



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

Standing Committee  
on  
Families and Communities

Ministry of Service Alberta  
Consideration of Main Estimates

Wednesday, May 4, 2016  
3:30 p.m.

Transcript No. 29-2-4

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

**Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

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

Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (ND)\*  
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)  
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)\*\*  
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Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (ND)  
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\* substitution for Karen McPherson

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**Also in Attendance**

Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W)  
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**Support Staff**

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## **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

### **Participants**

Ministry of Service Alberta

Hon. Stephanie V. McLean, Minister

Mark Brisson, Assistant Deputy Minister, Service Modernization

Tim Grant, Deputy Minister



3:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 4, 2016

[Ms Goehring in the chair]

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

**The Chair:** Welcome. I would like to call this meeting to order and, again, thank everyone for being here today. The committee has under consideration the estimates of the Ministry of Service Alberta for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017.

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

**Mr. Smith:** My name is Mark Smith, and I'm the MLA for Drayton Valley-Devon.

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

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

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

**Mr. Orr:** Ron Orr, MLA, Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Wayne Anderson, MLA, Highwood, and this is my assistant Andrew Koning.

**Ms McLean:** Minister McLean, MLA for Calgary-Varsity, Minister of Service Alberta. With me at the table I have Althea Hutchinson; my deputy minister, Tim Grant; and Mark Brisson, service modernization.

**Mr. Dach:** Lorne Dach, MLA, Edmonton-McClung, substituting for MLA McPherson.

**Dr. Turner:** Bob Turner, Edmonton-Whitemud.

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

**Mr. Westhead:** Cameron Westhead, MLA, Banff-Cochrane.

**Ms Drever:** Deborah Drever, MLA for Calgary-Bow.

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

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

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

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I wish to note for the record that Mr. Ellis is an official substitute for Ms Jansen and that Mr. Gill is an official substitute for Mr. Rodney.

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

Hon. members, the standing orders set out the process for consideration of the main estimates. Before we proceed with consideration of the main estimates for the Ministry of Service Alberta, I would like to review briefly the standing orders governing the speaking rotation. As provided for in Standing Order 59.01(6), the rotation is as follows. The minister or the member of

Executive Council acting on the minister's behalf may make opening comments not to exceed 10 minutes. For the hour that follows, members of the Official Opposition and the minister may speak. For the next 20 minutes the members of the third party, if any, and the minister may speak. For the next 20 minutes the members of any other party represented in the Assembly or any independent members and the minister may speak. For the next 20 minutes private members of government caucus and the minister may speak. For the time remaining, we will follow the same rotation just outlined to the extent possible; however, the speaking times are reduced to five minutes as set out in Standing Order 59.02(1)(c).

Members may speak more than once; however, speaking times for the first rotation are limited to 10 minutes at any one time. A minister and a member may combine their time for a total of 20 minutes. For the final rotation, with speaking times of five minutes, once again a minister and a member may combine their speaking time for a maximum total of 10 minutes. Discussion should flow through the chair at all times regardless of whether or not speaking time is combined. Members are asked to advise the chair at the beginning of their speech if they wish to combine their time with the minister's time.

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

Three hours have been scheduled to consider the estimates of the Ministry of Service Alberta. With the concurrence of the committee I will call a five-minute break near the midpoint of the meeting; however, the three-hour clock will continue to run. Does anyone oppose having this break? Seeing no opposition, we will call the break at midpoint.

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

Ministry officials may be present, and at the direction of the minister officials from the ministry may address the committee. Ministry staff seated in the gallery, if called upon, have access to a microphone in the gallery area. Members' staff may be present and, space permitting, may sit at the table or behind their members along the committee room wall. Members have priority for seating at the table at all times.

If debate is exhausted prior to the three hours, the ministry's estimates are deemed to have been considered for the time allotted in the schedule, and we will adjourn. Otherwise, we will adjourn this evening at 6:30.

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

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

Again I will remind all meeting participants to address their questions and responses through the chair and not directly to each other.

The vote on the estimates is deferred until consideration of all ministry estimates has concluded and will occur in Committee of Supply on May 17, 2016.

If there are amendments, an amendment to the estimates cannot seek to increase the amount of the estimates being considered, change the destination of a grant, or change the destination or purpose of a subsidy. An amendment may be proposed to reduce an estimate, but the amendment cannot propose to reduce the estimate by its full amount. The vote on amendments is deferred until Committee of Supply convenes on May 17, 2016. Amendments must be in writing and approved by Parliamentary Counsel prior to

the meeting at which they are being moved. Twenty copies of amendments must be provided at the meeting for committee members and staff.

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

**Ms McLean:** Thank you. Before we begin discussion of this year's detailed estimates, I would like the opportunity to address what is uppermost on everyone's mind. Wildfires continue to cut a path of destruction across Fort McMurray and neighbouring land. Our hearts go out to all of the families affected by this terrible situation. Our government and, I know, members from all sides of the House and communities across Alberta are doing all we can to ensure people are safe and have what they need. I want to thank the dedicated firefighters, emergency workers, police, and volunteers, who are working under very difficult circumstances.

This afternoon we are discussing Service Alberta's Budget 2016, the Alberta jobs plan. I'm glad to have the opportunity to present my ministry's estimates for the 2016-17 fiscal year. To help answer your questions, I have with me at the table, as I mentioned, my deputy minister, Tim Grant; Althea Hutchinson, our senior financial officer; and Mark Brisson for service modernization. Behind me is my department's executive team: Colin Lloyd for consumer and registry services, Cathryn Landreth for open government, Laura Wood for shared services, Stephen Bull for the SuperNet Secretariat, and Andrew Dore for policy and governance.

For many Albertans my department is their first contact with government. That's because Service Alberta manages the government call centres. So we hear first-hand how the current economic downturn is hurting people and communities. We also provide consumer protection and registry services for vehicles, life changes, and land titles, so we are often the first to notice changes in the marketplace.

We welcome Budget 2016, the Alberta jobs plan, as a positive step to move Alberta forward, and we're proud to do our part. I'll start by taking a look at how we're helping to control spending. Then I'll look at how Service Alberta is contributing to the four pillars of the Alberta jobs plan.

Service Alberta is well positioned to help the Alberta government control spending. Government is a major client of my ministry. We provide centralized financial, technology, business, and administrative services to all ministries. Our administrative services include mail and courier procurement, printing, telecommunications, and surplus sales. We manage accounts payable and receivable, employee pay and benefits, and support the information technology systems used to deliver these services across government. These and other centralized services help government operate as a single entity for easier public access, and they give us a big role in helping all departments achieve value and control their costs through our economies of scale.

We also drive efforts to deliver programs, services, and information more efficiently so that taxpayers get the best value for their money. In tough times like these Albertans expect their government to make smart decisions to save taxpayer dollars, so Service Alberta is modernizing services and finding efficiencies that save money across government. For example, we will save \$1.5 million annually through an initiative to establish in-house support for some of our IT services. By leveraging our buying power, we will see savings of up to 20 per cent for contingent IT contractors. By making better use of existing equipment and adopting new software, we'll be able to reduce printing costs by \$1.1 million and promote the use of electronic solutions.

Of course, Budget 2016, the Alberta jobs plan, is about Albertans and their families. It's about the communities they live in, and it's

about our government taking a thoughtful, practical, and sustainable approach to everything we do on behalf of Albertans. You can see that in each of the four pillars of the Alberta jobs plan, and you can see it in my ministry.

3:40

First, we're responsible for two new pieces of legislation that will directly support Alberta families and communities, which is the first pillar in the Alberta jobs plan. Albertans want to build a society where we take care of each other and where we create pathways out of poverty so that people can support their families.

As committed to in the throne speech, we will introduce changes to protect Albertans by regulating payday lenders and by significantly reducing the cost of borrowing. We want to ensure that repayment options are fair and reasonable. Albertans asked us for this, and we are listening. When we consulted with more than 1,400 stakeholders last year, they told us that current borrowing costs are too high. They also told us that borrowers should be allowed to pay back loans in instalments rather than in lump sums and that government should limit the amount of money that can be borrowed through payday loan companies.

Right now payday lenders in Alberta can charge \$23 per \$100 borrowed. That's the second-highest rate in the country. That money has to be paid each and every time a loan is extended. So clients who get paid biweekly pay \$56 a month in fees on a \$100 loan, which makes it very difficult to pay off the original amount. We know that many borrowers resort to taking out another loan to pay off the first one, incur more fees, and soon spiral in a vicious cycle of debt, all to pay off a small loan.

Albertans have made it clear that they want government to protect vulnerable people from paying exploitive interest rates on payday loans, so we're taking steps to help ensure that a short-term loan in a time of need doesn't trap people in mounting debt and poverty. This is especially important now, when family budgets are tighter than ever. It's simply not fair when those with the least income pay the most for credit. We are changing that.

Government is also supporting the work of credit unions and community groups like Momentum in Calgary, which offer alternative credit options to people who need them.

Another Service Alberta initiative to better protect consumers is the Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2016, which covers major purchases and services. For example, when Albertans buy a car or get one repaired, they need to know that their rights as a consumer are protected. The Fair Trading Amendment Act will give government the appropriate tools to ensure that regulators are doing their job and, if they aren't, to take action when needed.

In particular, the act allows government to address public concerns with the Alberta Motor Vehicle Industry Council, AMVIC, and increase trust and fairness for Albertans. The amendment will give us better oversight of AMVIC, similar to protection provisions in the real estate sector. AMVIC will continue to be responsible for licensing automotive businesses and registering automotive salespeople under the Fair Trading Act and the automotive business regulation. Service Alberta will continue to protect consumers so that Albertans feel they're making a purchase in a fair marketplace. I appreciate the support on the Fair Trading Act from all sides of the House.

Now I'll turn to the second pillar of the Alberta jobs plan, which is to invest in infrastructure. Service Alberta's role here is to ensure that the government's information management technology, or IMT, infrastructure is up to date and efficient. Albertans expect their government to provide well-managed services that can quickly respond to changes.

Because Service Alberta provides centralized business services across government, modernizing our business and technology services will support other public services by migrating systems to a standard IT platform, upgrading aging IT infrastructure, performing routine maintenance, providing digital identification and authentication for public users, and ensuring that government IT systems are secure and operational in times of crisis, both natural and man-made. That last point makes it easier and cheaper for Albertans to access government services online any time on any device. Albertans said that that's what they want.

They also want the service to be quick, secure, and easy to use, so that's what we're giving them. Through the MyAlberta e-services website people can sign up for their own digital ID that will give them secure, easy access to a range of government services. These include electronic reminders to renew their driver's licence, vehicle registration, and identification cards. Electronic reminders will save us \$3 million per year. A variety of other online services will be available down the road using the same infrastructure.

Consolidating services does require a great deal of collaboration among government ministries, but in the end we'll be able to provide services far more effectively, and providing online services through a single secure website will make sure that Albertans receive consistent services from government. There's an additional bonus of investing in IMT. It'll foster economic growth in Alberta IMT companies, creating new jobs and a more diverse economy.

On that note, I'll turn to the third pillar of the Alberta jobs plan, which is diversifying the energy industry and energy markets, which is part of our climate leadership plan. For example, we're making government's mail and print services not only more cost-effective but more environmentally friendly. Thanks to innovations in mail and print services we saved \$763,000 and took the equivalent of five vehicles off the road along with their emissions.

The fourth pillar of the Alberta jobs plan, to support Alberta business, is right up our alley. That's because Service Alberta maintains the open government portal, which is the largest subnational open government portal in Canada, with more than 5,300 resources referenced. It houses the second-largest set of data, with over 2,000 open-data sets. Open data can help build an economy that's more diversified and help create new opportunities for employment and growth. Data analytics will help us to make better evidence-based policy decisions.

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

For the hour that follows, members of the Official Opposition and the minister may speak. Would you like the timer to be set for 20-minute intervals, or would you prefer to let the time flow without interruption?

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Time flow without interruption.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Back and forth.

**The Chair:** Back and forth?

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Please.

**The Chair:** Minister, back and forth?

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

**The Chair:** Go ahead.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Well, thank you, hon. minister and your staff, for being here. I know it's a busy time right now. First off, thanks

for your kind words about Fort McMurray. I send my regrets from MLA Tany Yao, who is a front-line service worker up in Fort McMurray. That's his hometown. He's not here today. He's taking care of his family, friends, and other folks up there.

Minister, we're going to cover some points today, some questions, and if I interject, please don't take offence. It is because I already have the answer.

Okay. Let's start. In the business plan, page 121, key strategy 2.1 states: "Lead initiatives related to government transparency and protection of personal information." It goes on to list modernization of the FOIP and PIPA acts as but one of the ways those strategies should be met. As a strategy what other initiatives does the department have in mind for the protection and transparency of government's information systems?

**Ms McLean:** Okay. As mentioned, this is part of the open government information access and protection branch, our corporate and department FOIP services mentioned in the business plan. Our FOIP services in the information access and protection branch are part of what's provided here, and this consists of corporate FOIP services, which provides overarching policy guidance, training, and resources to support the effective administration of FOIP and PIPA. The department provides FOIP services, which provides access and privacy services to the ministry and three client ministries, which include Agriculture and Forestry, Culture and Tourism, and Seniors and Housing.

Additionally, the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future is reviewing PIPA and will be providing recommendations to government to ensure that PIPA balances the protection of Albertans' personal information and the interests of private-sector organizations in Alberta that collect that information.

Department staff supported the Legislative Assembly researchers in the development of supporting documentation, attended all committee meetings, and presented to the committee and provided a submission for the committee's consideration. We are awaiting the recommendations of the committee and the government's review and acceptance of those recommendations.

The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act is not currently under a formal review. However, work is ongoing to enhance government transparency by expanding options for proactive and routine access to information so that Albertans can access the information they need without always relying on the formal processes. My department provides ongoing training and awareness sessions for both public- and private-sector organizations to ensure that the mechanisms for protecting Albertans' privacy are known and understood.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Great. They sound like a great bunch of initiatives in a great number of departments, but how much money has been allocated for this, and where are they in the budget estimates?

3:50

**Ms McLean:** I'll just flip to the budget here. You can find this in the budget under line item 6, consumer awareness and advocacy. The total for the line is \$21.6 million, but this particular portion of that line item is \$5.5 million.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Thank you.

Has there been any discussion about increasing the FOIP fees?

**Ms McLean:** To my knowledge, there have not been particular discussions brought to my attention, but that's not to say that my officials haven't had some of those background discussions. I'll just

turn to my deputy minister, if I may, to inform perhaps a little bit more thoroughly on that.

**Mr. Grant:** Since I arrived in the department last July, there have been no discussions about increasing FOIP fees at this particular time.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Thanks, Tim.

The current Premier ran on a platform of open government by default. Madam Minister, do you believe the onus is on government to be more open or for Albertans to ask for more information?

**Ms McLean:** Is there a particular page of the budget that you're looking to have an answer on?

**Mr. W. Anderson:** You talk about open and transparent government in key strategy 2.1.

**Ms McLean:** In the business plan?

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Yeah.

**Ms McLean:** Okay. Thank you. There are a number of initiatives that we've been really proud of. The open government portal is where people, you know, would be most quickly directed to. It's the largest subnational open government portal in Canada – it has more than 5,000 resource references – and is the second largest with respect to open data, with almost 2,000 open-data sets. Open data not only provides transparency; it can help build an economy that's more diversified by assisting in creating opportunities for employment and growth.

These data analytics also provide guidance to our policy decisions. The mandate of the open government program is to advance the open government initiative to improve the way that government serves, informs, reports to, and partners with citizens and businesses. The portal was launched in August 2015. The enterprise data analytics are being established as part of the open government division to leverage open data and internal data to better facilitate decision-making and evidence-based policies.

It's also partnering with Alberta data partnerships to create geographic areas in the province designated as open-data areas. This is a unique and world-leading approach that will free up important natural resource and land-based data from participating agencies with six key ecologically important areas of the province. The release of data as open data will offer the opportunity for innovators and entrepreneurs to try novel approaches to create technological solutions to solve a variety of issues.

The Alberta government collaborates closely with the government of Canada in the co-development of technology, business processes, best practices standards, and licensing practices. The government of Alberta and the government of Canada collaborate by federating respective open data portals to enable Canadians to find open data from either portal without needing to understand which jurisdiction owns the data sets, so that eases efficiency with respect to open data. The demand to share data and information between government departments and agencies is growing as government-wide policies and integrated solutions are being developed to meet expectations from Albertans on issues such as better health outcomes, progress on climate change, and achieving economic diversification. We're taking the lead through the open government program in creating a data-sharing platform to enable these outcomes.

Our open data portal site information: over about the past six months, just so you know, we received approximately 278,000 page views, which is inclusive of 39,217 individual visits and 71 per cent

new visitors. The top pages include frequency and ranking of baby names by year and gender, incidentally, but also Alberta vital statistics annual review, sole-sourced service contracts, public disclosure of salary and severance, and average weekly earnings, including overtime. The public disclosure of salary and severance, as you know, was one of the first areas that our government focused on with respect to transparency in government, ensuring that there is additional transparency.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Considerable investment and time have been put into the open data portal. Now, has this department managed to foresee or to have any recognizable cost savings or increased efficiencies?

**Ms McLean:** The point of the open government is more focused on ensuring that people have access to the information they need. While that may not immediately be perceived as a cost savings, it actually can assist with revenue generation by assisting businesses with respect to their investment in Alberta. The open information that they can access through the portal will help attract additional revenue as opposed to a direct cost savings, as you've mentioned.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Okay. Just a last point on this same business plan, page 121, strategy 2.1. Your department is responsible for the FOIP Act, section 86. Section 86 of the act requires an annual report to be prepared by Service Alberta, yet not one has been released since 2012-2013. When can we expect those annual reports: the 2013-14, 2014-15, and eventually the 2015-16 reports?

**Ms McLean:** The contents for the 2013-14 report were compiled but not tabled due to the adjournment of the Legislature. As a result two years of data, the '13-14 and '14-15, are included in one report. The report includes statistics on the number of FOIP requests processed and how responses were provided by government and local public bodies such as schools and municipalities. Service Alberta collects and audits statistics each year from every public body in Alberta to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the numbers that form the annual report. So '13 has been tabled, and '14 is currently in the final preparation stage. As soon as it comes back from the printer, it will be tabled.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Okay. Thank you. That was a quicker answer than the original preamble, but it's what I was looking for.

Okay. Page 119 of your business plan, strategic context: please turn to that. In the second paragraph under Strategic Context it states: "Service Alberta has a strategic role within government in driving . . . and fostering the effective and efficient delivery of government programs, services and information." How does your department plan to drive and foster effective and efficient delivery of programs?

**Ms McLean:** Our programs and services fall into two broad categories, providing services and programs that have a direct impact on the personal and business activities of Albertans and supporting other departments in the delivery of their programs.

**4:00**

The services and programs provided directly to Albertans support key economic activities such as registering a land title. The ALTA 2 modernization project is included in this, and it will automate the registration of titles, reduce error rates in processing, allow for real-time registrations. All of these create financial benefits for all businesses and individuals involved in registering mortgages and titles.



In supporting departments, Service Alberta has been asked to take a stronger stewardship role over the capital investment for government's information management and technology programs and projects; for example, supporting departments to modernize their systems that collect geospatial reference and transportation data. This not only enables departments to improve program and service delivery but encourages the diversification of Alberta business by unlocking basic common reference data, which the World Bank stated has a proven track record of achieving economic growth.

Another key strategy is our open government initiative, which we've gone over just recently here. Releasing data, as I mentioned, offers the opportunity for innovators and entrepreneurs to try novel approaches in creating technological solutions to solve environmental, resource extraction, and other similar issues, which will in turn lead to diversification in the economy.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Okay. Page 120, priority 1.1 of your business plan. Last year I asked the then minister about the Alberta consumers' agenda, and I didn't really get an answer. I'm hoping you can explain: what is the Alberta consumers' agenda? Is this a written document? Is it something you've developed? If so, are you going to release it to the public?

**Ms McLean:** When we're talking about a consumer agenda, we're talking about things that will enhance consumer protection and address consumer needs. Those particular needs and issues are the kinds of things that evolve with the marketplace. In tough economic times, like we're currently facing, we see increased rates of certain kinds of economic activity. As I'd mentioned, the payday loan industry may be one example of such types of economic activity.

Service Alberta plays a role in providing some consumer protection but also enhancing consumer opportunities to ensure that Albertans have the best access to the marketplace that is fair and reasonable. So when we talk about a consumers' agenda, we're talking about those goals and initiatives that we hear from the public on an ongoing basis.

We're already taking action to enhance consumer protection in a number of areas, as I mentioned, with respect to the payday loan industry, the amendments to the Fair Trading Act as well as with respect to AMVIC. First of all, the payday loans, predatory lending, which was mentioned in the throne speech, is one way that we're moving forward on consumer protection but also, as we've already introduced, the Fair Trading Amendment Act, which will ensure that Albertans buying vehicles have enhanced protection.

The strategic directions that could be considered for inclusion in the consumer agenda, based on what we've been hearing, might see things such as a renewed legislative framework, including something like a consumers' bill of rights – none of this is fully cooked; it's stuff that we've been hearing from the public – new systems and tools to improve consumer protection such as data analytics to proactively identify emerging marketplace trends, apps to help consumers make informed choices when engaging in high-risk transactions, enhanced education for consumers and businesses, and perhaps recommendations that your own constituents might bring forward to you that we'd be more than happy to consider.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** I'm assuming that the Alberta consumers' agenda is really a working document; it's not something that's actually documented per se. It's a fluid document or a fluid strategy?

**Ms McLean:** Incidentally, our call centre does keep records of the calls that come in, so there is essentially floating documentation as we go along based on the calls that we get. Also, our offices certainly keep records of the casework that comes in from constituents and through MLAs' offices such as yourself. You're right. It is a fluid thing, and it ensures that we can be nimble and respond to the demands of citizens, who are consumers.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Thanks. Appreciate it.

Okay. Business plan, page 121, performance measure 1(a). I see that your department is developing a couple of performance measures to go around through this budget. The department's goal is to introduce or expand four consumer protection initiatives – and I'm assuming that's what you've been speaking to – and in each of the two years that goal increases to six. I imagine that the department already has a pretty good idea of what those are, and I'm thinking that's what you've just discussed right now. Is that correct? In 2016 and 2017 you're going from four to six. Are those what you were just speaking about now?

**Ms McLean:** Yes. By increasing the targets, we're increasing a target for ourselves and for our ministry to ensure that we provide additional opportunities and protections to the public. We're anticipating an increased need for some protections in the out years. With the four that we've got here, we're already well on our way to hitting that target.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Are there any costs associated with those right now, and are they in the budget line items anywhere?

**Ms McLean:** The changes with respect to the coming legislation respecting payday loans and then also the changes with respect to the Fair Trading Act, that we've already brought forward into the House, don't have particular costs associated that are reflected in line items. Where you would see a line item that would refer to consumer protection – you would look to our changes to the ABCs, for example. The UCA advisory board was dissolved, so there's been some cost savings there, and the stakeholders involved in that are supportive of the decision to realize the cost savings but also reallocate some of those funds to the UCA itself to provide enhanced consumer protection.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Are those savings reflected in this current budget estimate?

**Ms McLean:** Yes, they are.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Can you tell me where?

**Ms McLean:** Yes. Just give me one second here. Page 218 in the estimates, line 7.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Okay. Thank you.

Okay. Since we're talking about the UCA, I might as well go to this question now. It's been disbanded as a result of an ongoing review of Alberta's agencies, or ABCs review. According to some briefing notes we received, the advisory board will be replacing the energy consumers panel, which will be more representative of consumers and responsive to consumers' concerns. What are the major concerns uncovered during the review, and what led to the loss of confidence in the advisory board?

**Ms McLean:** Firstly, with the new panel that we seek to establish, we're not necessarily going to name it the energy consumers panel – that's still a bit in flux – but something along those lines.

The UCA advisory board was created in 2003, and it provided advice to the minister and the advocate. At that time the UCA itself was just being developed, so it required more guidance in the set-up so that it would function well. The advisory board provided advice concerning regulatory matters, policy and regulatory issues that could impact Alberta consumers of electricity and natural gas; public awareness of the Utilities Consumer Advocate, as it was just starting; consumer education initiatives; and the use of mediation to resolve consumer complaints with the retail service provider. They met on a monthly basis. However, the ABC review determined that the board should be dissolved. It played an important role in establishing the UCA in its early years, but its function really expired. It's no longer essential to the UCA's operation or mandate. It's really a duplication of efforts, so this is a timely efficiency that is recognized even by the prior members.

4:10

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Will the energy consumer panel be fully funded by the industry?

**Ms McLean:** No. The funding for the panel, however, will be very, very minuscule and absorbed by an existing line item, so there won't be additional monies required outside of the estimates that you have before you.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Forgive me, but did you tell me what the composition of the energy panel is going to be, the stakeholders or the groups?

**Ms McLean:** That is still under consultation.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Still up in the air? Okay. Thank you.

**Ms McLean:** I might add, for your edification, that the cost savings of this dissolution are projected to be \$240,000 annually.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Thank you.

Going back to the business plan, page 120, key strategy 1.3, if I may. It calls for the strengthening of consumer protection within Alberta's condominium industry, particularly when it comes to the purchasing of new condominiums. Is this going to be leading to new legislation?

**Ms McLean:** New legislation was introduced by the previous government – I'm just checking . . .

**Mr. W. Anderson:** I think it was Bill 9.

**Ms McLean:** Yeah. It was introduced in 2013 and passed in 2014, so the legislation is already there. Regulations, however, are being developed with respect to that act. Consultations have been under way with respect to the first phase that we're working on in those regulations. The consultation process was quite innovative for Alberta, with Service Alberta leading the way. We actually posted proposed regulations online on our site for Albertans to comment on and provide feedback. Those comments and feedback in addition to stakeholder and directed consultations have provided a lot of information that's helped us inform the direction that we would take in phase 1. Those regulations, however, are not yet cooked to the point where I could get into any of the weeds on it.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Thank you.

Getting over to your estimates, page 218, line item 6, consumer awareness and advocacy again. I just want clarification . . .

**Ms McLean:** Sorry. Just one sec. I'll follow along with you.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Your estimates, page 218.

**Ms McLean:** Line item 6?

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Yeah. Consumer awareness and advocacy. It says here that you plan to increase your reach to 100,000 consumers. How do you plan on doing that? Is it just existing infrastructure or any additional infrastructure?

**Ms McLean:** Sorry. Where are you pointing to that comment? I don't see that in the estimates. Is that in the business plan? I just want to make sure we're all on the same page.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Just a minute. Andrew is going to look it up.

**Ms McLean:** That's why we have our officials.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** While he's looking for that, we'll go back to page 218. A couple of questions about the motor vehicle system, MOVES.

**Ms McLean:** Sure.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** I think MOVES has been promised a upgrade for some time. In fact, in the fall estimates the former minister said, "MOVES is a very old system, and it needs to be upgraded." Has the government allocated any capital towards upgrading MOVES in this year's budget?

**Ms McLean:** This is quite a specific question, so I'm actually going to turn to our expert at the table.

Mark, if you don't mind.

**Mr. Brisson:** Sure. We have allocated capital funding towards this initiative this year. We are looking at doing a review of the application from a total quality perspective to make sure that we know what we know going in, and then we'll have a business case completed on a technological upgrade of the application, not a full replacement of the application, because of the current financial position we're in.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Is it going to be an in-house initiative, or is it going to be contracted out?

**Mr. Brisson:** It will be a combination of using our in-house business resources to work on the business requirements to ensure we're moving forward, but also we will be looking to go to the private sector to help us with specialized skill sets in moving from such old application coding and infrastructure to a new platform.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** A technology platform or an application platform?

**Mr. Brisson:** A new technology platform.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** So a hardware platform?

**Mr. Brisson:** Yes.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Okay. I forget. Did you mention, Mark, if there is a timing on this, again?

**Mr. Brisson:** The intent right now is that we're putting a team together and doing the business casework and looking to put an RFP out on the street in the summer time frame.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Okay. So summertime, RFP, closing the RFP sometime at the end of summer, and implementation in the fall?

**Mr. Brisson:** The intent is to put an RFP out in the summertime. I want to respect the summertime vacation plans of individuals, but the intent is to move forward, if that is the basis of your question.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Thanks. I appreciate it.

Back to your business plan, page 121, performance measure 2(b). It talks about measurement of “percentage of FOIP requests handled without complaint to the Information and Privacy Commissioner.” I’m wondering: can you tell me how many complaints were received by the Privacy Commissioner?

**Ms McLean:** We will have to get back to you on that one.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** The business plan, page 122, key strategy 4.2. I want to ask about the ending of mailed renewal reminders. According to the press release Albertans with disabilities will continue to receive their reminders in the mail. That’s correct, right?

**Ms McLean:** That’s correct.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** But the challenge that I’ve got is: what’s the reasoning behind not including seniors in grandfathering that clause? I mean, if you’ve got someone over the age of 70 and they don’t have a computer this year, what makes you think they’re going to have a computer next year? Can’t we include the people who are 70 years old and treat them the same as people with disabilities? I’m not saying that they are disabled by age, but I’ve had a lot of individuals contacting our office suggesting: you know, my grandparents are still capable of driving a vehicle, but they don’t have access to technology.

**Ms McLean:** Well, first of all, the point of this initiative is to move everyone, really, into the current sort of state of technology with respect to all services. This is one way that we’re moving people forward. But also we recognize, as you’ve mentioned, that simply being over a certain age does not constitute a disability. You know, for myself, I know that my own mother’s boyfriend is 50-some years old and he doesn’t know how to operate a computer at all whereas my grandmother has a smart phone. So this is not the kind of thing where you can paint all people of an age with one brush stroke.

In order to assist seniors, who, I am confident, are going to be able to find solutions to the reminder problem, whether it’s online or through services offered by their local registry as many have stepped in to fill the gap with other ways of notifying their clients, we have also provided an additional year of paper reminders for seniors to advise them of these changes so that they can take the steps that they need. If you’ve been hearing from your constituents on this, then I think we’ve been doing a good job of getting the message out there, that they know that this is changing. Like always, folks, no matter who they are, will be able to check the sticker on the back of their licence plate. If they are driving frequently or periodically, you typically walk behind your vehicle and can take notice there. Additionally, if they’ve been driving for a number of years, they’ve always been renewing the same month their entire driving history.

4:20

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Okay. Thank you. I appreciate that. So, in other words, no.

In the business plan, page 121, key strategy 2.3 talks about the department’s desire to “improve the way government shares and receives information with and from Albertans.” What specific areas have been identified as in need of improvement?

**Ms McLean:** A lot of the communication that government receives from folks has been limited by technology. One of the ways that we want to ensure that there’s more efficient information transfer is to look at what society is doing. The majority of Albertans are online in some way. So many folks are reliant on their smart phones and on technology. In order to improve those lines of communication so that we can meet Albertans where they are in terms of how they want to contact us, we have worked really hard on the open government portal.

I addressed some of what the open government portal does, but in this respect we share information in the portal in two ways: first, by continuously working to identify data, information, statistics, and reports that can be routinely provided on a proactive basis and, second, by enhancing how data is presented through tools like data visualization to help Albertans better understand and use our data and information. Of course, Albertans are welcome to contact my office by phone, written letter, or e-mail or to be in touch with their local MLA, such as yourself, and we receive many of these requests every day. We’re pleased just to have another way of connecting with Albertans to meet them where they are at.

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

Page 122 again, key strategy 3.5. Recently your department awarded a contract to perform an audit of SuperNet. What were the factors that prompted the department to RFP this audit at this time? Why was it warranted?

**Ms McLean:** I think you’re referring to the fact that the SuperNet contract is . . .

**Mr. W. Anderson:** It was an audit on SuperNet.

**Ms McLean:** I’m going to pass this over to my DM to give you the most fulsome information.

**Mr. Grant:** As you’re probably aware, the SuperNet contract was extended from 2015 to 2018. We’re in the process of going through a request for qualification, identifying a number of companies who may be able to help us to develop what we would call SuperNet 2.0. But in order to do that, in order to make sure we understood clearly what the current state of the SuperNet system was, we decided that we would conduct an audit of the system itself – the architecture, the governance – to ensure that as we’re moving into those discussions on the way forward, we have a clear understanding of our start point. There had not been an audit done previously, so this really provides us with the latest information on the current structure, the current challenges with SuperNet, and helps us define the way forward for the future.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** How come there hasn’t been an audit done in the last 15 years? Or has there been? You said that there hasn’t been.

**Mr. Grant:** Under this government there has not been an audit done of the SuperNet.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** So this is the first audit of SuperNet?

**Mr. Grant:** Yes.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Okay. You mentioned its current state. My question: is there a specific reason why we’re auditing it now? Are there some deficiencies within the way they’ve been managing the business? Is there anything there specifically that you’re looking for in an end result of the audit?

**Mr. Grant:** No. It was absolutely because of the PQR that is currently under way in order to make sure that we were showing due diligence in setting the conditions for the future contract, the future of SuperNet.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Okay. Thank you.

**Ms McLean:** I might be able to add to that if you'd like.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Sure.

**Ms McLean:** I think some of what you might be interested in is the fact that – I mean, first of all, the infrastructure was a solid investment by government. The current SuperNet operating model, however, is not equipped to meet those demands, and over the last 10 years the contracts have become out of date and ineffective. Vendor partnerships have deteriorated, and government is facing the need to review what's going on with SuperNet, so an audit would be informative in that review.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** May I ask: what's the time frame on the audit? I think the RFP has been awarded. Is there a time frame on the completion?

**Ms McLean:** I'll let my official answer that.

**Mr. Grant:** The audit has started, and it could potentially run into the next calendar year. Depending on what the initial determinations, the initial findings of the audit are, there is room to extend it to look at it. But it could run into the next calendar year.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Okay. Thank you.

The business plan, page 121 again, key strategy 2.4. We're going to talk again about the open data portal a little bit.

**Ms McLean:** Sorry. You said that you were at . . .

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Page 121 of your business plan, 2.4, open data.

Again, it talks about enhancing "the availability and usability of information on Alberta's Open Data Portal." It sounds like you're directing information already available in the open data portal. Are you pushing information out to the public, or does it mean that the public is being advertised to access the open data portal? Are you pushing it out, or is it returning it to have people come back into the data portal? What is your business objective there? What is your objective?

**Ms McLean:** Through the open portal we provide information to the public that is more efficient and useable in the format that it's produced in there than historically. Additionally, we receive information from across government and through certain agencies that interact with government. There is information sharing that goes both ways, but it's more of a select group of what's coming in.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** How do you measure success with that, then? How is it measured?

**Ms McLean:** We measure that by the data sets that come in as well as by the number of hits that we have to the site, and I gave you the numbers of the hits that we had earlier.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Okay. Thanks.

I'd like to go to your estimates, page 219, line item 8.1. I'm going to talk about the trans-Pacific partnership on government procurements. Now, I'm just wondering about your thoughts on the impact that the trans-Pacific partnership has had on government procurements. Are you aware of that?

4:30

**Ms McLean:** So this is something, the TPP portion, that affects Economic Development and Trade, but it hasn't had an impact on Service Alberta.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Okay. Any plans to take advantage of that TPP plan in the future?

**Ms McLean:** If Canada signs on to it, then it'll certainly have impacts for us.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Sure. Thank you.

On page 218 of your estimates, line item 8.1, procurement and administration services, you've got an operating budget here of \$35.41 million. What specifically falls under that line item?

**Ms McLean:** Are you looking for everything that falls under line 8 or specifically 8.1?

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Line item 8.1.

**Ms McLean:** Okay. Under procurement and administration services our administration services include things such as mail, print, and forms and imaging and records management programs. These are charged back to government as clients as a shared service. Our procurement services support the acquisition of goods and the purchase of information technology systems development and information technology outsourcing. It also includes logistics, warehousing, and our surplus sales operations as well as the Queen's Printer publications.

There is a 6 per cent reduction in this area, and this is in anticipation of our projected cost-containment measures. Departments are being encouraged to transition to more environmentally friendly methods of communicating with Albertans, so we anticipate that this will reduce the need for mail and print services provided by Service Alberta.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Thank you.

A bit of a change. On page 220 of the estimates, line item 6, you've got \$1 million recovered from other ministries for fleet administration. Is that correct?

**Ms McLean:** Sorry; can you repeat that? There was page flipping, and I couldn't hear you.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** On page 220, line item 6, you've got \$1 million recovered from ministries for fleet administration. Now, my question is: given that the ministry manages the government vehicle fleet, what's the impact of the new carbon tax on the government fleet? Do you know?

**Ms McLean:** We can get back to you on that.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Okay. Any chances you're looking at more efficient vehicles for the fleet? I noticed that there are a lot of brand new SUVs in the parking lot.

**Ms McLean:** We continue to prudently and economically minimize the carbon footprint of the government's fleet. The objectives of greening the fleet are to demonstrate environmental leadership and support our overarching policies, including our clean air strategy, climate change strategy; to minimize the government's fuel consumption, greenhouse gas emissions, and other adverse environmental impacts; and to continue to meet the government's need for vehicles that are well suited to providing programs and services to Albertans.

The executive vehicles, however, are only 2 per cent of the government fleet. It's not an accurate description if one were to refer to the executive fleet as the fleet in total as there are some 3,727 vehicles in the government fleet. We use the executive fleet in our government for fewer government official roles than in previous years and by previous governments with the exception that the Premier's staff and the Premier's office are not assigned executive vehicles.

As far as new vehicles go, there have been purchases of some vehicles in order to replace vehicles that may have expended their lifespan, including the purchase of a vehicle from the fleet by the Leader of the Official Opposition, so he's taking advantage of that as well.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Okay. Thank you. Thanks for that answer.

On page 122 of the business plan, key strategy 3.1 is to "improve the governance and implementation of the government's technology infrastructure and business applications to realize efficiencies." What government improvements would you like to see realized, and what have you got planned? Then, again, how do you measure your success in realizing efficiencies?

**Ms McLean:** One of the ways that we're improving the implementation of the government's technology infrastructure to realize efficiencies is with respect to the One Information Management Technology program and the capital funding that you find in our estimates. We are investing in infrastructure in IMT because this will help provide economic growth in Alberta in IMT companies, giving job creators some stability. They'll find that in our budget. The increased investment here helps Alberta close the gap with comparable jurisdictions. Investing in this infrastructure will improve the safety of our IT infrastructure and minimize the risk of aging in critical systems in government.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Is there any actual measurement of increasing efficiencies? Like, is there a measurement of any sort, something quantifiable?

**Ms McLean:** I will turn to my official, Mark, to talk about the efficiencies.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Thanks.

**Mr. Brisson:** We do have measurements as we go through with these migrations of infrastructure and processes and the services that we provide. We have measurables on all of the service-based contracts we have that deliver on our infrastructure and how we're doing: satisfaction surveys, satisfaction rates. Those exist. With all of the consolidation of the processes as part of the first GOA domain migration we are now on-boarding enough employees that we're seeing those economies of scales relaxed and the satisfaction rates and the employee productivity rates increase across government.

As we move forward with the next phase of migration of infrastructure and technology, we'll be looking at areas of savings from duplicate infrastructure, duplicate applications. We'll be looking at measurement around our environmental footprint and how much energy we're using and reducing on those as well as real cost-saving dollars from investments where we're not making any more and we're reinvesting back in some of our services.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Thanks.

You reference in your business plan services provided by Service Alberta as well as a goal of improving governance. Is Service

Alberta the ultimate authority on the usage of shared IT services? Like, is your department the ultimate authority on that?

**Ms McLean:** We provide shared IT services across government. There are some other departments that have IT services specifically in them, but we're working more towards a sort of one-stop solution...

**Mr. W. Anderson:** A one-stop shop?

**Ms McLean:** Yeah, in Service Alberta, a more centralized model of IT.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** A more centralized and cost-effective model, I hope.

**Ms McLean:** Yes. Well, that's the intention of the centralization.

4:40

**Mr. W. Anderson:** So does Service Alberta monitor any of the misuse within the IT infrastructure?

**Ms McLean:** Can I ask for clarity on what you're referring to as misuse?

**Mr. W. Anderson:** If there's any misuse of IT technology or IT services by any GOA employee of any sort, do you monitor that? Are there any lights that go off, flashes, or anything that indicates that this person or this individual or this organization is accessing data or information that they should not be?

**Ms McLean:** Are you talking about, like, overusage of data?

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Yes. Possibly overusage or accessing files or information that they should not be accessing.

**Ms McLean:** So overall security?

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Yes.

**Ms McLean:** The security of the government IT is under the responsibility of Service Alberta. With respect to sort of the nitty-gritty of how that works, I'll turn to Tim.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Service Alberta is the ultimate authority for managing, I guess, highlighting, or foreseeing any potential misuse of the information systems.

**Mr. Grant:** In general terms I would say that we are absolutely responsible for the GOA domain, for both the security, protecting it from external attacks, and monitoring its use internally. As Mark suggested earlier, the fact that not everyone is necessarily on the GOA domain, some of those efficiencies that we'd hoped to achieve – there are some of those applications that we are not responsible for monitoring.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Would Service Alberta provide the majority of the e-mail accounts for the GOA?

**Mr. Grant:** Yes.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Okay. My question is, then, that earlier this year it came to the public's attention that the Premier's husband had a government e-mail account for the purpose of sharing a calendar with the Premier. My question focuses on the governance of IT shared services. Did the Premier's office ask for that e-mail account to be created? Are you aware of that?

**The Chair:** Hon. member, can I ask that you tie the question to the budget that we're trying to speak about today?

**Mr. W. Anderson:** I was alluding to the business plan, page 122, key strategy 3.1: improve the governance and implementation. I did ask because of that: were they responsible for the e-mail systems as well? And I did ask them if they were responsible for procuring or providing e-mail services, and they said yes. I just wanted another question towards that. Is that out of order?

**The Chair:** Well, it needs to relate to the current budget.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Okay. Thank you.

Well, I see that I've only got five minutes remaining. I'd like to pass my time off to my colleague. Thank you.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Wonderful. Thank you very much. I would like to introduce an amendment. I have the requisite number of copies. Would you like me to wait until they're passed out, or can I read the amendment?

**The Chair:** Once I have the amendment, then, absolutely, go ahead and read it. I need the original and one copy. Thank you.

Go ahead.

**Mrs. Pitt:** All right. I move that

the 2016-17 main estimates of the Ministry of Service Alberta be reduced as follows:

- (a) for the minister's office under reference 1.1 at page 218 by \$39,000
  - (b) for the deputy minister's office under reference 1.3 at page 218 by \$41,000
  - (c) for corporate services under reference 1.4 at page 218 by \$967,000
- so that the amount to be voted at page 217 for expense is \$314,922,000.

It's just minuscule in the scheme of things.

**The Chair:** Members from the Official Opposition, you still have two minutes remaining.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Thank you.

On your estimates page 218, line item 2, land titles, I have a question, and it's a concern I have from a lot of industry stakeholders and constituents. In looking at the dollar amount there, I'm wondering whether there is any consideration for instituting a land title transfer tax.

**Ms McLean:** A land title transfer tax, you said?

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Yeah.

**Ms McLean:** To my knowledge, there have not been discussions about that brought to my attention. Whether or not that's happened at the officials level, I'm not entirely certain, so I'll flip over to my DM to comment on whether or not there have been any discussions.

**Mr. Grant:** No, there have been no discussions. Certainly, from our standpoint, it was clear when the Premier was elected that she had taken the land transfer tax off the table, not to be put back on. So, certainly, we have had no discussions about it.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Okay. Same estimates. With the advancement of technology the economy has become 24/7, and that includes real estate. Currently your spatial system, or what they call SPIN 2, is only available Mondays to Fridays for limited hours, 7 a.m. to 9 p.m.; on Saturdays; and then Sundays for five hours a day. You've

budgeted \$10.365 million for land titles this year. Has any of this money been allocated towards making SPIN available 24/7 to market?

**The Chair:** I apologize for the interruption. The time allotted for this part of the meeting has expired.

I would now invite members from the third-party opposition to speak for the next 20 minutes. Mr. Ellis, would you like to be going back and forth with the minister?

**Mr. Ellis:** Yeah. That's good.

**The Chair:** And would you like to be advised of your 10-minute warning?

**Mr. Ellis:** No.

**The Chair:** Okay. Go ahead.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Chair. Minister and department officials, thank you so much for being here. I'm going to be a little more friendly and really just – you know, I just want to say that I think all of us have it in our hearts and our heads, and I know, especially as an operational type of guy, we're all thinking about Fort McMurray. But we all also have a job to do, and we're going to do that, right?

I know that Service Alberta is not the most exciting ministry, but certainly it is one of those ministries... [interjections] Well, no. That's what my good friend Manmeet said – I'm sorry – and he was one of the ministers. But, you know, it is something that touches every Albertan, so let's not take away from how critical Service Alberta is. And, Minister, I know that you've been very busy as of late, notably with Bill 8 and with significant dialogue regarding that private member's Bill 203. I'm sure you're having that.

You know, last year I was just a rookie on this particular file. So in estimates last year it was a pleasure for me to be able to question the then minister alongside, of course, our good friend Manmeet Bhullar. And it's with him in mind that I'm going to be asking many of the questions on key themes that he established back in early November. Given that it has only been six months since the last estimates meeting on Service Alberta, a number of these issues, I believe, are still relevant today and even more so in some cases.

While there's no specific reference to a line item, although it is a cost-savings measure, I just want to get this one out of the way. We all know that there's a lot of information to absorb, of course, during a budget and estimates. We've heard a lot of questions being put to other ministers in the first few sets of estimates. Minister, can you commit or maybe give us some idea today that next year the government will provide budget data in an electronic format, in Excel or other similar open-data formats? It just would be a lot easier for folks, and I think it would be quite efficient in cost savings.

4:50

**Ms McLean:** Unfortunately, I can't speak for Treasury Board and Finance. That would fall under their purview.

But I would like to mention that I think Service Alberta is very exciting, and I find consumer protection to be very exciting.

**Mr. Ellis:** Again, I'm more of an operational guy.

You know, I guess I'll start with the subject that I'm most familiar with – and I'm going to apologize again; being the second set of questions, most of my stuff has probably been asked; I apologize if anything is duplicative here – estimates page 218, line 3 and line 9.1 regarding MOVES. We heard last year, of course – and I think this was already mentioned – that the system used is archaic. It kind of reminds me in Justice of JOIN, the justice online

information network. I think it's using the same technology of DOS 3.0 or something. Anyway, I'm being facetious.

But we've also established that the previous government had been in consultation with jurisdictions like Saskatchewan for a few years about how best to update the system. Revamping the system does not happen overnight – I think we all know this – and capital funding is required to achieve the rollout of something new, and last year's budget did not include any capital dollars to begin reshaping the system. I know you had previously touched on this – and maybe this is a question for one of your deputies here – but there was no mention of how much was going to be given to the capital budget or if there is any increase for MOVES. Does anybody have an answer for that?

**Ms McLean:** It's a \$4 million capital investment in '16-17.

**Mr. Ellis:** Oh, great. Fantastic. All that for such a small – go ahead.

**Ms McLean:** I'm going to have my DM add to the first part of that.

**Mr. Ellis:** Sure.

**Mr. Grant:** You had raised the issue that, as was mentioned in estimates in November, we had been looking at a range of options from commercial off-the-shelf to lift-and-shift of the application, which Mark Brisson had talked about earlier, to other government applications, and Saskatchewan was one of the examples that was used. What we found is that all of those options, particularly commercial off-the-shelf and even the government option from Saskatchewan, were significantly more expensive than were appropriate given the financial constraints we find ourselves in.

We've looked at an option here that will move us from COBOL, which is not DOS 3 but COBOL, which goes back to the '70s, into a more stable platform at a much more reasonable price. So as Mr. Brisson said, this is not a replacement of MOVES. It is an adjustment which will make it far more stable and much more cost-efficient to deal with.

**Mr. Ellis:** And probably more user accessible, user friendly, right?

**Ms McLean:** That's the goal.

**Mr. Ellis:** Great. Well, thank you very much. I appreciate that.

Minister, the capital plan has outlined planning funds. Page 49 of the fiscal plan shows \$5 million for information management technology and \$10 million for infrastructure capital planning. Additionally, page 51 shows \$2 million for public safety and emergency services planning funds. These are all in the fiscal year, and they total \$17 million. Are any of these planning dollars scheduled specifically for MOVES, and if not, do you plan on applying any of the planning? Or is it that \$4 million, which is something separate?

**Ms McLean:** The \$4 million is something separate. To date we've allocated about \$250,000 for the planning.

**Mr. Ellis:** Sorry, Minister. Is that from the \$4 million, the \$250,000, or is that separate as well?

**Ms McLean:** It's in addition to the \$4 million.

**Mr. Ellis:** Okay. Great. Well, thank you.

**Ms McLean:** It's always surprising to me how expensive software and hardware are for IT, even in my home computer. MacBooks are increasingly expensive.

**Mr. Ellis:** Yeah. Every time we go into Apple, right? It gets higher and higher.

In the last estimates we talked about the cycle planning for MOVES. The previous budget had no three-year planning, and it appears that the budget has no five-year planning for MOVES. Can the government expect to have a new system in place within this term if there is no dedicated long-term funding and planning at this present time? Is the updating of MOVES still in the research and review process, or is there a cycle of funding now in place?

**Ms McLean:** So we mentioned the \$4 million for the funding. As with most capital projects, it's a larger influx to get the capital project started and completed than it is for ongoing maintenance. We budget for the ongoing maintenance of MOVES already, as it is, so that would continue after the project is completed.

**Mr. Ellis:** Great. Thank you.

As you know, public safety is a very serious concern. I'm sure you've received a number of complaints, and – I'm sorry – I'm just kind of thinking that maybe a complaint came in from myself in the CPS. Of course, a strong desire is to update the technology. You know, am I asking for a fixed date? I guess my hope is: is there something that at least is on the horizon, that could be before 2020, something that can be in place?

**Ms McLean:** You're talking about MOVES?

**Mr. Ellis:** Yeah.

**Ms McLean:** We're expecting '18-19 for the new system.

**Mr. Ellis:** Very good. Well, thank you very much. That's excellent.

I guess that next, you know, I just want to touch on registries if you don't mind.

**Ms McLean:** I don't mind at all.

**Mr. Ellis:** Registries, as you know, are in the estimates at page 218, lines 3, 4, and 5. It's also mentioned in the business plan, page 122. I guess this is something that our good friend Manmeet had talked about in November. In 1993 there were 232 registry agents. Currently there are 225, or, of course, 226 if the registry agent in Wabasca is up and running. The previous minister before you had outlined that the review of the registry system was occurring. In 2014-15 the volume of transactions was just over 9.2 million. Eighty per cent of these transactions were capped. The cap was \$9 for motor vehicles. My question, Minister: is there a number for total transactions for the 2015-16 fiscal year, and can you provide an estimate for the fiscal year given the shift that is occurring to online services?

**Ms McLean:** The information will be public in the annual report, which will be in late June.

**Mr. Ellis:** I'm sorry. I didn't quite hear that.

**Ms McLean:** In the annual report it will be public in late June.

**Mr. Ellis:** Oh, okay. Thank you very much, Minister.

Again, focusing on a registry item, where are we currently in the review process? When can we expect to have an idea about where the government plans to make changes to the system such as the RFP processes and capped fees, for example?

**Ms McLean:** You're referring to . . .

**Mr. Ellis:** Line 4, page 218 of estimates.

**Ms McLean:** You're talking about the online services provided by registries. Is that right?

**Mr. Ellis:** Yes.

**Ms McLean:** Okay. We're still in some preliminary stages with respect to the planning of that. So there's still more to come but no update at this time.

**Mr. Ellis:** Okay. Thank you.

We're referencing line 5, page 218 of estimates. Minister, how extensive has the uptake been on the online registry services so far? Is there any way to quantify the early use of, you know, MySpace Alberta, which was made available on April 1, as well as the e-registry program?

**Ms McLean:** For those particular details I'm going to ask Mark Brisson to take the hot seat.

**Mr. Brisson:** Can you repeat your question for me, please?

5:00

**Mr. Ellis:** Sure. Absolutely. How extensive has the uptake been on the online registry services so far? Is there any way to quantify it, or have you any numbers, I guess is what I'm looking for, on the early use of MyAlberta e-services, which was made available on April 1, as well as the e-registry program?

**Mr. Brisson:** For the MyAlberta e-services web portal we have a number of products and services at play there. Some are ordering ski passes. You can order fishing licences that'll take you out to E and P. You can make campground reservations, order security courses. We do a number of conferences that we allow people to book into a conference and then also purchase. So we have a number of services that are there. They're up and going. We've had very good uptake of those services. I don't have the specific number of how many thousands of Albertans, but we have had several thousand that have taken advantage of this service that we're providing.

**Mr. Ellis:** Okay. Yeah. I was looking for numbers, but you're obviously saying that it's being used, that people are on the system and using it, so that's great.

**Mr. Brisson:** We have over 150 other candidate services across government that we're looking at onboarding over the next couple of years as business readiness comes into play and we're able to bring them into both the MyAlberta digital ID as well as the e-services payment option.

**Mr. Ellis:** Okay. Then a follow-up to that, and maybe you, sir, might be able to answer this. What is the involvement of the registry agent network in helping to increase these transactions on MyAlberta e-services? Do registry agents have a role to play in this new paradigm shift?

**Ms McLean:** These are services that are offered in-house by government. Ski passes, that kind of thing, are government of Alberta products, so we're offering them direct to Albertans.

**Mr. Ellis:** Okay. So the registry offices: that's not a service that they'll be doing, I guess?

**Ms McLean:** To my knowledge they've never done things like ski passes.

**Mr. Ellis:** Right. But there's no plan to utilize the registry offices, I guess, for any of these?

**Ms McLean:** Not at this time.

**Mr. Ellis:** Okay. Great.

Minister, last year the previous minister stated that the government was not and would not be looking to provide any online services through a third party. Is this still the case?

**Ms McLean:** You mean a third-party website? Sorry.

**Mr. Ellis:** Yes.

**Ms McLean:** Unfortunately, I didn't have the benefit of sitting in on the prior minister's estimates, so I'm grasping at that conversation you're referring to. I assume you're asking about the platform, and MyAlberta e-services is an in-house program.

**Mr. Ellis:** So everything is being kept in-house for online services?

**Ms McLean:** Yes, with respect to MyAlberta. I think that's what you're referring to.

**Mr. Ellis:** Yeah. There's no third party being contracted out or anything like that?

**Ms McLean:** For the development of MyAlberta? I'll flip that back over to Mark.

**Mr. Ellis:** Okay.

**Mr. Brisson:** The operations of the strategy and onboarding and working with business areas are done by business individuals within the department. We do have outsourced third-party developers that help develop the product and help with maintenance obligations.

**Mr. Ellis:** Okay. Great. Thank you.

Minister, during the last estimates we learned the strategy to determine what registry services will look like going into the future. Of course, it's still very much, you know, being determined, and I understand it's a very fluid process. Can the minister indicate or commit that there will be an open and fair process for new registry agents going forward, and can the minister outline if there are any new RFPs in the process?

**Ms McLean:** With respect to registry agents we license them. That licensing process has not changed, to my knowledge, so it will continue in the same fashion that it has.

**Mr. Ellis:** Again, I would just, you know, speak for our good friend and colleague Manmeet. He just wanted to ensure that you would commit that it would be a fair and open process going forward for RFPs.

**Ms McLean:** There are no current RFPs for new registry agents. As with everything in this government we are committed to increased openness and transparency.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you.

If we look at page 49 of the fiscal plan, it shows that the five-year total for modernization of the registry systems will be \$37 million and specifically \$6 million for the fiscal year. To be more precise, page 219 of the estimates shows that the figure is \$6.36 million. Is this money purely dedicated to online initiatives, or are there any other distinct factors behind this money?



**Ms McLean:** You're talking about the capital investment for registry information systems?

**Mr. Ellis:** Yes.

**Ms McLean:** Line 5. Okay. So \$6.4 million is for the modernization of registry systems, significant automation of business processes and major upgrades to applications used to deliver motor vehicles, land titles, and corporate registry, personal property, and vital statistics registry services. Two significant projects under there. One is ALTA 2. This project aims to modernize the existing ALTA registry system and the spatial information system to make it available 24/7 and to provide electronic functionality. The registry online access delivery system, or ROADS, will be used to protect the information Albertans have entrusted to government by monitoring access to the systems.

**Mr. Ellis:** Okay. Great. Well, thank you very much.

I know we're running short on time, but I might be able to at least get this in here. I just want to touch a little bit on consumer protection. That's line 6, page 218 of the estimates, consumer awareness and advocacy. Can the minister please explain why this money is – I'm sorry. I guess I should use some preamble here. Computer . . . [A timer sounded] Next time.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I'd now like to call the five-minute break that we agreed on at the beginning of the meeting. We will set the timer for five minutes, and when the timer goes off, we will restart this meeting.

[The committee adjourned from 5:08 p.m. to 5:14 p.m.]

**The Chair:** Thank you so much. We're going to reconvene the meeting.

This portion, the next 20 minutes, will be with government caucus. Would you like to go back and forth with the minister?

**Ms Drever:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Minister, to go back and forth?

**Ms McLean:** Oh, yeah. That's fine.

**The Chair:** Okay. Go ahead.

**Ms Drever:** Hello, everyone. Thank you so much. I would like to start off by saying that I'm going to be sharing my time with MLA Westhead.

I just wanted to echo some of my colleagues across the room about your remarks on Fort McMurray. I can say with confidence that all our hearts go out to those who are affected.

I would like to start off by addressing my private member's bill, that was passed unanimously last session in the Legislature, Bill 204, Residential Tenancies (Safer Spaces for Victims of Domestic Violence) Amendment Act, 2015. This bill protects survivors of domestic violence from the financial repercussions of terminating a lease. Bill 204 also seeks to address the growing problem of domestic violence here in Alberta. Since it was passed, I have had many people, particularly women, reach out to me in desperation to get help out of their dangerous situations. Minister, I was wondering: could you provide us with an update on the actions that the department will be taking related to the implementation of Bill 204? I'm interested in hearing about what portion of the 2016 budget reflects support for those important initiatives.

**Ms McLean:** This government is committed to ensuring appropriate protections are in place for victims of domestic

violence. The way to achieve this is by enabling them to end their residential lease agreements early in a case where there is a safety risk to the tenant, the tenant's child, or a dependent adult. Service Alberta is now actively working to develop the supporting regulations under Bill 204, which will allow us to operationalize this bill. The regulations address issues needed to operationalize the bill, including the appointment of the designated authority; the powers, duties, and functions of the designated authority; the form of the certificate used by the designated authority; as well as the circumstances under which a landlord may disclose information about the termination of a tenancy.

Under Bill 204 the designated authority may issue a certificate to a tenant entitling that tenant to end the tenancy agreement early where there is a court order such as an emergency protection order, a Court of Queen's Bench protection order, or a restraining order that has been issued or where a statement has been provided by a person in a professional capacity such as a police officer, social worker, physician, and others identified in the bill indicating that, in their opinion, the tenant or one of their dependants has been the subject of domestic violence.

This government will consult with stakeholders during the development of the regulations. It is anticipated that the bill and the necessary regulations will be brought into force by the summer of 2016. We have a policy and governance branch that is responsible and includes the policy and legislative agenda for the department. The funds specific to this are contained in the estimates in line 6, consumer awareness and advocacy.

**Ms Drever:** Thank you.

The ministry business plan states on page 120 under outcome 1 that your ministry will ensure "businesses are able to compete on a level playing field." To be sure, a fair and efficient and openly competitive marketplace is necessary for small businesses to thrive. What ministry initiatives does Budget 2016 support that will help Alberta's small businesses to thrive?

**Ms McLean:** Service Alberta is constantly working to ensure that our legislation and enforcement efforts support the activities of honest, hard-working small-business owners and protect these reputable businesses and consumers from the actions of scam artists, fraudsters, and irresponsible business competition. These dishonest individuals are, of course, in the minority, but their actions can have devastating impacts on Alberta's families. In February 2016 Service Alberta had 560 active investigations into consumer issues in Alberta and 1,445 charges pending before the courts. Many of the actions taken relate to unlicensed or unethical activities by businesses, which harms both consumers and competitors that play by the rules.

Recent actions include an unlicensed prepaid contractor who was convicted on February 3, 2016, for operating without a valid prepaid contractor's licence, fined \$1,000, and ordered to pay \$6,900 in restitution to the victims. A public alert was issued on March 31, 2016, warning consumers about misleading furnace rentals and sales by door-to-door salespeople and informed by ongoing investigations into complaints from consumers and businesses. One of these individuals actually came to my own door.

5:20

Legislative reviews and amendments are ongoing to ensure that the varied consumer legislation that Service Alberta is responsible for will meet the needs of the market and consumers, including legislation to regulate payday lenders and consultation and drafting of the regulations for the Condominium Property Act, by ensuring that honest businesses have a level playing field and that the

regulatory framework is modern and responsive to the issues that businesses and consumers face. Service Alberta supports small businesses.

**Ms Drever:** Thank you, Minister.

My constituency office often receives calls requesting assistance accessing government information, statistics, or reports. With respect to key strategies 2.3 and 2.4 – and I can just read them out – key strategy 2.3 says, “Improve the way government shares and receives information with and from Albertans,” and key strategy 2.4 says, “Enhance the availability and usability of information on Alberta’s Open Data Portal.” In the ministry business plan can you provide details on how Budget 2016 will improve the way government shares and receives information with and from Albertans?

**Ms McLean:** Our government is committed to transparency and accountability, as I’ve mentioned, and a big part of this is making sure government information is open and accessible. Alberta’s open government portal enhances the availability of information through routine disclosure of both data and information. Our goal here is to improve the way government shares information on the portal in two ways. I mentioned these earlier, but it’s worth mentioning that we are, first, continuously working to identify data, information, statistics, and reports that can be routinely provided on a proactive basis and, secondly, enhancing how data is presented through tools like data visualization to help Albertans better understand and use our data and information.

Formal access requests under FOIP and the privacy act remain as another option for stakeholders to obtain specific information that interests them. My department continues to evaluate options to improve responsiveness to these requests.

Of course, folks are, again, always welcome to contact me directly and through yourselves, and individual MLAs are also always more than welcome to come to my door. We receive many of these requests every day and are pleased to have the chance to connect people to the information that they need.

**Ms Drever:** I know that you’ve already talked about this, but I was wondering if you can still expand on your comments on consumer protection. Consumer protection is vital during our current economic situation, where many families are in especially tight financial circumstances. These days some families have few options for paying bills and buying groceries, and I know this because this is one of the main concerns in my constituency of Calgary-Bow. Minister, can you go into more detail about key strategy 1.2 in the business plan, which is to “review the fairness and viability of high-cost credit alternatives”? How is the ministry ensuring consumers are not taken advantage of during a time when many families are financially vulnerable?

**Ms McLean:** As the throne speech made clear, our government is committed to protecting Albertans experiencing economic distress from being preyed upon by unscrupulous lending practices. From September to December 2015 our government consulted with borrowers, lenders, and community advocacy groups as well as other interested Albertans about the current payday loans regulation under the Fair Trading Act. The consultation generated significant interest. We had over 1,500 responses received in an online survey and over 100 participants attending in person engagement sessions across the province.

Several key issues were identified through the consultation, including interest in reducing the maximum allowable cost of borrowing related to payday loans; improvement of disclosure and standardized contracts for payday lenders was also desirable;

improving protections for borrowers; and addressing the lack of alternative and healthy credit sources for borrowers. We heard from Albertans very clearly that they want more responsible lending from the payday industry.

This legislative session we will be introducing legislation that builds pathways out of poverty by helping Albertans who find themselves in difficult financial circumstances to escape the cycle of debt and to prevent that cycle of debt, which is caused by short-term, high-cost credit. We’re also working with organizations that will be able to offer alternative credit options to Albertans who need them. I look forward to updating members on those developments.

**Ms Drever:** Thank you very much.

Minister, on page 217 of the estimates I see that the capital investment amount has increased significantly from the 2015-16 budget to the 2016-17 estimate. I was wondering if you can explain what the increase is for and how it’s going to benefit Albertans.

**Ms McLean:** Service Alberta has been asked to take a stronger stewardship role over the capital investment for government’s information management and technology programs and projects. As a result capital funds for IT investments, that were previously allocated to individual departments, have been reallocated to Service Alberta. Bringing the funding for IT capital investment under one umbrella will benefit Albertans as the government improves its effectiveness and efficiency. Projects will be more closely aligned with the strategic priorities of this government. Common systems will be built once, not a number of times as in the past, with enhancement of the oversight of funds.

In addition to improving the effectiveness and efficiency of government, the projects themselves will have direct impacts on the personal and business lives of Albertans. For example, the funding will be used to renew and strengthen the Alberta 511 service, which provides information related to Alberta’s highways and allows citizens to report on the province’s road conditions, which helps make drivers safer and able to make better informed travel decisions. Also, a farm fertilizer information application will be developed which will combine science-based research with economics to aid farmers and other users making nutrient-use decisions, encouraging efficient management to improve crop productivity, economic profitability, competitiveness, and environmental sustainability.

**Ms Drever:** Well, thank you, Minister.

On page 49 of the governmental fiscal plan there are two projects related to One Information Management and Technology Enterprise. Can you explain to the committee what One Information Management and Technology Enterprise is, please?

**Ms McLean:** I’d be happy to. Service Alberta has been given the responsibility of providing oversight and governance for a number of information management and technology programs, otherwise known as IMT, and projects within the capital plan. Previously funding for the individual projects within the program would have been allocated to specific ministries for their information technology projects. Consolidating the funds within Service Alberta will allow government to achieve efficiencies through a stronger governance model for capital spending on information technology within government.

One IMT Enterprise means the consolidation of data centres, a single, secure firewall, a single e-mail system, information stored once, business applications built once and being used by multiple ministries. For example, application hosting services will be consolidated in the next phase of GOA’s domain migration program, providing a single enterprise IT environment to host all

GOA applications, reducing data centre locations from 37 down to five and ministry IT environments from 17 to one.

**Ms Drever:** Well, thank you. That was very helpful.

How does One Information Management and Technology Enterprise support the strategic priorities of government?

**Ms McLean:** The One IMT Enterprise program is a collection of individual projects that support numerous departments. The individual projects are aligned to the GOA's strategic priorities. For example, one of the projects is the medical examiners' data and information. This is a renewal of technology for the end-to-end management of cases that are unexplained, natural, violent, suspicious, deaths at workplaces, and deaths while in custody. Impacted stakeholders include next of kin, insurance companies, financial organizations, police, and Crown prosecutors. Timely, worthy investments in IMT infrastructure will play an important role in economic growth in Alberta IMT companies, giving job creators the stability they need to weather this economic downturn and create new opportunities for innovation, employment, and growth.

5:30

**Ms Drever:** Thank you.

Minister, page 219 of the 2016-17 government estimates shows that Service Alberta has undertaken significant capital investments in the area of technology services, line 9. What sort of improvements will Albertans see as a result of these new investments?

**Ms McLean:** These capital investments will be noticed by Albertans in several ways. Some examples are supporting jobs, economic growth, and diversification by unlocking geospatial reference data for new and existing Alberta businesses to leverage; providing Albertans access to government services any time, anywhere, on any device through the MyAlberta platform; enhancing employee productivity and reducing GOA's environmental footprint by consolidating networks, data centres, and applications through the One IMT Enterprise initiative; modernizing our treasury management system to more effectively forecast banking and liquidity requirements; modernizing the land title system to provide improved ability to handle current and periodic volume increases driven by market fluctuations, the ability to offer enhanced service offerings, reduced operational costs due to process automation, and reduced risk of failure of an aging system. Upgrading the motor vehicle system to newer technology, which we've been discussing at some length, should lower operating costs and position the government to be more responsive to how we capture and change data in the system for changes in the motor vehicle and transportation industries.

**Ms Drever:** Thank you. That reminds me to check the registration on my vehicle.

Minister, again on page 219 of the 2016-17 government estimates line 8.3 shows that Service Alberta has taken substantial capital investments in the area of business services systems. What sort of improvements will Albertans see as a result of these new investments?

**Ms McLean:** We provide the government's enterprise resource planning system, which is the business system that manages key processes such as financial transactions, expenses, payroll and benefits, and procurement. It is the financial system of record for the government, so it's an important system, but it has aged and is somewhat customized. The last upgrade was in 2009. Our priority

is to perform an upgrade to the software and shift to standard ways of working which reflect current practices in the market.

At the same time, we are building a strategy for the future that will help us move toward common ways of working government-wide. We are engaging with other department stakeholders to evaluate opportunities for system enhancements that are needed across ministries. This work will help government work more efficiently and effectively, reduce the duplication of effort, and lower our total costs of ownership. Some examples may include things such as grant management, budgeting, cash management, and similar processes.

**Ms Drever:** As the minister responsible for ensuring government is modernized, can you please speak to how Budget 2016 is supporting this role and working to realize efficiencies within government operations?

**Ms McLean:** Budget 2016 prioritizes moving services online through MyAlberta e-services to provide citizens with an efficient option of interacting with government and modernizing enterprise systems that reduce the complexity of our technology environment such as data centre consolidation and enterprise application opportunities.

Our e-procurement initiative will not only address our key strategy 3.3 in the business plan, adopting innovative practice in how government procures; it will also modernize how government operates and has the potential of bringing savings to government. E-procurement is a joint initiative, actually, with the governments of B.C., Saskatchewan, and potentially the Yukon Territory. Some of the benefits here include making it easier and more cost-effective for small and medium Alberta companies to do business with Alberta, B.C., and Saskatchewan public-sector organizations and leveraging buying power with other levels of government by driving best value for goods and services which are commonly required by Alberta, B.C., and Saskatchewan.

In Budget 2016 key investments are also being made to our enterprise resource planning system to improve our overall efficiency . . .

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

Now, for the next 10 minutes the member from the Official Opposition and the minister may speak. Would you like to go back and forth?

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Yeah. I'd prefer back and forth. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Interesting questions that were just requested. Centralization of your data structure, your data systems: I think that's a pretty onerous task, and I congratulate you on that move. I think it's a prudent move.

Now, my question to you. The amount of capitalization required to do so, the amount of work and effort to do so is going to include various things like technology platforms, application development, application procurement, and probably consulting services as well to help implement if not develop a strategy around that. Is any of that being done? Are any of the consulting services or project management in-house services, or is that going to be contracted out? I'm looking at Mark because I'm pretty sure that Mark has the answer. Sorry. No disrespect.

**Mr. Brisson:** We have a mix of services. Our procurement services that are delivered for us are done in-house. Our project management

services are a combination, a blend. We have in-house project managers in our infrastructure and delivery and client relationship units, and then we have specialized project managers on large initiatives to help us manage these complex projects. So it is a combination in those areas.

In addition, when we're talking about collapsing data centres and collapsing applications, as we begin to have less complex an environment, it gives us an opportunity to look at new service provision out there such as cloud services to help us lower the cost of buying large infrastructure and maybe passing that out to the private sector to deliver it for us more efficiently.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** You're potentially outsourcing that, then. Is that what I'm hearing?

**Mr. Brisson:** We are always looking at opportunities to provide the best service we can for the dollars that are spent in our budget. Some of those may include outsourcing some components of it, but the majority of it right now is in-house, in delivery of the domain.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Mark, are any of these projects now currently already in phase? Have some of them already been allocated to? Have the RFPs gone out? Has any organization been chosen to work with you yet, or is it just in the development stage?

**Mr. Brisson:** We're in the development of the strategy for data centre modernization as well as the application infrastructure modernization. We're developing a three- to five-year strategy, and we're doing the business planning for it.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Again, I might be repeating myself, but your three- to five-year strategy: who's developing that strategy? Is it just strictly in-house, or is it external resources as well?

**Mr. Brisson:** It is predominantly internal resources. We have some minor consulting services helping us with working with the ministries.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** No disrespect, but how did you procure the ability to do data centre collapsing or data centre management? Has there been a training program going on in your department? Do you have the expertise?

**Mr. Brisson:** We've developed the expertise over time, with many of those individuals working within the government. We also tap and leverage the expertise across government and the ministries, who have brought experience in this area as well.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Is the plan to take other ministries who have information technology departments or managers within them, collapse those, and bring those into Service Alberta?

**Mr. Brisson:** I think what we are contemplating is looking at the infrastructure first and the services that they provide and making sure that we're still able to deliver programs and services at the ministry phase and not taking that away from there but also looking at the common opportunities and maybe centralizing those that really do make sense.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Okay. Thank you.

Another question I had, just getting away from technology. Although my hon. colleague doesn't think Service Alberta is exciting, I think it is. When you mentioned the words "COBOL" and "Fortran," that brings back a lot of memories from the '70s. I

remember programming Fortran on keypunch cards, but let's not age myself anymore.

I believe Service Alberta is now responsible for or considering part of the review of the agencies, boards, and commissions. Is that correct?

**Ms McLean:** In a sense. We are the ones who have the budget line item for the ABCs. My deputy here is heading up – I think it's accurate to describe it as that – the ABC review.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Where is that budget line item? Is it on page 218, section 1?

**Ms McLean:** It's 218, section 1.3.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Section 1.3, deputy minister's office. Okay.

**Ms McLean:** Sorry. Section 1.4.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Section 1.4, corporate services. That makes more sense. Thank you.

A bit about the review. Are there going to be stakeholder consultations? Is that part of the plan?

**Ms McLean:** For the ABC review?

**Mr. W. Anderson:** For the ABC review.

**Ms McLean:** As you know, in this budget we have already put forward the initial phase of the list of which ABCs will be kept, conglomerated, or dissolved, so much of the work that you're referring to has already been done.

5:40

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Now, how do I delicately put this? History has shown that, potentially, ABCs were a tool or organization to provide rewards for political favours. I'm just considering this. How are you planning to ensure that this process is completely transparent and accountable back to the taxpayers?

**Ms McLean:** With respect to new appointments?

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Yes.

**Ms McLean:** There is an open – I'm searching for the word – application process. The GOA is now posting all of the positions that come up, and that adds to the transparency of the process. We're making efforts in our recruitment stage to be transparent. It provides an open opportunity to put forth applications, so anyone can apply for these positions, and the selections are made from the application pool.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Would that be available to the committee level, to the public? The individuals applying, I mean. I'm just trying to put my head around that again.

**Ms McLean:** I'll let my DM get into a little bit more of the process.

**Mr. Grant:** The process as it stands right now is working with boards, commissions, and with the ministries to ensure that there's a clear skill set matrix that is laid out to determine what kind of individuals with what skill sets that particular vacancy would hold. Those are all posted online and they're advertised widely so that we ensure we cast the net as widely as possible to get the right kind of people. They are then screened, as you would for almost any other employee, to look at those individuals: do they meet the skill sets that have been advertised? They then go through the normal

appointment process after that. But they're absolutely based on a stated skills matrix that's required for that type of organization, be it adjudicative, regulatory, public service, or the like.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Okay. Then there's an interview process afterwards?

**Mr. Grant:** Yes.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Who would be doing the interviewing? I'm not sure what the strategy or structure of that is.

**Mr. Grant:** The interview process, for the most part, is based on corporate human resources expertise, either corporate human resources or it's embedded into the departments. Individuals from the agencies, boards, and commissions and all of the interviewers and interviewees are then reviewed by the minister to ensure that it has been an open and transparent process.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Okay. So there are guidelines in place. Thank you.

**Mr. Grant:** Yes.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Just shifting gears again, in your business plan, page 122, key strategy 4.1: "delivery of government services by utilizing secure digital identity and e-commerce technologies." I think last time we spoke, Mr. Brisson had mentioned the potential for Albertans to access their health records online. Is that still in play? Is that being pursued at all this year? I do note that there's been some capitalization or there's an RFP coming out for a . . .

**Ms McLean:** I'll flip the details of that over to Mark.

**Mr. Brisson:** We're working closely with the Department of Health as being one of the lead implementations of our digital ID, which is helping them sign up Albertans at a level 3 assurance to help get them access to the portal. They will then provide that functionality back to Albertans, to get access to some of their health data based on the right consent level, et cetera.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Okay.

**Ms McLean:** Health is largely taking the lead on that.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Okay. That leads to another point, just a thought. Alberta Health Services has their own technology department. Are there any plans or anything in place to maybe bring Alberta Health Services technology into your centralization project? Is it part of your strategic move, or are they going to keep running as an independent technology organization?

**Ms McLean:** The first phase of this is looking inward at government ministries. We haven't expanded this yet to include ABCs.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** I'm talking about Alberta Health Services, though, as well.

**Ms McLean:** AHS is technically an ABC.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** I know, but I'm just wondering. There are no plans to bring in their technology? They've got about 14 different data centres as well.

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

I would now like to invite the third-party opposition to speak for the next 10 minutes. Would you like to go back and forth with the minister?

**Mr. Ellis:** We'll go back and forth, but could we start with Mr. Gill?

**The Chair:** Oh, absolutely. Go ahead, Mr. Gill.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, hon. minister. You know, I had long-time experience with SPIN 2 – I was a real estate appraiser – before I joined politics, so I know the importance of SPIN 2. It's crucial for any professional who deals with real estate. To the hon. minister: just to confirm, when will we have SPIN 2 24/7? Is it, like, next year, maybe 2017, 2018? And if that's the case, what's the cost going to be? I know a land title used to be \$5, and then it went to \$10. If you can please elaborate on that.

**Ms McLean:** Are you talking about the cost of access to SPIN 2, the membership, or are you talking about the cost of upgrading SPIN 2?

**Mr. Gill:** Yeah. The administering of the program.

**Ms McLean:** The goal for SPIN 2 to come on 24/7, our target, is December 2017.

**Mr. Gill:** Okay; 2017. Which difficulties will you have to overcome in order to do that? As we all know, SPIN 2 refreshes every night, at nighttime, right? It updates the land title changes and everything, so that's why, according to my understanding, the GOA shuts down the system, so that they can update the system.

**Ms McLean:** The specifics of how that program will operate functionally: Mark may be able to provide some additional information.

**Mr. Brisson:** We're doing work to both ALTA and SPIN 2. One, the ALTA piece, which we're implementing, is about getting electronic access for lawyers and others that have access to it, having electronic signatures as part of the process so that we take out a whole administrative component. That's part of this implementation at the same time.

The SPIN 2 piece is to work with the interface on the back end to make sure that we can have close to real-time updating of the information. We're going through that work right now, but the intent is to make it more accessible for a larger period of time and make sure that we can update it a bit more seamlessly.

**Mr. Gill:** Perfect. Thank you.

Now to my colleague.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Go ahead.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Chair. Minister, let's go back to that consumer protection, which was what I was trying to touch on earlier, line 5, page 218 of estimates. Consumer protection, of course, as we all would agree, is vitally important to Albertans, and last year we learned that there was no new funding available for consumer protection enforcement. The 2015-16 forecast is \$500,000 less than what was budgeted back in October. Can the minister please explain why this money is coming back less than what was budgeted? Does this equate to less money being utilized in consumer awareness and advocacy, or have there been some enhancements within the system, maybe efficiencies that have been found?

**Ms McLean:** Hon. member, I think you said line 5. Did you mean line 6 on page 218?

**Mr. Ellis:** Line 6. My apologies.

**Ms McLean:** No. That's fine. That line item is actually increasing, not decreasing.

**Mr. Ellis:** Oh, okay. Sorry. It was budgeted for \$21,645,000, but it came back lower for the forecast.

**Ms McLean:** You're talking about the forecast line.

**Mr. Ellis:** Straight across there. There's \$20,522,000, then \$21,645,000, and then it goes down, by about \$500,000, to \$21,145,000.

5:50

**Ms McLean:** We're prepared to discuss the estimates, not the forecasts.

**Mr. Ellis:** Okay. So you don't know why it's come back less, though, right?

**Ms McLean:** Well, that's more of a question for Public Accounts, and they would be prepared at that table to answer those questions, the forecast as opposed to the estimate number.

**Mr. Ellis:** Okay. The same line item shows that the budgeted amount – my apologies. Is there any money in the budget to increase the number of consumer protection investigators?

**Ms McLean:** No. At this time there has not been a need to increase the investigators.

**Mr. Ellis:** Okay. Is there just no need? You're not forecasting any need for any further investigators, or there's no demand for them?

**Ms McLean:** Our needs have been able to more or less be met by the number of investigators that we have, and we also have to take into consideration the current economic climate and the restraints that we're facing. I'm sure it would be, you know, lovely to decrease the workload of our current investigators – I'm sure that they would appreciate that – by adding new hires, but unfortunately we're just not in a position to do that.

**Mr. Ellis:** Fair point.

Can we maybe transition over to condominium regulations? It looks like it's in estimates, page 218, line 6. Minister, one function that I guess I'd like to dig a little deeper into is the condominium regulations. First off, I think the most interesting challenge is phase 3. Can the minister please update the committee on the progress of this phase?

**Ms McLean:** The development of the regulations?

**Mr. Ellis:** The tribunal system, yeah, the development of the regulations.

**Ms McLean:** As I'd mentioned previously, we're right now still in phase 1, and none of that is cooked or ready to go, so I would be really guessing as to when phase 3 is going to happen because these phases are rolling out sequentially.

**Mr. Ellis:** Sorry. I've just been informed, I guess, that last year, apparently, we were looking at development by the fall of 2016. Does that sound about right for going into phase 3, or are we not quite there yet?

**Ms McLean:** I'm not familiar with what would have been sort of guessed at previously by the minister. But if I were to guess, it would be within 2017, I think, to throw a target out there for you.

**Mr. Ellis:** Okay. Thanks. I appreciate that.

Maybe this has been asked already, but do you have any update on the progress of phases 1 and 2? Maybe more importantly, what's been done with the public feedback, that closed on October 30 last year, specifically, I guess, for phase 1?

**Ms McLean:** We haven't moved into phase 2 yet, and in phase 1 we've taken in the information that's been provided. As I mentioned, we got quite a lot of feedback on that, so that's being used to inform the development of the regulations, the drafting of them, but nothing is cooked yet.

**Mr. Ellis:** Okay. Has the feedback information been made public, or are there any plans to make it public?

**Ms McLean:** We have published the results of the feedback online. The survey had a total of 284 Albertans participating in the consultation survey. About 75 per cent of them identified themselves as condominium owners. A majority of respondents supported the draft regulations that we've posted. We posted a draft set for them to comment on specifically on a sort of line-by-line basis. They provided feedback and suggestions for improvement, and then . . .

**The Chair:** I apologize for the interruption. The time has concluded.

As there is no other party member or independent members present, I will now turn the next 10 minutes over to the government caucus for your 10 minutes. Would you like to share it with the minister?

**Ms Drever:** Yes.

**The Chair:** Okay. Go ahead.

**Ms Drever:** I would like to now share my time with MLA Westhead.

**The Chair:** Absolutely. Go ahead.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. We talked a little bit earlier about SuperNet. I know that we had a bit of a discussion about that, but considering the importance of that, I wonder if the minister might want to share a bit more. You know, it's pretty clear that the government faces high expectations for increasingly efficient and effective ways of delivering programs and services, especially with an evolving economic landscape. Service Alberta, obviously, plays a really important part in working with ministry partners to modernize business processes, technology to increase the government's productivity, efficiency, and effectiveness, and that ultimately results in prudent fiscal management and improved program delivery. In relation to SuperNet and, specifically, key strategy 3.5, which is on page 122, I just wonder, Minister, if you can provide an update or expand a little bit on what you've already told us about the project and its impact for Albertans.

**Ms McLean:** Absolutely. SuperNet is the government of Alberta's digital highway. It connects schools, hospitals, libraries, municipalities, and government offices in 429 communities across the province. Since 2005 it has enabled private-sector service providers to deliver Internet access to businesses and households across rural Alberta. Over the last 10 years, however, SuperNet has become

increasingly out of date as Albertans expect better and faster Internet speed and deserve the same. As SuperNet has not always kept pace with the changing demands and technological environment, many stakeholders are beginning to seek an alternate service. While alternative services are an option for some public-sector organizations in urban centres, rural areas are more dependent on the SuperNet and look to government for guidance.

Combined with a 2018 expiry date for the SuperNet operating agreement, government has a window of opportunity to review our SuperNet strategy. Progress on the project is well under way. We have prequalified a number of industry respondents through an open and competitive process to work with us to explore the technical and visionary requirements necessary to enhance digital government and help inform our government as to its role and options in improving Internet services for Albertans, in particular rural Albertans.

It's important to know that many stakeholders and industry players, including the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, and municipalities, have communicated that they are fully in support of this project, and they are eagerly awaiting the opportunity to participate in our government's process.

We want to hear from all stakeholders on this important project. We plan to engage with Albertans regarding our strategy, after which we will then move forward with a plan for the next provincial broadband network. This project is important as the next version of SuperNet will support my government's strategy of diversifying the economy and will allow us to build a stronger future for rural Alberta.

**Mr. Westhead:** Great. I'm actually thrilled to hear that because I know that in my constituency I've heard some concerns expressed about access to the Internet, so what you said there is going to really please a lot of my constituents and, I know, Albertans throughout the province.

I'm just wondering if you can tell us, you know, a little bit more about how Budget 2016 supports the expansion of SuperNet.

**Ms McLean:** SuperNet is a complex and important initiative for the future and continued prosperity of Alberta. In recognition of this, a SuperNet Secretariat, headed by ADM Stephen Bull, was created in March of 2016. The budget allocated to the day-to-day operations of SuperNet and the development of the next version of SuperNet you'll find reported on page 218, line 9.3, network services, of the government estimates. As this work progresses, should the SuperNet initiative require additional resources, the funds will be found within the department's operating budget.

6:00

**Mr. Westhead:** I just want to move on to page 124 now in the estimates and specifically in relation to the other revenue line item. In that line item there, on page 124, it shows that the business plan is decreasing by approximately \$5 million. So that's about a 7.5 per cent reduction from the 2015-16 forecast. Minister, I'm just wondering if you can help explain why the projection for the other revenue is decreasing by that amount.

**Ms McLean:** The \$63 million amount for the revenue includes \$1.6 million for the sale of products by the Queen's Printer and \$61.5 million for shared services. The reduction relates to the shared services revenues. Shared services revenue fluctuates from year to year because it depends on the amount of services other ministries need from Service Alberta in areas such as mail and courier, printing, records and forms management, software licences, and helpdesk services. As other ministries move to fewer paper

products and to be more efficient and technologically advanced with respect to their operations, we fully anticipate this line item to decrease.

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

I'd like to move to page 123, in particular one of the performance measures, 4(d). One of the indicators there is the number of services available through MyAlberta e-services, and I'm glad to see some good-looking targets there. I'm just wondering if you can provide some examples of the types of services that are available through MyAlberta e-services.

**Ms McLean:** The services available on MyAlberta e-services include obtaining your high school transcripts, campsite reservations, fishing licences, park merchandise, licences for locksmiths and security services workers, and agriculture publications. The department is in discussions with other ministries, and dozens of additional services have been identified as potential online services that could be made available via MyAlberta e-services. We are working to develop these options, and we look forward to keeping Albertans up to date on this service.

**Mr. Westhead:** I look forward to those updates. I know that park licences and hunting and fishing licences are something that my constituents really make a lot of use of, and I'm looking forward to that. So I'll share that with them when I find that out.

Again on page 123, performance measure 4(c), which is the number of Albertans with MyAlberta digital identity accounts, also a great initiative. I'm just wondering if you can tell us what types of services Albertans will be able to access from the government using the digital identities, MyAlberta.

**Ms McLean:** Actually, for this one I am going to defer to Mark.

**Mr. Brisson:** We've been looking at a number of potential opportunities across government for the digital ID. I've spoken to one recently about working with Alberta Health and their connection to providing health data back to individual patients who have consent to get it. We're also working with Human Services with respect to some of the programs and services they provide and moving them online such that front-counter services for clients won't have to come in to all the agencies. They could do it online. It would make it easier, more efficient but also more customer friendly for Albertans in accessing some of our services. We're in discussions with both Alberta Education as well as Advanced Education on opportunities there because with students and postsecondary there are many opportunities for young folks coming through who want to work in an online, digital world. They don't really work at the front counter anymore.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you for that.

I'd like to move to page 121, specifically outcome 2. The outcome is that "government is transparent and information is secure." I know we talked a little bit about this earlier in the meeting from some other members, but I think it's a topic that deserves a lot of attention, so I'd like to just focus on what the actual outcome is first, before we get into my question.

Obviously, citizens are becoming greater consumers of information, and our government needs to be open and transparent about that. The ministry is positioned to deliver information that's more open, accessible, and usable through advancements in technology. Of course, the ministry administers the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act as well as the Personal Information Protection Act, which further enables government transparency to be balanced with the need to protect Albertans'

personal information. What is the department going to be doing to address key strategy 2.1, which is a subset of that outcome?

**The Chair:** I apologize for the interruption.

I'd now like to open the floor to the members of the Official Opposition for the next 10 minutes. Are you interested in going back and forth?

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Yes, please. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Go ahead.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** I was going to ask a different question, but you piqued my interest now on something, and it's back to the hon. member asking the question about SuperNet. You made a comment that SuperNet has not met the demands of the current marketplace or provided the level of service desired. It sounds to me like there's an issue here. Now, if you make that statement, which you did, if they haven't been meeting the demands of the marketplace, how long did you know about this? How long has this been going on? Has there been an issue with SuperNet, with the providers?

**Ms McLean:** As many rural Albertans know, there are outages, that kind of thing, that occur, and Albertans expect and deserve the fast, reliable Internet that their peers can access in town centres and in the cities. This is something that I think has been apparent to Albertans for a number of years and prior to our government coming in on May 5 of the previous year. Once we came in, it's certainly something that we turned our attention to very quickly, to start working on diligently to ensure that, going forward, we're going to be providing good, reliable service to Albertans. But figuring out exactly how to tackle that beast is not the kind of thing that you want to do too hastily.

My DM would like to add some additional information.

**Mr. Grant:** When SuperNet came into being in 2005, the standard at that point seemed to be reasonable at 1.5 megabits per second. Sort of the national standard that's being accepted now is five megabits, so this is part of the challenge that we have, to be able to deliver to all Albertans the five-megabits-per-second standard as opposed to 1.5. That's one of the things that we're looking at as we look at sort of SuperNet 2.0 moving forward.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** You know, thanks, Tim, for bringing that up. Two things come to mind now. Living in the country, like I do, and in the rural constituencies, a lot of them say that they don't have – it's that last mile, and SuperNet does not provide that last mile. It's through a third-party carrier like Xplornet, Platinum, all the other ones out in the country. It's RF, radio frequency. That's what we get. In getting that service, now, two things come to mind. One, as I said before – I think we discussed this. When you have people in rural constituencies who don't have – and you mentioned it. You stated it, that the service level has not been the greatest. Here we go back to registries, online stuff. They've never had online services, so there's some frustration out there. Having said that, my understanding is that the last mile is provided by a third party, not by Axia, the SuperNet provider.

Now, my research tells me that those individual organizations have three different levels of service, and one level of service typically is the contracted service. As an Internet procurer myself, I buy a monthly contract fee, and I pay a monthly fee, and I get that service provided. But that's not often the top-tier level of service to get that five megabits. You don't get that. What they do is that they sell the top levels to the cellular guys: Bell and Telus and other ones.

They sell that service off first, which is not my service. They get that because it's a higher profit margin for the providers.

Now, what are we going to do? Maybe I'm kind of just thinking out loud. I'm hoping that this audit, the audit that's in place right now, which is a substantial amount of money – we're investing I think \$543,000, that PricewaterhouseCoopers is being paid to do this audit. I'm assuming that we're going to look into that portion of providing the last mile as well so that the end-mile product sellers don't, I would say, shorten the rural procurers like us and sell that level of service to the cellular carriers. They should give us the first-level, tier 1 level, service and give those people level 2 and level 3. Am I making sense? Do you understand what I'm trying to say?

6:10

**Ms McLean:** We share a number of your concerns, and throughout this process we're aware of the last-mile issue. It's something that is certainly on our radar and at the forefront of our attention. So we are very interested in solutions for that issue. What will shake out remains to be seen, but that's certainly something that we're very interested in.

**Mr. Grant:** You'd mentioned that it would be part of the audit with the last mile, that the ISPs would be part of that. The audit is really focused on the architecture system, to make sure that we understand the hardware, where the components are, but as part of the strategy of moving forward, without question that last mile will form part of the strategy of 2.0.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** I'm glad to hear that because that's where a lot of the issues have come up in my constituency.

It's an audit, and you've mentioned talking to stakeholders now. So once the audit is completed and the results come from that, then it's going to be discussed with stakeholders? You mentioned discussions with stakeholders and then looking at, potentially, new suppliers. Does that mean there is going to be an open-bid process when the contract is up in 2018 and potential for another provider to take over SuperNet?

**Ms McLean:** I'll flip this process over to my DM.

**Mr. Grant:** There are two things happening concurrently right now. One is the audit of the architecture, which has started. The other piece is the PQR. So we have gone through a process, and we've selected four large, capable companies who are likely able to deliver a service for us. We will start to have confidential discussions with them on what the capabilities are and what the technology is that exists today and would exist into the future. Once we have had those discussions, we will then look to have consultations with a broader public group of folks: AUMA, AAMDC, interested individuals in Alberta. So that would follow the work we do with the four companies that we've selected through the PQR.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Are you at liberty to tell us who those four companies are, or is that confidential?

**Mr. Grant:** We will be able to, but we're not able to right now.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Okay. Interesting.

**Ms McLean:** It will be posted online as part of the process.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Online. Okay.



One last question I have, changing gears again to just shift away from being a technowienner like I am: are you considering implementing front licence plates?

**Ms McLean:** I have not personally considered doing so. Are you interested in front licence plates?

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Absolutely not. I'm just wondering if you are. It's a question from a constituent, so that's why I ask.

Madam Chair, I've finished my questions.

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

Now I'd like to open up the floor to the third-party opposition. Mr. Ellis, for your 10 minutes would you like to go back and forth with the minister?

**Mr. Ellis:** Yeah. Thank you. I'm likely not going to use all 10, but I've got a few questions for you. Minister, if I can just change gears back to MOVES. You know, I don't have a specific line item; I apologize. This is more along the lines of prevention and cost savings, so it's certainly related to the estimates. Continuing with MOVES but looking from a slightly different angle, the War Amps of Canada is seeking access to be reinstated so that they can utilize the addresses within MOVES as a mailing list for, of course, the key tags program that they have. As we know, they're a charitable organization. Its function will generate significant ramifications on our budget, mostly in regard to health care and prevention.

The War Amps' fund is, you know, physical and mental health programs; for instance, recreational activities for children who have had limbs amputated. It encourages, of course, greater activity and positive well-being for both them and their families, so they provide a very, very, very important role. They're seeking that exemption through FOIP. Similar to seven out of 10 provinces who have already addressed this issue and certainly have met the request of War Amps, is your department considering an exemption or at least going to look into something like this for War Amps?

**Ms McLean:** I am very proud to say that my DM has that information, so he will provide it to you.

**Mr. Grant:** This is a complicated file. Several years ago War Amps came to the government and asked for a similar exemption, not from FOIP but actually from – pardon me; I can't remember the specific regulation. But they asked for an exemption so that they would be able to get a complete list of every motor vehicle owner-licensee in the province. What was agreed to at that time was that there would be a change to the regulation, which would allow them to have a presence in registry agents' offices so that they could start to build, essentially, their own database. That went for I believe three years, which allowed them to engage Albertans in the process of whether Albertans wanted to make an individual decision to participate in the War Amps tag program. That was not successful, so when that exemption came to an end, sort of motor vehicles' involvement, registry agents' involvement came to an end as well.

What we have done, though, recently is gone back to the registry agent network and asked them if they would look at some other solutions, other opportunities for War Amps to become involved, things like leaving tags on the counter so that people could take them up and then engage with War Amps separately.

The real issue is that there are numerous charities who would all like to have access to a large database with, you know, millions of Albertan drivers and licence holders in the province. To protect Albertans' information is absolutely critical, so we have been fairly strict on making that information available.

Essentially, it was tried, and it did not work successfully. Albertans did not seem to want to engage with War Amps; therefore, the interest has tapered off. As I say, we're trying to make a difference now. We're trying to re-engage in some different solutions that are apart from regulatory exemptions, but I think it's a little bit too early to tell whether that will be successful or not.

**Ms McLean:** In addition to that information, some other members of my office met with them last week. As a result, as my DM alluded to, we're in some initial considerations of how we can find other creative solutions to this issue.

**Mr. Ellis:** Yeah. You know, in conversations with them – and I appreciate you trying to think outside of the box on this – their concern is that even if you had key tags at a registry office, people are in a rush, and they miss them. I think what they have indicated to me is that they're not looking for access to the database per se. It's really just – I know it's the edge of a sword – looking for the addresses so they can send those key tags out.

Anyway, you know, I appreciate your answers on this. I only hope that this is something you're looking into and trying to help out this charitable organization.

**Ms McLean:** We certainly are. We met with them last week, so they've made it clear to us.

**Mr. Ellis:** Fantastic. Yeah. Thank you very much.

I've got a couple of questions here just in regard to the Utilities Consumer Advocate, page 218 of the estimates, line 7. The ABC review made the decision to place the advisory board with the energy consumer panel. The government has stated that this would be more representative of consumers and responsive to consumer concerns, which sounds fantastic. The office was not dissolved because they have done and continue to provide excellent regulatory policy issues that may impact consumers and can help in the resolving of consumer complaints. I guess my question is: what specific issues, if you did have them, did your government have with the board itself?

**6:20**

**Ms McLean:** We addressed this a little bit earlier. The Utilities Consumer Advocate advisory board was dissolved. It's not that there were problems with them. That is not a fair characterization of what went on here. It's just that they had run their purpose. It was largely to assist with the functionality and set-up of the Utilities Consumer Advocate, and that is a very robust group and service to Albertans now. So the UCA advisory board was largely a duplication of service and no longer filled the necessary function it once did.

**Mr. Ellis:** Okay. Thank you.

Have there been any considerable issues that the office has had to solve that can explain the greater need for industry funding since the 2014-15 fiscal year? What has it had to deal with that reflects the need for an additional \$1.5 million? Again, that's going back to page 218.

**Ms McLean:** Are you still on line 7?

**Mr. Ellis:** Yes.

**Ms McLean:** A variance exists – I think this is what you're talking about – between the '16-17 estimate and the '14-15 actuals. Is that what you're talking about?

**Mr. Ellis:** Yes.

**Ms McLean:** Historically the UCA's estimate is set at \$9.1 million. The actual expenditures, however, are heavily dependent on the number of interventions that the UCA participates in in a fiscal year.

**Mr. Ellis:** Okay. Great. Thank you.  
Thank you very much, Chair.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

I would now like to open the floor to government caucus as there are no independent or other party members present. Would you like to share your time with the minister?

**Mr. Westhead:** Yes, please.

**The Chair:** Go ahead.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you very much. I'll just sort of pick up where I left off. We were on page 121 and talking about outcome 2. I was going to ask a question about strategy 2.1, which is that the ministry will lead initiatives related to government transparency and protection of personal information, including the modernization of the FOIP Act and PIPA. Obviously, transparency is an important goal to strive for, but we also have to balance that with privacy. I'm just wondering if the minister can tell us a little bit about how she plans to achieve that goal.

**Ms McLean:** I reviewed this fairly thoroughly with the member from the Official Opposition, but I'll just highlight a few points for your edification. The Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future is reviewing the PIPA, which is the Personal Information Protection Act. They will provide recommendations to the government to ensure that PIPA balances the protection of Alberta's personal information and the interests of private-sector organizations in Alberta that collect the information. Our staff supported the Legislative Assembly researchers in the development of supporting documentation. We await the recommendations, really, of that committee and the government's review and acceptance of those recommendations.

The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act is not under a formal review, but we're always working to enhance government transparency. My department provides ongoing training and awareness sessions for both public- and private-sector organizations to ensure the mechanisms for protecting Albertans' privacy are known and understood.

To follow up with something that the opposition member had asked but we didn't have the opportunity to get to, this would be timely for me to address that Service Alberta had 72 general info requests plus 29 personal info requests, and two went to review by OIPC. This results in our 98 per cent.

Thank you, hon. member, for giving me the opportunity to provide that additional information.

**Mr. Westhead:** My pleasure.

Minister, my next question revolves around the Auditor General's report from October 2008. Since that's a little bit of time ago, I just wanted to refresh the committee's memory on just some of the things that were in the recommendations from that report. The Auditor General recommended that the Ministry of Service Alberta develop and promote a comprehensive IT control framework and accompanying implementation guidance as well as well-designed and cost-effective IT control processes and activities. I'm wondering if the minister can tell us a little bit about what her department has done to address those recommendations on the access and security monitoring of our

revenue application systems and whether or not Budget 2016 reflects support for this work.

**Ms McLean:** As a part of our normal operations Service Alberta maintains an IT disaster recovery framework to assist departments in developing plans that are consistent and effective. An IT disaster recovery exercise was done in January 2016 for the government's primary data centre. The results of this exercise will be used to augment and improve future exercises, and plans are under way to implement an annual exercise starting this coming fall.

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

My next two questions are going to be in relation to the main government estimates, so I just want to draw your attention to switching gears a little bit. I'm looking at page 217 of the government estimates. The department's capital investment for 2016-17 is more than twice the amount for Budget 2015-16. I know we talked about this a little bit earlier in our meeting, but I just want to take a bit of a different approach to it. I'm just wondering if you can explain how the department determines what is funded by the capital investment budget.

**Ms McLean:** The government's and therefore my department's treatment of capital expenses is based on the Public Sector Accounting Board, section 3150, tangible capital assets. Essentially, a tangible capital asset is an asset having physical substance. It's held for use by government in the production of supplier goods and services; for rental to others; for administrative purposes; or for the development, construction, maintenance, and repair of other tangible capital assets. It also has a useful life extending beyond a year and is intended for use on a continuing basis. It is not intended for sale in the ordinary course of operations. A minimum threshold cost of \$5,000 is applied for most assets.

In the case of information systems development the minimum threshold is actually \$250,000 and \$100,000 for major enhancements to information systems.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you.

Again on the government estimates, page 220, the department has a program called residential tenancy dispute resolution service, generating about \$620,000 in revenues. I know that in Canmore and Banff we have a very low vacancy rate; in fact, some would say that it's a negative vacancy rate. There are sometimes landlords that take advantage of this, and I know that people rely on the residential tenancy dispute process. I'm just wondering if the minister can provide a bit more information on the associated costs of the program and how the program is related to Provincial Court.

**Ms McLean:** The residential tenancy dispute resolution, or the RTDRS, was created in 2006, when its jurisdiction to hear disputes was established under the Residential Tenancies Act, the RTA. RTDRS is a quasi-judicial administrative tribunal, and it was created to provide an accessible, efficient, fair, and affordable alternative for resolving disputes between landlords and tenants outside of the Provincial Court system.

Alternative dispute resolution has gained much acceptance in the legal community as a viable means of dispensing justice while reallocating judicial resources to more complex and time-sensitive civil, family, and criminal matters. Provincial Court judges also recognize that the RTDRS has expertise in adjudicating and resolving these matters under the RTA.

Since its creation RTDRS has seen an ever-increasing number of applications. Since its inception it has received over 69,610

applications. In January 2016 the RTDRS set a record by filing 899 applications in that month.

Landlords and tenants have the option of either using the courts or RTDRS to resolve disputes; however, the filing fee with RTDRS is lower than pursuing the matter through small claims court. The timeliness of hearings and lower costs mean the RTDRS offers Albertans better access to justice while providing efficiencies to the government.

The department spends approximately \$2.4 million on delivering these services.

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

I would like to thank the minister and staff for joining us this evening, and I remind committee members that we are scheduled to meet tomorrow, May 5, 2016, to consider the estimates for the Ministry of Human Services.

Thank you, everyone. This meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 6:30 p.m.]









