What priority will be given to fixing classroom conditions in the existing K to 12 system?

Within what time frame will the government implement the class size guidelines from the Learning Commission report, especially those in kindergarten to grade 3, where in the big metropolitan, urban areas of the province existing class sizes are much, much higher than the 17 students per class recommended by the Learning Commission?

With respect to K to 3 class sizes or class complexity, on the other side of the issue, in areas outside of the major metropolitan centres, the greater Calgary/greater Edmonton regions, the problem is not so much in terms of the class size as such but the class complexity, which poses just as difficult challenges to school boards, to teachers, to parents when they are trying to provide the very best education that they can to these very young children who are in our schools going through kindergarten to grade 3. So those are some of the questions on the K to 12 part of Learning.

Then, of course, the question is: what funds are going to be allocated as part of these interim supply estimates to postsecondary institutions?

Is the base funding formula going to be changed for colleges and universities and technical institutes to help fill the gap that they have been suffering from in terms of their ability to pay the bills, the costs that are going up for providing the very essential educational experience and services that they do, and the money that is available to them from this government? There's no indication here, Mr. Chairman, how these interim supply estimates and the budget that's going to follow next week are going to address these questions. So those are a few of the questions here.

One or two other questions here, given the time I may have. Oh, yes. The tax giveaways that the government is planning to continue with to the corporate sector. How are the expenditures related to those gifts going to be paid for, and from where are the revenues going to come to do that? Through increase of service fees? Increase in health care premiums? Decreases to the services that are provided to seniors, or through cutbacks in the other social assistance programs?

I would like to ask questions about the AISH programs. Lots of Albertans depend on those. Is the government by way of these estimates going to allocate some money which will be used to increase the amount of money that AISH recipients receive starting the 1st of April? I know that the corporate sector is going to be receiving its gift of \$106 million which will kick in as of the 1st of April. Are the AISH recipients likely to be treated with any degree of similar kindness and generosity on the part of this government, or are they going to continue to be ignored and, in fact, going to be asked to wait for another year or two while the government meets its promises to the already wealthy in this province in the corporate sector, who do not need any of those gifts in order for them to remain financially viable and competitive?

Another question is on P3s, Mr. Chairman. P3s, in my view, are something that is causing lots of people to ask serious questions about the real intentions of this government. Is this a way of doing catch-up with respect to the huge deficits in infrastructure?

The Chair: Hon. member, we've run out of time.
The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mrs. Nelson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. The hon. member opposite has asked a number of questions on interim supply. Some of them I think are very valid questions, and I appreciate his inquiring into a number of areas. As you know, next week I will be bringing down the budget for the government, and a lot of those specific questions will be answered in that budget presentation on a department-by-department basis, so I have to be careful not to go too far into the specific details.

However, all that being said, I know that it was debated last night as to why we have interim supply, and it was part of the introduction that I gave when I filed the documents with the Legislature, to see that the government continues on over the year-end and, in fact, while we go through the department-by-department debate on the budgets when they're presented in the Committee of Supply on the budgets themselves.

All that being said, I know that some ministries have got up and talked about where dollars are needed. The obvious, of course, are the ongoing operations of their departments: their salaries, et cetera, their expenses. But a number of the departments clearly deal with other front-line groups that deliver services on behalf of the government, and their arrangements do begin at the beginning of the fiscal year, as of April 1. They need to be in fact advanced dollars so that their operations again continue on so that there isn't a disruption while we debate budgets within this Legislature, and that's important.

What I can say is that you've talked about a number of things that are near and dear to everyone's heart, health care being one of them, which is a very important aspect of any budget document that comes forward. Clearly, it is an area that affects every household in this province and is a focus and a priority for our government. You've heard the Minister of Health and Wellness on a daily basis talk about the sustainability of the health system and the renewal of the health system as a key focus for our government, and I believe that over the next number of months you'll see him focus his attentions on that sustainability and the road map that will get us to that.

You heard the Premier today talk about the Minister of Justice coming out with a release of the strategic plan that will be part of the budget document in the next few days. Again, that too will be a key element of the long-term road map of the vision for the government that takes us well beyond the four- or five-year time frame that normally is presented within a budgetary document.

This, of course, Mr. Chairman, came about as a result of the recommendations from the Financial Management Commission, recommendation 12, which to me was one of the most fundamental recommendations, I believe, that any government in Canada could ever accept. That was to be thinking strategically and thinking beyond the normal political mandate so that you could do some long-term planning and strategizing as you move forward and that would give focus to people not only within the Assembly itself but in the front-line areas such as the school boards, the universities, the health authorities, the municipalities so that they could in fact work on a long-term strategy that would deliver the objectives they have laid forward and the vision they have laid forward, and it would be in sync instead of in contradiction or waiting to see so there wouldn't be surprises. There could actually be long-term strategies laid out. It's not an unusual function; it's just unusual for governments to do that. Here in Alberta we haven't been afraid to take those new paths so that we could provide that kind of critical path and structure.

So that will be coming out, as the Premier said today, in the next few days from the Minister of Justice.

9:20

You've heard our Solicitor General talk about the importance of

policing, and those announcements will be coming out as part of the budget process. These are initiatives that we've heard from people. We've heard people tell us that they're critically important and they have to be dealt with, and the Solicitor General has talked about that already.

One of the biggest items coming forward in the budget, of course, is in the Learning portfolio. You've heard the Minister of Learning talk about the recommendations from the Learning Commission and how those recommendations will be implemented over the next few years and that the focus on learning will be key for Alberta, and we've accepted those as a government. So those, too, are very important reflections of the priorities for our government, and they're all part of this.

Again, life doesn't stop because of a date, and we found that in the capital plan this year. We said: let's not be tied to a date in capital, that because of March 31 everything has to stop; let's continue on. And we changed that in the capital planning process, which I think was wise.

I did try to find out where the rule came in that everything had to be spent before March 31 or you lost it, and that's why we made the fundamental change in structure this year that you could carry that capital forward and spend it when it made sense to do it. Again, the front-line delivery folks would have that evaluation and that expertise in their own shop. So it was a fundamental change, and I think it was very important.

So what we have here in the interim supply estimates are quite clearly the things that sustain us through those debates and the particulars of the budget that do come forward to maintain the ongoing programs so we don't put those programs in jeopardy. I think it's important to proceed on with it, and next week, as I say, I'll be bringing down the budget.

One of the things that you also mentioned was P3s. I know it was an issue, Mr. Chairman, that came up today again. Well, we've been very, very careful in our P3 process and very, very thorough, I believe. We even have a special advisory group with expertise in that area to make sure that when we look at projects that may qualify or be selected for a P3 concept, they in fact make sense. Some jurisdictions have gone off and I think got caught in the concept of P3 without the real evaluation. One of the key elements of a P3 project is the ability to transfer risk, and that's one of the key elements that has to be evaluated and associated with those kinds of projects.

Today someone asked the question about all the ones that have failed and have been wrong. The key is to make sure that you recognize where some of the weaknesses have been and make sure that they're not within our structure, and then we protect ourselves from those kinds of structures.

So that is one vehicle that can be used by governments, but it isn't the only vehicle because you do have to do an evaluation. You have to do a cost-benefit analysis. You have to do a long-term evaluation as to whether it makes sense to have someone else get involved in the project or to do it as we have done all along, and we've said in this government that the vast majority of our projects will continue to be financed in the way they have traditionally, that we will pay for them as we go along.

But there is an opportunity to use alternative financing. We've built that into the capital structure. We've left that door open, and if ideas do come forward, we will seriously evaluate them and look at them, but we will only go forward if it makes sense to do that. We're not prepared to just do it because it's the popular thing of the day.

Insofar as support, we could go through these. We have support, again, for the offices of the Legislative Assembly that have to carry

on beyond March 31: the Auditor General, the office of the Ombudsman, the Chief Electoral Officer, the Ethics Commissioner, and the Information and Privacy Commissioner. These are all functions, Mr. Chairman, that must continue on as we go through a budgetary debate, once the budget is submitted next week, and of course the departments of the government.

The realistic side of the situation is that things progress on, and they must be secure. That's all this is doing. This carries us on for two months and satisfies those agencies or groups that have to receive their operating up front to continue on. Nothing more, nothing less. So there's no magic to this. The real debate will come as we go through the budget documents and go on the elements within each vote and debate line by line in those votes the details of the expenditures on a department-by-department basis. I would hope that we would proceed with passing these interim estimates and proceed, then, next week with the budget and have the detailed debate at that time when we have the departments' estimates before the House.

I haven't answered all of your questions – some of them will have to wait until after the budget – but I fully intend to make sure that your questions are answered as you ask them through Committee of Supply in the budget debate. As I've told you on many occasions, if I haven't answered them all in committee, we will undertake to get answers back to you, and we will go through the *Hansard* for the questions. I think the vast majority of this debate needs to take place after the budget comes through.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. I just had to continue on because, of course, I'm on one of those issues that I just feel very strongly about. What I had been talking about was recommendation 40 from the Auditor General's 2002-2003 report appearing on page 272. I'll note that it is a repeat recommendation as well. It's recommending "that the Department of the Solicitor General implement the plan for provincial policing standards."

Now, seeing that this ministry is requesting \$84.1 million, I think it's more than reasonable to ask how the ministry is responding to the recommendations that were made regarding the ministry's operations, particularly with this minister. She is the black hole of space as far as reports are concerned, loves to commission them and have MLA committees running around there. [interjection] Oh, I'm sorry. He commissions them. She doesn't implement them and doesn't publish them. We've got three of them that are outstanding that are coming from her department which taxpayers have paid for, Mr. Chairman, and have not been able to see.

This is a fourth one actually, because what's still out there is the MLA review of the Police Act. That, in fact, did report, but then the minister looked at it for a while and said: "Well, you know, we're going to accept some and reject some. We want to do another feedback loop, and we'll get back to you." That's the last we heard of it. So we don't really know what was the end result of all of that, and that was July of 2001. Then in the fall of 2001 was that sort of first feedback loop, and we've never heard anything since.

The second thing that's outstanding completely – we've never seen it again; it disappeared into the wormhole of space – is the review of the Corrections Act. Again, a number of backbench MLAs went around the country looking at corrections: no published report; nothing happening there. With the victims' fund, which was a consultation that was chaired by the Member for Calgary-Shaw, a report was done. Poof, Mr. Chairman, no sign of it. Gone.

When I asked in question period for the Solicitor General to please

release all of these reports that taxpayers have paid for, I got told: "Well, I'm going to do something. Just wait for the budget, and then I can release all of these." I say: excuse me? Some of these are outstanding and, in fact, existed. We've actually seen parts of them, the policing review from 2001 anyway. So we don't need to wait until the 2004-2005 budget to be released to get these reports released. She can do them at any time.

9:30

The fourth unimplemented, unpublished, unfinished piece of business from this department is this plan for provincial policing standards. Now, the Auditor General notes that

the Ministry had drafted a policing standards manual but had decided not to issue the manual because it wanted to . . .

Wait for it.

. . . review the report of the MLA Policing Review Committee . . . issued on July 10, 2002, to assess its impact on policing standards.

Now we're waiting on a provincial policing standard, which is waiting on this MLA policing review, which does not have to wait for the budget. So let's have it. What is the problem that everything is being kept behind closed doors and under cover of darkness there?

What are the implications and risks of this? "Until the plan is implemented, the Ministry does not know whether police services meet the province's minimum policing standards. Public safety could be at risk." Now, the Auditor General doesn't run around making wild statements, so I've got to take him seriously when he says, "Public safety could be at risk," because we don't know what is supposed to happen here and we can't measure it. So this is very serious.

[Mr. Klapstein in the chair]

You know, one of the things we keep getting from this front bench around everything we ask now is: stay tuned. Well, if I can send a message back to the Public Affairs Bureau: come up with another one because that isn't working for us. I mean, this whole spin about: "Oh, gosh, you know, we've got to pay the salaries of the civil servant, and that's why we need this interim supply." Well, of course that's why you need the interim supply. Of course it's going to pay all of those salaries. And, no, the opposition is not saying that bureaucrats shouldn't get paid here.

What we are saying is that the timing of all of this is 100 per cent under the control of the government. The government calls us into this sitting; the government decides when the budget is going to be prepared and be released; the government decides when the throne speech is going to happen. The government is perfectly capable of calling this House back in on the 15th of January, the 25th of January, the 1st of February, or whatever. Lots of time to give us to get the throne speech done, to get a budget brought in, and to debate the full budget and pass it before the fiscal year-end, which is the point.

We were at a time once when special warrants were used only under extraordinary circumstances, when for some, you know, major reason, good reason we couldn't have the budget passed before the fiscal year began, which is the 1st of April. Now, what could be a circumstance there? Well, an election, for example. If the election were very close to the end of the fiscal year, then it wouldn't be possible to get the House in and get the budget passed in time, so that would be the use for a special warrant, or what's now called interim supply.

This has now become – and I actually heard someone say this last night – traditional. It's traditional that it would be this late, and that's the reason for it being this late. That's ridiculous. The government has total control about what they're doing here, so it's

the government's choice that they're going to be that late with getting the budget in here that we would have to have an interim supply budget brought forward. This is not about tradition; this is about choice.

The other excuse I've heard brought up by the government is, "Well, we have to wait for the federal government. We can't do our budget until we've heard from the feds." Well, I think out of the eight budgets I've been around for, the feds have actually produced a budget in the spring that was even close to what this government would be waiting for once. There's no need. The province is not tied to the federal budget. It doesn't have to wait for it, and most years it can't wait for it because the feds don't produce a budget anywhere close to this.

So, you know, go back to Public Affairs and get another spin on this one because this one ain't cutting it. It's not working. It's entirely up to the front bench how this goes, and obviously the choice is that they want an interim supply. If anybody's going to start yakking off about how bureaucrats aren't being paid, I will direct their attention to the front bench, whose choice it is to have an interim supply and to have us begin the budget debates so late that we cannot get a budget passed prior the beginning of the fiscal year.

Looking at Sustainable Resource Development, which is a ministry that is requesting . . . Oh; okay. This is good. Mr. Speaker, this is encouraging. This is why the minister wanted me to look at his department in particular, because I'm afraid, minister of science and technology, you've lost first place here for most reduced requests in interim supply. The new award is now going to, probably temporarily, the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development, who in 2002-2003 requested \$101.9 million, last year requested \$92.9 million, and this year, Mr. Chairman – and truly he is moving to the head of the line – is down to \$52.3 million as an interim supply for, once again I'll remind you all, three months of spending. I commend the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development for his austerity program here.

Now, when I look at what the Auditor General is looking for, I would be questioning the minister on whether he's been able to implement these recommendations, because they're concerns raised by the Auditor General. On page 277 an unnumbered recommendation requests that the Department of Sustainable Resource Development "follow the government's best practice guidelines for contracted services and grants when undertaking major capital or long-term lease projects."

The implications and risks of not implementing this are that the department

manages contracts totalling millions of dollars each year. Following the government's best practices will help the Department acquire cost-effective services with less risk. For example, in the "decision to contract" stage, a business case should identify risks, clarify estimated costs, and analyze lease vs. buy options. In the "review/approval process", the Department should consider the financial stability of its bidders. In the "continuous improvement" stage, the Department should consider how to improve its contracting practices.

So I'm looking to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development as to how he is progressing in implementing that.

Finally, when we look at Transportation, which is a budget that is – holy mackerel; that's got to be the biggest jump. In the year 2002-2003 the Department of Transportation requested \$139 million as an interim supply. Last year, Mr. Chairman, this department requested \$220.3 million and this year \$367.3 million. Yowza, says I. That's a lot of money for three months.

Mr. MacDonald: How is *Hansard* going to spell yowza?

Ms Blakeman: I have every faith that *Hansard* will figure out how to spell yowza. And there's an exclamation mark in there in case anybody was wondering.

All right. When I look at page 282 of the Auditor General's report under the Department of Transportation, there is a numbered recommendation, which means that we should take this seriously, recommending that the Ministry of Transportation

strengthen its monitoring of and audit processes for driver examiners by:

- preparing annual plans for monitoring and auditing examiners
- promptly monitoring and auditing driver examiners, and reporting the results to senior management
- training driver program administrators to identify the risk factors of unethical behaviour and to investigate problem examiners
- making the license renewal process as rigorous as the application process.

The implications and risks of not implementing this would be that there is a risk that the Ministry will not identify and investigate examiners who are not conducting examinations in accordance with legislation and policy. This could result in unqualified drivers obtaining driver licenses, risking the safety of the travelling public.

Very serious, and I commend the Auditor General for having raised the concern. I'm interested in how the minister plans on implementing that or, in fact, if it has been implemented, especially since he's asking for an astonishing \$367.3 million for three months of operation.

On page 285 we have the recommendation that the Ministry of Transportation "implement a process to mitigate the risk of examiners being affiliated with driver training schools or registry agents" and also recommending that the ministry "enhance its code of conduct and require examiners to reconfirm compliance with the code of conduct and conflict-of-interest requirements." Implications and risks are that "there is a risk that the Ministry will not identify or prevent unethical practices, which could result in issuing licences to unqualified drivers."

9:40

So I look forward to hearing verbally, or if not verbally then, please, in writing as soon as possible because, of course, I am not going to be able to support this request for interim supply until I am satisfied that these recommendations have in fact been implemented. Now, following the Committee of Supply examination of the interim supply requests, we will have an appropriation bill before us that goes through second reading, Committee of the Whole, and third reading, so we do have until the beginning of next week for ministers to reply to this member in writing with the answers to the questions that I have put before them.

At this point, Mr. Chairman, I would like to bring forward an amendment.

Some Hon. Members: Ah.

Ms Blakeman: That would be the sound of cheering that I hear. Thank you so much for the support. I'll keep talking while they distribute the amendment for Committee of Supply.

Essentially, what I'm asking is that "the Department of Justice estimates for the 2004-2005 interim supply . . . be reduced by \$12,250 so that the operating expense and equipment/inventory purchase to be voted is \$70,487,750."

Now, what is this connected to, you say? Well, what this is connected to is the standing policy committees and the pay for the Standing Policy Committee on Justice and Government Services, which covers goings-on in the departments of Justice, Solicitor General, and Government Services. These are committees that I

view, in fact, as unparliamentary and as essentially committees of the Tory caucus because in most cases these meetings are not open to the public. They're not open to the media. There is no *Hansard* recording kept of the proceedings of these meetings, and very rarely are other members of the House able to obtain, and certainly they're not allowed to participate in, the proceedings of these committees.

I do not believe that taxpayer money should be funding these committees. This is just one; there are four other committees that exist that are these standing policy committees. I don't believe that the taxpayer should be paying for these essentially internal policy committees.

Mr. MacDonald: Does SPC stand for special progressive conservative?

Ms Blakeman: Well, I'm asked if SPC stands for special progressive conservative, but it doesn't. It stands for standing policy committee.

I continue to argue that these, in fact, are internal Tory caucus committees, certainly not committees of the Legislative Assembly, and I would argue that they are not government committees and should not be paid for by the public dollar. They should be paid for by the partisan funds that the government caucus has access to.

Now, I believe that the amendment has been distributed, and I believe that I may call this amendment A1.

The Acting Chair: That would be fine. This amendment will be A1.

Ms Blakeman: Thank you. I think that it's important, especially when today we had Mr. Speaker's MLA for a Day youth participants in the building and watching our proceedings.

[Mr. Tannas in the chair]

I went up and spoke to a group of them this afternoon on the role of the opposition, and they were very interested in parliamentary process and, in fact, in their involvement. We talked a bit about democratic deficits that existed and why they feel disconnected from the proceedings of this particular House. I think these standing policy committees are in some small part responsible for that distancing that people feel. What this government has done over the 10 years that they've been in under the current leadership is move the business of this Assembly behind closed doors into internal workings of the government Tory caucus.

Dr. Massey: I think you got the attention of the Deputy Premier.

Ms Blakeman: Did we indeed? Okay.

So we don't have members of the backbench debating government bills in this House, for example, and when we say, "Well, you know, why don't you?" we're told: "We've already done it. We did it through this standing policy committee. We've already vetted it there." But we have no idea what questions were asked, who participated in the debate, who supported something, who didn't support something.

Part of what happens in this House and part of the reason that it's open to the public, that the galleries are open to the public, that there is a transcript kept of what we do, is so that our constituents can in fact look up what we've said and find out what we're saying on their behalf or, perhaps, not saying on their behalf. Then they can take issue with us and say, "You're not representing me."

We have no idea of what those government members feel about various bills. They don't debate the bills in this Assembly. They heckle. They love to heckle the opposition, who are in fact taking

the time to prepare and look at what's being said in the bills and get up and speak for their constituents. But I never know what the Member for Drayton Valley-Calmar actually thinks about these issues. He's more than willing to heckle me from the backbench there, but he doesn't get up and speak on the record for government bills.

Who are the other ones that we love to hear from here? West Yellowhead, Vermilion-Lloydminster, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, Edmonton-Castle Downs, Calgary-Fish Creek, Edmonton-McClung: all of them are really keen on heckling opposition members when they're up to speak, but we have no idea of what they actually feel about bills. And what's one of their primary excuses as to why they don't debate when the bill is being debated on the floor at the Legislative Assembly? Because they've already talked about it in the standing policy committee. How do we know that?

I hope you'll support this amendment. Thank you so much.

The Chair: The hon. Government House Leader on amendment A1.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm delighted to rise and speak to this amendment if for no other reason than that the hon. member has targeted the Department of Justice estimates, and if there is any department in government whose estimates should not be reduced by \$12,250, it's got to be the Department of Justice.

The Department of Justice works so hard to make our community safe in this province. The Department of Justice, Mr. Chairman, has the maintenance enforcement program. The hon. member, herself, on a daily basis talks about how important that program is to Alberta's children, raising money, collecting money that is ordered by courts so that Alberta's children can be properly taken care of. The hon. member should be ashamed, trying to lower the Department of Justice's budget by \$12,250. Alberta's children deserve better from that hon. member.

Mr. Chairman, I am absolutely shocked and appalled, to use a term that often was used by the predecessor from Edmonton-Strathcona as Leader of the Official Opposition some years ago – shocked and appalled – that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre would even dream of reducing the estimates for the Department of Justice by \$12,250. How many children does she want to go without their maintenance enforcement payments because the Department of Justice doesn't have the money to go out and collect?

The Department of Justice, Mr. Chairman, has the Public Trustee's office. [interjection] The Public Trustee – the hon. member obviously doesn't know – takes care of those vulnerable Albertans who cannot take care of themselves. The Minors' Property Act, which we've debated in this House, the Public Trustee Act, that we've debated in this House – the Public Trustee is responsible to take care of the assets of those people who aren't able to take care of themselves, to handle decedents' estates when there is no one else in place to take care of those decedents, to take care of the unfortunate in this province. And this hon. member brings forward a motion to reduce the budget by \$12,250.

The court system. We have a very strong court system in this province, but it can't do the job that it ought to be able to do or could do if it were provided even more resources, not less resources. So we need to try and reform the court systems by talking about single-trial courts, which can make more effective use of the resources.

9:50

We talk about the domestic violence court in Calgary. Her Liberal cousins have removed the support for domestic violence court because it's a pilot project that's ended, and in typical federal Liberal

fashion they start things but then withdraw your money and let the province carry the ball when it's successful.

Dr. Massey: Through the municipalities.

Mr. Hancock: Well, they were partners with us. The municipalities do have some concerns in that regard, and we work and the Minister of Municipal Affairs works very closely with them to try and make sure that we can achieve something. They're going to be very excited after the next budget.

But I can tell you that no one is going to be excited if this hon. member achieves her dream of reducing the Department of Justice estimates by \$12,250 because it takes away from the very thing which makes this community, this Alberta, a safe place to live, a safe, caring community, which is fundamental – fundamental, Mr. Chairman – to any just society.

Now, she uses as the pathetic excuse for taking away money from these very, very important roles of government, the standing policy committees. She says that because those are not committees of the Legislature involving all parties, they're not valid committees. Well, nobody has ever said that they were committees of the Legislature; they're committees of government. Each department of government consults with members of government with respect to government policy before it's brought to the Legislature. What could be more appropriate than that?

When it comes to the Legislature, members of the opposition and all members of the Legislature get to comment on it. But in developing government policy, we consult with the public. We have a thorough consultation process with the public, and members of the opposition aren't precluded from that process. They can be involved in the consultation processes with the government that go on on a regulation basis before any new public policy is brought to this Chamber. They can participate in that way. But when you're talking about developing government policy, obviously you consult with government members.

Now, government in our system of parliamentary democracy consists essentially in the truest form as members of Executive Council, but just because that's what is defined as government, it does not mean that members of Executive Council cannot create committees and consult more broadly. That's precisely what a standing policy committee is. In fact, this jurisdiction, Mr. Chairman, has, I think, the distinction of involving private members on the government side in policy development, budget development, and legislation development in a far greater way than any other parliamentary democracy that I'm aware of. That's after the public consultation and before it comes to the floor of the Legislature, leaving in the Legislature more time and opportunity for members of the opposition to raise any concerns that they might have.

The irony of it, Mr. Chairman, is that the bill that's had the most debate in this House is about agricultural operations, but if they read it, it's about spreading manure. That's the irony of it. The bill that's had the longest debate in the House so far and the most amendments from the opposition side is a bill about how we spread manure. It's manure management.

So, Mr. Chairman, I would encourage this House to turn down this ill-founded, ill-thought-out amendment because the effect of this amendment, even if it's only on interim supply, is to take away dollars from a department which needs those dollars, which, in fact, has been able to prevail upon Treasury Board, as they would know because they debated supplementary supply . . .

Dr. Pannu: Small change.

Mr. Hancock: Small change. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona calls \$12,250 small change. All I can say, Mr. Chairman, is that I have no idea what his pension is, but it must be a heck of a lot more than any pension I would get.

If \$12,250 is small change, I can tell you what we can do for \$12,250. Let's see; a quick calculation here. We can probably collect \$100,000 for children in Alberta with \$12,250. I'm guessing at that. I'll have to go back and remind myself. Maybe you'll raise the same type of amendment when we bring in our full supply. But with that kind of money, Mr. Chairman, we can do a lot. It's not just a modest amount. It's not a modest amount of money to the Department of Justice; I can tell you that.

I can tell you – and I'll get back to the concept that the hon. member raised about standing policy committees – that the standing policy committee that I report to that's chaired by the hon. Member for Lacombe-Stettler does a phenomenal job. A phenomenal job. What does it do?

Ms Blakeman: That may well be. It's taxpayers' money.

Mr. Hancock: Darn right it's taxpayers' money, and it should be taxpayers' money because they're getting value.

Ms Blakeman: It's an internal government committee.

Mr. Hancock: Well, all committees of government are internal government committees. It's not a committee of the Legislature; it's a government committee. It's not a partisan committee; it's a government committee. Well, I shouldn't say that it's not partisan because, of course, it's all members of the governing party that are on it. [interjection] Would you rather that I stopped now? Is that what you're suggesting?

I was making a point about the efficacy of standing policy committees, I believe. Standing policy committees perform a phenomenal function, and I can tell you what they do. You know, I have another committee that perhaps you want to tack onto this agenda, the dollars that are spent on the Justice Policy Advisory Committee. Perhaps the Justice Policy Advisory Committee's budget should be cut as well.

Maybe my travel expenses should be cut. Maybe I shouldn't travel anywhere. The hon. member in Public Accounts asked where I travelled. Well, I think she was surprised to know that I have gone to Nova Scotia for a meeting with justice ministers from across the country. That was on September 10 and 11 of that fatal year.

I went to Nunavut, as a matter of fact. Iqaluit, again to meet with justice ministers. The hon. member would probably look at the bills from that and suggest that it was way too high. Well, I can tell you: it's expensive to travel to Nunavut. But it's also expensive not to travel to Nunavut when justice ministers are meeting and talking about the Criminal Code and talking about amendments to the Criminal Code that might protect children by enhancing the laws against child pornography. Now, how do you value that? Are you going to check and see whether I spent \$15 on juice when I was at a meeting when we were talking about passing laws with respect to child pornography, and are you going to try and determine the value of that?

But back to the Justice Policy Advisory Committee, which is a committee of government. I meet with all sorts of people to talk about justice issues. The amendment just talks about taking \$12,250 out of my budget. That could affect all sorts of different things. It doesn't specifically say: with respect to standing policy committees.

But I'd like to come back to standing policy committees because they are one of the most effective tools of government, and I'll tell

you why. When we develop policy in the Department of Justice, we've gone out and talked to stakeholders about what barriers to success are, what things are getting in the way of having safe communities. We bring those ideas together; we develop a policy framework; we talk about being a policy-driven organization and policy outcomes for government. Then we bring them back in, and we frame those into a policy discussion. We can take them to a standing policy committee, which has representatives on it from all across this province, something we wouldn't get, actually . . .

Dr. Massey: None from the opposition.

Mr. Hancock: No, but we do have representatives from Edmonton on that, and the only representatives you have are from Edmonton except for one from Lethbridge.

So the standing policy committee does have representatives from all across the province – all across the province – and they can provide meaningful input from each of their communities about the proposed justice policy initiatives. Then we can take those initiatives back with the benefit of that input and refine it and do a better job of bringing forward better initiatives, and then we can put it in the form of a policy decision with recommendations. We can go back to that standing policy committee, and coming back to that standing policy committee, we can then refine that policy idea and get approval for it. It's the first stage, in fact, before it goes to cabinet. It can have broader input.

10:00

Many other governments in the parliamentary democracy don't have the benefit of that. They just have cabinet ministers who take policy ideas – I think the federal Liberal government operates in this way. They take their policy ideas, but at the initial stage of policy development they just drop their bills on the House without the benefit of any input from even their own private members.

Ms Blakeman: And then they all debate it, yes.

Mr. Hancock: Sure, they all debate it but after the decisions are made and the government has determined that it's part of its agenda and it's going to pass the bill.

Dr. Massey: How often are bills changed in here?

Mr. Hancock: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods asks: how often do bills change in here? I can respond to him honestly: every time a good idea is brought to the floor of the House to change that bill. Every single time a good idea is brought to the floor of the House to change that bill. [interjections]

Well, Mr. Chairman, obviously, they don't want to hear any more. They keep interrupting and heckling, so I will cede the floor to someone else. But I hope that hon. members would not acquiesce to the request from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, who so often purports to support maintenance enforcement and other initiatives taken by Justice to help the poor, the unfortunate, and those that need help, the children of this province, and who would want to take \$12,250 out of the Department of Justice so that the Minister of Justice couldn't go to federal/provincial/territorial ministers' meetings and ensure that the Criminal Code of Canada is amended to raise the age of consent, if we're ever successful in that, or to deal with things like conditional sentences or child pornography. She wants to take that out of the governance of this province.

I would ask that members do not support this amendment.

The Chair: Hon. members, I have a couple of words to say. I hesitate to even acknowledge the next speaker because Standing

Order 58(4) provides for the vote on an estimate before the Committee of Supply to be called "after it has received not less than 2 hours of consideration." This being two hours and pursuant to Government Motion 12 agreed to March 16, 2004, I must now put the following questions for the 2004-2005 interim supply estimates for the offices of the Legislative Assembly, the government and lottery fund for the next fiscal year ending March 31, 2005.

But first we must deal with amendment A1 as moved by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

The Chair: Now for the votes. Hon. members of supply, please realize that we will go through each and every line item, which may take us to the time in which we could have proposed one, which is quarter to 11.

Agreed to:

Legislative Assembly

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Support to the Legislative Assembly | |
| Operating Expense | \$9,700,000 |
| Office of the Auditor General | |
| Operating Expense and | |
| Equipment/Inventory Purchases | \$4,400,000 |
| Office of the Ombudsman | |
| Operating Expense | \$600,000 |
| Office of the Chief Electoral Officer | |
| Operating Expense | \$3,400,000 |
| Office of the Ethics Commissioner | |
| Operating Expense | \$100,000 |
| Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner | |
| Operating Expense | \$1,000,000 |

Government

| | |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development | |
| Operating Expense and | |
| Equipment/Inventory Purchases | \$13,800,000 |
| Agriculture, Food and Rural Development | |
| Operating Expense and | |
| Equipment/Inventory Purchases | \$108,200,000 |
| Children's Services | |
| Operating Expense and | |
| Equipment/Inventory Purchases | \$184,000,000 |
| Community Development | |
| Operating Expense and | |
| Equipment/Inventory Purchases | \$215,100,000 |
| Capital Investment | \$200,000 |
| Economic Development | |
| Operating Expense | \$14,400,000 |
| Energy | |
| Operating Expense and | |
| Equipment/Inventory Purchases | \$50,200,000 |
| Environment | |
| Operating Expense and | |
| Equipment/Inventory Purchases | \$30,900,000 |
| Executive Council | |
| Operating Expense | \$6,000,000 |
| Finance | |
| Operating Expense and | |
| Equipment/Inventory Purchases | \$18,500,000 |
| Nonbudgetary Disbursements | \$18,400,000 |
| Gaming | |
| Operating Expense | \$50,500,000 |
| Lottery Fund Payments | \$313,600,000 |

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Government Services | |
| Operating Expense and | |
| Equipment/Inventory Purchases | \$59,300,000 |
| Health and Wellness | |
| Operating Expense and | |
| Equipment/Inventory Purchases | \$1,997,000,000 |
| Capital Investment | \$5,700,000 |
| Human Resources and Employment | |
| Operating Expense and | |
| Equipment/Inventory Purchases | \$286,900,000 |
| Infrastructure | |
| Operating Expense and | |
| Equipment/Inventory Purchases | \$383,800,000 |
| Capital Investment | \$16,900,000 |
| Innovation and Science | |
| Operating Expense and | |
| Equipment/Inventory Purchases | \$46,200,000 |
| Capital Investment | \$6,000,000 |
| International and Intergovernmental Relations | |
| Operating Expense and | |
| Equipment/Inventory Purchases | \$2,300,000 |
| Justice | |
| Operating Expense and | |
| Equipment/Inventory Purchases | \$70,500,000 |
| 10:10 | |
| Learning | |
| Operating Expense and | |
| Equipment/Inventory Purchases | \$949,200,000 |
| Nonbudgetary Disbursements | \$48,000,000 |
| Municipal Affairs | |
| Operating Expense and | |
| Equipment/Inventory Purchases | \$29,300,000 |
| Revenue | |
| Operating Expense and | |
| Equipment/Inventory Purchases | \$12,500,000 |
| Seniors | |
| Operating Expense and | |
| Equipment/Inventory Purchases | \$101,600,000 |
| Solicitor General | |
| Operating Expense and | |
| Equipment/Inventory Purchases | \$84,100,000 |
| Sustainable Resource Development | |
| Operating Expense and | |
| Equipment/Inventory Purchases | \$49,300,000 |
| Capital Investment | \$3,000,000 |
| Transportation | |
| Operating Expense and | |
| Equipment/Inventory Purchases | \$265,600,000 |
| Capital Investment | \$101,700,000 |

The Chair: Apparently, I've run out of numbers to read.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and none too soon. I would move that the Committee of Supply rise and report the estimates for interim supply.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Klapstein: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions and reports as follows. All resolutions relating to the 2004-2005 interim supply estimates have been approved.

Support to the Legislative Assembly, operating expense, \$9,700,000; office of the Auditor General, operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$4,400,000; office of the Ombudsman, operating expense, \$600,000; office of the Chief Electoral Officer, operating expense, \$3,400,000; office of the Ethics Commissioner, operating expense, \$100,000; office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, operating expense, \$1,000,000.

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development: operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$13,800,000.

Agriculture, Food and Rural Development: operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$108,200,000.

Children's Services: operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$184,000,000.

Community Development: operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$215,100,000; capital investment, \$200,000.

Economic Development: operating expense, \$14,400,000.

Energy: operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$50,200,000.

Environment: operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$30,900,000.

Executive Council: operating expense, \$6,000,000.

Finance: operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$18,500,000; nonbudgetary disbursements, \$18,400,000.

Gaming: operating expense, \$50,500,000; lottery fund payments, \$313,600,000.

Government Services: operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$59,300,000.

Health and Wellness: operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$1,997,000,000; capital investment, \$5,700,000.

Human Resources and Employment: operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$286,900,000.

Infrastructure: operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$383,800,000; capital investment, \$16,900,000.

Innovation and Science: operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$46,200,000; capital investment, \$6,000,000.

International and Intergovernmental Relations: operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$2,300,000.

Justice: operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$70,500,000.

Learning: operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$949,200,000; nonbudgetary disbursements, \$48,000,000.

Municipal Affairs: operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$29,300,000.

Revenue: operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$12,500,000.

Seniors: operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$101,600,000.

Solicitor General: operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$84,100,000.

Sustainable Resource Development: operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$49,300,000; capital investment, \$3,000,000.

Transportation: operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$265,600,000; capital investment, \$101,700,000.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to table a list of those resolutions voted upon by the Committee of Supply pursuant to Standing Orders.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of Supply on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in this report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Having done good work to ensure that the public servants get their paycheques on April 1, I think that we ought to move adjournment until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; at 10:19 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Thursday at 1:30 p.m.]

