



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Third Session

Standing Committee  
on  
Public Accounts

Executive Council

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

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W), Chair  
Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND), Deputy Chair  
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND),\* Acting Deputy Chair

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Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (ND)  
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
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Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)\*\*  
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)  
Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)  
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Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)\*\*\*  
Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)  
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## **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

### **Participants**

Ministry of Executive Council

Jennifer Hibbert, Executive Director, Corporate Services, Finance and Administration

Corey Hogan, Managing Director, Public Affairs Bureau

Andre Tremblay, Deputy Clerk and Deputy Secretary to Cabinet



**8:30 a.m. Tuesday, March 7, 2017**

[Mr. Cyr in the chair]

**The Chair:** Good morning. I'd like to call this meeting of the Public Accounts Committee to order and welcome everyone in attendance. My name is Scott Cyr, the MLA for Bonnyville-Cold Lake and chair of the committee.

I'd like to ask members, staff, and guests joining the committee at the table to introduce themselves for the record, and then we'll go on to the members on the phone. To my right.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Jessica Littlewood, representing Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, acting deputy chair, substituting for the hon. Minister Shaye Anderson.

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

**Mr. Dach:** Lorne Dach, MLA, Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Brian Malkinson, MLA for Calgary-Currie.

**Loyola:** Rod Loyola, MLA for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

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

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

**Mr. Nielsen:** Good morning. Chris Nielsen, MLA, Edmonton-Decore.

**Ms Renaud:** Marie Renaud, St. Albert.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Richard Gotfried, Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Tremblay:** Andre Tremblay, deputy secretary to cabinet and deputy clerk of Executive Council.

**Ms Hibbert:** Jennifer Hibbert, executive director of corporate services for Executive Council.

**Mr. Arklie:** Graeme Arklie, principal with the Auditor General's office.

**Mr. Wylie:** Doug Wylie, Assistant Auditor General.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Derek Fildebrandt, Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Panda:** Prasad Panda, Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Barnes:** Drew Barnes, Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Dr. Massolin:** Good morning. Philip Massolin, manager of research and committee services.

**Mrs. Sawchuk:** Good morning. Karen Sawchuk, committee clerk.

**The Chair:** We do have Mr. Fraser that's going to be joining us. We're just working out the phones right now, and you'll hear him call in.

I would ask that anybody answering questions other than the two at the table announce their name and their position at the mike in the back.

I'd like to note for the record the following substitutions: Mrs. Littlewood for the hon. Mr. Anderson as the deputy chair, Member Loyola for Ms Goehring, and Mr. Nielsen for Mr. Westhead.

A few housekeeping items that we need to address before we turn to the business at hand. The microphone consoles are operated by *Hansard* staff, so there is no need to touch them. Audio of the

committee proceedings is streamed live on the Internet and recorded by *Hansard*. Audio access and meeting transcripts are available via the Legislative Assembly website. Please turn your phones to silent for the duration of the meeting.

Let's move to approval of the agenda. Are there any changes, additions, or deletions to the agenda? Seeing none, would a member be willing to move the motion? Thank you, Mr. Loyola. Is there any discussion on the motion? All in favour? Any opposed? Okay. We don't have the phones up and going yet, so the motion is carried. Thank you.

We'll move on to approval of the minutes. Do members have any amendments to the February 28, 2017, minutes? We have Mr. Fildebrandt that has moved the motion. Is there any discussion on the motion? All in favour? Any opposed? Thank you. The motion is carried.

Before us we have the Ministry of Executive Council, including the Public Affairs Bureau. This morning we'll go from 8:30 till 10 o'clock. I'd like to welcome the guests who are here on behalf of Executive Council to address the outstanding recommendations from the office of the Auditor General as well as the ministry's 2015-2016 annual report.

Members should have a research report prepared by research services, the Auditor General briefing document as well as an updated status of Auditor General recommendations document completed and submitted to the ministry.

I invite Mr. Tremblay to provide opening remarks not exceeding 10 minutes.

**Mr. Tremblay:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. We're pleased to appear before this committee and discuss the 2015-16 Exec Council annual report and outstanding Auditor General recommendations. The 2015-16 year was an extraordinary year for Exec Council as we provided support to a new government and its agenda and leadership to the public service during the transition period while at the same time managing our own changes in structure and management and supporting a new Lieutenant Governor.

The cabinet co-ordination office supported an effective government transition. The CCO facilitated the creation of five new cabinet committees, including a new climate change leadership policy committee, and it provided operational and logistical support for timely and effective decision-making as government implemented its agenda.

The policy co-ordination office provided secretariat services to the cabinet committees and helped develop a better and more proactive process to co-ordinate the legislative and policy agenda for government. The PCO also built crossgovernment understanding of policy development and the approval process for forwarding the agenda of government.

A new operations and machinery of government unit co-ordinated and implemented priorities, programs, and major projects in that very busy first year.

Intergovernmental relations became part of Exec Council in order to help the new government participate in two Council of the Federation meetings, that resulted in a national energy strategy; a Western Premiers' Conference, where we discussed fiscal challenges; and almost 20 Premier-level bilateral meetings with Quebec, New Brunswick, B.C., and Ontario. IGR also supported the Premier's participation in a first ministers' meeting ahead of the Paris climate change conference and a meeting among Premiers and the Prime Minister in March 2016 to discuss climate change, indigenous issues, and the economy.

The Alberta protocol office supported high-profile visits from seven heads of mission, including the U.S. consulate general and

six ambassadors. Memorandums of understanding were renewed with Alberta's sister provinces of Gangwon, in Korea, and Hokkaido, in Japan, and signed with the Governor of Missouri affirming a growing economic partnership protocol. Protocol also organized the state funeral of the late Premier Don Getty.

At every step of the way, from supporting the Getty funeral and the swearing-in ceremonies of a new government and Lieutenant Governor to announcing and implementing all major initiatives, policies, and strategies, the Public Affairs Bureau has supported government communications with Albertans. The bureau staffed 470 government events in 2015-16 and issued 693 news releases between April 1 and December 31, 2015. The bureau also organized and hosted five telephone town hall events to support consultations for Budget 2015, the royalty review, prebudget consultations for Budget 2016, and the Alberta jobs plan. The bureau also posted videos, that were viewed by over 750,000 individuals, and maintained the alberta.ca website, that attracted 3.8 million visits during that period.

With the government transition, internal restructuring, and an ambitious policy and legislative agenda, 2015-16 was an exceedingly challenging and productively rewarding year. One area where Executive Council achieved important progress was in meeting the Auditor General's recommendations for improvement around assessing risk and improving oversight for public information assets and improving processes for contracts. Delivering a broad range of supports and services such as public engagement, printing and advertising, and supports to review committees and task forces depends on a contracted services framework that must adhere to the highest level of compliance to ensure fairness to all suppliers and accountability to Alberta taxpayers. Information collected by government is a public asset that requires the highest level of security. Exec Council took action on the Auditor General's recommendations in both of these important areas.

Regarding contracts Executive Council implemented a revised contracting policy in June 2015. This policy addresses the concerns raised by the office of the Auditor General. For example, the decision to contract must be clearly documented, proper approvals must be in place before executing a contract, and performance must be monitored and documented. The new requirements include an improved rationale to support the decision to contract that clearly explains the need and benchmarks and documentation that validate the cost. The contract manager, a senior executive, and senior finance officers must all sign off on all contracts, each of whom can raise questions and challenges to ensure a contract award is fair and open. In addition, the Deputy Minister of Exec Council must sign off on any contract over \$75,000 and on all sole-source contracts over \$10,000.

The ministry continues to work with the office of the Auditor General so that contracting practices meet the recommendations of the 2014 report, policy changes are full implemented, and all appropriate documentation exists.

**8:40**

Security of information assets was the second element. Progress is also being made on implementing the Auditor General's recommendations regarding those security information asset issues. In brief, the Auditor General recommended that Executive Council assess the risk to public information assets throughout government to determine if adequate policies and controls are in place and to determine who is responsible and accountable for ensuring that public information assets are adequately protected. This work is under way.

In 2012 10 information security management directives were implemented as minimum standards that must be met by all departments across government in order to protect information assets. These directives were based on an international security standards and include roles and responsibilities, asset management, access control, and business continuity of management guidelines.

Service Alberta has been identified as the responsible and accountable ministry to ensure these guidelines are met across government. In 2015 Service Alberta began an asset assessment and found a compliance rate of 60 per cent across all departments. Service Alberta is now working with all departments to reach 80 per cent compliance by April 2018 and 100 per cent compliance by April 2019.

In conclusion, Exec Council continues to serve Albertans by supporting the Premier, cabinet, and the Alberta public service.

At this point I would be happy to take any questions you might have. Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

I will turn it over to the Auditor General's office for their comments. You have five minutes.

**Mr. Wylie:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. We actually have no comments. We'll return our time to the committee.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much. Those were brief. That gives us more time for questions.

We'll follow our usual time allotment format for an hour-and-a-half meeting for questions of the committee members. The first rotation will be two rounds of questions of eight minutes each for the Official Opposition members, followed by five minutes for the third-party opposition. Our second rotation will be five minutes for each of these parties. With the agreement of the committee any time remaining will be distributed equally among the three parties, with the final one to two minutes designated for outstanding questions to be read into the record.

I will now open the floor to members. Mr. Fildebrandt.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you for being here today. My first question would be: how come there's no deputy minister representing Executive Council today?

**Mr. Tremblay:** She's out of the province on a personal matter.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Okay. Thank you very much.

Actually, if a representative of the Public Affairs Bureau wants to just – you're both just Executive Council, not Public Affairs Bureau, right?

**Mr. Tremblay:** Public Affairs Bureau is part of Exec Council, but we do have the managing director of the bureau here today.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Yeah. Would you like to just come to the table, please? Thank you. My questions will be brief, but I would . . .

**The Chair:** Can you please introduce yourself for the record?

**Mr. Hogan:** Good morning. Corey Hogan, managing director of the Public Affairs Bureau.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you for joining us here today. My questions will be pointed, and if you could provide brief, pointed responses as well, that would be appreciated. Public Affairs Bureau has a very long-standing – not new but long-standing – reputation

as a rather partisan arm of the public service, deserved or undeserved. Can you tell us if you believe the Public Affairs Bureau has more, less, or the same amount of partisanship as under the previous administration?

**Mr. Hogan:** Well, I can't speak to the nature of the Public Affairs Bureau prior to 2015. I can only speak to the bureau as it exists now, and I would say that they are communications professionals, ably doing their job irrespective of their political views and giving the best communications advice that they are able to based on their years of professional experience.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Okay. That being said, though, it's obvious that there are many NDP partisans who have been brought into the ministry to do work. I won't name names, but I think it's pretty clear that it's . . . [An electronic device sounded] Well, thank you, Siri. I didn't know our phones were allowed to heckle and question us.

It's pretty obvious that the Public Affairs Bureau is not a regular branch of the government. There are many direct political appointees as a part of it. Can you speak to what proportion of staff within the Public Affairs Bureau could be classified broadly as political, maybe not necessarily partisan but political?

**Mr. Hogan:** Certainly. That would be zero per cent.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** You would count yourself as entirely not political or partisan?

**Mr. Hogan:** The nature of my role is to manage government communicators and provide communications advice. It has very little, if anything, to do with politics.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Okay. That's difficult to believe, considering the nature of the advertising and the campaigns that come out of the Public Affairs Bureau. The Public Affairs Bureau regularly conducts, I think, what could be fairly described as propaganda campaigns around government policies. For that to be effectively communicated through the Public Affairs Bureau, there are obviously people with strong partisan ties at the senior management levels of that. Can you speak to how many people, before entering the Public Affairs Bureau, had partisan ties?

**Mr. Hogan:** The Public Affairs Bureau is made up of communications professionals who provide communications advice . . .

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Yes. You said that before. I don't mean to cut you off.

**Mr. Hogan:** . . . irrespective of any political views that they bring.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** You've said that before. How many people, though, could be fairly described as having political ties before entering the Public Affairs Bureau?

**Mr. Hogan:** I certainly would not hazard a guess. But I would also say that it is absolutely immaterial to the work they do day in, day out.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** I don't think it is, considering the fact that they're spending tens of millions of dollars advertising and promoting government policies that are directly related to the platform of the governing party. It is quite material, so again I will ask the question. We get to decide what's material here or not, the members of the committee. How many people in the Public Affairs Bureau right now had partisan or political ties before entering the service of the Public Affairs Bureau?

**Mr. Hogan:** This isn't something that we track or calculate. The government communications arm is charged with communicating government initiatives irrespective of any partisan views people may have on their own time.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Okay. So you don't formally track it, but can you give us an approximation? You could lowball the number, even. Can you tell us what proportion of the Public Affairs Bureau's employees had political ties before entering its service?

**Mr. Hogan:** I could not, no.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** You could not. Okay. I'll just note now that I'd like to submit a written question for response, that I'd like an answer to that after this meeting.

The Public Affairs Bureau has grown since the new government has come in. It was already a significantly sized organization before May 2015, but it has grown significantly. What is the reasoning for the additional staff?

**Mr. Hogan:** The staff of the Public Affairs Bureau is constantly being reviewed to see if it's at the appropriate level to meet the communication needs of the government.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Okay. You know, that sounds like a well-rehearsed Public Affairs Bureau answer, but I'm looking for why you have more staff. Why do you need more staff now than pre-May 2015?

**Mr. Hogan:** I can't speak to pre-May 2015 . . .

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Why were more staff hired after May 2015?

**Mr. Hogan:** I can tell you why we have staffing levels at their current level, and it is to meet the needs of government communications as they currently exist.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Well-rehearsed talking points as I would expect from the Public Affairs Bureau. I like you, Mr. Hogan, but I want real, substantive answers, not necessarily just talking points.

**The Chair:** Mr. Fildebrandt, can you please put your questions through the chair?

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Yes.

Why have you had to hire more staff? Saying that the staffing levels are appropriate is not answering the question. The question is: why have you hired more staff?

**Mr. Hogan:** The increase I believe you're referring to is an increase of four FTEs, from 40 to 44. In previous fiscal years two FTEs were vacant and not utilized. That would be the reason for two of them. No new funding is required for any positions that are within those two, and the transferring of two FTEs from EDT does not reflect an increase of FTEs overall to government.

8:50

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Okay. What kind of political or ministerial direction does the Public Affairs Bureau receive before initiating campaigns, advertising campaigns or other major activities? What kind of direction do you get from the ministerial level?

**Mr. Hogan:** I think you'd have to unpack that question a bit more. I'm sorry, I'm not quite clear.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** The ministers provide, essentially, political direction to departments, and the deputy ministers carry that out at

the bureaucratic level. What kind of direction do you get from the ministerial level as it relates to communications campaigns?

**Mr. Hogan:** Budgets for campaigns are set by individual . . .

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** I'm not asking about budgets. I'm asking: what kind of direction do you get? For example, around advertising the government's carbon tax, what kind of direction do you get around, you know, what they're asking you to do?

**Mr. Hogan:** If I'm understanding your question, it's related to creative and the messages that are in it. We certainly dialogue with people in ministry staffs and with the Premier's office to ensure that it's accurately reflecting the message that has been agreed to by cabinet, but the creative is directed out of the Public Affairs Bureau.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** How much has the government spent on telephone town halls to date?

**Mr. Hogan:** I'm afraid I don't have that number at hand, but we're going to try to pull that out.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** If you could just provide that when our next rotation comes, that would be great.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Fildebrandt.  
Mr. Dach.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. A pleasure to be here this morning. Thanks to staff for attending. I'm going to focus my questions on the Auditor General's reports and see if we can drill down on some of those issues that are brought to light there. In particular, the Auditor General is clear about the need to set performance measures in order to better evaluate results, so I'm wondering: from all panel members and people here today, why were there no performance measures in the 2015-2016 annual report?

**Mr. Tremblay:** Thank you for the question. In the 2015-16 business plan the performance measures had been removed pending a review by the department. As such, there were no performance measures to report against in the corresponding annual report. As a new government there was an effort to ensure that the performance measures included were appropriate given the work that Exec Council does in conjunction with other ministries. We took this step because we do believe that performance measures for government are an important tool that measures our performance and holds ministries accountable for delivering on the outcomes that they are to achieve.

In its 2016-19 business plan – that table is part of the Budget 2016 documents – Exec Council added back measures similar to those used in the past. Although similar to performance measures included in the past, after thorough review, including a crossjurisdictional analysis of all other provinces and the federal government, it was determined that this is the most appropriate manner in which to measure the performance of the ministry, so they were added back in.

Unlike other ministries, who have outward-facing programs that have quantifiable outputs, the work of Exec Council as a leader and a support to the government of Alberta as a whole is more subjective in nature because the ministry provides strategic leadership and oversight to other ministries in delivering their programs. So, ultimately, we have qualitative measures in the plan for the most part that focus on Exec Council's ability to support other ministries in advancing their respective priorities.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Tremblay. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As a follow-up: have new performance measures been developed for Executive Council? Are they under way?

**Mr. Tremblay:** Yes. We have a number of them, and I'll provide some overview of them at this stage. As I said, performance measures were added back in, and there's a number of them. I'll tie them to specific outcomes. Outcome 1 of the business plan is that the "work of ministries is aligned to ensure [that effective] implementation of government's agenda" does occur. Performance measures from that point of view are: "Satisfaction of ministries with the services they receive from Executive Council." Again, Exec Council is providing strategic advice to ministries as they advance their specific policy and program priorities. The second element is: "Satisfaction of ministries with communications and support services they receive from Executive Council." Again, it's not just a matter of advancing policies or programs. It's also related to effectively communicating those out to Albertans. Those are two performance measures.

With respect to outcome 2, "Alberta's priorities are advanced across Canada . . . percentage of [client ministries] satisfied with services to advance Alberta's interests within Canada," that's a reflection of intergovernmental relation's role within Exec Council. Again, there are a number of ministries that interact with other provinces and the federal government in order to advance Alberta's interests, and IGR's ability to support them in that is critical. So the performance measure around satisfaction with IGR was an element that we added into the performance measures.

With respect to outcome 3, "Effective communication of government priorities and initiatives within and outside of government," and the next performance measure, 3(a), "Public satisfaction with government communications," this is an outward-facing performance measure, and it's reflective of the Public Affairs Bureau's mandate to communicate government priorities and government programs to Albertans. So that is an outward-facing measure that's quantitative in nature that was added in. The last piece, "Public satisfaction with the Government of Alberta home page," is a very specific performance measure, and it's reflective of alberta.ca's key prominence within our communications toolbox as one of the key areas where Albertans access information around government programs.

In summary, we did do a multijurisdictional scan across Canada. We overlaid that with the outcomes that are reflected in the business plan for Executive Council, and we did identify these performance measures as something that would allow us to understand whether we're effective as a government. Based on the jurisdictional review we did, we felt that the performance measures were comparable to or better than anything else that was currently available across the country.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Tremblay.

Mr. Chair, if I may continue, again according to the Auditor General, the ministry previously reported satisfaction survey results. I take it that the survey performance measures and results will be included in the business plan and annual reports in the future. I was wondering if other types of measures are being considered for Executive Council. For example, is there consideration being given to perhaps a switch to effective results analysis as a means of assessing performance? What might that look like to you if indeed that's the case?

**Mr. Tremblay:** Thank you for the question. In its 2016-19 business plan, as I mentioned, we did reintroduce performance measures, that I provided detail on a few moments ago. The measures and the



results are based on survey results that are undertaken by contracted services to ensure impartiality. Again, although similar performance measures were included in the past, after a thorough review, including cross-jurisdictional comparison with the federal government, it was determined at this stage that it's the most appropriate manner to measure the performance of Exec Council, which serves a very unique role within a Westminster government setting.

Unlike other ministries, we have outward-facing programs with quantifiable outputs. The work of Exec Council as a leader and a support to the government of Alberta as a whole is more subjective because the ministry provides strategic leadership and ongoing oversight to other ministries. Exec Council provides a leadership role in government. In measuring the success of that leadership, identifying areas for improvement, if they exist, is critical. We'll always continue to re-evaluate our performance measures, but we feel, based on our current offering, that we're in a good position to determine, ultimately, if Exec Council is delivering on the outcomes identified in its business plan.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Tremblay.

I'll cede to my colleague, MLA Miller.

**Ms Miller:** Thank you, Chair. Good morning, all. Cybersecurity is becoming increasingly important for all governments. As noted on page 59 of the 2012 Auditor General report, it is important to Albertans because they access services and government information online. As such, publicly funded IT systems must be secure and must protect the personal and government information from unauthorized use.

In 2012 the Auditor General undertook a follow-up audit on protecting information assets and made three recommendations to Executive Council.

- assess the risks to public information assets throughout the government
- determine if the government has adequate IT security policies, standards and controls to mitigate risks
- determine who is responsible and accountable to ensure that public information assets are adequately protected.

Can you please provide a summary of the information security management directives adopted by the government of Alberta and how these address the recommendations from the Auditor General?

9:00

**Mr. Tremblay:** Thank you for the question.

**The Chair:** Okay. Thank you. If you wouldn't mind responding to that question in writing.

**Mr. Tremblay:** Sure. We can do that.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

**Mr. Tremblay:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Gotfried.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to our panel here today for coming and representing Executive Council. I'm going to give them some fairly specific questions around your annual report just for some clarification purposes in terms of some of your objectives and outcomes. In your third desired outcome, as listed on page 9 of your annual report, it states that your objective is for Albertans to "receive clear and coordinated government communications." In light of the debacle that was the Bill 6 rollout and the communications and the virtual avalanche of negative

feedback from the affected audience, do you feel that you're achieving that outcome, as stated on page 9 of your annual report?

**Mr. Tremblay:** So you're focusing – I just want to make sure that I'm very clear on this question. This is around co-ordinated advice from Exec Council to departments? Can you restate what you're . . .

**Mr. Gotfried:** Well, your desired outcome on page 9 of your annual report says, "Albertans [to] receive clear and coordinated government communications." I would assume that is around government legislation and proposed legislation, possibly in those circumstances, and we know that there was huge negative public feedback on that. What I'm asking is: do you feel that you've achieved that outcome of giving Albertans clear and co-ordinated government communications with respect to government initiatives on Bill 6 specifically?

**Mr. Hogan:** The objective of clear and consistent communications is one that manifests through a lot of actions throughout the year. I certainly think that on Bill 6 there were efforts to make communications clear and consistent. You saw some of those efforts even yesterday through some of the rollout of additional communications on that matter. It's ongoing. I suppose, to tell you exactly how Bill 6 lands, we'll have to see.

**Mr. Tremblay:** I'll add to that. Communications efforts are only one component of the rollout of any initiative to the Alberta public, and the Public Affairs Bureau, based on the professional competencies that exist within that organization, has delivered consistent communication services and products to Albertans. Whether or not an initiative delivers a certain reaction within the Alberta public may not necessarily be a reflection on the effectiveness of how that particular initiative was delivered to Albertans.

**Mr. Gotfried:** All right. Thank you. I guess, you know, it takes us back to some of the comments that we received from the Auditor General and others. When you have vague business plans, you also have unmeasurable outcomes, and that's probably my concern from that.

Following up again on outcome 3, in what way do Albertans receive clear, unbiased communications when the communications arm of the government produced attack ads against companies such as Enmax and Capital Power while the government was involved in legal proceedings against these companies, noting that these companies are wholly or partially owned by Albertans, our shared taxpayer base in our two largest cities?

**Mr. Hogan:** Sorry. What ads are you referring to?

**Mr. Gotfried:** There were ads taken that were meant to influence public opinion with respect to the legal proceedings against both Enmax and Capital Power that were certainly, I think, taken note of by all members of the Legislature and certainly by members of the public in terms of the appropriateness of that during legal proceedings.

**Mr. Hogan:** Were these radio, print?

**Mr. Gotfried:** There were full-page newspaper ads if I recall correctly. I'm assuming that those would go through the Public Affairs Bureau.

**Mr. Hogan:** I suspect they would go through the department, with the Public Affairs Bureau being involved in some fashion. I can certainly follow up.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Is it not your role to advise other ministries with respect to their public affairs and communications?

**Mr. Hogan:** Personally, it has been for four months, yes, but today we're talking about 2015-16, I believe.

**Mr. Tremblay:** What we can do is take that question back and provide you some additional context once we've reviewed past communications efforts with respect to that particular file.

**Mr. Gotfried:** If you would, that would be appreciated. Thank you.

**Mr. Tremblay:** We will do that. Thank you.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Again, following up on outcome 3 from the annual report, it's noted on page 9 that the Public Affairs Bureau provides communication support on Alberta's climate leadership plan. Part of this plan is to phase out coal-fired electricity in Alberta. As part of this phase-out the government was supposed to contact and, I assume, committed to contact affected communities to explain to them what assistance would be provided. [A timer sounded] May I read this in?

**The Chair:** If you're comfortable reading it into the record for a written response.

**Mr. Gotfried:** You know what? I'll follow it up on my next cycle, please.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Panda.

**Mr. Panda:** I'll share my time with my colleague.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you. We'll continue from where we were. The government has brought in legislation capping how much political parties are allowed to spend during an election, including on things like advertising. What consideration was given to limit the government's ability to advertise outside of that cap of taxpayers' dollars?

**Mr. Hogan:** I'm afraid that within this context of the 2015-16 annual report I don't have any answers for you on that front. I'm not aware.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Okay. Executive Council spent a significant amount of money on telephone town halls. What is Executive Council and Public Affairs Bureau doing with the data it collects from those telephone town halls?

**Mr. Tremblay:** Sorry. Are you referring to the telephone town halls that were utilized for budget development?

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Primarily prebudget. There have been several of them. There's been the carbon tax, several of them. The Premier has participated in them. So what's happening with the data?

**Mr. Tremblay:** So for the '15-16 budget and Budget 2016 town halls?

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Yeah. Those telephone town halls are conducted through the Public Affairs Bureau, right?

**Mr. Tremblay:** Correct. Yeah.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Yeah. So what's happening with the data that's collected?

**Mr. Hogan:** To my knowledge not much at this moment. The data could conceivably be used to help inform decision-makers as to what the opinions of Albertans were when questions come up, you know, during those telephone town halls: press 1 for X, 2 for Y.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Is any of the data being collected being used for voter identification?

**Mr. Hogan:** No.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** What assurances do we have that data collected from these telephone town halls will not be used for partisan purposes?

**Mr. Hogan:** We can get a more fulsome answer on protections we have in place to make sure that our FOIP laws are being respected if you'd like.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** So we have your absolute assurance that none of the data collected from the telephone town halls will be used for voter identification or partisan purposes?

**Mr. Hogan:** You have my absolute assurances that if somebody were to do that, it would be an extreme violation of our privacy laws, and that's certainly something that we would take every step possible to stop.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Very good.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. With the additional \$3 billion carbon tax and early coal phase-out and the cap on oil sands and the increase in business and personal taxes, there is a decline in confidence – we recently saw a decline in mining, if you read that report – whereas in other provinces, like Saskatchewan, there's an improvement in confidence. So it appears the message from the Public Affairs Bureau is not very effective. How are you communicating that Alberta is a good place to invest when there is a decline in investor confidence?

**Mr. Tremblay:** The impact of those policies on the economy are probably better directed to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. If you're looking at economic impact commentary, that's probably more appropriately directed there.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you. Mr. Chair, if I look at this report that we got from the Auditor General this morning, we are spending millions of public dollars on PAB and their staff. We want to get value for that money we are spending in terms of messaging. I think there is still accountability with you to get the message right, that our communications are really resonating and investors are coming to Alberta to invest, to grow the economy, and create jobs, but it's not happening. How can you help to improve that environment through your communications?

**9:10**

**Mr. Hogan:** Public Affairs Bureau, as it's currently constituted after changes that occurred in December of 2014, is a co-ordinating body that provides central services. The actual communications materials of each department rest with the department. We provide expert counsel to those departments as well as items that they would not reasonably have in-house themselves on a department-by-department basis such as advertising purchasing services, media

monitoring, and things of that like. I do believe your question is probably better directed towards EDT.

**Mr. Panda:** Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'll try my luck with the minister of economic development. Usually I don't get good responses there.

My other question to the Executive Council is about McDougall Centre in Calgary. How often do members of the Executive Council use that building in Calgary? I understand there are 20 members of cabinet and there are nine rooms. Has the cabinet ever had all the nine rooms booked at the same time?

**Mr. Tremblay:** I have some data here for you, but I'll answer your specific question around all nine rooms being booked at once. I don't have the specific per-room data for understanding whether each room is being utilized at the same time. Executive Council does use that facility. McDougall Centre and Government House saw a decrease in usage in the previous fiscal year, but the usage for both venues has increased in 2016-17 and is meeting or surpassing 2014-15 usage.

I would say that McDougall specifically is utilized periodically for cabinet deliberations perhaps once a month or slightly less frequently than that. There are a number of stakeholder engagements that are led by ministers in utilizing McDougall Centre, and there are other government meetings that occur between ministries at McDougall Centre. I can provide detailed user and subscription information for McDougall Centre at a later date, but it is utilized by government and ministers in interaction with stakeholders and with cabinet deliberations.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you.

You may have to check this with Infrastructure, but in your opinion is there any reason why at least some rooms could not be reserved for other MLAs, particularly the MLAs from southern Alberta?

**Mr. Tremblay:** We'd have to step back and review the policy around that and determine whether that is doable based on current subscription rates and existing policy around the utilization of that building.

**Mr. Panda:** I'll share my time.

**The Chair:** Okay. Fifteen seconds.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** I have other questions, but I will just follow up on that. Have you ever conducted a study into the feasibility of allowing private members, particularly government members but all private members in general, to be able to use the facilities at the McDougall Centre?

**Mr. Tremblay:** Thanks for that question. I'm not aware of a past study that's been undertaken, but I'll take that away and get an answer for you.

**The Chair:** You'll provide it in writing?

**Mr. Tremblay:** We will submit that in writing along with the other questions that have been asked.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Ms Miller.

**Ms Miller:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you all. I'm going to repeat my last question so we can get it on the record. Can you please provide a summary of the information security management

directives adopted by the government of Alberta and how these address the recommendations from the Auditor General?

**Mr. Tremblay:** Thank you. The information security management directives are set. There is a set of 10 controls based on international security standards, ISO 27001, that must be implemented to ensure that security of information assets are in place. There are 10 of them.

Organization of information security: roles and responsibilities of information security management across the government of Alberta and within ministries. That's one area.

Asset management: management of information technology systems and classification of information processed by those systems.

Human resources is another element, so information security requirements that must be applied to human resource management activity.

Physical and environmental security: the management of physical and environmental threats to information and information technology systems.

Communications and operations management: requirements for a correct and secure operation of information technology systems and data processing facilities.

Access control: requirements to manage and control access to information technology systems.

Systems acquisition, development, and maintenance: requirements to manage and control the life cycle of information technology systems and hardware.

Incident management: management and co-ordination of information security incidents, including security breaches or weaknesses.

Business continuity management: requirements for information technology systems in business continuity planning.

The last one is just compliance: requirements to ensure that the government of Alberta is in compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, contracts, and policy instruments for information security management.

Those are the 10 directives that were identified in 2012 and are being implemented across government.

**Ms Miller:** Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. As a follow-up, what are the current IT standards and controls in Executive Council?

**Mr. Tremblay:** Executive Council is fully integrated within the GOA domain and relies on Service Alberta for the management of the following services: secure access to the Internet; interconnections with other departments in the GOA; configuration and support of desktops, laptops, tablets, mobile devices, and printers; access to network shared folders, e-mails, calendar, and print services; service support and hosting of Executive Council applications.

CGI managed security services manages, operates, and provides proactive technology life cycle management for the following GOA services and related to Executive Council as well: firewall management services, network intrusion prevention services, web threat management services, security and event management services, web application vulnerability management services, and infrastructure vulnerability management services.

Exec Council also aligns its practices with the following policies and directives within the GOA: information security management directives and guidelines, shared information and communications technology, infrastructure specifications, communications policies, web standard 2.0 within government, social media policy, social media comment and general usage policy, corporate identity guidelines, IMT standards and policies, privacy and security policy

directives, and the use of government of Alberta intranet and e-mail, so a very comprehensive package of security standards and controls that Executive Council adheres to as part of its everyday operations.

**Ms Miller:** Thank you.

Finally, what is the status of the implementation of these audit recommendations within Executive Council?

**Mr. Tremblay:** Executive Council has been working towards implementation of all 10 directives. In December the ministry completed its compliance self-assessment and is now focused on implementing changes to move forward with 100 per cent compliance. Within the context of the schedule that I articulated earlier in our deliberations, Exec Council is fully engaged in the work being co-ordinated by the corporate information security office at Service Alberta and is committed to ensuring we comply with these new directives and that they are used and issued effectively. Exec Council will be striving to reach 100 per cent compliance, as I mentioned, by April 2019. This is aligned with the GOA-wide goals as outlined in the audit status update provided in advance of the committee meeting.

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

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

9:20

**The Chair:** Ms Renaud.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm going to change gears a little bit and focus on contracting policies. The October 2016 Auditor General report provided a follow-up audit with Executive Council on improving contracting processes. On page 55 of the Auditor General's report it is recommended that the Department of Executive Council improve its contracting processes by documenting the following:

- the rationale for contracting services and selecting vendors when entering into sole-sourced contracts
- its assessment of whether proposed contract rates are reasonable, and ensuring contracts are authorized and in place before contracted services are received.

Given the results of this audit, how have Executive Council contracting policies changed since the recent audit was completed?

**Mr. Tremblay:** Okay. At the time the Auditor General made its recommendation in October 2014, Exec Council agreed that the recommendation was valid and took action to improve its practices. The ministry updated its policy and strengthened its contract administration and evaluation processes. This is acknowledged on page 53 of the OAG report released in October 2016. However, it was found that further improvements to the documentation supporting contracts needed to be made. Management accepts and acknowledges improvements originally made following October 2014, and we've taken some additional steps to change that.

I mentioned this in my opening remarks. I'll reiterate this now. We have clear policies required on the decision to contract. There's clear documentation that's required, that the proper approvals be in place before a contract is executed, and monitoring and documenting the evaluation and the performance of the contract are also embedded within the policy. We require that a contract manager, senior executive, and senior finance officer sign off on all contracts. We also require that any contract over . . .

**The Chair:** Thank you for that.

**Mr. Tremblay:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Fraser, are you on the phones? If so, can you state your name for the record?

**Mr. Fraser:** Yes, I am. I've been on the line since the beginning. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** Can you state your name for the record, please?

**Mr. Fraser:** Rick Fraser, Calgary-South East.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Fraser.  
Mr. Gotfried.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. Again, following on outcome 3 from the annual report, it is noted on page 9 that the Public Affairs Bureau provided communications support on Alberta's climate leadership plan. Part of this plan is the phase-out of coal-fired electricity in Alberta. As part of this phase-out the government was supposed to contact affected communities – in fact, I believe they communicated that they were doing so – and explain to them what plans were in place, what assistance would be provided, and what would allow them to diversify and transition to the new green economy to protect the viability of their communities.

From our direct research the mayors of the towns most affected by the phase-out never received any communication from the government, and it was instead members of our PC caucus who contacted them personally and individually. How were these Albertans provided or not provided, as the case may be, with clear and co-ordinated government communications around the climate leadership plan and its obvious and significant impact on them? I'm asking this with respect to outcome 3. How does this align with outcome 3 in your annual report, and would you say that perhaps this is an obvious oversight, where you fell short of achieving it?

**Mr. Tremblay:** Thank you for your question. As the director of the Public Affairs Bureau previously mentioned, communications efforts on ministry-specific initiatives are done in partnership between the PAB and the sponsoring ministry. In this particular case, coal phase-out and specific consultation with impacted communities of coal phase-out is being led by the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. That minister is leading a consultation with communities as it currently stands. So the question that you've raised is probably more appropriately directed towards the Minister of EDT as the lead for coal phase-out consultation with impacted communities.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Okay. It is noted on page 9 of your plan that you provided communications support. So would you say that maybe that support fell short on that particular occasion?

**Mr. Tremblay:** As I mentioned, communications is done in consultation with the sponsoring ministries, and I wouldn't comment on the effectiveness of that particular communications effort. I will defer to the managing director of the bureau if he wants to add any additional comments.

**Mr. Hogan:** No.

**Mr. Gotfried:** I would suggest perhaps that support did fall short on that particular occasion, but I'll leave that to you to judge accordingly.

On page 26 of the annual report it's noted that the deputy minister of policy co-ordination is paid a total compensation package of almost \$400,000. There are some notes in there that may affect that, so certainly some details around that would be helpful. This seems odd to me because it's my understanding that in the last report available, from the previous government, that position was titled

deputy chief of policy co-ordination. It paid roughly \$100,000 or \$133,000 less including all remuneration. I'm just wondering what justified the significant bump in pay for what seems to be the same position, noting that the description of the transition in the notes was still classified as a full DM position. How is this consistent with some of the rhetoric we've heard around cost savings and doing the right thing with respect to compensation for agencies, boards, and commissions when we're seeing such a large bump within the Public Affairs department's policy co-ordination deputy minister?

**Mr. Tremblay:** Thank you for the question. We're just going to consult our notes, and I will be back to you in a moment.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Well, maybe we can have a written reply to that particular question?

**Mr. Tremblay:** We can absolutely do that.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Just in the interest of time. Thank you. That would be fine.

**Mr. Tremblay:** Thank you for the question.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Just another question: what percentage of your organizational time is spent with stakeholder engagement, correspondence, scheduling, and issues management relative to the labour sector and union organizations?

**Mr. Tremblay:** We don't have specificity around the allocation of those functions in Exec Council towards a specific file. As you can imagine, Exec Council supports advancing all policy initiatives and program initiatives with partner ministries, and we don't track that level of detail with respect to a particular policy initiative.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Okay. I might suggest maybe that's one of those more specific job measures or satisfaction surveys in terms of us being able to measure your performance in the future.

**Mr. Tremblay:** Thank you for the suggestion.

**Mr. Gotfried:** In your role in the deputy minister's office as head of the Alberta public service will you be directly involved in upcoming labour negotiations or communications around such activities for any key public-sector unions?

**Mr. Tremblay:** Well, I'm not the head of the public service. I do work for the head of the public service. I'm deputy secretary of cabinet and deputy clerk of Exec Council, so my role in that particular file would be ensuring that it arrives at cabinet in an orderly fashion in order to facilitate the appropriate decision-making around any policy questions that pertain to that particular file area.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Great.  
Thank you very much.

**Mr. Tremblay:** You're welcome.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Gotfried.  
Mr. Panda.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. In your last corporate employee survey only 51 per cent of Executive Council employees agreed that "essential information flows effectively from senior leadership to [the employees]." How can you get on with only half of the information, and what are going to do to fix that problem?

**Mr. Tremblay:** I want to make sure that I clearly understand your question. Did you refer to the employee satisfaction survey results?

**Mr. Panda:** Right.

**Mr. Tremblay:** We're no longer talking specifically about the annual report. Is that correct?

**Mr. Panda:** Yeah. That relates to your department. There was a survey done, and only 51 per cent of your employees agreed that the essential information flows to them from the senior leadership. For employees to be effective, they need to get full information. Can you comment on that? How can you fix that problem?

**Mr. Tremblay:** Thank you for the question. You may be aware that there's a comprehensive movement within the public service currently around the development of an engagement strategy for Alberta public servant employees. There was a series of consultation sessions that was delivered last fall. That culminated with specific input from all levels within the Alberta public service around engagement and communication and supporting talent development. There has been a strategy released within the public service, and implementation has started to improve those types of indicators, including better communication within the public service.

**Mr. Panda:** Yeah. Thank you.

There also seems to be a disconnect between the performance measures and the annual corporate survey results, so while satisfaction for service is high, at 88 per cent, the corporate employee survey shows only 71 per cent confidence in the senior leadership of Executive Council and only 55 per cent across government as a whole. Can you comment on that, too?

9:30

**Mr. Tremblay:** I think that when you're looking at Exec Council, those performance measures are at a slightly different level, so those measures are focused on measuring and assessing the interrelationship between Exec Council and partner ministries in advancing policy and program work. Those measures are focused on that relationship.

The measures within the satisfaction survey are focused on individual satisfaction within the workplace, so although there could be an interrelationship between the two measures, they are measured for different reasons, which is why the indicators may be slightly different.

**Mr. Panda:** Okay. Thank you.

**Mr. Tremblay:** You're most welcome.

**Mr. Panda:** I'll share my time with my colleague here.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Do department communications directors report directly to the Public Affairs Bureau or to their deputy ministers?

**Mr. Hogan:** They report to their deputy ministers.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Okay. Do cabinet ministers' press secretaries report directly to the minister or the Public Affairs Bureau?

**Mr. Hogan:** Well, they definitely do not report to the Public Affairs Bureau.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Okay. What kind of regular contact or direction comes from the Public Affairs Bureau to the press secretaries?

**Mr. Hogan:** From the Public Affairs Bureau? None.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** None?

**Mr. Hogan:** No.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** What about to communications directors?

**Mr. Hogan:** We meet weekly in this room most of the time, in fact, with communications directors across government to co-ordinate communications activities. Our meetings are broken into three segments: troubleshooting, if anybody's got a challenge the group may help with . . .

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Okay. Actually, that's good. I appreciate that. Thank you.

How many members at the executive director level or higher within the Public Affairs Bureau hold political party memberships right now?

**Mr. Hogan:** I would have to ask the other two, but zero of the people that I have immediate knowledge of.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Yourself?

**Mr. Hogan:** Including myself.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** You do not have a membership?

**Mr. Hogan:** No.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Okay. Would people holding political memberships, though, be in violation of the public service's code of conduct and ethics?

**Mr. Hogan:** No.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** At the executive director level or higher?

**Mr. Hogan:** No, it would not. I think the regulation you're referring to is one about fundraising for political parties and running for political office, but there is a constitutional right to association with political parties.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Okay. What's the total amount spent on the 110 advertising campaigns mentioned in the annual report?

**Mr. Hogan:** Well, as mentioned before, our role at the Public Affairs Bureau is co-ordinating and providing services that are of a more corporate nature. The actual communications spending is done by individual departments, and I couldn't have those numbers.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** If you could just provide an aggregate response, and afterwards . . .

**Mr. Hogan:** Sure. In '15-16 . . .

**The Chair:** Sorry. Can you send a written response on that, please?

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Okay. In our next rotation. Just read it off.

**The Chair:** Okay.  
Ms Renaud.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm going to stop wandering a little bit and go back to the contracting policies, outstanding recommendations, and the reason that we're here. In the past we've seen instances where the Premier's office was permitted to influence the awarding of contracts. According to the audit this was the case with the Navigator contract under the previous government, as noted on page 56 of the Auditor's General's report:

"Without strong processes in place to manage contracting, the department is at risk of not receiving the best value for money." What assurances do you have that this kind of thing will not be allowed to inappropriately influence procurement in the awarding of future contracts?

**Mr. Tremblay:** As I've previously mentioned, we've added significant requirements around contracting, around ensuring that the scope of work is in place before we enter a contract, that the appropriate sign-offs are occurring before a contract is executed, that we have multiple levels of accountability throughout the ministry around approving contracts, and that we've established the appropriate thresholds around authorizing contract expenditures; specifically, Executive Council DMs sign off on contracts over \$75,000 and all sole-source contracts over \$10,000 being signed off by the DM of Exec Council as well. As I mentioned previously, all of those measures have been implemented to ensure that we don't have a repeat recommendation from the Auditor General with respect to our contracting practices, specifically around sole-source contracts.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Tremblay. That's all I have.

**Mr. Tremblay:** Thank you.

**Ms Renaud:** I'll cede my time to Mr. Malkinson.

**The Chair:** Mr. Malkinson.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. On page 6 of the ministry report it says that

Intergovernmental Relations (IGR) coordinates Alberta's leadership and participation within the Canadian federation to advance the goal of a federal system that best serves the needs of Albertans and Canadians.

Then it follows up to say that

IGR has also been highly active in promoting the importance of market access for Alberta's natural resource exports.

In Calgary-Currie my entire riding is in the shadow of the oil and gas companies' various towers. It is a big employer in my area. To that end, I'm interested in knowing what were the key accomplishments at the intergovernmental relations division of Executive Council as outlined in the 2015-16 annual report.

**Mr. Tremblay:** Thank you for your question. The intergovernmental relations division co-ordinates Alberta's leadership and participation within the Canadian federation interprovincially and, of course, with the federal government and aims to advance Alberta's interests within that realm. They advance Alberta's interests through intergovernmental meetings, including first ministers' meetings and Premiers' meetings. During 2015-16 the Premier met with the Prime Minister on five different occasions and discussed interests and priorities of Albertans. Following the first ministers' meeting in March 2016 the Vancouver declaration on clean growth and climate change was released. With this declaration the federal, provincial, and territorial governments agreed to identify measures to grow their economies and reduce carbon emissions.

In July 2015 at the Council of the Federation meeting the Premiers released the Canadian energy strategy. This strategy is a co-operative approach to sustainable energy development that will benefit Alberta and Canadians.

The Premier also held approximately 20 bilateral meetings with provincial counterparts, including the Premiers in almost every other key jurisdiction within Canada.

Intergovernmental relations provides specialized support and advice to all government ministries as well in advancing their interests. They support ministers and deputy ministers at approximately 160 intergovernmental meetings and conferences annually. These meetings are facilitated to progress Alberta's policy objectives on a wide range of issues, including energy, climate change, indigenous relations, health care, education, and immigration.

Finally, they review and approve all intergovernmental agreements to ensure that they're consistent with Alberta's goals and objectives. In 2015-16 intergovernmental relations reviewed and approved almost 300 intergovernmental relations related to some of the areas I just previously mentioned, so a very active group working within Exec Council but also supporting relevant ministries in advancing Alberta's interests.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Malkinson.  
Mr. Gotfried.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. In your corporate services role you're responsible for co-ordination of FOIP and records management, information and technology support and services. Can you comment on the recent concerns from the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner regarding undue delays in responding to FOIP requests within government? I would suggest that this is a particular concern to myself, other members of this committee, and all Albertans to ensure transparency and accountability within government.

**Mr. Tremblay:** Thank you for that question. Government is committed to being open and transparent, and this report will help us further those goals. We are acting on all recommendations in the report. Seven of the nine recommendations are accepted outright. We are adapting existing administrative processes to respond to the other two recommendations. We're pleased that the commissioner highlighted improvements in processing time down from 12 to 15 months average to three to six months average. While we recognize that there's more work to do, we are thankful that the trend is in the right direction. The commissioner noted a 216 per cent increase in FOIP requests within Exec Council. This is a significant factor in us establishing appropriate timelines.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you. I would hope that their concerns are taken seriously and, obviously, as an organization and arm of the government that is about communicating, that we would see more significant improvements on that going forward.

9:40

**Mr. Tremblay:** Agreed. Yeah.

**Mr. Gotfried:** With respect to the Public Affairs Bureau obviously the globalization of our economy is key to our growth. Can you tell me what languages are used within Public Affairs when doing specific departmental media releases? For example, do we translate relevant communications into Chinese if China is key or referenced in a release on trade or investment?

**Mr. Hogan:** Your question is very timely. In the past we have released media releases in English and French on occasion when it was specific to the Franco-Albertan community. However, the Public Affairs Bureau is currently increasing its capacity to provide materials in Chinese, Punjabi, Tagalog to begin, based on the use of those languages and the demographics and how census warrants it. Those are ongoing activities that we are taking to ensure that we

are communicating with all Albertans, irrespective of where they're from.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Okay. That's good news. Thank you for that.

Within your 2015-16 business plan there were very few specific details on what it is that the ministry actually does and inadequate performance measures, which is noted by the Auditor General's department and our research team. Attempts to find more information online were relatively unsuccessful for our team here and members of the committee since the ministry's website also demonstrates a lack of detail. Do you not find this a little odd for a group of professional communicators?

**Mr. Hogan:** In fact, I do. I would agree with you and will increase the amount of content about Executive Council in the near future.

**Mr. Gotfried:** So you're committed to improving that as we go forward?

**Mr. Hogan:** Yes, we are.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Hopefully, we can put some measures into your next annual report so that we can measure that outcome as well.

Lacking transparency and accountability with respect to detailed tracking of subdepartmental expenses and performance measures is of concern to this committee as well. Satisfaction surveys: I question whether those are good enough or even appropriate to measure performance or achievement of the ministry business plan. Do you believe that the lack of very specific accountability measures and performance measures and expense reporting is adequate for a \$50 billion organization?

**Mr. Tremblay:** As I mentioned before, Executive Council is in a very unique position, not unlike other provinces or jurisdictions within a Westminster model. Executive Council's performance measures, really, are tied to its relationship with other departments in advancing specific policy and program initiatives, which is why, when we did undertake a jurisdictional review of how Exec Council measures success in other jurisdictions, we either determined that there were no measures in place or that they were qualitative and relationship-based in nature. Exec Council is the lead for policy co-ordination and strategy development within the Alberta government. Performance measures that reflect specific department accomplishments are a good indication of whether Executive Council is doing their job in co-ordinating communications, intergovernmental and policy co-ordination activities across government.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you. I'd hoped that we could see some more details specifically around the subdepartmental budgets within your own ministry. There seems to be some clarity and lack of detail in that.

Thank you.

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

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Gotfried.

We have the opportunity for three two-minute rotations. That seems pretty limited, or we could go straight to written.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Can we do one more rotation, Mr. Chair?

**The Chair:** Is that the will of the room, for one rotation of two minutes each? Okay.

Mr. Fildebrandt.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** We've asked our questions. We'll forgo our rotation. Just do the other two, and then go to written questions if that's okay.

**The Chair:** Okay.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. In the previous answer to the question that I was asking before, you talked about the amount of work that you do supporting ministries, Premiers, and deputy ministers in almost 180 multilateral and bilateral meetings and/or conferences and facilitated progress for Alberta's policy objectives, including energy, climate change, indigenous relations, health care, education, immigration, and so on. Given the high number of meetings, I was wondering what progress has been made on key files within intergovernmental relations. Considering our time, perhaps abbreviated.

**Mr. Tremblay:** Is it possible for us to provide a written response on that based on the time that we currently have to answer that question?

**Mr. Malkinson:** Sure.

**Mr. Tremblay:** There is a tremendous amount of activity within IGR, and I don't believe I would do it service within perhaps 60 seconds that remain on this rotation.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you.

I'm going to hand off to MLA Miller.

**Mr. Tremblay:** Okay. Thank you.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Sorry. MLA Dach.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you. I'll be quick with my question. It's been a very busy year in terms of moving important policies intended to make life better for Albertans. Now, on page 7 the report indicates that "the Policy Coordination Office provided policy advice and support through the substantive structural and staffing changes required during a governmental transition." What were some of the highlights of the policy co-ordination office in the 2015-16 year?

**Mr. Tremblay:** I'll cover as much as I can in this particular question period. As I mentioned, PCO provides co-ordinative services to all ministries in bringing forward policy and legislative proposals through the government decision-making process. That is done through cabinet deliberations, but it's also done through a various assortment of policy committees that were put in place during the period of time that we're talking about today. Specifically, there were 14 Economic Development Policy Committee meetings that were undertaken during this period, 14 LRC, or Legislative Review Committee, meetings. That committee focuses on ensuring that legislation is reflective of the policy approvals provided by cabinet. If you'd like, I can provide further written information at a later date because there were quite a substantive number of efforts undertaken by PCO during that period.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you very much. That would be appreciated.

**Mr. Tremblay:** Thank you.

**The Chair:** Mr. Gotfried.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. The operations and machinery of government, or OMG, part of your organization "also delivers advice on the structure and function of government and

collaborates with ministries to coordinate public agency appointments for consideration by Cabinet." Can you give us the key priorities that you consider when delivering advice on public agency appointments, and, specifically, was a recommendation to eliminate consideration of ICD accreditation for candidates supported by your office?

**Mr. Tremblay:** The Public Agency Secretariat and related strategies have been moved to Treasury Board and Finance, so that question specifically, that policy question, is more appropriately directed to the Minister of Treasury Board and Finance. OMG no longer has authority or policy input into that particular notation.

**Mr. Gotfried:** All right. Thank you.

If Executive Council is responsible for leading an organization with an almost \$50 billion budget, what assurances can the ministry provide that it is going to carry out the strategic planning and, more importantly, the co-ordination of crossministry efforts to ensure implementation of its plans? We've heard here today some fallout and maybe some lack of achievement in terms of that crossministry co-ordination.

**Mr. Tremblay:** Thank you for that question. Executive Council and many of the agencies within it: crossministry collaboration is one of the key tenets of any activity that occurs with ministries. Crossministry collaboration occurs every day with respect to communicating, advancing interprovincial interests, or co-ordinating policy and legislative proposals that are coming forward. Mr. Hogan mentioned the role of the Public Affairs Bureau in consulting with ministries. Often complex policy issues or communications initiatives involve dialogue with more than one ministry. Sometimes multiple ministries are involved in planning and advancing policy. That happens every day within Exec Council.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Now we have a few minutes here to read questions into the record for written responses. Are there any questions that members are looking to read into the record?

**Mr. Gotfried:** My question is specifically around satisfaction surveys. I'd just like your written response on your understanding of whether satisfaction surveys are good enough or even appropriate to measure performance or achievement of the current or future ministry business plans.

**Mr. Tremblay:** Yeah. We can certainly address that, and we'll answer that question, for sure.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you.

I have one other question. It relates to . . .

**The Chair:** Just a second.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Sorry.

**The Chair:** Are there any other questions from the committee? No.

**Mr. Gotfried:** This is just a follow-up to a question from a colleague with respect to the McDougall Centre usage. Can we get a utilization report for the facility, and how might greater utilization help to reduce both government and other legislative organizational costs?

9:50

**Mr. Tremblay:** We can provide that.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Great. Thank you.



**The Chair:** I would like to thank the officials from the Ministry of Executive Council for attending today and responding to the committee members' questions. We ask that responses to outstanding questions from today's meeting be provided in writing and forwarded to the committee clerk within 30 days.

Going on to other business, was there any other business? No.

Okay. The committee meets on Tuesday, March 14, 2017, to hear from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. The committee

meeting is scheduled from 8:30 a.m. to 10 a.m. The premeeting briefing is at 8 a.m.

I will call for a motion to adjourn. Would a member move that the meeting be adjourned? I have multiple hands. Dr. Turner, thank you. All in favour? Any opposed? On the phones? Carried.

Thank you.

[The committee adjourned at 9:51 a.m.]





