

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Wednesday, April 30, 2003**

8:00 p.m.

Date: 2003/04/30

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Tannas in the chair]

The Chair: I would like to call the Committee of Supply to order.

head: **Main Estimates 2003-04**

Transportation

The Chair: Are there any comments or questions to be offered with respect to this fine set of estimates? The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Stelmach: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good evening, everyone. It is a real pleasure to present the estimates this evening for the upcoming fiscal year. I can certainly tell you with great sincerity that it's also a real pleasure and an honour to serve as this great province's Transportation minister.

I'd like to provide some details and information on the ministry's programs and activities, but before we begin, I'd like to introduce the ministry's senior staff who are with me tonight. The reason being is that in our department many of our senior officials interface directly with the elected officials in this Assembly, answering questions directly as they may come up on certain projects throughout the province or some of the other regulatory functions that we have in the department. It speeds up the process and gets the information back to the constituent as quickly as possible.

So to begin with, I'd like to introduce my deputy minister, Jay Ramotar. Sitting in the gallery next to Jay is Rob Penny, our ADM of transportation and civil engineering. We have Brian Marcotte, who is the assistant deputy minister of policy and planning; Jeanette Espie-Lefebvre, acting assistant deputy minister of transportation safety services; Gary Boddez, chair of the Transportation Safety Board. We have Winnie Yiu-Yeung, who is the executive director of the finance and business management branch. Just back from a bit of a maternity leave is Leanne Stangeland, director of communications, and sitting next to Leanne is of course Ron Glen, my executive assistant. I wish to publicly thank these people and all the Transportation staff for their outstanding work. I do get a lot of kudos from colleagues here in the House and constituents across the province, and really it's because of the excellent service and work we receive from our staff in Transportation. They're a great group to work with and hard working.

Mr. Chairman, the 2003-04 fiscal year marks a significant departure from past budgeting and planning practices, and I must say that it's a welcome departure for Alberta Transportation. Previously the department saw radical swings in funding from year to year and even within the same year. The past two fiscal years are a prime example. With the events of 9-11 and a sudden downturn in revenues the department trimmed roughly 20 percent of its budget midyear in 2001-02. This was achieved mainly by deferring capital projects in future years. Quite frankly, that was done when we were through most of the construction season, so it was quite difficult to achieve the 20 percent saving. It was more like 40 percent.

In the next fiscal year the department's budget and business plan were significantly adjusted mere days after being tabled in the Legislature, and you can see how the former financial management system created problems for the budgeting and planning processes. It wasn't only hard on the department staff. It was certainly difficult

on municipal construction engineering partners, who felt the same effects in this province. As a former county reeve I appreciate the challenges of municipal budgeting and know firsthand that there's not much room to manoeuvre in a municipal budget. When you're not sure what grant levels may be from year to year, it makes the budgeting process even more challenging. Our construction and engineering partners geared up for certain amounts of anticipated work only to be told scant months later that a lot of the work wasn't going to materialize. However, they still had equipment to pay for and other costs to absorb. The boom and bust cycle of capital spending caused a lot of instability in the industry.

As you know, the Financial Statutes Amendment Act was passed recently. I'm confident that the new budgeting and planning process will be much better, especially for capital-intensive ministries like Transportation. Department staff and our construction, consulting, engineering, and municipal partners can now make plans based on stable and predictable assumptions. This stability is important to the ministry because transportation is vital to Alberta's economy and Albertans' quality of life. Safe, efficient, and effective transportation systems are the lifeblood of a prosperous province.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I mentioned changes to the financial system a few minutes ago. The changes will directly affect this committee. This year you will have two votes: one for the ministry's operating expense and equipment or inventory purchases and a second vote for capital investment. Overall, the ministry's operating expense and equipment or inventory purchases will be \$924 million with a capital investment of \$372 million. So the ministry's overall budget is just under \$1.3 billion for 2003-04. Now, this is an increase of \$403 million from last year's budget, primarily to continue the Premier's task force commitments to municipalities and to allow construction of the north/south trade corridor and the ring roads in both Edmonton and Calgary.

Mr. Chairman, safety is the ministry's number one priority. The new Traffic Safety Act comes into effect May 20, and it amalgamates four existing acts into one, and I think we condense about 35 regulations into 18 as well. This new act also introduces new initiatives such as graduated driver licensing for new drivers and measures aimed at reducing impaired driving.

Graduated driver licensing – or I'll refer to it as GDL for short – will apply to all new drivers regardless of age. It is geared to giving new drivers more experience behind the wheel in less demanding situations before unrestricted licences are granted. New drivers will earn licences through a stage process over at least three years. The most important thing is that collision rates for new drivers have fallen in other provinces with graduated licence programs, in some cases as much as 30 percent. I'm confident that such reductions are certainly possible in Alberta once GDL takes effect.

The new act also updates fines and penalties, and certainly a lot of people have commented that the revised fines are another form of taxation. Well, the truth is that Alberta had not done a comprehensive review of fines and penalties in over a decade. The latest review for the new act revealed that Alberta's fines and penalties were either the lowest in Canada or among the lowest. In fact, fines were as low as \$5 for some offences, which didn't even cover the cost of writing or even processing the ticket. Alberta's fines and penalties are now in line with other Canadian provinces, and unless you break the law, you don't have to worry about the cost of the ticket.

A final note about the new act: it combines the Driver Control Board and Motor Transport Board into the Transportation Safety Board. The new board will have responsibilities related to both drivers and commercial vehicles.

Now is a good time to talk more about capital construction and maintenance because they go hand in hand with safety. On average

highway infrastructure improvements lead to reductions of 40 to 50 percent in collision rates depending on the particular improvement. So building up and maintaining transportation infrastructure is about more than just getting somewhere easier or faster. The ministry's construction priority remains completing the north/south trade corridor. When completed, the corridor will be a continuous four-lane highway link from the Alberta/Montana border, at Coumts, to the Alberta/B.C. border west of Grande Prairie. The corridor is a priority because it corresponds to significant increases in Alberta trade with both the United States and Mexico. I believe the trade to the United States has increased something like 300 percent in the last 10 years and Mexico about 400 percent. The department will invest \$205 million in corridor related projects in 2003-04. The projects include twinning rural sections, continuing work on Anthony Henday, and completing the Deerfoot Trail extension.

8:10

Speaking of Edmonton and Calgary, work continues on ring roads in both cities. The estimated cost on these two projects is around \$2 billion. Alberta Transportation has been working closely with the federal government to secure more funding for the roads – that's the ring roads – and to that end Ottawa has tentatively agreed to provide \$150 million for the two ring road projects over the next five years through the \$2 billion Canada strategic infrastructure fund.

In this fiscal year Transportation will also invest \$131 million in infrastructure on other parts of Alberta's highway network. This includes grade widening, base paving, intersection improvements. While these capital investments are important, it's equally vital that the department continues to protect that investment and enhance safety through regular maintenance. To this end we'll spend \$187 million to maintain provincial highways including work of snow removal, ice control, line painting, dust and weed control, and filling holes and pavement cracks.

We're also responsible for capital construction and maintenance of provincially owned water management infrastructures such as dams, canals, and spillways. We budgeted \$34 million for these activities for this fiscal year. The Little Bow project is almost complete, as the new dam and spillway were finished earlier this year, and rehabilitation of the canal through High River will be finished soon. As well, work will continue on the Carseland/Bow River headworks system in southern Alberta.

Alberta Transportation also administers a number of dam programs to assist municipalities with transportation and water/wastewater infrastructure, and one of these is the cities transportation partnership. Under this program the cities of Edmonton and Calgary receive funding equivalent to 5 cents per litre of road fuel delivered to outlets within the city limits. That's approximately \$75 million to Edmonton, \$90 million to Calgary, and that's to be used for transportation and transit system infrastructure and capital purchases. Cities other than Edmonton and Calgary continue to receive \$60 per capita under the basic grants.

Under the street improvement program, sometimes referred to as SIP, towns, villages, summer villages, and eligible hamlets also receive \$60 per capita. Rural municipalities continue to receive grants for local roads and bridges, and we've also introduced two new grant programs: one to help cities other than Edmonton and Calgary to address growth, and one to help municipalities deal with increased resource and industrial traffic on local roads. Approximately \$10 million and \$17 million respectively are allocated to these two programs this year, and both are project-specific programs.

The Alberta municipal water/wastewater partnership helps municipalities with population under 45,000 to secure safe, reliable sources of drinking water and wastewater treatment. This program

is also project specific, and funding for approved projects is delivered on a sliding scale, depending on the size of the municipality involved. In total we'll allocate \$265 million to provincial/municipal grant programs.

We also administer ICAP, the infrastructure Canada/Alberta program, in partnership with the federal/municipal governments. Municipalities may receive up to two-thirds of eligible costs for municipal infrastructure from the federal and provincial governments. We're in the third year, and we have committed \$171 million to ICAP. To date 453 projects worth \$371 million have been approved. ICAP provincial funding for this year is \$18 million.

So, as you can see, this will be a busy year for Transportation related activities which will greatly enhance the movement of goods and people in this province. This now concludes my comments, and I'm looking forward to answering whatever questions might come forward tonight.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry.

Mr. Bonner: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and it is indeed a pleasure to rise this evening and speak to estimates for the Department of Transportation. I'd like to thank the minister for his opening comments and as well thank his staff who are present here this evening to assist in any questions that we may have in the opposition or members of the government. Certainly, Albertans have for many decades enjoyed excellent highways. The demand and the increased traffic on our highways puts a strain on any budget, and it does certainly cause us to improve various sections for safety. It also increases the amount of maintenance, and we do require that to keep this province on the move and to keep our economy going strong.

In looking at the estimates for this particular year, I see that in the core business plans the ministry for 2003-2006 has four core businesses, and these are to manage transportation and safety problems, to manage the provincial highway network, to support economic development, and to represent Alberta's interest in transportation policy. Along those lines, I will have some questions for the minister as we proceed through the estimates. As well, we have strategic priorities that the ministry has identified, and these are included and identified in five priorities. One is to enhance "driver, road, and vehicle safety by managing high-risk drivers and carriers, and implementing the new Traffic Safety Act." A second priority is "protecting the integrity of highway and water management infrastructure." A third is to support "economic development and growth." A fourth is "leading the Capital Planning Initiative to enhance capital planning and management of infrastructure" across the country. And the fifth is "managing the environmental impact of our actions."

Now, as well, last week a number of us had the opportunity to hear economists speak about the great economic success which is centred around highway 2, the Edmonton/Calgary corridor, and certainly a lot of that success has to do with the ability of us to move products to export in the United States and to import products. We all know that Alberta more than any other province certainly does have a trade surplus with the United States, and Canada as a whole has a trade surplus somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$90 billion. We certainly could not do that without a very good transportation system. So my questions tonight are going to cover a number of the strategic priorities and the core businesses and certainly look at how we fit in and how harmonized our regulations are with those across Canada and as well with those of other countries.

I do have a number of issues that I would like to certainly bring to the minister's attention and see if he could handle those first of all.

A while back in the Assembly I asked the minister about a situation here where U-Haul trailers certainly have a predominance of Arizona licence plates. I know that at that time, he was going to check into it to see why this particular company would have so many Arizona plates and if in fact there was any type of agreement whereby they could have their Arizona plates and as well, Mr. Chairman, to see if in fact these vehicles were properly registered in the province, if there was any system involved whereby we could check as to how long those vehicles have been in the province if they're displaying Arizona plates. Addressing the safety issue, when those vehicles enter this province and remain here for any period of time, is there any type of inspection required on those trucks to make certain they are roadworthy?

Those concerns were brought to my attention by a letter I received, and unfortunately there wasn't an address on that letter so that we could contact Mr. Peterson, but he was extremely interested at that time to have answers to those problems and those issues that he had raised. This was certainly a concern of his after renting a U-Haul truck in Calgary to assist his daughter in moving, so he was quite concerned about the licence plates. He was also very concerned about that particular vehicle that he had rented and to know that it was roadworthy because he certainly didn't seem to think so.

8:20

This afternoon in the Legislature we asked the minister questions about Lethbridge airport's port of entry status. If he did have any more information on that or if the department does have the opportunity to look into this issue more, it would certainly be welcome because, again, the status of this airport, particularly its port of entry, has a huge impact on that region.

Another question that was brought to my attention by a constituent was the fact that in Alberta it is legal to equip cars with nitrous oxide. Of course, when you equip cars with nitrous oxide, it simply gives them a boost in horsepower of anywhere between 30 and 50 percent. It's very short-lived, but the only purpose that cars would require that type of a boost in horsepower certainly is in street racing or if in fact those cars were being pursued and they were trying to get away. One of the core business plans is to manage transportation safety programs. When we have these types of additions to cars, which certainly do not lead to safety but lead to a situation that drastically increases for a short period of time the horsepower of those cars, then I would like to hear the minister's comments on this particular subject.

Now, as well, another issue that has come to my attention in regard to traffic safety is the maximum driving shifts that drivers can work per shift in Canada, and when compared to the United States, these are 17 percent higher, and they are 56 percent higher than those in Europe. I'm looking at the maximum driving shift in Canada, which is proposed for 14 hours per day compared to the U.S., which is 12, and Europe, which is nine. So if the minister could provide some comment as to why this discrepancy and, particularly when we are putting so much attention on the north/south trade corridor and we are going to be having a lot of exports and imports that travel along this particular route, why we would not want to harmonize those hours with the United States.

As well, I am extremely concerned about the maximum number of hours per week that drivers can be at the wheel. Certainly in Canada – I don't know if this has been passed, and perhaps the minister could enlighten us on that – the maximum number of hours proposed is 95 hours, it is my understanding, compared to 60 hours in the United States and 55 hours in Europe. I think that's a situation that really in Alberta if one of our core business plans is to manage transportation and safety programs, I guess that this adds a greater

concern to me when we think of the number of branch lines of the railroad that have shut down over the last few years. Certainly they had to do that because they were no longer efficient, yet so many of the dangerous goods that were once hauled by the railroads are now being transported by truck. I think of the situation where the fuel at Cold Lake for the military facility at that point would all be trucked up there now, and certainly for a driver that's approaching his 95-hour maximum per week or a driver that's had a number of 14-hour shifts in a row, this is just nothing more than a missile heading down the highway. I think that when we do look at the safety issue, this is one that we should certainly look at very, very closely.

In looking at this issue of safety and highway maintenance, we have a situation where over the past number of years perhaps we did not have the type of maintenance on our roads that we would've liked to. In speaking with the minister some time ago, he was indicating that when we have road deterioration, as the time increases between when that road should be maintained or seek a level of maintenance, as that time increases that the road does not get the proper maintenance, then certainly the cost in the end of repairing that road is not a linear cost but it also increases very rapidly. So if the minister could give us some idea as to if in recent years the backlog of roads that should've been maintained has been caught up, and if it hasn't been caught up, if the minister could please indicate in his business plans how we are progressing with catching up on that particular backlog.

As well, if the minister could indicate how costs are for maintenance on the roads. I know that back in 2001, I believe, the average cost at that time for maintenance was \$5,300 per kilometre. If the minister could also indicate how much of the budget this year is going to be dedicated to resurfacing and repaving.

In looking at this year's budget, we have certainly a great amount of stress on transportation as far as moving products to market. If the minister could please indicate how much of our exports are moved to market on our roadways, on our highways. I know that he had a breakdown of that compared to rail, compared to marine, compared to air, and certainly compared to pipeline. I also noted that the transportation costs for moving products to market average somewhere in the neighbourhood of 16 percent of the final selling price, and if the minister could indicate if that has remained constant or if in fact it has increased or decreased.

8:30

As well, there are a number of strategic economic corridors that we have identified in the province, and these economic corridors certainly are, I think, switching more and more from an east/west flow to a north/south flow, and if the minister could please indicate if there has been a significant shift in the amount of goods that we are moving east to west as compared to north to south.

I would like to ask the minister some other questions in regard to water grants. Municipalities think that the water grants they receive from the ministry are good, but they are worried about how the Ministry of Environment makes the regulations but it's the Transportation ministry who pays out the money. My question for the minister this evening is: what is the ministry going to do to ensure that stricter regulations from Environment are matched with more money for municipalities from Transportation?

As well, another main concern for municipalities is that they are unable to keep up with the maintenance on their transportation infrastructure. In fact, most cities are building up a transportation infrastructure debt, and this is certainly compounded by the fact that we have had in some areas of the province some very strong economic growth, and people that come to Alberta to work don't bring their infrastructure with them. So, in regard to this, if the

minister could please outline what his department is doing to help and encourage these cities to eliminate their yearly infrastructure deficits and aggregate infrastructure debt.

Another concern. When we do have this growth that we have experienced in Alberta and new housing subdivisions are built, cities are not allowed to charge a levy for commuter roads that become necessary because of new population. Unfortunately, the cities cannot afford to build these roads themselves either. This is exactly the case in Calgary. So if the minister could please inform us what his department is doing to alleviate this crisis. Will the ministry introduce legislation that would allow cities to raise a development levy for the building of commuter roads?

As well, have there been any further considerations about requiring the use of electronic onboard recorders for commercial vehicles? Of course, this would be an added expense to truckers, but it would certainly eliminate the dual log books that we hear some drivers do employ so that they can drive more hours than they should throughout the week or per day. Of course, this is one of those factors that we touched upon earlier in the core business plan in regard to the issue of safety, and we certainly wish to encourage the safe conduct of commercial carriers and drivers. When we think back just a short time ago to the horrific accident in Calgary involving a truck and a car which had a number of nuns in it, it is a tragic reminder that passenger cars are certainly no match when they get into a collision with vehicles of that size.

Now, as well, something that seems to keep cropping up every year and just doesn't seem to go away is this whole notion of toll roads in the province, and I know it's something that the ministry from time to time does look at.

With those comments, I will take my seat. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Stelmach: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll try and answer as many of the questions that were raised by the hon. member. He covered quite a variety of goals and measurements and actually referred to the budget before us as well. With respect to trade I'll try and capture in terms of the trucks and trade and some of the other issues.

There's about a billion and half dollars worth of trade between Canada and the United States every year. In the province of Alberta 21 percent of the exports and greater than 50 percent of the imports coming into Canada, meaning what we would receive from the United States, would be by truck. When we measure exports in terms of the total economy – of course, some would be marine and a considerable amount by rail – we're finding that it's an interesting statistic, that we do bring in more goods by truck than we export. But that's a percentage, Mr. Chairman, of the total output of the economy.

With respect to investment in trade corridors and trucking the Americans are investing \$218 billion, and it's all dedicated to their transportation system. It's going to put additional pressure on us, there's no doubt, and that is why the western ministers of transportation have jointly submitted a number of options to the federal minister asking for a substantial return of the 10 cents a litre of fuel excise tax which is sent to Ottawa. The other proposal is that if you're going to tax fuel but not spend it on roads, just reduce the tax federally and allow us to pick up that tax. We will promise that it will be spent on road infrastructure. So whatever they pay in fuel tax will go directly into roads. It won't be siphoned off to other departments.

With respect to the question raised by the hon. member and also

the letter that he received some time ago with respect to U-Haul, car rental agencies and trucking companies must register under the international registration plan. What they do is retain their licence plates, but we would prorate the cost for the registration fee based on kilometres traveled. In the case of U-Haul, rather than changing plates every time they come in and then leave the province and go to another jurisdiction, they would pay us an equivalency prorated on the number of kilometres traveled in the province. However, they all must go through a commercial vehicle inspection program. That's a policy that we apply similar to our commercial vehicles. So even though they're registered out of province or to an out-of-country state, we would still ensure that they do obtain the safety certificate and also have the proper insurance while they operate in Alberta.

8:40

Inspection on commercial vehicles. Mr. Chairman, the hon. member has rightfully mentioned that we've seen a phenomenal increase in the number of trucks in the province. From 1991 to 2001 – that's not including the last two years of growth – we have seen a 270 percent increase in the number of large trucks, commercial vehicles. This is just in the 41,000-kilogram range and up, so that's the five-axle trucks. Just in that one category, from 9,000 to 25,000 some odd trucks. So that in itself tells us that there's been a huge increase.

When we measure the number of incidents – and I don't call them accidents, because most of them are preventable I think – we're actually holding our own. It's not increasing relative to the huge increase in the number of vehicles. But there are a few statistics that have shown that we have had more single vehicle trucks coming off the road, you know, no other vehicles involved, just the one vehicle coming off the road. We've also had a slight increase where people have been walking on the side of the highway late at night and have been unfortunately struck by a truck.

We could probably have, I believe, a commendable safety record, that we could compare to any jurisdiction. Whether it be the same number of trucks or rules or however we'd want to measure, we have a very commendable safety record because we have the only motor transport officer program in North America, not only in Canada but in North America, where our officers are all accredited. In fact, it's a bit of a problem because they have substantial training before they're hired in the province of Alberta. We do lose a number of them on a regular basis to police forces because they have much of the training already before they start with us. So it is something that Albertans are very proud of certainly, and I think it relates to a very respectable level of incidents in the trucking industry. However, there is room for improvement. We know that. Even one accident is unacceptable.

I do want to say that further down when we talked about the trucking safety record, yes, there is a possibility of drivers being tired. We've had one unfortunate incident in Lethbridge where the driver was arrested, was allegedly impaired. But another issue and what the western transportation ministers are working on is some sort of open communication, an exchange of information, of driver records between the provinces. That is paramount. In this particular case in this one incident when an RCMP officer was killed while sitting in his car with the flashing lights on, the driver was from British Columbia and had a record attached to him, one that wasn't very complimentary. Of course, we wouldn't know about it because we had no means of accessing that information.

With respect to the Lethbridge point of entry, unfortunately after September 11 the federal government had changed some of its policies under the veil of safety and removed all customs services from Lethbridge. So now if a person wants to do business in

Lethbridge and they're flying from the United States, they have to fly to Calgary and then go through customs in Calgary and then come back to Lethbridge. We have had a number of submissions, and I will provide to the hon. member and table with the House some of the letters that we have sent.

I think there's even a little larger area of concern here. It's not only the point of entry. Without wanting to point fingers and lay blame with anyone, I just want to state the facts. At the last two meetings transportation ministers from across Canada had, airports were quite a significant discussion item. They were of significant concern, especially the smaller airports and the viability of those airports. The position taken by the federal minister was that one should consider a drive to an airport in excess of three hours something that is unacceptable. Many people in this country drive more than three hours to an airport. Those were kind of the opening remarks that were delivered at the meeting. Well, in some provinces, of course, in three hours you would reach an important airport, I guess, and in some cases you can't. As a result, we're trying to work with the federal government to find some balance.

We are working on this issue in Lethbridge and trying to restore the point of entry services because I do believe – and I support what the hon. member has said – it is a vital entry point, a huge value-added component, especially in agriculture. We have had quite a significant investment in the two potato plants. We sell mustard out of there, a whole bunch of things. I forget a lot of it because I haven't been in agriculture for a while, but there is a significant investment in that area by American companies. We travel back and forth, and it would be great if we could fly to the place of business as efficiently and as effectively as we can.

The hours of service regulations. This is one area that's had huge debates for at least three years. I've attended the federal meetings, and it took a fair amount of discussion, co-operation, and collaboration amongst all the provinces and the federal government to agree on the hours of service for truckers. I firmly believe it's an improvement from what it was before, but to try and standardize it with the States – eastern Canada had separate issues than what we had here in the province of Alberta. There were some issues particular to certain industries, like oil, forestry, and I believe we've got the balance. A fair amount of discussion is necessary with our stakeholders in Alberta, but generally speaking, it is a reduction in . . .

The Chair: Unfortunately, hon. member, one of the hon. members' voices down there is coming through on the Department of Transportation microphone rather clearly, so it gets hard to follow. It may be the nature of the microphone or the nature of the other voice. Were you finished, hon. Minister of Transportation? I was trying to signal those other voices.

Mr. Stelmach: Well, no. There were a lot of questions raised.

Now, the hours of service would limit the hours of work for a commercial vehicle driver to 13 hours of driving but a 14-hour work shift and 10 hours off duty in one day. It's a very complex regulation to explain, and I can assure you, Mr. Chairman, that even if I were to walk out to the street and explain it to somebody very quickly – what's the difference, what are the reductions, et cetera, and how do you apply it? – I wouldn't be able to explain it in a 15-second sound bite, I can tell you that, but generally speaking, it will improve safety. We're still looking at those areas of exemptions that we had before, but we will work those out. We have consulted. We waited for the federal government to do its own consultations. Those have not happened in this province, but we do have the information that we had before, and we're going to carry forward.

8:50

Maintenance of roads. The issue was raised: what are the cost differences? Maintenance of a regular highway, one lane, done most appropriately according to engineering tests would cost roughly a hundred thousand dollars per kilometre, and if we were to not do it and proceed with the maintenance after the road has failed, well, certainly, that will increase to even in excess of \$500,000 a kilometre. So we don't want to do that on our provincial highways, because, as you know, Mr. Chairman, it's quite difficult to rebuild a road once we have a road in place. It's even more costly than starting with a new grade.

The cost of maintenance in the budget. We're going to be investing in this province in excess of \$265 million, a rough increase of about 15 percent from last year. We're trying to catch up with a backlog, but we still do have a fair amount, and the reason is that in the very late '70s, early '80s a considerable amount of highways in this province were paved. In 2003 and on from now some of those highways' life cycles will be coming to an end, and as a result we'll have to get back to them to maintain and repave. So there will be those additional pressures coming forward.

As well, we are putting in an increase in bridge repair and bridge maintenance this year. There are about 3,800 structures that we are responsible for directly in Transportation, but about 8,800 structures, rural and urban, are municipally owned, but we grant resources for maintenance. As you know, some of those were built back in the mid-40s, many of them in the '50s into the '60s, so we will have to maintain a very aggressive program ensuring that those bridges don't fail. The other is that you could build and upgrade a road to a higher standard, to a higher load limit, but if your bridge does not allow you to convey that load across, what's the sense of putting in that particular investment?

Approximately 16 percent of the cost of goods in this province is related to transportation. It's holding firm, although we would have to revisit that really to see if that has increased. What I'm hearing from industry is that it's more difficult to be competitive all the way into the Maritimes with their manufactured goods, and it's not only more expensive to get them there, but it's more expensive to get the product to a manufacturer's plant by truck. So it's a bit of a double whammy, and as a result we want to ensure that we move quickly on the corridors so that manufacturers can get their products out more in a free-flow, nonstop way.

There are a number of other questions, but I'll work on them in the next period because I think my time is running out. [interjection] I have one minute?

Okay. With respect to housing subdivisions and whether we're prepared to pass legislation, that is within Municipal Affairs. However, part of the 5 cents a litre, the increase in the grant, which used to be about \$60 per capita and now the 5 cents gives the cities about \$100 per capita – that's to be expended on their own city streets.

Economic corridors. Yes, north/south is important, but we also have to be mindful of the fact that we want to connect the east and west to the north and south so that we don't have all the growth along the north/south trade corridor and forget about the rest of this province. The rest of this province is important, and if we can tie to the north/south trade corridor, we will ensure competitiveness in the future.

The Chair: Okay. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Dr. Massey: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

An Hon. Member: Question.

Dr. Massey: The dead fish minister wants the question called.

I'm pleased to have the opportunity to raise some questions with respect to the Transportation estimates. I listened with interest to the minister's explanations. I start off with an apology. I'm not that familiar with the ministry and its operations, so if some of the questions I ask are very obvious, I apologize for that. I would like to stick, if I might, to the programs in the budget and to ask a series of specific questions about those program items.

I wonder if we could have a breakdown of the minister's and the deputy minister's office budgets by salary, including the salaries for all employees. Mr. Chairman, we get varying responses, it seems, almost dependent upon the department. I've gone through some of the annual reports and found very specific information there, and in other departments we get it in the budget, and I'm not quite sure. When we submitted a series of written questions about this item, not about the Transportation department, I don't believe, but about some other departments, we were told that the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act prevented this kind of information from being made public, yet I know that the FOIP Act allows the government to make public the salaries of superintendents and CEOs of the health authorities. So I guess we're looking for the same kind of specific information that is available about those organizations with respect to the Transportation department. Again, in the same line how much was spent on bonuses last year and is anticipated to be spent on bonuses this year, and can we have an indication of the size of those bonuses?

The operating expenses for the ministry are going up by nearly a million dollars this year. What will the new money be used to purchase? Could we have a breakdown of the \$25.716 million operating estimate for support services in 2003-04 by the business planning and corporate support, communications, financial services, human resource services, information and technology, and legal services? How do the numbers for the above categories compare to previous years? When there are large differences, could we have some accounting for that difference?

Why is the equipment and inventory purchase budget for ministry support services \$1.3 million less than it was last year? Does this indicate that last year's budget was an anomaly? There must have been some reason for this kind of a difference, and any information that will shed light on that difference would be appreciated.

In program 2, construction, upgrading, and operation of transportation infrastructure, the transportation safety services line item is increasing by approximately \$2.5 million from last year's budget and approximately \$2.3 million from last year's spending. Could we have an indication of why this is so? What programs are going to get this money, and how will the spending of this added money benefit Albertans?

The Transportation Safety Board's budget is increasing from \$859,000 to a million dollars. What is the reason for the increase? Is it because of an increased caseload? Just what is the reason behind this? What is the Transportation Safety Board's caseload? Does it differ from past years, and are there trends here that we can be made aware of?

9:00

Provincial highways will be receiving an operating expense. The expense is about \$20 million more than they received last year. We had some indication just in the previous comments from the minister, but can we have some detail in terms of where this money is going, and is it really \$20 million more expensive to operate Alberta highways this year than it was last?

Other road infrastructure will receive in operating expenses about \$2 million more than was spent last year. Can we have an indication of where the money is going, and why is it going to be \$2 million more expensive to operate Alberta highways this year than it was last? The operating expense for other road infrastructure was a million dollars more than was budgeted. Can we have some indication of what caused this increase?

The rural transportation partnership money is increasing by about \$19 million. What partnerships does the minister plan for the use of the money? How do you decide which partnerships are going to be entered upon? Who retains responsibility for these projects, the rural jurisdiction or the province? How does the ministry ensure that all rural jurisdictions will be given fair and equitable access to these funds?

Can the minister explain what operating expenses resource roads and new industry receive and why? Why is this line item receiving \$2 million more than it spent last year? That's quite a difference, and there must be a reason behind it.

Alberta cities transportation partnerships is receiving approximately \$115 million more than it spent last year. What projects is the ministry looking at funding with these dollars? How are the partnerships, again, decided upon? The same questions as with the rural. Who retains responsibilities for these projects; is it the city or the province? How does the ministry ensure that all cities are given fair and equitable access to these funds? So, again, the same questions but with the concern about fairness and the distribution of them across the province.

The streets improvement program budget is being nearly doubled. Where is this money going to specifically? How is it portioned? What was the impetus for giving the program \$14 million more?

The budget amount for municipal water and wastewater grants is staying the same as last year despite some communities in Alberta needing more help in purifying and treating their sewage, Mr. Chairman. I guess the question is: how did the ministry decide not to increase the amount of grants when there seems to be a significant need for this crucial service? There's a growing public sensitivity to this kind of service. Again, how will the \$25 million be apportioned? What type of projects will the money go to fund?

The infrastructure Canada/Alberta program is losing about \$14 million in this budget. Was this a decision of the ministry? What is the relationship with the federal government with respect to this budget item? Is there actually going to be a loss of funding? Just what are the particulars surrounding this item?

Sections 2.5 and 2.5.1 on page 368 of the estimates show program services. Could we have an indication of exactly what this line item includes and why there is a \$900,000 increase over last year's allocations?

The amortization of capital assets is budgeted for \$19 million more than was spent last year. Again, can the minister explain why this item requires \$19 million more this year than the past year? Why was the amortization of capital assets \$32 million over last year's budget? What happened to account for that difference?

[Mr. Lougheed in the chair]

Under equipment/inventory purchases highway systems is receiving 4 and a half million dollars more this year than last. Could we have an indication of where this line item is going and why there is an extra \$4.5 million included in the budget this year over last year?

The capital investment for provincial highways is going down by approximately \$9 million from what was spent last year. Could we have an explanation of why the ministry is spending less on this item

when spending as a whole has increased? Why was the line item more than \$50 million over budget last year? Is there really an overrun, or is it something to do with the budgeting process that explains that difference?

Again, it just appears that there's some instability in capital investment on highway systems over time and between budgeted and forecasted values. Can the minister give us some indication of what he is doing to eliminate this and how he's trying to mitigate the effect of roller-coaster budgets on construction companies? I know that the minister made some comments in his opening remarks with respect to this item.

The strategic economic investment corridor initiative is receiving \$98 million more than it received last year. Could we have some explanation in terms of the detail and the information about this item? The increase is large. It's a great increase over last year. Can we have some indication of why this is so? Can the minister give a specific cost breakdown of where all the money allocated to this line item goes?

Water management infrastructure will not see any more capital investment dollars. Again, how did the ministry decide not to give any more money to this line item when there are communities in the province that are having an exceedingly difficult time bringing fresh water to their residents; for example, Camrose, Ponoka, Blackfalds, Okotoks, Wabamun, and Barrhead?

The transfers from the government of Canada are budgeted to rise from \$2 million to \$9.4 million. What is the agreement under which this is happening?

The revenue from premiums, fees, and licences is budgeted to drop from 14 and a half million dollars to 11 and a half million dollars. Can we have an explanation of why this decrease is occurring?

The number of full-time equivalent employees of the ministry is being increased from 862 last year to 877. Could we have a brief explanation of why there are these differences?

So I think that with that long series of questions, Mr. Chairman, which require a lot of detail – and I can appreciate that the minister may not have it with him this evening – I'll conclude.

Thank you.

The Acting Chair: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Stelmach: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm going to try to catch up with where I left off with the original questions raised by my critic and then proceed to the next list of questions. I know that I won't be able to answer them all, because we won't have the time, but I'll try to do some of them, and then others we'll definitely respond to in writing in much greater detail.

9:10

With respect to water grants – and it was raised twice – we do have certainly more people in the province of Alberta which puts pressure on existing infrastructure, but as well we have infrastructure that's been in place for some time and does require renewal, and coupled with that, of course, is the fact that we're always raising the bar, raising the standards in the province. It does require more funding for water and wastewater for those particular reasons, and the reason that there hasn't been a change in water and wastewater grants and a change in the size of our budget is that it is one area that is untouchable. We did not lower any of those grants or reduce those grants when we had to find the 20 percent because of the September 11 event.

I'm proud to say that we are the only jurisdiction, the only province in Canada, that partnered with the municipalities and with

the federal government in a very unique way where we asked municipalities to sit on two committees: the first one is to establish the criteria on how the Canada/Alberta infrastructure money will be spent and, secondly, sit on the approval committee. So no decisions were made independently by Transportation. They were made by the committee, which included the AUMA, AAMD and C, Transportation, Municipal Affairs, and the federal government. Thanks to the input from municipalities we're the only jurisdiction that said: we want the majority of this money to go into hard infrastructure, green infrastructure, either into a waterline, sewer, or a road. Some of that went to creating better efficiencies in the buildings: better insulating, better air movement in the buildings, et cetera. Again, a worthwhile project.

A component of the \$171 million – if I recall, it's about \$23 million – went to an area where both the federal government and the province could nominate projects. Some of that went to, like, the hall D at the Convention Centre, and some of that went to similar projects where it was invested in buildings or improvements to current structures. Fort Edmonton Park and others I believe were nominated.

That is why in water and wastewater we not only expended all of the grants in the previous years of \$25 million and the same grant this year, but we've also caught up with all of the smaller projects because we've had the opportunity to partner with the federal government and actually invest some of their infrastructure money in hard infrastructure. So I think it was a win/win situation.

With respect to some of the other questions. There was a question – and I had a hard time remembering – with respect to, I think, a line item on deputy minister salaries and some other salaries, and my response is simply that I did respond to a written question, I believe, in the House, and that form will be tabled at some date. I'm not quite sure when, but it'll be coming across.

Transportation Safety Board. We've collapsed two boards into one. The expenses are more because we're doing more. We collapsed four different acts into one, the Traffic Safety Act. Coupled with that is a lower commercial vehicle threshold where the Transportation Safety Board will be involved. There's more activity. They sit as an appeal board to the Alberta administrative licence suspension program. This is when a driver blows .08 and we suspend their driver's licence for 90 days. They're in light of and notwithstanding the tough rules that were passed by this House. There hasn't been a significant drop in the number of incidents. In fact, I hate to say that it's actually trending slightly up overall, at least in the appeals that are coming forward to board. As well, there will be greater costs in the area of – again, that's all the vehicle inspection. There will be more done. We also opened up an office in Fort McMurray just to improve the service, so we'll have a couple of people on the board assigned to look after those Albertans that come before the board rather than always driving from Fort McMurray to Edmonton for the hearing. We'll be able to dispatch members there and conduct a hearing there, and it's all an improvement of service to Albertans.

Other road infrastructure. I think it was 2.2.2. It is a \$3 million increase, about a 30 percent increase, there's no doubt, but it covers maintenance of approximately 300 kilometres of public roads and bridges on Indian reserves; the maintenance and operation of rest areas, vehicle inspection stations, and ferries; maintenance of roads, parking areas, and bridges in provincial parks; maintenance of minor capital improvements of water management infrastructure; and there's also the provision of grants to various municipalities for runway maintenance, runway rehabilitation for smaller airports. So that's been captured in that line as other road infrastructure. After the election of 2001 and the restructuring the Department of

Transportation was responsible for the maintenance of roads and bridges in provincial parks, so we're like the contractors for those departments.

Rural transportation partnerships. It's a word that actually is better put just as "grants." They're grants to counties and MDs. They're based on relationship, the number of kilometres, assessment in that particular municipality, and it does vary from one municipality to another, but it does reflect the number of kilometres of road that they have to maintain, really the infrastructure they have to maintain, and also assessment. It may – I don't think that in the formula there's population, but we'll double-check on that. In fact, no, it isn't the population. It's just roads and assessment.

On the resource roads there is an increase really because that is one area we had reduced going into the aftermath of September 11. This program allows municipalities to apply to the Department of Transportation for a resource road grant, the criteria established again by partnership with the department and AUMA and AAMD and C, members of which will also be sitting on the committee that will be approving the applications under this particular program. Basically the criteria is to partner with municipalities and the private sector to build roads to assist with resource extraction. They won't be roads in the inventory of the province; they will be roads in the inventory of the municipality.

We've adjusted the formula a bit. It was 75/25 before, and now it's going to be 50/25/25: 50 percent from the department, 25 from the private sector, and 25 from the municipality, knowing that at the end of the day the value of that road will still be with the municipality. The reason we did it is that the 25 percent that we saved will still be spent in rural Alberta, but it will go to maintenance of bridges, and some of it was also redirected to secondaries. It is a program that has been extremely positive. It's allowed us to build roads into areas to help extend the window of opportunity for resource extraction well beyond a narrow window perhaps because of weather, like, you know, before spring thaw, before you can pull out your rig or access oil and gas.

[Mr. Tannas in the chair]

9:20

The cities transportation partnership. There is an increase in that. What's happened is that it's the 5 cents a litre, and as you know, in the last budget and business plan that was reduced. It will require further explanation because we have also prepaid the two cities before. You know, if we knew that we couldn't expend the money – let's say that we, for instance, had a difficult construction season – then we could prepay in one year the 5 cents a litre so that the cities had the use of that money, and then we would pay them less in the following year. So there are those other reasons for the differences. In fact, the year before we prepaid the two cities \$45 million in the last fiscal year, and as a result it does create some differences in terms of what is increased or decreased in terms of the way we report the estimates.

Street improvement. That has increased. It's \$60 per capita, and we want to ensure that smaller communities have a reasonable amount of funding, again for their infrastructure. It's also now extended to hamlets. So if a rural municipality, a rural municipal district, an improvement district, a county, or a municipal district is taken over – let's say that village A decided to become a hamlet. The hamlet would qualify for the \$60 per capita grant as well.

ICAP. There is a little bit of difference there simply because we are really paying similar to what the federal government is doing: pay as you go. So as the projects are completed by a municipality, we would pay them together with the federal government. Again,

because it's a three-way partnership, you rely on the municipality to manage the project, and some were not ready to go with some projects. It could have been because they didn't have the necessary permits in place, especially environmental permits, or they didn't have their money allocated in that year's budget and they had to roll the project over to another year. So we forecast, look ahead, see what projects are going to go forward, and then pretty well that's what we will put into the budget to offset our one-third expense.

Program services. There is an increase primarily because of manpower increases, the costs of the various contracts. Most of that money – and I believe it's \$34 million – goes to information technology, both tier 1 and 2. Tier 1 is really the cost of maintenance – you know, troubleshooting – and tier 2 is the design of information technology that relates to transportation. Some of it we actually share with municipalities: TIMS, TRAVIS, and I believe there's another one. To give you an example, if we're going to be tendering on a stretch of highway, let's say from Fort Saskatchewan to Lamont, every contractor would have to go and see where the line is painted, how many stop signs, where all the gas lines and telephone lines are, et cetera. Well, this would all now be captured on an information system database so that when we go to contract, to tender, respective contractors have that information handy, and it does lead to greater efficiencies. That's just one small component off of it, but it is something that other jurisdictions are looking at as well.

There was one with respect to amortization, 2.6.1 and 2.6.2, which is the consumption of inventories. I'm not an accountant, but I will make an attempt to explain. Basically, it is the amortization of the assets. A number of years ago we assumed responsibility for all of the secondary highways, and there is a 30 percent increase in that as a result of redoing the value of those highways for amortization. The increase is \$50 million. It's really assuming the additional responsibility of former secondary highways. We took them over from municipalities, and the exact value wasn't known until this particular year, so we've made some adjustments.

Consumption of the inventory. It just pertains to salt, sand, and gravel inventories that are used on our infrastructure and our highways, and we are going to be doing a little more. We also need more salt and gravel because we will be using it on the 15,000 kilometres of secondary highway that we assumed responsibility for from municipalities.

With respect to licence fees and permits that is down. That simply reflects a forecast on activity. Whenever there's a large rig being moved or a large vessel moved from let's say Edmonton to Fort McMurray, the trucking company would buy a permit for that move, and all of that is not really dedicated to Transportation, but certainly it's taken in as revenue into the department. With a lot of the construction complete in Fort McMurray there will be less of a movement there. That's not to say that there won't be a fair amount of movement with large vessels across Alberta, but it won't be the same as it was a few years ago. If it does increase, if there is more activity, we'll just reflect that in the final report of our revenue.

The Chair: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Mrs. McClellan: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just want to make some very brief comments on the Transportation estimates. First of all, I want to compliment the minister and his staff for their ability to manage under rather tight resources to continue to improve our transportation infrastructure over the last years. Certainly a strong supporter of having funding that is assured so that we can move forward in a very orderly fashion. I say that because the matter of moving goods and services in this province is absolutely integral to

us being successful in continuing to grow our value-added industry in a number of sectors whether it's forestry, agriculture, energy, and the many other things we do. The loss of rail services in this province has impacted our industries in a very significant way, so the need for the transportation system to move those goods and services from where they are produced or value is added to market is incredibly important.

9:30

In agriculture we have a strategy to grow our value-added industry to \$20 billion from \$9.9 billion over the next 10 years. Obviously, that strategy cannot be successful if we can't move those goods and services to the market. I'm certainly encouraged to see the work on Canamex, the trade corridor that's critical to us, and a commitment to the minister that we'll continue support through PNWER, through our Montana/Alberta Agricultural Opportunities Conference that we hold each year to work with you wherever it's appropriate to try and achieve regulations that are comparable on both sides of the border so that our trucks can move.

I am encouraged that the resource road program is still in the ministry. I will add my support for increased support for that for the very reasons I've just outlined.

I will also encourage the minister to continue to work with the federal government to pass some of the tax collected – just some – back to Infrastructure. I read with interest some information the minister provided to me on how the U.S. government works with the tax that they collect on energy and putting it back into roads. A fraction of that commitment from the federal government would mean a huge amount to this province. I cannot understand how a government can collect the type of tax that they do on a transportation fuel and put so little of it back into transportation. I think we have to continue to support you in encouraging them to do the right thing and pass more of that back to our provinces, but certainly here.

I said that I would be brief. I intend to be that way. I am going to close with this comment: minister, you have a great staff. Not only are they dedicated to ensuring that we have a well-managed transportation system, that safety is of prime importance, and that good planning is there, but I do want to put on the record to members in this House that these people who work in that department do more than that. They're great community members, and they're great community supporters.

I want to acknowledge that for the first time Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Alberta Infrastructure, and Alberta Transportation came together to do the Take It All Off for Cancer head shave. It was a great event. Members, they raised \$41,205 for cancer research. I think this is commendable. I do believe, Mr. Chairman, that we could probably raise quite a bit to see the deputy minister and the ADM in particular in the front row next year with much less hair after that event, and I will personally make the commitment to lobby for that.

So with that, Mr. Chairman, I'll take my seat.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry.

Mr. Bonner: Yes. One quick issue that I didn't touch on, Mr. Minister, that I wish I had. I also want to thank the Member for Edmonton-Highlands for allowing me to ask this. On the strategic economic corridors we have highway 63 north, which has had the unfortunate situation on more than one occasion of having to be closed because of forest fires, and the community becomes isolated. We also have 881 that goes to Fort McMurray. Particularly with the increased economic activity in Fort McMurray, what are the plans of

the department to get an alternate route to Fort McMurray so that they don't experience this situation?

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Stelmach: Thank you. If the hon. member would permit me, I neglected to make some comments on toll roads, so I'd like to do that. I'm going to leave the one on nitrous oxide for more information.

With respect to the electronic onboard recorders, many of the trucking companies monitor speed and time that drivers rest with electronic surveillance equipment. These are large carriers, and I believe that with most of these when the drivers are hired on, they are aware of the kind of restrictions or the surveillance they'll be under. But a lot of the trucking industry is one or two large trucks owned by, maybe, an owner who then hires a driver as well. I'm not quite sure who would be monitoring the smaller trucking firms in the end, but we'll get some response on that and take it further. Technology is one area that's increasing all the time, and I believe that sooner or later we're going to have to have a good debate on how much of the technology is acceptable in our society and how much of it isn't. That's with respect to traffic safety as well.

With respect to toll roads, after doing a number of studies before on this particular subject, the maximum return on a percentage of the total capital cost going in is about 25 percent. It's really a reflection of the population that we have. Other than looking at some projects, mostly in northern Alberta, that may fall into this category where the toll itself would be paid by one or two single users, mostly resource extraction companies – their policy is that if we are to put in a toll road, we would have to have an alternate route. If you look at your busiest roads that are traveled today – take Edmonton and Calgary – what portion would you toll? People would say: well, you know, you built three-quarters of this road, and then for the last quarter you want us to pay a toll on it. You bleed the traffic off someplace and move the problem someplace else.

It will require further study in this regard. However, there may be in some applications a shadow toll, where the province would pay a fixed rate per vehicle traveled to offset the costs to a company that might have built the road. That's still in the discussion stages, and sometime we'll come back to that whole topic. But for now about 25 percent is the maximum return on the capital based on a toll that would be acceptable to the traveling public.

9:40

Highways 63 and secondary 881. I tabled the three-year capital plan for Transportation yesterday just to give members an opportunity to review where we will be expending a lot of our money on our provincial highway system. With respect to highway 63 we will have – one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine – 10 projects. Those projects not only include preservation and overlay but also four-lane and two-stage paving contracts. It also includes interchanges and some erosion control and four-lane grading; that would be the Suncor access to north of Mildred Lake. So there's a fair amount of work being done there.

Then on secondary 881 there will be a 24-kilometre stretch of base-stage paving south of Wiau Lake to north of Wiau Lake, 68 kilometres of grading from north of Conklin to north of Cottonwood Creek, a further 23 kilometres south of Kettle River to north of Cottonwood Creek – that's base-stage paving – and then 13 kilometres of second-stage paving, which is north of Cheecham to south of Anzac, 23 kilometres of second-stage paving north from Cottonwood Creek to Cheecham, another 23 of side slope improve-

ment. So there's a considerable amount of work being done on those important roads, highways leading to Fort McMurray.

Just an additional item of information on secondary 881. When highway 63 was closed, there were over a thousand cars an hour passing through Lac La Biche using 881 as the only exit. Our information is that the first service station in the row through Lac La Biche ran out of gas within the hour. That's how many cars were passing through, so obviously there's a considerable amount of traffic. There are a number of buses on that road every day moving people to work, and it's one that does have an important priority in terms of the whole strategic economic borders in the province of Alberta.

The Chair: It was a government member the last time, now it's an opposition member, and then the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to thank the minister for his comments and information. This evening I have a number of questions for the minister, and I guess I'll start with P3s, which are referenced in the core business plan on page 377. I'd like to know if there is some objective criteria, a decision-making matrix or something like that that will determine objectively whether or not a P3 approach to a given project is the most beneficial as opposed to other more traditional alternatives of the government doing that.

My concern is, of course, that there could be a lot of subjective or even ideological factors taken into account. My experience tells me that generally and not universally the public sector has high-quality individuals, a great deal of built-in expertise, great resources, and access to fairly inexpensive capital. So in some particular cases there may be advantages to be gleaned, but very often P3s are not the best. So the question really is: is there some way that an objective assessment can be made that could be reported so that anyone, even an opposition member, could read it and figure it out and get a good, clear understanding of where the advantages and disadvantages lie with a given project?

I want to ask also about municipal issues, and I see that in goals and strategies, the core goals of the department, there is a section, goal 7, to "continue to support municipalities in addressing local transportation and water/wastewater needs." The first point deals with the cities of Edmonton and Calgary and the annual transportation funding based on 5 cents per litre of fuel delivered for road use. I'm wondering if this has been an extension to the contractual arrangement that was made a few years ago with those cities, what the format of that agreement is, and whether or not the government has a long-term commitment to that. There was a lot of concern a couple of years ago when the government in the provincial budget took that back. The municipalities were very concerned about that. The minister acted quite promptly to address that little fire that was burning, and the municipalities got their funding back. So I'd like to know the basis of that funding and how long a term that agreement is for.

Then under that I have a concern about, really, the lack of mention of public transportation in the goals of the department and in the numbers that we have. The numbers are quite large numbers and may include many things. Under Operating Expense, Municipal Partnerships, on page 368 of the estimates, there is \$264 million for that subprogram. What's the government's plan especially with respect to funding for Edmonton and Calgary LRT systems? The Edmonton system has just passed its 25-year anniversary, and I'm assuming that the Calgary system is more or less the same age. Of course we know that there are differences between the two systems, and Edmonton's decision to go underground in the downtown

portion has meant that its system has lagged behind. But what role does public transportation and especially rapid transit play in the government's plans?

There's mention here of green infrastructure. In my view, there's nothing more green as far as an infrastructure thing as that kind of system. I think the payoff in reducing CO₂ emissions and other emissions of supporting a modern and fairly extensive public transportation system can't be matched by other things, and there are, of course, other dramatic benefits including improvements in quality of life for the community. I also think – and I know that the Minister of Economic Development would probably agree with me – that a good, well-balanced municipal transportation system within a large metropolitan area has big economic payoffs as well. So I would like to know if the government has a long-term commitment to fund capital costs for LRT expansion.

I know that Calgary's plan places the extension of their system of LRT at the core of their strategies to reduce congestion and provide transportation within the city, but when I look at the government's numbers and their goals, I see pretty much reliance on roads and vehicles as a transportation solution. So I'd like the minister's comments on that as well.

With those questions, Mr. Chairman, I'll take my seat. Thank you.

The Chair: Hon. minister, do you wish to speak? There are a couple of other members here that have been bouncing up and down.

The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Boutilier: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to say how pleased I am that the Minister of Transportation has committed to come to visit highway 881 and highway 63, which he often refers to as corridors of wealth. I think that is very apropos. Obviously, one of the dilemmas we have faced, specifically the hon. Member for Athabasca-Wabasca, is the issue of highway 881 in terms of access. We have only one access in and out of a city of 60,000 people. I do recall when we had a major fire that ultimately posed a risk to the continued production of Suncor and Shell because they were unable to move and transport chemicals, and the plants were going to shut down because we didn't have any access. I always remember the executives of the companies indicating that we really need an alternate way in and out.

9:50

Now, with 881 we're making good progress. Needless to say, the question would be how we can escalate that priority, and I see many people in the Assembly shaking their heads in an affirmative action relative to that priority and meeting that priority because we never want to have that risk. We want to be able to mitigate it. I know the hon. minister is mitigating the risk, but we have the attitude in northeastern Alberta that we can always do better. I'd be interested in the minister's words on how we can do better to expedite that. In fact, the Minister of Finance met with some of the aboriginal chiefs with me just not that long ago where they indicated what the risk posed to, again, that corridor of wealth transporting people to jobs. One way in and one way out for a city of 60,000 is very difficult, and I know that the minister agrees that we need an alternative route. How can we get that moved up on the priority list to deal with such pressures?

The Chair: Actually, hon. Minister of Sustainable Resource Development, there was another minister, but apparently he's changed his mind.

The hon. Minister of Sustainable Resource Development.

Mr. Cardinal: Thank you very much. I, too, would like to thank the Minister of Transportation for his foresight and planning in the development of northern roads because they are critical to our economy in Alberta. I'd like to also put the hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs at ease in relation to a connector road from Fort McMurray. He would be pleased to know that we are working on not only 881 and 63; we're also working on 813, which takes off from Athabasca to Wabasca, and eventually that road will connect to Fort McMurray. So, Mr. Minister, you'll be pleased that the Minister of Transportation met with the MD of Opportunity. We're looking at the possibility of paving more this summer, and eventually that road will connect to Fort McMurray and, no doubt, will be paved, so we will have a third connector to Fort McMurray, and I'd like to thank the minister for that.

The Chair: The Minister of Finance is wanting to speak.

Mrs. Nelson: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Just very briefly.

The Chair: Another minister was called a few moments ago, but he was busily engaged.

The Minister of Finance, very briefly. Yes.

Mrs. Nelson: Yes, Mr. Chairman. What I wanted to say was that this is one of the most important portfolios in the government because, quite frankly, for the generation of wealth and the continued growth and economic prosperity within the province, there is no point in encouraging people to go out and produce new product lines if you don't have the ability to get the product to market, and with the lack of transportation, particularly from the rail that we've experienced lately and now with the air, we clearly need to have a road system that is very much enhanced and expanded. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and I did meet with the aboriginal people in regard to 881. It is an area of growth and pressure, and having only one exit in and out of that community is just not sufficient.

I also wanted to make mention of another area, which is in a different sector of the province, that has been very important, I believe, actually for our tourism industry, and I know our Minister of Economic Development would want me to mention this. One of the tourist attractions in this province is, of course, the Tyrrell museum, and the access into that area is highway 9, which has, from what I understand, the greatest amount of traffic by visitors of almost any road within the province, and highway 9 is in desperate need of expansion and shoulders so that it remains safe and doesn't become detrimental to enhancing the tourism travel into that sector of the province.

I would ask the hon. Minister of Transportation to be sure and give consideration to those areas that are a part of the economic growth and sustainability of this province and be sure that we don't have ourselves in a position where we're developing economic entities and adding value to our natural resources and then not being able to get to market. That doesn't make any sense at all. So transporting goods and services through air and rail and road and pipeline is critically important. So I would encourage the hon. minister to make sure he beats us up at Treasury Board for lots of money to put transportation networks in there, particularly 881 and highway 9.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, followed by the hon. Minister of Economic Development, and then the Minister of Transportation in the few moments we have left.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm referring to the business plans, a couple of different pages where I have questions. Page 383 has the ministry's statement of operations. There's a line here for amortization. It's quite a significant figure, \$160 million up to \$200 million, \$220 million, \$240 million. I'd just like you to explain that if you could.

Page 377. There are some questions raised for me by goal 5 that would be great for the minister to explain. The first bullet under goal 5 talks about:

Lead the cross-ministry Capital Planning Initiative in partnership with . . . Infrastructure and . . . Finance to ensure long-term capital plans and effective infrastructure management systems are in place . . .

And then the key point for me.

. . . alternative financing options such as public-private (P3) opportunities are considered, and performance is measured.

Now, I'm wondering what is being considered here. They actually mixed the symbols here. It says P3 and calls them "public-private opportunities" instead of public/private partnerships. What options are we looking at here? Are we looking at toll roads? Are we looking at maybe entirely private roadways? What's being considered? If the minister would be so kind as to provide us with the analyses, pro and con, on that. I know that in the last several years highway maintenance was privatized. That's not really a P3. That's a contracted service. What is counting here as a public/private opportunity, and what are the costs and benefits that have been found in this? I'm sure the Minister of Infrastructure will be interested in that too, but I'm asking you in particular.

Further down that goal it says, "Continue to undertake research focused on safety, engineering, and intelligent transportation systems." How much money is tied to that research? Where is the research done? Is this research done in the department? Is the research done with, say, engineering faculties at universities? Is it research done with who? So some details on that would be great. How much are you spending on research? I'm not objecting to this. In fact, I think research is great. Is the Department of Transportation becoming a bit of a research centre for the government? I don't know. I have no idea.

The next two points are connected together. The first one, "Ensure environmental practices are integrated into short and long-term planning," and then the final point under goal 5, "Support provincial and cross-ministry initiatives related to transportation and its role in climate change." Those are admirable goals, but I'm wondering what resources relate to this. We have the goals on the paper. What resources is the minister committing to achieve those goals, and how do the two link together? I'm getting a lot of sneezing and coughing over there. I hope it's not a reaction to my questions. I'd like to know how these goals are going to be implemented, basically, the connection between the resources, the actions, and the goal. How much money is involved?

I'm also very interested to know of any support from the department for alternatives to roads. Might we be looking at support for railway, support for LRT within the cities? I know there was even consideration of a maglev, magnetic levitation, rail system between Edmonton and Calgary. Is that what we're talking about when we're looking at alternatives to roads, that kind of green infrastructure, as it would be called? Related to that also with the development of fuel cell technology . . .

10:00

The Chair: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, but pursuant to Standing Order 58(4), which provides for not less than two hours of consideration for a department's proposed estimates unless there are no members who wish to speak prior to the

conclusion of the two hours – and that hasn't occurred – I must now put the question on the proposed estimates for the Department of Transportation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2004.

Agreed to:

Operating Expense and	
Equipment/Inventory Purchases	\$924,118,000
Capital Investment	\$372,080,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Hon. Government House Leader, would you say the magic words?

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd move that we rise and report and beg leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Lougheed: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

Resolved that a sum not exceeding the following be granted to Her Majesty for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2004, for the following department.

Transportation: operating expense and equipment/inventory purchases, \$924,118,000; capital investment, \$372,080,000.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in this report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

head: **Government Bills and Orders**

head: Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Tannas in the chair]

The Chair: The Committee of the Whole is called to order.

Bill 20
Alberta Municipal Financing Corporation
Amendment Act, 2003

The Chair: Are there any comments or questions to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glengarry.

Mr. Bonner: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Yes, I wanted to make sure I got an opportunity to speak here. I know that the Minister of Finance would certainly appreciate that we have open and frank discussions in the Assembly, particularly in dealing with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs.

In speaking to Bill 20, the Alberta Municipal Financing Corporation Amendment Act, 2003, we have to look at this particular bill and see that it certainly as a highlight gives greater flexibility to the Alberta Municipal Financing Corporation to distribute loans. It also changes the name of the corporation. It does a significant amount of housekeeping, and it does put term limits on directors of the corporation.

Now, in looking at the bill and particularly by way of a sectional analysis, I'm looking at section 3. This section reorganizes the definitions of the act. Most of these definitions are only a slight modification of those of the original act, and new definitions are introduced for improvement district, minister, and special area. Other new definitions are simple modifications of the old act. In looking at this particular issue, most of these changes, Mr. Chairman, are innocuous as they are amalgamations or reorganizations of items.

A question I do have is: why is the board of the Northland school division No. 61 under the Northland School Division Act specifically cited as an educational authority? If the minister could provide an explanation for this particular question, it would be deeply appreciated.

The definition of health authority is "a person, other than a regional health authority, that owns an approved hospital under the Hospitals Act." Is this possibly a reference to privately owned hospitals?

The term "resolution" in section 3 is also introduced, and this term will replace "bylaws" in many portions of the bill. According to the ministry this is to reflect that these are approved by the board and not by the shareholders, and this is understandable.

In looking at section 4, the name of the corporation is changed to Alberta Capital Finance Authority. This also gives the corporation the capacity and powers of a natural person but allows cabinet to make restrictions on these powers, rights, and privileges. The section also states that the corporation is not to engage in activity outside the business of the corporation.

Section 7 repeals section 5 of the original act. One of the questions I would have is: why would this section be edited out entirely and not replaced? This is dealing with common shares. Some of these original sections here are not intuitive and should be in the amended act. For example, improvement districts' rights are exercised on their behalf by the minister responsible for the Municipal Government Act. Under the amendment how do we know who is supposed to exercise the rights for the shareholders? This section should have been amended to conform with the new sections of the act, not deleted.

Again, in section 8 I see that this is just housekeeping. There are also some housekeeping provisions in section 9. Section 10: I don't see any concerns with this particular section.

Under section 11 sections 10 to 13 of the original act are repealed, and several new sections replace them. One of the things that I do note here: there is no longer the provision that establishes how a person may establish the right to vote.

Section 12 simply repeals sections 15 to 17 of the old act.

In going through this, Mr. Chairman, I do believe that the majority of the other changes that I have noted are more of a housekeeping nature and certainly clean up the act. In looking at this particular bill, I do have those few questions that I did bring up.

At this point in time I will take my seat and allow others to participate in debate in Committee of the Whole. Thank you.

10:10

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Dr. Taft: Thank you. I just rise on one particular issue to ensure for the record that our understanding is clear on this. There have been issues raised by members of the AUMA and others that there are some alarm bells rung by this legislation, and the sponsor may be able to address these. I'm counting on that in any case. I'll be as prompt as I can.

Section 21 of Bill 20 describes the business of the corporation, the

corporation in question being the Municipal Financing Corporation.

(a) to provide local authorities that are its shareholders . . .

And I hope that's a key clause here.

. . . with financing for capital projects;

(b) to act as financial agent or otherwise for a local authority that is its shareholder in negotiating loans or refinancing securities of the local authority or in any other capacity authorized by the regulations.

And so on it goes. Now, the key point I want to draw attention to here is the term "local authorities." The definition of local authority under section 3(g) is "a city, an educational authority, a health authority, a municipal authority, a regional authority or a town."

Then if we follow this further through the legalistic trail, section 3(e) defines health authority. This is where the alarm bell goes off for many people.

(c) "health authority" means

- (i) a person, other than a regional health authority, that owns an approved hospital under the Hospitals Act;
- (ii) a person, other than a regional health authority, that owns a mental health hospital under the Hospitals Act.

Those two subclauses are of great concern because they potentially open the door for this new corporation to provide financing to, say, businesses that may be in the health or the hospital industry.

So with all of that as background I am wondering what assurances the sponsor of the bill or other members may be able to provide to Albertans that in fact that is not a loophole or is not a provision that will allow businesses in the health industry to obtain this favourable financing. In fact, I don't know why those clauses are there, so maybe that could be explained to me if it's not for that reason.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Mr. Hlady: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I do appreciate the question from Edmonton-Riverview, and I will clarify it for him right away. On the questions that were asked by the previous member, I will look at those in *Hansard*, and at the beginning of third reading I will have those answers for you and take care of that for you.

On this last point I do understand the question that has been raised by Edmonton-Riverview. The AUMA had raised the fear themselves and were very concerned about this and put it in writing to a number of people in questioning. This is going to be taken care of, Mr. Chairman, under the regulation in regard to the fact that the concern under these particular sections is that if there was ever a private hospital, they would be able to go to the corporation and borrow money, and that was really the sense of the concern.

This is being taken care of, and that will never happen, because under regulations you have to be a shareholder of the corporation to be able to borrow from the corporation. A private hospital would never get the ability to become a shareholder of the corporation and therefore would never have the right or the ability to borrow from the AMFC. So if that helps you to clarify. That will never happen simply for that reason, and that really answers the question for you.

Dr. Taft: Do you know why those clauses are in there?

Mr. Hlady: Because this is speaking in the general terms of staying in the public sector. It doesn't refer to private. I think what people have done is they've taken read of this to say: oh, this could mean private. But it does not state and nowhere in the areas referenced by yourself did it state that we actually had private in this area, if you read it. Now, people chose to write that in themselves, that it could mean private. It does not mean private. It is protected from being

private by maintaining under the regulations that they will never be shareholders. Okay?

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The clauses of Bill 20 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Bill 12

Financial Sector Statutes Amendment Act, 2003

The Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill?

[The clauses of Bill 12 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Bill 10

Health Information Amendment Act, 2003

The Chair: Are there any further comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Dr. Taft: Thank you. Yes, I have several comments on this, Mr. Chairman. This is a small bill, a short bill but one that I think is important. It raises some important issues, and I find that I'm divided completely on this bill because one component of it I'm strongly supporting, and our caucus, the opposition, in fact raised this issue last fall. The other component of the bill I'm very uneasy with.

So I guess we can deal with the good news first, which is section 2 of this bill, which is to amend section 35(1) of the Health Information Act to sort out a problem which is really an inadvertent effect of the legislation as it stands right now. It led to some heart-wrenching moments in people's lives. The effect of the legislation as it is now is that if an underage child dies, the parents of that child are unable legally to have access to the medical records of that child. You can understand easily where that could be the cause of great grief and confusion to parents, parents who are wanting to bring some closure, at least some understanding to what's happened to their child. They want to have information on the diagnosis or the procedures or the injuries or whatever the cause of death was. Through an accident of legislation the act as it stands right now prohibited that. This particular amendment, as it's proposed here in Bill 10, will correct that problem; clearly, I'm sure we'll all agree, a simple gesture of humanity and one to be supported. So that's the good news.

10:20

The concerns arise with us with paragraph 3 of Bill 10, which addresses section 59 of the Health Information Act. This raises

much broader issues, issues that I have real concerns about. Speaking, first of all, broadly from the trends in our society, I am concerned about issues of individual liberty and individual privacy. Through the development of electronic technology we have moved into an age where all of us suddenly find enormous amounts of personal information circulating through dozens and dozens of probably now hundreds of databases of one kind or another. So everyone of us would probably be a bit startled if we knew how much private information was collected in so many different databases. All kinds of financial information, any legal or criminal information about us, educational information, what we borrow from the library, what books we buy, absolutely enormous amounts of consumer information, down to the tiniest detail of what kinds of toilet paper we might use or what kinds or colours of paint we use in our house: all of that is collected on every one of us and compiled into electronic databases and shared and sold back and forth. The amount of that information and the extent to which it flows back and forth increases year after year relentlessly, and indeed the fineness of the net through which this information is collected grows or intensifies every year. So that's the general picture.

Specifically here we're dealing with health information, and health information, as we all are aware, is among the most sensitive information in our lives for many of us. It could be information on anything. It could be something we're embarrassed about or something that people would hold as a liability against us in seeking employment or something that might disqualify us from insurance. All that kind of information and much, much more is held in health records, and to the extent that those health records are turned into electronic vehicles or electronic documents, that information suddenly can be shared. We can readily, readily lose control of that information.

All of us, I'm sure, can appreciate the difference between having information on a piece of paper, that can only really be shared either by passing around or photocopying, versus information that's stored electronically, which with the push of a button can be sent out to endless numbers of people, who can in turn through another push of a button distribute it to endless further numbers of people. So we're into a whole different quality of information. It's not just quantity; it's the quality, the very nature of the information we're discussing here.

Specifically to clause 3 of Bill 10, the effect of clause 3 is to remove one of the fundamental safeguards that have been put in place by legislation to give people some – some – modicum of control over their health information. That safeguard is to require health professionals to specifically ask a patient if their medical records can be shared electronically. So the way it is right now, a health professional needs to ask a patient: will you give me consent to record and potentially share your personal health records in electronic form?

Now, there's an interesting twist here. If the patient says no, even then the health professional doesn't necessarily have to respect that request. There are circumstances, some of them very understandable, in which a medical professional can actually overrule that request from a patient, but by and large there is at the very least a moral obligation on the health professional to respect the request of the patient.

The effect of this bill is to remove the requirement on the health professional to ask permission and instead flip the responsibility around so that the patient has to through their own volition and initiative say: I do not want this information shared electronically. If they fail to do so, the assumption is made that they have given permission. A very big and significant step here.

I have received a number of concerns around this which I want to

get on the record and which I would like the government to consider in this. I understand some of the reasons for this. One reason that's put forward is that it was time consuming for health professionals to go through the consent-seeking process. Well, I'm not convinced by that argument. I think that too often we are prepared to sacrifice personal privacy and personal freedom for the sake of efficiency. Efficiency on its own is not a terribly compelling reason for me to see personal privacy sacrificed, yet that is in many cases the biggest reason that's put forward for this activity.

Really in many ways I'm concerned that Bill 10 is an issue of big state powers being created even while we have a party that likes to talk about small government. We can have small government but a big state and a state that collects far more information than we would have ever allowed a state to collect 10 or 15 or 20 years ago. So this is a bill in which big state becomes an issue. I know that I'll get more than one chance if I run up the time here. I think it's worth contemplating this.

Every day busy and well-intentioned health professionals collect and document the intimate details of lives of patients in their care to help with diagnosis and to help co-ordinate treatment, and these professionals reassure those patients. Any of them who might be reluctant to expose sensitive information are reassured: don't worry; this is confidential. But we have to ask ourselves: what does that really mean, especially when that is recorded electronically? One of the key points here is that once people lose confidence that the information they provide will be respected confidentially, then in some cases they're going to become reluctant to share crucial information about their health that not only may affect their own health but may affect the health of others.

We must be particularly sensitive to this sort of thing in the wake of the recent SARS epidemic. By sharing information on where they travel or what their temperature might have been or what some symptoms might have been, they might not just be threatening themselves. By disclosing that information, a patient might threaten the ability of family members or colleagues to earn their living because they could all find themselves in quarantine.

So these are complicated issues. We want people to feel confident that they can come forward and share information without fear of being embarrassed or without fear of losing control of that information. Albertans, Mr. Chairman, are very sensitive about this. There was a public opinion survey conducted by the Alberta Medical Association in the late 1980s, and it found that 62 percent of Albertans, 62 percent, say that Alberta Health and Wellness should not have access to their medical records. Beyond that, 84 percent say that regional health authorities should not have access to patients' private information without consent, yet we are putting forward a bill here that will not require consent from patients. So I think we need to be careful that we respect public opinion on this.

10:30

This also ties into other issues. One of the concerns that this links to is: who owns health information? One of the concerns I have in this province is that the Alberta government has not at all taken steps to ensure that the patient owns this information. In fact, it looks very much like the government has gone to great lengths to avoid any suggestion that people actually own their own personal health information, and the reason for that is that once people are given ownership of their personal health information, then they will get control. I concede that if that were to happen, then some of the health information systems and, indeed, perhaps some crucial information would be made more difficult, but the point here is that people ultimately need control over what information is collected on them. At least we need to be very, very reluctant to ignore that

principle of people having control over information that's collected on them.

Now, there is one other point that is between the lines here of this particular clause, clause 3, and that is this: under this legislation even if I am active in asking that my information be kept confidential, not be shared, not be turned into electronic information or, if it is made electronic, not be distributed, there's no requirement for that to be respected. Information can be shared electronically by health professionals despite requests from patients for that not to happen, and we all know, as I mentioned earlier, that that could lead to the loss of control of that information.

So, Mr. Chairman, I am very ambivalent about Bill 10. On the one hand, clause 2 is a good clause, sorts out a problem. On the other hand, clause 3 reduces people's control over some of the most sensitive information they are ever asked to share with others. While I understand that this may move Alberta and help move Canada towards a better health information system, from which there are many benefits, I think that when this is combined with the fact that people are not given ownership of that information, I remain very, very uneasy. I think on a point of principle, a point of respecting patients' rights to control their personal information, I for one, I guess, will have to oppose Bill 10.

Thank you.

[The clauses of Bill 10 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that the committee rise and report Bill 20, Bill 12, and Bill 10.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Lougheed: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following: Bill 20, Bill 12, Bill 10.

The Deputy Speaker: Those who concur in this report, please say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Those opposed, please say no. Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that we adjourn until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; at 10:37 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Thursday at 1:30 p.m.]

