



STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ECONOMY

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ECONOMY

Ms. Colleen Young, Chair
Lloydminster

Ms. Vicki Mowat, Deputy Chair
Saskatoon Fairview

Mr. David Buckingham
Saskatoon Westview

Mr. Terry Dennis
Canora-Pelly

Mr. Delbert Kirsch
Batoche

Mr. Warren Michelson
Moose Jaw North

Mr. Doug Steele
Cypress Hills

[The committee met at 15:30.]

The Chair: — Welcome, everyone, this afternoon to the Standing Committee on the Economy for April 16th, 2019.

Committee members present here this afternoon are myself, Colleen Young, as Chair. Sitting in for Vicki Mowat is Mr. Belanger. We have other committee members: David Buckingham, Terry Dennis, Delbert Kirsch, Warren Michelson, and sitting in for Doug Steele is Hugh Nerlien.

**General Revenue Fund
Highways and Infrastructure
Vote 16**

Subvote (HI01)

The Chair: — We will now begin our consideration of the estimates for Highways and Infrastructure, vote 16, central management and services, subvote (HI01).

Minister Carr is here with her officials, and I would ask that officials, the first time they speak at the mike, state their name and their position. Minister Carr, you may begin with introducing your officials and any opening remarks you may have.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Well thank you, Madam Chair. I do have some remarks I'd like to make before we begin the estimates for the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure.

But first I'd like to introduce my officials with me today. I have Fred Antunes, my deputy minister, here on my right. On my left I have Wayne Gienow. He's the executive director of network planning and investment branch. And then we have Tom Lees, the assistant deputy minister, operations and maintenance division. Behind me I have Kelly Moskowy, the executive director of corporate services division, and my chief of staff, David Cooper.

On the left-hand side over there we also have Penny Popp, who is the assistant deputy minister of design and construction division. We have Doug Wakabayashi, who is the executive director of communication and customer service branch. And we also have with us David Stearns, who is the executive director of the construction branch. And joining us sometime throughout our deliberations we're going to be having Blair Wagar, the assistant deputy minister of planning, policy, and regulation division.

This year's provincial budget finds the right balance for the province of Saskatchewan. We are carefully managing spending, and this budget ensures that the investments our government makes into the programs, services, and infrastructure that Saskatchewan people value are sustainable into the future. This year's highway budget is \$706.1 million. This year's budget represents 23 per cent, \$218 million decrease from last year. However, this decrease is primarily a result of nearing completion on the Regina bypass. If we exclude the bypass, the highways budget represents 3.5 per cent or \$8 million increase from last year. Accounting for this year's budget, my government's total transportation investment is almost \$9 billion since 2008.

This year's capital budget will result in over 350 million invested into more than 1000 kilometres of highways in addition to the completion of the Regina bypass this fall. My ministry is working carefully to manage spending while investing in needed infrastructure for Saskatchewan people.

Our government has demonstrated a commitment for investments into highways, bridges, and culverts in this province, and we are working to complete projects on time and on budget. Represented in the ministry's vision, Transportation — Connecting Saskatchewan to the World, this year's 2019-20 budget will allow the ministry to continue to make progress on achieving its goals in the areas of improving safety and environmental sustainability, improving road conditions, creating an integrated transportation system, and efficient travel for people and goods.

This past weekend marked the one-year anniversary of the most horrific traffic collision in our province's history. The collision involving the Humboldt Broncos team bus was a reminder of how quickly life can change. And it makes us ask ourselves, what more can we do? We are honouring the Throne Speech commitment to improve safety at intersections with the enhanced intersections safety program. This program will see improvements to more than 60 intersections. This is a five-year commitment of \$65 million, including 13 million this year. This will include new turning lanes, lighting, clearing sightlines, and rumble strips.

To give you an idea of just a handful of the projects that will take place this year, my ministry will install rumble strips at Highway 35 and 335 as recommended in an independent engineering report. Lighting improvements will be made through Kindersley on Highway 7 in addition to Highway 3 at Shellbrook, Highway 16 at Langham, and Highway 8 south of Churchbridge. Lighting improvements and a northbound bypass lane will be installed at the junction of Highway 21 and 307. Major improvements will be made to Highway 1 at Kalium Access Road with new entrance and exit ramps. And a new flashing red light on the stop sign at Green Lake at the junction of Highway 155 and 55 will be installed.

We will also invest another 7 million through the safety improvement program or SIP, as we call it, to reduce the frequency and severity of collisions at specific locations throughout the province. A total investment of \$100 million in spot safety improvements will be made over the next five years.

And we are focused on safety not just for the travelling public but in our work zones as well. Our efforts to improve work zone signing continue. We recognize driver behaviour is still a major factor in incidents through our work zones. Our team met the public and stakeholders to identify some changes we can make. We can ensure work zone signing is consistent across the province and provide direction for people using the road that is simple, clear, and doesn't confuse.

We've developed a new user-friendly traffic control device manual for work zones that is easier to read and has a fresh new look for ministry staff, consultants, and contractors. Efforts were also made to reduce the number of signs to what is essential, while ensuring drivers know what to do. Speed differential is a

huge factor in collisions and we want to ensure the people behind the wheel know when to slow down and when it is okay to safely resume highway speed when exiting a work zone.

This construction season, you will see new signage that lets motorists know when you can resume speed because no workers or hazards exist. Education will continue to focus on why we need to slow down in a work and construction zone.

The ministry's focus on efficient travel for people and goods will result in strengthening the provincial highway network through capacity improvements like twinning and passing lanes. This will help make the network safer and keep Saskatchewan competitive on the world stage.

This budget provides 64 million to begin, continue, or complete work on interchanges, twinning, and passing lanes. Last fall we opened new interchanges up to traffic at Warman and Martensville, on Highways 11 and 12. All reports are that these overpasses have greatly improved traffic flow and safety. The final phase of Highway 7 twinning is scheduled for completion this year. The paving at Vanscoy is in the final leg of its multi-year project which will complete twinning from Saskatoon to Delisle. Last year passing lanes were completed on Highway 6 south of Regina, and Highway 4 north of Battlefords to Cochin.

The focus this year will turn towards several passing lane projects, including continued construction of passing lanes and short sections of twinning on Highways 6 and 39 between Regina and Estevan, construction of two sets of passing lanes west of Rosetown on Highway 7, and one set on Highway 2 north of Moose Jaw. Work will begin on construction of passing lanes on highways 9 and 10 between Canora and Melville and planning for passing lanes and other safety improvements on Highway 5 west of Saskatoon.

Our government needs to make investments that will keep our province growing, while at the same time it's critical that we keep the infrastructure we already have in good condition. That's why our government will be investing \$121.3 million into 920 kilometres of repaving and preventative maintenance across the province. This includes 240 kilometres of repaving, such as Highway 1 west of Tompkins, 32 kilometres; Highway 9 north of Usherville, 24 kilometres; Highway 10 east of Fort Qu'Appelle, 26 kilometres; Highway 15 west of Kenaston, 23 kilometres; as well as 490 kilometres of pavement sealing and 190 kilometres of medium pavement treatments like microsurfacing.

This year we're spending 60 million in bridge and culvert improvements, including 30 bridge replacements and major bridge repairs. That brings the total to more than 300 bridge repairs or replacements since our government came into office.

We're also committing 9 million to flood repairs, including ongoing issues on Highway 9 near Whitewood, Highway 11 near Lumsden, and Highway 8 north of Rocanville.

Another strategy to improve transportation is through integration of all the road infrastructure across the province. My ministry isn't the only organization that builds and maintains roads. When you include urban streets and RM [rural municipality] roads, our total road network in Saskatchewan is over an astonishing

190 000 kilometres. By working together collectively, we can do more. A coordinated approach to planning and managing truck traffic makes the best use of the roads while making the system more sustainable, extending to the reach of heavy-haul roads.

In addition we need to make sure that other modes of transportation like air and rail are integrated with the road network to make sure transportation supports our economy. This year we will provide more than 6.7 million in funding to municipalities to support their transportation systems through the urban highway connector program, as well as 14 million through the municipal roads for the economy program. We will also continue to provide \$700,000 through the community airport partnership, leveraging a total of 1.4 million investment in local airports.

Making the transportation system efficient is important to all of us. Goods and people need to be able to get where they're going safely, quickly, and efficiently. Exporters in agriculture and mining and oil and gas need to move products to market as cheaply as possible without having to worry about weight restrictions in order to remain competitive. This year we have a number of projects that move that goal forward.

The Regina bypass remains on time and on budget. Phase 1 opened in 2017 and now the final phase will be completed and opened this fall. Once complete, the Regina bypass, which is the largest infrastructure project in the province's history, will improve safety on Highway 1 east of Regina, reduce congestion in and around the city, and support and enhance our provincial economy by improving linkages to the national highway system. This project is 95 per cent complete and the remaining \$89 million worth of work will be completed by the end of October.

One of the biggest problems we continue to deal with is thin membrane surface, or TMS, highways. At one time, thin membrane surfaces kept rural communities out of the dust. However, today they aren't strong enough or wide enough to handle the trucks that use them. Where traffic volumes warrant and there is a strong business case, we continue to upgrade these highways. This year we'll do another 40 kilometres including Highway 155 from Green Lake to 20 kilometres north, Highway 255 south and west of Tobin Lake, and Highway 355 west of Spruce Home.

We continue to pursue partnerships with municipal governments to improve low-traffic-volume roads. We can do more when communities come to the table and it gives RMs a say in what standard the road is built to, operated, and maintained at. In many cases, the RM is in a better position to maintain these roads at a better level of service. We are actively working on several partnerships to further improve the condition of rural, low-volume TMS highways.

We are investing 57.3 million to build, operate, and maintain the transportation system in northern Saskatchewan, 28.2 million allocated for capital projects. This includes a number of bridge and culvert replacements in addition to improvements on Highway 135 south of Pelican Narrows, Highway 155 north of Green Lake, and spot improvements on Highway 106 east of the junction of 135.

[15:45]

And again I'd like to speak to the importance of partnerships. The northern transportation infrastructure task force is made up of the northern area transportation planning committee Chairs and a senior transportation planner from the ministry. Members include the north-north east transportation planning committee Chairperson, Bruce Fidler; the Athabasca Basin transportation planning Chairperson, Glen Strong; the north-north west transportation planning committee Chairperson Barry Opekokew; and area transportation planning committees Chair Richard Porter; and Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure senior transportation planner, Alan Lindsay.

This taskforce recently worked to come up with innovative funding and project delivery methods for infrastructure improvements in the North. The group brainstormed over a dozen approaches and put forth three proposals, one of which recommended a spot-improvement strategy where we upgrade stretches of road in order to create consistent driving conditions along a corridor. I'm pleased to announce that as a result of the work of the northern transportation infrastructure taskforce, this budget allocated 1 million to the spot improvements on Highway 106 that I mentioned moments ago. We will also continue to work with the community of Fond-du-Lac on various options to address future safety initiatives at the airport.

We continue efforts to make travel more efficient for public and goods. To create efficiency for the trucking sector we have harmonized the wide-base single tire program with Ontario. This was announced last fall by our Premier, Scott Moe, and Ontario Premier Doug Ford to improve trade across Canada. With thousands of trucks transporting goods in and out of the province, the use of wide-base single tires increases fuel economy and reduces both shipping costs and carbon emissions.

Our government has had to make some hard choices to bring our budget back to balanced, but as you can see, we have always understood the importance of a safe and efficient transportation network. Like any budget, we have some limitations, so we do need to be strategic. We are committed to improving safety. We are committed to helping goods get to market quickly and efficiency. We are committed to improving local access roads, and we are committed to investment in northern Saskatchewan. This budget ensures the improvements our government makes into programs, services, and infrastructure are sustainable into the future. And as you can see, we have a busy year ahead of ourselves.

My officials and I would be happy to answer any questions the committee members have now.

The Chair: — Thank you, Minister Carr. I'll now open the floor to questions from committee members. I'll recognize Mr. Belanger.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much. We have a number of questions on a wide range of what the Department of Highways is currently undertaking, and I want to get right into it. We understand that you have a loss of 54 FTEs [full-time equivalent]. Can you give us more information as to the background of these FTEs? Are they in maintenance? Are they in management? Are they in services? Like where is the cut on the FTEs?

Mr. Antunes: — So Fred Antunes, deputy minister of Highways and Infrastructure. So the estimates will show that there's actually an increase of 26 FTEs. Oh, I guess not in estimates anymore, but there's an increase of 26 FTEs. And that's because we reflected students, which we've never done before. So there's actually an overall increase. But when you look at some of the changes, there was some staff that moved over to SaskBuilds. So that was a transfer of positions that went over to SaskBuilds with the centralization of procurement services.

We've recently announced some changes related to administrative positions in our districts. And then we're also looking potentially at some, maybe some initial changes with our crews, but we haven't finalized anything there yet. So no decisions have been made on that yet.

Mr. Belanger: — And the gist and the reason why I'm asking about the FTEs is that we are paying really close attention to — after the bypass change and obviously the reduction of dollars over the next number of years because of the bypass commitments — how is that going to affect the overall operations of the Department of Highways.

And you know, there's a lot of worries from trends that we see. In particular the reason, the basis of my question on the FTEs is on the maintenance aspect. Obviously you look at some places that we're hearing have a difficulty in filling some of the positions — as an example, North Battleford, Prince Albert — where some of the positions for maintenance and so on and so forth aren't being filled or are being moved.

I would suggest, Madam Minister, that you look at the overall operations of Highways. You're going to have to ask the question, as we have a decrease in spending as evidenced in this year's budget, what are the impacts on the FTEs? And how are those losses of the FTEs in the services, in the dollars that we enjoyed in Highways previously, where are the cuts and how are they going to impact operations overall?

There's a lot of discussion around the maintenance of the equipment, and I would dare say that there are some emerging concerns. There's some people of the opinion that the vehicles, the highway vehicles aren't being maintained properly, that there is some significant public safety issues with improperly maintained vehicles. And I just want to serve notice today that these are consistent themes that we're picking up as the critic from a variety of sources.

So how confident are you as a minister that the potential danger, the potential issue of maintenance, proper maintenance on these vehicles aren't posing a risk to the public? Because obviously when we travel, you and I, we meet a snowplow. You know, we meet a grader. We meet a gravel truck. And one always assumes that these are highly maintained and that their specs and standards and condition of all their equipment is something that the department takes very seriously.

So I'd ask the question, how confident are you in the maintenance and safety of equipment under your watch while they're maintaining Saskatchewan highways?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Okay. Well I guess I'd just like to address a few things that you said throughout your comments there. Our

budget is not down this year. Our budget is actually up by \$8 million or 3.5 per cent, so we are not making any cuts as you alluded to. There is not more money coming off the road.

I want to touch briefly on some of the positions that you allude to that we're losing. We are not taking anybody off of the road. All workers that are being laid off are actually office staff. And we're restructuring, so we're not taking anybody off of any piece of the road. So those positions will still be there.

And as the deputy minister already mentioned, some of our positions are going over to SaskBuilds as part of the procurement piece. So while they're not actually in the Ministry of Highways, they are still doing our procurement for us, just in a different location.

And then, I mean, I feel very confident that our equipment is maintained very well. If you have specific, I guess, samples that you would like to bring forward to us because you believe it is an issue of safety, I urge you to absolutely do that and ensure that we get those taken care of. But I'm just going to let my deputy minister speak to the maintenance piece here.

Mr. Antunes: — Yes, so a couple things. So I think that when you look at the equipment that we've got in place, this year we actually are making a significant investment in equipment.

So we're in the process of building two new pavement strippers. We've got 15 new snowplow trucks that we're going to be building this year. We've recently leased 35 graders in addition to 10 graders that we got last year, 10 used graders that we got into the fleet. And we're also in the process of — sorry, we've done — the graders lease is something that we're going to be doing, 35 new graders that we're leasing. And we just recently leased 38 loaders. So those are all replacement pieces of equipment. And in addition to that we're also looking at opportunities to maybe lease another 15 snowplow trucks.

And I think in terms of the comment related to the safety of equipment, you know, I'll ask Tom Lees to speak a little bit to this, about the process that we go through in our shops. But the trucks are certified through SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance] inspections, and Tom can speak a little bit to how often that happens and what the process is.

Mr. Lees: — Tom Lees, assistant deputy minister with the operation and maintenance division. So as the deputy minister alluded to, absolutely the pieces of equipment that are in our shops go through daily circle checks to make sure that they meet all the safety specifications. They also go through, on a minimum, one SGI check or two SGI checks in a given year, as well as our highway patrol officers also do some CVE [commercial vehicle enforcement] inspections on them as well. So in terms of the pieces of equipment that are on the road, they go through specific safety checks to ensure that they're safe to go on the road before they do so.

Mr. Belanger: — What are the minimum thickness required for some of the blades that we operate in front our vehicles like the snowplow blades and the grader blades? Is there a minimum thickness required?

Mr. Lees: — I don't have that information on me.

Mr. Belanger: — Would you be able to provide that and also explain or provide myself with how the thickness of the blades that keep our highways free of snow and other debris, are there standards around blade thickness? And I'm assuming that there are, and the reason why I'm saying that is because you really have to be careful. SGEU [Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union] has a lot of examples, and they often communicate some of their issues with a number of members of the Assembly. They bring up some of the concerns around safety of government-owned equipment.

So as I said at the outset, inspection, maintenance, meeting the standards — these are things that are concerning. So I'm going to ask in the most simplest way, when you have a desired thickness of a snowplow — I'll use that as an example — is the safety regime so rigid that even that is being tracked? Can you assure me of that? It's being tracked?

Mr. Lees: — Yes, so there are standards on the thickness of the blades. And I think you're talking about the blade at the very bottom of the plow itself that wears down. There are standards to that. They're checked daily by our maintenance staff, and actually they've created some tools that they can use to do quick measurements throughout the day as well to ensure that it's not wearing down. And if it wears down, they certainly do stop and replace them.

Mr. Belanger: — Based on the premise of the lease, you talk about leasing new equipment. Is this a new practice of Highways or have you always leased out equipment as opposed to buying it outright?

Mr. Antunes: — I think it's something we've looked at recently as a different way to be able to do it. I think we started looking at the fact that equipment takes a long time to, you know . . . It starts to get old and then repair costs go up. And I think what we've found is that if you look at leasing equipment so that it gets replaced on a regular basis, those repair costs aren't there. The equipment gets replaced on a regular basis and we have better equipment. And we've found that we've been able to actually put more money into the road because it's a lower cost of ownership because the equipment is newer.

So it's something that we have done in the past. We stopped it for a little while. We were going to more rentals. We've come back now to leasing. So we started with 38 loaders, as I said, and we're looking at 35 graders. And then we're also looking at opportunities to do the same with snowplows.

Mr. Belanger: — The decision to lease equipment as opposed to purchase, is that also part of the decision making involved, not being able to keep full positions? Say as an example, I keep harping on about the maintenance staff. They're obviously a key part of the team overall. And when you hear that there's less maintenance on equipment, that there may be shortcuts taken . . . And I'm not going to give specifics. That's not really . . . I just don't want to give those specifics now.

[16:00]

But we're not seeking to privatize more and more of the fleet of Highways, thereby reducing full-time positions within Highways and in essence privatizing the Department of Highways. Is that

the direction that we're heading?

Mr. Antunes: — So when you look at leasing, I think we have had difficulty actually attracting mechanics to our shops. So if we have vacancies in areas, it's not because we've been trying to keep them vacant; it's because we've had difficulties in actually recruiting them. And that doesn't just go for Highways shops. It also goes for some of our section offices where, you know, depending on what the economic environment is in the region, we've had difficulty attracting people and retaining them.

So when the oil patch gets hot, for example, in southeast Saskatchewan, it's difficult for us to attract employees. And eventually if prices go up and wages go up, then people leave us. So we haven't tried actively to reduce any of those positions. Some of them, we've been filling positions in the last little while on a term basis, but we've recently moved to staffing those now on a permanent basis so we can get staff, you know, there's permanency in the employees that we've got in place. So we're moving in that direction.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — And I just want to comment on that also. You make the reference that we're taking shortcuts and you're not going to give us any examples of these things that are taking place. Myself, and I guess I would think probably yourself, should be concerned about this. And if people are taking shortcuts and you feel like there's any safety that's being depleted here, I would hope that you would share those with us so that we can undertake to get them fixed as soon as possible.

Mr. Belanger: — The minister may have misunderstood my question. It was a question. It was not a statement. Are we taking shortcuts, as in are we not properly maintaining the equipment because we can't attract and maintain heavy duty mechanics? That was the question.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Fair enough. I assure you we're not.

Mr. Belanger: — The other issue is around the equipment itself. Has there been any accidents or any major breakdown or . . . An example I would use, a snowplow cracking in half or any of that sort. Has any of those incidents been reported through all of the highways operations?

Mr. Antunes: — Not that I'm aware of. I mean we do have incidents of property damage where, you know, a plow might hit a guardrail or a plow might hit a bridge expansion joint, things like that. All of those get reported through our safety reporting system. So we're aware of every single incident that happens, whether it's property damage or a person being injured. I'm not aware of any situations where there's been like a plow breaking in half and that type of stuff. You know, obviously there may be situations where you have blown tires or other things that may break, but that happens with equipment.

Mr. Belanger: — When you lease a piece of equipment, whose responsibility is it to ensure that that equipment is in proper working order? And who maintains that equipment?

Mr. Antunes: — So when it comes to the day-to-day inspections, that would be our staff that are trained to, you know, do walk arounds and do different checks and that type of stuff.

But as part of the leasing program, we've done it different ways. But the program we're looking at now is we make it the responsibility of the leasing operator to do the scheduled maintenance on it. And that results . . . The reason you do that is because then they're guaranteeing that the equipment is going to get back in a certain condition, that they can go off and resell it while it has a high value. So usually the company that's providing the equipment wants to make sure that they're involved in the regular maintenance of it, but the day-to-day stuff is done by our staff.

Mr. Belanger: — Can you share with me the process for advertising the lease of vehicles that Highways may need? And as well, who are your primary providers of that lease equipment?

Mr. Antunes: — So we normally go through Central Services, now SaskBuilds. So they're the people that do the RFPs [request for proposal], so we follow the standard government procurement processes. Some of the typical vendors that we get are, I think Redhead is one, Brandt. There may be others but, you know . . . Caterpillar tractors. So there may be others . . . Kramer tractor. So those would be the typical people that would bid on it.

Yes, it's a completely open, transparent public procurement process that we follow with SaskBuilds.

Mr. Belanger: — All right. I want to switch gears here, and I'll be doing that quite a bit in terms of issues and the operations of Highways.

I want to turn our attention to Rowan's Ravine. It's of course a park not too far away from here. And it's a provincial park, and there's two particular highways that connect to the provincial park, Highway 220 and also Highway 322. As you know, Rowan's Ravine Provincial Park is fairly busy, and there's a lot of business people, recreation campers, and cottagers and just a ton of people.

And we spoke about this a couple of years ago. And I guess Highway 220 from Bulyea to Rowan's park, people are still calling it a goat path, saying that this thing . . . You can't get any RVs [recreational vehicle] on it. People are wrecking their vehicles on it. It's just a huge disaster.

And we were told two years ago that there was going to be some progress on that, but the reports are still coming back that this Highway 220 is just getting worse and worse.

I understand that there's been some work on 322, but people are getting really angry about the Highway 220 in particular, because their RV can barely be pulled safely on that particular stretch of highway. And as we mentioned, a lot of people use the provincial park.

So they're asking, based on the fact that this is in the central . . . Well it's in the southern part of the province. Many people use it and they're just wondering why in the heck can't that road be fixed. And there is some work being done on 322, which connects to Highway 220. But again there, that work needs to be finished.

So I guess to the people that are really frustrated with this

Highway 220, and I've identified all the matters around the safety aspect and the accessibility aspect and on and on and on. But they want to know, when is this Highway 220 going to be completed? Because there was commitments on this two years ago and it continues to remain a goat path. So what's the plan on Highway 220 from Bulyea into Rowan's Ravine Provincial Park?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So I guess the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure needs to balance our priorities across the province. And when we're looking at our road network, we take very seriously the different road services that we have and the amount of people that travel on all of those roads. So you're talking specifically about these roads that go to Rowan's Ravine, and I'm just going to turn it over to Tom Lees to have him tell you what the plan is there and what's been done.

Mr. Lees: — Thank you. So just to elaborate on what the minister's said, 322 and 220 in 2015, we're all aware that it fell apart significantly due to the water table out there. The Ministry of Highways has invested significant efforts into restructuring Highway 322. So we've done capital upgrades from the junction of 20 all the way to Glen Harbour on a capital project side. And then we've also done some extensive maintenance treatments on 322 from Glen Harbour to the junction of 220. So essentially 322 now operates as a dust-free surface from the junction of Highway 20 to 220.

In particular on Highway 220 which you referred to, it was a TMS road and in 2015 the ministry reverted it back to a gravel road. And we continue to maintain it by either doing gravel blading or adding additional gravel as required and doing spot improvements where's there's localized rutting. So in terms of 220 and 322, we've done significant work on that road in the last several years.

Mr. Belanger: — Just what is exactly the distance between the provincial park and Bulyea?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Provincial park and what?

Mr. Belanger: — Bulyea.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So 22 or 23 kilometres.

Mr. Belanger: — Is there an estimation, is there a collaboration with the Department of Tourism, with the Department of Highways, as to what kind of demand that this park has in terms of the traffic count and the importance to the economy?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Well I guess I would just note that investments are prioritized based on the size of the project, the importance of . . . whether it be to the Ministry of Highways or the people of the province, so that we do have efficient travel for people and goods, while improving safety and environmental sustainability.

We always want to improve road conditions, but as I mentioned we actually have hundreds of thousands . . . like 190 000 kilometres worth of road throughout our province, whether it be in the rural municipalities or on the highway system. So we have a huge basket of priorities that we need to be looking at.

Mr. Belanger: — Well thank you for the update, Madam

Minister. And I think I get that improving safety argument, and I get the basket argument that you're suggesting. But the people of this particular area, you know, they have been promised progress on this particular highway. And then when they approach the minister, and the last minister said it was on the list, that he was going to take some serious look at trying to address this. And then when we come back two years later and what we hear from the minister is, well improving safety, a significant investment. The same buzzwords, yet we still have the goat path that's supposed to be connecting to one of our nicest provincial parks in the province continue to deteriorate.

And that's what frustrates and upsets the local people. The local people are the ones that are getting extremely angry with the typical response of government saying, well we're concerned about improving safety. Well everybody is. We think we need a significant investment. Well everybody does. But not everybody had commitment from previous ministers that they'd look at Highway 220.

So I would encourage the minister to reflect on what was said in the past by the previous minister as it relates to this particular highway. And as I pointed out, these are local people that are getting upset by the day. You know, simple things that is really upsetting them and again, they'll tell you that they can barely pull an RV safely on that road. So are they concerned about safety? Absolutely.

You know, and the effect and impact on their businesses, on their recreation campers, and the cottagers there, they'll give you the same argument you're giving me. But what they want is commitment. They want commitment on that particular road, commitments that were made to them in the past. And that's why they're so upset.

So I go back to my earlier question. Can you commit to Highway 220 so that local people there who have been complaining, legitimately so for the last number of years, and been given assurances that these things would be looked into? Well, Madam Minister, no progress has been made as such. So can you commit?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So I would say that our government is very committed to the road network across the province of Saskatchewan. In the past 10 years we have invested just about \$9 billion in our road network. So we are making commitments. And as I already talked to you about how we prioritize those commitments, but you had asked if we had done some stakeholder engagement and how we decided to move forward with this road you're talking about. I'm just going to let Tom Lees address that specifically.

[16:15]

Mr. Lees: — So in terms of stakeholder engagement, as part of the 322 and 220 corridor improvement review, we did extensive consultation with the RMs in the area as well as a lot of the village communities along 322 as well as parks to look at what the long-term strategies, the long-term development plans were so we could understand the traffic volumes and the impacts on 322 and 222 to develop our long-term plans.

Mr. Belanger: — I was given the same answer three years ago.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So I guess just briefly, as far as we know there was no commitment and we focused on 322.

Mr. Belanger: — Well I'll have to re-dig up all the *Hansard* and all the comments made, because a lot of the local people . . . and we're talking to local people that are bringing these issues forward to us. They are still very upset. They are still demanding something be done to this goat path so that we can showcase what is in Rowan's Ravine Provincial Park. They are proud of that park. But they've said it if not three or four times in the last three or four years — something has got to be done on that road. And the response we get back from Highways seems to be, "stakeholder engagement" now is the new phrase, improving safety and significant investment. Well, they haven't seen any of that, any of those buzzwords being used today. So that doesn't . . .

And I used to always tell people that if they say your highway's on the list, you know . . . I used to often be told, well you can't travel on a list. And all the issues about stakeholder engagement, significant investment, improving safety, well they're all for improving safety but they haven't seen any stakeholder engagement and they certainly haven't seen any significant investment. And they wanted me to share that with you, because a lot of them are very upset. So I'll ask the question again. Is there any commitment being planned for Highway 220?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — There is no commitment at this time. They do have 322 that they can use. That road is a dust-free surface and it is a viable option for them to use to get to their location.

Mr. Belanger: — But Highway 322 is not finished. It needs to be finished all the way to 220. That's another point that they raised.

Mr. Gienow: — Wayne Gienow, executive director, network planning and investment. When we took a look at those two projects, both 322 and 220, we had to make a decision because we had . . . 322 was along with a lot of cottages along that route and was a much higher traffic volume. It went through Silton all the way up to the park there. So we did all the way up to Glen Harbour.

Now you are right, we do have the last section that we're looking at and we still have that within our prioritization model and on our different analysis, along with the Highway 220. But we do know that the highway section from 322 does rate higher. So even though it's not planned immediately, it does rate a bit higher.

Mr. Belanger: — Can the minister commit today to having more robust discussions with the stakeholders on this particular matter? Can we at least grant them that? We'll advise them accordingly till the minister agrees to having more robust discussion on this particular highway.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Well you know, I have an open-door policy and I meet with stakeholders all the time. As I talked in my speaking notes earlier, we are actively working on partnerships with several different communities and RMs across the province. They bring their concerns to me. Sometimes we find partnerships that can work, where they can help invest in that road also.

So I am always willing to have a conversation with and listen to people to help us determine how we're going to prioritize roadwork moving forward. And that will happen once again as we go through our next budget cycle.

Mr. Belanger: — Well I think that'll be cold comfort to them, because they have been knocking on Highways' doors for a long time, bringing forward their concerns with little success. Just to ask the question around, what are we . . . Are we sending any money right now to Vinci in France as part of our commitments towards the Regina bypass?

Mr. Antunes: — So we do make interim O & M [operating and maintenance], operations and maintenance payments for the work that they're doing on the Regina bypass on an annual basis for the sections that are currently open.

This year, because they're going to be reaching substantial completion, Regina Bypass Partners will receive . . . If they obtain their substantial completion October 31st, which we fully expect that they will, there will be a lump-sum payment made to them. Where that money gets distributed within the Regina Bypass Partners, I don't know. We make a payment to Regina Bypass Partners. What happens with it after that is their commercial business.

Mr. Belanger: — So what's the lump-sum payment?

Mr. Antunes: — What is the lump-sum payment? As you're aware, we've been accruing the cost of the Regina bypass all the way along, so that money's already been booked by the government. But this year the payment will be around \$577 million.

Mr. Belanger: — Now what did you pay last year?

Mr. Antunes: — So the year's not out yet, so last year the estimate was around \$4.4 million, and that's for the interim operations and maintenance in 2018-19.

Mr. Belanger: — Now once the bypass is complete, what are we expecting to pay to the Regina bypass partnership? I don't care how they spend it. I just want to know what we're paying or how they divvy it up.

Mr. Antunes: — So in this year's estimates, there's an \$11 million debt charge that will be paid. And then there's the substantial completion payment I indicated. And then we also have the \$89 million . . . Or I guess that's not getting paid because we're accruing that, so that's not a payment. So it's really the interim operations and maintenance component, which for this year which is about \$7.8 million.

Mr. Belanger: — Now I understand that the Regina bypass is being amortized over a number of years. Could you tell me the base payment for each of those years and how long that this agreement is for?

Mr. Antunes: — So the operations and maintenance amount, you know, varies by year. It's adjusted by inflation, so it's around \$12 million, and then it goes . . . it increases. The agreement's for 30 years and then it's increased by inflation so, you know, it starts out at 12 and it goes up about 2 per cent a year. There's a rehab

component that varies by year depending on what type of work that they're going to be planning to do for rehabilitation, and it ranges anywhere from a million dollars to \$15 million. It varies by year. There's an interest charge and a principal charge that is constant. It's about \$44 million a year.

Mr. Belanger: — Okay. So in consideration of the variances that you alluded to, what is the low range and what is the high range per year as an estimation for 30 years? I want to just see what the costs are over that 30-year period from the higher range to the low range.

Mr. Antunes: — So do you just want the total?

Mr. Belanger: — Yes.

Mr. Antunes: — Or are you interested . . . Just the total. So I guess the low range is, there's one that's around \$38 million, and the high range is around 78.

Mr. Belanger: — And that's a payment per year.

Mr. Antunes: — That's a payment per year.

Mr. Belanger: — I'm not very good at math. I should try and be the Finance minister for you folks. But anyway, what's the total cost over the 30-year period from the high range to the low range?

Mr. Antunes: — The total cost?

Mr. Belanger: — Yes.

Mr. Antunes: — So I think, you know, it's been published that the net present value of all the payments is \$1.88 billion, so that's what the amount is in net present value.

Mr. Belanger: — So and what we do is we send it to the Regina bypass partnership, and Vinci's a big part of that partnership. Are they the lead company, so to speak?

Mr. Antunes: — Yes. I don't know what their commercial arrangements are. So I know that they're a partner; I don't know what their commercial arrangements are in terms of who has what percentages on either the operations and maintenance or on the construction. I don't know.

Mr. Belanger: — No, no. I can appreciate that. I just wanted to know the total amount that we are paying for the bypass. The other issues around the maintenance, is there a relationship between Highways maintaining certain parts of the bypass and the bypass partnership maintaining the other portion? How is that arrangement being undertaken now? Like is there a certain amount of kilometres that Highways maintains or is it all done by the partnership?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So the maintenance contract is with the Regina bypass and they will be doing all of the maintenance. There's a small piece south on Highway 6 that is ours but the remainder is the Regina Bypass Partners over the 30-year contract.

Mr. Belanger: — I want to shift gears a bit to head north from

Regina and talk about the northeastern part of the province. I wanted to chat a bit about the Pelican Narrows First Nations. As we all know, there's been such a tremendous amount of challenge around northern airports. And I think the leadership of the Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation — that would be the chief and of course they also have a mayor there as well — that they wanted to sit down with you and chat with you about the Pelican Narrows airport. And I think you accommodated them but you tried to get them to meet with you at SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] in a private room during the SARM conference.

I was just wondering, was that meeting held during SARM and who attended and what was discussed and what were the agreements made at that meeting?

[16:30]

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So we did have a meeting at SARM and we actually met with the community. The band was supposed to be there but something happened and they got waylaid so we met with a couple of individuals. And we talked a lot about the airport and I guess the lighting and how things are handled during the nighttime, and the procedure that happens with all of that.

And as we went through those discussions, we talked about the price that's paid for these people that go out and actually set this lighting up when it has to be set up for a plane. And I think we actually came to a consensus that we're probably not paying enough for these people to do it because it takes two people at a time. And so we're actually looking at that and seeing what we can be offering to come to an agreement with that community so that I guess they feel like they're getting the value out of that.

Mr. Belanger: — And I think the understanding that . . . I think you probably met with the mayor, Ovide Michel, and the chief of course is Chief Peter Beatty. I understood that Chief Peter Beatty was unable to make the SARM meeting, and while they appreciate the effort to meet, I think he was probably looking at a different venue and perhaps a different location. And was there any assurance of a second meeting in which the chief would be able to come in as well and join you and chat about this? Because there was some discussion around perhaps a second follow-up meeting.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So we didn't actually make any commitments to meet again. We told them that we would go back and we would look at the formula and how we were paying out for that piece that they were concerned about.

I'm absolutely open to meeting with them again. I know that the last couple of years the ministers have had an opportunity to go up and take a tour of the North. So that's something that we're actually looking at doing again this year and, given an opportunity, I would definitely meet with them. But if that doesn't pan out, then I would be more than happy to meet with them at my office here in Regina or meet them halfway in Saskatoon. I go there several times for meetings. So I'm not opposed to meeting with them at all. They just need to arrange a time and make the arrangements.

Mr. Belanger: — All right. And I'm sure my colleague will be advising them as such so that then . . . I'm sure they'd appreciate

the opportunity to meet with you. Because they do have roughly 4,000 members. Well it's a mixture of municipal, but the vast majority are band members. You're dealing with 4,000 people within the Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation in Pelican Narrows.

And it's a gravelled strip. They've got some serious issues around that, and given the fact that it's such a large population base and we have to make arrangements to put the lights on and it's a gravelled strip. So they need serious upgrades to that particular airport. And I'm certain that the chief and the mayor in their second meeting with you would certainly give justice to the argument that this airport needs to be upgraded. And so I'm certain that they'll take you up on that offer.

Has there been any plans on the Pelican Narrows airport itself? Because a number of communities use that. Like there's a number of smaller communities around there and people travel in that particular area. But has there been any formal requests or any formal planning on upgrading that Pelican Narrows airport?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So no, we don't have any plans on upgrading it at the current time. And as I'm reading through some of my briefing notes with regards to the Pelican Narrows airport, I see that it gets about 50 aircraft movements a year within that airport. And having said that, the airport actually does meet standards for year-round medivac service by Twin Otter aircraft. So the airport can be used by King Air aircraft during the winter, as well as obviously during the summer months.

So at present we plan on keeping the airport the way it is and doing our annual maintenance costs on it. Our average annual maintenance costs run about \$46,000. And I'm told that we are doing some work on the road 135 south of Pelican Narrows that will definitely help with access if people are driving and not necessarily flying.

Mr. Belanger: — Yes, and that's one of the purposes I think that my colleague, who has presented a petition in the Assembly, will continue presenting those petitions because the whole value behind the petition is to remind you of the incredible challenge that we have in northern Saskatchewan as it pertains to the condition of our highways and also the condition of our airports. And as I mentioned before in the Assembly, the choice many northerners have is either you travel by bad highway or bad airport. And that's not much of a choice for many northern Saskatchewan residents.

So I think we will continue to maintain the pressure on doing something significant for our northern airport network. It is a significant challenge. I can't emphasize enough the risks to human health and the need for medical emergencies, and the list goes on. We do need to have either/or good, solid, safe road system or a state-of-the-art airport system. And at this stage we have neither. So I think the petitions will probably more than likely continue. The meeting . . . I'm sure you'll get a good glimpse of what the leadership is concerned about. And we hope that you would continue learning more about the northern infrastructure through your tour and actually do something following your tour. So I would challenge your minister on that point.

Mr. Antunes: — So I guess one thing that I can comment on is that with the federal government and the other provinces, at a

national level, we met in January. And one of the things we talked about there is actually creating a task force to look at access to northern and remote communities because this is bigger than a Saskatchewan problem. This is a cross-Canada problem. And so we've worked with Nunavut and Northwest Territories in Yellowknife and some of the other groups to actually create a task force at the national level to look at what can we do to improve access to northern communities.

So it's something that we are actively engaged in, and I think that it's not just a provincial responsibility; it's a federal responsibility. And we're trying to get the federal government to come to the table with some of these to deal with some of these challenges.

Mr. Belanger: — Okay, I want to shift the information now to Highway 102. It's north of La Ronge. I've had the opportunity to travel it a few times as my colleague probably travels it much more than anyone in this Assembly, and there's about 32 kilometres of pavement as you head north of La Ronge. And that pavement, I imagine it's TMS of some sort, but it's really falling apart. There are dangerous ruts and many, many potholes. And we have to have an engineer to have a look at this and see what's the future of this particular piece of highway. So it is a significant risk to the public.

And it is being used by a lot of people, not just the local communities that travel back and forth in and out of La Ronge and the communities north of La Ronge, but industry uses that as well, tourism. And that pavement is in really, really poor shape. Has there been any engineering work or any assessment or any review of that particular stretch of highway? Again it's Highway 102 and it's the paved section and it's about 32 kilometres of paved structure or stretch that is really in poor shape.

Mr. Gienow: — So 102, north of La Ronge there, we don't have it on our current plan. Again with a lot of our projects we actually go through our prioritization process, looking at a whole bunch of different factors, where those actually fit in. This may be one of the projects where we look at, as part of an improvement program, where there are certain areas where, you know, you upgrade 1 or 2 kilometres at a time to actually improve that section of roadway to make it a lot better for the truckers that use that roadway. When we're looking at that, we work with the ATPCs [area transportation planning committee] up in the North, and they actually identify projects that we do put through our prioritization program.

Mr. Belanger: — So with the regional transportation committees, where does Highway 102 fit in the scheme of things?

Mr. Gienow: — I'm not sure exactly how they have submitted it to us. But every year what we do is we go out to those area transportation planning committees. And they get to identify what some of the priorities are and some of the issues that they have with the roadway system — not even so much of what the improvements are; it's more of what is the need out there. So this one, it may be a safety need or it may be an access need, but they identify what those needs are. And then we take those and we do the analysis, trying to figure out what the actual appropriate solution is.

So some roadways, you know, it's upgrading the entire roadways. Some roadways, it's looking at primary weights. Others, we're looking at intersection improvements or safety upgrades. Some it's actually, you know, doing a grade raise or geotechnical-type improvement. So we do that analysis, trying to figure out what the actual need is out there, and then we put that through our prioritization process. Because obviously depending upon the need, that impacts what the benefits are and what the costs of that particular project are.

Mr. Belanger: — When you look at the role of the transportation committee, there's some good value to local advice — I'm not disputing that — but they don't obviously have the final say. So they can prioritize certain highways. It's still up to the Ministry of Highways to determine whether they're going to finance or fund that road or not. So the buck stops here, right at the minister's office and the government's doorstep. And that's the reason why we have venues such as this today, to explain to you as in the case of Pelican Narrows, when we have Flin Flon that's — is it Flin Flon? — that is no longer delivering children, they've got to have a quick access in and out because if there is childbirth issues that are of emergent natures. And I talked about the 4,000 people there and medical emergencies. They need a decent airport. Well the area transportation committee don't have the information in front of them to assess these things, and that's why we do it through these venues.

And Highway 102 north of La Ronge, you know, it's such in horrible shape that we fear there's going to be many more accidents and perhaps loss of life, primarily because it is a really poorly maintained road. It's got deep ruts and it's got many potholes. And it's a TMS road that's crumbling from the very base. And people in the region have been reaching out to my colleague and to myself, who is the critic, saying look, something's got to be done on that stretch of highway because somebody's going to get killed.

And we can't diminish those points because we talk about safety every day in the Assembly. So whether it's the Pelican Narrows airport that has some unique and some challenging issues surrounding it, it may not get the priority of the regional transportation committee because they don't have the engineers there, they don't have the safety experts, they don't have the volume of people going in and out. The ministry has that information. The ministry has that authority.

So whether it's Highway 102 or whether it's the Pelican Narrows airstrip, we're telling you that there's issues there that have got to be fixed. And we would hope that the ministry would hear those concerns today because it is a consistent, continual complaint of the leadership of those areas.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So we do listen to our communities and as we've talked about priorities, I mean, it's the reality of where we're at. But Pelican Narrows did come to us with a need and we purchased 50 battery-operated emergency lights to the health care centre in Pelican Narrows at their request. So maybe just small steps. Not the road you're looking for right now or an upgraded airport, but we do try to help out where we can, and this is one of the things that we did. And those are for trained personnel and medic situations so that they'll be able to get in and out of there safely.

[16:45]

Mr. Belanger: — Well I would like to, first of all, say that northern Saskatchewan has saw very little improvement to our highway and airport system in the last number of years. We've seen record investment into the Regina bypass, closing in on \$2 billion. I understand you're going to have another \$3 billion committed to Saskatoon's bypass. And we look at all the other investments made over time.

And northern Saskatchewan people are resilient and they're patient. But I guess I'd ask the minister, when is it our turn to see some investment into our highway system in northern Saskatchewan? Because at one time, I think it was 2008, your government announced the Wollaston Lake road. And it was the member from Cypress Hills, I can't remember . . . Wayne Elhard was the minister of Highways when the announcement was made. So obviously when you make an announcement, there's a process you follow which commits dollars to any announcement made by the Minister of Highways. The process is done, the money is allocated, and it's within your budget.

So a short time later, they retracted that commitment to Wollaston Lake. So where is that project today? Like where is the Wollaston Lake project? Because again you have several thousand people that are being impacted by having to use a barge system and really bad roads, back roads, to try and even get to Wollaston Lake. So where is the Wollaston Lake project as it stands today?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So I guess I just would like to address a couple of things within your comments there. You're stating that we're not investing in the North, that we're not giving it any increases or anything. I would argue that the budget for northern Saskatchewan has just about doubled since our government came into power. So going from the range of \$30 million to \$60 million one year, almost \$61 million, and \$57 million this year.

And of course that \$57 million is broke down amongst capital projects and regular operating and maintenance. As I look at the capital projects, they are things like culvert replacements, bridge replacements, base stabilization, 3.1 million Fond du Lac airport, slope stabilization. We're spending what I would consider is some significant money in the North on highways, between capital and maintenance, much more than was being spent in the past, I would argue.

And specifically to Wollaston Lake road, the provincial government has approved to move this project forward to provide \$250,000 once the federal government approves the First Nation's application. Additionally Ministry of Highways will cover the ongoing operating and maintenance costs. In addition, Ministry of Highways has invested \$7.9 million in construction of the first 14 kilometres of the all-season road.

So this is one of those situations unfortunately where we are waiting for the federal government to come up with their portion so that we can continue to help out in the North. But I would just go back to \$57 million in the North this year in our highways budget is not insignificant.

Mr. Belanger: — Well I would argue, Madam Minister, that it

is insignificant given the road network that we have in northern Saskatchewan. It is insignificant because we've been harping for the last number of years on crucial roads that we've been asking your government to repair and fix, which you have not. It is insignificant that the vast majority of the money that you alluded to is for operating and maintenance; it is not improvement. And 90 per cent of the projects that you've identified in northern Saskatchewan are culvert replacements. Every second announcement we have is on replacing culverts. The reason why you're replacing culverts is because the road around those culverts are crumbling. It becomes a serious liability issue and you're impacting many, many more people's lives.

So it's almost as if you're forced to replace those culverts but in reality your commitment to northern Saskatchewan is not there. And that's the most polite way I can explain to you. When we listen to some of the people in northern Saskatchewan talk about the deterioration of their vehicles, the impact on their family safety, the need for having a safe transportation system for the economy, all of the arguments are there, but the commitment is not.

So on the \$60 million that you have made reference to, can you explain to me today how much of that 60 million is actually on new road construction? Can you give me a price?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So I guess I just . . . You know, you talk about us replacing culverts. I would like to note that one of the reasons we are having to replace so many culverts in the North is because they had not been replaced for several, several years when they should have been replaced. So now we are truly playing catch-up. And I'm sure you've heard that story on more than one occasion.

So of the just about \$60 million that we have, 28 million of it is capital. And of those capital projects, I've got on here clay capping and base stabilization on 135. That is 20 kilometres of road that is going to be repaired. We've also got grade and pave north of Green Lake, another 20 kilometres that is going to be repaired. Base stabilization and clay capping west of Highway 2 to Highway 910 . . . How many kilometres? Twenty-eight kilometres, is that what it looks like here?

A Member: — Yes, about 28.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Yes. So we have that. We also have grading southwest of Cumberland House on the bridge. Significant investment. These are millions of dollars that are being spent on significant road improvements in the North.

Mr. Belanger: — Of course, I have the opportunity of travelling north on a weekly basis when the session was on, and we had heard that at SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] you made a comment that there was some commitments to repair 20 kilometres of road north of Green Lake. I imagine you must have mentioned that in your address for SUMA.

So I checked my odometer as I turned north of Green Lake and just as I hit the 20-kilometre mark, there was three logging trucks coming out of the bush that were hauling forestry or trees out of the bush. So I thought to myself, I wonder if they're building this 20 kilometres or repairing the 20 kilometres north of Green Lake for the people or for the resource. So were you given any . . .

Were you subjected to any lobbying by any of the forestry companies to replace or to repair that highway north of Green Lake? Were you lobbied at all by any of the forestry companies to repair that highway?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So this road has been on our plan for several years and I'm told that this is the last section of the road that is, and then it'll be complete. The project will finally be complete. The road was not built specifically for anybody in particular. The road is being built for the people of the North, whether that be you driving here to work or people trying to do their jobs as loggers. Regardless of what the purpose is, the road is built for the North.

Mr. Belanger: — Well I think a lot of people appreciate any investment into northern highways. They're desperate for investment into northern highways. And I can tell you that there are a lot of people that share the view that this highway was improved north of Green Lake . . . And I would add improved, not replaced because you said it would be repaired. And you know, and they notice that a lot of the logging trucks going in there are hauling the resource out, you know, to Meadow Lake or to Big River. And so while they're happy to see the road improved, they also realize that some of the intended benefit of having that road improved was for the logging industry.

Because, you know, that's the only time we see any investment by the government in the North, when there's something to extract. And we all are supportive of the forestry industry, but my argument being, when are you going to start investing in the safety of families, of our First Nations members, of our northern families and our northern people? Because it's not just about extracting resources. I think you also have to invest into, I think the phrase you used is "improving safety." Well there's a lot of communities in the North that are really concerned about that improving safety aspect.

It is a huge challenge in northern Saskatchewan communities because the people, their families travel in vans. We have school bus full of kids. We talk about Humboldt. Every week there's a school bus of kids going down some of those roads, and we don't see any investment into improving the safety aspect of our northern roads. And this is why people become skeptical after awhile because the only time we see any improvement to highways is when it's time to extract resources. And that 20 kilometres north of Green Lake, that's exactly where the trucks come out of the bush hauling our forestry resource. So sometimes they can be skeptical as they don't see any investment for a number of years and then they see that, and they think it's designed for the logging trucks. Well I think we need to start shifting our gears a bit here and start looking at the family safety aspect as well, and the economy of the rest of the North.

So as you look at the Northwest itself, many of the EMTs [emergency medical technician] often ask me to come for a ride in the ambulance, in the back of an ambulance. I politely decline, you know, for reasons you and I can both guess. But every time I see one of them, they say, come hop on the back of our EMS [emergency medical services] vehicle. And I don't, and the reason being is like you look at one particular highway, the highway that comes off the forks going into the community of Ile-a-la-Crosse. It is in getting worse shape than ever. Now Ile-a-la-Crosse is lucky to have the regional hospital.

And I think the mayor has been in touch with the ministry. I think the principal has written a number of letters. And they're asking what can be done for that Ile-a-la-Crosse connection. And it is not that long of a stretch; I think it's 12 kilometres. But as you come off the main Highway 155, it's 12 kilometres of road that needs to be rebuilt because that's where the vast majority of motor vehicle accidents go down that road coming to get emergency services in Ile-a-la-Crosse. And when you've got a broken leg or you've got worse medical problems in the back of an ambulance, it gets to be really problematic.

So I would ask the minister, have you heard anything about that particular stretch of highway, and what can you do to repair it? It's only 12 kilometres, and even if you done 1 or 2 or 3 or 4 kilometres a year and got it done over a three- or four-year period. That's a regional hospital in Ile-a-la-Crosse and a lot of people use the highways to get there in emergencies. And that highway is in very poor shape.

[17:00]

So I think it's Highway 918 . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . or 908, sorry. And again, it's only 12 kilometres. So if we would, if we could get that particular road repaired, even section by section, I think people would appreciate it. But it is in significant deterioration. And I would like to invite you to drive a few of these roads when you go on these northern tours, and come to the regional facility and ask the EMS guys to give you a ride in the back of their van. And then you'll see what they have to experience, especially the patient that may have some serious injury to themselves or illness.

That 908 has got to be replaced. There's no question about it. And a lot of folks can call it self-serving because it's my home community, but the fact of the matter is it's only 12 kilometres. It's not a significant amount. It's not a significant distance, but it's a significant link to our regional health facility.

So can you undertake in your northern tour to take a trip to the community and go up that highway and see for yourself? Because there was a section replaced when we were in government, and there's commitments for more. But of course that story is old now; 2007 there was a change.

So I think we need to find out where you're at on that particular stretch of highway. I did meet with your predecessor and explained that particular highway to him in great detail. And there was discussion, if you want to have a look at it. Now I don't know if he ever did, but I'd like to invite you to do the same, to come have a look at that 12 kilometres of road. It runs from our municipal airport to the main highway and it's 12 kilometres. In your northern tour, can you make an effort to look at that particular section of highway?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So specifically I'm not really sure what the itinerary is, what they have planned for me, which side we're landing on, which areas we're going to. If we're over there I will definitely have a look at it. But if we're not over there, then it might have to be next year territory.

But I guess, just to address some of the stuff in your preamble up to that question, you made the comment that the only time we put investment in the North is if we're going to be taking something

out of the North. I would argue that a good portion of these capital improvements that we're making, whether it be culvert replacements or work that we're doing to 123 or 135, those are not for taking stuff out. That is for the people of the North. So we have a little bit of a differing of opinion on that one.

I guess just one more comment with regards to funding and funding for the North. You've probably heard this from other ministers with regards to the bilateral agreement that's coming from the federal government, and how the funding projects are working. So we're working very hard with the feds to try and get some of that money reallocated to try and deal with, I guess, some of the projects that you're specifically talking about. So that is something that we are working actively on, trying to make happen so that we can do more of these projects, and we have to wait and see. Once again, we're waiting for the federal government to make a decision so we can decide how some of that money is going to be spent moving forward.

Mr. Belanger: — Just on the issue around the Fond du Lac airport. Are you able to give us an update as to where things are at, as we've had some great leadership from the chief of that particular First Nations. He was very articulate and very focused and basically championed the effort to get the airport replaced and widened and lengthened. So where exactly are we at with the Fond du Lac airport, because we've spoken of the accident there at great lengths in this Assembly.

And again, as I mentioned, the amount of traffic, air traffic, out of the Athabasca Basin is tremendous. We fly out there a lot and we know . . . We've lived in Uranium City for about six, seven months, so we know how the terrain is. We know how demanding life is out there, and the only basic way of getting out of the North for the vast majority of people is through air transportation.

Of course, Uranium City and Fond du Lac, and those particular — Camsell Portage — those particular communities don't have access to the far north road. Black Lake and Stony Rapids do, and of course that comes up through Points North. So the airport structure for Fond du Lac, which is the largest band not being able to access that road on a regular basis, they use the airport or the airplanes a lot. So what's the update on where things are at on that particular project?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So as you are probably already aware, the Ministry of Highways was successful in securing \$12.15 million in federal funding from the federal government for the rehabilitation of the Fond-du-Lac airport under the airport capital assistance program.

That rehabilitation will include the following components: runway repaving, taxiway repaving, apron repaving, and a lighting system upgrade. The total estimated cost of the rehabilitation is approximately \$14 million, so the Ministry of Highways will be putting in approximately \$1.85 million towards that project. And obviously if we hadn't made the application for the project, none of that money would have been coming our way for the benefit of the community of Fond-du-Lac.

I did actually have an opportunity to meet the chief. You spoke of him, and I met him in Saskatoon when the announcement was

made. A very nice man, I enjoyed visiting with him on that day.

And we also are looking into right now something called localizer performance with vertical guidance, LPV. It's a GPS [global positioning system] system, and it's high-intensity lighting to improve the landing success rate for those airplanes on the airport. And that will help the success rate when there's poor weather. Lots of times, as you're fully aware, planes can't land so they have to turn around and go back. So this will improve the number of times those airplanes can actually land if we decide to put this in. And that's with the improvements that I've spoke of.

Mr. Belanger: — What traffic count are you aware of when you talk about the amount of people on an annual basis that would utilize the Fond-du-Lac airport? I know the chief had his figures and he shared them with me, but what does your information say?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So for the Fond-du-Lac airport, we don't have number of people as per se, but we have the number of aircraft movements that are taking place. It's 3,500 for Fond-du-Lac.

Mr. Belanger: — Thirty-five hundred aircraft coming in on an annual basis. And as a result of all the effort by the chief and by the people, and the crash and the whole attention to the safety aspects of the Athabasca Basin travel matters that we spoke about, at one time I assumed that there was going to be an extension and widening of the airstrip. Has that now been turned down? Is there going to be lengthening or widening of the airstrip at all?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So a couple of times as we've talked about the Fond-du-Lac airport, you've mentioned the accident. And of course, you know, our thoughts and prayers continually go out with the community and the people that were affected by that accident. But I just want to be clear that it wasn't the condition of the runway that caused that accident. I believe the report come back and said it had something to do with the de-icing or not de-icing of the airplane. So I just want to clarify that upfront.

When we made the application for the rehabilitation of the airport, a part of that actually did include an ask for widening and lengthening, but it was something that was not approved under the airport capital assistance program. And if we widen and lengthen that airport, it actually comes at a substantial dollar amount.

So that was one of the reasons that we're actually looking at this LPV system. The GPS system that I talked about that has the high-intensity lighting and increases the success of landings in poor visibility and decreases the amount of times those airplanes have to turn around and go back to their original destination without actually landing. So for right now, no, there's no plan for widening and lengthening.

Mr. Belanger: — You mentioned the total project costs are 14 million. Correct me if I'm wrong on these figures. Okay, \$14 million set aside for the Fond-du-Lac airport, which is a far cry from the 23 to 25 million that was spoke of at one time by the chief. Of that 14 million, the province is putting 1.85 million. Again, correct me if I'm wrong. The feds are putting in 12.7 million; again these are your figures. And that \$14 million,

what you're doing with the \$14 million is you're repaving the airstrip, the taxiway, and the apron. Plus you're putting in, as you mentioned, the LPV lighting system. Is that a fair assessment of the project thus far?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — I just want to clarify. First of all, I had said that the final report from the accident, it was actually an initial report that talked about the de-icing. So I just want to clarify that up front.

And it's 12.15 million by the feds and 1.85 million from us. And yes, it's runway repaving, taxiway repaving, apron repaving, lighting system upgrade. Now that is not the LPV system that I spoke of. That's something that we are looking at doing over and above this project because we think, without having the lengthening and the widening of the airport, that this system will bring some huge benefit to the airport and the success of airplanes landing there.

Mr. Belanger: — Yes, the chief has long argued — and very strenuously I might add — that these northern airports are getting bigger aircraft and thus heavier loads, so there's heavier aircraft landings on these northern airport systems. And that's why he was advocating for a longer runway and widening that runway. I can only guess that he's probably disappointed that they're not doing this. And has he approached you on this particular matter? Have you had any correspondence with him since then?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — I have not had any correspondence with the chief since then. I spoke to him on the day of the announcement, and that was the extent of my conversations with him.

Mr. Belanger: — All right. I want to spend the next several minutes before we take our break on the notion around intersection safety. We all got a terrible wake-up call as a result of the tragic event around Humboldt, and absolutely everyone is now speaking of issues around intersection safety. But there's also discussion on truck driver training, and it's probably administered through the Highway Traffic Board.

But I want to share with you a few, I'll have a few questions of you as to what the government is trying to do to make sure that the truck driving training component . . . how you may have participated in this or your department may have consulted with SGI on this particular matter.

[17:15]

But in the fall of 2018 Throne Speech, your government announced a commitment to intersection safety enhancements. They talk about phase 1 and the highway access roads, highway to highway, and highway to access roads. There's approximately 120 intersections. Phase 2 was highway to highway and highway access roads where obstructions are outside or in the ministry's right-of-way, and there's 730 intersections there. And then you talked about phase 3, the highway key municipal roads and a number of intersections still to be determined.

So just in terms of phase 1, phase 2, and phase 3, can you give us an update as to what kind of progress have been made with those intersections? All in all, I think there are between phase 1 and phase 2 somewhere like 850 intersections, and then you have the key municipal roads. So I wanted to do phase 1, phase 2 separate,

and then we'll do phase 3 with a more independent focus.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Okay so yes, intersection safety is something that, very true, we talked about in the Throne Speech and it's something that we're highlighting over the next 5 years, between our safety improvement program and the intersection safety program that we have going. It's going to be \$100 million that's going to be invested within the province of Saskatchewan. We already had the safety improvement program going which, you know, is clearing the sight triangles and looking at all of that kind of stuff, and that was \$7 million a year that we've been spending. And I might note that that's up from 1 million as compared to 2007, so it was significant increase from previous years already.

And the accident really did highlight what truly is important to us. So we just felt like we should focus on this a little bit more and just accelerate our program, which is the reason we're going to be spending between the safety improvement program and the enhanced safety program with intersections of \$20 million a year.

So just to speak specifically to the phases that you're asking about, I'm going to turn it over to Tom.

Mr. Lees: — Yes, so in terms of the phases that you're talking about specific to the clearing of the sight triangles, so there was three phases. The first phase is in terms of doing a full desktop analysis on all highway to highway, highway to access, highway to community road roads, so we have completed 1,000 desktop reviews for all intersections across the province.

Phase 2 was looking at doing the detailed reviews in the field. So in terms of highway to highway intersections, we've completed field inspections on 120 and we've addressed obstructions in 70 sight triangles for highway to highway locations. And then in terms of highway to highway intersections where there's obstructions that are inside or outside of the right-of-way, we have conducted field inspections on 775 intersections and we're actively clearing sight triangles in that area as well.

Mr. Belanger: — Has there been any complaints from any businesses or private landowners as you undertake this particular process of . . . because obviously you're . . . One of the challenges around the Humboldt accident was obviously qualification of the driver and experience, but as well there was sight obstruction. I think there's some people . . . There was a map drawn of the actual accident site and show there's some significant problems with trees and so on and so forth.

So as you undertake this effort, have you had any complaints from landowners or from businesses where signs had to be taken down and trees cut or private property being cleared? How has the public responded to this?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So I'll talk to that kind of at a bit of a high level. So I guess we have a plan in place. We're sending letters out notifying people that we're looking at their intersections and, you know, things that might need to be changed. And then we're going to be engaging with them on what plan we can do moving forward, you know, what kind of mitigating factors can happen. And sometimes depending on sight triangles — it will depend what needs to be done — can we make improvements on the road surface to actually make that corner much safer, as opposed to

bigger mitigating factors.

Mr. Belanger: — So have you got any concerns or complaints from landowners? Like, I'm assuming that many of these intersections may have some businesses attached to the adjacent properties next to the intersections. There might be private land ownership. Have we had any problems with any of those landowners or business owners that are in these intersections?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So specifically with regards to the sight triangles and clearing of trees and stuff, we spent \$750,000 on that last year in intersections and very minimal complaints from the public. But as with any program when you're changing things or when you're asking people to make change, some people will have concerns. But we work with those landowners, with those businesses. And as I mentioned earlier, and sometimes it just comes down to putting more safety improvements on the road surface, you know, whether that be illuminated lighting or stop-ahead signs or rumble strips. Whatever the case may be then we can do some of those things.

Mr. Belanger: — With the actual Humboldt crash, was there any issue around obstruction of view at that particular intersection?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Well I think you've had the opportunity to read the report on 35 and 335 that we hired the independent engineer to . . . Can I assume you've read that report?

Mr. Belanger: — No, don't assume that. I'm asking you.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Okay. So yes McElhanney was the firm that we hired to do a report for us, and they gave several recommendations within that report. And some of them are lows, medium, and long-term reactions that we will be having with regards to that corner. And I'm just going to turn it over to my deputy minister right now so he can go through what has been completed, and how we are moving forward.

Mr. Antunes: — Yes, McElhanney completed the independent report and came back with 13 different recommendations. If you look at the number of recommendations, four of them have already been completed; 4 of the 13 are done. We did them over the winter. So those included things like installing "Stop ahead" and "Stop ahead" and "Stop" pavement message signs, which we typically don't use in this province. So these are new to Saskatchewan. We also looked at putting in some other sign-related enhancements like larger stop signs. So we've installed those already. So those are some of the things we've already done.

There's also recommendations about some of the breakaway posts for the railway signals and some of the light standards. So we've checked some of those, and some of them are okay. The other ones we're just going to check this spring. So those are being evaluated. And there's five items that were identified related to road construction that we have hired a consultant for. And we plan to complete those repairs, that work this year. So our intent is to basically have the recommendations all completed by the end of this year.

Mr. Belanger: — Was there a ton of concern and complaints of these intersections prior to this accident? Like, have you got any . . . Is there any internal way that you can assess whether there

was a bunch of complaints around any of these intersections? Has the department been made aware of any of them?

Mr. Antunes: — I mean we constantly look at evaluating all the intersections. So I think we have 400 intersections that we look at on an every two-year basis where we look at traffic accidents and identify, you know, are things changing, what types of improvements we can do so we can make some prioritization and planning the work. So that's something that's ongoing constantly.

In addition to that, we do get a lot of feedback from municipalities, primarily urban-rural municipalities about, you know, potential changes or improvements we can make to intersections where they're seeing traffic-operations issues that maybe . . . You know, we're not out there, we don't see them every day. So we get a lot of . . . I wouldn't say they're complaints; I'd say they're more concerns where people identify, hey, we see this type of behaviour happening here. And what we do is we put it into our . . . We used to put it into our safety improvement program where we had that \$7 million. But now that we've got this enhanced intersection safety program, we'll be able to address a lot more of those. So concerns are raised, we have a plan to address them, and now we've got more funding to address them.

Mr. Belanger: — Were there any concerns or complaints expressed about the intersection where the tragic event occurred with the Humboldt team prior to this?

Mr. Antunes: — Sorry, can you repeat that question?

Mr. Belanger: — Were there any other complaints sent to Highways prior to the accident itself involving the Humboldt team on that particular intersection?

Mr. Antunes: — I think there's been a number of freedom of information requests on this. And I think we've gone back and there's been minimal . . . You know, there was an accident there, I think 1997, 1988, different configuration. So there was, you know, there was concerns raised at that time. But since that time we have received, I don't want to say none because I might have missed one or two, but it's been minimal complaints at that intersection.

And I guess when I was making my comments earlier about the intersections, just to clarify, my comments were just about intersection safety in general, not specific to sight triangles. I'm assuming that's how you intended the question.

Mr. Belanger: — Now the other point is, as a result of the elevation of awareness if you will, if I can use that phrase, has there been a lot of complaints on any particular intersections or a bunch of intersections throughout the province? Because now everybody's aware of the intersection safety, but it came at a great price. So everybody's aware; the elevation of awareness is there.

So is there any other intersections that have been getting consistent and continual calls for inspection and redesign and so on and so forth? Because obviously when we undertake this particular phase — I spoke about these three phases — you assume that people are coming out of the woodwork to talk about

these intersections. And has there been a consistent level of concern expressed?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So I guess since we made the announcement on budget day, it has definitely brought more awareness to the people of the province. And we have had more phone calls from people just wanting us to know about an intersection that they may be concerned about. And then our office just gives that to the ministry and they look at their database. They see, is this an intersection we're looking at already? If it's not an intersection we're looking at, then they will take the time to actually go and see what the concerns are of that person. And then we prioritize things just like we do with all of the other intersections that we've already looked at.

Mr. Belanger: — Okay. Just on the whole notion around intersection safety, you were saying you were spending \$100 million. How long of a time is that over? Is that one year, two years, three years? Or is it just based on the fact that we have X amount of intersections; we're going to spend the money on assessing all of those and that's the budget we're allocating for that project?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Yes, no, I think that I actually had mentioned that in my speaking notes and in one of my answers. We are spending \$100 million over five years and so \$20 million a year, and we're just accelerating the program that we already had going and we're going to get as much work done as we can with that \$100 million over the next five years.

Mr. Belanger: — Was your ministry consulted extensively on the improvements now being made to the driver training program for driving some of the tractor-trailers, same type that was involved with this tragic event? How much consultation and how much participation did the Ministry of Highways offer as the government tried to figure out how to build a better training model?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So obviously all of the ministers had conversations around this as all of it was happening, for sure. But this is definitely being led by SGI and SGI is the department that actually took the time to put all of that together, do the consultation, and come out with a plan, not our department.

Mr. Belanger: — Madam Chair, we agreed to sit till 5:30 and we're supposed to be starting on a new subject. I'd like to suggest we take the recess for an hour now and then resume at 6:30. Is that fair?

The Chair: — Yes. The committee will recess and we will resume at 6:30 p.m.

[The committee recessed from 17:28 until 18:29.]

The Chair: — All right. Welcome back to estimates for Highways and Infrastructure, vote 16, central management and services, subvote (HI01). We will continue on where we left off earlier. And I will recognize once again Mr. Belanger.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I want to begin our third hour of the estimates based on the flood-related management issues that we're all familiar with in Saskatchewan. We had the pleasure of travelling through Humboldt and of

course the south of Yorkton a couple of years ago, and we just basically saw for a first hand some of the challenges around flood and the incredible costs of mitigating some of the damage as a result of flooding.

[18:30]

So some of the flood-related matters around highways 11, 9, and 8, of course Highway 2 as well, I want to chat a bit about that. But how is the outlook when it comes to anticipated water levels? Are you seeing any potential early problems as it relates to flooding throughout all of Saskatchewan and if so, could you be a bit more specific as to what areas that we anticipate flooding and some of the flooding concerns that we've had in the province over the years?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So the majority of the province is looking at a normal spring runoff, with some locations experiencing below-normal flows this year. Ministry of Highways staff do not anticipate flooding events to take place on specific highway sections but continue to monitor historically vulnerable areas such as Highway 16 in the Quill lakes area.

Culverts and bridges are checked and cleaned out annually to assist these structures in managing their water flow capabilities. In the event of flooding, crews will monitor the locations and accommodate traffic accordingly through road closures and/or detours and reporting on the condition through the Ministry of Highways hotline and social media.

In addition to the historic flood trends, Ministry of Highways uses flood data from the Water Security Agency to predict and identify flood risk areas and plan resources accordingly. If and when flooding situations arise, staff will be deployed to locations that require emergency assistance within other section areas and regions of the province. Ministry of Highways staff have years of experience dealing with flood events. This experience and willingness to work long allows us to handle emergency events in a timely manner. Ministry of Highways has a variety of in-house equipment that can be quickly supplemented by private contractors and equipment.

So just to reiterate, we are expecting normal spring runoff and do not anticipate any events happening.

Mr. Belanger: — As we can remember and recollect, some of the challenges around the Humboldt area certainly provided some significant cause for concern as we look at flooding, and as we all know flooding happens from time to time in the province of Saskatchewan. And as well, places like Prince Albert, when we talked about the highway north of Prince Albert, and as well south, that there was some flooding.

When during the planning stages can the ministry confidently predict that there will be no flooding problems this year? Like is it the end of May? Is it the middle of June? Like how, based on your discussion with the Watershed Authority, how do you predict whether we're fine, like we're not going to have any major flooding? Is it a timetable? Is it just hit and miss? How does that work?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So I mean I guess I've already stated that we are using maps, flood data from the Water Security Agency, and

currently we are going to see normal spring runoff. Having said that, throughout the season we could have special events, you know, exceptional rains that may change that, but we really can't predict what those events will be, or when or if they'll even happen. But right now I would think probably by the end of April, if not mid-May at the latest, based on the data we have, not including special flood events or rain events, we should probably know if we're going to be okay.

Mr. Belanger: — Okay. Well obviously there's a bit of angst as we all know, and it's just some days you worry about the drought and the next day you worry about the flooding. And the changing weather patterns probably creates quite a bit of havoc with a lot of different organizations, and governments aren't immune to that.

And so being able to respond to a crisis, not a crisis but a challenge of sudden downfall or downpour of rain in one specific area for four or five days, you mentioned the private sector and your department has some equipment. What do you mean by that? Is the private sector getting engaged? And you do have some equipment as well. Like how would you respond to a region that had an extraordinary amount of rain and then all of a sudden they have flooded areas? Like how would you respond to that?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So I guess I can speak to this specifically because we had flooding back in 2011 in Estevan. Some really significant flooding happened in that area and we had highways that were completely covered over at that time. And so the Department of Highways assesses the situation and determines what factors we need to take to alleviate the pressures that are there as far as the water goes.

We use our existing equipment, but obviously when there's a huge flood event like that, we don't have enough. So we go to market, for lack of a better term, and we find contractors that, you know, might have pump trucks or whatever it is, the resource we're going to need. We have like emergency management plans, so it's not like we'll have to go looking for this information very far. We're going to be prepared. We know what contractors have what type of equipment and what we're going to need. So once we decide what our plan is going to be, that's how we would roll it out.

Mr. Belanger: — In keeping in line with the questions around emergency circumstance and emergency situations, the ministry is involved with the protection and response team, the development of the PRT, so to speak. And your involvement is through the Highway Patrol officers. Is it correct to assume that there were six more Highway Patrol officers added this past January?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So you are correct. We have six new Saskatchewan Highway Patrol recruits that graduated in December of 2018.

Mr. Belanger: — And what would be the cost? I'm assuming it's to your ministry. Is that correct?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — For training the officers?

Mr. Belanger: — No, no. For the actual officers.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Can I just get some clarification? Are you asking what the individual costs, what the training costs are? What . . .

Mr. Belanger: — No. The clarification I want is you indicated that there are six new Highway Patrol officers being hired.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Yes.

Mr. Belanger: — Right. And I'm assuming it's through your department.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Yes.

Mr. Belanger: — Okay, so what are the costs for those officers, and how many are there now? Because one would assume that Highways and Infrastructure deals with highways and infrastructure. But then you have SGI; then you have the Highway Traffic Board; then you have highway safety. And when you see officers being hired by the Department of Highways and these are Highway Patrol officers, like we want to know how many are there now and what are the costs for these officers.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — I just want to take the time to introduce the new member that came. We have my ADM [assistant deputy minister] Blair Wagar, and I'm going to turn it over to him to answer.

Mr. Wagar: — Thank you. Blair Wagar, ADM of planning, policy and regulation. So in terms of incremental cost, if I think we're understanding the question is, what's the incremental cost to add these six new officers? So first of all, they're not new positions. We haven't added any new positions to our, used to be commercial vehicle enforcement, now it's called Saskatchewan Highway Patrol. So there's the same number of officers or same number of positions, I should say.

The incremental cost for adding the additional mandate or the PRT mandate is about \$1.1 million. That's estimated. That's for the, you know, the additional mandate.

Mr. Belanger: — So you're saying that the commercial vehicle enforcement, which was a . . . The reason I'm getting confused here is sometimes SGI monitors and is responsible for the Highway Traffic Board and they have certain initiatives that they undertake. Then when you see the Department of Highways and Infrastructure be part of a protection and response team, then the question is, how is the collaboration done with SGI and with their Highway Traffic Board? And why are you guys doing this more so than they are? And that's kind of why I wanted to know what the costs are. Is it part of the PRT overall intergovernmental initiative? That's the purpose, or the confusion that I need clarification on.

Mr. Wagar: — So I think your question is, what's the different roles and responsibilities between the Ministry of Highways, the SGI, and you referenced the Highway Traffic Board? So I can talk about, kind of, the roles and responsibilities of each one and who does what and then how the protective response team or PRT fits into all that.

[18:45]

So from a commercial vehicle enforcement perspective, both SGI and Highways and Transportation has kind of joint responsibility. And from a collaboration perspective it's very seamless. We share information between ourselves, but the roles that we have in terms of engaging with the commercial vehicle industry is different.

And I'll probably clarify that the reference to the Highway Traffic Board, that's been around a long time, but the Highway Traffic Board doesn't have any really direct responsibility in regulating commercial vehicles any longer. All that responsibility that the Highway Traffic Board had has been transitioned to SGI. And the role of the Highway Traffic Board is really a quasi-judicial kind of appeal board. They aren't involved in regulation anymore at all. So we'll kind of set them aside as more of a place that the industry can go to appeal if SGI takes some action to, you know, give them a safety rating that they don't agree with. And I can touch on that more later.

So the big difference between the role that we play, Ministry of Highways plays or Highway Patrol plays, is that our officers are on roadside, checking trucks — checking trucks at the scale, checking trucks at roadside — and there's two things that they do. One is they'll do a safety inspection. So they look at the driver, make sure that they meet their qualifications, that they comply with the hours of service, that they've completed a trip inspection on the vehicle. Then they also look at the vehicle itself, make sure that the loads are secure, make sure the brakes are in adjustment, tires are good, all of that stuff. So it's the safety fitness of the vehicle as well as the safety fitness of the driver every time that they stop a truck.

And if they clear kind of the fact that everything looks in order from a roadside inspection safety inspection perspective, then they'll turn some attention to, well is the vehicle overweight or not? And if they're at a scale location, well the truck just has to go over the scale and they can decide that. If they're at a roadside location, they've got to take their portable scales out and actually run the truck over their portable scales. So whatever they do at the scale, they can do anywhere on the road network, provided that it's safe to pull over that truck.

So that's what our Highway Patrol officers do, and their core mandate, even with the addition of the protective response team responsibility, their core mandate on a day-to-day basis when they come to work and hit the road, they're looking for commercial vehicles. That's what they're looking for: commercial vehicle compliance. However, because they're already on the road, they're already trained, they're already, you know, they're already doing law enforcement, they're largely equipped. When the PRT came along, all we really had to do was train them up to the Criminal Code.

And I don't want to underestimate all we needed to do. It was a pretty substantial amount of training to get them from where they are to becoming kind of, you know, full-blown police officers for the most part. Again their day-to-day responsibility is still commercial vehicle enforcement, but if there's a situation where . . . Just play out a scenario where there's a call to 911 for an emergency situation and our central dispatch looks and sees one of our commercial vehicle enforcement — or Highway Patrol now — officer is the closest one. They are now trained and equipped to be able to be a first responder, if you will, to that

particular call for service.

So that's the big difference, that they're always available to do that. And in addition to that, if they're in the course of looking for commercial vehicles and they see traffic behaviour in a private vehicle, somebody speeding, they can engage that person on their own to deal with the speeding behaviour. If they see somebody that appears to be maybe impaired, they can also deal with that from a Criminal Code perspective.

So I guess the main point in all this is that the incremental costs associated with adding the PRT responsibility, that's what I said about the . . . We estimate probably about that 1.1 million, which we've got some incremental support this year in our budget to do, but the total cost for having these officers has been in our ministry for a very long time and we continue to engage again on the commercial vehicle side.

All of the road activity that we collect, whether it's a roadside inspection or if we write a charge for, you know, insecure load or hours-of-service violation, all of that data, all those enforcement actions make their way onto SGI's carrier profile, and that's what SGI monitors. And if you get too many — just like a driver's licence — if you get too many infractions, too many out-of-service inspections, too many convictions, then SGI can take some action, go out and do a . . . basically a facility audit, it's called. They audit your records. They check your compliance against, you know, do you have a proper maintenance program? Is your safety officer getting all of these violations, and are they taking appropriate action on the drivers to try to prevent that behaviour from happening so our offices don't find it at roadside?

So that's the SGI role. It's more of an audit. Sit down with the company, try to figure out if there's some safety, you know, culture issues that they may need to change, some record-keeping things, some disciplinary action they need to take in terms of making sure that that driver or that company, the safety officer, and all their drivers understand what the rules are and help them comply, again so our officers don't have to find it at roadside.

So that's kind of how the two work together, and we do share information back and forth with each other all the time to make sure that we're engaging with the industry in a consistent way and in a way that tries to make the roads as safe as possible when it comes to our commercial vehicle operations.

Mr. Belanger: — Now as it pertains to commercial vehicles, and I understand that, you know, the auditor raised some concerns, but I'll touch on the auditor a bit later here. But just a supplementary question on the roles and responsibility of the highway safety officers. You know, during my many kilometres of travelling, you often come across a vehicle that's parked on the side of the road. It's either been broken down or abandoned or in many cases, sometimes as you go further from the cities you find some, even vehicles that are burnt.

Sometimes the vehicles are sitting there for two or three days, sometimes for two or three weeks. So it's a safety issue that is, you know, because the people have often asked me, like who is responsible for moving those vehicles from the highways that are parked on the side of the road? Because it does create a really significant safety problem. Because as you're travelling north,

you know, and the vehicle's out there longer, it collects dust and the deflectors don't show the vehicle, even with brights on sometimes.

So whose responsibility is that, to make sure that those vehicles are removed from the side of the road that are creating hazards to the travelling public?

Mr. Wagar: — So similar to, similar answer, shared responsibility. So if our traffic officer through highway patrols, the one that comes across that first, an abandoned vehicle as you describe, or whether it's an RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] officer or whether it's one of our operations people doing maintenance on the road, if they come across a vehicle that's, you know, parked on the side of the road, we don't immediately know that it's been abandoned. And the speed in which we take action will largely be based on how big a risk that vehicle poses. If it's right in the middle of the travel portion, obviously we're going to want to take immediate action to remove that risk.

If it is pulled way off to the side, again, we don't necessarily know that it's abandoned at that point in time. So if it's a Highway Patrol officer or an RCMP officer, through the plate we can often run that plate, figure out who the owner is and try to contact that owner to see what's happening, to see if they're coming back to get it. Did it just happen to run out of gas or something?

Or if we can't do that, again, it all depends on how big of a risk in that particular employee . . . whether it's again RCMP or Highway Patrol officers or operations people, how big a risk that poses in terms of how quick we want to take action with that.

Mr. Belanger: — We've seen vehicles parked on the side of the road for sometimes a couple of weeks, you know, and you wonder whether anybody's going to come pick it up because it does create a hazard even if it's pulled off to the side.

The auditor raised a concern about trucks not being weighed at the province's weigh stations, and she has identified the amount of \$10 million of a cost to repair the highways as a result of overweight vehicles. The \$10 million figure, is this accurate within the ministry's opinion? Or in the ministry's opinion has it been growing or has it remained static? So how big of a problem is it for trucks being able to avoid the weigh station and cost up to \$10 million in overweight damage?

Mr. Wagar: — So I think the study you referred to was a few years back where we did a kind of point-in-time sample at that particular time. So to extrapolate, that would be a little bit difficult and speculative, so I'd probably resist doing that.

But we do know that overweight vehicles is something that's a reality on our network all the time. And that is why we have a Highway Patrol, and that's why we have a commercial vehicle focus and why we have weigh scales and all of that, to try to mitigate that risk of overweight vehicles.

You know, we interact, our offices interact . . . Again it ranges from year to year depending on the staffing complement that we have. It can range from 10 to 12 to 14 inspections — roadside inspections, weighing — a year. So there's a lot of engagement that our officers do each year with the industry.

Whether we do that at the static scale locations or whether we do that through our . . . I call them mobile vehicle inspection stations, which allows our truck or our officers to go on and across our whole network, the amount of impact and engagement that we do with the industry is fairly consistent from one year to the next. And I think that there is a perception that because the scales necessarily, or the view is the auditor had, is that because the scale isn't open, there's an assumption that we aren't doing any weight enforcement, which is not accurate. Our officers are doing weight enforcement every single day across the network.

The other challenge I think that we have is that we have a very extensive network. You know, the province is vast. There's a lot of roads, which we talk a lot about, so our officers need to be pretty strategic in terms of where they spend their time. And I've mentioned before, the element of surprise is kind of important when it comes to enforcement, so opening up a scale, staying there, you know . . . The opportunity to plan your trip around that scale, again, there's lots of different ways to move. So our officers have to adjust their plans to make sure that they're doing the best job they can to intercept carriers that may not be following the rules compared to everyone else.

Mr. Belanger: — How has the trend been with particular offenders of, you know, the weight, the total weight allowed on the province's highways? Because many people would speculate it could be stress from the hauling a lot of the, for example, oil by trucks in the North. Could some of the logging trucks be overweight? Like, how do you control what sectors are doing what to our highways?

Mr. Wagar: — So you know, we haven't done a weight survey for quite some time so I don't have a number for you in terms of what the . . . I think your question was, what's the overweight rate?

[19:00]

But what I want to clarify a little bit is that we have two . . . There's permanent overweight where we work with the industry, like you mentioned the forestry sector in particular, where we work with them around program weights, which is allowing them to haul heavy, but they do that through permit. And we know that they're doing it and we work with them. They know they're doing it, and we manage the risk around the road network, meaning they're only allowed to haul in the winter time at certain weights because the road is less vulnerable at that time.

So permanent overweight happens across our network, whether it's the oil and gas sector. We'll work with them there. And there's the permits, part of the permits is built in where they pay a portion of the additional weight, or the additional consumption that they place on the road because of that heavier weight, they pay a portion of that back to the province. So some of the risk around that additional consumption is managed because of the permanent weight.

What you're talking about and what our officers are focused on and looking for is illegal overweights. And that's what they are focused on and looking and finding on the network.

Mr. Belanger: — All right. And you look at the transition that we've had from rail to road and some of the added

responsibilities as it pertains to, you know, damaging our roads as they begin to haul bigger and bigger loads. The rail industry itself, like has the ministry . . . does it have any responsibility for inspection of railbeds? Or do we have any role or responsibility in any way, shape, or form when it comes to railway safety and control?

Mr. Wagar: — So again just to clarify. When it comes to, I'll call them the federally regulated railways, like the CN [Canadian National] and CP [Canadian Pacific] in Saskatchewan, the ministry doesn't have regulatory authority over them. So we don't inspect any of their assets, whether it's track assets or rolling stock or anything like that. You know, again we're not a regulator of that sector; that's Transport Canada and the federal government. We have a keen interest in how they're performing because of the connection to them and moving goods, moving goods to market — critical to our economy. So we have an interest in how they're doing, how they're performing. And we engage and talk to them all the time.

When it comes to provincial railways, or the railways that are solely within the province, those are regulated by the ministry. We have a rail branch. And we look at . . . We do track inspections. We do crossing inspections each and every year. There's about 2100, just over 2100 kilometres of provincial railway track that's operated, owned and operated by many different companies. I think there's 13 different shortline railways that we regulate.

We require them to submit . . . all of the common carriers, so the shortline railways that are moving other peoples' goods across track where they have public crossings, all of those companies have safety management plans that they're required to submit to us. And we monitor and work with them to make sure that they're preventing incidents from occurring.

And we also work with industrial railways. And industrial railways are where the railway is solely contained within a private sector property. So they're not interacting with the public at all, but we look at making sure that they have . . . We don't have all of their safety management plans submitted yet. We're working on getting all of those submitted in the next two years. That's something that's new that's just come out in terms of us getting involved in making sure that those industrial railways are also operating safely.

Mr. Belanger: — So it would be premature to ask if there's any . . . like how many inspections do you do on these provincially owned and operated railway companies and, like, has there been any increase? Because obviously I assume that the more you use the railway method of transporting goods that there would be more incidents because you're using it more. So between the inspections and incidents, how would you compare the industry to, say, the trucking industry, and what can we see within the railway industry itself, whether it's a safer way to transport goods or not?

Mr. Wagar: — So I think it's pretty difficult to draw a conclusion or comparison between, you know, is trucking safer than shortline railways, because while they're both moving goods, you know, shortline railways probably don't move near the volume of goods and their safety profiles or their risk profiles are quite different in terms of interaction with the public

generally, and all that.

So I would be reluctant to be able to give you a good answer in terms of the comparison between the two, but what I can give you is that the number of incidents that we have on our shortline rail network is very, very low. They're very safety conscious. And the, you know, the amount of inspections we do . . . And probably the area that we think of the highest risk for the shortlines is that interaction between the public highway and the railway, so our crossings. And the way our inspection program works is that at the end of three years we will have inspected every crossing and then we start over again. So it's on a three-year rotation that we make sure that we get at every single crossing to make sure that, again if there happens to be lights or crossbucks, that all the signs are there, reflection, all of that.

And so again, to be able to compare the two, I think that would be very difficult because of their risk profiles being so different.

Mr. Belanger: — What are the provincially regulated rail companies hauling? Like what is their primary product that they haul?

Mr. Wagar: — The primary product for our shortlines would be ag products or grain in particular. There's a few that work in oil, but the vast majority is grain.

Mr. Belanger: — And do any of these provincially regulated rail companies cross any major river or waterway or water source for any community?

Mr. Wagar: — So if we're going to compare the shortline risk profile to like the class 1, the CNCPs [Canadian National and Canadian Pacific], it's not even close in terms of crossing major water bodies, major rivers, going through major communities. They aren't the same at all. It'd be, you know, there is towns that they would cross. There's probably some water bodies that, you know, I'm trying to think about the 2100 kilometres of rail network that we regulate and I can't think of major water bodies or, you know, large cities that the shortlines would go through.

The other part I think that's important . . . So again the comparison between the two is quite different in terms of volume of goods they move, the size of the water bodies that they would be crossing, and the size of the communities they'd be going through.

The other thing that's really important is the speed that they go is a fraction of the speed. I think top speed shortline might get up is maybe 20K, 25K for the most part. They are not high speed compared to CN or CP that could be moving up to, you know, up to 100 kilometres an hour, 80 kilometres an hour.

Mr. Belanger: — Right. And you look at the amount of track that was torn up throughout Saskatchewan. None of those tracks were of any value. Like who . . . I'm assuming that the larger rail companies own these running rights or these track beds. And in particular when I travel home through, between Blaine Lake and Shellbrook, there used to be a track there. Now it's all torn up. Who would own that before? And do national rail companies have the right to tear up their tracks and abandon their running rights, or is that saved for a provincial initiative around railway ownership?

Mr. Wagar: — So I think what you're referring to, for CN and CP in the past, the process that they go through or what they're required to do if they decided they don't want to operate a track any more . . . So this is federally regulated. It's not provincially regulated. And there is quite an extensive process that they have to go through of notification. It usually starts with them posting that they're no longer going to be operating a track, a piece of track, for a certain period of time. And that notice has to be made public. If they get to the point where they're deciding to . . . So that's one notification, is discontinuance of service. And then there's another process where I think where you're talking about it, is dismantling that track or dismantlement process, is again another really defined process in federal legislation where they have to go through a series of steps before they can actually go out and tear that track up.

The process usually involves — and I may not get the order just right here — but it involves, before they are able to dismantle, they need to offer that up for sale commercially. And so if it does have value and there is a commercial opportunity, someone can come in and purchase that track from either CN or CP, depending on who's doing that. And there's this very specific period of time, and I just can't remember the time frame but I want to say that it's two to three months that they have to advertise that track for sale commercially. If there's no commercial interest, then they need to offer that track to the province. And if the province isn't seeing an interest or ability or willingness to kind of pursue that, then they have to offer that to the local municipalities that are involved in that process. And then if all of those steps basically are followed and there isn't a transaction that takes place where the track is transferred, then they're eligible to go in and dismantle that track.

When they go and dismantle it, that's a complete business decision by the company. And then they also have the option as to whether or not, once they do dismantle that rail line, as to whether they keep the title to that land or whether they sell that land. Again that's something that is left between them and basically the market and any business decisions that they would make.

Mr. Belanger: — All right. No, and I knew there is a process attached to that; I wasn't familiar with it. Because sometimes you drive by and wonder why would they be tearing up that perfectly good piece of track that could be used for something, you know. And then you see the shift from rail to the road, and then you begin to wonder, even as a taxpayer I wonder how much more that's going to cost in the long run, but you hear the running rates argument; you hear the affordability argument. And now you've explained the process, it makes it a bit more understandable for the common or for the general public.

I want to change my questions to the municipal roads for the economy. And part of the discussion is around the bridges that obviously have been in the news the last couple of months. And when the budget allocated 14 million . . . I want to make sure that's the correct figure that was allocated for the MREP [municipal roads for the economy program].

[19:15]

The vice-president of APAS, and I'm assuming that's Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan, they, and I

quote, he said, “How can you be satisfied with \$14 million to MREP? Eleven RMs that have 238 bridges worth 233 million in the Northeast just met with you and MLAs to discuss the lack of funding for rural infrastructure.”

So obviously APAS wasn't pleased with what was committed to the municipal roads for the economy program. And you're hearing some of the bridges that he makes reference to actually having weight restrictions placed on them. And one bridge collapsed. Another had some structural problems with it.

Like are RMs basically left alone to do their own work when it comes to maintaining the bridges or building new bridges? And would they use the municipal roads to the economy money to build those bridges?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So you're correct about the dollar amount that goes into the MREP program, but I also want to just talk a little bit about the revenue sharing that we have for all of the municipalities and the cities throughout the province.

They do have the municipal revenue-sharing program on which they get funding through that. So we don't just supply money through the MREP program. They get municipal revenue sharing and they can choose to spend that money however they like. And I mean if we have a municipality that feels like a bridge or a culvert is a priority for them, then they'll choose to spend that money that way. And I'm just going to turn it over to Fred so he can talk a little more about the program.

Mr. Antunes: — Yes. So with the MREP program, I mean there's various components to it. And one of the components that's included is that we do provide some administrative support to SARM to administer the program. And part of that includes providing funding for a couple of bridge engineers that will look at bridges that are on kind of the heavy-haul program that's covered under MREP, or kind of those Clearing the Path corridors where MREP will provide funding.

But they're also there to provide assistance to other municipalities if they have questions related to bridges. And the Ministry of Highways is also willing to provide technical support if anybody comes to us and says, we've got a question about how a bridge should be built or designed, or a concern. We're willing to provide support to them with our bridge staff.

And I think this year through the MREP program we are actually going to be replacing, I think, five bridges as part of that program.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — And I just want to add to that a little bit. So through SARM, who is the group that helps administer this program, SARM is satisfied to learn that the municipal roads for the economy program will once again be maintaining funding at \$14 million. The government's investment in infrastructure is beneficial to all of Saskatchewan. Safe and sustainable infrastructure is essential to the rural way of life. So there are some people that are quite satisfied with the money that's coming their way.

Mr. Belanger: — Now when you indicate that Highways offers some engineering support, especially for joint projects or bridges being built on heavier haul or greater volume of traffic, that Highways is there and that you do offer to help them out, but as

you place the money with SARM, say, here's 14 million for MREP, who makes the decision around the allocation of those dollars, notwithstanding the engineering help on some of the heavier haul or traffic volume bridges and highways?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So through SARM there is a management committee board that actually makes all of these decisions. There are some people that sit on that committee from the Ministry of Highways — and I believe three, and then there's five members from the SARM board that actually sit on that committee — and they decide how that money is going to be allocated and prioritized throughout the program.

Mr. Belanger: — Okay. And which of the bridges that were built recently collapsed?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — The one that you're talking about is in the RM of Clayton.

Mr. Belanger: — And what was the cause of the collapse of that bridge? Was there any report or was there any particular issue with that bridge? And the reason I'm asking is that I view Highways telling the SARM under the MREP program, here's 14 million bucks and some of you may not like what's being handed to you, but here's 14 million bucks; go ahead and replace your bridges. We will sit in the committee and talk about that.

But then when you have a bridge that collapses and other bridges that the ministry have basically put restrictions on because of safety concerns, it almost assumes . . . One could easily assume that there isn't no follow-up, technical or engineering help, and really intense effort to work with SARM to make sure that the \$14 million is spent well, and that they're not having bridges collapse or bridges being restricted for weight. So where is the problem here? How did the bridge from Clayton collapse? And wasn't there any oversight from Highways?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So I just want to be clear. The bridge that collapsed did not go through the MREP program. We did not fund that bridge. This is a bridge that the community decided to build on their own. They did the RFP, the contract, and hired the people to do it. And I'm just going to turn it over to Fred to add to that a bit more.

Mr. Antunes: — Yes. So you know, my understanding is that that bridge collapse is currently under investigation, so they don't know what the root cause of it is. And I know that I can tell you that as it was being investigated, APEGS [Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Saskatchewan], who is the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists in the province, who regulate engineering in the province . . . And the requirement is that anybody who's designing a bridge has to be qualified to design a bridge. It's engineering, so it's legislated and regulated.

The Association of Professional Engineers is looking into that and they identified . . . They became aware that there was five other bridges built of similar type. So they sent out a letter to the municipalities that had these types of bridges and asked them to conduct an inspection, have an inspection conducted on those bridges. At the same time, SARM and Highways were talking about the fact that this bridge collapsed, and we said, maybe it's a good idea to have those inspections done. So we were already

working down that path.

And then when the letters came out, SARM said to the municipalities that, you know, through the MREP program, Highways and SARM will look at having these additional bridges inspected. When they went out and inspected those bridges that were done outside of the MREP program — so these again were the municipalities who were responsible for the design and construction, and they hired a firm to do the design and construction of these bridges — when the inspection took place, we also asked the consultant that went out and did the inspections to come back and put a load rating on the bridges to identify what weight-carrying capacity they could carry.

When they went out and did the inspections, they went out and looked to see if there was issues with the piles, because that's what they suspect was the problem with the first bridge is that something happened with the pile foundations. So they went out and looked at them and they inspected them to see if there was any visible, you know, settlement or that type of thing, and they didn't see that.

But what they did see is that some of the way the bridges were designed was a little bit different than we normally do. So they went back and completed a load evaluation. And as a result of completing those load evaluations, they determined that the bridges were not built, were not built to carry the load-carrying capacity that they were originally intended to. So as a result of that, you know, Highways became aware, because of our involvement on the program management board, that these bridges had significantly lower capacities than what they were designed for.

And we asked and worked with municipalities to ask them to weight-restrict those roads so that we can figure out what the real problem was and then make sure that there was no injuries or anything like that occurred. And I guess I, just to clarify, there was actually six bridges that we had them go out and inspect. One was okay and five were restricted, of those additional ones.

Mr. Belanger: — Yes. And you know, initially when you look at and hear some of the news behind bridges collapsing, you would assume somewhere along the line that Department of Highways could have played a role or should have played a role. Like there's all . . . And it's not speculative in nature because you do have a relationship to MREP with SARM and I'm assuming with SUMA as well.

So you're sitting there, you're talking about bridges, and then you have these RMs building bridges that may or may not meet the load expectations that the people that are designing them for them claim. And Highways simply — because it's a safety issue, right? — Highways simply cannot say, well they built it on their own. Actually I think the response should be that we take the safety of all construction of bridges connected to our highway system very seriously. So whether an RM is building these bridges or not, the point is the public travels on these bridges.

So that's why I was asking the collaboration between SARM and Highways, even on non-MREP projects of building a bridge or linking to your highway system, is something that is pretty darn important to have some oversight on. As opposed to having two representatives at the SARM meeting talking about issues that

are of concern when it comes to the structure of bridges, I think the discussion should be on how we protect the integrity of all the highway system. And if some RM goes off on their own and design and build a bridge that can't withstand the weight that they claim it's supposed to withstand, and it's part of our network of highways throughout the province, and one of them collapses and five others get inspection notifications, that's my point. Somewhere in the system there was a weak link.

So is there any effort to try and increase oversight or collaboration or is there a new process being considered to address the notion of these bridges built below specifications and perhaps not properly designed?

Mr. Antunes: — So I guess in terms of the oversight, I mean the designing of bridges in Saskatchewan is professional engineering as I said, so it is regulated. It's regulated by the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists in Saskatchewan, and they have a process to ensure that people are qualified. They do continuing professional development. You can only practise engineering in the field in which you're qualified. So they have processes in place to make sure that engineering is regulated.

In all cases, in all of these bridges, we're talking about one company that's involved in the construction of these bridges, so this is not a, you know . . . I guess I'd use the word aberration. So we're still trying to find out what the root cause of it is, but it's, you know . . . Highways is there to provide technical support to the RMs, but the RMs are responsible for managing these bridges. But if there is a situation related to public safety, Highways can step in and say we need to do something about, you know, load restricting or that type of thing if we need to.

In this case we've got five bridges that we think have some structural issues, so we've asked them to be precautionary. We've asked them to load restrict these bridges until we can get additional information, refine the analysis that we completed to make sure that they are safe, and if they need to be retrofitted then that'll be the municipality's responsibility to do that. But we'll try to provide technical expertise to help them get to that point.

Mr. Belanger: — Yes. And that was my point with the gentleman from APAS when he makes reference to the amount of bridges throughout the province, and it's a significant amount of bridges that the RM or SARM is involved with. So I would probably guess that there has been inspections of all of these bridges being done by SARM, or is it being done by Highways?

[19:30]

Mr. Antunes: — So the bridges are inspected over a three-year period around the province, the municipal bridges. And part of that, that's paid for through that MREP program. So they are inspected on a regular basis.

Mr. Belanger: — Okay. And they don't just inspect the MREP built bridges, you inspect all the bridges that the RMs may connect to our provincial highway system. Is that a fair assumption to make?

Mr. Gienow: — Wayne Gienow, executive director of network planning and investment. Yes, through MREP we inspect all of

the large bridges and large culverts that are done in that program.

I do want to clarify that when we hired the consultant to do the inspection on these six particular bridges, we actually asked for additional analysis. So normally when the consultant goes out and does an inspection, they do more of a visual inspection of what's there. In this particular case we looked at more of a loading analysis.

Mr. Belanger: — Okay. And not so much a structural, because I understand with the bridge that collapsed, that was built by the RM, all right, paid for by the RM, and contracted out by the RM, but that bridge probably is connected to our highway system somewhere. And my only point being whether it's SARM or APAS or just a resort community building a bridge for their own purposes, it's still connected to our provincial highway grid and there is still a safety issue. So I'm assuming that any bridge built in Saskatchewan would have Highways' inspection on it to make sure that what happened in that particular collapse doesn't happen, because we have 233 bridges out there that are under control of SARM.

Mr. Antunes: — Yes. So the bridges are . . . So first of all, a professional engineer has to design every one of those bridges. So if they're designed, then they're inspected. We hire an engineering or the MREP program hires an engineering company. So SARM coordinates it, the results go back to the RM. So they're inspected every three years and as Wayne said, it's a visual inspection. This time when we did the inspection on these six bridges, that included the structural valuation and load-carrying capability, which is not normal. We normally don't do that.

Mr. Belanger: — And my final question on this is — my colleague's going to assume the role of critic here — when you look at the structure of the bridge, how soon will we find out what happened at the collapse of that bridge?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So APEGS is doing the investigation and they did not give us a timeline.

Mr. Belanger: — And the report will be made to Highways and not just to the RM? Like, will the RM be able to get the report and keep it for their own purposes and not share?

Mr. Antunes: — So APEGS is investigating it, and the process under which they're investigating it, you know, we may never get a copy of it. There's no obligation for them to provide it to Highways. So APEGS could complete it as an internal report and depending on what the findings are, there may be some . . . I don't know this, but you know, if you're in a situation where somebody's investigating something related to engineering, if there's some cause associated with the engineer that did the work in general, speaking in general terms, if there's some fault found with the engineer that is doing the work, there's some type of discipline that goes along with that. And whether that report would ever be public in that case, I don't know. I'm not saying that that's what's going to happen in this case, because I don't know that. You have to wait until they complete the investigation.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you, and I'll now note that Ms. Cathy Sproule has joined us.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Thanks to my colleague for his last three hours. I get to finish off with this last hour that remains.

A Member: — Fifty-five minutes.

Ms. Sproule: — Just, I think, some . . . What's that?

A Member: — Fifty-five minutes.

Ms. Sproule: — Fifty-five minutes, my colleague points out. So starting with Public Accounts '17-18, I just want to get some clarification on the amounts paid to . . . This is bypass questions that I'm focusing on. There were two payments made to the SGTP Highway Bypass Limited Partnership. One was made on page 140 of Public Accounts, which is the payments over \$50,000, goods and services, I guess. It was made under goods and services over 50,000.

The other payment that was made was for \$562,547,775 as a capital asset acquisition. I'm just wondering if, Madam Minister, if you could explain why this was done in two separate payments to the bypass partnership.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Could you repeat the numbers for us please?

Ms. Sproule: — First payment is under goods and services, page 140, for 2.865 million. And the second figure was under capital asset acquisitions for \$562.547 million.

Mr. Antunes: — So the first payment would have been related to the operations and maintenance that they're conducting on the road that was opened for the . . . I think it was open in October of 2017, so there's an interim operations and maintenance payment that's made. I guess that's for the section before it was open. And then there's also an O & M payment that's made for the section after it was opened in 2017. So that's what the first payment is. So that actually is a, I guess, a cash payment to the, you know, now they're called Regina Bypass Partners.

The second number that you've quoted is not actually a payment to them. So the way it's accounted for is it's basically booking it as a capital asset when we budget it, so we book the amount of work that's done every year on a capital basis but it's not an actual payment to the bypass partners.

Ms. Sproule: — Any reason that the operations payment was, I think, significantly higher in years previous? So if it's for operation and maintenance, why would it be going down?

Mr. Antunes: — So the first payment the year before is also for operation and maintenance and, you know, this is the amount that they bid to do that work. So they put together the cash flow and we're just paying their cash flow.

Ms. Sproule: — Could you provide the committee with a breakdown of those figures, what the, particularly '17-18 Public Accounts, what that \$2.8 million went to?

Mr. Antunes: — I guess I'm not sure what more detail you're

looking for. I mean it's interim O & M, and O & M, operations and maintenance, and interim operations and maintenance. So they don't break it down in terms of how much it is for snowplowing, how much it is for mowing, how much it is for sign rehab, like any of that type of stuff. So it's just, it's operations and maintenance and they lump it together and that's the amount that they bid.

Ms. Sproule: — So you have no further details on what that 2.8 mill . . . Was that cut as one cheque then basically to the partnership?

Mr. Antunes: — So they're paid monthly. I wouldn't say that we don't know what it's for. I mean we have level-service targets that they need to meet in terms of providing a level of service for operations and maintenance. They meet those targets. If they don't meet those targets, there are penalties that are adjusted in terms of ends . . . you know, they call them nonconformist reports. And then if they get to a certain value then there could be financial penalties. But in this case, there didn't have . . . I don't believe they had any penalties. So this is for them providing the level of service that's stipulated in the contract.

Ms. Sproule: — Would it be possible to get copies of the nonconformist reports?

Mr. Antunes: — I think that's something we have to take back and look at the contract in terms of what's commercially confidential and not, in terms of our contract.

Ms. Sproule: — Sure. Madam Chair, I would just ask then to have the ministry look at that and table those with the committee if they are able to release them after they review them for confidentiality.

The same question then I would have for the monthly payments that the partnership made. Can you table with the committee the monthly payments that they made under these operations and maintenance requirements?

Mr. Antunes: — So once again because it's in the contract, I think we have to go back and look and see if it's commercially confidential information. I mean the total amount is there and it's a monthly payment. So we'd have to go back and look at that.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much. I appreciate your offer to go back and look at it. And if you can release that information, I would ask that you table it with the committee. Thank you.

Going on then to vote (HI10), in the Public Accounts when it describes this subvote, it includes operation and maintenance of the Regina bypass. So in the estimates this year, I just want to confirm . . . you don't mention the bypass in the Estimates book, but I just want to confirm that vote (HI10) in fact includes the operation and maintenance of the Regina bypass.

Mr. Antunes: — Yes, so (HI10) does include operation and maintenance of the Regina bypass.

Ms. Sproule: — And which allocation would that be found under? Is that operational services?

Mr. Antunes: — It would be under operational services.

Ms. Sproule: — So I note that over the years that number has been steadily growing, but in this year's estimates it's actually jumping by about \$13 million. Could you share with the committee what portion of that . . . Two questions: what portion of that is related to operation and maintenance of the bypass, and why that amount has gone up so much.

Mr. Antunes: — So the increase, there's two parts to it. So one part is because the bypass is going to be now open this fall, so there's going to be an additional cost for operations and maintenance. So that increased cost is \$3.606 million. And then, as you can see, there's also an interest expense in that operations subvote. So the rest of it, the 11.065, is the interest expense.

Ms. Sproule: — Okay, I just want to turn to the budget I think. No, I'm sorry, I'm still on the estimates. So the interest amount that's shared on page 18 is debt charges of 11.065 million. Is that the number you just quoted me?

A Member: — Yes, that's correct.

Ms. Sproule: — Yes. So that's this year's, the interest budgeted for this year for the bypass itself. Do you have any other interest charges in the ministry?

Mr. Antunes: — This is the charge for the bypass.

Ms. Sproule: — In terms of debt charges as reported in the budget, those figures are not included in the debt charges that are reported in the budget. Is this at the request of Highways or is this a decision made by the Minister of Finance?

[19:45]

Mr. Antunes: — So this is where it shows up, as I said, in our estimates. You know, where it shows up in government's overall budget, I mean Ministry of Finance is best positioned to answer that question.

Ms. Sproule: — Okay, let's go back to the operational services then. You said there's two parts to the increase; one is 3.606 million. Was that the number you gave me for increased expenses for operation and maintenance, 3.606?

Mr. Antunes: — For the Regina bypass, that's correct.

Ms. Sproule: — Yes. So of that total, 34.727 million — I'll just do the quick math — that increase is entirely related to the interest charges this year and the additional cost for operation and maintenance? It's 14.6 million, I think.

Mr. Antunes: — There are some other minor . . . There are some other adjustments in that subvote, but the 3.606 and 11.065 is related to the Regina bypass. And the other adjustments are either offset or slight increases to get the overall variance.

Ms. Sproule: — Okay. Thank you for that. In the capital builds plan, it's been tabled I think for four or five years now as part of the budget. And the number that was budgeted for highways capital for '19-20, in this year's budget, was 439,844. How much of that is for the bypass?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — The amount for the bypass is 89 million.

Ms. Sproule: — For '19-20?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Correct.

Ms. Sproule: — 89 million. In terms of targets in previous years, in '18-19 the target . . . sorry, '19-20. Here it is. In the '18-19 estimates budget, your target for this year was 387 million, and it's gone up to 439 million overall for highways capital. Can you share with the committee why the target is about \$53 million higher than last year's target?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So last year our capital was six hundred and seventy-two eight eighty-two, and this year it's four thirty-nine eight eighty-four. Are those the numbers you're talking about?

Ms. Sproule: — No, I'm sorry. In the previous budget there was something . . . You had three targets for the next future years, so your target for this year, in last year's estimates, was 387 million for this figure, and this year it's up to . . . your budget is 439. So I'm wondering why the target for '19-20 has increased to the budget by \$53 million.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So we thought the number was going to be slightly lower for the bypass and it wasn't. It was \$89 million. And then we also added some incremental funding for the intersection safety program that we're rolling out. And so when you plus-and-minus those, we get the new number.

Ms. Sproule: — So what was your target for the bypass in the '18-19 budget? It's currently 89, but what was the target for the bypass?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So I guess with our budget estimates and our budget projections, as we do our projects, some projects we manage to get done; some projects we don't manage to get done. And within these numbers, it fluctuates. And so based on the projects that were completed and those that did not get completed, this is the number that we ended up at.

Ms. Sproule: — Right, so I'll ask this again. In this year's budget, you're saying \$89 million was targeted for the bypass as the budget figure. In your target last year for this fiscal year it was . . . I'm just trying to find out what you had targeted for the bypass. Was it 89 million or did that change?

Mr. Antunes: — So I think we're struggling to understand kind of where the numbers are coming from that you're talking about. So when we look at estimates, we're looking at what was in estimates last year versus what's in estimates this year. And you know, we have the number for what we had this year in the capital budget. I think we can find . . . We might have the number here tonight about what we had in estimates for last year. In terms of the capital projections . . .

Ms. Sproule: — For this fiscal year.

Mr. Antunes: — We don't have that information here, what those capital projections were. And I think even the comments we made earlier about what the changes were, I think we were thinking you were talking about estimates, not necessarily about those capital projections. So we'd have to go back and look at that. So we don't have that information here.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you. I would appreciate it if you would go back and give me that figure in terms of what portion of the '19-20 target for the bypass was included last year.

Mr. Antunes: — Okay and to clarify, so what we're talking about again is what was in the 2018-19 capital plan and comparing what was in the estimate for Regina bypass for last year and this year, and then also . . . That's what you're looking for are those two numbers?

Ms. Sproule: — Yes, specifically on page 19 of last year's budget under Highways capital . . . of course you don't split out the Regina bypass. So that's what I'm trying to figure out is what you split out when you identified your target for this year. Because last year, obviously you were budgeting for '18-19. Does that make sense?

Mr. Antunes: — Yes, I understand. And I think the . . . keep in mind that things do change as we go through the year, so progress on the project changes from year to year. So what was a target last year depends on how much work got done on that specific project, but we can find that information for you. But you know, I guess the key point about the project is that it's still on time and on budget.

Ms. Sproule: — The reason I'm asking is that other years you've been closer in your capital builds planning. So I'm just wondering, why the difference in this particular year? So I appreciate . . .

Mr. Antunes: — It will be 100 per cent related to progress on the bypass, the variance.

Ms. Sproule: — Turning now to Public Accounts again on page 68, which is obligations under long-term financing arrangements. In there the Regina bypass is showing with an obligation . . . I just hope you can help me understand this a little bit. Right at the top of the page it says, Regina bypass 2017 obligations, 642-some million. There's something called additions of 551.9 million. I'm just wondering what those are?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — What document are you referencing? Are we in Estimates or are we in Public Accounts?

The Chair: — Ms. Sproule, your questions must be related to the estimates on Highways and Infrastructure tonight, not from Public Accounts from two years ago.

Ms. Sproule: — Madam Chair, may I?

The Chair: — Yes.

Ms. Sproule: — Every time I've been in committee in the last eight years, I have asked questions on the previous Public Accounts because that's the only time we get to ask questions about those in relation to the estimates in the year in question. So I don't know when else I would be able to ask these questions about Public Accounts and understand how Highways is reporting those numbers to the auditor for the . . . Like these only come in in July of the next year, and I've always asked questions on Public Accounts.

The Chair: — Your questions must be related to the

comparisons between last year's estimates and this year's estimates from what I can tell in . . . with what's been provided here this evening. And your question should be related to that, not to items that are within the Public Accounts from '17-18.

Ms. Sproule: — I'm going to take objection to that, Madam Chair. I disagree with your ruling and I'm going to have to raise this with House leaders at some point. Because this is always part of what I do in committee.

The Chair: — The minister hasn't been provided that information. She's coming here to present on estimates. She doesn't have that available with her this evening and you're asking questions that, you know, they weren't prepared to answer at this point in time because they're not related to what's on the table tonight.

Ms. Sproule: — It's directly related in understanding the financing on the bypass. If I could ask the Clerk to make copies of this page from Public Accounts, would the minister and her staff be okay in just answering a couple of questions?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — We'll accept that, provided we can answer it, based on the fact that we're not prepared for that.

Ms. Sproule: — Obviously. Yes. I just . . .

The Chair: — As I stated the ministry officials that were, have come here tonight to provide information may not have prepared for the questions that you're asking out of Public Accounts. They're out of estimates and the vote that's on the table tonight.

Ms. Sproule: — That's fair enough, Madam Chair. And I would accept if the ministry isn't able to answer those questions based on short notice. And if I had '18-19 Public Accounts, I'd definitely be asking on those questions, but those we don't get till July, which is why we're always dealing with the year previous.

But these are technical questions about how the reporting is done so . . .

The Chair: — But in the sense that, as I stated before, the reason I'm ruling that I am is because we are dealing with vote 16 here tonight, which has nothing to do with the Public Accounts that you have brought forward.

Ms. Sproule: — And I think, Madam Chair, that's where we may just disagree. Because obviously everything that's being spent this year is in context, and I think the context is very important.

So I've just done it for many, many years, and I'm just surprised that it's not something that officials are prepared to deal with tonight. So if the Clerk can make a copy of page 68, that would be . . . And then we can move on with some other questions while we're waiting for it.

We can move on, then, Madam Chair. Thanks.

The Chair: — Ms. Sproule.

Ms. Sproule: — I'm wondering, we were told by the ministry last year that there was 23 lawsuits, sorry, there were 23 lawsuits

levelled against the Sask government in relation to the bypass. I'm just wondering if you could tell us today how many lawsuits there are, first of all, remaining.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So yes, you're correct. There were 23 lawsuits, and there are 17 remaining. But we think that we have negotiated a settlement on another one. We're just waiting for the final paperwork to come back, so it should be on to 16.

Ms. Sproule: — Okay, so there's 16 remaining. What is the status of the 16 remaining? Are you still in negotiations or have any proceeded to court?

[20:00]

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So with the ones that are remaining, it's been a back and forth with information that's been provided as it has become apparent to us. And we're just . . . They're all at varying stages, but none of them are actually in any type of pre-trial situation. So we're just continuing to go back and forth and provide information as it becomes available and try and find a settlement without having to go to court.

Ms. Sproule: — All right. Thank you. Can you provide the committee with the names of the settled lawsuits?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So we are just going to probably have to consult with Justice to ensure that we're able to release these names. We're thinking it's probably a privacy thing.

Ms. Sproule: — Okay. If you could check with Justice, and then if you are able to release those names, share them with . . . table them with the Clerk. Thank you.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Okay. And I think we have an answer to one of your previous questions.

Mr. Antunes: — Okay, so I guess the one question that we said that we would table and that we would bring you additional information, so we found the answer. So last year, I think the difference between what we had budgeted . . . not budget, what was in that document target to this year was \$30 million. So I think we thought that they were going to do \$30 million more work in 2018, sorry, in '19. Yes, we thought they were going to do \$30 million more, but they ended up . . . Is that right?

A Member: — Yes, we're at 89 instead.

Mr. Antunes: — Yes, we're at 89 instead of 59. Yes.

Ms. Sproule: — Okay, thank you for that.

Mr. Antunes: — Does that make sense?

Ms. Sproule: — Yes it does. Yes. Can I ask a couple of questions on this now? I'm sure you'll be able to answer my questions, but if not, that's fine. In terms of the Regina bypass, the most recent Public Accounts we have, the 2018 obligation is 1.083 million, the top line there. But my question was about the additions. 551, what is that figure? Is that what you spent in 2017-18?

Mr. Antunes: — You're just asking about what is the additions?

Ms. Sproule: — Yes. Where did that figure come from?

Mr. Antunes: — So we think that the number that you're referring to is basically the amount that we believe . . . the amount that they got work done in terms of work or progress, so it wasn't again a payment to Regina Bypass Partners but the estimate of work that they accomplished in that year. We think that's what the number is.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you. And the payments? Beside it there's \$110 million.

Mr. Antunes: — So that would be the milestone payments. This is an actual cash payment now that would have been made to the Regina Bypass Partners for completing phase 1, for having phase 1 substantial completion in October 31st of 2017.

Ms. Sproule: — So that's not an annual payment then. It would just be a milestone payment?

Mr. Antunes: — It's a milestone payment.

Ms. Sproule: — Okay, thank you. The bottom of the page there's something called contractual obligations for the Regina bypass. And there's two figures given to make a total of 1 million. So it's 357 million for further construction and acquisition of tangible capital assets; future operation, maintenance, and lifecycle rehabilitation. Sorry, totalling \$1 billion. Are those contractual obligations? Is that future obligations or are they obligations that are met in the fiscal year in question?

Mr. Antunes: — Yes. So I believe those are the future obligations for remaining capital, as well as operations and maintenance and rehabilitation.

Ms. Sproule: — Okay, I'm getting there. Why is the 2018 figure lower than the 2017 figure? It doesn't match what you actually paid the consortium. So I'm just wondering, you know, there's a payment, a milestone payment of 110 million, but that doesn't add up to the difference. So why is there such a large difference? You dropped \$600 million.

Mr. Gienow: — Which number are you looking at?

Ms. Sproule: — At the very bottom on . . .

Mr. Gienow: — Yes.

Ms. Sproule: — The Regina bypass, the total for 2018 is \$1.084 billion. In 2017, it was 1.627 billion, so there's a difference of, you know, \$600 million there. And I'm just trying to figure out why it dropped so much in 2018. Does that equal the amount of the contractual obligations that you'd already met by that point?

The Chair: — Ms. Sproule, are you going to continue your questioning along the Public Accounts that you have brought here this evening? Because I'm going to ask that, you know, at this point in time that the vote that's on the table does not include these figures and these numbers. The minister's been willing to answer them, and in the future if you choose to bring something outside of the estimates that are put on the table for the evening, then I would suggest that you would have to make a motion to the committee for them to accept it.

Ms. Sproule: — Madam Chair, for your forbearance, that is actually my last question on this page.

Mr. Antunes: — So can I just try again, the numbers that you're referring to that you want us to check into the variance between? So you're asking about the 1.627 total that's on this page and then some other number on another document? Or are they both on this page?

Ms. Sproule: — Beside it, 2018.

Mr. Antunes: — Oh I see. Okay.

Ms. Sproule: — But you know what? I think we should just move on. So we'll move on. I want to move into, Madam Minister, you're familiar with an email from 2017 describing 1,100 minor deficiencies and some major deficiencies. Can the list of 1,100 minor deficiencies be tabled?

Mr. Stearns: — I'm David Stearns. I'm the executive director of construction branch in the design and construction division. So you're asking about deficiencies and the number of them. I thought maybe that it might be appropriate to put those into context. So for example, if you were doing a house renovation, of course initially you go out and seek a contractor. That contract is made or executed. Then the contractor undertakes the work and, just prior to what we might want to call final completion, the contractor and owner inspect the work. Deficiencies are identified or they might be like a paint flaw or there might be maybe a baseboard that needs some caulking or something like that. Those are all identified as flaws or things that have to be fixed up. In the world of the Regina bypass, we would call those deficiencies.

And of course, if you were doing a renovation, they would run around, usually with a contractor. They've got a roll of green tape and they would rip off little pieces and put it all over the place. That's a way of identifying where those deficiencies are. And then if you are to make a list of those, those would be a deficiency list, is what the language that we might find in the Regina bypass project agreement.

The contractor would then go off and finish doing all of that work and fixing those flaws up, putting the caulking where it should be, whatever's necessary to address all of those little pieces of green tape all over the house. And of course, then they will finally come to the owner and say, you know, I'm finally complete. And that would be referred to as a final completion, okay.

With the Regina bypass, it's a very similar principle. In fact all of our contracts have a very similar principle where at some point the contractor comes to you and says, we need an inspection on the road. On our design big-build projects, that inspection comes with a request from the contractor. We would have our operation maintenance staff in the van. We'd have possibly a consultant, if they're involved. We'd have our staff. We would go through that project and we would identify all of the deficiencies. I'll get into some of the characterization of those in a bit.

Ms. Sproule: — Madam Chair, may I? Mr. Stearns, I've done contracting, so you don't have to explain the process to me.

Mr. Stearns: — Yes, okay.

[20:15]

Ms. Sproule: — My question is, will you table the list of the 1,100 minor deficiencies that you referred to in your email on October 20th, 2017? Just a yes or no.

Mr. Stearns: — Right. There is a list of course. It does have some costs associated with it, which I would suggest is confidential to the project in terms of the Regina Bypass Partners and the independent certifier.

So I was going to do a comparison because the process is slightly different. But that list, leading to substantial completion, your number . . . I don't know which email you're referring to, but the actual spreadsheet that we had, that was done just before in advance. Of course there's a lot of these, as you can appreciate, and you've identified one number. As you lead towards October 31st, 2017, of course there's a cut-off date that we would have to do because you can't really do it right up until the 11th hour on October 31st, 2017.

So the actual number on the spreadsheet that was used is, if you add up all of the records, is 1,553. Out of those there is actually physical deficiencies, which is 1,207. And there's also a series of documents that were identified. They weren't necessarily having to be completed by, and I'll go through that in a moment, they wouldn't have to be completed by the final completion date, which would be specified as October 31st, 2018. And that was 346.

So if we have that split, there's documents that would be everything from test results or inspection test plan requirements, and so on. And I can go into that in a lot more detail. But about 22 per cent of them are documents, about 77 per cent are physical deficiencies.

Out of that, because it's a P3, a public-private partnership — and we've got to put the word "partnership" in it — actually the Regina Bypass Partners and the Regina Bypass Design Builders identified 716 of the 1,207. And MHI [Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure], our ministry with our team, we went out and we identified 491, which makes up that 1,207. So about a 60/40 split; in fact the Regina Bypass Partners themselves identified more than we did.

So it's a team effort. It's called commissioning. And of course that commissioning starts quite a bit in advance of the October 31st, 2017 date. In fact what the Regina Bypass Partners have to do is give a 90-day countdown notice that they are in fact going to achieve that. Then from that point on, what they do is they continue to work on these things.

And of course following both the list coming in, the independent certifier takes this list, all of those numbers that I was talking about, and they will review them themselves. So that's an independent certifier that is hired by both the Regina Bypass Partners and the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure. They take the two lists, they go out, they do an audit. They look at the lists and make sure that they are identified as minor deficiencies — in other words, those little green pieces of tape all over the house — and they would add that into the rest of the work that is substantially completed.

So the independent certifier, on October 31st, 2017, identified that a substantial completion for phase 1 of the Regina bypass which, just to remind everyone, extended from Highway 33 northward up to Tower Road and then out to Balgonie. Keep in mind that we advanced one whole interchange by one year through the various ways that we were able to partner together on the project. So that infrastructure was also brought into it in terms of commissioning and all of the exercise that was involved in that.

So the independent certifier looks at this. There was a substantial completion certificate issued that identified "substantially complete" along with this list that you're talking about. And so that list, what happens there is the independent certifier adds a duration of time on as well as a cost.

And that's the concern I would have, you know, I think we'd have to check that out in terms of the commercial confidentiality of the cost . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . But the list is what it is.

Ms. Sproule: — My question was, will you release that list that was referred to in your email of October 20th, 2017? That's all I'm asking you, Mr. Stearns. If you can't release it with the figure amounts, delete the amounts of the figures and just provide us with the list.

The Chair: — Ms. Sproule.

Ms. Sproule: — Is that something you will do?

The Chair: — Ms. Sproule, the email from 2017 is not part of the vote in the estimates that are on the table as well this evening.

Ms. Sproule: — So the ministry will refuse then?

The Chair: — The minister's officials are not refusing. Your question in the first place is inappropriate, based on the vote in the estimates that are on the table this evening. As I stated before, if it's something outside of the estimates, if you wish to put a motion on the table and the committee wishes to vote on it, you are welcome to do so.

Ms. Sproule: — Madam Chair, I asked written questions on this. I asked the minister in the House. We have petitions on the floor. And if I can't ask it in estimates, then where am I supposed to ask it?

The Chair: — Ms. Sproule, but the estimates are for the estimates that is on the table this evening, not from where you're taking them from.

Ms. Sproule: — And the estimates on the table this evening deal with amounts that have been spent on the Regina bypass, much of which would have been related to these minor deficiencies which Mr. Stearns so helpfully explained to us for 15 minutes. I just want a yes or no to that question. Obviously the answer is no. I can't get it here. I can't get it in the House. I can't get it in written questions and I cannot get it . . .

The Chair: — Mr. Stearns has agreed, as you heard from him, to go back and check because there might be some commercial sensitivity to it.

Ms. Sproule: — And can I ask the same for the major deficiencies?

Mr. Stearns: — Actually there is no such thing in the Regina bypass contract. So if we look at deficiencies and if we want to talk about what a minor deficiency is . . .

Ms. Sproule: — It's okay. I've got it in front of me.

Mr. Stearns: — Okay, you've got the contract?

Ms. Sproule: — The definitions. Yes.

Mr. Stearns: — So there is no such thing as a major deficiency in this contract. But if you wanted to look at the minor deficiency definition, you'll see that “. . . as the case may be, and which would not materially impair.” So if I would go back to the renovation of the home and there was, say, a wall missing, of course that's not substantially completed. You wouldn't be able to enjoy the benefit as part (a). So that you're looking at 1.265 clause.

Part (a), of course, “the public's or the Ministry's use and enjoyment of the Bypass,” if that's impaired, then of course the Regina Bypass Partners would not achieve substantial completion. Okay. The other one is “the performance of the Governmental Activities.” So what that really means is everything from overdimension loads to possibly overweight permits and that sort of thing.

The performance, the operation, maintenance, and rehab work by Project Co., which is the Regina Bypass Partners, so if they weren't able to undertake the operation and maintenance because, say, the road wasn't completed, then that would certainly impair.

And then the last and very important one is the “safety or traffic flow on the Bypass in any relevant respect.” So when we talk about minor deficiencies, there might be some minor things that, like a slope may have to be fixed up or something like that, and it's not a major, if you want to use that word, safety issue.

What I want to remind everybody is that before any part of the bypass is open to traffic, as part of this whole substantial completion process there must be an independent safety auditor report. So that independent safety auditor report is one of the documents that we would require in order to go ahead with substantial completion.

So to sum it up quickly, the October 31st, 2017 substantial completion date is comprised of two parts. Did they achieve substantial completion? The answer was yes. Were there some minor deficiencies as per this definition? The answer is yes, okay. That . . .

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Stearns. I need to move on.

Mr. Stearns: — Okay.

Ms. Sproule: — Because you've taken up a substantial amount of my available time explaining something that wasn't asked.

Mr. Stearns: — I'm sorry. I was just trying to . . .

Ms. Sproule: — So unfortunately I only have six minutes left. I want to turn to the auditor's report in terms of the problems you had with the original bypass. And I have some questions related to the Saskatoon bypass in this estimates year. And particularly, Madam Minister, I'm just wondering if you have completed the functional design study for the Saskatoon bypass, or Saskatoon freeway. I'm sorry.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So no, it's not completed. We actually just started the process. We've started some working groups. We've actually had our first meeting and we're just wrangling up all of our stakeholders at this current point in time. And that process is actually going to take three years to complete. So the answer is no, it's not done.

Ms. Sproule: — In terms of the auditor's report, the suggestion was that it should be done very quickly. Do you think three years is quickly?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So we just finished the general location study for this project, and as a rule the next step, the functional design, sometimes takes up to 10 years before we start. So the fact that we're starting it at this point in time, we actually are starting it quite quickly. And regarding the auditor's report, we've actually taken care of all of those items she asked for.

Ms. Sproule: — So the general location study was completed in February of 2018, and you're not sure if you'll be finished for 10 years, the functional design.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — No, that's actually not what I said. What I said was, as a rule, the functional design wouldn't even start for 10 years. So we have actually decided to start our functional design a lot sooner than what a normal process would take place.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you. The minister reported that you were working to initiate the functional design phase in January of 2018. Did that happen?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So we actually started the procurement of the people that we were going to have do this study for us back then, and now we've actually started with the actual functional plan by putting our stakeholder groups together.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you. In June of 2018 the process of replacing pipelines to accommodate the Regina bypass was just wrapping up, so the cost wasn't available. Can you provide the committee with that cost today?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So because the project is still under way we don't actually have the finalized numbers for that, so that's not something we can provide.

Ms. Sproule: — Who was clearing the snow from the sections owned by the P3 consortium?

Hon. Ms. Carr: — So as per the contract, it's the Regina Bypass Partners that are taking care of all of the operating and maintenance.

Ms. Sproule: — Has the Saskatchewan government incurred any

additional or unplanned costs for the bypass that were not accounted for within the P3 contract? In terms of the Pinkie Road interchange, have you got total costs for the revamp that was required to tear down the existing \$43 million interchange and replace it?

[20:30]

Mr. Antunes: — So, you know, as on any project there are things that come up as you're going through the project. Some are positive; some are negative. So there are, you know, things that we didn't anticipate that have been an extra cost. There's been other things that we've been able to make savings on. But at the end of the day, the bottom line, those balance out. And we're actually on time and on budget on the project.

And you know, with regards to, you know, about the interchange on Highway 1 West, I mean a majority . . . A lot of that interchange is actually being reused, and it's being reconfigured to be a systems-level interchange. So there's an additional functionality that's coming with that interchange that is part of the bypass project.

The Chair: — The time for this evening's . . . The time allotted for this evening's estimates has now expired. And I'll offer the opportunity, Minister, if you have any wrap-up comments or thank yous you'd like to make.

Hon. Ms. Carr: — Yes. Just briefly I'd just like to take the time to thank Ms. Sproule and Mr. Belanger for being here and asking questions, to the committee for sitting here all night, and of course to all of my officials who have helped me out and answered questions on our ministry's behalf. And thank you very much.

The Chair: — Ms. Sproule. No? Thank you, everyone. This committee now stands adjourned to the call of . . . Oh, I'd ask a member to move a motion of adjournment. Mr. Nerlien so moved. All agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. This committee now stands adjourned to the call of the Chair. Thank you, everyone.

[The committee adjourned at 20:31.]