



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
Second Session

Standing Committee
on
Public Accounts

Transportation

Tuesday, June 9, 2020
8 a.m.

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The 30th Legislature
Second Session**

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Phillips, Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP), Chair
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP), Deputy Chair

Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
Guthrie, Peter F., Airdrie-Cochrane (UCP)
Hoffman, Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UCP)
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UCP)
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)

Also in Attendance

Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)

Office of the Auditor General Participants

W. Doug Wylie	Auditor General
Brad Ireland	Assistant Auditor General

Support Staff

Shannon Dean, QC	Clerk
Stephanie LeBlanc	Clerk Assistant and Senior Parliamentary Counsel
Teri Cherkewich	Law Clerk
Trafton Koenig	Parliamentary Counsel
Philip Massolin	Clerk of Committees and Research Services
Sarah Amato	Research Officer
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Michael Kulicki	Committee Clerk
Jody Rempel	Committee Clerk
Aaron Roth	Committee Clerk
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Amanda LeBlanc	Deputy Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Participants

Ministry of Transportation

Crystal Damer, Assistant Deputy Minister, Safety and Policy

Dale Fung, Senior Financial Officer

Rae-Ann Lajeunesse, Deputy Minister

Tom Loo, Assistant Deputy Minister, Construction and Maintenance

Ranjit Tharmalingam, Assistant Deputy Minister, Planning, Finance and Technical Standards

8 a.m.

Tuesday, June 9, 2020

[Ms Phillips in the chair]

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

My name is Shannon Phillips. I'm the MLA for Lethbridge-West and chair of this committee. Ordinarily I would suggest that we would go around the committee table for all participants to introduce themselves, but we have participants joining us through various means of communication, so I will just note them for the record. If there are any that are not on my list, just put a little note in the chat, and I will make sure that your attendance is noted for the record.

We have members video conferencing: Dach, Hoffman, Guthrie. Members teleconferencing: Barnes and Gotfried. We have video conferencing of Renaud and Loyola, I believe, as well, and we have members present: Rowswell and Rosin. We also have video conferencing of Stephan and Member Toor and Member Reid. We will get to any corrections to my notes or the record as we go along.

Also joining us today are the following officials from the office of the Auditor General. We have via video conference Doug Wylie, the Auditor General, and Brad Ireland, Assistant AG. From the Leg. Assembly Office we have Philip Massolin, the clerk of committees and research services, and Aaron Roth, our committee clerk.

We also have with us a number of officials from the Ministry of Transportation. In the room we have Rae-Ann Lajeunesse, deputy; Crystal Damer, ADM of safety and policy; Tom Loo, ADM of construction and maintenance; Ranjit Tharmalingam, ADM of planning, finance, and technical standards, and Dale Fung, SFO for the department.

We do have a few housekeeping items to address before we continue. All members participating via video conference or teleconference, please ensure that your microphones are muted unless you're recognized to speak. Of course, as we discussed I think it was last week, if you do have a point of order, just feel free to unmute and say it so that we don't miss it in the chat. Once you do unmute your microphone, just wait one moment so that *Hansard* can catch up to us and properly identify you and also so that the audio captures what you are saying.

If you wish to abstain from a recorded vote, please send the committee clerk a private instant message or other means of communication to Mr. Roth.

Committee proceedings are live streamed on the Internet and broadcast on Alberta Assembly TV. The audio- and video stream and transcripts can all be accessed via the Legislative Assembly website and the usual *Hansard* methods.

We have the agenda in front of us, members. Are there any changes or additions to our agenda today? Seeing none, would a member like to move that the agenda for the June 9 meeting of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be approved as distributed? I've got a move from Member Rowswell. Is there any discussion on this motion? Seeing none, please unmute your microphones, then. All in favour? Are there any opposed? Thank you. That motion is carried. Please remute your microphones.

We'll move on to the minutes from our last meeting together. We have minutes of June 2 in front of us. Are there any errors or omissions to note? If not, would a member move that our minutes from the June 2 meeting of the Public Accounts Committee be approved as distributed?

Mr. Dach: So moved.

The Chair: Okay. Dach moved. Any discussion on this motion? Please unmute your microphones. All in favour? Any opposed? Thank you. That motion is carried. Please remute.

We're going to propose a modification to our two-hour time allotment when we are in session. Our ordinary meeting time on Tuesday mornings is 8. To ensure that members have adequate time to walk over to the Chamber when we are scheduled to sit during the morning following the committee's meeting, we would like – and the subcommittee has distributed via our internal website – to propose a time change for our time allotment for the two-hour meeting so that we keep two hours but we just change our rotation slightly so that we all have time to get to the Chamber. Is there any discussion on this proposed change? Would a member like to move that

the modified time allotment for two-hour meetings of the committee scheduled for the same morning as when the Assembly has a morning sitting be approved as distributed.

Mr. Gotfried: So moved.

The Chair: Thank you.

Any discussion on this motion? Okay. Very good. Please unmute. All in favour? All right. Any opposed? Any members on the phone? No. Okay. Thank you.

That motion is carried.

Thank you for your flexibility, hon. members, on that matter.

We will now welcome our guests from the Ministry of Transportation. Our friends are here to address the office of the Auditor General's outstanding recommendations and the ministry's annual report from 2018-19. I will invite officials to begin their remarks, not exceeding 10 minutes. Just a reminder to officials that we are here to query how decisions were made and funds were disbursed in the 2018-19 annual report year and to consider the Auditor General's recommendations even in the present time if they are outstanding recommendations. It's just become clear that every once in a while I need to provide a reminder of what we're actually here to talk about and what the work of the Public Accounts Committee is in the main. With the exception of the outstanding AG recommendations, it's backward looking.

I will now invite officials from the ministry to provide their opening remarks, not exceeding 10 minutes. Your time starts when you start speaking.

Ms Lajeunesse: Great. Thank you. Good morning. I am Rae-Ann Lajeunesse, Deputy Minister of Transportation. We are, as noted by the chair, here with you today to discuss the 2018-19 annual report of Alberta Transportation and the outstanding recommendation from the Auditor General.

With me today, as noted also, are Ranjit Tharmalingam, our assistant deputy minister of planning, finance, and technical standards; Tom Loo, assistant deputy minister of the construction and maintenance division; Crystal Damer, assistant deputy minister of safety and policy; and Dale Fung, our senior financial officer.

To start with today, I'd like to give you some background about Alberta Transportation. The Transportation department affects each and every Albertan, from High Level to Pincher Creek, Jasper to Lloydminster. Transportation is responsible for developing and preserving a safe, efficient multimodal transportation system to help move people and goods within the province and outside to national and world markets. We do that by working with our national, provincial, and territorial partners and municipalities and industry to promote Alberta's interests. We work to ensure trade corridors are working well to get our goods to market.

For example, the department worked hard to provide input into the development of federal rail, air, and marine regulations related

to the government of Canada's Bill C-49 that received royal assent in May 2018. This legislation will impact the rail transportation system and supply chain for all commodities, including grain, and also impact air travel. The department has also harmonized Alberta's transportation of dangerous goods regulation with the federal law, providing consistency across Canada for the handling of dangerous goods by air, marine, and federally regulated rail modes. These changes came into effect in July 2018 and served to reduce regulatory burden for industries transporting goods across provincial boundaries.

While Transportation does have a role regarding all modes of transportation, be it rail, air, or active transportation, some of the department's main priorities are public transportation, clean drinking water from modern systems, and the highway network, with more than 31,000 kilometres of highway, which equals 64,000 lane kilometres when we account for double- and triple-lane sections of the highway network.

Everyone uses or depends on services provided by Alberta Transportation. The core of our mandate is safety. In fact, it is our priority. We work to ensure the safety of those who use our highway network on a daily basis. We have many tools that help us identify issues and respond to them.

The department inspects bridges, overpasses, and pavement on a regular basis to determine if they need repair or, in some cases, replacement. We conduct traffic counts on highways to see if volume is exceeding standards of a particular highway, and that in turn helps us identify the need to twin or widen a highway.

Keeping our highways clear of ice and snow is one of our most important jobs. Winter in Alberta, as we all know, comes without fail each year and sometimes earlier and lasts longer than expected. During the winter months, which run roughly from October to April, we have more than 600 plows across the province clearing the way and making our roads safe. Our highway maintenance crews do a great job for Albertans, sometimes under very trying circumstances.

8:10

This brings me to the business at hand, the 2018-19 annual report. We had expenses of \$1.79 billion, which includes grants, amortization of capital assets, and consumption of inventory. This expenditure is within the department's approved 2018-19 budget of \$1.95 billion and is lower than the expenditure in 2017-18, the prior fiscal year. We had \$1.12 billion in capital investments, excluding noncash expenses. This was primarily for P3 financing. Our work is based on six desired outcomes, which I will go over.

Outcome 1 is competitiveness, market access, and economic growth. We want to ensure that Alberta has a safe and efficient multimodal transportation system to support a diversified economy.

Outcome 2 is long-term sustainability and affordability. This means ensuring that Alberta can afford to maintain its existing transportation assets and invest in new strategic infrastructure.

Outcome 3: connected and active communities. This is all about working to provide inclusive and accessible transportation options between and through communities.

Outcome 4: safety and security. We strive to maintain a transportation network that is safe and secure. We do this through education as well as regulatory, technological, and infrastructure improvements.

Outcome 5: innovation and technology integration. We work to make sure our transportation system can adapt to new innovations and technologies.

Last but certainly not least is outcome 6, environmental stewardship. We need to do our part by managing our transportation system in an environmentally responsible and sustainable manner.

As mentioned before, safety is always our priority. Every life in Alberta is important, and every death is one too many. However, fatalities and major injuries do occur on the roads. These were, I'm pleased to report, reduced in 2018-19. There were 2,324 fatal and major injury collisions, which represents a rate of 57.4 per 100,000 population. That's below both the target and the previous year rate, so in this case a lower result is good news. We assessed the collision history of more than 18,000 intersections and concluded that, overall, intersections in Alberta are operating safely. Intersections that were identified for safety improvements have been upgraded or have safety assessments under way. We have updated programs and regulations reflecting new cannabis-related provisions and have extended Alberta's zero-tolerance policy to include cannabis.

On March 1, 2019, Transportation put into effect two programs to ensure Alberta highways remain safe. Transportation launched a mandatory entry-level training program, otherwise known as MELT. This is a program for drivers seeking a class 1 or class 2 driver's licence. The aim of the program is to ensure that there are safer, more highly skilled drivers working in the truck and bus industries on Alberta's roads. We consulted with key industry stakeholders and Albertans to develop this approach. After launch we also made a few adjustments to grant an extension to help some farmers, farm employees, and school bus drivers adapt to the new requirements. The other program was a new pre-entry program defining new requirements for new national safety code carriers or start-up trucking companies. This was meant to improve safety on Alberta's highways and across the continent.

In regard to highway condition for this reporting period we can tell you that the overall surface condition of our highways improved. The percentage of roads in poor condition decreased to 15 per cent, while 59.5 per cent of the highway network was rated in good condition. Both the percentage results for poor and good condition are more favourable as compared to the targets established for this fiscal year. This is the direct result of a renewed focus on maintaining the existing network.

I'm sure many of you are familiar with 511, our highway information service. In 2018 a rebuild of 511 platforms was completed, making our service the first multijurisdictional model in Canada, which allows us to report on municipally controlled highways and roads in addition to provincial roads. These upgrades improved communication, collaboration, and co-ordination between travellers, emergency responders, police, and municipal partners.

In 2018-19 Alberta Transportation invested nearly \$1.12 billion in capital investment, including \$444.2 million for capital maintenance and renewal. We completed about 1,100 kilometres of road rehabilitation. More than \$236 million was allocated to Calgary and Edmonton ring roads, with much of that funding dedicated to the Calgary ring road. Once complete in 2021, the southwest section of the Calgary ring road will accommodate traffic volumes for the next 30 years, with an estimated 100,000 vehicles per day along some sections. A further \$336.5 million was invested in various provincial highway construction projects. Some of those projects included the QE II/Gaetz Avenue interchange south of Red Deer and the paving of highway 774 between Castle Mountain Resort to just south of Castle River, which helps support the long-term tourism strategy. Work also continued on multiyear projects such as the twinning of the Peace River Bridge, expansion of Airport Trail in Calgary, the highway 43X bypass near Grande Prairie, and, of course, as mentioned earlier, the Calgary ring road project.

In addition, the ministry invested over \$65 million in various water management structures. For capital grants, we are responsible for a number of capital grants to municipalities, which included

\$22.47 million for 76 strategic transportation infrastructure program projects, otherwise known as STIP; \$209.5 million for 67 projects under the GreenTRIP program; \$32.6 million for 28 municipal water supply, treatment, and waste-water treatment projects; \$82.6 million under the water for life program for 21 projects; and \$30.4 million was allocated to nine projects for the First Nations water tie-in program. Those are just a few of the many highlights from 2018-19.

Turning now to the outstanding recommendation from the Auditor General of Alberta, we have one outstanding recommendation from the Auditor General, and that is for the department to consistently comply with its policy to take disciplinary and enforcement action against noncompliant carriers. I want to note that Alberta Transportation has made substantive changes to how noncompliance issues are addressed. Specifically, the carrier intervention policy and procedures have been updated to provide more consistent . . .

The Chair: Thank you, Deputy.

I'll now invite the Auditor General for his comments in our introductory phase. Mr. Wylie, you have five minutes.

Mr. Wylie: Thank you, Chair, and good morning, everyone. It's great to be with you today. As the deputy was just indicating, there is one outstanding recommendation. As she had mentioned, it relates to the noncompliant carriers vis-à-vis the program that the department administers. We were informed that the department has indicated that they fully implemented the recommendation in the fall of 2019, so following our financial statement audit this summer, we'll be doing an immediate follow-up on that recommendation and reporting publicly on its status.

Chair, I return the remainder of my time to the committee. Thank you.

The Chair: Well, thank you, Mr. Wylie.

We will now proceed to questions from the committee members for our guests. Just as a reminder of the questioning rotation, we are with 15-minute opening rotations for the Official Opposition and the government; the second, third, and fourth rotations are 10 minutes each; and the fifth rotation is a three-minute round for each side to read questions into the record such that the department might follow up with them in writing within 30 days.

We will now move over to the first rotation, to the Official Opposition side. I believe I have Member Loyola, who is joining us by video conference. Mr. Loyola, your time starts when you start speaking.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much, Chair. I'd like to begin focusing my line of questioning on capital maintenance renewal and infrastructure spending in the capital plan. What I feel is that during the previous government we followed public-sector accounting rules pretty religiously, but then in the 2020 estimates, when Minister McIver was being questioned, they were speaking about new accounting standards. I just wanted to get some clarification, so I'm going to begin asking a few questions along those lines. Can the ministry tell this committee about the public-sector accounting standards in place in 2018-2019 when it comes to capital maintenance and renewal spending and about the public-sector accounting standards in place when it came to capital investment? How were these costed in our financial statements? Which types of spending were counted directly on the deficit and why, and which were counted as capital assets and then hit the deficit in terms of debt financing and amortization costs?

Ms Lajeunesse: I'll start with that. Thank you for the question. I think I would mostly like to say that the ministry in all cases in each year follows the accounting standard rules or practices that are in place. I'm not sure how much more detail I can give you on each of your subsequent questions. We do follow the accounting rules as set out that we are required to follow, and some of that information might be better answered by the Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance.

8:20

Member Loyola: Okay. So you can't give me any understanding under what types of spending were counted directly on the deficit and why?

Ms Lajeunesse: Perhaps I'll turn it over to my senior financial officer to make some comments on that.

Member Loyola: Thank you.

Mr. Fung: Hi. In responding to your questions, the amount that goes to the deficit is all the operating-type expenditures, which are the things that are a benefit for the current fiscal year. In terms of accounting, we have not introduced any new accounting standards or implemented any new accounting standards. We do follow the public-sector accounting. What we might have changed is that we introduced the major maintenance category, and that was just mainly to identify activities that are still capital in nature. We haven't moved anything or classified anything; these are still capital in nature in terms of doing the work. They are there to improve the functionality of the life of the asset. We have not changed any of the accounting standards. We still follow the public-sector accounting.

Member Loyola: Okay. I'm still looking for clarification. Sorry to press on this, but what types of spending are counted as capital assets and then hit the deficit in terms of debt financing and amortization costs? I'd like clarification on that, please.

Mr. Fung: Items that we spend on capital are capital in nature. Those would be improvements to roads. Those would be the building of new infrastructure on our highways, maintenance, maintaining our existing infrastructure. That extends the life of an asset, so they're in the category of capital maintenance and renewal, known as CMR. Anything that's capital in nature is basically expenditures that are benefiting over many years of its life. Those expenses are then recorded as capital investment and then amortized over the useful life of the asset.

In terms of roadways, those are amortized over 50 years. In terms of bridges, which are also a capital investment, or improvement of our bridges, new bridges are amortized over 50 to 75 years, depending on when those bridges were built. Capital maintenance and renewal: those are maintaining our existing highways and improving the condition of those roads to make sure that those roads continue to function and that those roads continue to be smooth for Albertans. Those are amortized over 20 years because those are overlays, or pavement on top of the highway. Those are the main categories of transportation that are amortized.

Other expenses that we spend in Transportation would be relating to the construction of water management infrastructure, so dams. Transportation is responsible to build those dams on behalf of Environment and Parks. Once those dams or water management infrastructure are built, they are then transferred over to Environment and Parks to amortize and maintain over their useful life. That would be the other category of capital assets that Transportation is primarily responsible for building.

Member Loyola: Okay. Thank you very much. I appreciate the clarification on that.

I understand that CMR spending increased significantly under the previous government and was recommended by the former Bank of Canada governor David Dodge. Can the ministry outline how much was spent on CMR in 2015-2016, 2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019? Can the ministry provide the four-year average, please?

Ms Lajeunesse: We're just getting this together here.

Actuals for '18-19 were \$402,519,000. I think that in terms of the other questions you had about the comparisons for the other years, we would need to get back to you.

Member Loyola: Okay. So you will provide that in writing?

Ms Lajeunesse: Yes.

Member Loyola: Okay. So you can't provide a four-year average at this time?

Ms Lajeunesse: No.

Member Loyola: Okay. Thank you.

My understanding is that last week during this committee we heard from the Ministry of Infrastructure with respect to capital maintenance and renewal, and the ministry asked that we direct questions to you today at this committee, so I'll do that in a moment. But I just want to set the stage here.

At estimates the Minister of Transportation stated that the ministry had adopted new accounting standards with respect to CMR. He said, "We are reporting... differently." The minister went on to say – and let me paraphrase here – that some CMR spending would be counted as investment. As a practical matter, for the exact same type of work being done by the ministry, the deficit would all of a sudden look smaller. This is okay. It follows public-sector accounting standards, but it's a budget trick and offside with public-sector accounting standards if those standards didn't change. I know that this is something that the former Minister of Transportation looked at very closely. Can the ministry please point this committee to the change in the public-sector accounting standards that allowed the current minister to classify his expenses differently after 2018-2019?

Ms Lajeunesse: Thank you for that question. I'm happy to provide clarification on that. What that really relates to is that there were opportunities under the existing accounting rules to capitalize work that we hadn't availed ourselves of in the past, so it is less about a change in the standard but more about a change in the department's practice that allowed us to utilize a standard to capitalize some work that functionally was extending the life of some of our assets.

Normally, if we are spending money that will just maintain the current state of the asset without giving it much more value in terms of its overall life, that would be captured in an operational maintenance expense, but because there is work that's done, after taking a look at some of the work that is done in that bucket, that is actually contributing to the extension of the value of the life of the asset, some of that work was able to be captured on the capital side. So not a change in the specific accounting standards but a change in the ministry availing themselves of the existing standards to capture some of our costs appropriately.

Member Loyola: Okay. Last week, on June 2, the Ministry of Infrastructure told this committee that there had been no change to accounting standards with respect to capital maintenance and

renewal when we compare 2018-2019 to 2019-2020. So let me be clear. The Member for Edmonton-South inquired with respect to CMR and changes to accounting standards. "So I understand that there was a change, I guess, in how CMR was accounted for for 2018-19 to how it is [accounted for] today. Is that correct?" The Deputy Minister of Infrastructure responded by saying: "No, that's not. No. We still account for it the same way that we did in 2018-19 as we do in 2019-20." The member followed up and asked, "In that case do you mean that it's not going to look differently in terms of the deficit for the ministry or the Treasury Board budget?" The deputy minister followed up with a one-word response, and her word was "No."

So I'd like to ask the ministry to account for this discrepancy. On the one hand, Infrastructure has told us in no uncertain terms that accounting standards haven't changed and that there is no change in how we account for CMR against the deficit. On the other hand, we have Transportation saying that, yes, absolutely, the standards have changed. Can the ministry please explain?

Ms Lajeunesse: Thank you for that. I'll try to clarify my earlier remarks. I indicated that there wasn't a change in the accounting rules. There was a change in the ministry availing themselves of the ability to code something as a capital improvement or major maintenance that results in an extension to the value of the asset. The rules haven't changed. The ministry assessed some of the work we were doing that was previously captured as operational expenses and recognized that that work, because of the fact that it functionally extends the value of the asset, was able to be captured in the capital bucket of spending. I think I'm consistent with what Infrastructure said. I can't speak to if Infrastructure didn't make that same change that Transportation did last year. However, Transportation realized that we were not availing ourselves of the existing rules in order to properly categorize some of our capital spending.

8:30

Member Loyola: I'm just wondering. How much of the maintenance cost would then transfer over into this new way of tracking?

Ms Lajeunesse: I believe we had put \$25 million into major maintenance under capital maintenance and renewal.

Member Loyola: Twenty-five million?

Ms Lajeunesse: Yes.

Member Loyola: Okay. I'd like to invite comment from the Auditor General's office on the same issue of CMR and how it is accounted. You heard from both the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Ministry of Transportation, so you've heard about this discrepancy. I'd like for you to comment, sir. Can you assure this committee that when you do your financial statement audits for both 2019-2020 and 2020-2021, you'll look into this issue to ensure that the books of the province are being accurately presented to Albertans on a consistent basis?

Mr. Wylie: Thank you for the question. Yes, I certainly can confirm that. I can also confirm that, to my knowledge, there is no change in the standard. There might be, as the deputy indicated, a change in the application to what the ministry has indicated they view as meeting elements of the standard that would qualify for capitalization. Again, I want to assure you that when we do our audits, we certainly look to determine what is capitalized and the

nature of what's being capitalized to ensure it is in accordance with the public-sector accounting standards.

I'll ask Brad Ireland, who is the Assistant Auditor General on this file, if he has anything to add with respect to your question, Member.

Mr. Ireland: Good morning, everyone. Yeah. As part of our audit work, particularly at Transportation and Infrastructure, we always look at expenses that are expensed as operating expenses and consider whether those, you know, should be capitalized, and we also look at capital expenditures and consider whether those are operating expenses. We look at both sides of this as part of our testing, and we do this on an annual basis.

Member Loyola: Okay. Just to reiterate, for me, it's important that there's, like, just a consistency from year to year and that we're tracking this efficiently and fairly. That's the concern, okay?

How much time do I have left?

The Chair: Essentially, 12 seconds.

Member Loyola: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. I think probably the time is up, so we will now move on to the first rotation for the government side. I don't know if I have a list, so I will just turn it over to the government side.

Mr. Reid: Thank you, Chair. I want to thank the members of the ministry for coming and presenting today and answering our questions. I appreciate it. To the DM: thank you for mentioning Pincher Creek in your opening remarks. It's from the most beautiful riding in the province, Livingstone-Macleod, and actually leads right into my first question for you, which is related to the twinning of highway 3.

On page 15 of the annual report it states that functional planning studies continued for highway 3. As highway 3 runs through Livingstone-Macleod, I'm hoping you can share the status of the study as I did hear a lot about it while door-knocking, and it's a priority for people in my riding: the status of the study, any planning updates, and any projected timelines regarding the twinning of highway 3.

Ms Lajeunesse: Maybe I'll turn it over to Tom Loo to give you some more details on that question.

Mr. Loo: As you mentioned, that particular planning study has been completed. To date we have completed all of the planning studies for the future twinning of highway 3 with the exception of one segment through the Piikani First Nation. The department is currently reviewing all of the recommendations and the options outlined in each of the planning studies. We're looking at bringing forward priorities and options for consideration in future capital plans.

Mr. Reid: Thank you, Mr. Loo.

Now I want to talk a little bit about some discrepancies or differences in expenditures. Referring to page 74, line 11.1, highway twinning, widening, and expansion, it says that the actual amount was \$303 million versus \$220 million budgeted, or an \$83 million overage on the budget. Can the department explain to me why the budget was almost 38 per cent over?

Ms Lajeunesse: Sure. What I have here is that the overexpenditure was primarily due to faster than anticipated progress on the Peace River Bridge twinning project and the Grande Prairie highway 43

bypass. Although the total cost for these projects remains the same, it just reflected a faster pace on those projects.

Mr. Reid: Nice to hear. Schedules, ahead of schedule on some projects: that's fantastic.

I want to talk a little bit about exports. Again, highway 2 and highway 3 run through my area of the province and are major arteries of transportation both inter- and extraprovincially. I want to refer to page 18, performance indicator 1(a), which states the volume of exports by mode of transportation. From 2014 to 2016 there was a significant decline in export volume followed by an upswing in export volume in 2017 and '18. Just two questions. I'll ask them at once, and you can address them. Question (a): can the department explain which exports declined to reduce overall volume of trade and if transportation capacity was a factor in that? The second part of my question is: while we understand that export trade volume is complicated and is certainly out of the control of the department, what has the department done to ensure that export by road, by air, by rail is as seamless as possible while also ensuring that we have capacity to meet the demand?

Thank you.

Ms Lajeunesse: I'll start with your first question. I don't have a specific breakdown of the specific exports that might have varied in that time period, but we can certainly look into that and get back to you.

With respect to trying to ensure seamless movement of goods, we work very diligently with our provincial and territorial partners as well as the federal government to try to harmonize rules and regulations that relate to interprovincial and cross-border travel. That is, I think, a significant step toward making sure that goods and services move seamlessly across provinces and the country.

Mr. Reid: Thank you, Deputy Minister. I appreciate your responses, and I look forward to a written response for that first question. That would be appreciated.

Thank you. I'd like to cede my time now to MLA Barnes.

The Chair: I'll give Mr. Barnes just another moment. If we want to pause the clock just so that he doesn't lose his time if he's having a hard time unmuteing.

Mr. Barnes, are you there?

Well, if not, then maybe . . .

Mr. Barnes: Can you hear me now?

The Chair: Oh. Yeah. There he is. Okay. Good. We'll start your time now, Mr. Barnes.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. Thank you, Chair, and thank you, all, for being here today. I have some questions around transit ridership and access. On page 24 of your annual report is a data table for transit ridership. It appears that transit ridership peaked in Alberta in 2014 and since then has been on a downward trend. The explanatory note here says that the factors are complicated, but one is the decline in the economy and particularly its impact on downtown Calgary. Can somebody from the ministry please speak on the department breakdown in terms of the number of ridership, particularly as it pertains to the difference between Calgary and Edmonton, and what your thoughts are on that going forward?

Thank you.

Ms Lajeunesse: I'm just going to look if we actually have a breakdown at hand between ridership in Edmonton and Calgary. If not, we can certainly get that information back to you.

I think what's interesting about these factors is, as we noted, that there are certainly things that are outside of the ministry's control that affect transit ridership, including things like vehicle ownership and other things like that. Certainly, the current situation also is another example of how things happen that impact ridership that are outside of our control. I think 2018 is the first year that we would have seen benefits from investments in transit that began in 2016, so we will be continuing to monitor those trends going forward in terms of how we can best support transit ridership overall.

8:40

Mr. Barnes: Okay. Thank you. When do you think you'll have those numbers? When do you think we'll be able to compare it?

Ms Lajeunesse: Each year at the end of the calendar year is when we collect the numbers on transit ridership, and we assess them over the following weeks and months in order to determine what strategies we would take going forward to continue to support transit ridership.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. Thank you.

On page 25 of the annual report is another data set, this time for access to transit. At 68 per cent access I don't think Albertans have ever had higher access to transit. I'm assuming that urban centres have access and rural areas can be more limited. Can you please speak to where you think there may be some deficiencies in access and where you think access is good? Can you please speak to the difference?

Ms Lajeunesse: Sure. You may be aware – and it was part of the annual report – that we implemented a rural bus service pilot in 2018, and that was an intent to try to discern where there may be gaps and if those gaps were going to be filled by those pilot projects. Those projects will run until the spring of 2021, at which time we will evaluate the impact they are having in terms of closing any gaps on rural aspects of transit ridership and access. Certainly, we have narrowed the focus of that pilot program to six communities initially, and we will see what the data provides over this last year and the upcoming year to determine if it has actually had a positive impact on access and ridership.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. Thank you.

Before that program was put in, did you look at how well some of the communities were serviced? To me, it's crucial as to where we're at now. In Medicine Hat, as an example, we had a number of private transit companies, private charter companies that were providing great service but don't seem to be faring as well now. Of course, we don't know if that's the economy or if that's the competition. Did you look at the numbers before you implemented the rural program?

Thank you.

Ms Lajeunesse: The department worked through a crossministry committee that scored applications from communities who were interested in participating in the rural pilot, and these were based on economic and social indicators. Only the top six highest scoring projects were considered eligible for funding. Certainly, as we move towards evaluation, we will consider those things, such that you mentioned. If, in fact, other transit services may have been impacted by these pilots – and like you said, there are many complicating factors, whether those be economic differences or changes in the times or increased competition, so we will consider those things as we evaluate the program.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. Thank you.

I'm wondering if the department can speak to the fact that transit is now more accessible but usage is down. Please combine that with the fact of how expensive some modes of transportation are. For example, LRT is extremely expensive. Please look at the cost overruns of projects such as the green line in Calgary: a statement, please, on the high cost versus the increased accessibility but the ridership being down. And can you please give me an update on the green line activity?

Thank you.

Ms Lajeunesse: Sure. I'll go back to your first question. I think you were asking us to describe the difference between more access but not a consistent or a correlated increase in ridership.

Maybe I'll ask my ADM of planning and finance to comment a little bit on that.

Mr. Tharmalingam: Thank you. First of all, in terms of the ridership, this is based on people that are riding it, but the access to the transit services: if you take LRT as an example, just because we are introducing LRT where a bus line was already there, the access to the transit service doesn't change. You're changing the mode in terms of going from bus to LRT, but it doesn't make any difference. Having said that, when you have an expansion into a new subdivision where transit services are going in, then that'll actually have an impact to the performance measure on that.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. An update on green line, please.

Mr. Tharmalingam: You want me to speak to that? Yeah. The update on the green line is that Calgary has taken their proposal. First of all, the green line is separated into two segments, segment 1 and segment 2. Segment 1 is the one going from the Elbow River on the east side of the downtown all the way down to Shepard, and then segment 2 is from the Elbow River going through downtown and going north up to 16th Avenue. Calgary has finalized and got federal approval for segment 1. However, for segment 2 they have yet to work with the stakeholders in terms of finalizing that. They have taken it through the green line subcommittee, and they are planning to take it to the council in the next couple of weeks. After that, we would be in a position to know what the position of Calgary is in terms of the green line.

Thank you.

The Chair: Sure. Just a reminder here that that question might be better in order if it was posed, for example, as "What were the amounts that were disbursed in the '18-19 budget year with respect to the green line, whether in planning or actual capital investment?" hon. member.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. Thank you. That's a great question.

Let's go to some other budget questions. On page 73 I noticed a few items with budgets that were exceeded. I'm hoping the department can explain each overage in spending. First of all, under provincial highway maintenance and preservation, line 5.1, the maintenance budget appears to be exceeded by \$17 million; \$253 million to \$270 million. Can you please explain this result?

Ms Lajeunesse: Sure. The overexpenditure in maintenance was primarily due to increased snowplow hours in winter and more bridge maintenance. In terms of P3 maintenance the overexpenditure was primarily due to inflationary increases built into public-private partnership agreements and approved change orders for the maintenance of the Edmonton and Calgary ring roads.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. Are inflationary elements a huge part of P3 contracts? Is it something we have to watch out for as taxpayers?

Ms Lajeunesse: I will turn that over to Mr. Tharmalingam to discuss the contract requirements around that.

Mr. Tharmalingam: I'll quickly talk about it. The P3 contract has provision for inflationary factors. I know that my colleague ADM Loo has much more detail on it. The answer to your question is yes. We do have inflationary factors attached to the contracts, so we have to actually adjust the contracts accordingly.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. Thank you.

Thirty-eight million dollars, again overbudget, further down on page 74, line 13.1 for rehabilitation projects. Please explain this \$38 million.

The Chair: Thank you, Member. I'm sure we'll get back to it.

We are now on to our second rotation, the Official Opposition side for 10 minutes, please.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Actually, before I go into my next line of questioning, I just wanted to follow up on the green line and how much has been spent. Perhaps I'll ask this really generally. Since the inception of expenditures on the green line, how much has been spent year per year? If possible, if we could get an update on that.

Ms Lajeunesse: I think we have what was spent in '18-19 available. We might have to get back to you on a cumulative total.

[Mr. Gotfried in the chair]

Member Loyola: Okay. If I could have that, that would be great.

Ms Lajeunesse: Sure. So '18-19 was \$51 million, just shy of \$52 million.

Member Loyola: Fifty-two million dollars. Okay. Just to clarify, I would like the cumulative total in writing, please.

Thank you for that.

Ms Lajeunesse: Yes.

8:50

Member Loyola: Now I'd like to actually go on to major capital investment projects and announcements from the ministry in 2018-2019. As I understand it and as I'm sure the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West will remember from her time on the Treasury Board and in cabinet, the ministry brought forward a number of projects for approval within the ministry's funding envelopes. I just want to get on the record today: in fiscal year 2018-2019 did the ministry get formal cabinet approval for the highway 3 replacement bridge in Lethbridge, that was subsequently announced roughly five months later?

Ms Lajeunesse: Highway 3 through Lethbridge has certainly seen increased traffic over the last few years, but we are not replacing the bridge over Oldman River at this time. We take into consideration all Transportation priorities: upgrades, maintenance, and infrastructure investment priorities . . .

Member Loyola: Could I just stop you, Deputy Minister? What I'm looking for is clarification on when the announcement was made for the replacement bridge in Lethbridge. Do you happen to have that information for us?

Ms Lajeunesse: No. I'm sorry. I don't have that right at hand.

Member Loyola: Okay. Could you please endeavour to find that information and get it to the committee, please?

Ms Lajeunesse: Yes, I will.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much for that. I appreciate it.

The other thing that I'm looking for is: did the ministry also get approval within its funding envelope for the highway 40 project in 2018-2019?

Ms Lajeunesse: I would start by saying that any of the projects that appeared in our capital plan are considered approved projects at the time. We always do have to think about adjustments to the capital plan as potentially projects progress at a faster rate and require more money in a given year or there are changes to priorities for other reasons.

Member Loyola: Okay. But I'm looking for specifically the highway 40 project.

[Ms Phillips in the chair]

Ms Lajeunesse: Highway 40 was scheduled outside of the capital plan in '18-19. Oh. Highway 40 twinning.

Member Loyola: Okay. Did the ministry also get approval within its funding envelope for the Deerfoot expansion strategy? That was within its funding envelope.

Ms Lajeunesse: Yes. For planning.

Member Loyola: Okay. Great.

Okay. I'm going on to my next question here. The previous minister went to Treasury Board and cabinet and solicited approval for these aforementioned projects in 2018 and then announced them in early 2019. Now, the current minister has claimed that the previous minister had never budgeted for these projects, which I believe is factually untrue given that they had gone through the extensive due diligence and through the full governance process. Now, I understand that the ministers change, but formal records of decisions don't, and the ministry has the institutional knowledge. Can the ministry account for the current comments of the Minister of Transportation and explain how he possibly claimed that these projects were never approved and funded?

Ms Lajeunesse: I don't have the records at hand right now, but I can certainly get back to you on those questions.

Member Loyola: Okay. Then we will get an update on the highway 3 bridge in Lethbridge, the highway 40 project, and the Deerfoot expansion strategy, correct?

Ms Lajeunesse: That's correct.

Member Loyola: Okay. Thank you very much for that. I appreciate it.

I'd like to ask about Alberta Transportation funding for Terwillegar Drive that was approved in 2018-2019. This is an important project for many in south Edmonton, so it was with great relief that the Alberta government back in 2018-2019 stepped up to help south Edmonton. In the future we can talk about the decision to cancel this funding, but I'd like to go back to 2018-2019. I understand that this project got more due diligence by the previous minister than virtually any other relative to its dollar value, so can the ministry tell this committee: back in 2018-2019 why was this

project deemed so essential? Can the ministry catalogue the extensive back and forth between officials and the city on this critical project?

Ms Lajeunesse: In response to your second question I would certainly need to go back to provide what you're looking for in terms of all of the due diligence that was applied in considering that project.

Member Loyola: So none of the ministry staff that are there with you can speak to this issue? If some of them could provide some insight on this, I'd really appreciate it.

Ms Lajeunesse: Yeah. What you're specifically looking for is the diligence that was done in providing support to the Terwillegar project. Is that correct?

Member Loyola: Indeed, I am.

Ms Lajeunesse: I think we'll have to get back to you on that.

Member Loyola: Okay. I'm still after how the ministry deemed this project essential. If you could speak to that specifically.

Ms Lajeunesse: I would say in general terms that I'm not sure if I can speak specifically to Terwillegar without the sort of information you were looking for, that we will provide later. But I can say that we always take a look at all of the projects we have at hand or on the horizon and consider all of the various social and economic benefits they might provide to any . . .

Member Loyola: Okay. Thank you very much, Deputy Minister. Sorry to cut you off; it's just in the interest of time. I appreciate your response, and I mean no disrespect.

Now I'd like to go to drivers' licences and safety. Right now with COVID-19 the issue of how we deal with drivers' licences is a serious concern as testing has been suspended. As well, some regulations governing commercial vehicle safety have been put on hold as a political matter. The issue of licences is front and center.

In general you can only ask questions at PAC that are retrospective in nature unless there's an outstanding recommendation of the Auditor General. Given this and that Minister Mason brought forward a whole package to make our roads safer following Humboldt, including changes to commercial vehicles and regular drivers, I'd like to ask the following. In terms of the outstanding recommendation of the Auditor General as well as – members of the committee are aware that the Humboldt tragedy prompted the ministry to take the issue of commercial vehicle safety much more seriously and frankly. On the recommendation of the AG, I have the following questions. With the reopening happening, can the ministry share with the committee when those suspended regulations will be put back in, and can the ministry tell us what they're going to do to catch up? What's the plan? We've delayed enforcement, and the ministry has told us before that enforcement is very much a function of volume and tracking.

Ms Lajeunesse: I think that you have a couple of questions in there that are separately related to driver road tests as well as some of the . . .

The Chair: Well, plenty of time to get back to it. Thank you.

Now we'll move on to the government side for 10 minutes. I'm just checking. I think it's Member Rosin to lead off. Go ahead.

Ms Rosin: Well, thank you so much for being here today. I'm going to start off my line of questioning focusing on automated traffic

enforcement, also known as photoradar. Page 29 of your annual report is where this is referenced. It looks like an independent review that was done found that there was a small improvement to traffic safety, but the enforcement tool oftentimes was not being used in a way that actually maximized traffic safety. I'm wondering if you can speak to why traffic safety was possibly not being maximized and what was being maximized by automated traffic enforcement.

I think a lot of people out there in Alberta may believe that photoradar or, I guess, receiving a ticket in the mail, you know, two to three weeks later, after you've been speeding, may not be doing as much to actually get speeding drivers off the road and stop them in their tracks and that it may be more of a revenue generation tool. So I'm wondering if you can speak to how photoradar is being used and what is and what isn't being maximized as a result.

9:00

Ms Lajeunesse: I guess what I would say to that – and certainly I will ask Crystal Damer to add anything further to my comments. With photoradar, I would say that essentially we were looking at where there were potential gaps in identifying the safety issue that was being addressed at a particular location where photoradar exists. That's not to say that a plan was to place a photoradar unit at a location where there was a desire to improve safety, more so that we were lacking some of the data to make that connection.

Of course, there is the criticism that it does generate revenue, so we want to be clear, going forward, and as we continue review work around this program that photoradar is indeed being used as a primary impact to improving safety.

Ms Rosin: Okay. Just to confirm, retroactively there was no proper metric being used to assess whether it was having impact on safety, and that's something you'll look into in the future. Is that . . .

Ms Lajeunesse: Yeah. We're actually looking for better data around the placement of those units that would support that it is addressing where safety improvements can be made.

Ms Rosin: Okay. Thank you.

I'll kind of go in that same line. I'm wondering if you can speak to the impact of photoradar on the safety of our roads, so not necessarily just on the reduction in speeding but actually on the collision rate. If we look at measure 4(a) on page 30, it actually does look like the collision rate of our roads is dropping in the last five years. I'm wondering if you can speak to whether that attests to photoradar or if, again, the data for photoradar is inconclusive and that that just may be a different result.

Ms Lajeunesse: Yeah. I don't think I can conclusively say that any improvement in that is specifically and only related to photoradar locations or how it's being used. Certainly, the ministry does a number of other things that contribute to road safety as well, so I'm not even sure that I could make that direct connection with regard to the specific question you're asking, but we can take a look at it.

Ms Rosin: Okay. Thank you.

Again in the photoradar vein, I'm wondering if you can speak to how wide the use of photoradar is in Alberta compared to other provinces. Do we have more units on the road, fewer units on the road? How widespread are these, and, I guess, how many tickets do you know they're giving out compared to other provinces?

Ms Lajeunesse: Okay. A jurisdictional comparison. Crystal, do you know that?

Ms Damer: We have 27 municipalities in Alberta that are using photoradar as a tool as part of their traffic safety plans. We've looked at some of the other provinces to see where they're at relative to their implementation of photoradar. Alberta is probably ahead of most jurisdictions in the use of the tool. We are looking at other provinces, like Ontario, that are looking to implement it more readily in their jurisdictions as well, so we do keep abreast of what others are doing. Again, as Rae-Ann indicated, one of our key issues is trying to get to a data set where we can actually do that close correlation between what's happening with the use of photoradar and traffic safety plans and their goals and if it's a tool that's providing value to that goal.

Ms Rosin: Okay. Right now it looks like we have more photoradar on the road than other provinces, but there is no data to confirm whether those have actually made Alberta's roads safer than those in other provinces.

Ms Damer: That's the piece that we're working on right now with municipalities, and their first reports are just in, so we will be looking at their data.

Ms Rosin: Okay. Great.

I will branch off, then, onto another topic. On page 73 of the annual report is the line item for the minister's office for 2018-19. The budget was set at \$755,000, and the actual was \$1.225 million. I'm wondering if your department can explain the reason for the minister's office being \$470,000 overbudget.

Ms Lajeunesse: Yes. Sure. Thank you for the question. That overexpenditure was related to transitioning from a shared ministers' office with Infrastructure to stand-alone offices between Transportation and Infrastructure partway through that fiscal year.

Ms Rosin: Okay. So with that transition came the hiring of more staff, I presume. What all goes into that transition cost?

Ms Lajeunesse: There would need to be enough staff to support two ministers rather than one.

Ms Rosin: Okay. Thank you.

My last line of questioning. On page 19 there's a table for commercial vehicle permits. Unlike export trade volume, which is continually increasing, the decline in permits for commercial vehicle transport has actually not recovered from its dip in 2014. I'm just wondering if you can explain the lower levels of commercial licences and permits for overweight, oversized loads in comparison to the export trade volume, which is increasing.

Ms Lajeunesse: I'll ask Crystal to comment more specifically on if we have a correlation between exports, trade volume, and the permits. Permits are sort of dependent on a number of factors. Actually, Crystal is probably better equipped to get into some of the technical details.

Ms Damer: Sure. The permits are issued specifically when a load is oversized, overweight in order to understand what's travelling on our roads relative to our bridges and also managing, with municipalities, the impacts to their roads. So it could be a factor of what economic activity is happening. Again, if we have large numbers of loads going up to Fort McMurray, for instance, you'd have more permits issued in that particular year. Again, it's a reflection of activity. It's not that link necessarily to exports. Sometimes it's more geared to what's happening within the province and the type of economic development and where the activity is happening.

Other things that would fall into these types of permits include cranes and loads and where cranes are moving to in the province. There are a number of factors to the types of permits that we would issue, depending on what the loads are and where they're going to.

Ms Rosin: Okay. Is there, by chance, any correlation to red tape when issuing permits in that more trips are being sent as smaller loads as opposed to oversized loads because obtaining a permit is difficult or burdensome, or would you say that it's more just a straight reflection of activity?

Ms Damer: In these instances it would be more a reflection of straight activity. The permit is an exemption from the rules that are stated in the regulations. One of the things that would be happening as we look at these permits is that – some of our regulations are out of date, and these are activities that are happening every day that we give permits for. So there is work under way in the department to look at: should those just be written into the regulations, thereby streamlining our permits? You may find in future years that our permits are down because we've done some red tape reduction relative to updating our regulations.

Ms Rosin: Okay. Perfect. Thank you.

With that, I will pass the rest of my time on to Member Toor.

The Chair: We'll just stop the clock here.

Member Toor, are you there? Are you able to unmute here? I know sometimes it can take a minute.

Okay. I believe, probably, that Member Rowswell looks like he's got some stuff in front of him. No? Okay.

I'm not hearing from Member Toor, so maybe he's having some technical difficulties. I know he was here earlier. I'll just open it up to the government side. We'll restart the clock when you are – oh, there he is.

All right. Member Toor, we'll let you get settled in. We'll start the clock for you. We'll give you 30 seconds' grace here to begin your questions unless Mr. Rowswell wants to lead off . . .

Mr. Rowswell: While he's getting ready?

The Chair: Yeah.

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah.

The Chair: Okay. Just let us know, and we'll start the clock when you start speaking.

Mr. Rowswell: Okay. The condition of the provincial highway network. I was just reading here that the QE corridor and the high load network and the oversize network – like, a lot of municipalities that I talk to all think their highway is overload or heavy load. Is there a list somewhere of which ones are that way?

Ms Lajeunesse: Yeah. We consider things to be high load when they meet certain criteria. We also define highways differently according to traffic volume and what sort of traffic it serves and things like that.

Maybe I'll ask Tom Loo to give you a bit more information on that.

Mr. Loo: On the department's website we actually do have a designated high load, overdimension corridor. That's been identified where there's sufficient width and sufficient capacity on the bridges to take those overdimensional loads. It is published. And, as Crystal mentioned earlier, when we issue permits, part of the permitting process is to identify what routes these vehicles

would be taking and ensuring that they do stay on those overdimensional corridors.

9:10

Mr. Rowswell: Okay. Yeah. Well, that's good to know. It's been presented to me that certain highways are that way and that therefore, you know, "I need maintenance" or "I need whatever." That's good to know. I can check that out.

The other one, I guess, would be the first time I heard . . .

The Chair: Thank you, Member Rowswell.

The third rotation. We'll now move over to the Official Opposition, please.

Member Loyola: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to go back to my question regarding the pandemic. I'll just reiterate that. With the reopening, can the ministry share with this committee when the suspended regulation will be put back in, and can the ministry tell us what they're doing to catch up? What's the plan as we've delayed enforcement? The ministry has told us before that enforcement is very much a function of volume and tracking.

Ms Lajeunesse: Sure. I'll have Crystal Damer give you some details on the various provisions that we gave extensions to during the pandemic, but I'll just start by saying that certainly, where we made those decisions, it was not giving people something new that they didn't already have. In terms of allowing short extensions to deal with the pandemic situation and people not being able to perhaps go to a registry or other offices to deal with the things they needed to do, in some of these cases the things that they might have been renewing might only come up for renewal over the course of a couple of years. Looking at short extensions during the period of the pandemic for things that people already had was not raising a safety concern, and certainly, as things open up, people can still go, if registry offices are open, to do some of those things.

I'll just let Crystal give you some details on when the specific ones are coming back into force and how we're addressing the compliance.

Member Loyola: Thank you.

Ms Damer: Thank you. There were a few restrictions that were lifted as part of the COVID response for the commercial trucking industry. Those are part of the Public Health Act emergency order, so when that expires, those restrictions will also be gone, and we will go back to business as usual under the regulations. A couple of those pieces: their goal was to ensure that when trucks were moving in support of COVID – and that was whether it was delivering goods, whether it was delivering medical supplies – it was important that trucks had the ability to move and deliver their goods in a timely fashion.

A couple of items that we eliminated on a temporary basis were that we permitted wide-base single tires throughout the province so that trucks didn't have to change out their tires as they came into communities. They could carry on and deliver their goods. There were parking restrictions that were posing problems as truckers were trying to either get food, fuel, or get some sleep, so one of the things that we wanted to ensure was that they didn't have any restrictions when it came to where they parked their vehicles so long as they were done in a safe way but, to the same point, too, understanding that they had to get access to some basic services. Then the other one was timely delivery of goods. Some restrictions are out there with regard to when deliveries could be made into communities. Again, in an effort in COVID to make sure that goods were in fact rolling into communities, those bylaws were lifted in

the short term. Those all come to closure once the public health emergency is resolved.

Member Loyola: Okay. In following up on that, what I'm really interested in is: what is the plan for catching up, then, when the public health emergency is lifted?

Ms Damer: When it comes to commercial and the vehicles that are on the roads, we continued business throughout that time frame. Again, we have auditors that could be doing work remotely. It could be talking with the commercial carriers and working with them on anything that was outstanding for issues. So we may be slightly behind, but it's not that work didn't continue for the time of the pandemic; there was work definitely under way. And we have been working with the commercial trucking industry to be supportive of their needs right now, too, while they focus on delivering goods. But, again, key things like safety fitness certificates and ensuring that they're up to date and things like commercial vehicle inspection tickets that need to be dealt with are all still under regulation and are required to be done. They may have had a bit of an extension of 90 days, but that just gives them time to get in to get the work done. It doesn't alleviate them from doing the work.

Member Loyola: Okay. Thank you.

I'd like to ask about driver testing and commercial vehicles. We have this outstanding recommendation of the Auditor General, and the ministry has told us that he's virtually suspended all driver examinations. He told Albertans that roughly 5,000 Albertans, including commercial drivers, take tests monthly, but now there is no testing. What's the ministry doing to get back to testing?

Ms Lajeunesse: Sure. Thanks for that. We have resumed. We did in the early stages suspend all road tests during the pandemic. We very quickly during that time were looking at ways that we would be able to provide driver testing for a commercial class of licences that might be required to support the pandemic, so we developed a strategy to do that and a methodology to do that safely within the pandemic health protocols.

We've since had clearance from the chief medical officer of health to resume testing in cab or in car, which would be our normal way of testing. We have been rolling that out to – initially, we're still targeting some prioritized groups to deliver that testing to because it is wholly dependent on the availability of PPE supply for us to do those. We will continue to roll out those tests as we can and broaden out to all of the other classes as we can, as PPE availability allows. In the meantime we have continued to develop our capacity for driver examiners and the number of driver examiners we have to be able to catch up in terms of some of the testing that would have been missed during the time that the tests were not being provided.

Member Loyola: Okay. I'm just trying to get a better understanding. Some examiners, then, are providing road tests is my understanding from your answer. I've been asking the minister about this for the last two months, if he's been working on a plan with the chief medical officer of health, and he hasn't really gotten back to me on specifics. Now you're telling me that these examinations have actually resumed. Okay. That's a surprise to me.

Anyways, what has been the advice of the chief medical officer? For example, in terms of health reasons examiners themselves have been questioning disinfection of private vehicles. Can you give us some insight into that?

Ms Rosin: Point of order, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Sorry, hon. member. We do have a point of order being called.

Member.

Ms Rosin: The deputies and the staff here from Transportation today are here to answer questions from the 2018-19 annual report, and we are quite clearly focused right now on the current time frame. Maybe it's the chair's role, but I still would ask the hon. member to bring his questions back to the previous year's annual report.

The Chair: Sure. Hon. members, I will remind you that any outstanding recommendations of the Auditor General are in order and, in fact, entirely relevant to this committee's deliberations. Querying the department's plan for satisfying any outstanding recommendations of the Auditor General is in order. So I will encourage the hon. member to bring his questions back to the plan for satisfying the outstanding recommendation of the Auditor General around commercial vehicle safety. Even in the context of the pandemic that is in order as long as it is back to that outstanding recommendation.

Thank you.

Member Loyola: Thank you, Madam Chair. In my preamble to this question I did actually state that I was reflecting on the outstanding recommendations of the Auditor General, so I would appreciate a response to my question, please.

Ms Lajeunesse: Sure. Could you remind me what your last question was?

Member Loyola: Okay. It was about the advice of the chief medical officer and then how to resume examinations and issues with the disinfecting of private vehicles.

Ms Lajeunesse: Sure. Certainly, consistent with what Minister McIver has said, we did work with the chief medical officer of health. The department developed protocols and presented them to the chief medical officer of health to get approval that these were appropriate and could be used during the pandemic to resume testing. Early on we had always said that we would do emergency testing for commercial vehicles, which we have been doing and had initially developed a protocol to do. That involved a follow-behind method for the testing of some commercial licences.

Most recently we've gotten clearance from the chief medical officer of health to do in-cab or in-car testing, which is our normal way of testing. Of course, it raises other concerns in terms of the physical distancing and how we might manage that in vehicles. We are continuing to develop how we might expand those tests to all licence classes while also working with the union on the application and protocol of cleaning and disinfecting vehicles and querying potential . . .

9:20

Member Loyola: Thank you very much, Deputy Minister. I really appreciate your answer.

Just really quickly before I run out of time on this rotation, I specifically want to address – I know that the ministry has a list of dangerous intersections. In 2018-2019 how much money was allotted to addressing the issues surrounding these dangerous intersections?

Ms Lajeunesse: I'll have to see if we have a specific number for intersection improvements, which could be . . .

Member Loyola: As I stated, there's an actual list, it's my understanding, that has been provided by the ministry during estimates. If you could provide the amount of money in 2018-2019 allocated to these specific dangerous intersections, I'd really appreciate it.

Ms Lajeunesse: Yeah. I'll have to get back to you on the exact number that was allocated to safety improvements.

The Chair: Okey-dokey. We are moving along, then, in our third rotation to the government side for 10 minutes. Member Rowswell.

Mr. Rowswell: You know, what I really like about Public Accounts is that I always learn neat stuff. I never heard of the international roughness index before, which is quite interesting. I'm quite impressed that every 50 metres is analyzed. That's amazing. So the fact that you're doing that is great work.

One question would be relative to – it says that 15 per cent of the highways are in poor condition, which means that "upgrading is required to comply with minimum codes or standards and deterioration has reached the point where major repairs or replacement are [required]." Then 25 per cent are in fair condition, which means, you know, that there is still quite a bit of work to do on them. Is that a big number? Like, is that pretty normal? How are we progressing on plans to – not plans. Has that reduced? Like, the plans to get that done: how has that worked out?

Ms Lajeunesse: Right. Sure. I'll certainly defer to Ranjit or Tom to give you some more information on the overall good or bad of those numbers. What I would say is that these numbers also relate to the age of the infrastructure. They're fluid numbers in terms of how they might fit between categories in terms of aging infrastructure and what we might do to repair them and what would cause them to fall lower on the index. I would also say that having a poor rating is a rating that we hold ourselves accountable to in terms of making needed improvements, but it's not a reflection of safety, necessarily.

Mr. Rowswell: Okay. Thank you.

Ms Lajeunesse: Tom, did you have . . .

Mr. Loo: I think I would just add, as SFO Dale mentioned earlier, that our asphalt roads have a service life of 20 years. It's expected that our roads and our bridges will go through that life cycle. As they're brand new, they're in excellent condition, and they're expected to deteriorate over time. We have maintenance and rehabilitation interventions to keep them safe and operational, but it's expected that through the large inventory of our road network at any given time you're going to have a certain percentage of our roads that are in poor condition. In a perfect world, if you had unlimited funds, you'd be able to address all of that, but it is expected to move through that life cycle of good, fair, poor.

Mr. Rowswell: So then part of it is that it might not be actually based on inspection; it just might be the age of it.

Mr. Loo: It's based on the age. You mentioned earlier about IRI. We have a regular inspection program for both our roads and bridges, and as we develop our capital plan, we take all of those elements into consideration: the overall condition of the road, economic activity, environmental impact, social impact. All of that feeds into the criteria for identifying and prioritizing projects for action.

Mr. Rowswell: How many miles of road do we have? Kilometres, I guess.

Ms Lajeunesse: Sixty-four thousand lane kilometres.

Mr. Rowswell: Wow. Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Toor: Thank you, Chair, and thank you for all the great work you guys are doing. I really appreciate it. My question. I think if you look on page 29 of the annual report, there is a paragraph regarding changes to the road testing model. The change was effective on March 1, 2019. You know, the results were quite odious. There were massive delays when it comes to the driver test system. Many must drive long distances for the driving test, and the massive delays are having an impact on our communities and economy. My question is: can the department explain the due diligence and the preparation undertaken before making the massive change in the road testing?

Ms Lajeunesse: Sure. Maybe I will turn to Crystal to give some history on what preparations were made by the department to assume the road testing within government.

Ms Damer: Sure. It happened in October of 2018, when government announced that it would be going to a public model for road test delivery and that that would be implemented on March 1. So in those five months there was considerable work to do, regulatory changes to set up new IT systems and to set up the new business processes with the registry agents in order to be ready to go for February 1. One of those key pieces was also recruiting our driver examiners that would be part of the new public model. In that instance we started off the year with about 77 driver examiners, when we started the new model on March 1.

Mr. Toor: Did the department anticipate any delays when the change was made in the run-up to March 1, 2019?

Ms Damer: I don't know if we would have anticipated delays. We knew it was a very tight turnaround for changing from a private-sector model to a public model given the amount of changes that had to happen to take on delivery.

Mr. Toor: Were any performance measures developed for the new test models?

Ms Damer: They were developed further into 2019. As we got under way, we knew exactly what our historical number of road tests were; that was something that we had going into the model. As well, we had an understanding of how many driver examiners were in the previous model. We didn't start the year with an adequate number of driver examiners.

Mr. Toor: Does the department have performance measures that compare the performance of the previous system to the new model of the government employees performing road tests? I'm asking in terms of the overall number of examiners and how the tests were conducted. Do you have any data about that?

Ms Damer: Yes. We know how many examiners we have in our current model, and we know how many we had in the previous model. We know how many exams are delivered on a monthly basis. We also know the distribution to regions where those road tests are delivered. All of that factored into some work that we've been doing over the last year in order to get enough road test examiners in order to get our delivery back in line. We were tracking what the wait times were throughout that period.

Mr. Toor: When we go to page 16 of the annual report, it states that changes were made to the dangerous goods transportation and handling regulation. The report continues by stating: "These amendments reduced regulatory and administrative burden for industries transporting goods across provincial boundaries, reducing red tape, and resulting in savings in both time and cost to industry." Can the department explain any progress made on reducing red tape in other areas of the department?

Ms Lajeunesse: Sure. I would say, overall, that of course red tape initiatives that are responsive to industry are particularly impactful for the department, so we definitely have a focus on reducing red tape in those areas. We also know that we have a number of sort of legacy forms, policies, and procedures, which have been developed over the years and may not be completely responsive to the environment today, that we are working on shedding so that they no longer appear as requirements for industry.

9:30

Mr. Toor: There were some line items in the budget that were related to grants. On page 47 the line item for transfers from the federal government was \$138 million for '18-19, below the actual from the year before and below the budgeted amount for '18-19. Can the department explain why there was a drop in the federal revenue?

Ms Lajeunesse: Sure. That really reflects that there was less progress made on those projects that were being funded through that capital funding stream. It's just a reflection of payments being made on progress, for slower progress in some of those.

Mr. Toor: Then on page 47 again, for municipal transportation – these are also grant programs – the expense was below budget. I think it was \$67 million, and it was down from \$298 million. The budget was actually \$231 million. Can the department explain the variance?

Ms Lajeunesse: Yes. A similar answer: that is a reflection of the progress made on projects in any given year. We fund as you go, if you will, in terms of paying on progress, so when there are less expenditures in that particular year, it's a reflection of less progress on those projects.

Mr. Toor: Thank you very much.

I'll pass on my time to Member Barnes, I guess.

Mr. Barnes: Yes. Thank you, Member Toor.

I'd like to go back to my question on the budget on page 74, please, provincial highway rehabilitation again. I see that line 13.1, rehabilitation projects, exceeded in actual spending compared to the budget, and it was exceeded by \$38 million. Can the department please explain going over the budget by \$38 million?

The Chair: Thank you, Member Barnes. I don't know if you heard the beep, but that rotation has now come to an end.

We will now move over to the Official Opposition for the fourth rotation, with a 10-minute block, please.

Member Loyola: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll continue my line of questioning. In 2018-19 the ministry approved a number of projects to improve public transportation across communities in Alberta, and this was done through the Alberta community transit fund, what municipal leaders called GreenTRIP 2.0. As I understand it, roughly \$250 million was actually committed to 17 communities, and these communities spent considerable effort and resources applying. This funding: CNG buses in Calgary, new

transit stations in Edmonton, even \$8 million for Lethbridge for new buses, and then, of course, in Banff – the list goes on. Can the ministry talk about the development of the Alberta community transit fund, or GreenTRIP 2.0, back in 2018-2019? What was the application procedure, how many jobs were expected to be created, and how were the projects scored?

Ms Lajeunesse: Thank you for that question. That's a lot of detail. I'm not sure if we have it at hand, but I will turn to Ranjit Tharmalingam to give you some information on the development of that fund and those programs.

Mr. Tharmalingam: The Alberta community transit fund, which was part of 2018-19, which was originally supported with a \$215 million program as a capital grant, was to support the expansion of transit services. No funds were expended, no agreements were signed by the department under this program.

To your question about how many projects were approved, there were applications received from a number of municipalities, and some of them were expecting to match the federal program called investing in Canada's infrastructure as well. We do not have a specific number for the applications we received, but I can tell you that none of those funds were expended, and no agreements were signed.

Member Loyola: Okay. Then can you give me any insight into how the projects were scored?

Mr. Tharmalingam: I don't have the full details of the ACT program for me to share, but they are very similar to programs like GreenTRIP, as you have indicated. It looks for regional collaboration, it looks for an increase in ridership, and it also looks for other factors that help in terms of reducing greenhouse gas and so on.

Member Loyola: Thank you. If you could follow up with more details in writing, I would really appreciate that. Then, as well, I'd like to ask the ministry to please also include the number of jobs that were expected to be created through these projects.

I'm going to move on, then, to the next question. I understand that the ministry later on in 2019-2020 cancelled the funding and that municipalities were left scrambling. I know that I heard from a lot of unhappy mayors and councillors and, quite frankly, members of the public. Can the ministry tell this committee how they communicate to the public when these critical projects are cancelled? What do you say, for example, to the commuter in Calgary who was promised a new bus, and what do you say to our municipal partners who made the budgeting decisions and signed contracts? Does the ministry provide a bailout to cover the cancelled commitments, or do they just leave municipalities with the tab?

Ms Lajeunesse: I would say that in terms of your specific question around the discontinuation of the ACT funding, I would have to go back to look at what announcements and notifications were given to those interested communities. In general terms we certainly, as part of our mandate, try to assess where various transit or transportation projects are needed and how we would continue to support those going forward.

Member Loyola: Okay. Then you will provide a more detailed response to these questions?

Ms Lajeunesse: Yes.

Member Loyola: Okay. Thank you very much.
Madam Chair, how much time do I have left?

The Chair: Five minutes.

Member Loyola: Okay. What I'm going to do now: the next question I'm just going to read into the record. I don't expect an answer because I just want to hand off and give the opportunity to some of my colleagues to ask some questions as well.

In 2018-2019 the ministry promised to be good partners with municipalities, and that commitment continued into 2019-2020, but we saw the city of Calgary come out very strongly against the government because they made commitments based on approved funding and then that funding was cancelled. We saw this with the Alberta community transit fund, where Calgary had approved and now was left alone footing the bill. So in the case of Calgary, what's the ministry's message to the city? How are they meant to cope when the government of Alberta made commitments, fully funded at that time, and then cancelled those commitments?

Then as a follow-up to that, for Calgary and, in particular, the funding agreement for the green line, I'd like to stay with the formal plan in 2018-2019. Now, this was about a \$1.53 billion commitment on behalf of the province going back to 2018-2019. Can you please inform this committee on the flow of funding each year of that legislated commitment?

Now I'd like to hand it off to the Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you very much, Chair. I'd like to start off with a local constituency question, if I may, having to do with the southwest Henday and the addition of laneways and noise abatement. I know that in 2018-2019 I made representations to then Minister Mason, the Minister of Transportation, regarding noise on the southwest Henday and congestion, which, of course, is a big issue with all constituents in that part of the ring road, and there was a commitment made to fund a lane addition, one lane north and south, basically from highway 2 to Stony Plain Road, to relieve congestion.

Also, there was a commitment made, after representations were made, through me, by members of the community who live along that roadway, regarding noise abatement. There has been a group of individuals, particularly from Wedgewood and Cameron Heights, who I represented at the time, who for 15 years have been advocating to get noise abatement measures undertaken by the ministry to improve their quality of life and their actual health, because you can't have a conversation in the backyards of many of these homes. I'm wondering. I know that the lane-widening project is under way, but given that this advocacy has been taking place for 15 years to abate the noise that these neighbourhoods are suffering along the southwest Henday, is the ministry continuing with noise abatement measures that Minister Mason promised after extensive noise studies and that these neighbourhoods have been begging for for 15 years, or has the ministry dropped the noise abatement element of these roadway improvements, which were probably going to be done along with the lane additions on the southwest Henday?

9:40

Ms Lajeunesse: Thank you for that question. I will ask Tom Loo to respond to where we're at on noise abatement and similar initiatives.

Mr. Loo: Thank you for the question. As part of the design work for the additional lanes on southwest Henday, we did extensive measuring and modelling for noise, and this included what we refer to as a stress test, which took into account projected increased traffic volumes.

Mr. Dach: That was under Minister Mason, correct?

Mr. Loo: That is correct, sir.

That also took into account the additional lanes, increased traffic volumes, and also the fact that the additional lanes would bring traffic slightly closer to the residents. So extensive testing and modelling was completed, and we even applied some projected increased traffic volumes, increased elements of truck traffic. All of this was done against the department's noise attenuation guidelines, which is 65 decibels average over 24 hours. There were, I believe, two locations that were identified that met the threshold for noise attenuation. Those will be proceeding for construction as part of the additional lanes.

Mr. Dach: All right. Now, I know that not only this neighbourhood on the southwest Henday or this area of the southwest Henday suffers from noise but also areas on the Calgary ring road. I'm just wondering if the ministry has now adopted as a regular part of its planning procedure the ability to implement noise abatement measures where they receive public complaints or where they believe that it will become a problem after the roadway is built.

Mr. Loo: As part of our normal practice for both ring roads, we do do the modelling during the design process to determine the expected noise levels as a result of the traffic. Once the . . .

Mr. Dach: If you could finish up in writing, I'd appreciate it.
Thank you.

The Chair: Okay. Now for the fourth rotation: the government side, 10 minutes.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. Thank you, Chair. Again I'll try the question. On page 74, provincial highway rehabilitation, \$38 million over budget: I'd like to ask the ministry, please, to outline that for us.
Thank you.

Ms Lajeunesse: Sure. Thank you for that question. The \$38.8 million overexpenditure on highway rehabilitation was primarily due to better progress on overlay projects and more slide repair work than originally anticipated.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. Do you go out for quotes quite a bit? You know, if the price of oil, say, were to fall or asphalt or bitumen were to fall, does that give some opportunity to do more? How do you play into the fact that we might get more value for the taxpayer at different times? Do we look for more bids?
Thank you.

Ms Lajeunesse: Certainly, as product prices on the market change, we do benefit from that when we're contracting for work, so there is often a reflection of those savings in the bids that we receive.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. Thanks again.

Provincial bridge rehabilitation: I want to give an example in my constituency. We had a huge 1-in-350-year flood event in Cypress county in 2010. About eight miles south of the Trans-Canada highway at Walsh, you know, five or so miles inside the Alberta-Saskatchewan border, is the Graburn bridge, that now for 10 years hasn't been up to full capacity and able to carry necessary hay and cattle and normal transportation requirements across it sometimes. Of course, in that vicinity are many, many families and many, many huge, multimillion-dollar farming industries. Is this bridge at all on the department's radar? How does the department handle things like

bridges and special flood or fire or catastrophic events that may put more bridges and roads into the poor category?

Thank you.

Ms Lajeunesse: Thank you for that. I'll start by saying that when there are extraordinary disasters that occur in the province, there is other funding often made available through the Municipal Affairs disaster recovery program. The ministry will often avail ourselves of that funding when we have to do emergency repairs in response to those sorts of situations.

But in terms of the specific bridge you were talking about, maybe I'll ask Tom if he has information on that.

Mr. Loo: Well, I don't have any specific information on that particular bridge, but we can follow up and get back to you in writing.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. Thank you both very much. I appreciate that.

Highway 3. I think the twinning of highway 3 is essential. Not only is the Medicine Hat economy, because of oil and gas, because of the sage grouse protection order, you know, struggling, but with Lethbridge having those three potato-processing plants, more and more potatoes are being grown almost right up to Medicine Hat now. I believe that this has really impacted the amount of traffic on highway 3, and of course, for parts from Medicine Hat to Taber, the 60 or so miles that are not twinned, your safety is an even bigger concern. I'm wondering if the department has recently done any new traffic counts on highway 3 from Medicine Hat to Taber, in particular heavy-vehicle traffic.

Thank you.

Ms Lajeunesse: We do regular traffic counts on highways and roads across the province. I don't have that information at hand, but we can get back to you.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. I appreciate that. There is some concern, you know, for people that want the development and want things to happen. But if this were to progress, and as we go through some municipalities, how does the department reach out to municipalities to hear all of their good ideas for ensuring that their commercial access remains viable? How do we ensure that those ideas get heard?

Ms Lajeunesse: Well, I'll turn to Tom and Ranjit to give you some further detailed information, but I can say that we do work closely with municipalities on their issues, their concerns, their ideas, their needs and how those relate to provincial infrastructure that we may be building or constructing that impacts those communities.

Mr. Tharmalingam: Okay. I'll start, and then feel free, Tom, to jump in.

First of all, as part of our capital planning process, we go through the needs analysis by looking at the traffic volume. Again, we have the updated volumes and we look at that. Then we do the planning studies. You talked about the highway 3 planning studies. As part of the highway 3 planning studies we actually communicate and engage municipalities and other stakeholders to make sure that we get their input.

In addition, as part of the capital plan, we also actually get feedback from local municipalities. We get that through a number of ways. We do get it through letters that come through the minister. We also get it through our regional directors, those who are locally available, and then they have their input from there as well. In addition to that, we also get it through our grant programs like STIP. There are times that there is an impact of a growth in the local road

that has also an impact on the provincial highway. So there are many ways that we actually get the information and then input to it.

Anything, Tom, you want to add to it?

Mr. Loo: Maybe I'll also add that as part of the functional planning study we have a technical review committee, and usually the representatives from each of the affected municipalities are part of that technical review committee. We also have public open houses. We fully recognize that when we plan these major projects, whether it's twinning or an interchange, the municipalities are keenly interested in the options, or the preferred options, because what we ultimately decide to do impacts their development.

Particularly for highway 3, municipalities want to know what side we're twinning on, how it impacts traffic coming in and out of their communities, and, particularly for interchange footprints, even though construction may be years away, they would like to know what our ultimate plans are and how they impact those communities. I believe they are aware and are part of the planning process. Their ideas and concerns are fed into that planning study.

Mr. Barnes: Okay. Thank you, all. My last question before I turn it over to colleagues is about Dunmore, just to the east of Medicine Hat. Unfortunately, every two or three years there's a horrific accident as Eagle Butte Road hits the Trans Canada. I know that the county and the province have made some changes, but there's been talk of merge roads, there's been talk of traffic lights. I'm wondering if the Department of Transportation has any study in the last year's budget that was done and any plans going ahead for the Trans-Canada-Eagle Butte intersection at Dunmore.

Thank you.

9:50

Mr. Loo: We can get back to you and confirm in writing, but I do believe that particular intersection that you've mentioned at Dunmore, we are planning some work there to increase safety. I do believe we are looking at signalization there, but we can confirm that in writing.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you very much. I'll turn my time over.

Mr. Reid: Thank you, Chair. It's MLA Reid.

The Chair: Yes. Please go ahead.

Mr. Reid: I just want to go back to some comments made earlier regarding driver testing. Of course driver testing is important and essential for my rural constituents, from my young farm kids looking to get a mode of transportation to transportation for goods and services. Earlier I believe one of the ADMs made reference to the recruitment of 77 examiners but didn't say how many were in the old system. Can you either tell me or deliver to us in writing how many examiners there were under the old system and if there were any anticipated gaps in examiners? If there were, why did we not anticipate any delays to driver testing?

Ms Damer: There were about 160 driver examiners in the previous private model. We recruited to bring into the public sector a number of those drivers. Seventy-seven came to join the new model. Over the last year we've been recruiting. We're now up at about 170 driver examiners, so we've recruited back to about where we were in the private sector before.

Mr. Reid: Fantastic. Thank you. I appreciate that.

Now I want to roll to another issue: increasing concerns in my riding and, I think, all our rural ridings over rural busing, both related to effectiveness and just the costs and the expenses related

to it. I want to talk about the rural bus pilot program. At the conclusion of the pilot program, how will the department judge the success of the program? What performance measures were selected at the beginning of the pilot program to guide you?

Ms Lajeunesse: Sure. As I mentioned earlier . . .

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We are now moving on to the fifth rotation: the Official Opposition to read questions into the record for three minutes, followed by the government side to do the same. Your time starts when you begin speaking.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Chair. Member Dach here. I have a quick question regarding bringing fresh water to First Nations reserves. As this committee is no doubt aware, getting water to reserves was a pretty big commitment of the ministry in 2018-19. As I can see, roughly \$100 million was budgeted. Now, as I understand it, that commitment was honoured by the current government, but it only scratches the surface. Can the ministry explain what changed in its thinking? Much more work needs to be done, but why is getting clean drinking water no longer a key priority? Why was the next tranche funding cancelled?

I'll turn my time over to Madam Renaud.

Ms Renaud: Thank you. My question is around performance measure 3(a) on page 41 of the annual report. The methodology notes that "transit ridership is reported by the Canadian Urban Transit Association," but the data doesn't include specialized services such as handibus or paratransit. I'm wondering if the department can provide some information about what metrics are used to monitor what is accessible and what the metrics are to determine success or not. Also, further down it notes "that nearly all conventional transit routes are designated [as] low-floor accessible." I'm wondering if the department can provide more information, some numbers around what "nearly all" means.

Thank you.

Ms Hoffman: My question is about the Yellowhead. I'm hoping that we can get a response in writing about progress made on the Yellowhead initiatives over the 2018-19 fiscal year and how those relate to the annual report as we move forward.

Thank you.

Mr. Dach: I have another question about STIP funding, strategic transportation infrastructure program. In 2018-2019 many projects were under way. I'm just wondering if those projects ended up being completed, or are some still under way? What's the value of that STIP funding in 2018-19, rural versus urban, the breakdown of that, and the jobs created in '18-19 under those STIP program projects?

I'll turn it over to my colleagues.

The Chair: Okay. That wraps up the request for written response round for the Official Opposition.

We'll move on to the government side for three minutes, please.

Mr. Rowswell: I have a question. Just to expand on Member Dach's with regard to First Nations, there were 10 projects, as I understand it, that were under way in 2018-19 to bring clean water to the boundaries of 14 First Nations. I'm just wondering if they've been completed, and of course, then the federal government takes it from there. You know, I'd like to know: do they actually have drinking water, or has the water only gotten to their boundary?

Then, also, how many other First Nations don't have clean drinking water in Alberta? I'd like to find that number out as well.

Mr. Reid: I'd like to just read in the questions I was cut off on in the last round. Again, related to the rural bus pilot project: at the conclusion, how will the department judge its success, and what performance measures were selected at the beginning of the pilot to guide the process?

Thank you very much and, again, thank you to members of the ministry for their time today. I cede to any other members of my caucus that may have questions.

The Chair: Okay. It looks like we are finished with that final round of questions. We are going to just ask that any outstanding questions be responded to in writing within 30 days and forwarded to the committee clerk. Thank you.

We'll now move on to other business. Thank you very much to the officials for joining us today.

Hon. members, at our June 2 meeting we had a few technical issues that prevented the meeting from starting on time. I just want

to let the members know, to update you, that our very capable LAO staff have isolated that issue that caused the delay. They've taken steps to prevent it from happening further. Thank you to the committee members for their patience and to the LAO IT staff and others for their diligence on this.

Are there any other items for discussion under other business?

Seeing none, we have a date of a next meeting, Tuesday, June 16, starting at 8 a.m.

I will now call for a motion to adjourn this meeting. Would a member move that the meeting be adjourned?

Mr. Rowswell: So moved.

The Chair: All right. Oh. I'm just going to say it was Member Rowswell, because there were a lot of people who moved it. All in favour? I believe I heard all the ayes there. Good. Are there any opposed? All right. Very good. That motion is carried.

See you all next week. Thank you.

[The committee adjourned at 9:58 a.m.]

