



Province of Alberta

The 28th Legislature  
Third Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday evening, March 11, 2015

Issue 19e

The Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, Speaker

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 28th Legislature

Third Session

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 11, 2015

### Committee of Supply

[Mr. Rogers in the chair]

#### Supplementary Supply Estimates 2014-15 General Revenue Fund

**The Chair:** I'd like to call the Committee of Supply back to order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo was speaking, and I believe he had eight minutes and 34 seconds left.

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, thank you very much, and it's great to be back here. I'm just trying to get, if I can borrow a clerk here, back to the Education section, page 22, I believe that is. That's where I'm going to go to.

We had some discussion earlier on reprofiling and the like, and I don't want to revisit that debate on what reprofiling is or isn't and the like. Nevertheless, I look at the \$65 million for 50 new schools and 70 modernizations reprofiled to 2014-2015 to both accelerate some projects and address other project delays. Well, as the hon. member who will be answering this question knows, I don't know how in the world some projects need to be accelerated or how they got delayed given that the promises for these schools were made in 2012 and there is a clear need for those schools as, you know, we haven't built schools in a generation.

Just to keep up with population growth alone, we would have needed 87 schools, just to pick a random number. But it's not a random number. It's actually based on population growth. Maybe he could tell me how in the world these projects need to be accelerated at this time given that the need was clear in 2012 or how projects were delayed. Were they delayed by school boards or other people of that nature, or was it delayed by this government? I'd like to hear what these were that necessitated this change in our budgeting here at this time.

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Mr. Oberle:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. As I laid out in the notes relating to the supplementary estimates for the Department of Education, there were a number of reprofiling because of changes in timing of projects over a long construction horizon here. I'll point out to the hon. member that the fact that money was spent in the third quarter meant that projects were actually happening. Obviously, the money was spent on projects.

The Minister of Infrastructure the other day in the House laid out a number of reasons why projects had been delayed and why other projects have been accelerated. I invite the member to visit the *Hansard* record of the Minister of Infrastructure's comments. If that's insufficient to answer his question tonight – and I'm not sure whether that will be or not – I'd be happy to refer questions to the Minister of Education or the Minister of Infrastructure on his behalf, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Hehr:** I guess, to refer to these questions, what were the delays? I've been in these budget debates and now this supplementary budget, where every minister of both Infrastructure and Education told me it was their job number one to build these schools. They told me that point blank, Mr. Chair. I'm not kidding. I went through the budget debates from last year, and the hon. minister of SRD now was the one

who told me that it was job number one to get this stuff up and running, so I'm confused about what these delays were. I'd be interested in hearing what they are. You know, nevertheless, it appears to me that the government of the day had every plan just to get the money started on these in this calendar year and were just simply paying lip service to the fact prior to that.

But let me try another question in regard to these line items. The money to go to the Calgary board of education to address student accommodation pressures: is that on an increase in student enrolment numbers, or is that on actual infrastructure, or that will be on capital as well because it says "capital"?

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Energy on behalf of the Minister of Education.

**Mr. Oberle:** Yes. As the member just answered his own question, that's capital.

Mr. Chair, the hon. member points out that he's talked to Education ministers in the past and Infrastructure ministers who assured him that the construction of schools was job one in our province. That is, in fact, the case. It remains the case. That's why we're in the middle of the largest infrastructure build in the country's history in terms of schools put together by a province. That's where we are. We're building. It's a complex environment. The minister laid out a number of reasons for delays or in some instances advancements. I could summarize for the member that he talked about the difficulties in getting development permits, siting issues, contract issues, redesign issues. It's a very complex environment when you're building this many schools. Nonetheless, we are building. It's job one, and the spending in here indicates that there are, in fact, jobs under way.

**Mr. Hehr:** Could the hon. minister give me a little more clarity around the \$19.4 million that is proposed for emergent needs in the rest of Alberta? What are some of those places, and what are the needs?

**Mr. Oberle:** I can't give him much more detail than that. That, obviously, would be growth pressures and other pressures that school boards feel, that the minister felt that it was necessary to provide extraordinary funding. Those were pressures that were not evident or made aware to the minister at the start of the school year, Mr. Chair. In most cases those are population pressures. If the member needs more detail than that, I'm happy to refer the question to the minister.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Hehr:** You know, according to the government's own figures as of August 28, 2014, deferred maintenance for Alberta's public, Catholic, and francophone school jurisdictions totalled just shy of \$852 million, and I believe there's \$20 million proposed to help with capital maintenance and renewal. Was this money going into the deferred maintenance projects listed or these other projects that are up and going? Can you provide some clarity around that?

**Mr. Oberle:** Well, Mr. Chair, obviously, capital maintenance renewal is for maintenance projects, so whether an individual project was on the list that formed the maintenance backlog I cannot answer. Either it was or it's an emergent need, some damage done, and a school board identified a need to fund some maintenance immediately. Again, if the member wants individual school project information, I'll refer that to the minister.

**The Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Hehr:** Okay. If we can go back to Municipal Affairs, it said in a March 6, 2015, news release that the government announced a third-quarter funding increase of \$400 million for the municipal sustainability initiative. However, on page 50 of the supplementary supply estimates it says an additional, I believe, \$400 million is being requested for MSI capital grants. Why is there this discrepancy, and what is with the additional amounts of money there?

**The Chair:** Hon. member, I believe the minister answered a similar question earlier, which might be available on *Hansard*, or maybe we could ask that the minister provide that for you later, but your time has expired. So thank you very much.

At this time I will go to the fourth party and recognize the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. I just wondered if you wish to have your time back and forth with the ministers, hon. member. If you do, then we should say that now.

**Mr. Bilous:** This is my only opportunity to have a dialogue with the ministers regarding sup supply?

**The Chair:** There's a potential for a combined 20 minutes back and forth between you and a minister or various ministers, so if you choose to combine the times, it affords the back and forth just like the previous member had.

**Mr. Bilous:** Sure. I'll combine my time and go back and forth.

**The Chair:** Wonderful. So you can have 20 minutes starting now.

**Mr. Bilous:** Great. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 17, to supplementary supply. You know, I can appreciate that, obviously, the government needs to get approval from this House for spending for the interim here. Going through it, some of the spending here that ranges over a variety of different bills and ministries I quite understand, and others I have questions for. I'll try to go through, and I apologize if some of my comments are repeats of what other members have said, but the purpose of that, if I am bringing up a point that was brought up earlier, in my opinion, speaks to the importance of what we're debating and the amount of dollars that this House, should the budget or supplementary supply bill pass, will be spending.

7:40

When I look at this bill, you know, major concerns for me jump out, and they'll be in a couple different categories. One of them is health care and a lot of the cuts that I read when you look at the numbers, and I'll go through and explain my position on this. As well, you know, looking at the area of legal aid, I know that that is something that my colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona has been very passionate about as far as ensuring that there is adequate funding for this. Then, of course, getting into infrastructure, again, as my colleague the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo has asked some questions regarding education. The current maintenance deferral price tag that exists versus the amount of dollars that are in the sup supply are quite incongruent, Mr. Chair.

Starting off with health care, I mean, the estimates, from what I read, are basically telling us that the health care budget has been cut by over \$130 million, and I'll break that number down because it does look as though we're approving about \$157 million, but when you look at the numbers, the numbers tell us that there is \$206 million available because it wasn't spent on other programs. For me, I have questions around this and concerns with the fact that, you know, health care is probably one of Albertans' and Canadians' top priorities, and the fact that there's money that is being cut because it wasn't spent raises some alarm bells for me.

In the sup supply there's a need for \$170 million for not implementing the pharmacare and \$120 million for collective agreements with AHS, but I just want to flag that these aren't new services being offered to Albertans. When you do the math on that, all that should be needed is \$73 million for new health spending, but again when you look at that \$206 million that was supposed to be spent on health but wasn't, in fact, it means that there is a cut of about \$133 million to health care.

The concern comes from, you know, that over the last while you look at emergency department wait times, and I know my colleague mentioned today that the goal that this government set out years ago for this year was that 90 per cent of the people who visit the emergency room are seen within the targeted period of time. In the first week of March only 19 per cent of people who visited the emergency room at the Grey Nuns were seen within that target. That's quite a large difference between under 20 per cent and 90 per cent as the goal and where we should be. In the same week, as well, at the Peter Lougheed Centre in Calgary only a third of patients were seen within that targeted time.

You know, I appreciate that although the government has recently introduced some measures to help address capacity issues in our emergency rooms, these are issues that have been ongoing not just within the last year but have been ongoing for quite some time. To me, how this looks is that instead of dealing with these issues and spending the money that they had, the government chose not to, which, again, is a bit of a concern. So I guess I'll start with: where did the \$206 million of unused initial supply come from in terms of lines in the 2014-15 budget?

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Energy on behalf of the minister.

**Mr. Oberle:** Mr. Chair, I'll try to address the questions, and then I'll make my best of efforts, but I'll advise the member up front that I'd be more than happy to refer questions to the minister. For those in the House this afternoon it was becoming increasingly obvious that the minister was having a little bit of difficulty and has asked that I accept questions on his behalf.

The budget of Health was not cut. When you do a line item budgeting process, it's very typical that you're over in some areas and under in other areas, and you reallocate dollars appropriately. The minister has identified that they overbudgeted in a couple of areas, and that's where the savings come from. I can't give him details beyond what he has on the page in front of him. The minister was unable to share his notes with me. I offer our sincere apologies. But I'm more than happy to refer the questions to the minister as I'll advise all hon. members in here tonight.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Bilous:** I thank the hon. minister for his comments. I obviously quite understand that the Minister of Health was not feeling well, and I appreciate his attempts to answer the question.

I'm just curious, and I do understand, you know, that if money wasn't spent, then you can slide it over. I guess I am just looking for a few more details as to why those certain line items weren't spent, but I won't go back to the minister. I appreciate that we can clarify that at another time.

I will move on from . . .

**The Chair:** I encourage you to look at *Hansard* from earlier as well because there was some similar questioning.

**Mr. Bilous:** Right.

**The Chair:** Please proceed.

**Mr. Bilous:** I will. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I will definitely review *Hansard*.

I'd like to talk a little bit about education. You know, I appreciate that there is a significant amount of spending in this that is going towards especially the capital side of our projects. I do have some concerns with, again, the fact that you have project delays. I know it's been discussed in this House and outside of the House as far as where initial targets were and where we are now and that we are quite behind as far as the initial targets, which is why we're seeing them move further ahead and we talk about project delays.

I mean, the importance of infrastructure and critical infrastructure like our schools and hospitals is such that I can't help but mention that this is a situation that we shouldn't be facing the way we are today. I mean, had for a number of years the government invested adequately in new schools, with the growing population and knowing, you know, the birth rate of our province and the number of folks moving here – we're trying to play a big game of catch-up. I get that there are significant program delays. However, not building new facilities for a significant number of years has really placed a burden on families and schools and classrooms and on our students. In my opinion, much could have been avoided had we started building many years ago.

The other thing that I need to flag is that there are schools throughout the province where, you know, the timelines that the government has laid out are quite inaccurate, Mr. Chair. The one example that I spoke of was in Red Deer at the Inglewood elementary school, which was supposed to begin construction next month, and we learned that that hasn't even gone to tender. There are other examples as well.

I don't know how much detail – and I know my colleague the Member for Calgary-Buffalo had inquired a little bit as far as some of the specific line items. I would like to at least get it on record – and I don't know if the minister can answer to that \$19.4 million for emergent needs in the rest of Alberta. I'd love to get that fleshed out a little bit more. I mean, it's just shy of \$20 million. I know that there are significant pressures in cities like Grande Prairie, Fort McMurray, but, you know, as well there are some pressures in other parts of the province. I don't know if the Minister of Education has some more specifics as far as that line item and if he could share them with us, please.

**Mr. Oberle:** Mr. Chair, I don't have specifics beyond – and the question has been asked already, so it's on the record. I'll refer that to the Minister of Education.

I do want to talk about the overall build, Mr. Chair. The member says that, you know, we haven't kept up, that we should have been building a long time ago, and that we haven't spent enough. Another party in here says that we spent too much. The fact of the matter is that schools are a pressing item in our province. There's absolutely no doubt about it. We're in the midst of the largest provincial infrastructure build ever in the country. Very obviously, in your timeline some things go faster; some things go slower. The Minister of Infrastructure has been absolutely open about the progress of those. He promised a report card; there is a report card. He has been open and honest about the reasons for delays and the progress of every single school project by name, updated regularly. It was just updated again on Monday of this week, so we fully understand the need for schools.

We're in the middle of a build. We have for some time now had the largest per capita infrastructure spend in the country, and in some circles we're criticized for that. But the fact of the matter is that in my time in this House the province, our province, has grown by more than 30 per cent, from 3 million people to over 4 million people, and that growth rate continues. It's over 100,000 people per

year, every year. Obviously, it's a lot of work to keep up to that, and that's what the minister is attempting to do, Mr. Chair.

7:50

**The Chair:** Thank you.

The hon. member.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. You know, I can appreciate that we've had a very rapid growth rate in this province, but again it needs to be noted that there was a significant period of time in the early 2000s when there were very few new schools built, and those pressures continued to mount until we've gotten to a point where it's toppled over. An example I often use: when you look at maintenance, let's say, by homeowners. If they refuse to look at replacing their roof, replacing their boiler, their hot water tank, any kind of maintenance, over time eventually all of it will come back to bite them, and suddenly they're replacing all of them simultaneously, which, of course, means that it's much more costly, and it's much more difficult to do it all simultaneously. So, you know, I appreciate the fact that trying to do – what is it? – 150 projects in a very short period of time poses its challenges.

My point here to the House is that had we been building all along in a timely fashion, we wouldn't have our backs up against the wall. Those were conscious decisions that were made by the government not to invest in infrastructure. We look at conditions of our hospitals and health care facilities around the province. We've heard of numerous examples this year where roofs are collapsing – there's mould; there's water damage – and injecting money now into it obviously is necessary, but, again, prevention is probably the smartest use of dollars in ensuring that we never get to this point where we're putting lives either in danger or at risk. Also, leaving it to the point where – you know, it's like the example with the roof on your house. I mean, if you don't replace those shingles, eventually you're going to get water damage, and now you're going to be replacing a whole bunch of things in the interior of your house versus just replacing the roof when it was needed.

I do think it's also important to note that a FOIP on deferred maintenance, when we're talking about schools, shows that throughout the province there's more than \$850 million in deferred maintenance, or an \$850 million price tag. I appreciate that there's money that's being pumped into modernizations and new schools, but, again, when I look at \$20 million for capital maintenance compared to the \$850 million price tag, I mean, all we're doing is kicking the can forward and hoping to get by a few more years before another school either has to be shut down or gets too expensive to repair.

You know, Mr. Chair, I don't think that that is the most fiscally prudent and smartest way to be planning for a province that is growing and moving forward, especially when we look at something as important as education, the future of our province, the future of young Albertans. I personally take great issue with having them either learning in broom closets or being bused long periods of time each day, which has a negative impact on the education of our children.

So a question that I'll ask the minister is – I appreciate that the Calgary board of education has quite a long list of needs and dollars that are needed, and I see that just over \$30 million is here in the line item. You know, I appreciate that that's for CBE, but I'm wondering about growth pressures in other parts of the province as far as the dollars that are going to be allocated outside of just the Calgary board of education. I know that Edmonton is facing a similar crisis. Are we adequately addressing the needs outside of CBE?

Then I'll ask as well – you know, this is all under capital – if the minister can comment about dollars for other teaching resources. I

understand that this is going significantly for growth pressures, so it's important to build the facility, but it's equally important to have adequate staffing. So I'm wondering if the minister can comment on that.

**Mr. Oberle:** Well, there's a number of things in the question and the preceding comments that I would dearly like to comment upon. Where to begin, Mr. Chair? The member said that in years gone by we haven't spent. I'm pretty sure that in my whole time in this Legislature we spent above the national average on a per capita basis for infrastructure, in most years well above. During that time I don't actually remember any hospital roofs caving in. I do remember an issue where some ceiling tiles came down because a water pipe burst in the ceiling above the tiles, but no roofs collapsed that I recall – maybe I'm wrong on that – and certainly no lives were threatened in the case of some ceiling tiles coming down. I stand to be corrected, but I read the newspapers. I suspect that I read further down the column than some members opposite.

Mr. Chair, the fact of the matter is that we are in the middle of the largest infrastructure build in Canadian history. We're working very hard at that. There are a lot of Albertans pulling together to do that. So some of the numbers that the member bandies around – for example, \$20 million – are absolutely inadequate for the infrastructure backlog in this province. I wholeheartedly agree. I would point out that that's the supplementary spending, which means it's over and above the budget envelope that was approved in this House in the spring of this year. So it's not the full maintenance spending that we're doing this year; it's \$20 million over the original estimated full maintenance spending that we're doing in this budget year.

I would also point out that the \$30 million for the Calgary board of education represents emergent needs over and above what was approved as a budget in this budget year. This is not atypical. School boards' budgets are approved in this Legislature in the spring. As they go into the fall, enrolment numbers often don't line up, and Calgary felt some significant and extraordinary pressures both in this year and going forward. So they've identified a budget, and the minister funded an additional \$30 million. The same is true for the rest of Alberta, and the funding is there, \$19,400,000, which addresses the pressures over and above this budget year for the rest of Alberta. Those are all capital dollars, which means they're going into infrastructure, Mr. Chair.

I would assume, as there are no operational overspends or supplementary estimates in this department, that the spending was kept within budget on the operational side. As we fill chairs and blackboards and other things – I guess they don't use blackboards anymore in schools. You know, as we resource our schools going forward, as we build them, the operational dollars will be reflected in future budgets, not in supplementary estimates tabled in the third quarter, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, you have another 33 seconds.

**Mr. Bilous:** Another 33 seconds. Well, time flies when you're having fun.

Okay. Well, I will read some quick questions here. I'm curious about the Kananaskis golf course and why it's not in parks, recreation, and tourism.

Looking at Human Services, where is the additional \$38.8 million made available from lower than budgeted expenses and other programs? Where is that being saved?

Let's see here. In Energy I've got several questions which . . .

**The Chair:** I would hope that those questions could be provided at some point later, or, again, hon. member, some of those questions

were addressed earlier. So if the ministers don't have the ability to provide those, certainly *Hansard* will allude to those questions that you raised earlier.

At this point, hon. members, we have concluded the first round of questioning. This next portion allows for five minutes each or the potential for five and five combined. I would next recognize the independent member, who's not here.

Then I would ask for any government member – and I'll chastise myself as your chairman for referring to the absence of any member, which I did not intend to do. I will now offer the opportunity to any government member who chooses to ask some questions.

Seeing none, then I would go back to any member and the potential for another five and five. The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod, would you like to do a five and five with the minister?

8:00

**Mr. Stier:** That will be fine. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Wonderful. Please proceed, starting now.

**Mr. Stier:** Yes. Well, good evening, and thank you very much for the opportunity. To the Minister of ESRD, if I could, I would like to just address a few questions with respect to the flooding. He was a big participant in the past couple of years with that, and I know he has a lot of knowledge. He wasn't here earlier. Just a few things popped into my mind that I wanted to get out.

Tomorrow I'm attending another meeting for the flood situation in High River, and I noticed that on page 30 of the estimates, Minister, we see that there is a supplementary need here for 32 mil for the town of High River flood mitigation projects, rebuilding berms, et cetera. It's kind of curious to me because we have had a number of reports come in very recently, including a meeting I attended in High River on Wednesday evening last week, with respect to the diversions and all that kind of stuff that are now apparently no longer on hold. They are being, you know, told in the area that there is another report now forthcoming from another company called Deltares. We'll see that tomorrow night.

I wondered, first of all: could you explain the \$32 million in this document here and if that is still needed or not, please?

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resource Development.

**Mr. Fawcett:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the question from the member. This is a good question. One of the great things that happened in High River subsequent to the flooding in 2013 was that the town and council there immediately sprang into action and developed a plan to build a number of berms and dikes within the town to protect the town. These berms and dikes were built to the 2013 flood conveyance level plus another metre of freeboard, so you can be assured that currently that town is well protected.

As part of their mitigation strategy there have been conversations ongoing about a potential diversion of water from the Highwood River from somewhere upstream of the town during high-flow periods, and there were a number of options, whether they were looking at going north or south. Ultimately, it was narrowed down to looking at a southern diversion into the Little Bow River.

There were two engineering studies – one done by the province, one done by the town – that had some slightly different perspectives on what that diversion might look like. Frankly, the one done by the province, the initial engineering report, was looking at a massive diversion that would have probably cost a significant amount of



money. The town itself was looking at a bit of a smaller diversion, with some additional protection with some berms and dikes.

We have contracted out to Deltares, which is a firm that does research and assessment of flooding and river morphology when it comes to flooding. They are from the Netherlands, which has been one of the world's most recognized countries in dealing with flooding. That organization has taken a look at these two engineering reports and looked at what the town of High River has done up to this point in time and is providing recommendations. Those recommendations went out for consultation to stakeholders in the area. We're now finalizing that report, and it will be out for public consumption.

I can assure that what's in the report and what the town is looking at is not going with the more extensive, larger diversion. It just doesn't make sense. What you see with this expense here, the \$32 million, was the work that was done on those berms and dikes that are currently in place in the town right now.

Like I said, you know, in chatting with the mayor and the folks there, they're quite proud of the type of protection they've been able to put into the town through the province's financial support, allowing that if there was a flood at the 2013 level, a big portion of that town would now be protected from that. There would be a lot of water running through that channel, but it is there.

There is, like I said, this final piece that we're sorting through with the Deltares report. It will potentially require some additional berms and dikes to be built and some potential infrastructure to be moved and upgraded to allow for the conveyance of the kind of water to go down that river channel. That's what that money was put toward, the current berms and dikes that have been put in place by the town.

**The Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The hon. member.

**Mr. Stier:** Thank you. A supplementary if I could, Mr. Chair. Just to clarify, this is money that has been spent, and this is for that?

**Mr. Fawcett:** Yes.

**Mr. Stier:** Okay. If I could just follow up, if we look at the second item down from there, Mr. Minister, we're talking about 4 and a half mil for the Springbank reservoir, or the theoretical one, the project. The question, then: is that money, too, spent, and if so, what has it been for? Is that just for study so far?

**Mr. Fawcett:** Yeah. That's essentially what it is. That is money that has been spent or is being spent in this fiscal year in the study – engineering, negotiations with landowners, public consultation – for this particular project.

**Mr. Stier:** Okay. If I could just follow up – and you just mentioned negotiations with landowners – has there actually been compensation paid to landowners in this project at this time? I didn't know it was actually decided that you were at a stage to proceed with that project. It was my understanding that there was another, alternative project and that the actual decision hadn't been made one way or the other. Can you just shed a little light on that if you would, please, Minister?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Fawcett:** Yeah. We've been quite clear, actually, since about September that we will be proceeding with the Springbank dry off-stream reservoir project. All initial studies and analysis that have been done are that, of all the factors that we need to consider, which are financial factors, cost-benefit analysis, environmental impact, impacts on landowners, the type of protection it will provide, the impacts on upstream and downstream communities, on balance,

this is the most feasible project, and our commitment is to try to move forward with it as fast as possible. However, you're right. This project will require access to and the purchase of or some sort of agreement for the use of private land from landowners, and we're in that process of establishing terms of negotiation in order to have fair and respectful negotiations with the landowners.

While, you know, I think it probably could be understandable to most here that they're not necessarily enamoured with the idea that this project would be moving forward, they do understand in the conversations that we've had with them privately that government has to make some of these tough decisions, and they've engaged with us in good faith in trying to come up with a framework to establish a successful negotiation. That's the process we're in with them right now.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

The hon. member.

**Mr. Stier:** Yeah. Thank you. Just to finish up on that – and I appreciate the minister's patience with my questions on that subject – just as you and, I'm sure, a lot of the members here tonight are aware, with the alternative, McLean Creek, there were some funds spent, I believe, in exploring that particular project. Did these funds, the 4 and a half million, include some of that study work at all, and if not, were there monies spent on exploring thoroughly the McLean Creek alternative? As members here know, a lot of people are concerned about the protection of the hamlet of Bragg Creek and Redwood Meadows and some of those communities. I'm just wondering if any of this money went towards, actually, the feasibility study on that alternative, please.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**8:10**

**Mr. Fawcett:** Yeah. I think that's another good question. What you'll see is what we were referring to, I believe, when you talked about the \$4.5 million that was for the Springbank off-stream reservoir. It was a capital expenditure. [A timer sounded] Am I allowed to continue?

**The Chair:** No. That has concluded, but I think you gave a concise answer, so we thank you.

I'll recognize the next speaker, the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo. You, too, have the potential of five and five should you choose to.

**Mr. Hehr:** Yeah. Five and five. Sure.

**The Chair:** Proceed.

**Mr. Hehr:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I've been very interested in this flood discussion, so we can hopefully continue on from there. I note that in January the federal government switched its budgeting on the disaster relief program and what it's going to do in the future to provinces who try to access funds under that program. They move from covering the first \$12.4 million in damages to reducing that to just \$4.1 million. Have those conversations been had in your ministry on budgeting and in light of what we've been through and the like?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Fawcett:** Yeah. I'll try to answer those questions. Unfortunately, the disaster recovery program falls under Municipal Affairs. I don't mean unfortunately; I just don't necessarily have the answers to that discussion.

**Mr. Hehr:** You were the minister of flooding. You know all this.

**Mr. Fawcett:** Yeah. I do think that there have been changes made to the federal government's what's called the disaster financial assistance program. You know, I don't think that the floods in 2013 were the complete reason for that. I think it was a challenge for the federal government in looking at where some of their biggest costs were coming from and trying to control costs. If they've made changes, it only, actually, emphasizes the need for us to look more intently at flood mitigation because we won't have as much protection, potentially, on a disaster from a financial standpoint from the federal government if it was to happen again.

The minister might be able to answer that question a little bit better.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mrs. McQueen:** Thank you. Just to add to it if you would like, certainly the changes that were made with regard to the federal government are going forward, so they will not affect the 2013 or '14 or prior disasters but do affect going forward.

**Mr. Hehr:** Also, I got into this a little bit earlier. You know, we're talking about some of this money going to projects on both the Bow River side and on the Elbow side, and you've explained sort of the reasons and the rationale behind the Springbank flood mitigation plan. As I don't have access to the depth or breadth of reports that you guys have, I'll take you at your word that it is the most economically feasible as well as probably the best plan going forward.

Nevertheless, can you comment a little bit on the Bow side of things, you know, what you're doing currently on flood mitigation and whether there's any of this money going towards that and the plan on the Bow going forward and some of the concerns that have been highlighted around that side of things? We've concentrated quite a bit on the Elbow River. Are we looking at expenses and potential future mitigation projects on that side?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Fawcett:** Yeah. Thank you. It's a very good question. It's actually a pretty complex one. One of the challenges when it comes to flood mitigation is that not all communities and not all watersheds are created equal, right? The kinds of solutions that need to be put in place are unique to (a) the community and what kind of infrastructure is built in the flood areas and (b) the geography and the way that the river goes and interacts with the landscape. On the Elbow River we've been able to identify some potential projects, large projects that we can move forward with that will get us a large amount of the way to the kind of protection that we need for those communities that could be impacted from flooding on the Elbow.

On the Bow River you don't have as much potential to look at doing a larger project to get that protection, you know, so that's one negative. The positive is that you do have some infrastructure already in place, that TransAlta operates as part of their operations. Last year we had an agreement in place, that was in the original budget, that allowed us to help try to mitigate some of the flows potentially during a flood situation through the Ghost reservoir dam.

The challenge is that we believe that we could actually get an even greater level of protection through further negotiations with TransAlta and working with them with not just the Ghost reservoir dam but some of the other infrastructure that they have along the Bow River watershed. It's a fairly complex issue around what exactly the level of protection is and then what that financial agreement might look like. We're in discussions with them.

The \$14 million for funds for continued implementation of flood infrastructure recovery measures: you'll see that our mitigation and resiliency branch is what this funding is for, not specifically for that negotiation, but part of it is to provide the operational funding for us to continue doing this work.

**Mr. Hehr:** Well, let me ask you this follow-up. Of that \$14 million designated for some of this – let's be clear. Obviously, TransAlta is impacted financially as a result of flood mitigation measures they do on behalf of the province, so that's part of the ongoing thing. What is the price tag around that process and in this budget cycle?

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Fawcett:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I believe that in the current budget I don't have the exact number, but it was in the order of \$3 million for this last flood season's pilot project. A longer term or comprehensive agreement will cost more than that for sure. We don't know exactly until we get those details worked out.

For this flood year, you know, the intention is to continue to at least, at the very minimum, have the same kind of deal that we had in place last year, and that will obviously be forthcoming in whatever the Finance minister tables on the 26th.

**Mr. Hehr:** Okay. In light of what we've learned – and we see the feds, you know, moving out of the disaster relief program at least to a certain extent. Given that, I'm wondering if there's any money being spent in this budget, this supplementary supply, and/or if there are any comments the minister might like to make on whether there's been any progress made on discussions with the national government on national flood insurance and/or whether there's talk of actually going alone here, having a provincial flood insurance program, given that we are the natural disaster capital of Canada, given our proximity to the mountains and the like. I note that just because it seems to be a public policy position that is reasonable, that other jurisdictions have taken, that looks like you have competing claims. To me, it looks like it makes common sense. Wondering whether there are any comments on that.

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Mrs. McQueen:** Well, thank you, and thank you for the question. I can tell you that out of our ministry – and I would assume it is the same with the hon. member's supplementary estimates – there are no dollars that are being requested with regard to that issue. That was the question.

**Mr. Hehr:** You didn't take the bait.

**Mrs. McQueen:** I know.

**Mr. Hehr:** I wanted to discuss more broadly the principle. Nevertheless there, they didn't take the bait. I'll pass to let other members ask a question.

**The Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Before I recognize the next speaker, I'll recognize the Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Hale:** Yes, Mr. Chair. I would ask that we possibly revert to Introduction of Guests.

**The Chair:** Wonderful. The Member for Strathmore-Brooks has asked that we revert briefly to the Introduction of Guests.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**8:20 Introduction of Guests**

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Hale:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to take this moment to introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislature someone who has visited here a few times before, the mayor of Brooks, Mr. Martin Shields, who, I may also add, is the nominated candidate in the upcoming federal election for our Bow River riding.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Supplementary Supply Estimates 2014-15  
General Revenue Fund  
(continued)**

**The Chair:** I'll recognize the next speaker, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview. Again, you have the potential for five and five if you so desire.

**Mr. Bilous:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, that's your wish?

**Mr. Bilous:** That is my wish, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Proceed.

**Mr. Bilous:** A couple of quick questions that I think the Minister of Energy can answer because he is the former Minister of Aboriginal Relations. I'm curious about what critical infrastructure projects were undertaken and for which additional funding is requested although my gut tells me that this has to do with flood relief and reconstruction. I'm also curious if the minister can comment on how the funding is split between federal and provincial governments.

**The Chair:** Is that a question for the hon. Associate Minister of Aboriginal Relations?

**Mr. Dorward:** Yeah. I assume the member is referring to the \$8.6 million in capital funding. Thank you. I appreciate the opportunity to respond to that. There are two components to that. Some is on *Hansard* from earlier today. I don't want to steal too much of your time. There are two components. Five point six million dollars was for the Lubicon Lake band community to install 19 trailers, that were taken from Slave Lake, and also to provide water and sewage services to those homes as well as to set up a situation whereby the Lubicon community members will have access to a very good waterline. That was part of it as well.

Then in addition to that \$5.6 million there's also \$3 million, which is part of the Métis settlement funding over 10 years in a long-term governance agreement with the provincial government whereby Métis communities will receive funding similar to MSI funding for municipalities, Mr. Chair.

I'll let the member just ask me further questions instead of using up all his time.

**Mr. Bilous:** I thank the associate minister for his brevity. Forgive me. The \$3 million for the critical infrastructure on Métis settlements: that you had said is split between – is there a portion of that \$3 million coming from the federal government, or is it the MSI but only from the provincial government with the Métis settlements?

**Mr. Oberle:** Mr. Chair, I wonder if I could respond to that. The \$3 million is not for a flood response. We've got a long-term arrangement with the Métis settlements that provides for a move toward the sustainability of the settlements, and there's funding that goes to the settlements. It's similar to MSI, for lack of a better word, although they're certainly not municipalities. They're a much, much different government structure, but it allows them some resources in the community. As part of that agreement we agreed on a critical infrastructure list.

The resources they're provided allow them to use seed money to leverage other money. It might be federal money; there could be grants. In this particular case this is the province's contribution on a leverage of that critical infrastructure money to allow us to begin to pick off a list that both the Métis and the government of Alberta agreed to as part of the long-term arrangement.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Minister, for that response. I appreciate that.

I'd like to just move to Energy in my last couple of minutes here and talk about the line item with Energy. I believe the compensation here is a result of land that needed to be bought back from developers and other owners by the Crown for the purpose of conservation under the lower Athabasca regional plan. My understanding is that these payments are governed by the mineral rights compensation act, so a few questions here. Maybe I'll just ask them all, and then the minister can respond as he wishes.

I'm curious to know, if possible, how much of this money was paid to corporations and what proportion of the funds paid out was in the form of initial principal of cash paid to the Crown, development allowances, reclamation allowances, interest allowances, and how much more money will be paid out through the program.

**Mr. Oberle:** I thank the hon. member for the question. There are two programs here, two issues that caused the government to move to reacquire land. So let's be clear that the companies' proponents of development don't purchase the land although that's what it's called indeed. It's called a land sale. They purchase rights to use the resources. In this case between the lower Athabasca regional plan and the urban development region surrounding the population centre of the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo, as would be the case in most, these are undeveloped leases. Somebody has purchased the rights to develop mineral resources, and in the mineral rights compensation regulation there is pretty clear guidance as to how we go about purchasing those leases back. We refund the money that they used to purchase the lease – so that would be the land sales, or bonus payment, as it's known – and then improvements on the landscape. We don't fund for lost opportunity, future resource revenue, those sorts of things.

In these cases, if I had to guess, I would say that 100 per cent of the money went to corporations. I'm not aware of anybody that would be developing oil sands leases as an individual. It's certainly not an endeavour that an individual could undertake, so these would all be corporations. All of the money would have been paid to refund them and to reacquire the rights to those leases so that the lands could go to other uses.

In the case of LARP they went to protected areas. I think we established in the neighbourhood of 2 million hectares – I have the number here someplace – a very large area, protected areas in the lower Athabasca region. In the case of the UDSR surrounding Fort McMurray, we of course are providing for municipal development and municipal expansion and had to extinguish the mineral rights underneath. That's what the program was for.

I hope I've answered the member's questions.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I'll thank the minister. Just a couple of follow-ups. I appreciate that the government doesn't fund any lost opportunities that the corporation may have with the mineral rights. I appreciate that that's the difference; it's land that's still owned by the Crown. It was just the mineral rights that were sold and then purchased back. Is there, in the repurchasing, an interest adjustment or a value adjustment between what it was sold for and when it's repurchased? I'm not sure if that value changes or if it's determined, if there has been exploration done where, then, the government needs to increase or pay that difference between the original purchase price and the repurchasing of the mineral rights.

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Mr. Oberle:** Yeah. Actually, I think I might want to respond to the member offline, in writing. It's in *Hansard*. I'll respond. I can't actually answer that. You know, obviously, any company would argue that they've got a certain amount of sunk cost in the lease even if it's not developed. If there's not a physical drilled well sitting there, there could be other costs. Often this becomes a bit of a negotiation. I believe it would include an interest adjustment if the land sale had been done sometime prior. But I honestly can't answer that right at the moment. I will get back to the member with that.

**The Chair:** Thank you, hon. member. You still have some time.

**Mr. Bilous:** Yeah. One further follow-up question. I appreciate the minister getting back to me on that, and I respect the fact that offhand he may not have that information at his fingertips.

I don't know if the minister can respond to whether there will be more money paid out through this program or if this sum is for the total land that is needed, whether it's for LARP or for Wood Buffalo, or if there is more that needs to be repurchased.

**Mr. Oberle:** Well, the mineral rights compensation regulation exists for a reason, Mr. Chair, and that is that from time to time the province of course makes development decisions that impact the underlying mineral rights, and occasionally the province is required to reassess the use of land. We've made such decisions in the lower Athabasca region, and the number was more than 2 million hectares of conservation land established.

**8:30**

From time to time those development decisions will happen in our province. We have a land-use framework that brought a lot of stakeholder Albertans to the table to talk about land-use direction. You know, from time to time we establish protected areas in this province, and from time to time our municipalities expand. All of those require a revisit of the underlying mineral rights, and occasionally that requires that we purchase them.

In the case of LARP we've made our decisions there, the lower Athabasca regional plan, and in the case of the Fort McMurray urban development region we've made our decision there as well. But the program exists, and it allows for the fact that we do from time to time revisit land use in this province.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Bilous:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I thank the minister again for his response.

**The Chair:** Time has expired. Are there other speakers?  
Then I'll call the question.

### Vote on Supplementary Supply Estimates 2014-15 General Revenue Fund

Agreed to:  
Office of the Child and Youth Advocate  
Operational and Capital \$730,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? That is carried.

Agreed to:  
Aboriginal Relations  
Capital \$8,600,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? That is carried.

Agreed to:  
Education  
Capital \$215,704,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? That is carried.

Agreed to:  
Energy  
Financial Transactions \$57,700,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? That is carried.

Agreed to:  
Environment and Sustainable Resource Development  
Operational \$200,014,000  
Capital \$48,085,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? That is carried.

Agreed to:  
Health  
Operational \$157,000,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? That is carried.

Agreed to:  
Human Services  
Operational \$46,872,000  
Capital \$500,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? That is carried.

Agreed to:  
Infrastructure  
Operational \$15,256,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? That is carried.

Agreed to:  
Justice and Solicitor General  
Operational \$16,739,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? That is carried.

Agreed to:  
Municipal Affairs  
Operational \$6,116,000  
Capital \$431,720,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? That is carried.

Agreed to:  
Service Alberta  
Operational \$5,400,000  
Financial Transactions \$5,433,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? That is carried.

Agreed to:  
Transportation  
Operational \$11,853,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? That is carried.

Agreed to:  
Transfer from Capital vote of Municipal Affairs  
to the Capital vote of Seniors \$4,800,000

**The Chair:** Shall the vote be reported? Agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? That is carried.

**Mr. Oberle:** At this time I would move that we rise and report, Mr. Chair.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Dr. Brown:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again. The following resolutions relating to the 2014-15 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2015, have been approved.

Legislative Assembly, Office of the Child and Youth Advocate: operational and capital, \$730,000.

Aboriginal Relations: capital, \$8,600,000.

Education: capital, \$215,704,000.

Energy: financial transactions, \$57,700,000.

Environment and Sustainable Resource Development: operational, \$200,014,000; capital, \$48,085,000.

Health: operational, \$157,000,000.

Human Services: operational, \$46,872,000; capital, \$500,000.

Infrastructure: operational, \$15,256,000.

Justice and Solicitor General: operational, \$16,739,000.

Municipal Affairs: operational, \$6,116,000; capital, \$431,720,000.

Service Alberta: operational, \$5,400,000; financial transactions, \$5,433,000.

Transportation: operational, \$11,853,000.

The Committee of Supply has also approved the following amounts to be transferred.

Transfer from Municipal Affairs capital vote to Seniors capital vote, \$4,800,000.

That's my report, Mr. Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Does the Assembly concur in the report? Agreed?

**Hon. Members:** Concur.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

I would like to alert the hon. members that Standing Order 61(3) provides that upon the Assembly concurring in the report by the Committee of Supply, the Assembly immediately reverts to the Introduction of Bills for the introduction of the appropriation bill.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

8:40

## Introduction of Bills

### Bill 17

#### Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2015

**Mr. Oberle:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 17, that being the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2015. This being a money bill, His Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Did you wish to describe the bill just briefly, hon. Deputy Government House Leader?

**Mr. Oberle:** It's the supplementary supply, Mr. Speaker, which allows for the supplementary spending of the government in the third quarter.

**The Deputy Speaker:** And I thank you for that, hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

[Motion carried; Bill 17 read a first time]

**Mr. Denis:** Mr. Speaker, it's a little late tonight, and I would move that the House stand adjourned till 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 8:42 p.m. to Thursday at 1:30 p.m.]













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