



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
First Session

Standing Committee
on
Resource Stewardship

Ministry of Transportation
Consideration of Main Estimates

Tuesday, October 29, 2019
3:30 p.m.

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First Session**

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

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Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Participants

Ministry of Transportation
Hon. Ric McIver, Minister
Tom Loo, Assistant Deputy Minister, Construction and Maintenance
Andre Tremblay, Deputy Minister

3:30 p.m.

Tuesday, October 29, 2019

[Mr. Loewen in the chair]

**Ministry of Transportation
Consideration of Main Estimates**

The Acting Chair: I would like to call the meeting to order and welcome everyone. The committee has under consideration the estimates for the Ministry of Transportation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020.

I'd ask that we go around the table and have all MLAs introduce themselves for the record. Minister, please introduce the officials that are joining you at the table. I am Todd Loewen, MLA for Central Peace-Notley, and I am substituting for Mr. Hanson as the chair for this meeting. We'll continue, starting to my right.

Member Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Acting Chair. I'm Joe Ceci, the deputy chair of Resource Stewardship, and I am from the constituency of Calgary-Buffalo.

Mr. Rehn: I'm Pat Rehn, MLA for Lesser Slave Lake.

Mr. Getson: Shane Getson, MLA for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

Mr. Sigurdson: R.J. Sigurdson, MLA, Highwood.

Mr. Smith: Mark Smith, MLA for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Turton: Searle Turton, MLA for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

Mr. Singh: Peter Singh, MLA for Calgary-East.

Mr. Yaseen: Muhammad Yaseen, Calgary-North.

Ms Rosin: Miranda Rosin, MLA for Banff-Kananaskis.

Mr. Sabir: Irfan Sabir, MLA for Calgary-McCall.

Mr. Feehan: Richard Feehan, MLA, Edmonton-Rutherford.

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

The Acting Chair: Minister, you and your staff, please.

Mr. McIver: Thank you. I'm here with Andre Tremblay, my deputy minister; Crystal Damer, the assistant deputy minister of the safety and policy division; Dale Fung, our executive director of Transportation's finance division; and Kimberly Row, the deputy minister's chief of staff.

The Acting Chair: And yourself.

Mr. McIver: Ric McIver, MLA, Calgary-Hays, Minister of Transportation. We also have some other department staff here in attendance.

The Acting Chair: Okay. Thank you.

I'd like to note the following substitution for the record: Member Loyola for Mr. Dach.

Please note that the microphones are operated by *Hansard* and that the committee proceedings are being live streamed on the Internet and broadcast on Alberta Assembly TV. Please set your cellphones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting.

Hon. members, the standing orders set out the process for consideration of the main estimates. Standing Order 59.01(7) establishes the speaking rotation while the speaking time limits are

set out in Standing Order 59.02(1). In brief, the minister or member of Executive Council acting on the minister's behalf will have 10 minutes to address the committee. At the conclusion of his comments we begin a 50-minute speaking block for the Official Opposition, followed by a 20-minute speaking block for the government caucus.

The rotation of speaking time will then alternate between the Official Opposition and the government caucus, with individual speaking times set to five minutes each, which, if combined with the minister's time, make it a 10-minute block. Discussion should flow through the chair at all times regardless of whether or not the speaking time is combined. Members are asked to advise the chair at the beginning of their rotation if they wish to combine their time with the minister's time. If members have any questions regarding speaking times or the rotation, please feel free to send a note or e-mail to either the chair or the committee clerk.

A total of two hours has been scheduled to consider the estimates of the Ministry of Transportation. The scheduled end time of this meeting is 5:30 p.m.

Ministry officials may be present and at the direction of the minister may address the committee. Ministry officials seated in the gallery, if called upon, have access to a microphone in the gallery area. Pages are available to deliver notes or other materials between the gallery and the table. Attendees in the gallery may not approach the table. Space permitting, opposition caucus staff may sit at the table to assist their members; however, members have priority to sit at the table at all times.

If debate is exhausted prior to two hours, the ministry's estimates are deemed to have been considered for the time allotted in the schedule, and the committee will adjourn. Points of order will be dealt with as they arise, and the clock will continue to run.

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

The vote on the estimates and any amendments will occur in Committee of Supply on November 19, 2019. Amendments must be in writing and approved by Parliamentary Counsel prior to the meeting at which they are to be moved. The original amendment is to be deposited with the committee clerk, and 20 copies of the amendment must be provided at the meeting for the committee members and staff.

I now invite the Minister of Transportation to begin with his opening remarks. You have 10 minutes.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate that. I already introduced our staff, so I won't do that again. I'm pleased to have them here.

I'm pleased to present Alberta Transportation's 2019-2020 estimates. Transportation, as you know, affects each and every Albertan, from High Level to Pincher Creek, Jasper to Lloydminster. Whether it's travelling along our highway network, using public transportation, relying on clean drinking water from modern water systems, or depending on the vast array of goods and services that move across our province, Alberta Transportation plays a role.

Transportation safety is our top priority. My department works hard to ensure that thousands of kilometres of highways are safe for Albertans to travel, also that those who drive on our highways do so in a safe and competent manner.

We are committed to providing Albertans with high-quality service for driver road tests. We recognize that Albertans have faced significant delays in getting road tests, and we are taking action to reduce wait times and increase the number of road tests available. In addition to government driver exams, we are licensing 20 private driver examiners from outside government to help

conduct road tests. We are going to continue to add more in the coming months to ensure that Albertans have the service they need and depend on.

Government is strengthening the rules for recently licensed truck and bus drivers. The new mandatory entry-level training, or MELT, requirements are here to stay for all class 1 and class 2 drivers.

We are focusing our traffic safety investments on grants to organizations that provide public education and traffic safety campaigns and programs to reduce impaired driving. We are maintaining \$500,000 a year to provide grants to organizations for traffic safety programs. We are also using alternative approaches, including social media, to promote traffic safety instead of paid advertising. We need to maximize current technologies to ensure that we're reaching people in the ways that they choose to consume information. At the same time, we are maintaining our front-line traffic safety services in remote areas and regions.

On the maintenance side, we are reducing some nonsafety summer highway maintenance activities. Our focus will be on essential activities like cable barriers, guardrails, and safety systems that protect drivers from hazards. Priority will be given to highways with higher volumes and profiles. Winter maintenance activities, including snow removal and ice control, will not be affected. Some maintenance and preservation activities such as short-length repaving will now be funded through the capital plan under major maintenance.

Budget 2019 invests \$7.2 billion over four years in Transportation's capital plan, including \$2.9 billion for planning, design, and construction of roads and bridges; \$1.5 billion in capital maintenance and renewal for smaller bridge construction projects and major highway and bridge rehabilitation projects; \$484.9 million for water management and flood recovery projects; and \$2.3 billion for capital grants to support municipal transportation and water/waste-water projects. Our \$2.9 billion investment in new infrastructure includes continuing our investment in highway twinning, widening, and expansion projects, with \$597.4 million allocated over four years.

We are continuing to build key infrastructure in the major urban centres and investing in projects in smaller and rural municipalities. For example, Budget 2019 includes \$26.5 million for highway 1A upgrading and widening within the Stoney Nakoda First Nation between Cochrane and Canmore; \$50 million is also allocated for this project in future years beyond the four-year capital plan.

A total of \$1.8 billion is dedicated to completing the Calgary ring road, which, once completed in 2022, will provide travellers with 101 kilometres of free-flow travel. The southwest portion of the Calgary ring road is targeted to open to traffic in October 2021. The capital plan also commits \$110.1 million to Deerfoot Trail improvements, with an additional \$99.7 million in future years, for a total investment of \$209.8 million.

In Edmonton \$95.4 million is dedicated to the widening of the southwest Henday Drive, which is a heavily used portion of the Edmonton ring road.

In Peace River we are investing \$56 million to complete the Peace River Bridge project.

Our \$1.5 billion investment in capital maintenance and renewal allows us to maintain the condition of Alberta's existing highways and bridges and extend their lifespan. This investment includes bridge construction, major road rehabilitation, and major maintenance activities. We are prioritizing repaving projects on key highways, including our major trade corridors, particularly those that serve our energy sector, to support industry and help get Alberta goods to market and to support jobs.

For water management and flood recovery projects, we are retaining critical funding to work in partnership with Alberta

Environment and Parks to invest \$119 million over four years to maintain existing water management infrastructure across Alberta, including dams, spillways, and canals. This work ensures a safe water supply to support our agricultural, industrial, and tourism sectors and jobs throughout Alberta.

3:40

Budget 2019 also includes \$365.9 million over four years for the Springbank off-stream reservoir, also known as SR 1. Of this, \$92 million is earmarked in the 2019-20 budget to purchase land and continue through the design and regulatory process. SR 1 will provide flood mitigation along the Elbow River to protect the city of Calgary and area and downstream areas, of course, from the risk of flood. We are moving the project through the regulatory process as quickly as possible to protect those communities and our provincial economy.

I am pleased to share that we are extending funding for the strategic transportation infrastructure program to support municipalities in improving critical local transportation infrastructure. We are investing \$83.7 million over four years in the program, with \$25 million in funding now included in 2022-23. The program was previously scheduled to end in fiscal 2021.

As part of our ongoing commitment to ensuring that all Albertans have reliable access to clean drinking water and effective wastewater services, we are investing \$194.7 million in the water for life program, \$90 million in the Alberta municipal water/waste-water partnership, and \$53 million in the First Nations water tie-in program. We will also leverage federal funding, where possible, to support critical water and waste-water projects.

In Budget 2019 we continue to support public transit. We will maintain the \$3 billion for Edmonton and Calgary LRT projects. However, part of the capital plan reductions comes from adjusting cash flow related to this funding. That means that \$75 million would be provided to Calgary LRT projects within the four-year capital plan. Most of the provincial funding to Calgary and Edmonton will be provided after 2022-23. The adjusted provincial cash flows are more prudent as the cash flow reflects the province's ability to pay and minimizes the need to borrow when funds are not available. The revised cash flow would not impact the cash for the federal contribution to the Edmonton and Calgary LRT projects.

In addition, we made the difficult decision to remove the carbon tax funded Alberta community transit fund. No funding was ever provided through this program ever since it was introduced in 2018. We will work with municipalities to help them access federal funding for their transit projects.

We are also continuing our commitment to fund green transit incentive programs, including GreenTRIP. We are providing \$189.9 million over four years in GreenTRIP funding to support municipal transit projects across Alberta.

To live within our means, Transportation's operating expense in 2019-20 is \$411 million, declining steadily to \$372 million by 2023. This is a 16 per cent reduction compared to 2018-19. Budget 2019 confirms our commitment to investing in a safe, efficient, and sustainable transportation system in Alberta while reflecting the need to spend within our means.

Mr. Chair, I thank you for the opportunity to provide this overview of the Transportation budget. I look forward to the committee's questions, and I am happy at this point to take any questions that the committee may choose to send our way.

Thank you.

The Acting Chair: Okay. Thank you, Minister.

We have a new MLA joining us here. Mr. Dang, would you introduce yourself for the record.

Mr. Dang: Thank you. Thomas Dang, MLA for Edmonton-South.

The Acting Chair: Thank you very much.

Okay. For the next 50 minutes members of the Official Opposition and the minister may speak. The timer will be set for two 20-minute intervals and a final 10-minute block so members are aware of the time. Members of the opposition, go ahead. Member Loyola.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I want to thank the minister for being here today along with his staff. Thank you very much for making yourself available. Of course, it is your responsibility to do so, so I'm glad that you're complying with your responsibility, Minister.

I do want to be able to eventually follow up on specific projects that the previous government had undertaken, but before I do that, I just wanted to ask a more high-level question in terms of: how are you deciding which projects are part of the capital plan and which ones will not make it into the capital plan? How is that decision made? Was it done with the input of cabinet and private members of the government caucus?

Mr. McIver: Well, it's a decision that we make. Of course, as you know, hon. member, all projects have specific benefits which are greater or lesser, depending on a whole number of things. We make recommendations out of our department, and they . . .

Member Loyola: What specific factors are you using in order to make these decisions?

Mr. McIver: To answer an earlier part of your question, after we do that, they go through Treasury Board before they get put in the budget. I think everything goes through Treasury Board before it gets into the budget.

I think what you're asking for is some of the major criteria that we used. First of all, safety. Safety is obviously always a major factor for us in Transportation. Of course, minimizing injuries and fatalities on the roads and getting people to and fro and remaining healthy and whole is important.

We consider economic impact.

Member Loyola: Can I just stop you right there, Minister, if you don't mind? I just want to ask you about the performance metrics on how you actually measure safety and if you could highlight those specifically.

Mr. McIver: Okay.

Mr. Tremblay: I could provide some information.

Mr. McIver: Sure. Certainly, amongst other things we consider collision, if there's a history of collision and traffic things, the amount of traffic using it, the nature of the traffic on the road, for example. If there are a hundred vehicles going down the road, we would rank it higher if the road goes in front of a school and there are a lot of children crossing, that type of thing. We might also rank it higher, for example, if there are heavy industrial trucks going by as well as people. That might be a higher traffic safety ranking.

What other criteria do we use for that kind of thing?

Mr. Tremblay: I think the minister is right. We use collision data, data around fatalities. We assess the condition of the road on a regular basis in terms of the width and the foundation condition as it relates to overall traffic counts. We also look at the types of vehicles travelling down the road. We're not just assessing the asset condition, but we're assessing that road as it relates to past and

projected vehicle activities on that road to assess whether or not it needs further investment. We also have an inventory of intersections across the province. We monitor those intersections as they relate to collision data and other serious incidents, and we use that to identify what intersection upgrades may be required in the future.

Member Loyola: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Tremblay.

I know that the previous Minister of Transportation, our good friend Brian Mason, had a list of I believe it was 20 of what he would label as the most challenging or difficult intersections in the entire province. Does that list continue to be used? Is that the way that you're working on this particular project in order to improve those specific intersections?

Mr. McIver: Yeah. You're referring to the previous minister, that's not here anymore, our good friend Mr. Mason. While I believe what you said, I can't really lay claim to knowing what he looked at, not that I don't believe you, but I have no proof of what he did or did not look at. I think that more pertinent might be what you're looking for. We have a list of safety-challenged intersections.

Member Loyola: How long is that list, Minister?

Mr. McIver: Quite.

Is there a number on how long it is?

I've got the top 10 here in my hand if that's of interest to you.

Mr. Tremblay: I could clarify.

Mr. McIver: Yeah. Go ahead.

Mr. Tremblay: It's in the hundreds.

Member Loyola: It's in the hundreds.

Mr. Tremblay: It is.

The Acting Chair: Excuse me, Minister. When you go to one of your staff, introduce the staff, or have the staff introduce himself before he speaks, please.

Mr. McIver: Chair, I shall try to comply with the request that you just made.

The Acting Chair: Thank you.

Mr. McIver: Retroactively I asked Deputy Minister Andre Tremblay to assist me, and he did. In the future I will try to introduce him before I do that.

The Acting Chair: Excellent. Thank you.

Mr. McIver: We keep track of collision statistics, you know, injuries and death per 100,000 people.

Member Loyola: Oh, sorry. If you don't mind, Minister, Mr. Tremblay was telling me that the list of challenging intersections was in the hundreds. I was hoping that he could give a little bit more detail on that and why this list is so incredibly long.

3:50

Mr. Tremblay: I don't know how much detail I can give you on specific intersections, but I'm not sure that's what you're asking. The reason why the list is so long is that the provincial highway network has hundreds and hundreds of intersections, so we're assessing each of those intersections as it relates to overall safety.

Member Loyola: Okay. I know that under the previous Progressive Conservative government they used to have a 50-year plan, and I know that under the previous minister they scrapped that whole idea of a 50-year plan because it was just too long. To forecast 50 years out was getting very difficult because of existing or new technologies that were being introduced and such. I know that there was still a long-term plan. How many of these intersections are on the current capital plan, and how are you planning on addressing the rest of these intersections as you move into the future years?

Mr. McIver: Okay. Well, let me just say that I don't disagree with you that predicting tomorrow is an imperfect science; predicting 50 years from tomorrow is more imperfect. I think that you'd agree with me on that.

Member Loyola: Yeah. We all wish we had a crystal ball, don't we, Minister?

Mr. McIver: On the other hand, two major projects that I could point to that I think were important to the major cities in our province: I'm thinking of Edmonton's Anthony Henday Drive and the Calgary ring road, that is under construction currently. I don't believe that either one of those projects would have been possible had somebody not decided 50 years ago or more – I think in some cases maybe 75 years ago – that those projects were important. The reason that that's important is because land-use decisions in the ensuing 50 years could have made the road impossible to be built in a continuous way had there been schools and hospitals, you know, maybe waste-water treatment plants constructed along the way . . .

Member Loyola: Pardon me, Minister. Are you planning on going back to a 50-year plan?

Mr. McIver: Well, you know what? I don't know that. I haven't actually had the opportunity to do it yet. It's being held under review in light of the new government priorities and our economic climate, but one of the things that I intend to follow up on – and I realize that we're responsible for more than Edmonton and Calgary, but it's pertinent to your question – is that my understanding is that the regional governments and cities around Edmonton and Calgary have at this point not gone away from a plan for an outer ring road, for example. In the event that that might be required 50 or 75 years from now, I intend to address the municipal governments in both regions at some point to ask them whether they want to reconsider that. Again, not to put too fine a point on it – I'll be dead before either one of those projects is considered because I won't be around 50 years from now – but that does mean that all of our grandchildren may benefit from them if the planning is put in place now.

I actually believe in long-term planning. I realize that a long-term plan has to be flexible. If you were to ask me what the perfect length of a long-term plan is, I just couldn't even begin to answer that, but I would say to whatever length you can go with reasonably believable assumptions that could benefit Albertans. Then I'm okay with trying to put some meat on those bones and trying to make sure that Alberta is a good place, again, for all of our children and grandchildren.

Member Loyola: Thank you, Minister. I appreciate that insight.

I'd like to get back to this list of problematic intersections. You did say that you had a list of the perhaps we could say 10 worst intersections. Would that be appropriate, the most problematic?

Mr. McIver: The list that I'm holding is entitled, euphemistically phrased, I might say, the top 10 safety-challenged intersections.

Member Loyola: Okay.

Mr. McIver: All right. Highway 39 and 60 had construction in 2019. Highway 2 and township road 204 was improved in the last two years. Highway 2 and township road 210 was improved in the last two years. Highway 2 and 651 is scheduled for work in 2022. Highway 16A and the Lake Eden road has been improved in the last two years. Highway 623 and 814 got some construction work this year, in 2019. Highway 12 and 67th Street in Stettler is scheduled for work in 2021. Highways 28 and 63 and 829 got some construction work this year. Highway 11 and 20 has been improved in the last two years, and highway 901 and 817 has been improved in the last two years.

Member Loyola: Okay. Thank you very much.

I'd like to move on to the MELT program and ask you a few questions about that. Of course, that's on page 149 of the business plan. Under section 4.3 you have here:

Continue to provide oversight and monitoring, including mandatory entry-level training for Class 1 and Class 2 driver's licence applicants and pre-entry requirements to support carrier safety, to ensure Alberta's highway network remains one of the safest in the country.

Now, from previous questions that I've asked in the House, Minister, there seems to be some confusion about the exemptions that you have provided for class 1 and class 2. I'm hoping that you can go into detail on this and that we can get it on the record and whether or not those exemptions will be extended for two years or indefinitely, because it seems that the media has received two different messages from you.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you for that. I guess one of the things that I would like you to know, hon. member, is that MELT is here to stay. Mandatory entry-level training, as I believe you know, comes to us from our good friends in the United States of America. As of February 2022 class 1 and 2 vehicles crossing over from Canada into the United States will be required to be MELT compliant. There will be no exemptions on that. That is where we're at.

Member Loyola: So immediately there will be no exemptions whatsoever?

Mr. McIver: Correct. There are no exemptions. Yes.

Member Loyola: No exemptions.

Mr. McIver: Right.

Member Loyola: Okay.

Mr. McIver: We consider that an important thing. It's not only important for safety, which is our top priority. It's also important for the benefit of the economy because, as you know, Alberta produces a lot more of everything. We need to ship it, and we need to have our carriers able to cross over to do business with our biggest partner.

Member Loyola: Okay. On a more high level, then, what other programs are going to be delivered through traffic safety services that are going to contribute to the improved outcomes when it comes to safety on our highways?

Mr. McIver: We're getting some information here looked up, but one of the things I can tell you that is in place right now are pre-entry standards for somebody that wants to open and operate a trucking company in Alberta. That's something that has been added in the recent past. There was a time – I don't know if it's quite this

simple – when you could essentially buy a business licence and be in the trucking business, and then you would get inspected after the fact. Currently there is in place a pre-entry system, where if you want to operate a trucking company, you would have to apply. You would have to be able to demonstrate that you were aware of the main trucking safety requirements, compliance, reporting standards, to be able to present some evidence that you understood them and would be prepared to meet those standards. Of course, thereafter there would be regular inspections to see how you're doing, with consequences for trucking companies that fall short.

Member Loyola: What kind of consequences, Minister?

Mr. McIver: Well, shutting them down. Inspectors look at vehicles from time to time and on a regular schedule. It depends on the nature of the shortfall in compliance.

Member Loyola: And I imagine that there would be fines associated as well?

Mr. McIver: There are. This Traffic Safety Act allows for administrative penalties to be issued up to \$10,000 per offence. The majority of penalties actually issued range from \$1,500 to \$5,000 per offence. Noncompliant carriers that do not come into compliance within the stipulated timelines are suspended as of the business day after that, and should somebody come in with a noncompliance issue that would be an immediate safety risk, then their ability to operate that vehicle would be suspended immediately and not be reinstated until the vehicle comes into compliance.

Member Loyola: Perfect. Thank you very much, Minister.

I know that it's been an issue lately with trucking companies, of course, that hire temporary foreign workers to come in and actually drive our highways. By no means do I want to demonize temporary foreign workers, I mean, although I believe that if people are good enough to work here in this province, they're good enough to stay here and get their permanent residency. They add to our economy immensely, as I'm sure you agree. By no means do I want to demonize temporary foreign workers, but how will some of the new safety guidelines, regulations, and that be able to make sure that these temporary foreign workers are in compliance when working with these companies?

4:00

Mr. McIver: No. It's a good question, and to be clear, I agree with you. Alberta is a place where we welcome new people, and we don't want to demonize temporary foreign workers, but I think you would agree with me that they need to be held up to the same safety standards that any other Albertan would be held up to before they're allowed to drive on the roads. I think you and I are agreeing on that. The onus is on the employers to ensure that temporary foreign workers receive appropriate training for the jobs they're employed in.

I'm happy to talk to you about it a little bit, but I have to say that this piece of policy really lives in labour, okay? Our labour minister, as in the last government, is also the immigration minister. I can say that it's something also that our Premier has taken great interest in. With his history as formerly being Canada's immigration minister, he's pretty familiar with this.

Our government is making efforts to welcome people that come to Alberta but also helping them to have their credentials recognized. Another part of that, an important part that I think you're hinting at – I don't think you said it obliquely – is that one of the things is making sure that they actually have those

qualifications before they're allowed to get behind the wheel of a vehicle, whether it's a 1,000-pound motorcycle or a 150,000-pound B train. Either way, they need to actually be qualified to operate that equipment, and those qualifications have to be verifiable.

I know there have been media reports about some people coming to Canada from other places that have somehow found their way behind the wheel of a large vehicle without the qualifications. I would say that in most if not all cases that's the fault of operators that allow that to happen and sometimes pressure new Canadians into doing that under threat of them not being able to afford to be here, but there's no excuse for it. We want to be, we intend to be part of the solution to prevent that, to whatever extent that is happening, from happening in the future. It (a) makes the roads unsafe, and (b) it actually takes advantage of new Canadians when they come to a country where they should be able to depend upon the rule of law, safety standards, employment standards.

Member Loyola: Perfect. Thank you, Minister. I appreciate that answer.

Mr. McIver: I think you and I actually agree on this, sir.

Member Loyola: Yeah. Thank you.

The follow-up question that I have on that, then. You're very familiar with the Tantis report. We've talked about it in the House, of course. Under the Tantis report it highlighted that these licences were actually being purchased on the side. I don't know what could be more corrupt than that. How are you as Minister of Transportation planning on dealing with the reality that licences were actually being purchased and that people weren't having to go through it, especially now that in your opening remarks you stated: 20 new examiners outside of government? I assume that these are going to be private examiners, outside of the government. How are you planning to make sure that these regulations are followed and that the same problems that were occurring before under the Progressive Conservatives aren't continuing now?

Mr. McIver: Those problems did happen under the Progressive Conservatives and under the NDP government, as a matter of fact. Here's one important change we have made since we've been here. Currently driver examiners are actually tracked, if you don't mind. You may not appreciate the expression – I don't mean it in any offensive way – but Big Brother is now watching. This is what I mean by that. It used to be that . . . [A timer sounded]

The Acting Chair: Keep going. The first 20 minutes are done.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Can I continue?

Is it okay, Mr. Loyola?

Member Loyola: Yeah. Please go ahead.

Mr. McIver: It used to be that it was to a certain degree done on faith, that when somebody scheduled an appointment, the appointment would be done properly, would be judged objectively. Someone would be given their licence or not given their licence based on the objective information that the examiner received. I would think that even though you point out some problems in the past, for the most part that was done properly, in the way it should be. But there were examples of bad behaviour where that did not happen. We've made that a lot harder to occur.

Member Loyola: How, specifically, sir?

Mr. McIver: The tablets that driver examiners are required to have with them every single test are GPS tracked, so we can tell, without

being in the vehicle, when the driver examination in the vehicle started, at what speed the vehicle travelled. Within, I think, a pretty tight tolerance we can actually tell whether the vehicle stopped at a stop sign during the test or whether it didn't, whether it was speeding or whether it wasn't. I believe we can actually, to a fairly high degree, identify where the parallel parking, in the case of a street vehicle, happened or where the backing up into a truck bay happened, in the example of a truck licence. There's a lot higher level of accountability and oversight than there was even from the time that the NDP was in government or the PCs were in government, for that matter.

Also, we have implemented mandatory entry-level training, which is an additional level. It's, of course, come out of the United States.

Member Loyola: If I could just stop you there. The question was specifically about corruption and people being able to purchase licences. How is that specifically going to be addressed?

Mr. McIver: It's just strong oversight over road testing. We watch a lot more than was done in the past, including with that electronic monitoring through the tablets that they're required to carry, and just overall stronger monitoring of driver examiners.

Member Loyola: Okay. Thank you very much, Minister.

I'd like to specifically ask about some projects that we know were undertaken in the past. First of all, the twinning of highway 19: is that something that has been funded under the capital plan? Where is that project at?

Mr. McIver: Highway 19 is in three stages, and I'm going to ask Mr. Tom Loo, if you don't mind – Tom is here; he's our assistant deputy minister, who has kind of been head of that three-stage project – to try to give you probably a little more accurate answer than I could, if that's okay.

Member Loyola: I appreciate that, Minister. Thank you.

Mr. McIver: Mr. Loo, if you don't mind.

Mr. Loo: I'm Tom Loo. I'm the assistant deputy minister of construction and maintenance for the department. Budget 2019 includes \$104.5 million for the east, middle, and west segments of the three phases of the highway 19 twinning project between the QE II and highway 60. As you're all aware, highway 19 serves an important commercial and industrial region of Alberta and several area communities and the Edmonton International Airport. It connects the QE II, part of the busiest transportation corridor in Alberta, vital to keeping goods, services, and people moving to support the economy. Twinning will help improve travel for commercial and passenger vehicles and enhance safety for all users.

Twinning of the entire 12 kilometres of highway 19 has three phases. The east segment, which is approximately 2.4 kilometres long, between the QE II and range road 253, was completed in September 2019, this past fall. The middle segment, comprising 6.3 kilometres, includes twinning between range road 253 and range road 261. Planning for this segment was completed in March 2018, and co-ordination for utility relocation and land purchases is under way. The west segment, 3.5 kilometres long, is twinning between range road 261 and highway 60. Land acquisition and utility relocation for this segment are ongoing.

Member Loyola: Mr. Chair, through you to Mr. Loo, if you don't mind, you mentioned the purchase of land along that middle

section. Could you go into a little bit more detail on where we are with that? Is that an expropriation? What are some of the details around that?

Mr. Loo: I can't provide specifics because, as you can imagine, there's a significant amount of land that's required for the project, so we have commenced discussions with the landowners. There are numerous landowners. Some are looking for opportunities where we would require buying entire quarter sections. There are others where we're able to buy segments of their property. So there are a lot of ongoing discussions with various landowners. Of course, it's our preference to avoid expropriation and to reach an amicable sale with the landowners.

4:10

Member Loyola: Okay. Thank you very much. I appreciate that, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to now move on to the Fort Saskatchewan bridge. If you could give us some more details on exactly where that project is.

Mr. McIver: You know what? Do you mind if I invite Mr. Loo back?

Member Loyola: No problem at all.

Mr. McIver: He's probably my most valuable player on this particular file.

The Acting Chair: If I could just interject for a second. From now on the questions should all go through the minister and not directly to the staff.

Member Loyola: Okay. Thank you.

The Acting Chair: Yeah. Thanks.

Mr. McIver: Thanks, Chair. Thanks, Mr. Loyola.

Mr. Loo: The highway 15 twinning project is well under way. The project consists of two phases. The first project includes twinning three kilometres of highway 15, between east of highway 28A and west of highway 37. This work is expected to be completed by the end of this month, weather permitting.

The second project includes the twinning of three kilometres of highway 15, between east of highway 37 and east of the 99th Avenue overpass within the city of Fort Saskatchewan. This includes the construction of a new bridge over the North Saskatchewan River. Construction is well under way and is expected to be completed by the fall of 2022. Currently the focus of the construction is winter work in the river in terms of building the substructure for the new bridge structures.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much.

Minister, going back to highway 19, I'd like to get some more of the details on the sale of the land. I'm hoping that you would be agreeable to undertake to provide a more detailed answer specifically on where all of that is.

Mr. McIver: MLA Loyola, we will endeavour to get you some more detail on where we are with the land purchases. May I ask, in order that we hopefully satisfy your desire for information: is there a particular parcel or particular piece that you're more interested in than the rest? Usually when somebody asks a question like that, there's a reason. That's why I'm asking. I'm just trying to get you the information you want.

Member Loyola: No. I'm just hoping to get the details on how negotiations are going with some of the landowners in that particular area.

Mr. McIver: Okay. Well, we'll get it to you in writing after the fact if that's all right with you. It probably won't happen before these two hours are up.

Member Loyola: I appreciate that.

Mr. McIver: But we'll dig it up out of the – we'll go into the archives for you. How is that?

Member Loyola: Okay. Thank you very much, Minister. I appreciate that.

I did hear a little piece about highway 37, but I'm also interested in highways 15 and 825 as well. Minister, if you can give me any details on where the projects are for those highways.

Mr. McIver: Okay. Chair, I'll invite Mr. Loo again. This is kind of a project he's in charge of. The answers I could give will be less detailed than what Mr. Loo can provide.

The Acting Chair: Absolutely. Yes.

Mr. Loo: Again, I'm Tom Loo, assistant deputy minister of construction and maintenance. I'm not sure if I have to do that every time.

The Acting Chair: While that would be great, just your name is fine.

Mr. Loo: The intersection of highways 37, 825, and 15 is a priority project for the community. As many are aware, this is a very busy intersection, particularly during rush hour, and drivers can experience long wait times getting through. The department invested \$15 million in this important improvement. Construction has been under way since 2017, and the project is expected to be fully open to traffic later this fall. This included significant work, including upgrading the traffic lights at the highway 37 and highway 15 intersection and installing a new signal at the highway 37 and highway 825 intersection. The expectation is that this will provide improved capacity and improved flow of traffic for both personal and industrial motorists.

Member Loyola: Thank you.

I'd like to now move on to the potential, if you've considered it, twinning of highway 3, down in Crowsnest Pass. Minister, I know that a lot of people come in from B.C. using that highway. I think that it's very important not only for trade and investment but also for tourism. I'm hoping that you can give me your insight on what your plans are with the twinning of highway 3.

Mr. McIver: It's a bit of a complex question you just asked, and I'll try to give you an answer on it. Highway 3, as I guess you would probably know: there are several sections. You know what I mean? There are different pieces that have different effects on traffic. Highway 23 is certainly a priority for many of the residents of southern Alberta and industry drivers. They use this highway to move goods across the region into the U.S. Functional planning studies are under way to evaluate the possible twinning of highway 3. Once the studies are complete, Alberta Transportation will review the results and prioritize projects for consideration in our capital plan project.

I would say to you that there are different considerations. There are considerations on the east side. Medicine Hat to the border side

is one section that certainly the food production people in the Medicine Hat and the Lethbridge areas are pretty interested in seeing done. But one of the other ends, too, is on the west side, from the B.C. border, particularly highway 22 into the junction with highway 2 at Fort Macleod, which is always busy.

Member Loyola: Yeah.

Mr. McIver: They really suffer when there is a road disruption on highway 1 or on the Yellowhead because when that happens, there's a sudden rerouting of lots and lots of traffic and lots of that heavy traffic off highway 1 and off the Yellowhead that choose highway 3 as the alternative when one of the other ones is down. People down there tell me that sometimes they can't actually pull out onto the road in their own municipality, and turning left can be impossible during those times when there's been, again, an accident or a snowslide or something on the other highways.

One of the other complications, through the engineering studies that we're doing, is that in at least one of the municipalities – Alberta Transportation, we have control of two or three routes through the municipalities, and we've been asked by the municipalities to actually pick one so that they can choose what to do with the other routes.

Member Loyola: To actually go through a municipality? Just for clarification, Minister.

Mr. McIver: Yes.

Member Loyola: You're not concerned that that's a safety concern?

Mr. McIver: Well, the municipalities grew up, as in most of Canada, most of Alberta, on highways, right? The original highways were rivers, and now they're roads. The populations gather there because that's where they can travel. Once the studies are done, we'll certainly use the info that we get for the capital plan.

One of the other complications that I think you'll actually be interested in is the Frank Slide. There is a road through there now. As you might imagine, one of the careful considerations we have to have is that no one knows where the bodies are underneath that slide. So if you don't build a road – actually, there's no way to know whether you're building a road over how many graves.

Member Loyola: Right. I can appreciate that.

Mr. McIver: That's someplace where we have to combine the need for infrastructure in the future with some sensitivity for the memory of those that perished in that tragedy. So how we're going to deal with that, I have to tell you, I don't know, but we're going to be confronted one day with that issue.

Member Loyola: Well, Minister, I know you're a motorcycle rider as well, as am I. I've got a VTX 1300.

Mr. McIver: Okay. You go faster than I do.

Member Loyola: I don't know about that. I stay within the speed limit.

Mr. McIver: I ride old guys' bikes.

Member Loyola: I don't know. Have you had the chance to go down highway 3 on your motorcycle?

Mr. McIver: Uh-huh.

Member Loyola: Okay. Beautiful. I'm planning on taking that trip myself one of these days soon.

I'd like to now move on to the Gaetz in Red Deer. How's that project going? Where are we at with the project? Are we almost . . .

Mr. McIver: I think we're getting a lot closer to the end than the beginning.

Member Loyola: Yeah.

Mr. McIver: I'm going to ask Andre to contribute here if you don't mind.

Member Loyola: Sure. Thank you very much, Minister.

Mr. Tremblay: We're almost complete on that project. I think the last remaining cable barriers are being installed, and then we'll have full functionality and full safety with that project.

Member Loyola: Okay.

Mr. McIver: I have complained to Andre that some of the signage isn't what it might be to get onto Gasoline Alley on the southbound lanes, and we have made some improvements since the original signage was there. Certainly got complaints from the people there that a lot of people that used to stop there couldn't recognize the exit, so we're evaluating the signage we've got there now. If more improvements are needed, we will try to make them, too. That's something else going on in terms of finishing work.

4:20

Member Loyola: Okay. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chair, how much time do I have left?

The Acting Chair: Four minutes on this second 20-minute segment.

Member Loyola: On the second 20 minutes? Thank you very much.

I'd like to go into a little bit more detail around the Grande Prairie region and highways that service there, specifically in terms of economic development. I was hoping that you could start off with which projects in that area are being funded under your capital plan and which aren't and why

Mr. McIver: Okay. We'll get that gathered here for you as quickly as we can.

Member Loyola: Sure. Thank you, Minister.

Mr. McIver: Okay. I'm going to start going with what I've got just in the interest of time.

Member Loyola: Please go ahead.

Mr. McIver: You probably don't want to wait for 10 minutes for this.

Highway 43, Kaybob Drive, and Fox Creek, improvements on that. That's on the way to Grande Prairie. It's not right in Grande Prairie. The highway 43 bypass project around Grande Prairie was completed and opened to traffic in September 2019. The highway 43 bypass and roundabout provide a safer, less congested route, particularly for heavy truck traffic in the region. The roundabout is the first one built on a divided highway in Alberta, interestingly enough. We will be monitoring that. Roundabouts are proven to be something that helps safety, but indeed they can be problematic if the turn ratio isn't big enough for the size of the traffic on it. Since

there's a lot of heavy traffic there, we will certainly, you know, monitor that. We hope it'll be fine, but sometimes despite the best efforts of the best engineers, it's not always perfect, so we will make adjustments if we have to. So far it seems to be working great. That's what I'm told, but we will continue to monitor that. The highway 43 interchange in Grande Prairie involved construction of a new highway 43, which was formerly called highway 43X, to allow motorists travelling on highway 43 to bypass northwest of Grande Prairie. This bypass is fully opened, as I said, and the improvement to the highway 43 and range road 63 intersection was the first – of course, again, that's the double roundabout. Okay. I covered that. I don't want to repeat myself.

Highway 40 has experienced significant traffic increases in the last five years. It's obviously an important corridor south of Grande Prairie, and we have allocated in Budget 2019 \$8 million toward preconstruction work on highway 40 south of Grande Prairie to prepare for twinning 19 kilometres and are investigating ways to support the highway's growing capacity in the future. We know traffic volumes on the highway have increased. We are certainly hearing from both the industrial users south of Grande Prairie as well as the residential users of that road that they are hoping to have a better exit and entrance into Grande Prairie from there.

In addition, a significant improvement on highway 40 between the Kakwa River and the Canfor intersection is under way currently. This includes 55 kilometres of paving, the construction of 27 kilometres of passing lanes, and seven intersection improvements. We think it'll improve safety and help the movement of traffic. Highway 16 to south of Grande Cache: we're doing animal fencing in that area. We've got climbing and passing lanes on highway 40, including four kilometres of repaving. One kilometre north of highway 66 . . .

The Acting Chair: Okay. Ten minutes left in the first 50-minute block.

Mr. McIver: Shall I continue?

The Acting Chair: Carry on.

Member Loyola: Please go ahead, Minister.

Mr. McIver: Two kilometres north of highway 668 there are six kilometres of repaving going there to support oversized and overweight corridor movement, which is important, of course, in the Grande Prairie area with all the oil, logging, and other heavy industrial considerations there. Also, there's work going on between the Wildhay River to south of Pinto Creek, miscellaneous road work which also is to support the oversized, overweight corridor, consistent with the industrial and business needs in that area.

Member Loyola: Okay. I'm going to turn it over to some of my colleagues here shortly, but I just wanted to touch base with you on – since becoming Minister of Transportation, what kinds of consultation have you been doing with municipalities in order to address some of these issues, with trying to prioritize some of these projects as you move forward?

Mr. McIver: A lot. I'll put a little more meat on the bones on that. The short answer is: a lot. I've been up to Grande Prairie, up to Fort McMurray, up to Fort Chipewyan, talked to community leaders, business leaders, you know, ordinary citizens, postsecondary institutions about some of their transportation concerns. At the AUMA conference, both there and in my office and since, I've met with – I don't have the exact number. I figure it's 20, 25

municipalities from the AUMA members that I've actually had into my office or met them at the AUMA.

Member Loyola: Okay. If you don't mind, I'll stop you there, Minister. Thank you for that.

So how is it that you are prioritizing the projects, then, based on all the feedback that you're getting from all of these stakeholders?

Mr. McIver: Well, you know what? What I tell municipalities, and I believe it to be the truth or I wouldn't tell them that, is that you don't always get a yes, but you'll always get your project considered.

Again, what I started talking about earlier, and you asked me to shift gears – and I'll just touch on that briefly – is that we consider safety, economic impact, social impact, the cost-benefit analysis. We consider the environmental impact, and we consider emerging issues: again, a new hospital being built, a new school being built, a new project, whether it be oil and gas, logging, a gravel pit. It could be that collisions have cropped up on a road and we maybe don't know why. If collisions start happening, then of course that pushes a project higher on the evaluation list. I listen to my professionals in the ministry.

Andre, did I miss anything?

Mr. Tremblay: Just to augment the minister's comments, we have a regional office network throughout the province. When we undertake capital planning, we consider all of the factors that the minister just articulated, but we also consult on an ongoing basis with municipalities across the province to understand what their development plans are and what their transportation plans are as it relates to development. That's fed into the capital planning process. So when we identify a local project, in all cases we would be working with the municipality to understand what their priorities are as well. That goes into the overall evaluation framework that actually is used to select projects for the capital plan.

Member Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Tremblay.

Minister, I appreciate that there are a number of criteria that you take into consideration. But you still haven't identified how you – you, yourself as the minister, along with your staff – go about deciding which projects get funded and which do not in terms of really prioritizing these projects. That's what I'm after right here. So, please, if you could get into more detail on that.

Mr. McIver: Well, I take advice from the professionals within my ministry. They consider all the factors that we talked about, and frankly we agonize over what's the most important to do first. You try to put things on a list of what's most important and then what the budget is that we're allotted after we get through Treasury Board, and budget kind of designs where we cut the list off, what we can do and what we can't do. We do planning studies. We do engineering studies. We disappoint everybody that we say no to, and we make happy, I hope, most of the people that we say yes to. It's an ongoing evaluation and re-evaluation. It never ends . . .

Member Loyola: Okay. Thank you, Minister.

Mr. McIver: . . . because the conditions never end, and the requests never stop coming in, and we are constantly, constantly re-evaluating.

Member Loyola: Thank you, Minister. Thank you. I appreciate all that. Thank you very much. There are so many more questions that I wish I could ask, but I want to turn it over to my colleagues here soon.

Before I do, I want to get into the green transit incentive program, the GreenTRIP. It's significantly underfunded. I would like to have more details on why you decided to not put more money into GreenTRIP. What was the justification?

Mr. McIver: Well, we are committed to the \$3 billion, fully, for the LRT projects in Calgary and Edmonton. We did reprofile the biggest part of the funding beyond these four years. We are committed to those LRT projects, and we are committed to delivering that full funding to Calgary and Edmonton for those LRT projects. We have let them know that.

I guess if you ask why we didn't add money to the program, it's because we're broke. We kind of come into this with the government of Alberta over \$60 billion in debt and a \$7 billion to \$10 billion a year deficit, and we're trying to overcome that.

4:30

Member Loyola: How are you planning on addressing the whole issue of greenhouse gas emissions within your ministry?

Mr. McIver: Okay. Certainly, we will continue to be supportive of the transit initiatives that come forward from municipalities.

I know that our highway maintenance companies, I believe, are active in looking for ways to be more efficient with their operations and not just on emissions but in considering the environmental impact of the things that we put on roads for traction – the salt, the sand, the other chemicals – in combinations of goods and services. We're committed to supporting our government's approach to environmental protection. Highway maintenance contractors have improved environmental management plans for their highway maintenance yard, including salt containment.

We're reviewing the use of water-borne paint rather than oil-based paint. Obviously, the concern is that we're trying to have a good environmental impact while still having the paint stick on the road.

Last, we have used up to 30 per cent recycled asphalt at times when we're doing work. We use warm-mix asphalt when possible instead of hot-mix asphalt. We sometimes use recycled concrete instead of gravel. We do a lot of things.

Member Loyola: Thank you very much, Minister.

I see that the First Nations water tie-in program: you've taken \$6 million out of there. I was hoping that you could address why you decided to take that amount of money. I mean, I'm referring to what was budgeted in 2018-19 compared now to what your estimate is for this. There's a difference of \$6 million there in terms of the First Nation water tie-in program.

Mr. McIver: I will check here with my staff. My understanding is that we didn't take anything out of there, so I'm going to find out here or try to find out right now for you or certainly thereafter.

If there's \$6 million left, I'm going to ask my staff: did we divert . . .

Member Loyola: That's item 7.3 under the estimates for Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Andre seems to think that he's got the answer, so I'm going to let him give it to you.

Mr. Tremblay: It's a cash-flow issue. We overspent in that program last year, and that needs to be accounted for in this year's budget, so we advanced as many projects as we could. Overspending in one fiscal year means that you need to draw that down proportionately in the next fiscal year. No net reduction.

Member Loyola: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Tremblay.

Mr. McIver: The program was kept whole, just so you know.

Member Loyola: Okay. Then my understanding is that there was quite a bit of consultation done on this. I'm hoping that you could address consultation with indigenous communities moving forward, and then I'll turn it over to my colleague from Edmonton-Rutherford if he wants to ask any follow-up questions on that.

Mr. McIver: Okay. We do constant consultation with indigenous communities – just as a matter of interest, I had the chief from the Dene Tha' in my office last night along with a council member, a staffer, and a consultant; we met with several other indigenous communities and nations – essentially meet with them, whoever wants to meet with us, and listen to their concerns and see where we can help them. We engaged with First Nations on the highway 40 widening projects in the design and construction phases, the highway 628 realignment . . .

The Acting Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll move to the government caucus. You'll have 20 minutes. Would you like to go back and forth, or would you like to do 10 and 10?

Mr. Singh: Mr. Chair, I have two questions. I would like to have permission to go back and forth.

The Acting Chair: Would you like to go back and forth with the minister?

Mr. Singh: Yeah.

The Acting Chair: Okay. Thank you. Go ahead.

Mr. Singh: Through the chair to the minister, I think you're doing a great . . .

Mr. McIver: I'm sorry, Chair. I can't hear with the background. I apologize. I don't mean to be rude to my colleagues, but I'm truly trying to hear the questions here, okay?

Mr. Singh: Through the chair to the minister, I think you're doing great work. My question is on page 149 of the 2019-20 business plan. The key objective 4.3 mentions the continuation of oversight and monitoring, including the mandatory entry-level training for class 1 and class 2. There has been lots of discussion about your requirements for mandatory entry-level training, MELT. What is your direction on this issue going forward?

Mr. McIver: Well, I want to assure you that MELT is here to stay. We are delivering it. Anybody that walks through the door now and wants a class 1 or 2 licence will be required to meet the MELT requirements or they will not get their class 1 or 2 licence.

In the past the United States, of course, added the MELT requirements, effective February 2020. The previous government grandfathered over 150,000 class 1 and 2 drivers that had been driving for somewhere between one day and 40 years and a whole, full variety in between, I suppose. Roughly 5,500 transition drivers passed the pre-MELT exams after the intent to implement the new training was announced but before the new MELT exams were available. These transition drivers were expected to eventually retest. Our officials are examining the driving records of these individuals. If they've received any infractions since earning their licence, they will be required to retest, under Alberta's new safety requirements, by February 28, 2020. The MELT transition drivers

mentioned will have a two-year probation period, and if their driving record is not kept clean, they will automatically have to retest under MELT by February 28, 2020.

Again, as I said, anybody that steps forward at this point – and forever, as far as I'm concerned – that wants a class 1 or 2 licence is going to have to meet those requirements.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Minister.

I know that safety rest areas are funded under highway twinning, widening, and expansion. I see that program listed on page 136 of the fiscal plan. What is the ministry doing to increase the number of safety rest areas across the province?

Mr. McIver: Well, let me first of all say that we recognize that safety rest areas are important. I mean, I go back and forth between Calgary and Edmonton, I think, as you probably do, once a week, sometimes twice a week, and I often use the safety rest areas if I happen to be going back and forth late at night, sometimes to grab five or 10 minutes of rest, rest my eyes before I continue on. It's important for safety.

I believe that Budget 2019 does include \$23.5 million over four years to add or improve rest-stop areas along some of the key routes, including QE II southbound near Wolf Creek, QE II northbound near Bowden, QE II and highway 42 at the northwest quadrant, highway 36 at the town of Vauxhall, highway 40 at the roadside turnout near Grande Cache.

I have to say that we're also open to businesses, municipalities coming to us with places where they think – you know, I can't make promises here, obviously. We don't make announcements at estimates typically, and I'm not making one now, but I'm just saying that we are open to suggestions for, say, somebody that wants to work with us on a road that needs a rest area. If they say, "We want to build a gas station and a restaurant, provide a rest area that's needed," I can't give a blanket yes, but I would say that we'll certainly hear them out because we think that there is room in Alberta for more quality rest stops and rest areas. I think Alberta is somewhat underserved, and we're considering strategies to reverse that trend and to service Alberta in a more robust way than Alberta enjoys today.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Minister, for answering.

I would let my fellow members have the next question. Thank you.

Mr. Getson: Yeah. Again, thanks, Minister, and your staff there. They're spot on with their items. I'm really impressed.

Mr. McIver: Well, they're better than I am.

Mr. Getson: Always surround yourself with better people. I mean, that's a good old adage that doesn't go away.

This is kind of neat. I'm a civil engineering technologist, and I actually had to dust off my TAC manual again and see some of the criteria. I'm so glad to know that what I learned way back when is still applicable today.

One of the items on I think it was page 112: we mentioned that we're going to look at the driver examinations. That's been a big thing out in rural Alberta. I know that the urban centres are getting serviced – that was some of the announcements – but in rural locations folks are travelling upwards of an hour, an hour and a half, booking six months out trying to get folks' drivers' exams. Minister, if you could tell us what you're working on to help us out in those areas.

4:40

Mr. McIver: Listen, I made no secret of it. I've been asked lots of questions. We're struggling, okay? As of March 1 of this year the

previous government essentially blew up the previous driver examination system. They nationalized it and made them all government employees. That by itself is not a problem.

The real problem is that we went from over 150 driver examiners down to 73 at the beginning of the busiest time of the year for people that need driver examiners. Of course, the summer is the only time, typically, that motorcycle riders can get their driver examiners. The summer period is also when the agricultural industry hires people for the fall. It's the time when school boards hire and train the school bus drivers for September, school starting. It's a time when most Albertans just choose to have their driver's licence test because they don't want to parallel park in the snow and the ice.

We have hired up to twice as many examiners as we had then, but it took several months to do that while we fell behind severely. At the same time this was happening, we started the requirement to deliver the MELT higher level of training and examinations. So we're very far behind on all of it. We're in the midst now – we announced that we were going to add 20 licensees on a temporary basis to help our hard-working employees deliver the driver exams, and we are working to get them trained and on the road and have actually said that we're not necessarily going to stop at 20. We'll go to 40 or 50 or whatever it takes until we get caught up.

But I'm here to tell you that it's still in trouble. We're still working real hard at it. Believe me, we can't forget about it because Albertans remind us every hour of every day. I'm sure the constituents of every MLA in the room are contacting my office all the time. We are determined to get caught up, but we're struggling. Part of the problem is that we can't take a shortcut because the whole thing is about safety, and if you shortcut the person teaching the safety and testing the safety, then you haven't actually caught up on the safety. We're trying to be responsible and trying to catch up, and we're struggling.

Mr. Getson: I have another question, if I may, as well. This one shouldn't come as a surprise given the location and proximity to the other gentlemen and the area and corridor that's very near and dear to our hearts, from highway 16 through 60. Appreciate the work that's taken place on 19 in tying us back into highway 2. I guess the one that's kind of our favourite in that area is that highway 60 overpass. I couldn't see it specifically listed in here. I'm just wondering where it's at and if it's still on the books in the next two years and if it meets the requirements based on your criteria for selecting capital projects.

Mr. McIver: Okay. The highway 60 overpass: that's west of Edmonton, right?

Mr. Getson: Yes, sir.

Mr. McIver: Okay. We allocated \$8 million towards the project in Budget 2019. The project includes twinning highway 60 between highways 16 and 16A, construction of an overpass over the CNR tracks, and realignment of the interchange at highway 16A. I don't know if you were aware of any of this or not.

Mr. Getson: Absolutely, yeah.

Mr. McIver: Improvements to highway 60 will ease congestion and traffic and help improve the flow of industrial and commercial and commuter traffic. Separating the CNR rail from the tracks, we think, will greatly improve safety as well as rail operations. An additional \$88 million is allocated outside of the capital plan. The project has an estimated cost of \$96 million.

Anything I missed there, Andre?

Mr. Getson: When would that timing be? Sorry.

Mr. McIver: I use the phrase "outside of the capital plan." That's why you're asking the timing, right? Four years.

Mr. Getson: Four years out. Okay. Thanks.
I'll turn it over to another member here.

Mr. Singh: Through the chair to the minister, on page 197 of the government estimates I see that Transportation is investing \$327.3 million in maintenance and preservation in 2019 and '20. How are you ensuring that we keep up with the maintenance of our roads?

Mr. McIver: Okay. Well, let me just say that one of the most important things that we do: routine patrols and inspections are completed on a daily basis by our highway maintenance contractors and by department staff. Identified safety issues are addressed on a priority basis, but I have to say that we are reducing some nonsafety summer highway maintenance activities. We're not deferring any repairs that impact the safety or integrity of our bridges or roads, but in this budget Albertans may notice rougher roads and taller vegetation in some areas because of some of what we're doing to control costs. Again, priority will be given to highways with higher volumes and profiles, for example economic corridors. But I want you to know that winter maintenance activities, including snow removal and ice control, will not be affected or reduced. Those are all safety-related maintenance issues, and they will not be reduced because they're safety-related issues and because public safety is a top priority for us. We are closely monitoring the highway conditions, repairing the roads and bridges, and controlling vegetation that could create safety issues.

Where we get noxious weed complaints, we will go over and spot spray those even if they are not scheduled to be cut under our reduced summer maintenance schedule. If there are noxious weed problems, we will address those individually and spray those as required. Oftentimes it's reported by municipalities.

Yeah. Some short maintenance and preservation activities such as short-length repaving, concrete bridge deck repairs, and culvert replacements will now be funded differently through the capital plan under major maintenance, a line you'll see in the budget there instead of the operating budget, where appropriate. Those are the ones where it can be determined that doing this will actually add value to the infrastructure. Consequently, in some cases, we can capitalize it, and that's a change from how we've done it in the past.

The MacKinnon report did note that Statistics Canada data indicates that the average age of infrastructure in Alberta is generally lower than in other provinces. We think we won't be in trouble on this, but because we are reducing some of the maintenance, we are going to monitor it carefully to make sure that we don't cause safety issues.

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Minister, for answering.

Mr. Getson: Now you've got me going, Minister. You know how that works once you uncork the genie, so I apologize. In the outcomes, on number 1 on page 146 of the business plan, it's good to see that we're looking and trying to keep competitive and moving, you know, products across market, as you mentioned. We produce way more and more in exporting. What are we doing to facilitate that transportation of goods and services across the province? How does that fit within the bailiwick?

Mr. McIver: Well, we are responsible for the network. I say that because a lot of people and the times when people talk about roads or bridges or intersections, they're worried about the road or the

bridge or the intersection. I have no criticism of anybody for thinking that way, but we need to think of that as well as thinking of the network. The network is how Albertans generally get around Alberta and how goods and services come into Alberta and leave Alberta. Those economic corridors are very important. We try to monitor those extra carefully as well as we do studies on the high-load corridor network for oversized and overweight loads in Alberta. I think we have more of those loads than probably all the other provinces do. If not, certainly must be near the top.

The QE II corridor, the Alberta transportation trade network, was completed in 2018-19. The Alberta transportation trade network study assessed existing and future export commodities and identified priority infrastructure gaps. In other words, where we see a need emerging, we try to get on top of it. You know, we did announcements here recently about major projects coming, so we try to prepare and have the roads in place. We participate in the federal, provincial, territorial meetings to talk about the wider network with our provincial and territorial and federal partners.

We participate in WESTAC, really a very, I think, important group of western transportation professionals, where railroads sit at the table, ports for Prince Rupert, Vancouver, Thunder Bay are at the table. We're talking about, really, trains, planes, and automobiles on the road participate. We share information with them, and they share information with us so that we can try to be proactive as much as we can. You know, you can't tell the future, but when somebody announces they're going to build a plant in the middle of Manitoba or Saskatchewan or B.C., it's nice to have somebody tip you off and say: hey. Then we try to stay on top of it and react to that.

4:50

In the 2019 construction program, which is on the government's website, some of the corridors include the Tofield bypass on highway 834, which is part of an overdimensional load corridor, whose current alignment brings it right into the town of Tofield. It will involve a new alignment to the east of town, which will reduce congestion and delays for industry and other highway users while separating industry from other highway users, from local vehicle and pedestrian traffic.

We're continuing work on the twinning of the Peace River Bridge on highway 2, which is slated for completion in the fall of 2020; twinning of highway 19, which we've talked about a little bit today; highway 40, south of Grande Prairie, we're doing work there; several intersection improvements and repaving along highway 43; and 45 kilometres of repaving along highway 3. If I didn't include that in my answer earlier to the hon. member, I apologize for that. That's another piece of stuff that we're doing.

Mr. Getson: Okay. Just changing gears here a bit, Minister, as well. On page 105 of the fiscal plan it's talking about improving flooding resistance. How are you guys specifically looking at it? I know that it's outside of my area, down in that Calgary area, but a lot of colleagues had talked about it. What's going on there to help prevent some floods?

Mr. McIver: Right now there are several things going on. Of course, the SR 1 project: my instructions from the Premier are to get that approval done so that we can put a project in place. To confirm our support of SR 1, Budget 2019 includes \$365.9 million over four years. No, it's not approved yet. Yes, we're planning on getting it approved, because we set \$365 million aside to do improvements. But we can't do them until both the federal environmental assessment agency and the provincial environmental authority allow us to do that.

Upstream flood mitigation is being done in Redwood Meadows. The berms have been repaired, and the berms at Bragg Creek will be in place in 2021. In addition, Redwood Meadows will receive additional funding to improve the berms that are there. We've replaced the berms that were there before the floods in 2013, and they failed, but we're also going to enhance them to make them better, higher than they were before.

At this point the way it works with flood mitigation is that Environment and Parks has to decide on the project. They decide which projects will be done. They give us the job, as their construction company, to get it approved and to build it, and during that period of time they serve as the provincial regulator. So we get it approved, if we can. We build it, and then on opening day we hand the keys back to environment and say: here's the dam that you asked for, and now you can run it. We're the construction company and the ones that get the approvals done through the environmental assessment agencies. We're working hard at that.

Of course, in the meantime, before the major projects are done, we have arrangements with the operators of the dams further upstream in the river. The government pays them money each spring to keep the water level behind their dams lower, to provide more capacity in case there is a flood situation, to protect downstream communities: Calgary area and everybody downstream from there.

We also hired an expert, as we said that we would in the campaign, to give us advice on getting the approvals done for SR 1. We've hired that expert, Mr. Ignasiak. He stays with the ministry as a consultant to help us get through the approval process as successfully and, hopefully, quickly as we can. We're not in control of it, but we're working very hard with his expert advice and my excellent staff to not be the holdup and to get through that federal-provincial process as fast as we can. But it's onerous. Yeah. We're doing a lot of work on it and fighting our way through the environmental process.

Mr. Getson: Okay. I guess one last one, with the indulgence of the group here, and I promise I'll be quiet after this, guys. You've already kind of touched on it a little bit, but coming back to the capital plans, there are several projects . . .

The Acting Chair: Thank you very much.

We will now move to the opposition side for 10 minutes. Go ahead.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you. Thank you, Minister and everyone from the department for coming today. Very helpful information so far, and I appreciate it. In my role as the critic for Indigenous Relations I'd like to ask a few questions about the First Nations tie-in program. Now, in many ways, you know, the first five or six questions are all a lump sum, and I'd be more than happy to receive it in writing later if it's a more efficient way to provide the information.

I understand from the answer that you gave just recently that there is a cash-flow issue because money was overspent in one year and some money will not be spent this year as a result of that, and I accept that. But it then leads me to the question of: which nations are where in the process?

I understand that it is a three-stage process that nations are allotted. First, an original planning stage, then moving into implementation design, and then finally, of course, the construction stage. I'm just wondering, given that there is somewhat of an abeyance in terms of moving forward, if you could identify for me which nations are at which of the three stages, and which ones will

be delayed moving forward over the next little while. If that requires some written answers, I'd be prepared to receive it that way.

Mr. McIver: Okay. Well, thank you. I hope you'll be pleased to know that when I made my trip up to Fort Chipewyan recently, we cut the ribbon on the water treatment plant there, which was well received in that community, as I'm sure you're well aware. So that is up and operating and open. The Frog Lake First Nation, with the Bonnyville Regional Water Services Commission: we're doing waterline design in our budget in 2019-20. There's a \$1 million grant towards that.

Mr. Feehan: Can I just pause for a moment there because there was an additional question with regard to the Frog Lake First Nation's waterline that perhaps you can answer, or perhaps you can tell me later. There was a question as to whether or not the line would be coming from the north, from the Cold Lake area, and there was a western and an eastern proposal. The eastern proposal would be a little bit closer to Elizabeth and Fishing Lake Métis settlements and therefore would have to be built to accommodate them in the future. I'm just wondering whether the decision has been made on the actual line on that line.

Mr. McIver: Well, I can also tell you – I mean, I'm okay with it, but you cut me off before I also told you that for that project there's another million dollars for a regional tie-in, preliminary design, with the town of Bonnyville. Does that answer your question, or no?

Mr. Feehan: No. Because the decision as to whether it'd go east or west would be . . .

Mr. McIver: We'll try to get you something in writing. I don't have it at my fingertips today.

Mr. Feehan: I didn't necessarily imagine you would, but I would like to have that information to know whether or not the proposal is to build it on the eastern corridor at a size large enough to connect the two Métis settlements or not.

Mr. McIver: Okay. I'm just going to tip you off now – later on I'll let you decide how you use your time – but we have, I think, some answers for Mr. Loyola on his land acquisition question. But first I'm going to answer your question. I'm just giving you this background in case you folks say: let's give Mr. Loyola his answer. Right now I'm going to carry on with you, okay?

Mr. Feehan: Yes. That would be perfect.

Mr. McIver: All right. Also, the Paul First Nation and Alexis First Nation: a twinning for \$1.7 million is in the budget.

Mr. Feehan: Those were both completed maybe two years ago?

Mr. McIver: That's the remaining funds to be paid out to complete it, so I would say from that that it's not completed, but it's in the budget to be spent, which means to be done.

Mr. Feehan: Okay.

Mr. McIver: The Whitefish (Goodfish) Lake First Nation waterline, connecting to the Highway 28/63 Regional Water Services Commission, which serves the areas north to Newbrook and east to Mallaig, is under construction, target completion: 2019-2020. That's \$3 million there, assigned to that. The Dene Tha' First Nation, the Bushe River-High Level waterline: construction is expected to begin in 2020, and we have \$1.1 million budgeted for

that work. Also, the Maskwacis, Ermineskin, Louis Bull, Montana, and Samson: there's a feasibility study with construction funding to figure out what the construction funding is going to be. The Mikisew Cree Nation: there's a feasibility study on that, too, and out of that will grow a budget. I can't give you numbers on those two, because part of the whole idea of doing the feasibility study is . . .

Mr. Feehan: Yes. I understand that. That's why I was wondering if perhaps you can provide me later a listing of where they are in that stage process of consideration, whether they're just at the consideration stage or whether . . .

Mr. McIver: The Siksika Nation has a feasibility study going on, or will have this year. The Beaver Lake Cree Nation will have a feasibility study done this year. The Sturgeon Lake Cree Nation: also a feasibility study to be done in 2020-21. The Bigstone Cree Nation will have a feasibility study done in 2020-21, and the Loon River will have a feasibility study done in 2020-21. That's what I can tell you today.

5:00

Mr. Feehan: Great. Excellent. Thank you.

Now, the question, then, comes in that we have a number of nations that are at the feasibility stage. However, the original hundred million dollars that was put into this project in the first place would clearly not be able to provide for all of those should they come to fruition from the feasibility stage level. Is there any plan in your next four-year projection to increase the hundred million dollars in the First Nations tie-in program?

Mr. McIver: Well, let me say this. The previous government put in place, I think, a hundred million dollars, and that's whole. All that's committed. At this date, this time, October 29 at 5 p.m., we haven't added any money to that program, so it will be in a different budget year that we would consider that. In this budget, that we are doing estimates for, there is no more money in that particular program, but we are planning on fully completing what was committed to.

Mr. Feehan: Right.

At this point we're quite aware that that money will clearly not cover all of the nations that you've identified as having a feasibility study under way at this particular time.

Mr. McIver: Okay.

Mr. Feehan: It's accurate for me to say that?

Mr. McIver: It's accurate for you to say that we didn't add anything to the hundred million dollars, but we're going to honour the full hundred million dollars.

Mr. Feehan: Right. Okay. Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

I'd like to ask a few road questions. Again I'll stick to some of the work with the First Nations for a little bit. Now, you identified that the highway 1 work through the Stoney Nakoda area is under way. Can you tell me if that is actually . . .

Mr. McIver: It's not under way.

Mr. Feehan: Ah. That's my question. Okay.

Have we finally got a final, signed deal, or are we still in the final negotiations?

Mr. McIver: No. We are working very hard towards that.

Mr. Feehan: Okay.

Mr. McIver: We had a signed deal back in 2013. I signed it, and the previous government let that deal lapse.

Mr. Feehan: That's not right, but that's okay.

Mr. McIver: You can tell me more about that than I could tell you.

Mr. Feehan: Yeah, I certainly can.

Mr. McIver: But we are trying to recover that lapsed agreement and get it back on the rails because we think it's important.

Mr. Feehan: Okay. You mentioned it in your original speech, so it made me wonder about whether . . .

Mr. McIver: Yeah. We have funding in the budget, so I guess I could say that we are feeling optimistic about our ability to get that project done, but as you know, only a signed deal is a signed deal.

Mr. Feehan: That's right.

Mr. McIver: While we don't have said signed deal, we're working very hard towards it, and I suppose, because we put money in the budget, we're feeling at least some optimism.

Mr. Feehan: Does your money in the budget cover the land transfer aspect of the highway change?

Mr. McIver: Yes.

Mr. Feehan: Including the . . .

Mr. McIver: Let me say this. When I read my opening remarks, some of the money that I talked about is in the four-year plan, and some of it is beyond the four-year plan. But if you combined what I talked about in the four-year plan plus what I talked about beyond the four-year plan, my understanding is that it should be the full cost of the project.

Mr. Feehan: Okay. Thank you.

There have been a number of requests, primarily from Little Red First Nations, which is in northern Alberta, regarding highway 58 leading from High Level east toward Wood Buffalo park.

Mr. McIver: Is that the Dene Tha'?

Mr. Feehan: No. Little Red First Nations.

Mr. McIver: Little Red. Okay. Pardon me.

Mr. Feehan: Right now the highway is paved from High Level to the highway 88 intersection, where it proceeds down through Fort Vermilion. They made the request for paving to occur from the highway 88 corner to at least as far as John D'Or Prairie, perhaps as far as Garden River, which is, in fact, the only western access into Alberta's largest park. I'm just wondering whether or not there are any plans to proceed with the paving or improvements on highway 58, that section.

Mr. McIver: I don't see it in the budget, in the documents available to me. We will try to get back to you on that. I think it's safe to say that it's not in this year's budget. But you asked about plans, and plans are sometimes this day, this week, this month, this year, this decade, so we will try to get you something better than what I just said, not that random.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you.

The Acting Chair: Okay. Thank you very much.

We'll go to the government caucus now for 10 minutes. Would you like to go back and forth?

Mr. Turton: If that's acceptable, Mr. Chair.

Mr. McIver: Yeah.

The Acting Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Turton: Awesome.

Thank you very much, Mr. Minister, for coming here today along with the rest of your team. I just have one simple question about a project that's very near and dear to my riding of Spruce Grove-Stony Plain, and that is secondary highway 628. I see that it wasn't mentioned on the actual capital plan. Just to follow some of the questions that Member Getson asked about some projects, I was just hoping you could give a little more description about what has to be done on that project and approximate timelines about when the government will be taking a look at it?

Mr. McIver: Well, thanks, hon. member.

Mr. Chair, I really don't want to upset the opposition, and I'm not picking on them. I'm just trying to hear what's going on if you don't mind.

The Acting Chair: With all due respect, we have to keep the volume down. The discussions on the side can interfere with the business at hand.

Mr. McIver: Sorry. I don't want to offend anybody, but I'm truly trying to listen, okay?

The Acting Chair: Yeah. Thank you.

Mr. McIver: We understand that highway 628 is an important commuter route between Edmonton and Spruce Grove and Stony Plain and the residential developments in Parkland county. We've allocated \$46 million in Budget 2019 to begin work towards rebuilding 16 kilometres of highway 628 between highway 779 and the west Edmonton city limits. We know that the residents along this route have been calling for safety improvements, particularly since a fatality occurred in 2017. We know it's an important commuter route. The project, we think, will enhance safety, improve commute times, and reduce congestion on other arterial roads. It includes reconstruction of five kilometres of highway 628 between 231st Street in west Edmonton and highway 60, and the realignment of 11 kilometres between highway 60 and Campsite Road south of Spruce Grove. Also, the paving of highway 628 between highway 779 and Stony Plain to the Golden Spike Road was completed in 2018.

Mr. Turton: Okay. Is there an estimated timeline of when it's going to be on the radar, Mr. Minister?

Mr. McIver: Andre, is it going to be completed this year or just begun this year? I'm going to ask Mr. Loo.

Mr. Loo: Four years.

Mr. McIver: Four years for all that to be done. Okay. It's in the budget; over four years it'll be done.

Mr. Turton: Excellent. Thank you so much, Mr. Minister.

I defer the rest of my time to Member Yaseen. Thank you so much.

Mr. Yaseen: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Minister. Can I go back and forth?

Thank you, Minister, for your hard work and your team's hard work to bring this province back on track and to fiscal balance. My question to you is referring to page 198 of the government estimates.

Mr. McIver: Okay.

Mr. Yaseen: Page 198 of the government estimates shows \$92 million in 2019-20 for the Springbank off-stream reservoir. Does this increase in investment for SR1, or Springbank off-stream, reflect the government's commitment to flood mitigation for Calgary and surrounding areas?

Mr. McIver: It does. We've always said that we're committed to flood mitigation for Calgary and area and southern Alberta, and we're working hard to get the approval done. The \$92 million is directed towards the Springbank off-stream reservoir, as you rightly said, so that we can avoid a repeat of the devastating floods of 2013. I will say that we have that money there in anticipation, we hope, of getting approvals.

We can't build anything until both the federal Environmental Assessment Agency and the provincial environmental assessment agency give us permission, and outside of those formal processes we have some work to do with the First Nations and indigenous groups in the area, municipalities, residents, people that have expressed concerns. Your colleague on your right is smiling right now because she represents some of those people with concerns, and we're trying to make and take time for each group that has expressed concerns to do what we can to satisfy those concerns. But I can tell you that we still have some work to do. We're not just sitting on our hands waiting for the federal and provincial governments to say yes or to say no. We're actually out talking to concerned parties on a regular basis as well as actively engaging with the federal and provincial approval agencies.

Mr. Yaseen: Thank you.

My other question refers to page 136 of the fiscal plan, which shows that Transportation is investing in water management infrastructure. Can you please explain the importance of investing \$29 million in 2019, for a total of \$119 million over the four-year capital plan, in water management infrastructure?

5:10

Mr. McIver: Okay. Well, I'll tell you: it's really important. If you're in a municipality that doesn't have adequate clean water or adequate water treatment, you really know how important it is. Nothing will make water matter more to you than not having it or the disposal of water. We are investing \$119 million over four years.

The program is pretty flat. It's flat with what it's been in the past. You'll see some variance in numbers from year to year, but those variances are a result of the construction schedules. Sometimes the number goes higher because a project becomes more expensive through detailed design or through problems in construction. Sometimes we're fortunate and, I will say also, through good management a project comes under budget. It can be lower. Also, sometimes projects that get approved can't get delivered on the schedule you want. So rather than take the money back, we push the money into the next year so that a community that gets approval on their waste-water project – and we heard, with a question from the other side, about one of those projects on the indigenous water

program where that happened, or where money actually got spent more in the year before.

Essentially, the program is flat. The variations come from the construction schedules, overbudget or underbudget situations, things like that, but essentially the underlying is that the program is flat for funding.

Mr. Yaseen: Well, thank you, Minister.

Now I will pass it on to my smiling colleague on my right.

Ms Rosin: Thank you.

Well, thank you, Minister, for being here today. I know we've all got the near-impossible challenge of balancing the budget with balancing the interests of Albertans. You're probably going to have seen my question coming from a mile away. On page 198 of the government estimates I see highway rehabilitation projects, and we know that wildlife crossings are funded under this category. I'm just wondering if you can speak to what our government is doing to protect the wildlife crossing on Alberta highways, coupled with protecting the humans who travel up and down these highways every day, primarily the No. 1 overpass just west of highway 40.

Mr. McIver: No. It's good. I did kind of anticipate that this might be a question because I've heard from you, and I've heard from your municipalities. I've heard from both of you. The government of Alberta has allocated \$20 million over four years to identify animal-vehicle collision-prone areas across the province to assess the best ways to redirect wildlife and design and install mitigation measures such as fencing, overpasses, underpasses, and wildlife detection systems. We've hired an engineering consultant to deliver the wildlife overpass in the Bow valley. I think that one will be of great interest to you and your constituents.

We continue to support the work toward implementing infrastructure that will allow safe highways and will allow wildlife to flourish, especially in the natural park areas in the foothills and the Rocky Mountains but, truly, across Alberta. We need to protect wildlife everywhere that we can. A number of the potential projects throughout the province are being reviewed for wildlife fencing, including the wildlife detection systems similar to those being implemented in B.C. We are looking to get a project under way between Banff and Calgary. It's a high priority, and we are trying to work through that process to deliver something. We have some work to do, but we're committed to getting it done.

Ms Rosin: Thanks. Just to clarify: that \$20 million right now is allocated to wildlife crossings across the province, but you wouldn't say that the area between Calgary and Banff will be a priority within that?

Mr. McIver: Oh, no. The area between Calgary and Banff is a high priority. As I said, while we care about wildlife everywhere, we certainly respect the sanctity and the importance of our national parks and our provincial parks. Obviously, that Banff to Calgary corridor is an important one.

Ms Rosin: Wonderful. Thank you.

I just have one last question for now. In the fiscal plan on page 13 the government indicated that the size of the public sector is going to be reduced by about 7.7 per cent over the next four years, but I'm wondering why Alberta Transportation's full-time equivalent is increasing by 161 employees from the 2018-19 budget, from 732 to 893?

Mr. McIver: Okay. Well, the increase of 161 full-time equivalent employees . . .

The Acting Chair: Okay. Thank you very much. Sorry about that.

We're going to move on to the opposition caucus for 10 minutes. Go ahead.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Minister, for sharing your time with us today. I'm going to go back and forth if that's all right, and I'm going to be very brief. I only have a couple of questions, and then I'll kick it over to one of my colleagues here.

Minister, I have a few questions about, particularly, some projects in the Edmonton area. I noted in this budget – maybe I couldn't find it, and perhaps you could enlighten me a bit. Can you talk to me a bit about the Anthony Henday southwest upgrades as well?

Mr. McIver: Okay. I think that's . . .

Mr. Dang: Sorry. I understand that a lot of that money is out the door already. I just want to see timelines and make sure that we're on track there.

Mr. McIver: Do you mind if I ask Mr. Loo to contribute here? I can give you a general answer, but his hands are actually closer to the men and women in the big, yellow vehicles than mine are, so he might be able to give you a little higher level . . .

Mr. Dang: Next year you'll have to give him a chair, Minister.

Mr. McIver: If he doesn't mind and the chair is okay.

Mr. Loo: I'm Tom Loo, assistant deputy minister of construction and maintenance with the department. In Budget 2019 we allocated \$95.4 million to continue to expand the southwest Anthony Henday Drive. That's the segment of the Edmonton ring road which is the oldest and probably the most heavily travelled with all the development in that quadrant of the city. We are widening this segment of the Anthony Henday Drive from four lanes to six lanes. The project will add a lane in each direction between Calgary Trail and Whitemud Drive. We have awarded a contract to the contractor, and they are in the process of mobilizing to the site, and construction is expected to start in November of this year. The entire project is scheduled to open to traffic in the fall of 2022.

As many of you are aware, when the original design for Anthony Henday Drive was done, it was graded to allow for eight lanes in each direction. So the widening of this freeway was anticipated and is accounted for in a lot of the grading that was done originally with the project.

Mr. Dang: Perfect. Thank you very much.

Moving on, then, I'd like to ask about the Yellowhead freeway upgrade. I understand that that's a billion-dollar project – and I imagine that perhaps Mr. Loo will have to come back up – and I want to see what the province's commitment to the Yellowhead will be and to the other project there.

Mr. McIver: Yeah. No. Thank you. The Yellowhead project involves upgrading the Yellowhead to a free-flow road through Edmonton. It includes 11 interchanges throughout the city. The total project cost, as you rightly identify, is about \$1 billion, with the governments of Alberta and Canada each contributing \$241.6 million, and we will follow through on that commitment.

Mr. Dang: And there are no changes to the timeline for the delivery of that money?

Mr. McIver: We don't foresee any, no. I mean, construction is construction, but we don't anticipate any change in the timelines if you allow for the fact that construction is construction.

Mr. Dang: Yeah. Then, finally, one more question around the west leg of the valley line LRT. I understand that there will be changes to the funding there. How do you anticipate that there won't be change to the delivery time, basically?

Mr. McIver: Well, for example, Edmonton is in a bit of a different situation than Calgary. Edmonton didn't have a funding agreement with the province on the money, the \$1.47 billion designated to Edmonton. All that money is still earmarked and set aside for Edmonton, for the LRT, and we will work carefully and as closely as they'll allow us with the city of Edmonton to determine where they are in the planning and construction phases. When we get to that, then we will work with them to talk about what their need for cash flow will be and the best ways for them to flow it from the federal government, from the province, and from the money the city themselves have set aside. We're hopeful that they won't make . . .

Mr. Dang: Right. I guess my question is in I believe it's Bill 20; it might be 21. I'm sorry. They're both fairly large. But I understand that with the fiscal framework around some of that, the province is going to be implementing that through legislation. Does that mean you've already decided how that money will flow and at what rate?

Mr. McIver: We are determining that currently, and when we do, we will announce it. That'll be determined through regulations, but we will obviously not keep those a secret. The cities of Edmonton and Calgary will want to know what the schedule is. As the regulations are completed, we will share it with them and make it public, and it'll be sooner rather than later. I know you're going to say: what day? I can't tell you that. I'm sorry. But we're sensitive to the needs for information by Edmonton, and we are going to try to share that information with them sooner rather than later because we think it matters.

5:20

Mr. Dang: Thank you. I hope so. I mean, I think it's something that's going to be very important, that we try to reach timelines.

Sorry. I lied. I have one more question, Mr. Chair, before I kick it over to my colleague here. I promised my colleague from St. Albert that I'd ask about the plan for twinning Ray Gibbon Drive and what the long-term outlook on that is going to be, which is in St. Albert, of course.

Mr. McIver: Okay. My folks are grabbing that for me right now. There we go. Ray Gibbon Drive is one of the top priorities in the Edmonton Metropolitan Region Board. That's what they tell us in their plans to – we understand that it matters. Ray Gibbon Drive is an important corridor linking St. Albert communities, communities north of St. Albert to the Anthony Henday Drive and the Yellowhead in the city of Edmonton. The twinning of the road between Anthony Henday and Villeneuve Road will enhance safety and improve commuter times and reduce congestion. We are still committed to provide \$27.1 million for this project. The funding starts in 2025-26. It's outside of the current four-year capital plan, but the money is committed.

Mr. Dang: That's why I won't see it in the capital planning?

Mr. McIver: That is why you will not see it in the capital plan, because it is not there.

Mr. Dang: Okay. Perfect. Thank you very much.

I'll kick it over, I think, to my colleague from Calgary-Buffalo.

Member Ceci: Thanks. I heard you say around the LRT green line in Calgary that you reprofiled the biggest part of that funding

beyond the four years. Did I hear you say that the federal government will bridge finance or bridge the monies that the province is not going . . .

Mr. McIver: No, I don't think I used . . .

Member Ceci: Okay. Can you just clarify?

Mr. McIver: No. Here's what I can tell you. We don't believe that our reprofiling of the funding will have any effect on the federal funding.

Member Ceci: Construction?

Mr. McIver: So we don't believe it should have any effect on the construction. But I can tell you that we've already made arrangements for our staff this week to meet with the city of Calgary. We're going down with them to talk about – to find out where they're at in their desires for timelines, schedule.

Member Ceci: Okay. Did I hear you say that it won't affect the construction start timeline?

Mr. McIver: We don't believe that it will, no.

Member Ceci: Okay. We'll find out.

Mr. McIver: I have to say that our staff this week is going down to work co-operatively with Calgary.

Member Ceci: Thank you.

Can I ask a question about the Bow River flood mitigation? You've mentioned SR 1; you've mentioned Redwood. Are there any monies in this estimates expenditure for mitigation with regard to Bow River flooding?

Mr. McIver: Well, if there was this year, it would be in the Alberta Environment and Parks budget.

Member Ceci: Okay. It's not in your budget.

Mr. McIver: No. As I said, we don't have the project until they decide what they're building there. Right now we're talking to people on several projects and trying to determine which one should be done.

Member Ceci: And that's one of them?

Mr. McIver: Right. This would be a good Alberta Environment and Parks question. After they decide, then it becomes my question.

Member Ceci: Good. Okay.

The Peace Bridge: \$56 million, I heard you say, was for that. Is that going to complete it?

Mr. McIver: The Peace River Bridge?

Member Ceci: Yes, the Peace River Bridge.

Mr. McIver: Okay. Sorry. I wasn't being . . .

Member Ceci: No, no. The Peace River Bridge.

Mr. McIver: All right. You and I once in our careers discussed the Peace Bridge, once upon a time.

Member Ceci: Yes.

Mr. McIver: That was exciting.

Member Ceci: And I supported it, and you didn't, if I recall.

Mr. McIver: Also correct.

Member Ceci: Yeah. So the Peace River Bridge: \$56 million. Does that finish it?

Mr. McIver: I was wrong. I thought it was only going to be \$25 million. It turned out to be about \$86 million.

Member Ceci: In 2019-2020 is it completed?

Mr. McIver: We believe the money in the budget will finish the bridge.

Member Ceci: The \$56 million.

Mr. McIver: Yeah. We believe that that will complete the project.

Member Ceci: And when will it be completed?

Mr. McIver: The fall of 2020: that is what we expect.

Member Ceci: Thank you.

I'm going to turn it over to you. Go ahead.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you. Thank you, Chair, for whatever time is left. I think I was looking at, Minister, that you are cutting from 7.2, water for life; the green transit incentive program, 6.2; highway twinning, widening, and expansion, 11.1; highway rehabilitation projects, 13.1. Overall, over the last year it's a 7 per cent cut in your budget, and quite frankly it's a boondoggle of historic proportion now that Albertans will be made to pay with their road safety for the reckless \$4.7 billion in the no-jobs corporate giveaway. That's what happens when you . . .

The Acting Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll be moving on to the government caucus right now. Go ahead.

Ms Rosin: I guess I'll pick up where I left off, when you were about to answer. My question from last time was just regarding the increase of 161 employees in your budget.

Mr. McIver: These are for the driver examiner road test model after the previous government blew up the system and nationalized it. This represents the employees that are delivering the road test models, the government employees working very hard and doing a great job. It includes the driver examiners, management, oversight, and scheduling people. That's what that is.

Ms Rosin: Perfect. Thank you.

With that, I'll cede my time.

Mr. Smith: Okay. Thank you. I'd like to go back and forth for whatever time we have.

The Acting Chair: Yeah. Go ahead.

Mr. Smith: Okay. Well, Mr. Minister, we might be at the very end here. Congratulations for a successful budget estimates. I have one quick question here for you. On page 147 of the ministry business plan for 2019 through '23 there's \$387.2 million that's budgeted for capital maintenance renewal for bridges, highways, major maintenance, and slide repair. Two questions. One, what is the ratio for new projects versus maintenance projects?

Mr. McIver: The ratio of new versus maintenance?

Mr. Smith: Yeah. Then, two, what support and insight from industry partners are we seeing when it comes to creating safer roads?

Mr. McIver: Well, capital investment is budgeted for a billion dollars in 2019-20, as shown on page 193. Excluding the \$387.2 million budgeted for capital maintenance projects, the budget for new projects is \$612.8 million. Using this financial information, the ratio is \$1.58 to be spent on new projects for every \$1 to be spent on maintenance projects.

Mr. Smith: Okay.

Mr. McIver: You asked a second part, right?

Mr. Smith: Yeah. What support and insight from industry partners are we seeing when it comes to creating safer roads?

Mr. McIver: Well, everybody benefits. Listen, everybody wants a better and safer road. Everybody in this room has probably at some point asked for one. If I'm wrong about anybody, my apologies, but the vast majority of people in this room have been interested in one at some point. The Consulting Engineers of Alberta are supportive. The Alberta Roadbuilders & Heavy Construction Association wants us to do more for obvious reasons but also because they care. The Alberta Motor Transport Association presses us all the time to make decisions on safer roads and bridges. The Alberta Motor Association has been a good partner. We listen and talk to them as well, and they also want us to make good decisions on renewing and building safe roads. I would say that essentially every industry – there may be individual businesses that don't support it, but I would suggest to you that essentially every industry in Alberta wants us to do more. We do what we can within our budget and try to make responsible decisions while we do that.

Mr. Smith: Thank you very much.

Mr. Rehn: Chair?

The Acting Chair: Yeah. Go ahead.

Mr. Rehn: Thank you, Minister, for coming and answering our questions today. On page 150 I wanted to ask. On that page of the ministry's business plan for 2019-2023 it mentions that our province would like to achieve innovation and technological integration. What are some examples of the new innovations being brought to Alberta's transportation system?

Mr. McIver: Well, currently there's an ACTIVE-AURORA project in vehicle technology, Canada's first connected vehicle test bed network. Actually, in Beaumont today I think you can find an unmanned bus that goes up and down the main street that's been there as a test for a period of time. While it's not the most advanced one, it's actually Alberta contributing to the driverless vehicles of the future and gathering some data and learning what we can and sharing that. We provide automated permitting, you know, less red tape and whatnot, but actually we do that through technology when we're delivering that part of what we do. We will continue to operate and over time, we believe, enhance 511 Alberta, a real-time road support service via phone, online, and apps for mobile devices.

The Acting Chair: Okay.

Mr. McIver: I was just getting started.

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

I'd like to remind committee members that we are scheduled to meet next Thursday, October 31, at 9 a.m. to consider the estimates of the Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance.

Thank you, everyone. This meeting is adjourned. I ask that we all clear the meeting room quickly to accommodate another committee meeting scheduled for 5:45.

Thank you.

[The committee adjourned at 5:30 p.m.]

