



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
First Session

Standing Committee
on
Public Accounts

Transportation and Economic Corridors

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**Legislative Assembly of Alberta
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First Session**

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UC), Deputy Chair
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Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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Tom Loo, Assistant Deputy Minister, Construction and Maintenance

David Peace, Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic and Integrated Services

Paul C. Smith, Assistant Deputy Minister, Capital Planning, Grants and Engineering Services

Bryce Stewart, Deputy Minister

7:30 a.m.

Tuesday, May 13, 2025

[Mr. Sabir in the chair]

The Chair: Good morning, everyone. I would like to call this meeting of the Public Accounts Committee to order and welcome everyone in attendance.

My name is Irfan Sabir, MLA for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall and chair of the committee. As we begin this morning, I would like to invite members, guests, and LAO staff at the table to introduce themselves. We'll begin to my right.

Mr. Rowswell: Garth Rowswell, MLA, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

Mr. McDougall: Myles McDougall, MLA for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mrs. Johnson: Jennifer Johnson, Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Lundy: Good morning, everyone. Brandon Lundy, Leduc-Beaumont.

Ms de Jonge: Chantelle de Jonge, MLA for Chestermere-Strathmore.

Mr. Loo: Tom Loo, assistant deputy minister with construction and maintenance division.

Mr. Fung: Dale Fung, assistant deputy minister of financial services.

Mr. Stewart: Bryce Stewart, Deputy Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors.

Mr. Smith: Paul Smith, assistant deputy minister of capital planning, grants and engineering services.

Mr. Peace: David Peace, ADM for strategic and integrated services.

Mr. Wylie: Good morning. Doug Wylie, Auditor General.

Mr. Ireland: Brad Ireland, Assistant Auditor General.

Mr. Schmidt: Marlin Schmidt, Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Ms Renaud: Marie Renaud, St. Albert.

Mr. Ellingson: Court Ellingson, Calgary-Foothills.

Ms Robert: Good morning. Nancy Robert, clerk of *Journals* and committees.

Mr. Huffman: Good morning. Warren Huffman, committee clerk.

The Chair: We will now go to those joining us online. Please introduce yourself as I call your name. Hon. Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Good morning, everyone. This is Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk, MLA, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

The Chair: Thank you.

A few housekeeping items before we turn to the business at hand. Please note that the microphones are operated by *Hansard* staff. Committee proceedings are live streamed on the Internet and broadcast on Alberta Assembly TV. The audio- and videostreams and transcripts of meetings can be accessed via the Legislative Assembly website. Those participating by videoconference are encouraged to please turn on your camera while speaking and mute your microphone when not speaking. Members participating

virtually who wish to be placed on the speakers list are asked to e-mail or send a message to the committee clerk, and members in the room are asked to please signal to the chair. Please set your cellphones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting. Comments should flow through the chair at all times.

Approval of agenda. Hon. members, are there any changes or additions to the agenda? If not, would a member like to move that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts approve the proposed agenda as distributed for its Tuesday, May 13, 2025, meeting? Moved by MLA Rowswell. Any discussion on the motion? Seeing none, all in favour? Any opposed? Those joining online, all in favour? Thank you. The motion is carried.

We have minutes from the Tuesday, May 6, 2025, meeting of the committee. Do members have any errors or omissions to note? If not, would a member like to move that the Standing Committee on Public Accounts approve the minutes as distributed of its meeting held on Tuesday, May 6, 2025? Moved by MLA Johnson. Any discussion on the motion? All in favour? Any opposed? Online? Thank you. The motion is carried.

The Ministry of Transportation and Economic Corridors is with us today to discuss the ministry's annual report 2023-24, responsibilities under their purview during that reporting period, and relevant reports of the Auditor General. I invite officials from the ministry to provide an opening statement not exceeding 10 minutes.

Mr. Stewart: Thank you, and good morning. We are here to discuss the 2023-24 Alberta Transportation and Economic Corridors annual report. With me today, from my left to right, are Tom Loo, assistant deputy minister of construction and maintenance division; Dale Fung, assistant deputy minister of the financial services division; Paul Smith, assistant deputy minister of the capital planning, grants and engineering services division; and David Peace, assistant deputy minister of the strategic integrated services division.

I'd like to start by sharing some background about Alberta Transportation and Economic Corridors. The department is responsible for providing a safe and efficient transportation system to support Alberta's economic, social, and environmental vitality. The department promotes a vital and diverse economy by managing transportation safety, supporting municipalities with public transportation and water and waste-water facilities, expanding and enhancing a well-integrated transportation system and enabling market access, and, finally, preserving and developing the provincial highway network and water management infrastructure.

The department's work extends to communities across the province and affects all Albertans. Whether it's travelling along our highway network, using public transportation, relying on clean drinking water from modern systems, or depending on the goods and services that move across our province, everyone uses or depends on services provided by the Ministry of Transportation and Economic Corridors.

Now, here are the details of the '23-24 annual report. The department's expense in '23-24 totalled \$2.4 billion, which includes operating costs, grants to municipalities, and provincial highway maintenance, including amortization of capital assets and the use of salt, sand, and gravel. In '23-24 the department delivered on commitments identified in the ministry's '23-26 business plan and continued day-to-day operations to support Albertans, including spending \$515.9 million for planning, design, and construction of twinning, widening, and expanding roads and bridges; \$657.8 million for capital maintenance and renewal, consisting of highway and bridge rehabilitation and replacement projects; \$218.2 million for water management and flood mitigation protection; and \$818.8 million in capital grants to municipalities.

To maintain the safety of the provincial highways, the department expended \$407 million in '23-24 on highway maintenance activities. These activities include winter maintenance such as snow removal and summer maintenance such as pothole patching, crack sealing, and moulding. Public safety is a top priority for the department, and highway conditions are closely monitored to ensure a safe and reliable transportation network.

In '23-24 a new performance measure was introduced. This measure evaluates the effectiveness of snow and ice removal and control on the highway system. The result in '23-24 was that 97 per cent of winter maintenance was completed within or above the specified contract requirements, an improvement of 2 per cent from '22-23. The department's '23-24 capital investment is \$1.8 billion. Much of this work was focused on prioritizing and advancing strategic economic corridors, including the Calgary Ring Road; '23-24 investments included \$105.2 million for the Calgary Ring Road. That was primarily for the final segment of Stoney Trail, which opened to the public traffic in December 2023. As well, the new eastbound Bow River Bridge on the northwest leg of the Calgary Ring Road opened to traffic in September of 2023.

We are also investing in the expansion of Edmonton's southwest leg of Anthony Henday Drive from four to six lanes. Other work in the Edmonton region included the completion of twinning a section of highway 19 between range road 261 and highway 60. Further north in the province we completed 9.2 kilometres of twinning highway 40 between Grande Prairie and Wapiti River, including a new bridge. Design work was also under way for highway 881 passing lanes between Lac La Biche and highway 63 just south of Fort McMurray.

Work also got under way on planning and preliminary engineering to extend highway 686 from Fort McMurray to Peerless Lake to support economic development across the region and create a new emergency route for northern residents. The 218-kilometre highway project will open new travel options for this resource-rich part of Alberta. Major construction and other projects also began in '23-24, including on the new interchange on highway 2 at Leduc, with completion expected in 2026.

Construction also began on a new interchange to replace the at-grade intersection of highways 22 and 1A in Cochrane. Construction to twin highway 11 between Sylvan Lake and Rocky Mountain House was ongoing as well as construction on major improvements to Deerfoot Trail in Calgary. Work also began on the project's scope of a new interchange on highway 1 in Wheatland county to support the proposed De Havilland development.

Part of the department's mandate, as the name suggests, is to advance economic corridors, and in '23-24 this work included signing an agreement and a memo of understanding with Saskatchewan and Manitoba to collaborate on interprovincial infrastructure to support trade and economic growth across the prairies.

In addition to our work managing and delivering road and bridge projects on the provincial highway network, the department is responsible for administering a number of grant programs. Grant funding provided in '23-24 included \$27.4 million for the strategic transportation infrastructure program, also known as STIP, for 120 projects; \$41.1 million for 77 projects under the Alberta municipal water/wastewater partnership; \$9.2 million for 15 projects under the water for life program; and \$500,000 for a single project under the First Nations water tie in-program. The department also provided \$1.1 million in '23-24 through the regional airport development grant to support airports in developing airport improvement business cases and feasibility studies for improving airport infrastructure and air transportation.

7:40

Another key focus area for the department in '23-24 was implementing a number of changes to driver licensing to help alleviate driver shortages in the province. This work included removing the requirement for class 2 bus drivers to complete the formerly mandatory entry-level training program, that's also known as MELT. This change aligns with the approach in other provinces and helps alleviate the bus driver shortage in Alberta, particularly for school bus drivers. By reducing the time and cost it takes drivers to obtain a class 2 driver's licence, we can alleviate that shortage. It allows school boards and bus companies to hire and train school bus drivers more easily.

The department in partnership with Alberta Education also introduced class 2 and class 4 postlicensing competency grants for school bus drivers. A total of \$300,000 in grant funding was invested for this initiative. This grant was intended to support the cost of on-the-job competency training for Albertans. For example, it helps school bus drivers continuously improve their professional driving skills.

In '23-24 the department invested \$8.4 million in commercial driver grant programs that helped 765 Albertans complete training to obtain their class 1 driver's licence or build competencies for class 2 and class 4 drivers. In 2023-24 the department also undertook a comprehensive review of the MELT program for class 1 drivers with reforms that led to the newly-developed made-in-Alberta class 1 learning pathway. The pathway provides a flexible, apprenticeship-style approach focused on attracting and retaining drivers in the profession. Alberta, like many other jurisdictions across Canada, is facing a shortage of commercial drivers, and the pathway is intended to help attract and retain commercial drivers to the province while improving safety.

Additionally, the department established the Commercial Driver Shortage Committee in 2023-24 to collaboratively identify and address factors impacting the commercial driver shortage in the province.

Other driver licensing improvements in '23-24 included changes to graduated licensing requirements. Albertans in the graduated driver's license, or GDL, program no longer have to take an advanced road test to get their full class 5 or class 6 driver's licence. With a focus on putting safety first, program changes include a new comprehensive road test for drivers entering the class 5 – that's passenger – and class 6 motorcycle graduated driver's licence, or GDL, program as well as strengthened requirements to automatically exit the GDL program. These changes ensure new drivers have and develop safe driving behaviors.

The department clearly has an important role to play in helping ensure Albertans can get where they're going as safely as possible. That concludes my opening remarks. Thank you for your time this morning, and I'm happy to answer any questions that you have.

The Chair: Thank you.

I would now turn it over to the Auditor General for his comment. Mr. Wylie, you have five minutes.

Mr. Wylie: Good morning. Thank you, Chair. It is great to be with you again today.

I'll start with a brief overview of the financial statement work that we do at the ministry. I think I've said numerous times that at each one of the departments we do sample transactions that are part of the audit of the consolidated financial statement work, and this year we did the same thing at this department. This work did result in two recommendations for fiscal '23-24. First, we recommended that the department improve its processes and internal controls over financial reporting to ensure the quality of financial reporting. The

second recommendation focused on the department improving its asset accounting processes. In addition to the financial statement audit work, we released a performance audit on the department's highway maintenance contracts in November of 2024. We made two recommendations from that work.

Each year the department spends over \$320 million for summer and winter maintenance on the highways in the province, and it needs effective systems to ensure contractors do the work they are getting paid for and for any extra work it gives to contractors to ensure that they are following the procurement policies. During this audit we found that the department did not always have evidence or adequate reporting from contractors to demonstrate how all contract requirements were being met, did not always reduce payments for materials that did not meet the specifications, did not always comply with its sole-sourcing policy when it gives extra work to contractors during the year, and lacked controls for pricing and approving all extra work.

Our recommendations, of course, then focused on improving the monitoring processes to ensure contractors are meeting the contractual requirements and improving guidance and processes for the administration of any extra work given during the year. In addition, in our June 2021 report on processes to provide information about the government's environmental liabilities, we made two recommendations to the department: first, to improve its processes to assess, estimate, and account for its environmental liabilities relating to sand and gravel pits and highway maintenance yards; and, secondly, to improve its processes to ensure compliance with environmental legislation at highway maintenance yards.

We found that the department did not have effective processes to assess, estimate, and account for its environmental liabilities relating to its sand and gravel pits and highway maintenance yards. It lacked the required acceptance of risk management plans and consent from adjacent property owners to follow a risk management approach at certain sites, and that is something that is required in legislation.

Chair, that concludes my opening comments. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now hear questions from committee members. As there is the election of the Speaker at 10 a.m., we will be using modified speaking times today to accommodate that meeting, so both caucuses will have slightly reduced question blocks so we can complete our business with ample time for members to make their way to the Chamber.

We will begin with the Official Opposition. Instead of 15 minutes, your first block will be 12 minutes, and every subsequent block for both caucuses will have one minute less. Member Schmidt.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Alternative procurement models are discussed on page 55 of the annual report, and in that report it said that the department "heard from industry how risk has been shifted to industry over the years and that it was impacting the ability to achieve value for money on TEC projects." I'm wondering. Did the department quantify the distribution of risk between government and industry and evaluate how that's changed over time?

Mr. Stewart: I think where I'd probably start with that is that we'd look at that on a contract-by-contract basis. I think some of the challenges that emerged that industry were relaying to us were especially after the COVID pandemic. There was a significant amount of inflation that came forward and impacted construction

prices, so those would have been costs that industry would have ended up having to absorb. I think that was a massive shift for industry in Alberta and elsewhere. I think that led industry to look at models that have been in place for a couple of decades and say: these were not as sustainable as in the past.

We continue to explore alternative procurement models, including P3 opportunities, for new projects. I'd suggest, at least in the horizontal construction business, these were a little bit tough over the last few years, coming out of COVID and the higher inflation rates, but to the extent possible we would still like to look for opportunities where we can have the party most able to handle the risk that manages that risk. But it doesn't benefit us if we push risk off the private sector that they ultimately need to price into competitive bids, so that is a piece that we explore on a contract-by-contract basis and get the right procurement methodology. We do need to hear from industry on that piece, and of course we'd evaluate that contract by contract of when to pursue an alternative procurement model versus something that would be a more basic model, I would suggest, like a design/bid/build or a design/build.

7:50

Mr. Schmidt: When you're developing these contracts, then, does the department have a target for the appropriate level of risk that it should assume?

Mr. Stewart: I think, as I mentioned, it would be on a contract-by-contract basis, I would suggest. I'll turn things over to ADM Tom Loo, who can provide a little bit more detail on a few examples. But I would suggest that with larger, more complex contracts, that would look different than a smaller contract, that might be a bridge replacement, that might be more standard, and there would be less risk that would arise.

A more complex contract would be something larger, and it could be a multiyear contract, where the proponent is absorbing more risk, because if it's a five- or six-year contract, then the chance of inflation impacting that is clearly higher than if it was only one or two years. So I think that would be the way we would look at it. There are certain markers that would suggest that there may be more risk in those contracts, and there are some construction types that are inherently more risky than others. Something like paving a road is pretty straightforward. Something like a bridge rehab, where you're getting into detail, or a geotech piece is going to be more risky because there may be more factors that come up during the construction that are unknown at the outset.

Tom?

Mr. Loo: I would just echo the comments that Deputy Minister Stewart mentioned. In terms of your question, is there some limit of dollar value, as Deputy Minister Stewart mentioned, we look at each project on a case-by-case basis, so it's very difficult to necessarily assign a dollar value to risk. You could have risks; simple things like weather, for instance. With short-term contracts we would have a completion date in the fall. You could have a situation where a contractor encounters inclement weather, and they push right up against the completion date. There are opportunities for us to share that risk in terms of providing time extensions. However, on a three-year or five-year construction project the expectation is that the contractor would be able to make up time over that period.

Other specific risks that we saw, particularly in fiscal '23-24, was on the back end of COVID and on the back end of significant inflation. Contractors came to us and said, you know, we're bidding fixed-price contracts, and we are put in a place to assume that risk of those increased costs. So we have ongoing discussions with

industry in terms of how we can go about mitigating some of those risks. As you alluded to, risk is money, and if there isn't some form of sharing some of that pain, contractors will ultimately bid that into these contracts, which ultimately means the taxpayers pay. So we've looked at mechanisms on a case-by-case basis to mitigate some of that risk.

Coming out of COVID, there was a real challenge in terms of obtaining stainless steel. There were contracts that were already tendered, and these contractors came back to us and said, "I just can't get stainless steel in the time frame that you're asking us to; that's impacting construction completion dates and penalties." They came to us, and there were ongoing discussions of using alternate forms, whether it's galvanized or different high-tech reinforcing steel, to mitigate some of that risk. Our intent was to work with industry to mitigate the risk, which ultimately controls costs.

Mr. Schmidt: The annual report says that industry has claimed that the shift in risk allocation impacts Transportation's ability to get value for money. Did the department do any work to quantify how much value was lost because of this shift in risk allocation?

Mr. Stewart: I believe so. When industry was talking about that, they would have been talking generically and they would have been talking prospectively, so we looked at how to manage that on a forward basis. Was there any collective assessment of going back two or three or four or five years? No, there wasn't any assessment on speculatively what might have been made on up front, which might have cost us. So it's very, very difficult to assess that.

I would suggest the other thing that's difficult to assess is that we look to getting multiple bids and competitive bids, but to disentangle that from what is the risk premium that's being paid, that would be a challenging thing. But we absolutely look at sort of bid patterns to make sure that we have sufficient folks bidding on projects and that the clustering of pricing is tight enough that we're dealing with a competitive market. So as contractors bid in risk, they're bidding in the same level of risk. That would be what we would expect to see. Again, we'd like to derisk those jobs as much as possible, and it may involve simple things like if we need to drill more geotech holes up front to provide more information to those folks bidding. There are other elements that we can undertake, and we're undertaking to be able to try to derisk things up front. But to answer your question holistically, that wasn't done.

Mr. Schmidt: Yeah. It's frustrating to hear that the Transportation department seems to be just taking the industry's word for it that there is inappropriate risk allocation here, not doing the work to see if taxpayers are being adequately protected in the development of these contracts.

Now I want to go on to conflicts of interest. When Infrastructure appeared before the committee a couple of weeks ago, they couldn't satisfactorily answer questions that we had asked, that the Auditor General had raised about their practices for protecting against conflict of interest in procurement procedures. I'm wondering if Transportation can tell this committee about the work that it does to protect against conflicts of interest when procuring goods and services.

Mr. Stewart: Probably the initial place that I'd start is – I don't know if it gets precisely to your question about conflict of interest – that we do have a supplementary code of conduct. The Alberta Public Service has a general code of conduct. We have a supplementary code of conduct to provide (a) some additional direction to staff, just given the business that we're in, but I think more than anything to highlight how important it is around not just

how we deal with major contractors and consultants but the perception because perception is critically important. If we're perceived as being in a position that you suggest, a conflict of interest position, that is problematic. So I would suggest that's the other place that we proceed, but I'm not aware of any conflict of interest issues, and we would take that very seriously if they surfaced.

Mr. Schmidt: Right. Part of the issue that Infrastructure was unable to address was this responsibility for staff in the Infrastructure department to self-report. Unless somebody self-reports a conflict of interest, they admitted that they don't really have any other mechanism to evaluate whether or not somebody has a conflict of interest. Does Transportation have anything more robust than the self-reporting procedure that is in place at Infrastructure?

Mr. Stewart: I would suggest in terms of conflicts of interest, I mean, there are whole – I'm assuming you're speaking about the procurement area in general. In terms of procurement, the way I would approach that is to say that in addition to the supplementary code of conduct we have public tenders, competitive, prequalified situations. So the opportunity for conflict of interest: I don't see how it would arise given that the tenders are all public, and you would have . . .

Mr. Schmidt: Sorry to cut you off. You know, how are the processes that Transportation uses different from the ones that Infrastructure uses, which have not adequately protected against potential conflicts of interest? Like, you mentioned the supplementary code of conduct. What other kinds of procedures or policies are in place to protect against conflict of interest that Infrastructure doesn't have?

Mr. Stewart: I would suggest the Contracts Review Committee that Transportation has is very effective. It's something that goes into contracts in detail and provides recommendations. I think the other . . .

Mr. Schmidt: Right, but Infrastructure also has that.

Mr. Lundy: Point of order, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to call a point of order under 23(b). This is the member opposite's fourth reference to the Ministry of Infrastructure, which I do not believe is joining us today. I assume he had ample time to speak to that ministry when they joined us, and I think the member should continue to ask about the procedures in the ministry that has joined us today.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Schmidt: Mr. Chair, my questions were clearly based on comparing and contrasting the policies that Transportation has with Infrastructure. I am only repeating some of the concerns that we heard from Infrastructure. They were not providing satisfactory answers to protect against conflict of interest. My questions are designed to get at whether or not Transportation has additional processes, any different processes, anything more effective than Infrastructure, and I'm giving the deputy minister an opportunity to explain how Transportation is different from Infrastructure. I'm not asking any questions about Infrastructure's conflict of interest procedures.

8:00

The Chair: Well, I think the question needs to relate to Transportation and its policies when it comes to conflict of interest within the reporting period. I would caution the member to focus more on the policies that are in place within Transportation.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you. The Auditor General raised issues with how contract review committees in Infrastructure failed to adequately protect against conflicts of interest and make value-for-money decisions. I'm wondering if the deputy minister can tell us how Transportation's contract review committee process is different from Infrastructure's so that those problems don't arise in this department.

Mr. Stewart: I can only speak to our own contract review committee process; I can't opine on Infrastructure's. The piece that I guess I would defer to as well is that the office of the Auditor General didn't identify any issues with conflict of interest in Transportation and Economic Corridors or our contract review committee. So I'm not sure what hypothetical . . .

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now hear a question from the government caucus. MLA de Jonge.

Ms de Jonge: Thank you, Chair. Good morning, everybody. I'm jumping right into the annual report. Page 73, line 3.2, shows the driver safety initiative program. I think we can all agree that it's of utmost importance that the government of Alberta ensures that we have safe drivers on our roads and that we're maintaining strong road safety standards overall.

Alberta is full of increasingly busy transportation corridors. I happen to have a few of these in my constituency – highway 1, of course; Glenmore Trail, very busy; and highway 564 as well – sort of these corridors coming out of Calgary going east to the communities where people live and drive into the city for work and other things but also the industry that's developing to the east of Calgary as well. In your opening statement you mentioned De Havilland, that's coming to Wheatland county. We're very excited about that.

It's certainly of paramount importance that we're supporting driver safety in all forms. My question is if the deputy minister can explain what items were included in this driver safety initiative program for '23-24. You know, on the same page it mentions that \$5.1 million was spent in the '23-24 reporting period on these initiatives. Can the deputy minister outline how that \$5.1 million was spent overall?

Mr. Stewart: Sure. I'll start by talking a little bit about what items were included in the driver safety initiatives program in '23-24. The first one I'll touch on is mandatory entry level training, or the MELT program, and driver examinations. Both those two support a comprehensive road safety strategy focused on both the education, driver education, and also the licensing standards. MELT, as I suspect many will be aware, is a standardized program that provides new commercial drivers with the essential knowledge and skills for the safe operation of class 1 – those are the tractor trailer vehicles – and class 2, bus vehicles. As of April 23, 2023, to address the reported difficulty of hiring and retaining new school bus drivers to provide safe transportation for students, as I mentioned in my opening remarks, we did remove the requirement for MELT for class 2 vehicles. That's the same as other provinces and territories who didn't have MELT for class 2.

I would suggest that for the driver examinations they also include examination programs for commercial drivers and oversight of all testing under the examinations and licensing business unit. Just a recollection that in 2021 passenger road testing was privatized, leaving the delivery of commercial road testing and oversight of all road testing under the examinations and licensing business unit. Those are the big pieces that are part of that.

To your specific question about the \$5.1 million and how that was spent, that funding covered all costs associated with conducting the commercial driver examinations across the province using driver examiners. It also included oversight of all road testing under the examinations and licensing business unit. It primarily funded, as I mentioned, the commercial driver examinations and also hiring administration of driver examiners and supported oversight of all road-testing activities. A significant portion of the expenditures was associated with operational costs for conducting examinations, maintaining licensing standards, and ensuring compliance with legislative requirements and supporting initiatives like MELT. In '23-24, just to give you an order of magnitude, about 370,000 road tests were conducted, and that generated about \$4.1 million in revenue to the general revenue fund.

I think I'll leave things there, but thank you for the question.

Ms de Jonge: Thank you for your work on that.

I'm flipping back to page 35. Key objection 1.5 states that the Ministry of Transportation and Economic Corridors is "[working] with industry to identify and initiate projects to support resolving the truck driver shortage in Alberta." This is something I hear from commercial operators in my constituency, about the difficulty to always fill that need for drivers for their commercial operations. I know the ministry has been working on solutions to this.

You know, one of the items mentioned under this key objective is the commercial driver grants program. I've had the opportunity to talk about this specific grant program and what it offers to operators in my constituency. I'm wondering. How did that grant program go about achieving that key objective set by the ministry in the '23-24 reporting period? Specifically, now flipping back to the last page we were talking about, page 73, it shows \$8.4 million was spent in '23-24 under the commercial drivers grant. I'm interested to know: what did that \$8.4 million go towards, and how many recipients received grant funding in '23-24?

Mr. Stewart: Sure. When we look at the grant program for commercial drivers – and it's really critical to, as you talked about, reduce the shortages and skill up our drivers – it's comprised of three separate grants that support the industry. The grants are the driving back to work grant. That was implemented back in 2020 and supports unemployed Albertans to obtain a class 1 driver's licence and covers up to 90 per cent of the driver training and testing costs.

In my opening remarks I mentioned the class 2, class 4 competency grant. This was delivered in partnership with Alberta Education and administered to develop class 2 and class 4 school bus driver competencies. The thinking is to move beyond just the licensing but when folks get into those jobs, making sure they have the skills to manage a challenging occupation.

Then in February 2024, so towards the end of this fiscal year that we're talking about here today, the department announced an allocation of \$2.8 million dollars to Women Building Futures to help more women and gender-diverse individuals enter the trucking industry as commercial drivers. Of the \$2.8 million that we committed, \$1.28 million was provided in the '23-24 fiscal year and the remainder provided in '24-25, our last fiscal year.

In terms of the breakdown that you asked for on the \$8.4 million, how that broke down was that the biggest program was the driving back to work grant, which was \$5.35 million for unemployed and underemployed Albertans; and then there was \$1.072 million for the class 1 competency grant supporting the Alberta Motor Transport Association, more commonly known as AMTA; and \$300,000 for the class 2, class 4 competency grant, and this is the

one that we delivered with Education; and \$1.28 million to support Women Building Futures for their initiative.

The driving back to work program: we got just under 700 students enrolled in that program with 689, and 75 people participated in the class 2, class 4 competency program. Women Building Futures delivered eight information sessions – it was early as we were getting stood up – 180 engagements promoting women and transportation, and at the time of this reporting 12 women had received training in '23-24.

Ms de Jonge: Thank you to the deputy minister.

With that, I'm going to cede what's left of my time to my colleague from Leduc-Beaumont.

8:10

Mr. Lundy: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to our officials for joining us this morning. I really appreciate you providing this information. You mentioned in your opening comments that we're all very excited for the highway 2 Leduc overpass. That's superexciting news.

I'd like to ask my first question. This is on page 57 under key objective 3.4. This is in relation to provincial highway maintenance, obviously a key issue, particularly in rural Alberta. It's just making sure that our highways are properly maintained. Through the chair, this area of the report, on page 57, key objective 3.4, shows that \$406.7 million was spent on provincial highway maintenance during the '23-24 reporting period. Could the deputy minister please describe how that \$406.7 million has been allocated over the same reporting period?

Mr. Stewart: For sure. Budget 2023 included an increase of \$57 million; \$20 million annually was increased for road surface repairs such as pothole patching, and the increase helped meet service levels as well as increased traffic volumes on the provincial highway network that we see due to population growth and economic growth. That is split between winter and summer maintenance, including the mowing, cracks filling, and pothole filling and that type of maintenance and then the winter control over ice and snow.

I'll leave it there, but that's where we ended up with the highway maintenance.

Mr. Lundy: Thank you. I know potholes, in particular, are always going to be a concern.

I'll switch gears here. We're getting a little short on time. I would like to ask about the passenger rail master plan. This is on page 53 of the annual report. This is under key objective 3.1, that references Transportation and Economic Corridors' passenger rail master plan. I know many Albertans across the province are always interested to hear about the future of passenger rail and are looking to what this network could be built out. Through the chair to the deputy minister: can you please explain the purpose and scope of the passenger rail master plan as it pertains to the '23-24 reporting period?

Mr. Stewart: I'd be happy to. The contract itself is outside of the '23-24 reporting period, but in '23-24 we really started thinking and planning around what we needed to achieve through a passenger rail master plan so that we would be ready to procure consultants to be able to undertake the work. The intent was to be able to look forward multiple decades – these are massive generational decisions – and then identify what the concrete actions are that we need to take over the next number of years to be able to position us for that optimal passenger rail system in the province.

The intent of it that we were thinking of in '23-24 was, first of all, clearly to assess the feasibility and look at intercity services that we call regional rail, whether the use of conventional or high-speed technology makes sense, looking at commuter services to major metro hubs and surrounding communities, and then also talking about how they integrate with municipal transportation networks, being able to do a cost benefit analysis, including what is required of government, and then also the governance and delivery models.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now move back to the Official Opposition members for nine minutes of questions.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to continue the line of questioning with regard to highway maintenance contracts. The Auditor General found that the ministry does not demonstrate or document whether it follows the government's sole-sourcing policy when awarding construction services over \$100,000. What processes does the ministry use to award contract services over \$100,000 to existing highway maintenance contractors?

Mr. Stewart: Thanks. I'll kick things off, and then I'll turn things over to ADM Loo to get into a little more detail on how we approach this. The Auditor General's review was very helpful in terms of continuous improvement. It was essentially about how we're better able to document and ensure that we've got clarity on what has been documented to be received.

Speaking specifically about the highway maintenance contracts, \$100,000 is a considerable amount of money, but on some of these construction jobs it is relatively small. What we will look at is that there may be extra work that is awarded under highway maintenance contracts, and that is in the contract provisions, where an unforeseeable situation or urgency exists and goods and services or construction could not be obtained in time by means of open procurement procedures.

An example of this – and I'll get ADM Loo to walk through an example – would be an emergency situation where you may need to replace a culvert. You clearly wouldn't be going to an open procurement to be able to deal with an emergency basis like that, and you wouldn't be getting bids in an area of the province where it's a very small job and the cost of actually mobilizing a contractor would be prohibitive. So there are, under the highway maintenance contracts, tools to be able to do those extra work orders. Like I said, the best example would be under emergencies, where you could have a flood or a wildfire, where something has to be done immediately and it would not make sense to go through a procurement process. These are typically, from a construction perspective, low-value contracts.

Tom, I wonder if you can provide an example.

Mr. Loo: Just again, following up on Deputy Minister Stewart's comments, these highway maintenance contracts that we have throughout the province: we have 25 contract maintenance areas, and they are 10-year-long contracts. We have established private contractors that move into the area. They have staff that live and work in those areas. They have established shops. They've mobilized equipment, whether it be plows, trucks, whatever is required to maintain the provincial highway network. Those contracts include numerous what I would categorize as standard bid items: things like plowing, that we've talked about, pothole filling, that type of work. That's everyday routine work that is completed, and we pay on a unit price basis.

When we get into the extra work order type things, these are things that are not identified with a fixed price within the contract. As Deputy Minister Stewart mentioned, we've had unfortunate

situations where we've had a flood situation, could be a small 900-millimetre diameter culvert that's washed out on a primary highway somewhere in the province. It would just not be practical to stop, do a complete design, issue a public procurement, tender. That would take us days if not weeks. So types of work of . . .

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you to the assistant deputy minister.

I'm wondering if the Auditor General can comment, then. Like, are those the types of issues that you found? Is it just improper documentation of emergency work orders that are purported, or were there other issues that the department is not mentioning?

Mr. Wylie: Yeah. In essence, what we're looking at is the heart of the issue. Part of it was documentation. There are processes and policies that exist. Our view, no matter what program or area we're looking at, is that if you have policies and procedures, you should follow those or document why there are exceptions, or if, in fact, there are clear ongoing exceptions, then clarify those within the policies and practices and document when those exceptions occur.

Often in organizations where they have extensive processes and there's noncompliance, we will say: well, if you don't plan on following those policies, then change them because, otherwise, the expectation is that you would. Part of the issue here was, again, the documentation of what is to be done and then, you know, either following that or identify exceptions. If it's an emergency situation, then that should be documented and clarified.

The other issue here, I think, is part of the trade agreement. There there are exceptions allowed, and I believe those are emergency cases, if I'm not mistaken. I think there are three exceptions to the trade agreement that the department follows, and one of them would be emergency cases. But, again, we indicate in the report that the department did not document if the trade exception applied to the work in the four cases above.

It's about ensuring there's clarity and understanding of the staff of what the policies are, documenting if there are exceptions – that's the internal policies – and then when it relates to the trade requirements, again, to ensure that you are documenting if exceptions such as emergencies apply.

8:20

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you.

What work has the department done since the Auditor General's report has come out to improve documentation processes?

Mr. Stewart: The big piece is around updating the contract administration manual, so being clear with the expectation that we have these processes in place. There are going to be enhanced processes and procedures to ensure the work completed meets contractual requirements and provides staff training around the manuals so that they understand the requirements to enter this. We have also had discussions with – we have quarterly meetings with our highway maintenance contractors, and we have indicated to them that we need to tighten this up and improve documentation and be very clear around what is approved and what that approval chain is like. We expect that recommendation to be implemented in the '27-28 fiscal year.

Then around the specific question you raised around guidance and process to administer extra work, what we've done there is that we're enhancing processes and procedures again through the contract administration manual and also our procurement accountability framework manual, providing staff training. That one we expect to be ready to be implemented during the '25-26 fiscal year, and we'd then invite the Auditor General to review those measures.

It's something we take very seriously and appreciate the effort of the audit. It is something where we have to be tighter and more

disciplined around properly documenting when we're doing these things. That provides clarity both internally and externally, and our highway maintenance contractors appreciate the need for that diligence.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you very much for that answer.

Now, in the AG's December 2023 report he identified several issues with procurement. One of them was information access controls. The AG said that the risk of inappropriate controls is the potential for somebody to inappropriately access information that they shouldn't. Now, when the AG identified this, did the department do any investigation to see if anybody had actually inappropriately accessed and shared information that they weren't supposed to?

Mr. Stewart: On those recommendations, they have been responded to and approved by the Auditor General, so those have been closed.

On that specific question that you're raising, it was folks that had no longer worked in the ministry that were still on the list. Now, some of those would have been in government; some of those would have been outside of government. If they were outside of government, they wouldn't have had access because they would have been outside the firewall. So that piece is around regularly checking who has access to the documents.

Mr. Schmidt: Did you actually do an investigation? I mean, just because the firewall is in place doesn't necessarily mean that it's working. Did you look to see if anybody inappropriately accessed that?

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now move to government private members for nine minutes of questions.

Mr. McDougall: Thank you very much. You mentioned earlier about the provincial passenger rail strategy, which involves a lot of elements that have to somehow come together, whether commuter rail, internal rail, and transportation within cities. Of course, the potential for a line between Calgary and Edmonton and other proposals, like an unsolicited – you know, we have an unsolicited proposal, for example, to go from at one point in time it was Calgary airport to Banff. A subelement of that, mentioned on page 53, is the Calgary Airport Rail Connection Study, which, to my understanding, was critical in resolving some of the outstanding questions for some of the other elements that I mentioned before. I see that the study for that – you know, it's key. I think everybody would agree that it would be nice to have a rail connection to the airport and downtown.

So a study was done. I see that the study was supposed to be completed by the summer of 2024, so much of the work was done on that previously. Can you provide some details on that Calgary Airport Rail Connection Study and any updates and where that's left things going forward in terms of trying to fit all the other pieces into that puzzle?

Mr. Stewart: Happy to. As you point out, the Calgary airport is really critical to a bunch of the intersecting potential passenger rail options. That is a study that, when we discussed with the city of Calgary, was really, really important to spend some time digging into what those solutions could look like.

In Budget 2023 we allocated \$3 million to support the Calgary Airport Rail Connection Study. We call it CARCS. That was a city-led study. In '23-24 they used a total of \$1.3 million, with the remaining funding and work completed in fiscal '24-25. They had

an initial report publicly, which was January of this year. The work in earnest began in October of 2023. The city of Calgary is still working to finalize the CARCS report, but it has advanced the study to a stage where the city of Calgary has identified a preferred option for connecting the airport to downtown Calgary, which was essentially what we wanted to get out of CARCS. It identified the east leg as the first infrastructure development stage that would provide a connection from the Blue Line to the Calgary airport terminal, so east of the airport you would have the LRT Blue Line. That currently is not quite parallel east-west with the airport, but we're funding some engineering in '23-24 to extend the Blue Line north. What CARCS was looking at is that then there's going to have to be some sort of connector that goes east-west from the airport out to the LRT. So that is where they landed with that first connection point, the Blue Line LRT going from that airport connector then to downtown Calgary. That's on the east end.

What that also does: the CARCS study protects future options for direct nonstop connections between the airport and downtown Calgary or potential future commuter or regional services that are envisioned in the passenger rail master plan. What I mean by that is that to the west of the airport, that's where – you mentioned the unsolicited proposals, the two unsolicited proposals with respect to high-speed rail between Edmonton and Calgary. As I understand it, they would be west of the airport so that that would leave that western connection going directly into downtown. That was similar to Calgary-Banff at the time. They were also looking at that connection west of the airport to downtown. CARCS was taking that all into account.

To keep the answer simple: the preferred option, first up, is going to be the LRT on the east side of the airport to downtown and then keeping things free on the west end for potential future commuter and high-speed rail options. I don't believe the report is finalized by the city of Calgary yet, but they've had some good discussions, and they're getting close. It's been a really good activity to spend the time and money on that study. That'll just roll up into the passenger rail master plan, so it complements the passenger rail master plan and is totally integrated with where we want to go with that.

Mr. McDougall: You know, two routes from the airport, one Blue Line, which, of course, many stops in between there and downtown and then one with no stop. Now, my understanding is that if that's going to happen, it would be through the CPKC line between the airport – or that right-of-way, that line that they have that connects much of the area between the airport and downtown. That's part of that study that has been looked at by the city, and they haven't come to any conclusions on that element yet?

Mr. Stewart: That one, I'd suggest, starts to dovetail into the passenger rail master plan. For sure, there are a lot of options on the west side coming down. A number of them – you know, the CPKC right-of-way is certainly one of those, but that would obviously be a discussion with CPKC. But there are other options.

The other piece that I should have mentioned but didn't mention was that, at its most extensive build-out, the green line would also go up parallel with the airport east-west on the west side, and that would be much farther west than the CPKC track. So you could have that direct route, which could be a high speed, but then in the coming years, decades, the green line: the city plans to have that over the river and servicing the north. That would be another connection point with the airport. And, again, you'd need this east-west connector coming out of the airport. But I would suggest that the passenger rail master plan will be looking at all options, of

which what I'll call the Deerfoot valley would only be one of those options.

8:30

Mr. McDougall: So although there's work that's been done over the period we're talking about, we expect that to come to some kind of resolution in terms of what a master plan will be this coming summer, I think. Would that be correct to assume?

Mr. Stewart: That's correct. The planning we did in '23-24 saw us being able to get a procurement out shortly in '24-25, and the remit of the consultancies and consortium involved in the passenger rail master plan was to deliver this by this summer, so we're on track to do that. It's been a massive, heavy lift, but it's so far gone very well, and I'm very pleased with the level of engagement that we've been able to do. We're not at the stage where we're doing engagement on specific routing, but there's a lot of excitement, and it's sort of the first conversation of this scope and magnitude about passenger rail in Alberta.

Previously there has been a focus on specific projects, but this is really talking about: what does the future look like? So talking with average Albertans, talking with municipalities, talking with Indigenous communities about what that master plan can look like. That's been a big part of this work as well, but that will be rolled up in the master plan that we produce by the summer. What we'd like to see is that that will equip government to make decisions in fall 2025 on what would be the first steps to develop a master plan and passenger rail system that will serve us well for the coming decades and coming generations.

Mr. McDougall: Thank you for that very fulsome answer. At this point, then, from the work done, what we kind of do know, though, is that the Blue Line will connect to the international part. Can you just outline in the few seconds we have left what you're doing to support that extension to the airport on the Blue Line?

Mr. Stewart: Sure. In '23-24 provided engineering dollars to the city, and it's outside the scope of this, but we are providing funding for the actual construction here over the next few years. That's a piece that came forward outside of the '23-24 time frame.

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now move back to the Official Opposition members for nine minutes of questions. MLA Renaud.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to talk about the Strategic Aviation Advisory Council recommendations. First of all, there are 15 appointed members, just based on publicly available information. I note 11 are men, four are women. Were there any attempts at all – this is a really underrepresented, I guess, sector. Aviation sector, aerospace sector: really underrepresented for women. I'm just wondering if there was any attempt at all for any kind of gender balance or to attract more women who are experts in their field.

Mr. Stewart: I think you raise an absolutely key point. We see that with commercial carriers as well. It's very underrepresented. It's certainly something that is of interest, getting as many people into the sector as possible.

Ms Renaud: Could you speak to the council, the Strategic Aviation Advisory Council makeup?

Mr. Stewart: Sure. It is an item that the vice-chair is looking into. We do have a pilot shortage in Alberta, as elsewhere, so it is something the vice-chair is looking into.

I wonder, ADM Peace, if you want to speak to that. You've been closely involved with the Strategic Aviation Advisory Council and the work they are doing on increasing the balance of the gender balance and just attracting more diverse staff to the aviation industry.

Mr. Peace: Absolutely. Their vice-chair, Kendra Kincade, operates aviation and is also the chair of Alberta Aviation Council. Within SAAC she's formed a subcommittee to look at diversity and inclusion within SAAC and try to increase opportunities for women. She's quite an advocate for that.

Ms Renaud: That's great. That's good news. Thank you for that. I appreciate that.

Again, we know women are critically underrepresented. Aerospace, the data I could find: 17 per cent female air traffic controllers, 7 per cent pilots, 2.3 aircraft mechanic engineers. You mentioned a grant to Women Building Futures of over a million dollars that resulted in 12 bus drivers, I think that was. So my question is: were there any recommendations from the council regarding addressing the critical underrepresentation that I just mentioned in those sectors or in those jobs, I guess?

Mr. Stewart: Not that I'm aware of at this stage. I know it's something they're looking into. As ADM Peace mentioned, they've struck this subgroup to look at this. I'm not aware of any specific recommendations.

Ms Renaud: That would be something the subcommittee would look at, then report back. Any timelines for that?

Mr. Stewart: ADM Peace.

Mr. Peace: Thanks. I think it's ongoing work that is already in play. They haven't made a recommendation to government because they're taking initiatives on their own. The Alberta Aviation & Aerospace Council just recently had a convention in Edmonton where opportunities for women entering the aviation field or aerospace field was a prominent part of that. If you look at the outcomes or the pictures that have been posted online – it was just last week – there's a large number of female participants in there.

Ms Renaud: Is there a likelihood, then, that the recommendations coming from the subcommittee of this council would then turn into targets for this ministry?

Mr. Stewart: The way the process would work is the SAAC would provide recommendations to the ministry, and then the minister would ultimately make that decision. Although SAAC also provides – it's under tech, and we support it, but it also provides recommendations across government, so it may be that in effect some of those recommendations could potentially be as much a fit with Advanced Education. But it would come to government for consideration of how those recommendations would be implemented.

Ms Renaud: So if I'm understanding correctly, that recommendation would come to the minister. Then the minister would decide whether or not that was worthy of becoming a target for the department.

Mr. Stewart: Or to the minister that is the lead for that. It could be the Minister of Jobs, Economy and Trade or Advanced Education. It could be either one of those. I would say that the other piece that I'd flag is we also would intentionally do significant advocacy with the federal government given their regulatory role.

Ms Renaud: Thank you. Sorry. I'm just running out of time. We're on a short timeline.

I'm going to switch to page 35, the regional airport development grants. I think it was a \$1.1 million grant. I note in the report that "thirteen regional airports with currently scheduled or historically scheduled intra-provincial commercial passenger flights were invited to apply for the funding, resulting in ten approved applications." Could you tell us what the total number of regional airports in Alberta is with currently scheduled or historically scheduled intraprovincial commercial flights? Big sentence. Thirteen were invited to apply, 10 were approved, but what is the pool of airports?

Mr. Stewart: In terms of regional airports there are, as you mentioned, 10 regional airports to undertake business case and feasibility studies. There's a significantly larger number of smaller community airports, and they don't have regularly scheduled flights. So that's how we define regional airports, as airports that have regularly scheduled flights.

In terms of regional we have seven that currently have regularly scheduled flights. There's another three that previously did, so they're caught in the mix. The three that previously had them but no longer have them would be Lloydminster, Peace River, Red Deer. The other seven that currently have regularly scheduled flights – these are noncharters – would be Fort McMurray, Fort Chip, Grande Prairie, High Level, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, and Whitecourt.

Ms Renaud: I'm sorry. What was the total number of regional airports?

Mr. Stewart: There would be 10 that we would describe as regional.

Ms Renaud: Ten. Okay. And then the community?

Mr. Stewart: There are 71 community airports.

Ms Renaud: Seventy-one. Perfect.

Mr. Stewart: Then on top of that there's 240 privately owned. These would be airports, aerodromes, helipads. So that gives you a sense. That obviously doesn't include the international hubs like YYC and YEG.

Ms Renaud: Okay. Could you tell us sort of: what was the criteria to select the 13 regional airports to apply for funding, to ask them to apply for funding? Just because they were the ones that were operating?

Mr. Stewart: Yeah. On the 10 regional airports the rationale for competing on this was that they had previously or currently regularly scheduled flights. The desire was around improving intraprovincial flights in Alberta, so you need to have those regularly scheduled. We weren't looking at investments in airports that just strictly had the small community airports or the charters, and one of the reasons for that is we have a funding program for community airports. We don't have a funding envelope for regional airports. We fund those on an as-needed basis, so this was an opportunity to understand for them: what are their needs, what are their aspirations, what are the challenges they face? Whereas community airports: there's already a vehicle for that. And the two major airports clearly are more under the federal jurisdiction and are at a scale where it would be a different conversation altogether.

Ms Renaud: I actually looked around to see if I could find the grant recipients, like, sort of what was the scope of the projects that they were undertaking. I couldn't find it. Doesn't mean it's not there. I'm just wondering: is this publicly available information?

Mr. Stewart: They have been awarded. It's not public at this time, but, clearly, I think when we get the results there will be some ability to be able to sort of triage what they would potentially mean. But we can follow up on that in a little bit more detail.

8:40

Ms Renaud: Okay. If you could with the committee and leave that with the committee, that'd be great.

I'm going to switch quickly to the community airport program. You may have said this and I missed it. What was the total grant amount awarded, and to which community airports?

Mr. Stewart: Sure. This is part of the broader STIP program. The total in '23-24 – this would be an annual program – was approximately \$4.6 million in STIP funding. That went to five projects, and these are the community airports: Westlock Regional for asphalt overlay and lighting replacement, \$1.7 million . . .

Ms Renaud: Just the name of the airport would be great. Yeah.

Mr. Stewart: Sure. Stettler Airport, Fairview Airport is the third one, MD of Willow Creek, and Vulcan county was the fifth one.

Ms Renaud: Could you tell us who selects these community airports to be successful recipients?

Mr. Stewart: Sure. They would apply in . . .

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now move back to the government side. MLA Jackie Armstrong-Homeniuk.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Hi. Good morning. Chair, through you to the deputy minister: first of all, thank you for all the hard work you do. I know you work really hard in maintaining the roads throughout the winter time, and I'm very grateful for, you know, all the contractors out there that keep us safe all winter. I'm someone who makes a lot of miles on the roads, and I do appreciate their paying attention to the fact that the roads need to be graded and sanded, et cetera. So I want to just pass that on to you to share with your contractors.

On page 32 of the ministry's annual report under water and wastewater infrastructure programs one of the grant programs listed is the Alberta municipal water and wastewater partnership. Chair, through you to the deputy minister: can you please explain to this committee what is included in this program? Also to the deputy minister: I see on page 73 of the Transportation and Economic Corridors annual report that \$41.1 million was spent under the Alberta municipal water and wastewater program. How are these funds allocated, and how did they benefit Albertans?

Mr. Stewart: Thank you for the question. You're quite right. The Alberta municipal water/wastewater program – it's a bit of a mouthful to say, the AMWWP, so the acronym doesn't really help all that much either – is one of our two major envelopes of funding for water and wastewater, the other being water for life. What this program is is project-specific grants to municipalities to assist in construction of high-priority municipal water supply and treatment, wastewater treatment and disposal projects.

It focuses on smaller municipalities, communities with populations of less than 45,000, with the thinking being that it can

be a real challenge for those communities that are smaller that don't have the tax base to afford these one-time costs for the required investments. It helps mainly small rural communities and gives them access to reliable and efficient water and wastewater treatment facilities. It's used as the provincial contribution that's often needed to leverage federal funding to support critical water/wastewater projects. You will see a number of projects where the municipality would put in money, the province will and the federal government as well.

A key part of this is that we do explore with municipalities innovative technologies around water/wastewater. It is an area that does evolve. A really good example of that is the town of Sundre and the electroflocculation technology that's being explored. It can remove a variety of pollutants without the need for chemicals or filters. If those technologies are successful, it's something that can be used elsewhere, so that's particularly exciting for us. Municipalities, depending on the size, can receive up to 75 per cent of funding for their projects, so it's a really important program for them.

In the breakdown of what we pushed out in '23-24, the \$41 million that was spent, I could certainly talk about how those funds were allocated. When we looked about them, the principles around funding were supporting sustainable growth and economic development by enabling municipalities to expand their essential infrastructure, attract investment, and meet the needs of growing populations. There absolutely is a public health component in ensuring safe drinking water through effective waste-water treatment and reducing contamination and waterborne illness risks, and then also a piece around infrastructure efficiency and resilience by improving system performance and long-term reliability. There is also a job creation, a local capacity building piece.

So \$41.1 million in '23-24 was broadly distributed to 58 different municipalities, and there were 77 projects delivered by those 58 municipalities. Five of the bigger municipalities that delivered on nine projects would have included the city of Wetaskiwin, that delivered a project for \$4 million; the municipal district of Pincher Creek had three projects for \$1.7 million; the town of Bruderheim, a project for \$2.4 million; Rocky Mountain House, the town, \$4 million for one project; and the village of Alix had three projects for \$2.2 million.

That gives you sort of a sense of sort of the scale of most of these investments and the recipients. Typically these are multiyear projects, so it's not one and done. When I think about the city of Wetaskiwin, they received support for upgrades to their wastewater treatment facility, so that will benefit their whole community, support population growth, and we've seen significant progress on that project. The MD of Pincher Creek, that would be a good example of a multiyear project, and that was completed late in 2024.

The town of Bruderheim upgraded their water storage reservoir and pumping station. Rocky Mountain House upgraded their wastewater treatment facility, an aerated lagoon system that needed to meet the new standards by the federal and provincial government. This is often a big piece that smaller municipalities depend upon us for as regulations may change and improve, and they will be in a situation where they may not have the tax base to be able to cover that all themselves, so it's important that they have access to this funding. Then the village of Alix is a good example of upgrades to fund for infrastructure deficiencies. That was how that program was allocated in '23-24, and it certainly is one that municipalities depend on, and we have an annual application process for that similar to STIP and similar to water for life.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Thank you. Chair, through you again to the deputy minister, highway safety, mobility, and the long-term

sustainability of our transportation infrastructure are all priorities shared by Albertans right across the province. On page 74 of the annual report under provincial highway construction projects, I see that \$301.8 million was allocated to highway twinning, widening, and expansion. Chair, through you to the deputy minister, could you provide a breakdown of this funding and which projects were included?

Mr. Stewart: I'd be happy to. These are expenditures on construction projects and also preparation for work activities like planning and preliminary engineering, detail design, and land acquisition. There are a number of major projects in here that I'd flag.

The interchange in Leduc is a good example of one. That was stimulus funding. That's a very, very heavily trafficked area of the province. About almost 50,000 vehicles travel that stretch of the QE II every day, and about 13 per cent of that traffic are heavy trucks, so this interchange is really vital to commuters and visitors to the Edmonton region, and it provides another major connection to accessing the QE II and commercial developments in Leduc in a safe fashion. Construction commenced in 2023 and is on track for completion in 2025.

Another one that I'd flag that's pretty significant: if I go to Grande Prairie, the highway 40 twinning south of Grande Prairie. There was \$63.2 million in '23-24. I was just up there to see the work that was done there, and it's very impressive. It's an area where folks in that area of the province recognize that volumes on that highway south of Grande Prairie have increased significantly over the last five years, and a lot of that is heavy truck traffic. So the two-phase project combined for a total of 29 kilometres. Phase 1 is complete. That's the city of Grande Prairie to Wapiti River. Then phase 2, which is Wapiti River to Township Road 700, is expected to be complete by this fall. It will make a massive difference for that community. The last one that I will just touch on briefly is highway 686, grade, base, pave from Peerless to Trout Lake, so \$27.4 million in '23-24 there. This is part of a broader development of highway 686.

8:50

The Chair: Thank you.

We will now move back to the Official Opposition members for nine minutes. MLA Ellingson.

Mr. Ellingson: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Based on my experience here in this meeting, nine minutes, let's go rapid-fire. Okay. On page 73, the financial reporting, \$125 million was estimated for the Calgary LRT; \$173 million was actually spent. Can you tell us: In '23-24 what specifically did we spend the \$173 million on for the green line LRT?

Mr. Stewart: Sure. We're a funding partner with the federal government and the city for the LRT. In '23-24 it would have been spent on items like planning, early works, property acquisition. There would be a number of things that the city of Calgary would have spent it on. But a good example of one of the pieces where it would have gone to, if you know Calgary, is the 78 Avenue project in Ogden, so down by the CPKC yard. That began in July 2023 and is expected to be completed this summer. There was a pedestrian tunnel at 72 Avenue southeast and a vehicle underpass. That would be an example of early works, to be able to support the green line that's proceeding, especially on that south stretch.

Mr. Ellingson: The \$244 million, where it's noted in federal funding for the Calgary LRT in '23-24: is that spent on the same items? Are they all kind of pooled and gone into the same items?

Mr. Stewart: No. They will go to different items. The federal government has some strictures on what they will spend their money on. For example, I believe the federal government won't fund property acquisition. That would be something – when we look at how we fund money, whether it's the city of Calgary, the province, the federal government, we need to align our funding with what's accepted under that. In that example for property acquisition we'd be working with the city on that and not the federal government. It would be a different grouping of items, and it would be something that we would have worked with the city of Calgary on to ensure that there's a line of sight on the detail of what funds what.

Mr. Ellingson: But in '23-24, between the province, the feds, and the city, there were significant funds that were invested into the green line LRT. The city at that time believed that they had the province's support. I believe that it's going back to 2017 that the province had been, you know, working with the city and approving the alignment. I'm stepping a little bit back in time, but can you confirm for me that the province had been supporting the city in that and acknowledging the alignment?

Mr. Stewart: Sure.

Mr. Ellingson: Yeah.

According to the city of Calgary references, the government of Alberta had committed \$1.54 billion back in 2017. Is that true?

Mr. Stewart: In terms of '23-24 the number the province had committed was the \$1.53 billion. There's some additional money that was spent by the federal government and the provincial government prior to that. The ICIP funding is the \$1.53 billion that the province and the federal government committed to the green line. The plan that we were working on in '23-24 was the 2022 approved business case, and by "approved business case," that was the business case that the federal government formally approved for the green line. That would have included 18 kilometres of low-floor LRT track from Eau Claire in downtown Calgary to Shepard in the southeast, and that would have been 14 stations, 2.5 kilometres, one maintenance storage facility. That was what was contemplated in '23-24, and that commitment was the \$1.53 from the province.

Mr. Ellingson: Thank you for that. Maybe you can confirm for me that back in 2019, even though the extensive engagement alignment studies work had been going back for several years, with many notations in 2017-2018, the government of Alberta then stepped in and kind of hit the pause button with their own questions then, in 2019, about the downtown alignment. Again, I'm stepping back in time, but can you tell us about the 2019 pause, hitting the pause button on the downtown alignment in 2019?

Mr. Stewart: Just a question to the chair: I'm just looking for the connection point to '23-24.

Mr. Ellingson: Okay. I'll get back to '23-24, but I need to build a little bit of a history here. I'm going to be asking about some inflationary cost pressures. If there was a pause in 2019, we're kind of pushing things, you know, maybe a little bit past COVID, when work could have been initiated before COVID. I'm wondering if you can just fill us in a little bit about whether or not any work would have been delayed pre-COVID that pushed us into a post-COVID period.

Mr. Stewart: I would suggest that for this I was prepared to speak about '23-24, so I don't have the history with me to be able to speak

to 2019, a question as detailed as that. It might be a question that – I mean, the city of Calgary would clearly have more of the detail on that.

Mr. Ellingson: Sure.

In '23-24 in the agreements that we had, we knew that the 2022 business case was 18 kilometres, Eau Claire, 14 stations. Then obviously we came up in 2024 with some concerns from the minister about the city coming back with a shortened line that was more expensive. My colleague asked earlier about the risks associated with large infrastructure projects, and you commented earlier about the inflationary experiences of transportation projects post-COVID. In '23-24 did you do any of your own risk assessments for the green line to anticipate that costs would maybe be going up?

Mr. Stewart: On the green line I would say that how this is different from our other projects that we procure is that we are a funder and the city of Calgary is ultimately responsible for their procurement and their risk allocation decisions. So, I didn't do any independent analysis in '23-24. Those inflationary pressures: we would have deferred to the city of Calgary to be able to present those to us and how they would mitigate those. Those would have been something to ask the city of Calgary.

Mr. Ellingson: In that partnership – obviously a lot of trust in that partnership that you're placing \$1.54 billion into a project and trusting the city's risk assessment and not doing your own risk assessment. Then I'm curious, like, was there, you know, what – would anything have come from the department or the ministry informing the minister in making his statements in 2024 about the costs associated with green line?

Mr. Stewart: I think, just keeping things within '23-24 and just talking specifically about risk allocation, as a funder the risk of inflationary pressures would be with the proponent, and that would be the city of Calgary, and that would be similar to other grant arrangements. We would expect it to pass. . .

Mr. Ellingson: Would you have had any expectations with the proponent, with the city, coming back with those inflationary costs? Like, noting that earlier in this meeting, you talked about significant inflationary risks and pressures for transportation projects. You talked about, with transportation projects, the inability to secure supplies. You talked about delays associated with transportation projects in the post-COVID period. Would you have been surprised at all or expecting the city to come back with some notations on increased costs?

Mr. Stewart: I think I'd certainly – first of all, I'd start by saying the city is a sophisticated player, and as with any risk what you would expect is that there would be some level of mitigation. I wouldn't want to prejudge what a city is able to deliver or not deliver. It would be the same way when I speak about grant agreements with, say, the city of Edmonton and their LRT projects. Again, you don't want to prejudge what they're going to be able to come back with to deliver under those cost pressures.

Mr. Ellingson: I mean, so some – even in the construction industry they estimate postpandemic cost increases of 55 per cent.

The Chair: Thank you members.

We will move back to the government members for nine minutes of questions.

Mrs. Johnson: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Through you to the team that has come today: thank you for all your work.

9:00

I'm going to go to our top intersection improvements in the province. As mentioned before, traffic safety is a concern of our government, particularly when it comes to high-collision areas, and we've already heard about the Leduc overpass that is dealing with 50,000 cars a day, as we just heard, and that 13 per cent, if I remember correctly, are large trucks. That's pretty significant.

On page 51 of the annual report, performance measure 2(a) shows the fatal and major injury collision rate per 100,000 population. As our province continues to grow, it's critical to ensure our most dangerous intersections are identified and addressed in order to reduce the number of collisions on our roadways. To the deputy minister, through you, Mr. Chair, in relation to the efforts to reduce the number and severity of traffic collisions, what actions did the ministry take in 2023-24 to address the top 10 locations with the highest number of collisions?

Mr. Stewart: Thanks for the question. Typically when we look at intersections, we sort of rank the top thousand, with specific focus, obviously, on the top 10, as they have the most significant number of collisions. Out of the top 10, that were evaluated with the most recent collision data at the time, I'm happy to announce that five of those were improved. Four are planned for future improvements and included in the '25-26 construction program. When I talk about a future improvement, that might be something larger scale that just can't happen as quickly. One is being designed, but construction is pending further budget approval.

To give you a more specific take on where these are, because I think location matters, some of these intersections, especially in rural areas, are understood by those communities as problem spots. Highway 16A, range road 20 west of Stony Plain, that's a bit of a skew in that intersection. That is in the construction program. Highway 2 and 338 Avenue, and that's east of Okotoks: that's being planned and designed, and construction is pending future approval. So that would be a bigger improvement.

The ones that have been improved recently: highway 2A, Glen Park Road and Township Road 490 south of the Leduc, that was improved recently. Highway 20, Aspelund Road north of Sylvan Lake was improved recently. Highway 28 and 63 and 829 north of Redwater is in the construction program, as are highways 2A, 42, and 592 in Penhold. Highway 28, Opal access west of Redwater was improved recently, as was highway 623, 814 east of Leduc, and highway 16A, Bevington Road east of Acheson improved recently. The last one was highway 44, 642 west of Morinville, which is a construction program. It's not to say that we don't focus on the other ones, but we do try to triage, so we focus on the most immediate first.

Mrs. Johnson: Thank you very much, through you, Mr. Chair, to the deputy minister for that. To follow up on that: how does the ministry monitor and assess intersection safety to determine where these improvements are required?

Mr. Stewart: There are a couple of main approaches we take to improve intersections. We obviously track data on collisions to make sure that we're focusing on the areas that have the most sort of problems, so we rely on a number of engineering guidelines and warrants to identify improvement needs during the design of construction projects. Some of this would be work that we do as a member of the Transportation Association of Canada.

There is significant expertise with engineers across the country on the standards that we need to ensure safety, so we look to both what's needed currently and then also future traffic volumes so that we're focusing on safe operation over the entire design life. We're not just solving today and yesterday's problems, but we're thinking ahead to areas where there may be significant traffic flows that we need to plan for in the future. In some cases you might end up needing an interchange if your volumes are high enough.

Safety screening methodology: we align with the approach the American Association of State Highways and Transportation Officials highway safety manual take to rank and identify collision-prone intersections. I would suggest the other thing that we do significantly is also have significant local engagement to understand at a grassroots level what solutions are going to work, because there is often not a singular solution. There may be different options, and we want to hear from local residents, from the agricultural industry, from other industries, and from folks in the area what will work and won't work.

And then intersections requiring minor improvements are things that can be addressed with our highway maintenance contractors. For the more complex issues, where we have reoccurring collision problems, we hire consultants – and by consultants I mean engineering firms – and they design those larger scope improvements. At the largest we can be talking about interchanges, but that would be the most significant work that we would see.

Mrs. Johnson: Thank you very much. I really appreciate that. The one intersection you mentioned, highway 20 and Aspelund Road, is just a few miles from my house. I've driven it hundreds if not thousands of times. I really appreciate that attention is being given to that.

We'll move on to highway rehabilitation projects, as a bit of a follow up on that. On page 58 of the annual report, performance measure 3(a) indicates physical condition of provincial highway surfaces, which shows a 1.2 per cent improvement of highways in poor condition due to the additional investment of the provincial highway rehabilitation program. To the deputy minister: could you expand on the provincial highway rehabilitation program and the factors that contributed to the program's improvement?

Mr. Stewart: Sure. This is a program that looks at capital improvements to restore and improve the condition of road infrastructure. There are a number of things that we'd be looking at, so overlays, cold mill, and inlay of aging pavement. Safety improvements. We talked about intersection improvements; those are an important part of this.

The other part would be, especially in high traffic areas with high industrial use, building out climbing and passing lanes. You don't always need to go and divide the highway, but if you have sufficient climbing and passing lanes, that will improve the safety profile.

Wildlife collision mitigation projects, that is also a big focus, to reduce those impacts both on vehicle collisions but also obviously on the wildlife.

Skid-resistant projects like chip sealing, micro surfacing and slide repairs, which gets into some of the geotech work that we do, which can be quite a challenge as that's one of those areas that can be a little bit less predictable.

We started 96 projects in '23-24, and we worked on an additional 16 projects in the previous year, so these would have been multiyear projects. It's a mix of multiyear and single year projects. We completed 90 projects in '23-24. The condition of the paved highway network really is important, and also the preservation piece because it should reduce the rehabilitation costs and the total life cycle costs of highways. Keeping on top of that ensures that, on

a cash basis, Albertans are getting the best value for their investment.

So that's what the program goes towards, and it's been fairly successful. We're pleased with the results.

Mrs. Johnson: I really appreciate that. Thank you, through you, Mr. Chair. That really affects my constituency as well. I've got a lot of happy constituents out east of Lacombe where that highway was redone, highway 12 from east of Lacombe past Clive. I hear nothing but praises and happiness coming out from that area, so thank you very much.

I'm not going to try to fill the last 20 seconds.

The Chair: The final rotation. The members will read questions into the record for a written response, starting with the Official Opposition; a three-minute block.

Ms Renaud: Okay. Of the 15 members of the Strategic Aviation Advisory Council, I note a lot of expertise in a lot of areas, but I didn't see – and perhaps it just wasn't mentioned – any members with expertise in emergency management, fire, medical, or air ambulance. Would the department outline the emergency medical expertise on the council? Also, what is the total operating cost of this council?

And, finally, I note the passenger rail master plan outlined a number of targets: improving commuter rail, regular rail lines, creation of a Crown corporation, examination, multimodal hubs. Can the department outline any targets related to climate change mitigation in the creation of this master plan? Are there any projections of emissions reductions, et cetera?

Thank you.

The Chair: Over to the government side for three minutes.

Mr. Rowswell: Okay. Thank you. I would like to turn to page 22 of the report and the discussion on highway 3 twinning. This is a key economic corridor through southern Alberta's vibrant agricultural region, and it joins Saskatchewan to British Columbia.

9:10

I would like to get a detail to the committee about what was accomplished in '23-24 and what is under way to further enhance this corridor, and, also, to provide any further information regarding the economic importance of this corridor.

We've been discussing the status of projects and updates already today, and I would like to continue that line of questioning. On page 28 of the report it discusses the proposed highway 686 extension. I'd like the deputy minister to highlight to this committee why this extension is needed and what will be achieved through this project.

Another one on MOUs. Market access is a key component of enhancing and expanding our economy. In order to increase access, it is important for Alberta to work with other jurisdictions. On page 27 of the report, it addresses the issue. Key objective 1.2 highlights collaborating with industry stakeholders, other governments, and Indigenous communities to identify and advance nation-building infrastructure projects, that increase access to other markets for our amazing Alberta businesses. Could you explain how memorandums of understanding of economic corridors and federal-provincial advocacy in general help to achieve this goal?

In recent years, I think it's fair to say, we have all become aware of how important supply chains are, including getting product from one area of the country to the other. The trucking industry is a key part of supply chains in Alberta. Performance measure 1(b) on page 40 of the report tracks the percentage of commercial truck driver vacancies in relation to the total number of licensed commercial

truck drivers. How does the department track and analyze trends in commercial truck drivers, driver job vacancies, and further to that, what actions are being taken in response to the data?

The Chair: Thank you. Anybody else?

Okay. I would like to thank officials from the Ministry of Transportation and Economic Corridors and the office of the Auditor General for their participation and responding to committee members' questions. We ask that any outstanding questions be responded to in writing within 30 days and forwarded to the committee clerk.

Members were asked to bring requests today for additional research that they may want in preparation for our meeting to review the Auditor General's October 14 report on the processes to assess and manage the condition of affordable housing.

Do members have any motions for additional research?

Mr. Rowswell: I would like to move that

the Standing Committee on Public Accounts direct the Legislative Assembly Office in preparation for the committee's review of the Auditor General's processes to assess and manage the condition of affordable housing report to provide information on the origins of affordable housing in Alberta, the number of affordable homes built in Alberta since 2005 and the amount budgeted for them, and how comparable Canadian and Commonwealth jurisdictions define affordable housing.

The Chair: Thank you.

This is a debatable motion. Any comments? Go ahead.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Would it be possible to add the information on the origins of affordable housing? Talking about affordable housing, is it possible to add "accessible" and affordable housing?

The Chair: Is that an amendment you want to move?

Ms Renaud: Yes. I don't know if it's in scope, though. I guess I'm just asking, first of all, if that would . . .

Mr. Rowswell: That should be fine. Good research to have, I think. Yeah.

Ms Renaud: Thank you.

The Chair: So you are moving an amendment to add the word "accessible."

Ms Renaud: Correct.

The Chair: In section (a)?

Ms Renaud: Well, it looks like sections (a) and (b) and (c): "affordable and accessible."

Mr. Rowswell: I was just wondering. Like, affordable housing and affordable, accessible might identify two different groups of people. I'm just wondering if it's okay that we say affordable and affordable and accessible. It's more specific to the group we're kind of talking about.

Ms Renaud: Sure. Yeah. That's fair.

The Chair: There is now a change in the wording.

Ms Robert: She hasn't moved it yet, so that's okay. We can workshop this a little bit. It's not even been moved yet, so it's okay to sort of discuss the wording.

I'm just trying to make sure I understand. You want it to say: information on the origins of affordable . . .

Mr. Rowswell: Affordable housing for accessible-restricted people.

Ms Robert: Could it be affordable housing and accessible housing?

Mr. Lundy: Does it almost make sense as like a (d), like a whole new – some of these terms have a history in legislation and in funding agreements between governments, affordable housing. One of the questions we're asking is: what does that definition mean from a crossjurisdictional perspective? I think the research group is going to be hamstrung trying to find a term that is affordable, accessible housing for the intent of this project.

But to the member's point, if we wanted to have another area of research that is "Tell us the history of what accessible means in relation to affordable housing," away from (a), (b), and (c), then I think it would be easier for the research team.

The Chair: Let me help you guys out here. The first amendment will be information on the origin of affordable housing in Alberta and what percentage of that is accessible, right, Marie? That's the purpose?

Ms Renaud: Sure.

Ms Robert: That's the entire request?

The Chair: Yeah. In clause (a) that will be the change, the number of affordable homes built in Alberta since 2005 and the amount budgeted for them and what percentage of that is, again, accessible. The question MLA Renaud is asking is essentially: what is the percentage of accessible housing out of this affordable housing stock, right?

Ms Renaud: It should be fairly straightforward for them to find.

9:20

The Chair: If the ministry officials want to leave, they can do so while we tweak the motion.

Okay. We have the amendment, and what essentially it's doing is that to "information on the origins of affordable housing in Alberta" it's adding "information on affordable housing and accessible housing in Alberta" and in the second clause, (b), "the number of homes built in Alberta and what percentage of that is accessible."

That's the only amendment, so unless I see any discussion on the amendment, I could ask the question.

Ms Robert: Does that make sense?

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah, I think it does.

The Chair: You can look at your screen right behind you. That will be closer. Nancy and Warren have done an amazing job, covered everything that . . .

Ms Robert: We just have an extra quote in there, but we'll clean that up. But if that makes sense then . . .

Mr. Rowswell: Yes.

Ms Robert: Okay.

Did you want to move that?

Ms Renaud: Yeah, I would like to move that amendment.

Ms Robert: It should be read into the record, please.

Ms Renaud: Okay. That

the motion be amended by adding

- (a) “and accessible housing” after “affordable housing” in clause (a), and
- (b) “and what percentage of those homes are accessible homes” after “affordable homes” in clause (b).

The Chair: Yeah, the motion is moved. Any discussion? We don’t need to . . .

Mrs. Johnson: Oh. I would just like to thank my colleague Member Renaud for that. It looks really good, and it keeps it really clean and streamlined for the researchers. It’s a really important question.

The Chair: Thank you.

Seeing no other discussion, I’m prepared to ask the question. All those in favour of this amendment? Any opposed? All those in favour online?

The amendment is carried.

On the main motion as amended, are there any members wanting to speak? Seeing none, all those in favour of the motion? All those opposed to the motion? All those in favour joining online?

The motion is carried as amended.

Do members have any other motions?

Mr. Schmidt: Mr. Chair, I have another. Yeah, there we go; thank you for reading my mind. That

the Standing Committee on Public Accounts direct the Legislative Assembly Office, in preparation for the committee’s review of the Auditor General’s processes,

to assess and manage the condition of affordable housing report and to provide a list of any provincial legislation that contains provisions related to the duty to maintain housing stock owned by the government.

I’m moving this because we saw the LAO provide excellent background research on the Water Act for the surface water discussion. I hope they can provide an overview of applicable legislation in preparation for this meeting as well.

The Chair: Thank you.

Any other members wishing to speak? Seeing none, I can just go to the question. All those in favour of the motion? Any opposed? All those in favour online?

The motion is carried.

Any other motions?

Seeing none, moving on to other business. The committee has received a written response from the Ministry of Infrastructure from our meeting on April 8, 2025. It was posted on the committee’s internal website for members, and following our usual practice, it will be posted on the Assembly website.

Are there any other items for discussion? Seeing none.

Unless something comes up over the summer, the next meeting of the committee is scheduled for October 14 to review the Auditor General’s report.

At this point I will call for a motion to adjourn. Would a member like to move that the standing committee adjourn this meeting of May 13, 2025? So moved by Mr. Ellingson. All in favour? Any opposed? Those joining online, all in favour? It doesn’t matter at this point.

Thank you. The meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 9:29 a.m.]

