



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Third Session

Standing Committee
on
Resource Stewardship

Ministry of Municipal Affairs
Consideration of Main Estimates

Wednesday, April 12, 2017
3:30 p.m.

Transcript No. 29-3-5

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

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND), Chair
Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (W), Deputy Chair

Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC)
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W)
Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (ND)
Kleinsteuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)
MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)
Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)
McIver, Ric, Calgary-Hays (PC)*
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)

* substitution for Wayne Drysdale

Also in Attendance

Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)

Support Staff

Robert H. Reynolds, QC	Clerk
Shannon Dean	Law Clerk and Director of House Services
Trafton Koenig	Parliamentary Counsel
Stephanie LeBlanc	Parliamentary Counsel
Philip Massolin	Manager of Research and Committee Services
Sarah Amato	Research Officer
Nancy Robert	Research Officer
Corinne Dacyshyn	Committee Clerk
Jody Rempel	Committee Clerk
Aaron Roth	Committee Clerk
Karen Sawchuk	Committee Clerk
Rhonda Sorensen	Manager of Corporate Communications
Jeanette Dotimas	Communications Consultant
Tracey Sales	Communications Consultant
Janet Schwegel	Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Participants

Ministry of Municipal Affairs

Hon. Shaye Anderson, Minister

Anthony Lemphers, Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Strategic Services

Bruce McDonald, Assistant Deputy Minister, Public Safety

Brad Pickering, Deputy Minister

Gary Sandberg, Assistant Deputy Minister, Municipal Services and Legislation

Alberta Emergency Management Agency

Shane Schreiber, Managing Director

3:30 p.m.

Wednesday, April 12, 2017

[Loyola in the chair]

**Ministry of Municipal Affairs
Consideration of Main Estimates**

The Chair: I'd like to call the meeting to order and welcome everyone. The committee has under consideration the estimates of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2018.

I'd ask that we go around the table and have all MLAs introduce themselves for the record. Minister, please introduce the officials that are joining you at the table. I am Rod Loyola, MLA for Edmonton-Ellerslie and the chair of this committee.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Grant Hunter, the MLA for Cardston-Taber-Warner and deputy chair.

Mr. Hanson: David Hanson, MLA, Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Stier: Pat Stier, MLA, Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Clark: Good afternoon. Greg Clark, MLA, Calgary-Elbow, joined at the table here by my assistant, Barb Currie.

Mr. McIver: Ric McIver, MLA, Calgary-Hays.

Mr. S. Anderson: Shaye Anderson, Leduc-Beaumont and Minister of Municipal Affairs. To my left is my deputy minister, Brad Pickering. To my right is Anthony Lemphers, assistant deputy minister of corporate strategic services, and Gary Sandberg, who is the ADM for municipal services and legislation.

Ms Kazim: Good afternoon. Anam Kazim, MLA for Calgary-Glenmore.

Mr. Rosendahl: Good afternoon. Eric Rosendahl, MLA, West Yellowhead.

Ms Woollard: Good afternoon. Denise Woollard, MLA, Edmonton-Mill Creek.

Mr. Nielsen: Good afternoon, everyone. Chris Nielsen, MLA for Edmonton-Decore.

Ms Babcock: Erin Babcock, Stony Plain.

Mr. Kleinstaubert: Good afternoon, folks. Jamie Kleinstaubert, Calgary-Northern Hills.

Mr. Dang: Good afternoon. Thomas Dang, MLA for Edmonton-South West.

Mr. Malkinson: Good afternoon. Brian Malkinson, MLA for Calgary-Currie.

The Chair: Thank you. Please note that the microphones are operated by *Hansard*, and the committee proceedings are being audio and video live streamed. Please set your cellphones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting.

Hon. members, the standing orders set out the process for consideration of the main estimates. Before we proceed with the consideration of main estimates for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, I would like to review briefly the standing orders governing the speaking rotation. As provided for in Standing Order 59.01(6),

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

Members may speak more than once; however, speaking times for the first rotation are limited to 10 minutes at any one time. A minister and member may combine their time for a total of 20 minutes. For the final rotation, with speaking times of up to five minutes, once again the minister and a member may combine their speaking times for a maximum total of 10 minutes. Discussion should flow through the chair at all times regardless of whether or not the speaking time is combined. Members are asked to advise the chair at the beginning of their speech if they wish to combine their time with the minister's time. If members have any questions regarding speaking times or the rotation, please feel free to send a note or speak directly with either the chair or the committee clerk about the process.

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

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

Ministry officials may be present and at the direction of the minister may address the committee. Ministry officials seated in the gallery, if called upon, have access to a microphone in the gallery area. We have pages available to make deliveries should any notes or other materials need to pass between the gallery and the table. Members' staff may be present and seated along the committee room wall. Space permitting, opposition caucus staff may sit at the table; however, members have priority for seating at the table at all times.

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

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

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

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

The vote on the estimates is deferred until consideration of all ministry estimates has concluded and will occur in Committee of Supply on April 19, 2017.

If there are any amendments, an amendment to the estimate cannot seek to increase the amount of the estimates being considered, change the destination of a grant, or change the destination or purpose of a subsidy. An amendment may be

proposed to reduce an estimate, but the amendment cannot propose to reduce the estimate by its full amount. The vote on amendments is deferred until Committee of Supply convenes on April 19, 2017. Amendments must be in writing and approved by Parliamentary Counsel prior to the meeting at which they are to be moved. Twenty copies of amendments, including the original, must be provided at the meeting for committee members and staff.

I will now invite the Minister of Municipal Affairs to begin his opening remarks.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good afternoon. I'm here today to present my ministry's 2017-2020 business plan and highlights of the Municipal Affairs 2017-18 budget. I introduced the folks at the table, but I do have staff members that are behind me as well to answer questions when we need them to. I have some prepared remarks, and then we will take those questions.

The Municipal Affairs business plan supports municipalities and communities and provides opportunities for Albertans to succeed. We do this through direct investment in infrastructure and public libraries as well as disaster recovery. We also work alongside municipal leaders to help them provide accountable local governance. This is accomplished through our advisory services, mediation, and ongoing improvements to the legislation that governs municipalities.

I was pleased to introduce the last amending bill of the Municipal Government Act review this week after much consultation with Albertans. Municipal Affairs has done an incredible job on the engagement for this wide-reaching legislation, and in fact the Alberta Chambers of Commerce this week called the MGA review the gold standard for government consultation.

I'm also very proud of the work my department does for the province's safety system. The vital work of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency helps Albertans prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies and disasters such as last year's Fort McMurray wildfire. One of the impacts of climate change is the possibility of continued increases in extreme weather and disaster events, so the work of the AEMA is more important now than ever.

Before I get into the numbers, I'd like to say a few things about the guiding principles of our government and how it relates to the budget. In a tough economy Alberta needs a government that makes life better. Across Alberta we have heard about the importance of core infrastructure to communities. Given the economic climate investing in priority infrastructure is not only the smart thing to do; it is the right thing to do. We know that municipalities need stable, predictable funding to deliver the programs and services our families and communities rely on. We are committed to working with the municipalities to make sure that happens. In the meantime we will not be turning off the taps for municipal funding. Municipalities will continue to receive the funding they need to support priority local infrastructure.

Municipal Affairs' 2017-18 total budget is \$1.696 billion. This is a decrease of \$48 million compared to 2016-17. There are two major reasons for the decrease. One is a drop in the basic municipal transportation grant, or BMTG, funding. This funding is tied to the volume of fuel sales in the province and has decreased as a result of lower fuel sales. This represents a decrease of \$25 million in BMTG from the 2016-17 budget. Secondly, there is a lower small communities fund budget, a decrease of \$43 million, which reflects the expected cash requirements of municipalities for the approved projects under the program. This was a planned and anticipated decrease.

This decrease in the total budget is partially offset by several increases in capital investments. We have budgeted almost \$11 million in one-time capital support for public library services

through helping regional library systems' headquarters address critical capital maintenance. We've also included support for the Edmonton public library's Stanley Milner downtown branch renovation. There is also support for the continued transformation of the disaster recovery program.

I'm happy to report that Alberta remains the most generous provincial funder of municipalities in Canada at \$471 per capita. In total, through various ministries our government is providing \$2.39 billion in direct capital plan funding to municipalities for municipal infrastructure support. In this budget that means that municipalities are receiving 26 cents out of every dollar in our capital plan.

We continue to provide our municipal partners with stable, predictable funding for their infrastructure priorities. Over the next four years municipal sustainability initiative, MSI, funding, capital and operating, remains steady at a combined \$876 million.

Like most other ministries, Municipal Affairs has reduced its supplies and services budget by 1 per cent over and above the 2 per cent reduction made last fiscal year.

The ministry has also reallocated \$400,000 annually to public libraries over the three years of the business plan, so they receive provincial funding based on the current population.

3:40

There are no other significant adjustments to ministry operating funding.

In terms of capital funding, our budget is dedicating \$10.7 million of new capital funding to our regional library systems to address required maintenance of their headquarter buildings. Regional library systems play an important role in managing library resources and services accessible across the province. Alberta is also contributing, as I said, to the Stanley Milner Library in Edmonton, and that is \$2 million in funding to renovate. This funding is contingent upon the federal government providing matching funding. The Edmonton public library is a vital member of the provincial library network, and the Stanley Milner Library is their main branch.

To improve the disaster recovery program, \$4 million in capital funding will go towards building a new IT system. Improved technology under the disaster recovery program transformation will help the province to better respond to Alberta's communities and families impacted by disasters.

A one-time budget investment of \$3 million will support the development of an IT system for centralizing industrial assessment within Municipal Affairs. This will be cost neutral to the government of Alberta as industry is so supportive of this centralization that they're willing to help foot the bill.

The budget also includes information technology investments across Municipal Affairs to support its many programs. This comes to just over \$1 million each year, for a total of \$4 million over four years.

Over the next four years the Safety Codes Council will invest a total of more than \$6.4 million for IT infrastructure.

These are the highlights from the capital plan.

We'll now move on to the MSI and the BMTG, which are two of the most significant ways our government funds municipalities. We truly appreciate the MSI. The MSI is an important program for our municipal partners. We made it a priority to provide it predictable infrastructure funding that respects local priorities. In addition to providing vital infrastructure, MSI funding is creating jobs and putting Albertans to work. The overall 2017-18 MSI budget is just over \$1.2 billion, which includes MSI capital, MSI operating, and basic municipal transportation grants. MSI capital remains unchanged at \$846 million annually, and MSI operating remains unchanged at \$30 million annually.

The BMTG is budgeted at \$335 million, a decrease of \$6 million from what was forecast and paid last year and \$25 million less than what was budgeted last fiscal year. The reason for this, as I mentioned before, is that the funding formula is tied to the volume of fuel sales, which are currently down.

Calgary's 2017 total MSI funding is \$371 million, a slight decrease from 2016, which reflects the decrease of the BMTG. Edmonton's 2017 total MSI funding is \$260 million, again a small decrease because of the BMTG. The total MSI funding to all other municipalities is \$580 million in 2017.

Individual municipal allocations can fluctuate each year as a result of the grant program formula. The MSI is calculated using several factors, including population, education property tax requisition, and length of roads. This means that whenever a municipality experiences more rapid growth in any of these factors as compared to the rest of the province, their share of the total MSI pie will increase. This is done to ensure that the MSI is responsive to areas where growth is occurring.

The Alberta community partnership, or ACP, funding aims to improve the viability and long-term sustainability of municipalities by providing support for regional collaboration and capacity-building activities. The ACP budget decreased by \$1.5 million at the third-quarter fiscal update last year. It will remain at \$18.5 million in 2017-18 and is targeted to remain at that funding level for the next four years. Encouraging and supporting collaboration among municipalities is part of the commitment to helping build stronger communities and the overall goal of the Alberta community partnership. Changes were made to the program last year to better align it with the forward-thinking directions of amendments being made to the Municipal Government Act to support municipal collaboration. The focus of eligible projects helps support the development of intermunicipal collaboration frameworks. These agreements between neighbouring municipalities will better serve Albertans by providing more efficient land-use planning, service delivery, and cost sharing.

We continue to commit to pay grants in place of taxes, or GPOT, in the amount equivalent to the property tax that the province would have been paid if the property were not tax exempt. The total GPOT for 2017-18 is estimated to be about \$59.2 million.

In 2017-18 our government froze the education property tax rates from last year, which means that the requisition reflects 31.2 per cent of the consolidated operating expenses for K to 12 education. This is down from 51 per cent 20 years ago and 32 per cent over the last four years. This year the total education property tax requisition will be \$2.4 billion, an amount that ensures that Alberta students are well served by a teacher in every classroom.

In terms of emergency response I think it has been well established that the ministry does not budget for hypothetical disasters or emergencies. They are funded as they occur as they are unpredictable in their very nature.

Albertans and municipalities continue to receive essential support from disaster recovery programs and municipal wildfire assistance programs. The Alberta government and its many partners are dedicated to working collaboratively with municipalities in response to disasters; to protecting life, property, and communities; and to helping Albertans recover from these emergencies.

Our government has made key changes to improve the delivery of the disaster recovery programs such as bringing the program in-house from an outsourced private provider, assigning case managers to work directly with applicants, and adding more staff to handle the greater number of Albertans who need support in response to recent large-scale disasters. DRP improvements also extend to improving the technology . . .

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

For the hour that follows, members of the Official Opposition and the minister may speak. Would you like the timer set at 20-minute intervals so that you're aware of the time?

Mr. Stier: Yes, at 20 minutes. Thank you. And we'd like to go back and forth with the minister if that's all right with him.

The Chair: Please go ahead.

Mr. Stier: Thank you. Well, good afternoon, Minister, to you and your staff. Thanks to all of you for being here. It's good to see a lot of familiar faces that I've seen over the years. I think we're going to have an interesting time discussing a lot of the things that you had mentioned, Minister, as well as some other items of interest that we have ourselves, that you didn't get a chance to speak of.

Mr. S. Anderson: I ran out of time.

Mr. Stier: Ten minutes isn't a very long time.

Mr. Chair, if I may, I'd like to at this point introduce and relinquish my immediate time to my colleague the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, who will start us off in our presentation today.

Thank you.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Minister. I'm going to jump right in, use up my time as best I can. On the strategic transportation infrastructure program, or STIP, I had a call from a municipality that was setting their budget on this Tuesday, and they asked me to check on this, the STIP grants that are available. One of the problems that they have is that they can't really set their budgets until they know whether this money is coming in or not. They can't put out tenders for projects. We're well into May by the time they find out about it.

We're just wondering if there is some way that we can hone that down, even if it was knowing a year in advance or even a three-year program that they could depend on. The advantage of that is that they can get a lot better prices if they put tenders out in January, February or even November, December for a spring project rather than waiting till May, when a lot of these companies have got their dockets full for the year. You know, they'll put a bid out on a project, put a high bid on it, and if they get it, they get it, right? So there would be that advantage.

Now, the answer I got from the office when I called on Friday was that they didn't want to give individual information out on the STIP grants. They wanted to announce the whole thing at once, and it would be done this week. Has that been done yet this week, the STIP grants?

Mr. S. Anderson: Well, thank you for the question. I understand exactly what you're saying about, you know, that stable, predictable kind of idea that you're talking about. I'd love to give you a good answer, but STIP is actually under Transportation, so it's not under my purview.

Did you phone my ministry and ask?

Mr. Hanson: No. I phoned Transportation as well.

Mr. S. Anderson: Okay. Yeah. They're the ones that you would have to ask about it because it isn't under me, unfortunately.

Mr. Hanson: Is this something that we could ask you to push forward, to explain to them. I mean, I've explained it to them as well, but it just makes more sense to get those numbers out to these guys so that they can set their budgets.

Mr. S. Anderson: Yeah. For sure. I know exactly what you're trying to say. Of course, I can mention it to Minister Mason.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much.

We're going to get back to and jump to the Alberta Emergency Management Agency. One specific one I'd like to talk about is outcome 3, page 116 of the business plan. On evacuation centre preparedness, many local municipalities saw their population bloom to double, even triple – some of them up in our area actually went up five times in a 24-hour period – with the arrival of evacuees fleeing the wildfire last year. Specifically, what is being done to ensure that while the initial response is still the main focus of the government, municipalities that are seeing a massive influx of people are getting the support that they need?

Mr. S. Anderson: You know, I talked to some of the municipal officials up in your area about that at AAMD and C, had a couple of chats about that and about what's going on up there and thanked them very much. I remember that when that was going on, you brought that up in the House, too, and it was extremely important.

3:50

When we're talking about emergency preparedness, our ministry has \$200,000 set aside, and GOA has \$200 million set aside. That's just the initial, right? What happened last year in Fort Mac and up north is that when money was needed, then we would have to go, obviously, and ask for those funds.

Are you looking for grants and things like that? Is that what you mean, like, quicker funding kinds of things?

Mr. Hanson: I've actually got a specific question. I don't know if you'd like me to ask that one.

Mr. S. Anderson: Sure.

Mr. Hanson: It deals with the county of Lac La Biche. Now, they were years in advance planning, you know, putting together an emergency response plan, which takes up a lot of their staff. When the evacuation was called in Fort McMurray, they were probably the first people to respond. They initiated their emergency response plan, which took a lot of their staff away from their regular duties. You know, for the full two-week period they were pretty much on there. For any of the ambulance people and firefighters that were sent into action, for a lot of that the cost was covered. But Lac La Biche county has got a shortfall of about \$249,000 for their nonemergency staff that were put into the evacuation centre and helped out in organizing and logistics and that kind of thing. Is there any way that they can get some of that \$249,000 shortfall covered?

Mr. S. Anderson: Well, we did have a meeting with them. That's correct. That's one of the ones that we met with. Now that I think about it, I did see them at AAMD and C.

Mr. Hanson: You can't forget Omer.

Mr. S. Anderson: Yeah, Omer. I met him, I think, right after I got elected.

We did have a chat with them about that. I know we had some discussions about what can happen going forward. I don't know if he's sent in a letter to me about that specifically. I don't think he's sent anything as of yet, but I remember he did mention it, and we kind of had a discussion on, you know, what they were looking for. But I haven't seen specifics from him yet.

Mr. Hanson: My understanding was that they did have a submission but that a portion of it was rejected, and I was just wondering if there's some way we can . . .

Mr. S. Anderson: Well, if you'd contact him and get him to look into it.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. I will do that.

Mr. S. Anderson: There are certain criteria that have to be met. It's hard because I know that sometimes these things come across my table, and I look at them – you know, I get a lot. I think that I and Environment and Parks get the most phone calls, e-mails, and letters. Sometimes I see them when they come across the table, and I think: gee, I know it doesn't meet the criteria, but what else is out there? Right? Maybe it's through Ag and Forestry or whatever it is.

But if there's something else we can find, then we can have a discussion.

Mr. Hanson: That community especially really jumped to the pump and helped out and actually sent people up the highway to rescue with gas and water and that sort of thing. I think that they deserve a medal rather than being held back on some funding. It really doesn't amount to all that much for the government of Alberta, but for a smaller community like that it's pretty substantial.

Mr. S. Anderson: Yeah. I've got a couple of friends that live up there that helped out, too.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you. I'll get Omer to send you something.

Estimates page 214, line 9.1, managing director's office: again, it's not a large sum of money, but it saw a significant increase, over 50 per cent, to \$720,000. Is that just for hiring new staff in that department?

Mr. S. Anderson: That was on page 214, you said?

Mr. Hanson: Page 214, line 9.1.

Mr. S. Anderson: The increase was because of a reallocation in AEMA, so it wasn't actually new staff.

Mr. Hanson: So just a reallocation of funds?

Mr. S. Anderson: Yeah.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. The second question, then: page 116 of the business plan, key strategy 3.1. It's a decrease of 6 per cent, which is always good from a conservative aspect. Key strategy 3.1 is to strengthen the provincial emergency management framework. Is this an actual document, this framework? Is this something that we can actually pick up and feel? Is it a physical document?

Mr. S. Anderson: It is a specific plan. I can defer to one of my staff members here that can speak to it if you'd like.

Mr. Hanson: Yeah. Sure.

Mr. Schreiber: Good afternoon. I'm Shane Schreiber. I'm the managing director of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency. The Alberta emergency management framework is laid out in the Alberta emergency plan, which is available through our website and provided to every municipality and key stakeholder in emergency management in the province. So it's all described there.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Thank you.

Where would the funding be found for that? Would that be line 9 on page 214?

Mr. S. Anderson: It would be in the funding for AEMA itself.

Mr. Hanson: For AEMA?

Mr. S. Anderson: Yeah.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. So no specific line item just for that framework?

Mr. S. Anderson: There isn't one, no.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. On page 116 of the business plan key strategy 3.2 states: "Improve the Government of Alberta's response capability to major and widespread emergencies and disasters." Where is this reflected in that budget?

Mr. S. Anderson: That one is not a specific one either. It is actually just in the AEMA budget, it looks like.

Mr. Hanson: It's all just lumped in together?

Mr. S. Anderson: Yeah.

Mr. Hanson: The next question might be a tough one for you because you're new and you weren't involved – or you were involved, I guess, in some way last summer, but it's probably more for your staff. Now, almost a year removed from the wildfire in Fort McMurray, what is the biggest takeaway from that experience? Is there anything you would have changed or done differently? A specific question is: are you looking into the early response, or lack of, that could have prevented this thing from getting out of control?

Mr. S. Anderson: I know that we did, just like with every disaster. We had a third party come in to look at it. It was KPMG, I believe. We just got the report. I haven't had a chance to go through all of it yet, just some specifics on it. But I know that, like, obviously when things like this happen, there are probably things that you can tweak to do a little better or, you know, a little quicker or be more efficient. Like I said, I haven't gone through it yet. I'm not sure if my staff has had time to really dissect it. But that's kind of an ongoing thing that the department does anyway on a continuous basis to make sure that they are functioning at the highest level.

We actually just had a disaster response mock exercise that was if a big earthquake hits B.C., because we're the next ones here, and we'd have to take care of it. Part of that was working with new staff as well and being more efficient, you know, communicationwise and things like that.

Mr. Hanson: So you're working on a report at this time. When will it be made public or available to the opposition?

Mr. S. Anderson: Well, KPMG, a third party, did one, right? But internally, just like every ministry, you know, they're always looking for efficiencies and working on that.

I'll let Mr. Schreiber respond.

Mr. Schreiber: Shane Schreiber, managing director of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency. In the wake of every large-scale disaster the Alberta Emergency Management Agency undertakes an independent third-party review of the response, and individual departments usually also undertake a postincident assessment. So we do them internally, and then we hire an independent external third party to do kind of an overall one.

The third party that's doing the one on the 2016 wildfires, the broad provincial response, including evacuation centres, support to

Wood Buffalo, is KPMG. We have a first draft of that report. They just tabled it. But there's still lots of information and data that they have to gather, lots of questions that they would like to have answered. Wildfire under Ag and Forestry also do a review of their operations on an annual basis, and I know that they have a report that will also be tabled specifically dealing with the tactics and the fighting of that wildfire.

4:00

Mr. Hanson: Okay. The 2016 third-party KPMG report, has it been made public yet?

Mr. S. Anderson: Yeah, but like Shane said, we don't have the final draft yet.

Mr. Hanson: If we could get a copy of that as soon as it's available, that would be great.

Next question. From a practical standpoint is AEMA responsible for taking the lead on all disasters? I understand that most of the major disasters the province has faced recently have been natural, like fires and floods. Would they also get involved in a medical emergency like, you know, we had that SARS epidemic years back, that kind of thing, or is that out of their purview?

Mr. Schreiber: Shane Schreiber, managing director of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency. This kind of leads back to your question on the Alberta emergency management framework. Ninety-five per cent of all emergencies are handled by either first responders or municipalities. We try to manage emergencies at the lowest level that's capable. In cases where it gets beyond the capability of a municipality and a municipality's partners to meet the demands of that emergency, the government of Alberta will step in. When the government of Alberta steps in, the Alberta Emergency Management Agency co-ordinates all of the supports that are provided by the government of Alberta and all of the actors, all of the stakeholders that are responding to that particular event. It usually takes a fairly large-scale event before the Alberta Emergency Management Agency takes over the running of it, and really we only take over the running of it when there is a state of provincial emergency declared.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Thank you.

That just brings me to my last question, and then I'll defer to my colleague. I brought it up to the ag minister as well, but being that you're Municipal Affairs, you deal with the municipalities at their level. With the close to a million acres of farmland that's still – especially up in the north of the province, we've been getting a bunch of wet weather. Farmers are starting to get antsy. Usually you're in the field by the end of April, first week of May at the latest, kind of thing, to get going. A lot of these guys, they've still got thousands of acres of cropland to get off before they can even get in, having some issues with AFSC, you know, shorthanded 120 people, trying to get to 6,200 quarter sections of land that are sitting out there. In the event that somebody drops a match into some of this stuff and the municipality has to react with their volunteer fire departments or maybe bring in help from another municipality, can they expect some help from AEMA to help cover the costs of some of that or some of the co-ordination?

Mr. S. Anderson: Well, I know that we do have, like I said, \$200,000 for localized kind of smaller events like that in Municipal Affairs. We put that to the side. As Shane was saying, AEMA is usually on a larger scale, when there's, like, a massive disaster kind of thing. I would guess that we would be probably co-ordinating with the local officials and things like that and also talking to Ag

and Forestry and seeing what they had with their wildfire units and things like that.

Mr. Hanson: Large disasters can start with one match.

Mr. S. Anderson: For sure. Yeah. Exactly.

Mr. Hanson: Okay. Thank you very much, Minister. I'll defer.

Mr. Stier: Mr. Chair, if I may now proceed. My colleague is now departing, I believe, so I'll proceed along with the time remaining, please.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Stier: Thank you. Well, thank you, gentlemen, for the information so far. I'd like to carry on with a little bit about AEMA if I may. What we're talking about here, I guess, is better preparedness. You know, the time is coming upon us now. It's spring, and his last question with respect to fires was a good one, I think. With relation to that kind of thing, we're wondering about the Provincial Operations Centre. Mr. Schreiber may be called upon again, I suspect. I understand there was some damage to that facility here in Edmonton last year, if I recall, some flooding or something. Has that been all cleaned up, and is the operations centre fully functional and available for any situation that comes before us, please?

Mr. Schreiber: Just to check, do I have to say my name each time? Yeah? Shane Schreiber, managing director of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency. In 2013 the POC sustained some sewage backup flooding. That was all cleaned up. The issue with the current Provincial Operations Centre, POC, is that with the size of the emergencies and the number of people we have to have in there in order to co-ordinate all of the supports, we've outgrown the current POC. So we've got to take a look at somehow expanding it or getting a new facility to be able to bring in all of the stakeholders that we now need to respond to some of these large-scale emergencies.

Mr. Stier: Okay. If you wish to remain there, I'd appreciate it, Mr. Schreiber, please. It'll prevent you from another introduction.

Mr. S. Anderson: Can I just supplement that real quick?

Mr. Stier: Yeah, of course.

Mr. S. Anderson: If you do notice, in our capital plan there's \$125 million over the next three years, starting 2018-19, for a new POC. When I mentioned that mock exercise that I was at a couple of months ago . . .

Mr. Stier: In Vancouver, was it?

Mr. S. Anderson: Yeah. It was if the big one hit Vancouver or the mainland and the island, I guess, and everything. It was tight in there. I can't even imagine the number of people that would have been in there when Fort Mac was going on. I am incredibly proud of the work that these guys did. I mean, I was in there and saw how tight it was, and I cannot imagine what they were, you know, going through. It was like a buzzing hive in there when I was there. It's just quite amazing. We have recognized that they need something updated communicationwise and technology and everything so that they can act swiftly.

Mr. Stier: Still on my question, though, just to be clear: we are able and it's fully functioning and able to go tomorrow morning if necessary if there's a fire?

Mr. Schreiber: Yeah. Absolutely.

Mr. Stier: Very good.

Okay. I'd like to carry on if I could. With that, then, you said that it was being funded through improvements and modifications or modernization to that centre or the extra facility. What fund or what source was it that you were going to draw that from?

Mr. S. Anderson: It's from the capital plan. It's \$125 million over three years, starting in 2018-19.

Mr. Stier: Okay. Thank you for that.

Along the same lines we're wondering: in preparedness if you're looking at, you know, areas that seem frequently affected by these kinds of disasters, does the department have or create or maintain working contracts with any local private equipment and personnel that they can trigger right away if necessary on an emergency order being called upon? Is something in place so that we can immediately jump in with equipment already preset?

Mr. Schreiber: We usually work through other government departments that have standing contracts to be able to do that. For instance, with respect to emergencies on roadways we actually get the Department of Transportation to use their standing contracts. When it comes to supporting, for instance, evacuation centres, we usually reach out and use Children's Services and Social Services. They've got existing relationships with nongovernmental organizations and the Red Cross. They can access that support.

We've also started to come up with a registry of preferred vendors or capable vendors so that we can actually reach out really quickly and that we know, for instance, who owns, you know, a bunch of sandbagging machines and things like that. We do keep a standing list of preferred vendors that we can then tap really quickly to be able to move on some of these response issues.

Mr. Stier: That sounds good. Thank you, Mr. Schreiber.

To that same point I'm just wondering. We were talking about, by the way, through the chair, the business plan, where we're talking about outcomes and better preparedness. Where would you have that money allocated to be drawn from? Would that be still from the \$200,000 immediate money, or is that, again, from your overall \$2 million budget that you draw from for that type of situation that you just described, please?

Mr. S. Anderson: It would be from disaster funding itself.

Mr. Stier: Okay. All right. Thank you.

Going forward, then, as well with respect to some of these things that have occurred, have you looked to potentially amend some of the different kinds of setback issues within municipalities like Wood Buffalo and so on that are heavily forested? Have you looked at the Municipal Affairs region of control, like in the MGA somewhere, to change direction on setback requirements in those kinds of areas?

Mr. S. Anderson: It's not specifically under the MGA, what we're doing. That would be under Ag and Forestry that would set those.

Mr. Stier: I see.

Mr. S. Anderson: I mean, if they had any specific concerns, I guess, pertaining to my ministry, they would have to bring those to me.

Mr. Stier: Thank you very much.

Just going back, then, to the business plan, page 116, key strategy 3.4, again, this is a little ambiguous. What is meant by the government's business continuity plan or program? Is that referring to the business of the overall government? Is that something within this ministry itself? Can you explain about that particular strategy and what it relates to, please?

Mr. S. Anderson: Thanks, Shane.

4:10

Mr. Schreiber: Under the government emergency management regulation each ministry is required to maintain its own business continuity plan to ensure that it can continue to deliver the critical services to Albertans. Within the GOA AEMA is asked to coordinate the overall program; in other words, to set the standards, to review the departmental plans, to provide exercises and best practices. That's what AEMA does. We don't make the business plan. We make the business plan better, for lack of a better way to express it.

Mr. Stier: Okay. As a follow-up, if I could, is there, then, some information we could obtain on what kinds of things you might be working on in enhancing the emergency alert system and how much is being budgeted and where that budget would be?

Mr. Schreiber: Alberta emergency alert: is that the question?

Mr. Stier: Yes, it is.

Mr. Schreiber: Yes. It should be available when the ministry makes its annual tables, its annual report.

Mr. Stier: Okay. Do you know or does someone at the table know where that is found in the budget, please, for that type of situation?

Mr. S. Anderson: Massive amount of information here.

Mr. Stier: Yeah. Again, as you're looking – I understand – what we're trying to focus on is preparedness for the upcoming season. It is almost a year since the worst disaster we've had in Canada, and this is the reason we're focusing on this. We have just a couple of more questions. We'll be moving on to another topic.

Mr. S. Anderson: For sure. I totally, exactly understand what you're asking.

The Alberta emergency alert is on page 214, under 9.3, operations.

Mr. Stier: Oh, it's in operations.

Mr. S. Anderson: Yeah.

Mr. Stier: Okay. Thank you for that. It's unfortunate that these things are expressed as they are.

Mr. S. Anderson: Yeah. No worries. That's why we have these things.

Mr. Stier: Right.

Last couple of questions then, with relation, again, to the business plan, page 116, key strategies. Actually, last year there was a key strategy which stated: "Lead the 911 grant program and develop

provincial 911 call answering standards to enhance the community based [local] 911 services made available to Albertans." We don't see that in the business plan now. Is it not still a priority for the department anymore? Can you speak a little bit about the 911 call answering grant program and services, please?

Mr. Schreiber: The 911 standards project has been completed, and we've shared those standards with all of the 911 call answering centres. They're also known as public safety access points, or PSAPs. We've shared that with them, and we now make meeting those standards a condition for the 911 grant. We also regularly audit or review the PSAPs to make sure that they're meeting the standards.

Mr. Stier: Thank you very much for that clear answer. That's good.

Mr. S. Anderson: It's in the business plan on page 116, 3.5. It does mention it. Of course, yes, it is a priority for us, the 911 program.

Mr. Stier: Thank you. We did miss that. I appreciate that.

Mr. S. Anderson: No worries. It's estimated that \$15.6 million will be available in 2017-18.

Mr. Stier: Okay. Thank you, Minister.

I'd like to move now, if I could, to MSI, the municipal sustainability initiative, which is for local infrastructure priorities normally and helping communities, helping municipalities with their needs. Let's start, then, with estimates page 215 and the capital line 4.2. What we see there is \$846 million with no change. I think you alluded to this in some remarks in your intro, Minister. I believe this is the last year of this program, however. Are you looking to consider a similar funding model in the next year, two years, three years, five years, whatever? How are you going to extend this program, if I may?

Mr. S. Anderson: Actually, March 31 was the end of the original program, but as I had said before, we didn't turn the taps off, so it's in the capital plan for four years. That was one of my big priorities. Actually, ever since getting elected, I think that's one of the biggest things I've been asked about or prodded about, so I wanted to make sure. At AAMD and C I talked about the fact that we are continuing that because it is incredibly important to municipalities. You know, it gives them the opportunity to obviously use that money as a priority, where they see fit in their communities, right? So, yeah, that is in the capital plan for the next four years, and it's in the business plan, too, on page 119, under expense. It has it in there.

Mr. Stier: Okay. My next question, following up, then, is related to MSI again, page 115, key strategy 1.5. When MSI was initially announced, in 2007, the promise, as you are aware, was around \$11.3 billion over 10 years. Do you know what that wound up at at the end of that 10-year cycle, what it actually delivered, please?

Mr. S. Anderson: We do have that. Give me a second, and I will find that for you.

On March 31 it was \$7.557 billion.

Mr. Stier: Wow. That's a significant difference from the initial promise.

Mr. S. Anderson: It was extended, too, right? It's continuing. That's why we've continued it, because we know it's important.

Mr. Stier: So that has been paid out to that amount. Is there a whole bunch of projects that are more or less a deficit in the province as a

result of that lack of sustainable funding over that period of time? I guess what I'm asking is: do you have a whole big list somewhere of a bunch of stuff that just was never funded?

Mr. S. Anderson: No, we don't. You know, with everything that I've seen and in speaking to Minister Larivee before me on this, we've had a lot go across our desk. I haven't said no to any of the projects. They've all met all the prerequisites, so any of the funding that's come across, that I've seen, that the municipalities have asked for has gone to them.

Mr. Stier: Uh-huh. Okay.

To the estimates again, page 215, line 4.2: again \$846 million. There was no change. Meeting Alberta's growth challenges in every community, both urban and rural, will take foresight and leadership at both the provincial and the municipal levels in the business plan as well. How do you expect to meet those challenges? Are there a number of different initiatives that you're going to take? How is the plan going to change from what we've seen in the past? I think that's what this question means.

Mr. S. Anderson: Are you referring more to MSI or in general?

Mr. Stier: MSI.

Mr. S. Anderson: Like I said, when I first started, I knew how important MSI was, and I wanted to make sure that continued, so I took the angst out. A lot of people kind of leveraged that. They knew they were going to get that funding. I want it to continue so that we have time to work with the municipalities. I've been speaking to AAMD and C and AUMA, local officials, municipal officials. We've had people providing feedback of ideas on how they think it might work better or that it's working well as it is. That's something that's ongoing. We want to make sure of that going forward. I mean, you hear those words "stable funding" and "sustainable," right? I want to make sure that we're working continuously with municipal officials and the groups out there to find something that's going to work long term instead of short term.

Mr. Stier: Okay. As you may realize, I think most of us in this room are aware that municipalities are to be doing three- and five-year plans with regard to their financing and capital plans and so on and so forth. You've said that this will be something that will run for about four years in its current form. Will you, then, at the end of three years get ready for the next phase and maybe make some changes to what it's going to look like so that municipalities are aware before the thing runs out again?

Mr. S. Anderson: Oh, for sure. Yeah. That's why I wanted to do the four years, because then it gives us time. Without a doubt, I would rather do it sooner than later because it makes sure that, obviously, these municipalities know what the funding looks like, what the formula looks like. I mean, I don't want to leave anything to the last minute. That's not good for any of them trying to do their budgets, right? Yeah, the sooner we can do that, the better, but we have to make sure that it's going to be a good long-term solution. So as long as we can all come to the table and make sure that we've got something that we all know is going to work, then perfect. That could take a year or eight months. Who knows?

4:20

Mr. Stier: Fair enough. That sounds like a reasonable step.

In the business plan, page 115, key strategy 1.5 talks about how they're going to provide funding to municipalities to help them meet their strategic long-term infrastructure needs, including supporting municipalities in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. I

understand that Environment and Parks has a number of programs aimed at supporting municipalities to reduce emissions, but MSI is normally generally for capital investments. So what is the ministry doing with regard to greenhouse gas emissions? If you could respond to that, I'd be interested to hear what you have to say, please. You know, is there a specific program in the budget that we can look at in relation to that, please?

Mr. S. Anderson: Yeah, you're right. MSI is something where each area has its own priority list, but what we're working on is developing, if you're talking about GHGs and things like that, more along green infrastructure and maybe public transit and those types of things. We're trying to support those types of initiatives out there. That's mostly what it probably would be.

Mr. Stier: Okay. I don't know how these ministries cross over, but would that include some of these solar power sources on buildings, or would that be strictly Environment and Parks?

Mr. S. Anderson: It could. I mean, we do have the municipal solar program, right? It all just depends on how these municipalities want to allocate their money. I mean, there are going to be, obviously, programs coming forward. I don't really want to try to speak in hypotheticals and guess what's going to be coming forward. You know, we're always receiving feedback on things that municipalities think could work better for them and make them more efficient in energy efficient things. We want to make sure that we're using the money wisely and listening to our municipalities in that respect, too.

Mr. Stier: Okay. Would the funding for that be found in section 3 on page 214? Is that basically where some of those greenhouse gas things would be pulled from?

Mr. S. Anderson: It would be under the capital plan under the carbon levy part.

Mr. Stier: Okay.

Mr. S. Anderson: So \$2.2 billion will be allocated to green infrastructure, and as I said, a major portion provides support for public transit and other green infrastructure.

Mr. Stier: So that can fit under there and doesn't go into the Transportation department at all? That is something that you own?

Mr. S. Anderson: Yeah. It's one of those kind of joint, crossministry things that roll over.

Mr. Stier: All right. Let's move on, then, again to page 113, and we're still on MSI. Strategic context is the paragraph. It talks about: "Municipal Affairs is continuing to build a new relationship with municipalities that strengthens Alberta's communities and provides opportunities for Albertans to succeed." You know, we're not claiming that the previous government had the best relationship with municipalities, but your government had some questions about coal plant shutdowns that weren't received too well during the convention. What messages did you take away from the meetings that were held with AAMD and C regarding the coal plant shutdowns? Have you guys addressed some of those concerns properly with the municipalities and what you're going to do in terms of MSI to some of those municipalities that may be affected by that?

Mr. S. Anderson: Minister Bilous is leading on that file at the moment. He has been to a number of communities and had

discussions with municipal officials and companies about how that's progressing.

At the AAMD and C convention I didn't have anybody that actually particularly came up to me to ask about it because a lot of them had already discussed things with Minister Bilous.

As far as the funding goes, I don't think there's anything through MSI in that respect that I know of. That wouldn't be for that. That would be under the climate leadership plan as well.

Mr. Stier: Okay. So your ministry is not involved in that kind of assistance, then?

Mr. S. Anderson: No.

I just got a quick note here. For municipalities and individuals impacted by the phase-out, the climate leadership plan will phase out coal emissions in a balanced way.

Mr. Stier: Okay. Fair enough.

Then I have to move on, Minister. I'm sorry; sometimes I may have to advance us quickly here because of the time.

Mr. S. Anderson: Oh, no worries. You know what? There are so many crossministry things, too.

Mr. Stier: Okay. Let's go to one of my favourites. I think that some of you may know it as regional planning and regional co-operation and collaboration. I see some smiles over there on the other side of the room.

You know, the objective of the Alberta community partnership, which I think is where all this funding is going now, is "to improve the viability and long-term sustainability of municipalities by providing support for regional collaboration and capacity-building initiatives," according to you folks. Further to that, in the Municipal Affairs business plan it states that the ministry will "work with municipalities to strengthen regional planning and service delivery through implementation of new mandatory Growth Management Boards in metropolitan regions [of Calgary and Edmonton] and Intermunicipal Collaborative Frameworks in other areas of the province."

With that topic area in mind, we have a few questions, gentlemen. In the estimates on page 214, operating expense, line item 7 has a number beside it of about \$18.5 million. This program supports, I gather, quite a large number of things that are encapsulated in there. You know, it probably has regional collaboration, capacity-building initiatives with all additional intermunicipal planning that the MGA amendments require. [A timer sounded] I'd like to carry on, if I could, in the time remaining. What is the \$18.5 million going towards? Is this something that's easily defined? Is there a document or some kind of area that we can look at and say how that \$18.5 million is broken out?

Mr. S. Anderson: Okay. We have a breakdown internally of kind of how it's structured, the estimates of it.

Mr. Stier: If that internal thing could be quickly summarized or if we could get that in writing later as a response, that would be appreciated.

Mr. S. Anderson: Yeah. The \$18.5 million: you're going to go through, like, the intermunicipal collaboration, the Capital Region Board, regional partnership, municipal restructuring, municipal internship, and then some other grants that are in there as well.

Mr. Stier: Okay. That's not in the estimates, I don't believe.

Mr. S. Anderson: No.

Mr. Stier: So that leads us to a lot of questions. You've got something down for the two growth management boards to operate each year. From my history over the years I've known that we had one that was operating, the Edmonton Capital Region Board. How much was funded towards that in the past few years? Perhaps one of your fellows there can answer that question.

Mr. S. Anderson: In the past few years?

Mr. Stier: Right.

Mr. S. Anderson: The Capital Region Board?

Mr. Stier: Yeah.

Mr. S. Anderson: In 2015-16, \$3,419,000; in 2016-17, \$2,500,000.

Mr. Stier: Okay. Calgary doesn't exist at this moment in time, yet they were receiving funding as the Calgary Regional Partnership, in a manner of speaking. What was the funding to the CRP if you don't mind, please?

Mr. S. Anderson: Well, the CRP in 2015-16 was \$3.424 million, and then in 2016-17 it was \$2.5 million.

Mr. Stier: Okay. When you get down to those two boards, one was functioning and one was not. One had a job to do and a set of rules to work with, and they made decisions, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. Then why was the Calgary Regional Partnership given exactly the same amount of money and didn't have actually any responsibilities other than to hold meetings and produce a few brochures, if I may venture to say?

Mr. S. Anderson: Well, I mean, the Edmonton Capital Region Board was mandatory, and the CRP was a voluntary one, so there are differences there. You know, I know that the one in Edmonton has been around a little bit longer, obviously, and is maybe a little more complex in the way it works. I mean, I can't speak to what they do or don't do or how effective or any of that kind of thing. I don't want to speculate on that part.

Mr. Stier: Okay. I'll leave the question for now, but I may come back to that in some respect.

In the future, now, we know that the Calgary area will be having a regional board imposed. Will we expect, then, that they will both be getting amounts of a similar nature, 3 and a half million to \$4 million or something like that, to operate? If so, how could they possibly do that if they need to get an office, if they need to get staff, if they need to get all of these other things? Is it fair to say that there will be a larger amount to the new regional management board in Calgary for start-up costs and staffing, et cetera, et cetera, and operating for the first year? If so, what would that funding look like?

4:30

Mr. S. Anderson: It's \$2.25 million that it's going to be for them. I know that we're still in discussions. Actually, I have a meeting pretty quickly again with Calgary and some municipal partners around there about what their growth management board is going to look like and how it's going to transition that from voluntary to the growth management board. But they will receive the same amount of funding. Like I say, we're still in discussions with them to see how they would like to transition. We're having some really good conversations in that respect, but it is ongoing. As you state, I mean, Calgary hasn't been around quite as long as Edmonton with that growth management part of it, so we are trying to, I guess, if

we can, look at what Edmonton has done and kind of find some efficiencies there and find out how they did it and maybe use some templates, I think, that would help Calgary.

But it's an ongoing conversation. As to what's going to happen, I mean, that \$2.25 million is what I know is there.

Mr. Stier: Okay. It's interesting, and I understand that it's in the in-progress mode yet. Unfortunately, we in the Legislature are not privy to regulations and how they're being discussed, what is in these regulation discussions, what kind of funding is going to be involved. We see from the information you've just provided that that's about a million dollar cut from where they were funded before, it sounds like. I just wondered: how far along are you with that process? When do you think the Calgary regional board will actually fire up and be started? Again, I offer this because we are not informed of this. We really don't know. We're not privy to these discussions.

Mr. S. Anderson: Sure. I did meet in March with, you know, some of them up here, I guess, and with some of the other ones from the regional partnership. I've had conversations. As far as the regulations go, I can't give you a time when it's going to be done because we're in those discussions – right? – to see how it's going to work and what they propose and what they come up with for us. But as far as the regulations go, any of those regs that we have always get posted for 60 days online so that we make sure we get feedback. I think you might even be able to sign up on the Municipal Affairs website to get updates so that as soon as regulations get posted, you can go in and have a look and then provide your feedback.

Mr. Stier: Yeah, once they're posted. The problem is that we don't know what's being discussed to be posted, so we're looking for advanced information, I suspect.

Getting back to this growth board, would the city of Calgary or the municipalities surrounding the city of Calgary that are going to be in the growth board be required to provide their own source of funds for some of these operations? Certainly, they are now funding their own operations as it goes. Is that part of the change in the funding that you're talking about, perhaps, that they will be contributing to the operations in some percentage way?

Mr. S. Anderson: Yeah, for sure. I mean, we give that initial – right? – that base funding, but there is expectation that, obviously, whatever they come up with in their different joint-use agreements and what have you, they would be funding some of that on their own.

Mr. Stier: Okay. Let's move on a little bit, then. Let's look at page 214, again operations, line 7. You have some key program outcomes. You know, we heard a lot through the fall debate on Bill 21, the Modernized Municipal Government Act, and so on about moving towards more of these intermunicipal development plan requirements, municipal development plan requirements. A lot of municipalities across Alberta do not have the large, huge planning departments that some others do. In fact, like the CRP group and like the Capital Region Board, there's actually another group in Lethbridge that I'm familiar with that does planning services for a large number of municipalities. I believe you may know the business that I'm referring to, Oldman regional services. They provide these services to I think 20 or 30 local municipalities.

Is part of your 18 and a half million dollars that you're proposing going to provide, first of all, local municipalities with extra funding because they're now required to do some of these plans they've never had to do before? Two, is part of that money therefore,

perhaps, going to go to servicing companies like that, that they have hired, where they don't have their own internal planning departments to help them do the job that's now suddenly going to be required, please?

Mr. S. Anderson: That will be under the ACP, a lot of that.

The other thing is that we give money to AUMA and AAMD and C, right? How much was it? It's \$500,000 each to help with that, so that change management part. We want to make sure that we have that in place so that we can have templates and things. There are a lot of examples around the province of some really good relationships and agreements already, so we want to make sure that it's not going to be cost prohibitive, especially to the smaller municipalities, right? We've stated that we're going to be there to support them in any of these adjustments, developing materials to help them and things like that. We're going to try to defray a lot of those costs because we have a lot of examples and we can help in that respect.

Mr. Stier: I've heard some of those answers before, if I may, and nothing meant by that comment. It's not definitive enough, Minister. You know, there are a lot of municipalities who know that not only do they have to do municipal development plans, some of them who have never done it before, which is an internal thing, but they also have to do an IDP with every one of the adjoining municipalities. Perhaps, too, within their counties they may have towns that they have to do it with as well.

Has the department, I guess, instead of the solutions you've said, of saying, "Well, we will support you," thought of coming up with a program listing how many different municipalities you have to do these plans with and saying: okay; well, on a per capita basis or on a per-municipality basis that you have to do plans for, we would fund X amount of dollars for that so that you can set up your own internal staff requirements for it? Is that something that is possibly being discussed?

Mr. Pickering: In response to that, the intermunicipal collaboration frameworks are really sort of the agreements between municipalities for collaboration. During the process of dealing with the MGA, there was a clear expectation that municipalities collaborate. Under our Alberta community partnership program there is funding, including funding that was delivered this year to a number of municipalities that are getting started on that through an application process.

As the minister mentioned, we also are working with the two municipal associations to put together tool kits and some of the funding around that. As well, there is some work on the municipal development plans that you mentioned, working with some of the planning agencies to come up with templates. Some of those planning agencies do provide direct planning services, and we are not funding direct planning services. It again is an expectation that the municipalities pay those costs.

Mr. Stier: I see. Okay.

Mr. S. Anderson: I have had a fair number of those grants come across my desk as well where people are already looking because they're already preparing and getting ready and doing some good. Like I say, there are some great plans out there already. At AAMD and C I had some pretty good discussions with some people that were doing some positive stuff already.

Mr. Stier: Okay. Fair enough. Thank you for that, gentlemen. I think that satisfies that line of questioning in that regard.

The expectation, though, in the MDs and counties, where there are going to be smaller municipality interests with a major

metropolitan centre type of thing like the new Calgary one – you know, small urbans and our rural neighbours understand each other, yet there are some significant differences with the major centres in comparison. There has been one instance in my area, as an example, where two smaller centres that were involved with the Calgary Regional Partnership are no longer going to be involved because you've changed the criteria and they have to have a 5,000-level population to carry on. When we have some of those smaller communities, what assurances are they going to have that they're going to be adequately represented on this new board?

Mr. S. Anderson: In that respect, we had to draw the line at a population of 5,000, right? We can't have too many people sitting around the table because it would kind of elongate the time frames of trying to make some of these decisions. So that was the number that we chose.

I'm pretty sure I know who you're talking about down in your area. What happens there, then, would be – so a lot of decisions would be made for Calgary, for example. You know, having them there when it probably doesn't pertain to them, they probably are kind of a little bit disinterested, possibly. What would happen in that respect is that they would have an ICF – I don't know whether it would be on water, waste water, a rec facility, whatever it might be – with that larger municipality or city around them. That's where that would work, and it would only be the stuff that they would want in. They don't have to be involved in anything that they don't discuss with that bigger municipality or city. So that's kind of where that falls in.

4:40

We have some around Edmonton, too, that are less than 5,000, but the expectation and what is going to happen is that they will be speaking to those places, too, and making sure that they're working in collaboration because, obviously, we have to do what's best for the residents out there, right? Really, that's what it gets down to is that we don't want duplication of services anymore. We want to be more efficient and make sure that our residents are getting what they need and that the officials and the cities are doing what they should for them.

Mr. Stier: Okay. And, through the chair, we're still within the same operational subject. I'm talking about 18 and a half million dollars. The thing is that, as you know, some municipalities have not been involved too much in this. We've seen that the Capital Region Board had a large number of members for the past few years of operation. Then suddenly a decision was made somewhere along the way to go to the 5,000 level, and this cut out quite a lot of people that had been involved previously. Their noses were out of joint, to put it bluntly. What was the reasoning? Was there something that happened in the Capital Region Board that made that decision happen, to cause a sudden change? And is that taken into account in the formulation of the new board for Calgary?

Mr. S. Anderson: I wasn't there for that decision at the time, but like I said, it was more that we had to draw the line at the number of people you have sitting around the table. I think Edmonton was 24. I mean, that's a lot there for the municipalities, and some of the stuff didn't pertain to a lot of them – right? – so I think that was the major reason why . . .

Mr. Stier: Minister, if I may interrupt you.

Mr. S. Anderson: Yeah.

Mr. Stier: Were there issues that caused that decision? Were there specific issues that you're aware of?

Mr. S. Anderson: Not that I'm aware of.

Mr. Stier: I think that's your area there, actually, isn't it? Where you live or where you reside is near to where the Capital Region Board was in effect?

Mr. S. Anderson: Down where I live? There are no issues down there.

Mr. Stier: All right. My mistake. I wasn't talking about issues, but the Capital Region Board was controlling part of where your riding is, was it not?

Mr. S. Anderson: Well, my riding is in the Capital Region Board.

Mr. Stier: That's what I meant. Sorry.

Mr. S. Anderson: No. That's okay. No worries.

Mr. Stier: What I'm trying to get to here, gentlemen, is that something was learned in the past seven years. Suddenly the decision was made to cut out a lot of the smaller communities who thought they should still have a say. What I'm trying to say is that when we're putting together the new regional board, are we taking what we've learned in the Edmonton capital board to go into the formulation of the new board in Calgary?

Mr. S. Anderson: Well, I think we have to look at the things that have happened in the past – right? – to understand why we are where we are right now. It's more of a streamlining that's happening, trying to be more efficient with what we're doing. You know, as was stated before, the Edmonton region has been doing this a little bit longer, so of course there's been a certain amount of trial and error that they've gone through. You can always learn from mistakes or positive things that happen, right? Without a doubt, there are going to be things that we're going to be taking, like I said before about templates and things like that, too, that we can assist with down in Calgary or wherever else, any other kind of ICF or any of that.

Mr. Stier: Okay. Minister, I realize you're new in the position, but I need to ask about the theory of changing Calgary to a growth board system. There are two or three municipalities there that have been resisting that idea for many years. They're worried about losing local control, local autonomy. They're concerned about what planning matters they'll still be able to do and still being able to take advantage of some growth. Will Calgary still be threatening to have a veto situation? Can you speak a little bit about what the reason was to directly put Calgary under a growth board system? What was the key thing? Perhaps one of your associates could speak to that. I'm not sure.

Mr. S. Anderson: Well, I mean, I think the key thing is that our communities are interconnected, right? People don't see these lines on a map. That's the big thing. We have to make sure that we're working together to find efficiencies here and working together to make sure that we're doing what's best for the region. The MGA is all about regional collaboration. That's the whole point of it, right? That's the key to all of it. I can't point to one particular instance that says that we should do this or not do this. It's the fact that it's better for the residents to make sure that we're working together on that. I mean, whether it be for water or waste water or solid waste or rec centres or what have you, that's the whole point of it, right? I think

that when you talk about a veto, it doesn't matter how big or small you are; everybody is equal.

Mr. Stier: Well, Minister, I think in the decision-making process we've seen in these things in the past and what is being presented, I believe that the major population centre would in fact have a voting veto if I understand it correctly. I'm open to having that argument presented.

I understand I'm out of time, I think.

The Chair: You've still got one minute.

Mr. Stier: I have one minute left.

Mr. S. Anderson: It's a two-thirds majority is what it is.

Mr. Stier: Okay. All right.

Mr. Chair, I think I'll relinquish the half a minute I've got left now and allow the other parties to have their fair say. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much, sir.

We'll now move on to the member from the third party.

Mr. McIver: Okay. I'll share time if it's okay with the minister, Chair.

Mr. S. Anderson: Sure.

The Chair: Please go ahead.

Mr. McIver: Good. It looks like we made a decision there.

I'm going to start off where my predecessor left off because I think your mind is already there, Minister, and that's some of the ground I wanted to cover. You said just a couple of minutes ago that you want municipalities to work together. It sounds good, but in the Edmonton regional area it sounds like some of the ones that have been working together for years won't be allowed to anymore. So where are they going to go? Who are they going to work with?

Mr. S. Anderson: That's not what I said. They are going to be working together.

Mr. McIver: Even though they're under 5,000?

Mr. S. Anderson: Yeah, because they can make these ICFs, right? That's the whole point. So for some of those decisions that might not pertain to them for one of the bigger centres, they don't have to be involved. They're involved with what they want to be involved with, right? That's the agreement that they make through these ICFs and things.

Mr. McIver: Okay. It sounded more clear to me, at least, when you said it this time, so thank you for that.

In Calgary, the Calgary Regional Partnership members: are any of those going to be excluded from the growth management plan board?

Mr. S. Anderson: I have the representatives. Do you want me to tell you which ones are going to be included?

Mr. McIver: Yes, please.

Mr. S. Anderson: For the Calgary region the following municipalities are part of the board: Airdrie, Calgary, Chestermere, Cochrane, High River, Okotoks, Strathmore, the municipal district of Foothills, Rocky View county. And part of Wheatland county,

near the town of Strathmore, will be subject to the regional growth plan.

Mr. McIver: All right. So nobody is out that's in now?

Mr. S. Anderson: Yeah. There will be . . .

Mr. McIver: Which ones are out, if you don't mind my asking? That's actually what I really wanted to hear. It's all right. I can get it from you later if somebody wants to send me a copy.

Mr. S. Anderson: For sure.

Mr. McIver: Minister, I don't expect you to memorize everything. That's an unreasonable expectation, but I'm sure you or your staff can get back to me, and that'll be fine.

I'm going to go down the road a little bit further on some of the other things. Who pays? You did say that everybody pays. I caught that. I was listening. Is there a formula by population or land area or something that determines the percentage in these growth management boards, how much people pay?

Mr. Pickering: That would be a decision of the actual entity. Once they're formed, there will be grant funding that is provided by the provincial government to take care of the areas where we have a provincial interest, and then the expectation is that the entity itself will determine its budget.

Mr. McIver: Okay. So you're giving them some cash so that they all play nice in the sandbox and get along – that sounds reasonable – but what if they don't get along anyway? Then what do you do?

Mr. Pickering: I think that based on our experience in the Edmonton region, they were brought together in 2008, and, you know, they're basically on their second generation of a growth plan, that they've finished, and it was done on a consensual basis.

Mr. McIver: Okay. So you're hoping that they all get along?

Mr. S. Anderson: Well, I think that's the expectation. I mean, to be honest, the reason we're here and doing this job is for our constituents, right? For them to work together is going to be beneficial to all of their constituents. Obviously, it's more efficient, cost-effective. We don't want duplication of services out there, and I don't think they do either. If we can work together on all facets of that, I think it'll be better for everybody.

Mr. McIver: Is there an element of the growth management boards that's designed to protect farmland, or is that not part of the mandate?

Mr. Pickering: Again, there's regional planning at a provincial level, which we have policies on, and then those get applied to a growth management plan when it's developed. You know, those plans are basically looking at growth nodes, servicing in those metropolitan areas so that we don't get duplication.

Mr. McIver: Okay. But specifically on protecting farmland, is there an element of policy there that will be focused on that?

Mr. Pickering: Those would flow from the land-use framework at a provincial level.

Mr. McIver: The land-use framework. Okay.

Any changes planned to things like the first-quarter rollouts and stuff like that?

4:50

Mr. Pickering: Again, you're getting into sort of a very fine resolution of planning detail that would be dealt with at kind of a local level. So, no, at this point there are no plans to change that.

Mr. McIver: Okay. Thank you.

Now, you talked about the new POC. Has the location been identified for it yet?

Mr. S. Anderson: Not yet, no.

Mr. McIver: Okay. The 911 grants: what authority or what sway do you have over the 911 centres in Alberta at this point? Is it just you that has authority over them or somebody else as well?

Mr. Schreiber: Shane Schreiber, managing director of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency. The PSAPs are given the standards which we're working across Canada to develop. There are really two levers that help us hold sway. One is the grant. If they don't meet the standards or aren't trying to meet the standards, then they aren't eligible for the grant funding. They also get paid by municipalities to provide the 911 service to municipalities. So if they're not doing a very good job, the municipality can simply fire them and get a different PSAP to run their 911 program.

Mr. McIver: All right. So, to be clear, before you have to introduce yourself again, if you don't mind, it's a combination of your authority and the municipality's authority?

Mr. Schreiber: That is correct.

Mr. McIver: That was my answer. Thank you. I appreciate that.

Mr. S. Anderson: There is the Emergency 911 Act. There are two regulations under the act. The emergency 911 levy is administered by Treasury Board and Finance. Then it's Municipal Affairs that administers the emergency 911 grants regulation.

Mr. McIver: Okay. The answer I just got was kind of what I wanted, but I appreciate the extra information, too, Minister.

Moving along, there is \$2.2 billion in green infrastructure that you talked about. Are you in on the Calgary green line with this budget?

Mr. S. Anderson: That's Transportation, and I'm sure he's answered that.

Mr. McIver: But it's the green infrastructure.

Mr. S. Anderson: That would be under Transportation.

Mr. McIver: So you're just not going to answer that for me? Okay.

Mr. S. Anderson: Well, I just did answer it. It's under Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Yeah. I appreciate that, but it wasn't the definitive answer.

Mr. S. Anderson: Well, I know you want another answer, but that's the actual, honest, straight-up answer.

Mr. McIver: Okay. Thank you, Minister.

Moving along here, on the MSI, what changes are you anticipating to make when you have your new program, your rollout, this year?

Mr. S. Anderson: You know what? We're still working on that. I wouldn't want to speculate or work on hypotheticals on that. We're going to be working together with the AAMD and C and the AUMA and other officials out there on that.

Mr. McIver: Is the formula to distribute whatever amount of money you have going to be the same as it is now, or is it going to be changed?

Mr. S. Anderson: Well, for this year, yeah, but going forward, you know, if we tweak it or change it or what have you – is that what you mean? Like I said, I don't want to speak to hypotheticals because those conversations need to be undertaken. The MSI funding is based on the 2017-18 formula factors right now.

Mr. McIver: And you don't anticipate a change?

Mr. S. Anderson: Well, you know, like I say, those are hypotheticals, and I don't deal in those. I deal in facts.

Mr. McIver: And that's what I'm asking for, facts.

Mr. S. Anderson: Yeah. Well, as I had stated, we need to have those conversations going forward, right? We made sure that the funding is there for four years, and we can have those in-depth conversations with the municipal officials and make sure that what we're doing, going forward, is a collaborative approach.

Mr. McIver: Okay. Do you have facts on whether the funding will be more or less than it is now?

Mr. S. Anderson: That's something that we're going to have to be working on going forward.

Mr. McIver: Okay. How much money in your budget is earmarked potentially to be in the new MSI program or whatever you will call it?

Mr. S. Anderson: Well, I mean, each municipality, I'm sure you're aware, receives a base funding of 120 grand per year except summer villages, which get 60 grand.

Mr. McIver: Yeah, but that wasn't what I asked.

Mr. S. Anderson: I'm giving you the numbers that are there. As I said, I won't deal in hypotheticals because I don't think that's good for any of us, right?

Mr. McIver: Okay. Your government support of municipalities through the capital plan goes four years out as compared to what was five years. Do you plan on re-establishing the five-year capital plan to give municipalities the window that they've been accustomed to having for long-term planning for their infrastructure needs?

Mr. S. Anderson: It would be a Treasury Board and Finance decision on that part. But as I stated, we want to make sure that we have the funding there for the next four years, and we want to make sure that we work quickly and collaboratively with the municipalities to make sure that we have something that's in place, that works for them, works for us, works for everybody.

Mr. McIver: Okay. City charters. Sorry. I've only got 20 minutes, so I'm rocking as fast as I can here, Minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: That's fine. No worries.

Mr. McIver: Do you plan on completing the city charters in the next year?

Mr. S. Anderson: I have met with the mayors of Edmonton and Calgary, and those conversations are ongoing. We've had some really fruitful conversations. Our staff is always in contact with the big cities on that. I'm not going to speculate on where it's going to land because we do have a fair amount of work still to do on it. I wouldn't want to give you a time frame on it right now because that wouldn't be something that I'd be able to give you at the moment.

Mr. McIver: Are you contemplating giving the big cities new taxation powers?

Mr. S. Anderson: Working on the city charters has a lot under it. Whether that comes up or not, that's to be seen. That's in the preliminary stages, exploration of any fiscal framework. A lot of our discussions have been around the sustainability going forward. We know that the big cities are very complex. You know that, obviously.

Mr. McIver: That's why I'm asking, Minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Yeah. Again, I'm not going to speculate on what's going to happen in our conversations going forward.

Mr. McIver: Okay. All right. Are there any provincial responsibilities that you've agreed on with the big cities that they will assume once the charters are in place that the province is looking after right now?

Mr. S. Anderson: I would say that nothing is in stone right now. It is ongoing.

Mr. McIver: All right. It sounds like nothing is decided on anything that you can talk about today.

Mr. S. Anderson: Well, I mean, the city charters are an ongoing conversation – right? – so I don't want to speculate and put something on the record that's not true. It's something we're going to continue to work with the two big cities on. I respect our relationships, so I want to make sure that once we get more information back on city charters – we did have a draft framework, you know, and we had a What We Heard report, that we're discussing for the next phase of this.

Mr. McIver: And that report is public?

Mr. S. Anderson: No.

Mr. McIver: Okay. All right.

Mr. S. Anderson: Once we get everything written, obviously, the same as how our regulations work, we'll put it online.

Mr. McIver: All right. I'll move along. I'm fishing in a pond with no fish in it right now, so I'm going to go to a different pond, Minister.

Taxes: are you planning on doing anything with the community revitalization levy in the next year? Any changes to it?

Mr. S. Anderson: No.

Mr. McIver: Okay. Any relief coming to the municipalities on the carbon tax in the next year, on what they're paying in carbon tax?

Mr. S. Anderson: Well, I mean, we have a lot of programs out there: the municipal solar program, a lot of other initiatives with MSI.

Mr. McIver: I mean, are they going to be relieved of any of their responsibility to pay the carbon tax?

Mr. S. Anderson: Well, there are a lot of efficiency programs out there. We're working with municipalities on that, whether it be green infrastructure or transit or what have you, right? That's where these programs are coming into play to help municipalities.

Mr. McIver: Okay. A minute ago you couldn't answer about transit.

Mr. S. Anderson: I said that it was the Calgary green line that's under Transportation. That was your question.

Mr. McIver: Yeah, but it's a pretty clear definition of transit.

Mr. S. Anderson: That's Transportation. Just because the word "green" was in there, it doesn't mean that they're the same.

Mr. McIver: No, but the LRT is transit. I don't think you could argue with me on that.

Mr. S. Anderson: I understand, but they're two different things that we're talking about.

Mr. McIver: Community viability: any communities at risk that you have programs to keep viable or to do something else with in the next year?

Mr. S. Anderson: You mean like some small villages or things like that?

Mr. McIver: Small, big, whatever size, yeah.

Mr. S. Anderson: I think we have programs in place out there to help. When people write in or send us letters about viability, you know, reports or inspections or what have you, these are things that have been in place for a while, right? We get those periodically, and once we get them – it depends on what they're asking for, right? Is there a grant that would help or what have you? I mean, I can't speculate on that part of it.

We've got a few smaller ones, villages, that are under viability reviews at the moment, and then we'll see what comes from them.

5:00

Mr. McIver: The MGA budget impacts. I know that you've got legislation before the House now, and I don't want to discuss the legislation real specifically. But if we have it right, last year the minister that was there – and I know it wasn't you – said that there would be no budget impacts from the MGA amendments, yet assessment services, line 3.2, more than doubles this year to \$16.9 million. Is that to support centralized assessment?

Mr. S. Anderson: Yes, it is.

Mr. McIver: Okay. How are municipalities being supported to make that change? I'm thinking of – it's on page 114 of the business plan. How do taxpayers know that they're getting money for the value after the change?

Mr. S. Anderson: For the centralized assessing?

Mr. McIver: Yes, please.

Mr. S. Anderson: I think part of it in general is that we've spoken a lot with municipalities and industry out there to make sure that there is a fair and kind of an equitable playing field. You go from a gas plant in one municipality that gets assessed differently than a municipality next door, and they earn the exact same thing. We want to try to find efficiencies in that and make sure that these assessors – we use the skills that are out there. There are a lot of very good assessors in their area.

Mr. McIver: Minister, my next question is not going to sound very nice to you, but I want you to know that it didn't originate with me. It originated with municipalities that have this concern, so I'm asking you this question.

Mr. S. Anderson: Sure.

Mr. McIver: Once you folks get centrally assessing things that the municipalities are assessing now, can you assure me and, more importantly, municipalities that you won't get greedy and keep some of the fruits of that assessment for yourself as opposed to directing it straight to the municipality and leaving it there?

Mr. S. Anderson: Well, you know, obviously, I will try not to take that personally. That's an interesting question you have there, and that's not something that has come up at all. I haven't had one municipality say that to me, to be honest. To be honest, I'm a little offended that somebody would say that.

Mr. McIver: All right. But you didn't answer the question either.

Mr. S. Anderson: Yeah.

Mr. McIver: Under 8.5 on page 214 of the business plan you're showing a doubling of the new home buyer protection plan costs. Are you proposing changes to the system to bring more support to homebuyers, or what's driving that doubling of the cost, please?

Mr. S. Anderson: What we have right now – we have been discussing that in other provinces there's builder licensing that's out there that protects the consumer at the start of the build. B.C., Ontario, and Quebec have it right now. Right now we wanted to put in the budget – there are just ongoing discussions and consultation with home builders, consumers, a lot of consultation, actually. That was put there simply just in case, you know, we move forward with something along those lines. Like I say, it's still under consultation. We'd just like to be prepared going forward.

Mr. McIver: Okay. But you're prepared with a doubling of the cost, okay?

Mr. S. Anderson: It's consumer protection.

Mr. McIver: Is it safe to presume that you're not expecting the number of new homes built to be doubled this year compared to last year?

Mr. S. Anderson: I don't know. I mean, I can't speculate on how many homes are going to be built. I know that home starts are up. I know that.

Mr. McIver: But the government projects that all the time. I'm just asking: are your projections double?

Mr. S. Anderson: No. We're not assuming doubling of homes. You know, we just had that in the budget to implement in case we move forward with the new builder licensing.

Mr. McIver: Okay. On the building codes, last year the minister said that you're moving towards automated adoption of building codes, and it's again in the business plan. How much of that has been implemented, please?

Mr. S. Anderson: Sorry. Can you repeat the question?

Mr. McIver: The minister last year said that we're "moving towards automated adoption of new building codes," page RS-312. The item appears in your current business plan. Can you give us an update, please?

Mr. McDonald: Sure. We have 10 code areas under the Safety Codes Act. At this point in time we've over the past two years put in automatic code adoption for seven code areas now, with three remaining. There will be building, fire, and elevators is the third. So building, fire, and elevators are the only three areas left to harmonize. [A timer sounded]

Mr. McIver: Under the wire. Thank you, and thank you, Minister.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We are now going to take a break, as previously agreed. We'll reconvene at 5:10.

[The committee adjourned from 5:05 p.m. to 5:13 p.m.]

The Chair: I'd like to call us back to order, please. Thank you very much.

We'll now move on to the independent Member for Calgary-Elbow for 20 minutes.

Mr. Clark: Who is also the leader of the Alberta Party caucus.

The Chair: Would you like to go back and forth, sir?

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Thank you to the minister and thank you to your staff for being here with us late this afternoon. I am going to start with questions about outcome 2 as it relates specifically to the safety and protection and policy choices that Municipal Affairs is working, I know, with other ministries on, particularly the floodway development regulation, that I understand is in progress.

I just want to put on the record that there are a couple of pieces of correspondence which I don't believe we've received a response to. Now, I recognize that you're the new minister, relatively new. I'll ask just to put it on the record. We sent something on October 17, 2016, to your predecessor. If that is somewhere in the archives of your office, we really would appreciate a response given that that was October 2016. I also did send you an e-mail on February 13, 2017, with some specific requests on this. The good news, though, is that I'm going to ask you all those questions right now, so hopefully you can give me some answers here in person.

The question I'll just start with, then, is: as you develop the floodway development regulation, working in concert with other ministries, particularly Environment, to update flood hazard maps, what's the process? As you develop that policy, are you assuming that structural mitigation is in place? I'm thinking of things like the ongoing work on the Glenmore reservoir in Calgary, that will restrict the flow of waters at flood times down the Elbow River, and I'm also thinking, of course, of the Springbank project, which is currently under development, going through that process through the Ministry of Transportation. Those projects, obviously, will have a significant impact on flows.

I'm just curious about what the order of operations here is. Are you looking to do upstream mitigation first; then update maps,

assuming the mitigation is in place; and then create the floodway development regulation? Or is there a different order?

Mr. S. Anderson: Well, I appreciate your – yes, I do remember your e-mail. I don't remember that other letter that you had talked about. All of this is under – and we talked about this before – Environment. They're doing some work on that right now, and it's not something that I'm privy to. That is ongoing at the moment, so I wouldn't want to speculate on kind of where they're at with it or what kind of formula they're working with, to be honest. Unfortunately, you would have to inquire through Environment to see kind of where they're at, but I do know it's ongoing. It's not something that's going to be, you know, an easy thing to fix. You know that more so than probably anybody else in here. But, yeah, I wouldn't want to speculate on that because it is Environment.

Mr. Clark: The good news is that in the e-mail I attached a letter to me from Environment which indicates that they are going to do mapping, assuming naturalized flows, that there's nothing in the way, which strikes me as a bit odd, given that we've had the Glenmore reservoir there since the 1930s. But I understand, from an emergency response perspective, that we do need to know the worst-case scenario, so I understand and respect the reason for doing that.

What I understand the process to be is that Municipal Affairs will take the maps as developed by Environment – and I guess I would hope that you're working with Environment on this process and working closely crossministry. Based on the information provided in the maps, I understand, then, that Municipal Affairs will make policies, certain policies as relates to what development is allowed within the floodway and flood fringe as defined by those maps. Just let me stop there and confirm that that's, in fact, work that's under way within your department.

Mr. S. Anderson: Yeah. I mean, when I spoke, I meant that I hadn't – I'm not privy to that yet, but I do know that there's some crossministry work, obviously, going forward once that mapping is done and so forth. Obviously, we have to work together on those issues. I don't know where they're at, so I wouldn't want to say something that's untrue.

Mr. Clark: Where are you, then, in the process of creating the floodway development regulation?

Mr. S. Anderson: For us right now any type of floodway regulation that we have going on is going through a review process. I mean, we are doing some work on our end. Obviously, we have to anticipate and try to work with these guys, right? But as we are preparing this, I would say that we'd have to leave it pretty broad, you know, as we work with Environment.

I would say right now that there's nothing that I can tell you that's written in stone at the moment, but once we get more information as we work with environment, then, you know – I know it's a super important issue to you and, actually, a lot of the Calgary MLAs. We want to make sure that once we have the information, we can get it out to everybody, of course. We will do that, right?

Mr. Clark: Yeah. And, of course, a floodway development regulation would be a province-wide regulation, and clearly as a representative of the good people of Calgary-Elbow there's a particular interest in Calgary around this. But it is a province-wide regulation, and I'll delve into the details of that here in a moment. Can you give us any sense of timing as to when the floodway development regulation will be completed and released publicly?

Mr. S. Anderson: We don't have a time right now.

Mr. Clark: Is it months, years, weeks, days?

Mr. S. Anderson: I don't want to speculate, honestly. I wouldn't want to say something that's . . .

Mr. Clark: Just in all sincerity, what I would hope is that that order of operations is in the right order and that we're not making policy absent an understanding of what mitigated flows will look like.

Mr. S. Anderson: I mean, I think that's why it's taking so long, obviously. You want to get it right. You want to make sure that people are safe and that we do it right going forward. I would say that that's probably the biggest reason why, you know, things are taking a long time, because it is important to get it right.

Mr. Clark: Does the ministry take a view on policy-level mitigation? I mean, is the objective to get people to move out of the way who live in communities who've been there for many decades, over a century in some cases, and businesses that have been there? We happened to have built the city of Calgary at the confluence of two rivers there, susceptible to flooding. What's the general philosophy that you're approaching the question of the floodway development regulation with?

5:20

Mr. S. Anderson: I mean, it'd be pretty standard, I would say. We try to ensure that when we make our policy decisions, we do have that appropriate balance between public safety but also the respect for the investment, the owners that are down there. It's obviously a pretty fine balance that we have to go through. Is there a particular line in the budget you'd like to point me to?

Mr. Clark: Well, no. I mean, it speaks to the overall policy as it relates to what the city of Calgary in particular is going to be able to – the policies they're going to be able to move forward with.

I've sat down with the city of Calgary, and one of the things they feel very strongly about is that they have a pretty good policy frame in place. They're concerned about a one-size-fits-all floodway development regulation that would apply province-wide and not respect the unique nature of the city of Calgary. It is a city of a million people. We've built the downtown core on a flood plain. Whether that was a wise choice or not 125 years ago, it is what it is. They also have a real strategy around densification, which allows them to reuse infrastructure, reduce the carbon footprint, all the things that we think are a good idea. In Calgary densification means building near rivers.

There are two schools of thought. There's: the river is going to go where it is, and people ought to move out of the way no matter the cost. The other is: you know, let's be reasonable about where we've built existing infrastructure, and then let's have some reasonable policy. Reasonable policy, to me, is some of the things the city of Calgary has already done. They've done some things like removed grandfathering, relaxed some zoning to allow for buildings to be higher, and if there's a substantial renovation proposed, utilities must be above grade, those sorts of things. Those things, to me, are reasonable. But if the objective is to restrict development, either renovation or net new development of any kind, to the point where it slowly kind of chokes out development anywhere near a river, I don't think that's feasible. It's certainly not feasible in the city of Calgary, and there are unique circumstances.

I know you've recognized that with waterways in Fort McMurray, and I would encourage you, please, to consider that as you develop the floodway development regulation. I would also

encourage, if you haven't already – and I recognize that you're very busy – your officials in your department to sit down with the city of Calgary, who have some real expertise in this and, I know, a certain perspective, obviously. I think it'd be really, really helpful if you could do that. Obviously, I'm very happy to sit down – I would like to if we can at some point – to talk about this. I know it's a very important issue both to my constituents and I think to the economic viability of the city of Calgary and, ultimately, the province.

I just want to move on to a related but different issue. As you may or may not know as a new minister, there were 17 properties purchased by the province of Alberta through the floodway buyout program. Those 17 properties happen to be in Calgary-Elbow. As I understand it, pretty much all of the work has been done to demolish the properties and to seed them with grass, and it's the desire of the community to see those properties resold back into the market once mitigation is in place. Is that a commitment you're willing and able to make right now? Will you be able to resell those properties back into the market to recoup some of the money that was, frankly, wasted in purchasing them in the first place when mitigation is in place?

Mr. S. Anderson: That's one of those things that we're working on. We're working on it with Infrastructure. Obviously, we have to have discussions with them on it. It also, obviously, depends on some of that mapping. But you were right when you were talking about the development before, about the practical kind of things we have to do. I think you're right about the waterways in Fort Mac, common sense and looking at, as I'd said before, the balance, right? So we're working with Infrastructure on that, and once that mapping is done, then we can move forward.

For sure, I'm a practical, common-sense person. A lot of the guys that I work with are like that. I've got a great team here, so I'm confident that they're looking at all these aspects. But, for sure, I don't mind sitting down with you and looking at your information and having a discussion, too, whenever we can. I mean, I'm busy, but you're the leader of the Alberta Party. I'll make some time for you.

Mr. Clark: There you go. Thank you very much. I appreciate that. I'd love to sit down with you and talk more about that. I do appreciate that if we do take a common-sense approach to this – I have talked with the city of Calgary specifically. They have no particular interest in turning any of those properties into parks or any other municipal use. I think they'd be quite interested in seeing those properties sold back into the market. They're not contiguous; it's a real patchwork. It doesn't seem to make a lot of sense to keep them out of the real estate market. It would be both an opportunity for the province to recoup some substantial money but also to put the community back together, which is very important as we're now approaching four years postflood.

Speaking of floods and disasters, for the disaster recovery program, which you alluded to in your initial comments, you said that you're working on some updates and some changes there. Is there any plan to change the DRP eligibility or criteria?

Mr. Schreiber: Shane Schreiber, managing director of the Alberta Emergency Management Agency.

The Chair: Sorry. Just for the record you don't have to introduce yourself every time.

Mr. Schreiber: Okay. Under the old system you did.

You're asking specifically about DRP eligibility. There is a cabinet report that's being prepared that's taking a look at many

aspects of the disaster recovery program. Eligibility and cost sharing are one of the things that we're looking at.

Mr. Clark: Are you considering changing criteria? One of the things that those flood hazard maps will show us is floodways, flood fringe, but that defines, as I understand it – and please correct me if I'm wrong about this – eligibility for DRP as well. Is there any talk of changing what that criteria or eligibility may be, either from perhaps a 1-in-100-years flood to a 1-in-200-years flood? Is there anything like that that you're looking at changing?

Mr. Schreiber: The challenge is that right now DRP covers damages as a result of overland flooding because insurance is not readily and reasonably available. However, insurance companies in Canada are rolling out overland flooding products, so we'll have to do an assessment as to where those products are available and what appetite the government has to then cover those people that may not be able to get private insurance in the areas where it's not readily and reasonably available.

Mr. Clark: But DRP, of course, is not insurance. The objective of DRP is in no way to make you whole again at the end of the day. It really is just to tide you over for basic, basic needs.

Mr. Schreiber: Yeah. It gets you a house. It doesn't get you the house you had.

Mr. Clark: That's right, so that definition of readily and reasonably available I think needs to be certainly well considered, as I'm sure you know.

Okay. I'll move on to building codes, then. One of my constituents is in a wheelchair, and she also does a lot of work consulting on accessibility. One of her great frustrations is that a lot of buildings in this province are built to the building code as it relates to the barrier-free section of the building code, but that doesn't really represent true accessibility. One of the things that she jokingly says is that it drives her nuts when she presses the button to open an automatic door. She calls them kill-me doors because they swing towards you as opposed to the other way. While that's technically in accordance with the building code, it clearly does not enable accessibility.

I'm curious if this is something that you are looking at, revising Alberta's building code to enhance accessibility for Albertans, which is important today and will become even more so as our population ages.

Mr. S. Anderson: Are you ready for me to answer?

Mr. Clark: I'm ready.

Mr. S. Anderson: Yeah. Okay. We do have the Barrier Free Sub-Council for safety codes, but I think that Bruce would be able to supplement a little bit along those lines for you.

Mr. McDonald: Sure. We have the Barrier Free Sub-Council at the Safety Codes Council, which tends to look at all of those issues. We also work with the National Research Council on any changes to the building code that are necessary. I think some of the issues that have come up in the past are dealing with, you know, very old buildings or buildings that have been constructed prior to the current, updated building code. As you can well imagine, if we did do things retroactively like that, it would be extremely expensive to go back and have building owners update all properties to meet current code standards.

5:30

Mr. Clark: I think that one of the frustrations is that it's not just the old buildings; it's a lot of new builds. She does a lot of work with architects as they're designing new buildings. You know, I don't want to, I guess, name specific names of buildings that were built. Buildings that have opened in the last year, where she'll try to roll her wheelchair up and it's not possible: that's, again, her frustration, which I know is a frustration, of course, of the disability community province-wide as well. I'm just interested in that.

Sorry. What was the name of that council on the building code?

Mr. McDonald: It's called the Barrier Free Sub-Council at the Safety Codes Council.

Mr. Clark: Okay. Who's on that council? What's that made up of?

Mr. McDonald: I don't have the members, but there are members from various disability communities; CNIB, for example. There's a pretty wide array of individuals, representatives. We can certainly provide that.

Mr. Clark: I'd appreciate that. If she's not aware of that, I will put her in touch with that.

Are you actively working on changes to the building code? Is this an ongoing iterative process, or is it something that happens by sort of large changes infrequently?

Mr. McDonald: Yeah. Building code is on a five-year cycle, and it doesn't stop and start. As soon as one building code is published, it almost starts immediately, with consultation at the national level first, but we always come back to the Safety Codes Council as well. It's a pretty comprehensive process, but, you know, we would certainly take feedback at any point in time. The chair is from Alberta for the provincial-territorial committee on building codes, so we are in a position to bring forward those at the national level as well.

Mr. Clark: Where are we in the five-year cycle of building code changes?

Mr. McDonald: The next code will be published in 2020 for the building code.

Mr. Clark: Okay. Given that it's 2017, is now a pretty good time to be trying to get some changes made?

Mr. McDonald: Definitely.

Mr. Clark: Okay. I will have her get in touch. I appreciate the answers.

Given that I've got six seconds left, I think we can call it. Thank you very much. I appreciate your answers.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now move on to the private members of the government caucus.

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you for being here, Minister. I would like to share my time equally with the Member for Calgary-Northern Hills. Outcome 1 in the business plan, page 115, states, "Albertans live in viable municipalities and communities with responsible, collaborative and accountable local governments." Obviously, a big shift in the Municipal Government Act is a requirement for municipalities to work together and to collaborate more. Could you articulate why the province is making it mandatory for municipalities to enter into intermunicipal

collaborative frameworks, and what sorts of outcomes do you see happening there?

Mr. S. Anderson: Sure. Thanks for the question. I mean, I think collaboration, to be honest with you, is kind of a no-brainer. I think it makes sense for our communities. As I had stated before, people don't look at the lines on a map; they look to see where the nearest community centre is that they want to go to or rec centre or, you know, police or fire station, what have you, right? I think that we need to make sure that regional collaboration is something that we're all doing. That's a big part of the MGA, as I said.

Collaboration is key. It's something that I noticed when I first came out into my riding. I was fortunate to have some mayors out there that have done some really good things together. I mean, they have joint agreements on everything from the sanding trucks to, you know, clearing ice and snow and things to do with rec centres and what have you. I mean, even when they do announcements, they always do it together because they just know that their region benefits from that. We want to make sure that we're working together on these things that are costly like that, like water, waste water – what else? – transportation, I would say, and emergency management, to be cost efficient.

Duplication of services is a big one. We don't want to be duplicating services. I know there are some agreements in our area with all the fire. Like, from the airport to the city of Leduc to the county, they do a lot of work together on that because it covers a bigger area. They collaborate quite well on that. I've had some really good discussions with people, especially at AAMD and C, on some of the good things that are being done around the province. I think Parkland does some good things, too, and some other counties and municipalities.

That's, I think, the biggest part of it. We want to make sure that we're planning these communities so they're sustainable and resilient going forward. That's the whole point of it, right? When people move to a community, they want to make sure that they have the services that are there for them. When we work together, you know, it's better. Instead of having separate people asking for the same thing, we're together, and you're going to get more, right? It's for the benefit of all of our constituents.

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Minister.

I'd like to stay on the topic of intermunicipal collaboration. As you said, it's a huge thing that we see in my region, with the trimunicipal area there. On page 114 it states:

The implementation of the renewed Municipal Government Act, in particular, will bring new responsibilities and opportunities, including a key focus on municipalities working together through municipal partnerships to deliver more effective and efficient services to their communities. These changes will increase municipal workload and the workload of Municipal Affairs.

Now, I know these changes are quite popular with the public and municipal leaders because I've heard a lot of that in my municipalities, but my question is about that last point, where you expect municipal workload to increase. How much to you expect municipal workloads to increase, and how will your ministry help with this increased workload?

Mr. S. Anderson: It's a good question. It's something that municipal officials have been asking me. It was something they were concerned about. They want to make sure that they have the resources available because some of them might never have done these types of agreements before, right? I think that working on these ICFs in the end is going to save money for these municipalities. That's what's going to happen.

One of the things that we're working on through the ministry is getting templates for these different towns and villages and municipalities so that they have something they can work with. They don't have to make agreements with their neighbours on every single thing. It could only be a few things or it could be many, depending on their situation. One of the things that we know: change is hard. It's a little scary sometimes, so we have change management processes there, supports for these municipalities. The \$500,000 we gave to AAMD and C last month was exactly for those types of things, to aid these municipalities. We have a similar arrangement with AUMA.

I think there are right now about 600 agreements or so out there. I mean, we're not reinventing the wheel. There are a lot of agreements out there, so we have a lot of good examples that we can use to help people and to defray those costs. I think that's the whole, like, kind of point of what we're doing right now, trying to make sure that people understand that we're going to be there to help them with that and, going forward, that, you know, once we have these things in place, it's just going to be better for everybody.

Ms Babcock: That's very good news. Thank you, Minister.

Sticking to regional collaboration, I'd like to ask a few questions about the growth management boards. On page 115 the Municipal Affairs business plan states, under key strategies to achieve outcome 1, that Municipal Affairs will "work with municipalities to strengthen regional planning and service delivery through implementation of new mandatory Growth Management Boards in [the] metropolitan regions" of Calgary and Edmonton, which we've already talked about today. I understand that at least in the Edmonton region, which has the CRB, this isn't entirely new. Can you update us or inform us on exactly what will be changing for the CRB going forward?

Mr. S. Anderson: Sure. Yeah. The Capital Region Board has been around since about 2009. It's been working quite well, all of them together. I think it's something we can use as a model for collaboration, especially with Calgary being a little bit new to the management part of it, so we can help out.

The two major changes to the CRB, I would say, relate to the membership mandate. Right now it's at 24, and it's going down to 13 municipalities. What that is being done for is because we want to be more, I guess, streamlined, leaner, more focused on what's going on so that, you know, we have a little bit easier time of making decisions quicker, make sure we make those right decisions for the people that we represent. We chose 5,000 as the population. We had to choose something, so that was the choice that we made. All the municipalities in our region, in the Edmonton region specifically, that are over 5,000 will be on the board and then four counties in the region. It's still a big group of people who represent a lot of our area.

5:40

One of the other mandates that we wanted to include was economic development. We want to promote that regional economic development. There are some good things going on here, I know. You look at the Industrial Heartland. You look west out to Stony and Spruce and the things that are happening out there, down through Nisku and things like that, out into Strathcona. I mean, there's some really good regional work that's being done out there. It has been a pretty good focus to this point, but going forward, it's going to be even more so.

We've had some really good conversations with Mayor Iveson and some of the other mayors around and municipal officials about that because now they're looking at, instead of – you know, they

focus on their own little area, which is great, but if you open up your mind and have a bigger picture look at it and we all work together on it, it's just going to be better for everybody, right? And not just the Edmonton region: it's going to spread out to the rest of the province. The same in Calgary: that will do the same thing. I think it's to the benefit of everybody.

Ms Babcock: Thank you.

At this point I will turn it over to my colleague.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Okay. Thank you for that. Thank you for that, Minister. On the same topic of the growth management boards, then, outlined in the business plan, just maybe elaborate a little bit more on the Calgary region. Since making the mandatory growth board there – it's a new thing, and that topic has been touched on by a few other members in the room. But I was wondering if you could provide a bit of an overview of how the work to set up that board is progressing along.

Mr. S. Anderson: Sure. Yeah. You know, right now we've got the fact that in Calgary there's the regional CRP. It's a volunteer initiative that co-ordinates regional servicing and collaboration. What we're doing is making it mandatory for a growth management board going forward. With the CRP, at the moment it includes membership of urban municipalities but not really so much on the rural aspect of it, I guess. That's kind of where we're looking at maybe reaching out more to have these relationships. There are some, obviously, but that's going to be a big focus.

We need to do, you know, a fair amount of work with the Calgary region just to get them up to speed and understanding kind of, I guess, what we're looking for. We can look at the Capital Region Board here for some of those initiatives and examples of how they've gone through their trials and tribulations kind of thing. But much like in Edmonton, we want to make sure that when we work with these members of the growth management board, it is a collaboration to draft the regulations and, like, how these things are going to work. It's all about partnership. That's the biggest thing, and I think that everybody is onboard with that. It seems that we've been having some really good conversations with that.

I had mentioned before the proposed membership of Calgary, Chestermere, Airdrie, Okotoks, Cochrane, High River, Strathmore, the MD of Foothills, and Wheatland and Rocky View counties. I'll be meeting pretty soon – I think it's in the next couple of weeks – with the members of this board. At that time we'll have some more discussions on kind of what we're going to do going forward and, I would say, I guess, the transition of how we're going to do that.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you, Minister.

My last question on that topic. I understand that your ministry does provide funding to support these boards, but I can't see where that line item is on page 119 of the business plan. Can you confirm that your ministry is providing funding for these boards, how much, and where in the budget it comes from?

Mr. S. Anderson: It's on page 119 of the business plan?

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Yes.

Mr. S. Anderson: What that is is that the ministry is providing support for the CGMB, the incoming Calgary growth management board. What that budgeted price is is \$2.25 million, and it comes in under the ACP, the Alberta community partnership program. This funding is used to support the core administrative costs and the development of the regional services initiatives of those two boards. We're happy to support these boards because we know that in the

end, when everybody is collaborating, it's going to deliver very good regional services and ultimately save the taxpayers money and be more efficient.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Great. Thanks.

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Minister. I'd like to talk about outcome 3 of the ministry's business plan, page 116, which is ensuring that Alberta is prepared for disasters and emergencies. I know we've already heard quite a bit of conversation about this this evening, but it's a really important piece. You know, we did have a smallish wildfire in my area last year. It was at the very beginning of the season in Duffield, and it was pretty terrifying for our entire community.

I know that this question does come up quite a bit, and it came up at supplementary estimates last month, regarding how much is budgeted for disasters. But I'm going to ask it again. Last year the government budgeted \$200 million for disaster emergency assistance, yet the Fort McMurray wildfires alone cost \$750 million. I understand that \$200 million for emergencies is budgeted again this year. My question is: why isn't the budget increased to cover the costs of the emergencies?

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you. I think it's a good question. Disasters are by their nature unpredictable, obviously, in their size, their cost. You spoke about a small one in your area. That goes up to the big ones like we had in Fort Mac. As a result of that, aside from the \$200,000 that we have set aside in the DRP budget for smaller local disasters, the ministry doesn't budget for disasters or emergencies in that respect. I mean, they're funded as they occur, depending on the scope and the size and the scale of what's happening. What that would mean is that, for example, we set aside, as I had said, \$200 million in the GOA for potential disasters that we try to prepare for. Then what that enables us to do is act quickly and effectively, you know, very fast, when it first happens and then provide that aid, that support in the beginning. Once we need to get more money and if that \$200 million isn't enough, then we go and we make a request for the supplemental funds. None of those costs are going to be on the shoulders of Albertans.

The provinces cost share the eligible emergency response and recovery with the federal government as well, so we work hand in hand with them on that. They don't budget fully for anticipated disasters either. We anticipate almost \$500 million from the federal government for the 2016 wildfires and nearly \$1 billion from the 2013 southern Alberta flood. You're as prepared as you can be, I guess. You know, we need people to know out there that when something happens, the government is going to have their back.

I had the pleasure of going up to Fort Mac to see some amazing people a couple of months ago in their recovery, to see what was happening and how much building was happening up there. I met a super fellow who is building his own house. It was nice to see and to hear and understand, you know, how much that money meant to the municipality and where it went and what they're building. It's something that we always need to remind people of, that the government is there to have their back, and they always will. When we need the money, it's going to be there.

Ms Babcock: Thank you. Also on outcome 3, I understand that the federal government made some changes last year with respect to how they support provinces and communities that have been affected by a disaster. Can you describe those changes and how they're going to affect Alberta?

Mr. S. Anderson: For sure. Yeah, they did make some changes. On January 1, 2016, the government of Canada amended their per

capita formula, which is used to determine the federal cost share for disaster relief. What they did now – the first \$3.03 per capita of disaster assistance comes from the province. The feds then take on 50 per cent of the next \$6.07 per capita and 75 per cent of the next \$6.07 per capita. Past that the federal government covers 90 per cent of the cost. That means that the province will be responsible to cover more of the recovery costs than in previous years. Based on Alberta's current population of 4.2 million, the province will now be responsible for 100 per cent of the first \$12.8 million of DRP. So Albertans and municipalities have received and will continue to receive the essential support from the DRP, the disaster recovery program, and municipal wildfire assistance programs. First Nations DRPs are 100 per cent recovered from the government of Canada. That will continue to be the same. Yeah, they did change it a bit, so it makes it a bit tougher on us, but we're used to that.

5:50

Ms Babcock: Further to outcome 3, Minister, I see details on page 116 as a key strategy that the minister is looking to transform disaster recovery activities and programs to improve the province's ability to recover from widespread emergencies and disasters. Can you describe what type of transformation you're alluding to here? What types of funds will be committed to this effort?

Mr. S. Anderson: Sure. I would be happy to. We're allocating \$4 million to complete the design and undertake the implementation of a new disaster financial assistance IT system. The new system will streamline the application process and improve our program's transparency by enabling Albertans and municipalities to apply for assistance and then also check on the status of the file online. It's going to include a new database that's going to streamline case management. It's going to lead to faster and more efficient payment of eligible residential, small-business, and municipal claims, which is a good thing. It will also offer increased audit management capabilities to improve the transparency of disaster financial assistance and maximize Alberta's eligibility for federal reimbursements under the disaster financial assistance arrangements.

We know that Albertans in need of the DRP are often facing the most stressful events in their lifetime, obviously, and they need a system that's going to be accessible. It's going to be informative. It's going to be transparent. We need to make sure that information is there. A lack of information, you know, sometimes, is really hard on people, right? So we want to make sure that we have the systems in place that are going to be available to them, that are going to give them some guidance and maybe some peace of mind, obviously.

You know, we learned some lessons from Fort Mac and Slave Lake and also the floods down in Calgary, so we're trying to take steps to make things better for Albertans, lives better for Albertans. That's one of the ways that we're doing that.

Ms Babcock: Thank you. I'll stay on outcome 3 for a couple more questions here. With specific regard to the disaster recovery program for Fort McMurray, Minister, I imagine the funding for the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo to recover from the wildfire is continuing this year, but can you describe some of the items that have yet to be funded?

Mr. S. Anderson: Sure. Currently, right now, there are 196 projects identified by the RMWB related to the response and recovery from the wildfire. At present all remain open. [A timer sounded] Is that the time? All right.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister.

We're now going to go back to the Official Opposition, but just a friendly reminder that it's five minutes or 10 minutes combined with the minister. Please go ahead, sir.

Mr. Stier: Ten minutes combined, Mr. Chair, if I could, please.

The Chair: Okay. Please go ahead.

Mr. Stier: Thank you. Well, hello again, gentlemen. I'd like to go back to where I was a little bit for a few minutes, if I could, with regard to regional planning and some of the growth board stuff we talked about. Not so much the growth boards, I guess, but the regional planning stuff gives me a little concern.

As you know, in the past few months we've discussed and worked on the Modernized Municipal Government Act, Bill 21, and Bill 22 to some extent, which required municipal development plans, IDPs, and then ICFs to be constructed, as we've talked about this evening already to a certain extent. Of course, as you know, when those documents are written and prepared, they have to keep the direction of the land-use framework in mind and the direction of the regional plans. Of course, that was brought in by the previous government back in '07 roughly, with the previous minister of SRD, who was at the time the MLA for the Foothills-Rocky View constituency. It moved along, and there were some timelines set with some terms of reference documents and how things were going to be laid out.

Now we are here, 10 years later. Only two of those plans are actually physical documents that have been finished out of the seven that were proposed in the land-use framework. One of the other ones that remains, the North Saskatchewan plan, is partway through its development, I understand. According to the website that I looked at, it seems like that process has come to a bit of a stop. I understand that the upper Peace and lower Peace may be in some sort of preliminary discussions to put together regional advisory councils to get those started as well.

Nonetheless, if the municipalities that you folks control through the ministry you are operating are to do these plans that are now being required, how can they do that when the regional plans are not complete? That's my first question. I'm going to ask about three questions here, and maybe you can respond to the whole thing.

Secondly, the Minister of Environment and Parks and the ministry were questioned the other day by myself in this regard and confirmed that was the case, that they had had to go back to the lower Athabasca regional plan and some of the South Saskatchewan and do some ongoing update work, biodiversity sections and a few other things that they were augmenting.

The other part of the puzzle is that the regional plans require to be reflected in how the growth boards will work because they're going to be making decisions based upon the rules that are in the municipal development plans. The whole thing is kind of intertwined together with the big baby at the top of the page in hierarchy being the land-use framework and the regional plans below that, yet many of those are not complete.

My questions. Firstly, are you in contact with the Land Use Secretariat on the staging of those plans? Are you thinking, therefore, that because they're not complete, the old Alberta land-use policies that we've had for about 20 years are going to have to be used and utilized until those other documents are finished? Third, do you anticipate having some discussions about that moving forward, or how will municipalities work with this bit of a conundrum? Frankly, they are supposed to be a lot further along the line of progress, and they're not there yet. Can you comment on that, please?

Mr. S. Anderson: Yeah. I'll just throw some comments out, and then if anybody wants to supplement, they can. I know that with the regional plans you had mentioned the land-use commissioner and Environment and Parks. That is under them. But, obviously, a lot of this stuff is crossministry. We're always discussing things together, right? So I do know that the South Saskatchewan is complete, and that's going to inform the Calgary regional growth plan. Then the North Saskatchewan has gone through the regional advisory committee, and the Capital Region Board was involved. That's what I know about that right now.

I don't know if anybody wants to supplement kind of where we're at on that.

Mr. Pickering: Yeah. I guess the only other thing I'd supplement with is that the land-use policies apply to an area until a regional plan has been developed.

Mr. Stier: Then, I guess, if I could, the remaining areas and the municipalities within those remaining areas where there is not an up-to-date, modernized regional plan as per the land-use framework are going to be fairly vague and will only be based on those few chapters in the Alberta land-use policies that we used 15 to 20 years ago. Is that a fair assessment? Have you been talking to the Land Use Secretariat office about how long it will be before they will be completing their task, or are you guys involved in that?

Secondly, have you ever considered moving that whole division out of Environment and Parks and taking that Land Use Secretariat into your realm? It seems to me that all of the planning process in Alberta, from when an applicant makes an application to take a five-acre piece off a 120-acre piece or whether he's putting in a development permit application and everything, all of his presentations made to get that application processed and all of that will depend eventually upon that whole hierarchy, which includes the Land Use Secretariat and the regional plans. Wouldn't it make more sense to have this within the ministry that you are working with, Municipal Affairs?

Mr. Pickering: I think to answer your first question with respect to growth management boards, as the minister mentioned, the South Saskatchewan is done, so that will inform the Calgary Regional Partnership plan. The Capital Region Board was involved in the RAC for the North Saskatchewan regional plan, so I think there's good alignment there. With respect to the balance of the province and the regional plan the transitional sort of strategy was that the land-use policies will apply until a regional plan is in place.

Mr. Stier: Right.

6:00

Mr. Pickering: Once a regional plan is in place under the Alberta Land Stewardship Act, then municipalities will be required to amend their municipal development plans to comply with it. So we do over time get that sort of hierarchy of planning that we are looking for. Those will inform the intermunicipal development plans that are required now under the MGA. I think planning is an evolving issue, and I think as things evolve, those will be taken into consideration.

Mr. Stier: Okay. Just if I may – and I understand, Mr. Pickering, where you're going with that. To my last point, though, have there been conversations with the Land Use Secretariat on the progress of those others to try to get that going to match all these other things you guys are doing with a lot of gusto here in the MGA amendment?

Secondly, have you thought about bringing that division out of Environment and Parks and bringing it under the Ministry of Municipal Affairs?

Mr. Pickering: Those would be broader discussions with respect to realignment. I think the point that I would suggest to you there is that, you know, from a cumulative effects management perspective, there's a very strong tie to Environment and Parks, dealing with air, land, and water, so the air, biodiversity, and water. I think that was the original rationale for the land-use commissioner to be in Environment and Parks. That probably hasn't changed.

Mr. Stier: Just to follow up, then, I have not heard, though: are you working with Environment and Parks on the progress?

Mr. Pickering: The progress under the Land Stewardship Act and the regional planning sort of initiative that is occurring across government is a crossgovernment initiative, and Municipal Affairs is part of that process. We obviously in kind of the settled areas of the province have a fair amount of expertise that we can provide to Environment and Parks.

Mr. Stier: Okay. All right.

I see I have about a minute left, so I'm going to jump into another topic now, gentlemen, if you don't mind. I want to get back to an old problem that we've had in the past year or two, and that's grants in lieu of taxes. A lot of the municipalities were complaining over the past few years that on the government-subsidized housing and seniors' housing, they were no longer getting their share of grants in lieu of taxes for those properties. Can you make a quick comment – I see there are about 40 seconds left – with respect to that aspect of your ministry? Are you going to put that program back into place?

Mr. S. Anderson: The information I have is that it's under Seniors and Housing for that part of it.

Mr. Stier: That's moved to Seniors and Housing?

Mr. S. Anderson: Yeah.

Mr. Pickering: Maybe just to supplement, we have a grant in place of taxes program. That is continuing. The piece that was eliminated was through the seniors ministry, so that's not proposed, as I understand it, to be resurrected.

Mr. S. Anderson: I knew that. I didn't say that clearly enough. Sorry.

Mr. Stier: Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll move on to Mr. McIver.

Mr. McIver: Thanks, Chair. Ten minutes?

The Chair: Yes, indeed.

Mr. McIver: If the minister is still amenable, I'll share time with the minister. I think I got a thumbs up, Chair. Thank you.

Okay. On page 118 of your business plan, under city charters – and I know we touched on that a little bit earlier – the last three words on that page say that risks on the charters are “competing stakeholder perspectives.” I just have to ask: which stakeholders would have competing perspectives, please, Minister?

Mr. S. Anderson: Sorry. Are you asking who they would compete with? I mean, is that what you're . . .

Mr. McIver: Yeah. Well, you said that one of the risks in this thing is competing stakeholder perspectives, so I'm saying: which stakeholders would have competing perspectives?

Mr. S. Anderson: Well, for us, I mean, we didn't identify which stakeholders, but we . . .

Mr. McIver: That's why I'm asking.

Mr. S. Anderson: Yeah, I know. That's what I'm saying. Just given the regulatory focus of what the city charters are, we're trying to make sure that, obviously, Edmonton and Calgary are flexible in what they can do. But, yeah. I mean, that's just something that was – I don't have a list of competing stakeholders.

Mr. McIver: I would be happy if someone would send a list to me later, Minister, if that's convenient.

Mr. S. Anderson: Yeah. If I can find something for you, I can get it to you.

Mr. McIver: Thank you.

We'll keep moving here. Two minutes out of my 10 are gone, so I'll keep rolling here. Last year – and I know it was before your time, Minister – one of the previous ministers spoke of the potential municipal election finances changes. Have you made or are you planning on making changes to the municipal election finances rules? So that I don't have to have you go to the well twice: will those rules be in place in time for this fall's municipal election, please, if indeed you're making any?

Mr. S. Anderson: Do you want to . . .

Mr. Sandberg: Yeah. Sure. I can speak to it. There are no changes intended for the Local Authorities Election Act in advance of the 2017 municipal elections, but as we do after every municipal election, we intend to do a review of the legislation after the October 2017 elections.

Mr. McIver: Okay. Thank you. So not to be obtuse but just clear, the municipal election rules for 2017 will be the same as for 2013?

Mr. Sandberg: There are no changes intended.

Mr. S. Anderson: Yeah. I could have answered there.

Mr. McIver: No. That's a nice clean, clear answer. I appreciate that very much.

Mr. S. Anderson: Yeah. We've got a lot of work to do on it.

Mr. McIver: Last year the minister committed to following up on improvements to the municipal financial information system. Can you give us an update? How is that going? Have you or one of your predecessor ministers made changes there?

Mr. Sandberg: The municipal financial information system is in essence a database that is operated in the ministry that collects information from municipalities across the province on an annual basis. We have not at this point this year been able to undertake any of the software and IT upgrades that we would need to do, so we have been continuing to talk with municipalities about the kinds of changes that they would be looking for.

Mr. McIver: Okay. So it's still on your list but not really started yet. Is that fair?

Mr. Sandberg: It is not. You're correct.

Mr. McIver: Okay. That's again a nice clean, clear answer. I'm always grateful for that. Thank you.

Let's go to the Municipal Government Board. Your predecessor said that consolidation of the Surface Rights Board, the Land Compensation Board, and the new homebuyer protection under the MGB would save \$210,000 for the cost of a chair, and item 10 in this year's business plan shows almost a 60 per cent increase in funding for the Municipal Government Board this year. Can you explain what seems on the surface a disconnect between what we were told and what's happening, please?

Mr. Lemphers: Sure. Thank you. The budget increase was due to, actually, part of the administrative amalgamation of the four boards. The four boards continue to exist currently. The cost to support the administration of the boards has been consolidated within this ministry. There was a \$2.7 million increase to Municipal Affairs to transfer the administrative portion to support the two boards that were originally Environment and Parks. That's the Land Compensation Board and the Surface Rights Board. That was transferred, the funding was, to Municipal Affairs. So Environment and Parks received a corresponding \$2.7 million drop in their budget, and the money is now shown under the Municipal Government Board line, which is where the administration has been grouped for now while we achieve the administrative savings.

Mr. McIver: Okay. You said the magic words: while we achieve the savings. They're not there now. Should I be looking for them again next year at this time and asking you this again?

Mr. S. Anderson: The board chair savings are there.

Mr. Lemphers: There are savings that are being achieved. We have eliminated one board chair. We have consolidated the administration into one work site, which is saving \$54,000 annually. The savings for the board chair is \$221,000 a year. We're moving several of the full-time Land Compensation Board members to part-time, which is going to save about \$273,000 a year. Those savings are occurring, but they were more than offset by the \$2.7 million that got transferred with the drop in Environment and Parks.

Mr. McIver: That is what I would call a good answer. Thank you.

The MGB. Are there any more changes coming? Are you happy with how it's operating, the Municipal Government Board? I'll tell you why I ask here. One of the things is how many Albertans feel neutral about the MGB rather than neutral or satisfied in your performance indicator 4(a). I guess the reason I ask is: are there any more changes, and how are you measuring the use and accessibility of the MGB?

6:10

Mr. Lemphers: Municipal Affairs tracks the performance of the MGB and the new environment protection board. Environment and Parks didn't have the same level of performance measure tracking, and those two boards still exist under Environment and Parks for now. The administrative amalgamation that I just finished talking about, that identified the savings: the amalgamation is being done in two phases. The administrative amalgamation results in the savings. We're going to see how well the administrative amalgamation is working, and then we'll look to move to a formal

legislative amalgamation of all four boards if things are working well at the administrative level.

Mr. McIver: Okay. So there should be more questions for me next year. Thank you. That was a good answer.

Outcome 4 that you've got, concerning quasi-judicial boards, is the only outcome that doesn't show a corresponding risk to achieving the outcomes. Isn't there something that could go wrong? Is there a reason why there are no risks involved with not achieving the outcomes there when you've got that listed on the other ones?

Mr. S. Anderson: Brad, do you want to reply?

Mr. Pickering: With respect to a quasi-judicial body they make a decision based on the evidence that's before them from the two parties. There is no risk in the context that a decision needs to be made within the time horizons required.

Back to your performance measure one, 88 per cent: we feel it is a very good measurement in the context that with two parties, one gets the decision that they're looking for and the other doesn't. You have a 50 per cent sort of opportunity not to get a decision that goes in your favour. So to have an 88 per cent positive performance rating, we see that as very positive.

Mr. McIver: Thank you.

Orphan wells. Your predecessor last year alluded to supports for municipalities who owned orphan wells. There's been recently announced support in the federal budget. Do you plan on bolstering that and getting municipality support for orphan wells?

Mr. S. Anderson: There is a committee that we formed. We're involved with it, AAMD and C, Environment and Parks – I can't remember who else is on that – Education. We do have a committee that's working on that to try to figure out what might be achievable, what kind of best outcomes we're looking for. Right now that's being worked on. Hopefully, we hear back, you know, and get some really positive feedback about that. Then going forward, we could work on that.

Mr. McIver: Okay. Calgary's West Village remediation. Anything in this budget to help Calgary out with that remediation on the West Village?

Mr. S. Anderson: Not in this one, no.

Mr. McIver: Okay. Thank you.

First Nations. How much of the MSI grants went to help First Nations community members that are living off-reserve to help with municipalities? Anything? Your business plan mentions First Nations and UNDRIP . . .

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We will now move on to the private members of the government caucus.

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Minister. I have one last question on outcome 3, the disaster recovery. I see that a key strategy here is to improve the government of Alberta's response capability to respond to major and widespread emergencies and disasters. Now, one thing I have heard is that the current Provincial Operations Centre is outdated. I know there are some plans for an upgrade there. I know we've had this discussion a little bit already tonight, but could you please share with us the ministry's plan for a new Provincial Operations Centre?

Mr. S. Anderson: Sure. You bet. It's absolutely a top priority to get the POC into a new, updated facility with better technology. As I stated before, seeing what they're working with and how incredible a job they did working with Fort Mac was astounding, to be honest. These guys – you know, I stated before about a beehive buzzing, right? It looks like it's chaos, but when you stand there and watch what everybody is doing in that small space, everybody knows where they need to be, who they need to talk to, when they need to do it.

I'm looking forward to making sure that we get something that's up to date for them, a new, modern facility, and because a lot of what we do, too, is co-ordinate with people out in the field – right? – to make sure that we have that new technology. I mean, we were talking about – typical in 2017, you know, they have all their technology, but then we also monitor things like social media. We need to be able to monitor everything we possibly can to make sure that we get our resources where we need them to keep people safe.

In saying that, POC is like a central point of collection of information where they can disseminate from, you know, and it's responsible for co-ordinating not only just that initial response but the maintenance of that support, too, right? So for us to make sure that we have something new and reliable for these guys, I think is a huge deal for us. As I said, I'm amazed at the people that work in AEMA and what they achieve; it's astounding to see. I'm really quite proud of what they do. Hopefully, we can find a new area soon where we can start building something for them. I'm looking forward to that, and I'm sure that Mr. Schreiber is, too. We'll get something that's going to be in this century for them, which would be very nice.

[Mr. Hunter in the chair]

Ms Babcock: Thank you.

I'd like to move on to MSI, as that is something I hear a lot about in my riding. I'm looking at the statement of operations on page 119 of the business plan, and I understand that there are a number of different envelopes associated with MSI, including capital, operating, and basic municipal transportation grants. I know that you touched a bit on the breakdown of what amounts Calgary and Edmonton are receiving this year and how much is going to other communities, but I'm wondering how that's calculated. Essentially, what is the formula that's used to determine what a municipality will receive?

Mr. S. Anderson: Sure. That's a good question. We want to make sure that the support is there for these municipalities to make sure that they can finance a lot of their municipal infrastructure, right? The model right now provides base funding of \$120,000 a year for all municipalities, then \$60,000 a year for summer villages, and then another \$9 million is made available for funding to municipality populations that are under 10,000 and have limited local assessment bases.

I mean, that's just the base, but the rest of the funding goes on a formula that's a combination of population, which is 48 per cent; education tax requisitions, which is 48 per cent; and then kilometres of local roads, which is 4 per cent. This formula takes into account the base needs of the municipalities, but it accounts also for the size of the population and the need for rural municipalities especially to manage their extensive road networks because we know that there are thousands and thousands of roads out in our municipalities that need to be taken care of. I know it's something that our Infrastructure minister is working on every single day, you know, the number of roads and bridges that need to be fixed out there.

The infrastructure deficit is massive in this province, and the rural areas are really affected by it. Farmers need good bridges to get their trucks across, you know, oil companies, things like that. We have to take all of that into account for MSI. Right now it's working quite well, and the municipalities are quite happy with it. I'm very glad that we extended it for those four years and are able to work on what's going to come forward, a continuation or something new, what have you, with AAMD and C and AUMA, and then see what we can do going forward.

Ms Babcock: Thank you.

My next question on MSI relates to capital and operational spending. Both MSI capital and operating funds have remained unchanged, and given the circumstances I know that municipal leaders in my area are pretty darn happy to see stability in the funding, but I'd like to know why the wide gap in funding between operating and capital funds. Can you share with us why only \$30 million a year is pledged to operating, what types of functions that supports, and what kinds of municipalities are making use of this funding?

[Loyola in the chair]

Mr. S. Anderson: Sure. At its core MSI is a capital program. It's designed to support local infrastructure priorities. This said, healthy and sustainable municipalities also require core funding to ensure that they have the capacity to manage their infrastructure and plan for the future. That's why the smaller allocation of \$30 million is provided in operation funding. The types of functions that this funding serves are primarily basic municipal service, planning activities, or capacity-building activities, and those are to improve efficiency and the effectiveness of the municipality.

6:20

Every year the municipalities must submit their MSI operating spending plan to Municipal Affairs for approval in accordance with the program guidelines. You know, we find that these operating funds tend to be more important to the smaller municipalities, like the smaller villages and summer villages or rural municipalities with low populations and assessments. That really helps them out in planning what they're doing going forward.

Ms Babcock: Thank you.

This will be my last question on MSI. When I look at page 119, the statement of operations, I see a lot of direct support to Alberta's municipalities, and I know our municipalities appreciate that. I know that you, and Minister Larivee before you, have often pointed out that Alberta is one of the most generous funders of municipalities across the country. To your knowledge, Minister, with this budget is Alberta still leading the way in terms of providing supports to municipalities across this country?

Mr. S. Anderson: Sorry; just repeat that last part.

Ms Babcock: To your knowledge with this budget is Alberta still leading the way in terms of providing supports to municipalities across this country?

Mr. S. Anderson: Yeah. For sure. As I've stated before and Minister Larivee has said before, in this province we provide more funding to municipalities per capita than any other province in Canada. When you're looking at that – and you'll hear me say that municipalities are receiving 26 cents of every capital dollar in our plan, and that's the highest amount of any category, even more than schools and health care and infrastructure, like roads and bridges and things like that.

In the budget across all ministries municipalities are being allocated nearly \$2.39 billion through the capital plan in total funding for municipal infrastructure support, which is actually an increase of 43 per cent over Budget 2016, when the municipalities were allocated \$1.7 billion. It was a promise that we made to make sure that we support our local municipalities and partners in their infrastructure needs, and it's something that I'm really proud of, that we're keeping that promise. I'm a man of my word, so when I say that we're going to help, we will, and I'm really happy that we're continuing to do that.

Ms Babcock: Thank you.

At this point I will pass it over to the Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Now just turning the topic a little bit over to the funding of public libraries, if I may – I don't think there have been many comments on this today, but I'll take it from here – I have a few questions regarding the often overlooked part of the Municipal Affairs budget, and that is the ministry's support for public libraries, which I believe serve an essential role in supporting Albertans and our communities. I see here on page 119 of the business plan that support for public libraries is increasing by about \$13 million. I know you spoke a bit about this in your opening remarks, but can you break this budget line down a bit further for us and tell us where this money is going and what it does?

Mr. S. Anderson: Sure. Yeah, you know, I'd be happy to because we're proud to support local libraries and public libraries. We know they're important in communities, especially in a lot of small communities, right? They're a hub for what goes on in that community and a gathering place. We did increase the funding for libraries by \$13 million in the budget, and that's because we want to demonstrate our commitment to improving access to public library services.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Minister.

We'll now go on to the Official Opposition once again. You have six minutes.

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm going to relinquish my remaining time to the member that's sitting next door to my assistant, the Member for Drumheller-Stettler, please.

The Chair: Okay. Please go ahead, sir.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Chair and Minister. If I could, I'd like to go back and forth briefly.

Mr. S. Anderson: Sure.

Mr. Strankman: I want to go to page 114 of the Municipal Affairs plan. You talk about Municipal Affairs undertaking reviews of several significant policies and programs. I wanted to ask you if you could inform me of the status of the review of the agency, board, and commission corporate body known as the Special Areas Board and the stage of the process of that review, please.

Mr. S. Anderson: Sure. I mean, I have a few notes on that. I could give you a couple of updates here, I guess. You might have heard a little bit of this before. Obviously, you know that they've been in place since the 1930s. I've had discussions with yourself and some other municipal officials about it before, and there have been some suggestions that we need to consider if a board is still needed or whether some tweaks might be needed to it.

Mr. Strankman: I just wanted to ask you, Minister, what stage the review process was at, please.

Mr. S. Anderson: Yeah. Well, right now my staff has been in regular contact with the Special Areas Board. We're reviewing options right now to see whether a full review is going to be needed.

Mr. Strankman: No. I understand, Minister, that it is in process . . .

Mr. S. Anderson: Yeah. We're in the process.

Mr. Strankman: There was a public engagement document presented last fall at the constituency meeting out there in the area. Could you tell me what stage that is at?

Mr. S. Anderson: Well, what I can tell you is that we will be able to announce our direction a little bit later this year. I can't give you an exact time frame for that at this moment.

Mr. Strankman: Okay. Minister, you're aware that there's something north of \$50 million in the savings account fund for that agency corporate? Could you tell me what the direction for that funding might be?

Mr. Sandberg: I believe you're speaking about the special areas trust account?

Mr. Strankman: Absolutely, sir.

Mr. Sandberg: The current approach of the ministry is that the trust account is, in fact – the resources are available to the Special Areas Board. The revenues in that have been generated by the residents and taxpayers of the special areas.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you for that.

So when would the people get an opportunity to decide on the direction of that funding? Presently the legislation only talks about an advisory council. There is no democratic way that the people can access those funds municipally, a municipal democratic method where the people of the area can access those funds.

Mr. Sandberg: Again, the approach that the ministry has taken with the Special Areas Board is that the Special Areas Board does conduct local elections at exactly the same time as municipal elections are conducted.

Mr. Strankman: Yes. But, sir, for your information, those elections have to be approved in finality by the minister.

Mr. Sandberg: That's correct.

Mr. Strankman: They are not the same democratic elections that happen in municipalities.

Mr. Sandberg: So, in fact . . .

Mr. Strankman: So my question, then, is: how do the people municipally, democratically direct the funding? They have no democratic municipal way of achieving the direction of their taxation without democratic representation.

Mr. Sandberg: I can only . . .

Mr. Strankman: Mr. Chair, you know, we have time running here, so I would ask that the minister would respond with due diligence.

Mr. S. Anderson: I'm asking my ADM, sir, if he has an answer for you, so we will get it to you in due time. Patience, please. We're trying to get you what you're looking for.

Mr. Strankman: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. S. Anderson: I would appreciate it if you would wait for the answer. That would be fantastic.

Mr. Strankman: Well, sir, I only have six minutes left, so I would appreciate it if you could respond in writing to that.

Mr. S. Anderson: Sure. If that's what you'd like, we can get something for you.

Mr. Strankman: I appreciate that.

So you commented earlier, sir, that the review process was in place and that you would have an answer on that in due process. Would that be communicated to the people?

Mr. S. Anderson: Once that review comes through, I think we have to make a decision on whether it's going to change structures or anything, right? Once we can get that information available, once we make our decisions – obviously, like I said, it's later this year when the review is done, too, so it's going to take some time.

Mr. Strankman: So would that be in time to allow for the municipal elections to take place this fall, sir?

Mr. S. Anderson: I don't think so, no.

Mr. Strankman: Why would that be?

Mr. S. Anderson: Because the review hasn't even come out yet. So I'm not going to speculate on, you know, if it's going to be totally done by then. We don't think it's going to be done by then. I'm just telling you right now the way it looks, right? It doesn't look . . .

Mr. Strankman: Minister, in so many other different areas – this is the only remaining area that's been in place with this undemocratic form of municipal government for over 75 years.

There have been other transitions that have taken place. Can you help me understand why there may be a delay?

Mr. S. Anderson: You know what? I understand your perspective. I hear perspectives from both sides, to be honest with you. That's why . . .

Mr. Strankman: There is no democratic method for opinions to be demonstrated from any side, sir. As a resident of the area I'm the only one that can actually have an opinion to you directly in that regard.

Mr. S. Anderson: Actually, I've had discussions with other officials and letters have been sent to us, too, so there are perspectives on both sides. Obviously, I'm willing to always listen to both sides of what's happening. I respect that you have your opinions and your views on it – and that's great – but there are other ones that we have to listen to as well, right?

Mr. Strankman: Within the area?

Mr. S. Anderson: Yes.

Mr. Strankman: But I just informed you, sir, that there is no democratic method for those views to be expressed.

Mr. S. Anderson: I just finished saying that we've talked to other people. We've had letters, and people talk to us. You're not the only one who comes and talks to me about this stuff. Municipal Affairs is pretty busy, so . . .

Mr. Strankman: Thank you.

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

I would like to remind committee members that we are scheduled to meet next tomorrow morning, which is April 13, 2017, at 9 to consider the estimates of the Ministry of Indigenous Relations.

Thank you, everyone. This meeting is adjourned.

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

