



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 27th Legislature
Fourth Session

Standing Committee
on
Community Services

Department of Tourism, Parks and Recreation
Consideration of Main Estimates

Tuesday, March 15, 2011
6:30 p.m.

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Fourth Session**

Standing Committee on Community Services

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6:30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 15, 2011

[Mr. Doerksen in the chair]

Department of Tourism, Parks and Recreation
Consideration of Main Estimates

The Chair: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I would like to welcome everyone to the Standing Committee on Community Services. The committee has under consideration this evening the estimates of the Department of Tourism, Parks and Recreation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2012. I'd like to remind everyone that the usual rules regarding electronic devices, food, and beverages in the Chamber continue to apply.

Members and staff should be aware that all the proceedings of the policy field committees in their consideration of the budget estimates are being video streamed. The minister whose department's estimates are under review this evening is seated in the designated location, and all other members wishing to speak must do so from their assigned seat in the Chamber. I would also remind members to please stand when you're speaking.

A few process review items that we need to review. The speaking order and times are prescribed by the standing orders and Government Motion 5, passed on February 23, 2011, and are as follows: the minister may make opening comments not to exceed 10 minutes; for the hour that follows, members of the Official Opposition and the minister may speak; for the next 20 minutes the members of the third party, the Wildrose Alliance, and the minister may speak; for the next 20 minutes the members of the fourth party, the New Democratic Party, and the minister may speak; for the next 20 minutes the members of any other party represented in the Assembly and any independent members and the minister may speak; following that, any member may speak in the time that remains. Within this sequence members may speak more than once; however, speaking time is limited to not more than 10 minutes at a time.

A minister and a member may combine their time for a total of 20 minutes. Members are asked to advise the chair at the beginning of their speech if they plan to combine their time with the minister's time.

Committee members, ministers, and other members who are not committee members may participate. Department officials and staff may be present but will not be addressing the committee this evening.

Three hours have been scheduled to consider the estimates of the Department of Tourism, Parks and Recreation. If the debate is exhausted prior to three hours, the department's estimates are deemed to have been considered for the time allotted in the schedule, and we will adjourn; otherwise, we will adjourn at 9:30 p.m.

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

I'd also remind members that voting on the estimates is deferred until Committee of Supply on April 20, 2011.

Any amendments must be reviewed by Parliamentary Counsel no later than 6 p.m. on the day they are to be moved. There are none this evening. An amendment to the estimates cannot seek to increase the amount of the estimates being considered, change the destination of a grant, or change the destination or purpose of a subsidy. An amendment may be proposed to reduce an estimate, but the amendment cannot propose to reduce the estimate by its full amount.

The vote on estimates is also deferred until Committee of Supply, April 20, 2011. Twenty-five copies of amendments must be provided at the meeting for committee members and staff.

With regard to written responses a written response by the office of the Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation to questions deferred during the course of this meeting can be tabled in the Assembly by the minister or through the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly for the benefit of all MLAs.

With that, I would like to invite the Minister of the Department of Tourism, Parks and Recreation to begin remarks.

Mr. Johnston: Could I just ask a question? Just one question. Sorry, Minister. You went through the sequence pretty quickly, and I didn't get that. I wonder if you could just repeat that. Who's first, the parties.

The Chair: The sequence of speaking this evening? First of all, the minister has 10 minutes. The first hour will be at the discretion of the Official Opposition and the minister. Following that, for 20 minutes the third party, the Wildrose Alliance. The next 20 minutes will be the fourth party, the New Democrats. Then for the 20 minutes following that, any member may speak.

Mr. Johnston: Thank you. Sorry, Chair. Sorry, Minister.

Mrs. Ady: Thank you very much. I'm pleased to be here to discuss Tourism, Parks and Recreation's estimates for 2011-12. Joining me is my deputy minister, Bill Werry; the senior financial officer, Cam Steenveld; the assistant deputy minister for parks, Jay Nagendran; the assistant deputy minister for tourism, Reegan McCullough; the assistant deputy minister for recreation and sport development, Tim Moorhouse; the communications director, Anne Douglas.

The ministry's mission is to create conditions for a vibrant and successful tourism industry, to manage and conserve provincial parks for the benefit of all Albertans and future generations, and to promote active, healthy lifestyles through sports and recreation. The ministry's total operating expense for 2011-12 is \$167 million. This is a 3.5 per cent reduction from the 2010-11 forecast due to lower collections under the tourism levy in 2009-2010, which is the basis for this year's tourism funding.

There is a small increase in the provincial parks budget and virtually no change to the recreation sports development budget this year. This budget will allow us to stay the course, and we'll not have to reduce any services to Albertans.

The decrease in tourism funding is about \$15 million this year. While this is a significant number, the budget is based on tourism levy revenue collected two years earlier, so the Travel Alberta board has wisely set aside a contingency fund to minimize the impact of the anticipated decrease.

Budget 2011 provides \$59.9 million to tourism-related initiatives. Travel Alberta will receive 80 per cent of that amount, \$49 million, for marketing programs to maintain Alberta's competitive position. National and international marketing will continue to build on our success at the 2010 Olympics. Resources will be allocated to Internet and social media marketing strategies, and Travel Alberta will actively pursue exciting new opportunities to promote Alberta in new markets like China. Domestic and regional marketing is also vital, and the successful campaigns to attract visitors from around Alberta and other provinces will continue. Albertans actually account for more than 50 per cent of the province's tourism revenue.

Previously, regional marketing, including the Stay campaign, was done under a contracted agency. To improve efficiency and streamline administration, that contract was not renewed, and in 2011-12 regional marketing personnel will become employees of Travel Alberta. You'll see this reflected in the increase of 18 FTEs for Travel Alberta on page 329.

The remaining 20 per cent of the tourism levy funding, \$13 million, will be spent within the department on tourism development and research, investment attraction, and marketing support.

In addition, we plan to implement a new tourism development strategy this year. This strategy will guide our efforts to expand the range of experiences, products, and destinations that we have to offer visitors. This is a key aspect of remaining a competitive and vital economic growth area in communities across the province.

We'll also continue to work to attract investment to Alberta tourism projects and expand our research to get solid data on the return of our tourism investment. We believe that we're providing Albertans with good value, and we want hard evidence to back that up.

On the international front we'll continue to lobby the federal government for more open skies air service agreements to allow the market to determine the air services to and from Alberta. We know that providing direct air access to Alberta is crucial for a more competitive tourism industry. Many visitors to Alberta enter Canada through gateways like Vancouver or Toronto. Open skies are also critical to landlocked Alberta, and my department has strong support for this initiative from International and Intergovernmental Relations and Transportation.

Budget 2011-12 proposes \$71.6 million for provincial parks. This is an increase of 3.1 per cent over the 2010-11 forecast. A further \$13.6 million in capital investment is planned. This budget will allow us to open – I'm so thrilled about this – the Glenbow Ranch provincial park this summer. That land, as you know, was purchased in 2007, and we've been working to get it ready to welcome the public over the past three years. The park conserves more than 3,200 acres of spectacular natural landscape between Calgary and Cochrane. These lands also span 14 kilometres of the Bow River shoreline and play an important role in the ecosystem that provides clean drinking water for the city of Calgary. Four new FTEs will be added to operate the new park, and a further eight FTEs will be added to put more boots on the ground in parks across the province.

6:40

User fees for online campground reservations and changes will be increasing by \$2 in Budget 2011-12. Our goal is to move toward cost recovery for this service over time. By leveraging federal funds, we were able to add the campground at Little Bow provincial park to the service this year. It seems many Albertans think this was a good idea as all the reservable campsites at the Little Bow were booked for the May long weekend on the first day. The tourism budget also supports operating expenses for the online reservation service as it provides clear tourism benefits. This reflects our strategy to use funds effectively across the department and to provide services in a way that makes sense to Albertans. It's also important to note that Albertans don't have to pay reservation fees to enjoy camping. There are 170 other campgrounds that offer sites on a first-come, first-served basis.

Over the past two years we have leveraged federal and partner funds for whatever there was as far as opportunities went, and combined with the capital funds voted over the previous six years, we've been able to replace or upgrade infrastructure and facilities across the parks system. With that in mind, on a short-term basis we are reallocating \$4.4 million from capital funding to operations. What this will mean is that some larger projects will be completed over a longer period of time. Critical, ongoing maintenance in smaller projects will continue, and Albertans should not experience any decrease in services or standards.

With more than \$250 million in capital investment over the past six years, about 73 per cent of park infrastructure is estimated to be in good or fair condition. We'll continue to invest in these important assets.

Over the coming year my ministry will continue to support implementation of the land-use framework as you will note with the strategies highlighted in our business plan.

In addition to the obvious land-use framework linkage with parks our recreation and sports division is working on a multi-use corridor strategy for tourism and recreation trails on public lands. With regard to recreation and sport, Budget 2011 will allow us to continue the current level of funding and support for more than 100 provincial associations. Through sports and recreation foundations these organizations deliver recreation, sport, and active-living programs to Albertans.

We have to keep working to counteract the trends toward inactivity and the health and wellness consequences of sedentary lifestyles. Budget 2012 allocates just over \$28 million to support recreation, sport, and active-living programs. The majority of that funding, more than \$26 million, is provided through the Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation. We will continue to support programs and services to encourage Albertans to lead more active lives and to help athletes strive for excellence in sports.

This year's budget also includes funding to support hosting of the 2015 Western Canada Summer Games in an Alberta city chosen by the Canada Summer Games committee in early summer. An event like this attracts significant visitors from across the country, and the hosting experience is included in the tourism budget.

I believe that this budget is responsible and prudent. We have streamlined and reduced administrative costs and found efficiencies wherever we could. We'll continue to look for opportunities to leverage funds and share costs with partners, and we're using technology to ensure that we maximize revenue in marketing opportunities. Most importantly, this budget supports programs and services that contribute to Albertans' good quality of life and helps to ensure that our province continues to be a great place to live, work, and visit.

Thank you, and I welcome your questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

The first hour will be designated to Mr. Chase. Do you wish to share the time with the minister, or are you just going to read questions into the record?

Mr. Chase: For the first part, the first two sections for sure, I'd like to go the 10 minutes to myself and then listen to the responses in the minister's 10 minutes.

The Chair: Begin, please. Thank you.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. To begin with, Minister and supporters of tourism, recreation, and parks, which to me is the most important part of your portfolio, I want to thank you for being here tonight. I also want to begin by thanking my researcher Ben Whynot, who has put a tremendous amount of what I would refer to as ammunition into the Gatling gun approach that I will be using a little bit later in my debate. I do want to put on the record that for each of the 30 minutes allowed to me, we'll be discussing approximately 5 and a half million dollars of budgeting per minute; therefore, I don't want to waste time.

As I say, I'm going to depart from my usual procedure somewhat to put on the record an e-mail that I received from Angeles

Mendoza – and this was copied to all the members of the House – addressed to the Hon. Ed Stelmach, Premier of Alberta.

To the Honourable Members of the Provincial Government/Legislative Assembly

I hope that you have decided to vote against logging the Castle Wilderness and protect our water supply. The Oldman and Bow rivers bring to Calgary that is captured in the watershed of the Castle. So far our environment continues to be impaired by the cumulative effects of economic activities that should be prevented to the effective implementation of environmental legislation and the protection of biodiversity-rich hot spots such as the Castle.

More than 1,000 experts and protected area managers from various countries, many of them from Canada and the USA, are gathering at the Biannual meeting of the George Wright Society in New Orleans. Today I gave a presentation and talked about the relevance of the Castle Wilderness for the water supply of southern Alberta, the preservation of ecosystem services that sustain our quality of life and our economy, and the protection of species and ecosystems in North America.

I would be . . . happy if I could tell my audience that the Members of the Legislature of Alberta voted against logging in the Castle.

It was very sad to tell the audience that the Castle is scheduled for clear-cut logging. That its old growth forests are not protected and will very likely disappear soon. It was heartbreaking to tell the international audience that no action has been taken to protect the ecosystem that is crucial for the survival of numerous species that are shared between Canada, the USA and Mexico, such as large mammals and migratory birds. This, this despite the existence of international agreements to protect species and ecosystems.

The worst, for me as an Albertan and Canadian, was to acknowledge that we are failing to protect the natural systems that support the ecosystem services that we still enjoy. It was the worst, because in Latin America and Africa I have seen in other parts of the world how people are suffering because of lack of water, the pollution of rivers, and the poor air quality that result from the loss of forests. That may be our future and only you can prevent it from becoming our reality.

The cumulative value of the Castle as a protected wilderness is much more in terms of water supply, clean air, mitigation of climate change, tourism revenues, and a healthy environment than the price of the wood that can be extracted from it.

When I come back to Canada, I will know what you, our elected representatives have decided for the Castle. PLEASE, remember that is not . . . the future of a piece of land that is on the table. Is our future, the future of our children, and the future of our livelihoods.

Today some people heard me talking. Later, people in Canada and around the world will see how we are doing as stewards of our natural capital.

I am eager to get a response from each one of you and to hear from you what steps our Provincial Government is taking to protect our natural areas and create consistency among the land use decisions, future legislation for Alberta parks, the Land Use Framework, the Water for Life strategy, and the Cumulative Effects Regulatory Framework.

Last year in the fall I was extremely pleased when the minister at least postponed or pulled the Alberta Parks Act, Bill 29, because there's no doubt that that act required further work. My concern continues to be that the land-use framework has not been either legislated or, therefore, able to be enforced. Without that guide as to the usage of our regions, there are no rules, so people create their own rules. What's happening now in the Castle is an example of a lack of enforcement of the very weak rules that we have.

6:50

The letter writer talked about animal migratory patterns. On this past Friday, Dave Mabell in the *Lethbridge Herald*, March 12, talked about the Yellowstone to Yukon route, and the Castle is a key part, a key segment, in that route, which allows for animal migration all the way from down south in the Yellowstone up to our Yukon. Without that ability to travel many species are endangered, but the most regal of those species is the grizzly.

My feeling is that you cannot deal in isolated portfolios. You cannot have Tourism, Parks and Recreation in this silo, Sustainable Resources in another silo, and over here we have Environment. Unless we see the three ministries working together, I am very afraid for the future of this province.

Now, the Gatling gun. Data from Statistics Canada for 2008 reports that Alberta generated \$5.7 billion in revenue from its tourism industry and had over 22.7 million visits. That's from Travel Alberta business strategy 2010-13, page 10.

I will be providing references, so anyone following tonight's debate or considering the importance of Tourism, Parks and Recreation will be able to see the citations and do the research for themselves.

Overall spending on tourism programs was reduced by \$15 million from the 2010-11 forecast of \$74.5 million to \$59.4 million. This decrease is largely due to reduced assistance to Travel Alberta. The \$12.2 million from the 2010-11 forecast is a result of an anticipated decrease in revenue from the tourism levy.

Given that Travel Alberta's reserve fund only amounts to \$6 million, can the minister offer any insight into how the corporation will absorb the remaining funding gap? Which program areas will be reduced or eliminated? Will Travel Alberta reduce staff levels, close information centres, or reduce hours of operation? Has Travel Alberta adjusted any of its metrics or goals in light of these funding reductions? Will the goal of the \$6.2 billion in tourism revenue by 2013 still be achievable?

Since the tourism levy is not expected to return to previous strength in either 2012-13 or 2013-14 and that the corporation is without further reserves, is the minister exploring any options for assisting the corporation, or will Travel Alberta have to live with whatever revenue is allocated to them from the tourism levy? Is there a long-term savings or reserve strategy to stabilize Travel Alberta? When will the minister reopen the memorandum of understanding between the department and Travel Alberta, which is set to expire in 2014? Why is Travel Alberta receiving \$46.5 million in assistance from the tourism levy when the levy generated \$60 million in 2009-10? Is the department keeping the balance to fund its own programs and forcing Travel Alberta to simply make do?

When the minister was over in Germany talking to groups about increasing German tourism, at home I was receiving information from members of the bourse tourism department in Germany indicating their concerns about what was happening here at home and their reluctance to visit as a result, and Germany has been one of our main providers of tourists.

The forecast for tourism information services is \$1.25 million more in 2010-11 than the budgeted amount, but the estimate for 2011-12 reduces this line even further below the previous budget amounts, estimates 2011-12, line item 2.2, page 322. What accounted for overspending in this line by 36 per cent? Did unanticipated demand, perhaps as a result of more Albertans choosing to travel in-province, require greater than anticipated spending, or is the additional spending a one-time expense? Given the variance between the 2010-11 budget and forecast, why is the ministry choosing to reduce this line to the 2010-11 budgeted amount?

Major athletic events tourism services came in under the 2010-11 budgeted amount by \$279,000. The estimate for 2011-12, however, shows an increase of \$306,000 to \$1 million, estimates 2011-12, line item 2.5, page 322. What major athletic events will be supported by this million dollar budget? Why was a similarly sized allocation underspent by almost a third in 2010-11?

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chase. We'll provide the next 10 minutes for the minister, please.

Mrs. Ady: Well, once again, more questions than I can answer in 10 minutes, so I hope the hon. member appreciates that we might be responding in writing to some of these questions.

Let's talk about the Castle, since you raised it first and foremost. I know that you've asked me questions even in this Assembly about the Castle, and I continue to remind the hon. member that the Castle at this point in time is not a park, and that's why I always say that you're going to have to direct your questions to the minister of sustainable resources because that's where that land sits at this point in time.

Do I recognize the Castle as a special area, something that's beautiful? Yes. I've been there. I've toured it. It is. Remember that we're using the land-use framework to help set up, and Parks is working in lockstep with Sustainable Resources and all other departments on the land-use framework. When we look at that south Saskatchewan region, it's of course in that region. When that RAC is complete and reports back and we then respond as government, that's when I might be able – truthfully, my colleagues always accuse me of trying to make the entire province a park because, of course, I would. Even where my house sits, I'd love for that to be a park as well. But any decisions regarding additional protection or new recreation and tourism opportunities will be guided by that regional planning process. That is the process for the designation of new parks.

We have been encouraging all Albertans to become involved in the development of the land-use framework regional plans, the RACs, that are coming back to government. As I said before, we're going to continue to work with Sustainable Resource Development on those. But until such time as that work gets completed, it's difficult for me to speak about something that doesn't sit within my department. At this point in time it does not.

There are other things that we have to consider. We have to consider community support, local impacts, existing resource commitments, and we know that in the Castle area there are some complex issues happening, and that's why I think that the RAC is going to be such important work in that region. For instance, part of the area being proposed for a new wildland provincial park is Crown land with existing energy and forestry commitments at this time. That's something that has to be worked out.

Another important factor is community support. As you know, from the plan from Parks we always talked about how support just can't come from areas not existing in the region that we're talking about. At times we've come in and said, "This will be a park" but never checked with the neighbours, and consequently they felt shut out from processes. So the plan for parks really focused on allowing them to have input into what happens in their neighbourhood.

We see, despite polls, that there's not unanimous support. Last year the mayor of Pincher Creek said that the council voted against supporting the proposal. I've also heard concerns from some ranchers, you know, and different groups that are obviously speaking to us as well. It's a complex issue. It's one of the reasons I think that the RAC needs to exist: so that you have an overarching framework over an area. I do think this is going to be a very

important RAC when it comes under discussion, when we actually go over the recommendations for the area.

Again, it's not in my purview at this point in time. If it joins, I'd be happy to receive it into the parks, but until that situation comes to be, it's difficult for me to discuss it from a budgetary standpoint.

As far as us working in silos, I would say to you, hon. member, that the land-use framework has been a very good exercise in pulling us out of our silos. We sit around the table with our deputies all present and the ministers all present, we receive those recommendations back from those that are set up over each different RAC, and we have that discussion. So it's not just me sitting amongst the parks department talking about what we would like to see. We have to balance that out with all the other departments, and I think it has been a wonderful exercise in pulling us out of our silos and starting to say: "What are the impacts in this region? How do we plan on saying this piece of land has to have under consideration all things?"

Parks definitely gets to play a role in that, and I've always been very happy to be at that table. I think it's important that we're there. For the future of recreation and the conservation of lands for this province I think it's absolutely critical that we're there. I think that we're moving along in that area, and I'm actually encouraged when I look at that work.

7:00

You talked about the tourism levy, and you started to ask questions about what's moving in and out and are we letting Travel Alberta down. I think that it's important for you to recognize that the tourism levy is actually done two years kind of behind. So we have the benefit which other portfolios don't have of actually getting to forecast forward. The tourism levy dramatically jumped during the boom, right in front of the recession, and we saw a huge increase in the tourism levy for the first time, especially as we became a Crown corporation.

The new corporate board. One of the reasons why we wanted there to be a corporate board was so that they could start to manage it not on a year-to-year basis but as a business would. They looked forward, saw what those numbers were looking like, and said: we need to have some kind of a sustainability fund because we know that the numbers are going up today, but they're going to dip two years out. So they placed those funds aside at this point in time. I can tell you that the Travel Alberta corporation is feeling very comfortable because they were allowed to create that sustainability fund and they didn't have to spend all the money in the given year. They could actually create it to manage the dip that's coming, so they were able to plan forward and are feeling very comfortable at this point in time. Even though they now seem to be in a reduced position, they are not. They're going to use their sustainability fund. They've got the plan in place. In fact, we're launching some of the most exciting things that I've seen in a long time in the tourism strategy stuff that we're working on. I just can't say enough about where I think the Travel Alberta corporation is heading. I'm really pleased with it.

As you know, Travel Alberta helps the Alberta tourism industry. It's helping it to grow by more sharply focusing their marketing strategy targeted at Alberta, British Columbia, and a number of high-yield markets. They're really focusing on those. I hope I'll have a little bit of time to speak to that later, but I've only got 10 minutes now, so I'll wait and maybe answer that when it comes up a little bit later.

We will not be assisting the Travel Alberta corporation. One of the things that we did when we brought the corporation into being was – here's 4 per cent of the hotel tax that will go into a levy, and

we committed to the corporation that they would get 80 per cent of that, whether it was up or whether it was down, but they could not come back to government and ask for them to pick up short-falls. They had to manage like a business manages. They were very comfortable with that because they knew they had that levy, that they could count on it, and they weren't waiting year by year to see what government would or wouldn't be able to put into their budgets. So they were very comfortable with it. They know they have to live within it and that we as government will not be stepping in. That will always be determined by the actual levy.

As you know, 20 per cent will always go in to help us within the department on the development of product and those types of opportunities that we do within the department. I'm pretty comfortable with those numbers, but we will get some answers for you in writing on your specific line item questions.

You mentioned Germany. It's interesting that you were having the one conversation, but I spent many days at the ITB meeting with tourism operators. The beauty of the German market is that 90 per cent of tourists still book through travel agencies there. It's different from the rest of the world, which is getting very fragmented in how it books vacations. A lot of that is driven by the fact that in Europe they have a four- to six-week vacation window every year. I know it's something we'd all love to have. We don't, but they do in Europe. So they tend to take long, extended vacations, and they set those up through travel agents because they want a really good experience. They're going in for a long time. It's a big commitment for them; they're planning on spending a fair amount of money on their vacation every year.

We're very excited, actually, that in the last year direct entries out of the German market were up 12 per cent into the province of Alberta. We know there was a bit of a recession, a bit of a slow-down. We're now seeing the increase come out of the German market again. So when you say that people are not planning on coming, our numbers indicate exactly the opposite, that we're up by 12 per cent. In my meetings with tourism operators they're very bullish on Alberta. They feel like this is the right product for them and that they will continue to sell it. We spent many hours talking about who wants to come, how they want to come, and what they want to have when they get here. That's what we're trying to respond to, making sure that we have the product and the type of experience that the German market wants because they're our second most important international market by far, England being first. Of course, our first international will always be the U.S., even though we are still seeing some dip in that market at this time.

So I'm surprised by your comment because our numbers indicate exactly the opposite coming out of the German market. Their economy is, actually, quite buoyant compared to other European markets, so they're not feeling some of the same pinches that they would still be feeling in England. We're actually very excited about the German market. I can speak about that later as well when we have longer.

As far as the major athletic events, funding the \$1 million . . . [Mrs. Ady's speaking time expired] Maybe I can answer that question later.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister. That marks the end of your first 10-minute segment.

Mr. Chase, the next 10 minutes is at your discretion.

Mr. Chase: I very much appreciate that the minister has expressed a willingness to respond in writing to the numerous questions that I will put on the record.

The minister expressed her limitations with regard to the management of the Castle-Crown, and I would remind the minister that since 2005 I have called on a series of ministers to declare the Castle-Crown protected as the Andy Russell I'tai Sah Kòp park of approximately a thousand square kilometres. Hopefully, that declaration will occur during your remaining time as minister. Long live the minister.

Why does the department appear to be prioritizing funds for tourism services at major athletic events over hosting major athletic events here in the province? This comes from line item 4.4. Hosting major athletic events has been zeroed out in 2010-11 and again in 2011-12.

Tourism strategy was budgeted at \$1.088 million in 2010-11, but the forecast is only \$603,000. The estimate for this line item is zero for 2011-12, estimates 2011-12, line item 2.6, page 322.

The business plan for 2010-13, page 272, mentions implementing a tourism development strategy as strategy 1.1, but there's no mention of such a strategy in the 2011-14 business plan. Given that this line item is zeroed out in 2011-12, is the identified tourism strategy completed, or has it merely been suspended? If the former, when will the minister produce the strategy? If the latter, why did the minister choose to suspend the initiative? Why was this item under budget by \$485,000? Were aspects of the original strategy not completed to save funds? Could the minister outline how the \$603,000 was spent?

The government of China extended approved destination status to Canada in December 2009, an important distinction in that it makes pleasure travel possible for millions of middle-class Chinese citizens. The Conference Board of Canada has estimated that the approved destination status will double the yearly rate of travel of Chinese tourists to Canada by 2015. Given that 2010 was the first full year that Canada held approved destination status, could the minister comment on whether the government's expectations for Chinese tourist activity in Alberta have been met?

[Mr. Johnston in the chair]

A story in the *Calgary Herald* dated December 10, 2010, quotes China's consul general to Alberta as saying that we are behind Ontario and British Columbia in terms of our marketing programs in China. Does the minister disagree with the consul general? What kinds of initiatives is the department as well as Travel Alberta undertaking to compete against other Canadian provinces for a greater share of Chinese tourism dollars? What performance targets or goals does Alberta have in terms of Chinese tourists visiting the province? Why do the department's business plan and performance measures not contain any mention of the important new market, particularly when the consul general says that, quote, measures should be taken to make Alberta more popular with Chinese people. End of quote.

Given that the legislation mentions tourism at several points, what role, if any, will the department have in the new Asia advisory council, presuming passage of Bill 1 in the Legislature? Will the department have an opportunity to provide input to the Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations on the membership of the council?

Earlier last year a coalition of U.S. environmental groups launched a publicity campaign called Rethink Alberta intended to dissuade individuals from travelling to Alberta until the province cleaned up the oil sands. Earlier this month 23 tourism and recreation businesses located in southwest Alberta issued an industry-wide advisory warning for future investment in the region due to the government's desire to proceed with clear-cut logging in the Castle wilderness, which this government euphemistically refers

to as block cutting. What it means is annihilating a block, a block, a block. Does the minister have any data or statistics estimating the impact of the Rethink Alberta campaign on the province's tourism industry?

Is the minister concerned that the fallout from the logging program in the Castle could weaken the local tourism and recreation industry? This is the first sight that American tourists have, basically, crossing the border. How many expensive black eyes is the department willing to take because of its real and perceived environmental indifferences?

7:10

Parks. The overall parks budget was reduced by \$8.8 million from the 2009-10 actual to a total of \$47 million budgeted in 2010-11. However, forecasted spending for the year climbed to \$51 million, and a number of the reductions made in the previous year's budget were minimized. It seems that we are robbing Peter to pay Paul, and it's the tourism side that gets robbed this time.

[Mr. Doerksen in the chair]

Overall parks spending in 2011-12 is estimated at approximately \$54 million, an increase of about \$6.4 million, or 13.5 per cent, from the budgeted amount for 2010-11, page 322 of estimates 2011-12. Minister, you'll never hear me complain about increases to the parks budget. Are the increases in the department's budget for this year an admission that the reductions in last year's budget were not feasible and compromised park services to Albertans, as the Official Opposition pointed out at that time? You know me. I'd like posters for conservation officers: apply here.

Given that the 2010-11 budgeted amount and forecast for program support are so exact, why is the department increasing the amount by \$425,000, which almost doubles the amount in this line? Estimates 2011-12, line item 3.1, page 322. What will this increase go towards? Will it be used to expand the number of staffers working within the department? Did the ministry conduct any kind of review or assessment of park program supports that indicated that increased funding was necessary? Where were the weaknesses in the ministry's program supports? Is this a one-time increase, or does the ministry intend, if able, to maintain this higher level of program support?

Priority initiative 2.2 of the ministry's business plan commits the department to continue with the implementation of new parks legislation, business plan 2011-14, page 111. Is there a proportion of the \$5.5 million allocated for the parks policy and planning set aside for conducting a more intensive consultation process for new parks legislation? Estimates 2011-12, line item 3.2, page 322. More specifically, is the minister looking at more personalized and meaningful consultation such as town halls or open forums rather than a short online survey? Madam Minister, this is something I've asked in terms of the Alberta parks Bill 29 review. Please get out there. Don't sit back and let the computer do the work. It's the face to face.

Does the minister have a timeframe for the consultation process and for bringing back altered legislation? You know from your discussions with the Sierra Club and Canadian Parks and Wilderness that they don't see this legislation as being amendable. They believe that we need more parks and we need more plans for managing those parks.

Parks infrastructure management was budgeted for a decrease of \$2.85 million in 2010-11, but forecasted spending reached \$6.575 million. The department estimates spending \$7 million in 2011-12, closer to the \$7.9 million spent in 2009-10, estimates 2011-12, line item 3.4, page 322. What drove the higher than anticipated spending on park infrastructure in 2010-11? Did the

ministry determine that the spending reductions budgeted for were excessive and threatened the integrity of certain park facilities? Where will the ministry concentrate the additional funds for infrastructure estimated for 2011-12? Cataract Creek would be a nice potential. Which park facilities will see infrastructure upgrades? Will these facilities be evenly dispersed throughout the province, or does the ministry have a priority list?

The business plan for 2010-13 indicated in a note that the department was developing a performance measure on the condition of park facilities, page 274. Why is this indicator not presented or indicated as still in development in the business plan for 2011-14? How can the department not have a measure for such a crucial aspect of park management, especially when the ministry routinely boasts about its \$200 million investment in park infrastructure from 2004-05 to 2008-09? How can those investments be properly assessed when the department does not have indicators on the conditions of park facilities?

Given that the business plan identifies priority initiative 2.4 as managing park infrastructure to address the changing needs of Alberta's growing population, how will this initiative be met when the department's plans do not appear to include adding new parks to the system to accommodate the size of our population? Business plan 2011-14, page 111. Perhaps related to the above priority list, what capital projects is the ministry intending with the \$12.4 million budgeted for capital projects under parks infrastructure management? Estimates 2011-12, line item 3.4, page 323. Why, when the ministry's business plan . . . [Mr. Chase's speaking time expired]

Mrs. Ady: Okay. Hon. member, I don't know how far we'll get again, but what we don't get, we'll send you in writing, obviously. I'm sure that other members will bring up additional questions, so I can kind of backfill later.

Your first question out of the gate was on line 4.4, and it was about the hosting piece. I know that might be a bit unclear, but what we're in essence doing is transferring from the tourism levy, that's within parks department, over to sports and rec for major sporting facilities – there's a million dollars in there – because we consider that to be a tourism activity. A great example would've been the Arctic Winter Games that we just had in Grande Prairie. I met with them today. They're still talking about the legacy that was left in Grande Prairie after the games and how much activity comes to their hotels, their restaurants. In all ways the Grey Cup would have been a great example for the city of Edmonton this year. You've got a lot happening, a lot of things that come. I do consider it a tourism piece, so we are pulling it out of the development fund and moving it within the department over to sports and recreation. It gives us the opportunity to help support some of those initiatives.

We've got the Western Canada Games coming, and I think there will be others. We will always see others. I would love to see, of course, another Olympics come to this province, but I think I'll have to live another 20 years in government if I want to be here when it happens. We know what the World Cup and all of those things bring to the province, and we think they have benefits to tourism.

You asked me about China, and I wanted to spend a minute on China. You're right. We finally got ADS. How long did we seek that approved destination status? You can't openly go out there and commercialize yourself in China without it. Yet it probably took us longer to get it than anywhere else in the world. We thought we'd be first for a while, and we almost ended up in the last position.

That being said, we were at work before ADS came along. We're probably one of the few provinces – I know that as the

minister I've been to China three times. When I was at the federal-provincial-territorial meetings this last year, the other provinces' ministers were getting together with the federal minister and going to China for the first time. I hear what he's saying as far as how he's viewing our strategy, but I would say that that's not true. We were there when they launched the Perfect Family piece. I was probably the only minister there doing press for our province.

As well, we actually participate right now in a joint office with Saskatchewan and British Columbia in China. I went and toured that when I was in Shanghai. We have on the ground an office there helping us with that development.

I think it's important, too, to understand that China is a very big country. You can go in there and decide that you understand how to attract a tourist in China, and you might not understand. We're learning some things by those who got ADS status early – Australia is a great example – who had hiccups initially when they brought in their Chinese tourists. We're trying to make sure that we learn those lessons from them. As well, we're learning that the Chinese tourist doesn't necessarily do things the way our other international guests have done them. Sometimes they like to take a picture in front of the venue, but they don't actually buy a ticket to go into the venue. They just want to be able to prove they were there, right? There's a bit of a different cultural thing that's happening. We've got people on the ground with Travel Alberta that understand it and are helping us wind our way through it.

The visa will become and is another very big issue there. We're working with the CTC. The one lesson that we have learned, and I can't emphasize this enough, is that when you get out in the big world – and I was just at the ITB in Berlin. There were 180 countries there. Iraq and Iran were there for the first time. I was quite surprised to see them at a tourism conference. All those countries are there. You're in this big world, and you're competing for tourists. You start to realize that Canada is about this big on the world stage and that everybody is clanging the drum and trying to attract attention.

7:20

What we have learned and have worked very closely on with what is now the Canadian Tourism Commission is that the world sees Canada; they don't necessarily see Alberta. So we have found that if we hunt in a pack, we all do better. If we will go out and help the CTC brand Canada, then we can say: we'll break into regions after the fact. In fact, we've started different campaigns in Germany, for example, this year alone where it wasn't Alberta, it was western Canada. We're now saying to British Columbia: "You know, tourists can't see where we drew a line down the Rocky Mountains. They don't really distinguish our border. They see western Canada and eastern Canada if they see a division at all." So you can go to China, and you can try as much as you want to say Alberta, Alberta, Alberta, but they're seeing Canada, at best, at this point in time.

We need to recognize that we work better when we all go over there together and market Canada and make it a must-see destination and then bring them in and start to designate the different provinces. As much as we are competing, we've got to do some groups hugs here because if we don't, we're going to be a little tiny voice and an even tinier voice. We have to be very careful about that.

I would say to you that we've got some very good strategies going into China. Our marketing programs are going to prove effective, and I think that as you see them unfold and develop over time, you're going to see that we did the right things in the early days in that market and in not making what I call major mistakes. I think that's important in a new country that you're hoping to

have a really good relationship with over time, particularly when we look at their numbers. As I said before, we've got an office over there now.

The Rethink Alberta campaign. Right in the middle of Stampede week, which is a great big moment in our province – you know, we were in there; we were feeling pretty warm. It was not the warmest summer, but we were feeling warm about it, and right in the middle of it we have this Rethink Alberta campaign. I have to tell you that I was a bit offended. I was offended by the Rethink Alberta campaign, and the reason that I was offended was that it attacked an industry that is probably the greenest industry that we have in this province.

I said to them at the time: why are you attacking probably the most environmentally friendly folks in the province, the people that actually love the land, that are taking care of the land? I even told the story of when I went on my horseback ride up to the Blue Mountains this summer with Mac Makenny, and he stopped and almost killed me and the horse in front to get down and pick up a gum wrapper in the middle of nowhere. Those are the kinds of tourism operators we have in this province, that love the land, that help us take care of the land. Yet they attack that industry.

I will tell you at this point in time that our research shows that their campaign has not had one single effect so far on tourism. They're going to relaunch again this summer. They've told us; they've signalled that. But the campaign that they launched last year – I guess: say our name, say our name because maybe then the word Alberta penetrates somewhere. At this point in time we're seeing no effect from that campaign. But it sure offended a lot of people who work really hard every day, that get up in that little bed and breakfast and have that little restaurant and have that campground and work really hard to make a living, to be attacked by a group they didn't even know or understand. I felt like it was an unfair attack on that industry, in all honesty.

I will go on to say that we need to do a better job of spreading our message of the good things that we are doing in this province. I tell the German people: we could fit the country of Germany in the province of Alberta three times. The size and the scope of the country is massive compared to where their thinking is and how tight they live and the environments that they live in.

I think it's important also to recognize and to give us credit for the things that we are doing right in this province, for the lands that we are preserving, the good work that we're doing even in our oil and gas industry, when we look at the technology that we're creating, that's being used all over the world to help clean up and be more environmentally friendly. All of those things also need to be told. Those stories need to be told, but for the 120,000 or 130,000 Albertans that make their living in this industry, it felt like a very unfair attack on them. Again, it did not have an effect last year. Will it have an effect this year? I guess we'll have to wait and see. But we're going to continue to tell our story. You can show a picture of Alberta, and it's pretty hard sometimes to argue with the beauty of the landscapes that we have. So that's all I'll say about that, but as far as your question: no, it didn't have an effect.

You asked about the increase to the parks budget and whether I felt like it was needed. Yes, hon. member, I did feel like it was needed. Do I think more boots on the ground are important in our parks system? Yes. Why? Because as much as we have a large majority of Albertans that love this land and take good care of it, we have others that do not. They're a very small minority, very small, but we want to make sure that they aren't let loose on our landscape. The more opportunity that we have to put people who can help monitor and help us manage that activity: we're happy about that. So I was very pleased when we were able to get more

budget put back in this year to see those additional 12 FTEs out there. I think they're needed.

You know, I thought we did a very good job of stretching our resources last year and that overall if you look at our . . . [A timer sounded] Well, I'll answer those questions later, too, maybe.

The Chair: Mr. Chase, please.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. The reason I brought up Rethink Alberta – I was ruffled as well, Minister, but there's a reality that more and more of our forest is being clear-cut logged. The government has approved further tailings ponds, so the picture postcard of Alberta is starting to get fragmented, and that concerns me.

A number of German tourists have almost sort of Hollywood versions of western nature, the Wild West, and the Wild West is being compromised. As I mentioned, Castle-Crown is just one of the areas. Indian Graves. McLean Creek. The other side of McLean Creek was where they filmed *Brokeback Mountain*. Global Forest Watch with satellite imagery will show all sorts of clear-cut areas in areas that were once pristine forest. In the case of the Castle it's old-growth forest. The idea that these trees are considered more valuable on a logging truck headed south or first north up to Cochrane to get processed and then back down south again – we have to rethink what it is that we're selling. Are we selling sort of a roadside billboard of the Alberta that was, or are we preserving in a sustainable fashion the Alberta that will continue to be, that will be enjoyed by my grandchildren and your grandchildren?

Back to the machine gun. Why, when the ministry's business plan states that parks infrastructure needs to be improved to accommodate a growing population, is the department reducing estimated capital project spending on parks infrastructure by \$5.6 million from the 2010-11 forecast? It's kind of the left hand/right hand.

Continuing on with the business plan, what is the timeline for the "development of a provincial recreation management strategy," listed as priority initiative 2.1? Business plan 2011-14, page 111. Is this strategy connected to the creation of the delegated administrative authority for trails contained in the government's proposed Alberta Parks Act? How closely are these two initiatives linked? Will the department move forward on the recreation management strategy in the absence of new parks legislation?

Given that priority initiative 2.3 of the business plan commits the department to "increase the appeal of provincial parks to visitors of all ages," why is performance measure 2(a), which measures the percentage of Albertans who visited a provincial park within 12 months, a less than ambitious target of 33 per cent, a target that stays the same for 2011-12, 2012-13, and 2013-14? Business plan 2011-14, page 111. Again, your Treasury ministry is painting this rosy picture of getting out of the recession. You'd think that if that were an accurate portrayal, we'd have more dollars to spend with our Stay vacations.

If the department is committed to increasing the appeal of parks to more and more visitors, why do the performance measures not anticipate increased parks visitation? How meaningful is performance measure 2(b), which measures the percentage of visitors satisfied with the quality of parks, when less than a third of Albertans visit parks as shown in performance measure 2(a)?

You know how I feel about pricing people out of the parks, and we've had another increase in parks fees. Several campsite fees are hiked in this year's budget. The fee for reserving a campsite increases from \$10 to \$12, and fees for changing a reservation increase from \$3 to \$5. That's from fiscal plan 2011-14, page 83. Given that premiums, fees, and licences have been increased in a

variety of areas in this budget, was there a government-wide directive to departments to generate revenue through fee hikes?

7:30

Is the minister concerned that even minor hikes to campsite reservation fees might discourage campers given that many Albertans are still feeling pinched from the ongoing recession? How much additional revenue are the increases to campsite reservation fees estimated to bring in? I note that the premiums, fees, and licences are actually estimated to decrease next year by \$469,000, estimates 2011-12, page 329. Why is this projected to occur if fees are being increased?

Given that the department has commented to the press that increased fee revenue will be used to expand the online reservation service, if the department's revenue projections are not met, will the department have to make cuts to the online service? I note that estimated spending on this item is unchanged from the previous year, estimates 2011-12, line item 2.4, page 322.

Recreation and sport programs were reduced by \$18.4 million in 2010-11, from \$44 million to \$25.7 million. The 2011-12 budget estimates similarly show total spending of \$25 million on recreation and sport programs, estimates 2011-12, page 322. Estimated spending in 2011-12 represents a staggering 43 per cent reduction from 2009-10 levels, and Olympic-related spending only accounts for a third of the difference. How could sport programs in the province not suffer when the total program budget has been almost cut in half in two years? Given that there were overages in the overall budget for tourism and parks programs, did the department put in place firmer controls in recreation and sport programs to have the forecast for 2010-11 exactly match the budgeted amount? Was there a cut-off point?

Although the overall budget for recreation and sport is significantly reduced from two years ago, estimated program support spending for 2011-12 is 31 per cent higher than the forecast for the previous year and almost as high as 2009-10, estimates 2011-12, line item 4.1, page 322. If the overall program budget has decreased, why has program support not decreased at the same time? In other words, why is the additional spending needed to support a program that is held at the same level from the previous year and significantly reduced from two years ago.

How will the department make the \$865,000 reduction from the 2010-11 budget in the recreation and sport services line? Estimates 2011-12, line item 4.2, page 322. Are specific programs or facilities in line for funding reductions? How are they chosen?

How elastic is the department's definition of "adult Albertans who participated in recreational activities and sport"? That can be found in performance measure 3(a), business plan 2011-14, page 111. I note that the department scores 80.4 per cent in 2009-10 although the Centre for Active Living at the U of A found in a 2009 survey that 41.5 per cent of Albertans are physically inactive.

Priority initiative 3.1 found in the business plan commits the department to implementing the Active Alberta policy, page 111. Does the minister have a timeline for approving a final version of this policy given that the policy is in draft form and that that consultation concluded last July? Does the minister intend to move forward with splitting up the Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation into the parks conservation fund and Active Alberta in the absence of the kind of comprehensive parks legislation proposed in Bill 29?

These are miscellaneous. Has the ministry conducted any studies or assessments of the ongoing impact of the department's investment in the 2010 Olympic Winter Games? Can the minister point to any data or statistics that suggest what the ongoing return

on the investment has been for Alberta's tourism industry or brand as a result of this initiative?

Given that the department is estimated to increase by 30 additional full-time equivalent positions in 2011-12, fiscal plan 2011-14, page 84 – well, would that they would be conservation officers – can the minister outline where these new personnel will be added? Are these policy staffers within the department or new parks conservation and administrative officers? What assessments or reviews did the ministry make to determine that it needed an additional 30 staffers since the department eliminated 10 positions in the last budget? Fiscal plan 2010-13, page 85. Can the minister tell me if these positions have essentially been refilled this year? If so, isn't this an example of the kind of short-sighted planning that the Official Opposition has been pointing out for some time?

Revenue from the government of Canada is estimated to drop by \$3.6 million from the 2010-11 forecast, a decrease of almost 90 per cent, estimates 2011-12, page 329. What accounts for this sizable decrease in the span of one year? Is this attributable to the end of the federal stimulus program, or is there a different cause?

The estimates for expenses of the Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation remain close to the 2010-11 forecast for most items; however, other initiatives have been increased by \$92,000, an increase of almost 300 per cent, estimates 2011-12, page 332.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chase. You've raised some questions, exhausted your time.

Mrs. Ady: Well, hon. member, again, we'll try to do things in writing, but I think the other colleagues maybe will do some cleanup. There's no way to get to all of those topics, and I don't want to just brush them off.

You asked me first about the fee increase on campground reservation systems. Let's just lay it out there. We did increase that by \$2 this year. As well, if you change your mind, that's going up by \$2. You ask if that's going to be a barrier. I've got to tell you: the campground reservation system since we began it last year took in 130,000 reservations. This year alone we have 1,600 new contracts, we call them, with people looking to enter our campground reservation system. What we're attempting to do is make sure that we come up to cost recovery on this system. If you're using it, it's a service – right? – and it should be at cost recovery. We began it below as we were starting, as we were working out the bugs. But, no, we don't think that that's going to become a barrier.

We haven't increased other fees across the parks system, just this particular service piece. But we are looking at other opportunities for creating fees on other services that we could offer, and that money could actually be put back into services within the parks or other opportunities within our parks.

An example would be opportunities for longer term camping in the parks. There's such a demand for that. Are there areas or parks in the province where we could say, "Look; you can come and bring your camper in for a month or two"? What would the services or the fees around that be? Where are those opportunities? We probably wouldn't bring it into the Kananaskis, where you have such a shortage. But we definitely have campgrounds where they're beautiful and people want to be able to do that. I mean, this baby boomer generation that's retiring, that has the time to spend, like our German friends, a month or two out in the parks, let's create that product for them. Where is it written that they can only be in there 10 days and they have to move?

Where there is opportunity, we are looking at how we can increase some of those, and that money can then go back in and generate more product and more opportunity in the parks. I don't

think there's anything wrong with that, and I'll continue to advocate for that.

The campground reservation system, I'm not really thinking that that's such a barrier. Sometimes I get suggestions that I should have a day use fee. I kind of am opposed to that. Fundamentally, we're trying to get people to get outside of their houses, to be more fit, and one of the best ways to be more fit is to get outside and to camp and hike and move around. So I don't like the barriers, and I think day use fees would get in the way of those families that might go spend the day hiking with their kids.

I come from a family of six children. Frankly, the only holiday my parents could ever afford was that station wagon with the tent thrown in the back. You know, the irony of it is that it's all they could afford, and we absolutely adored those holidays. It taught me my love of the outdoors. It taught me my love of parks. The only thing I was every afraid of was having to try and find the outhouse in the dark. I remember being kind of mortally terrified of that as a child.

The reality is that I don't want barriers that will prevent families where that's all they can afford to do with their kids. So I'm not an advocate of the day-use fee, and I probably would never support it.

Recreation and sport: you talked a little bit about that. There's no question there was a reduction last year. We tried very hard to keep it in the administrative levels of those hundred organizations that we support. We did not want to see it down at the level where kids are participating and others are out there actively participating in sport. I was very happy that this year there were no further cuts to this, that we were able to flatline that particular piece. Would I like to see it increase again? Absolutely. But you know and I know that we're still coming out of recession in this province. So I have to say that, fundamentally, I don't think it prevented those sports activities from continuing from last year to this year, so that is a flatline piece.

7:40

But you did put your finger on something that we moved administratively, and I would like to describe that for you. You'll see behind me a new ADM that's over recreation. I've always fundamentally felt strongly that sports is an important tool for activity but that it does not describe the only kind of activity. As ministers of this particular portfolio – we just came back from the FPT meeting on this – we're very concerned when only 11 per cent of our children are getting the required amount of activity that they need. So I asked my deputy to look at bringing on a new ADM – and I consider that a fairly high level in this government – that would focus on this particular area, particularly as we come forward with a new strategy. I hope to be able to speak later tonight about this. We're going to be doing a whole body of work around this that is different.

As I said to the other ministers at this FPT, we have to stop doing research, we have to stop talking about it, and we have to get into what I call action mode here. I read an article this week by one of the editorial boards, where they said: "Oh, government shouldn't even get in this. Like, how can they change anything?" I was just stunned by that comment. Governments can't afford to ignore it. They can't afford to ignore the fact that when I go into schools, I see obesity in children that we've never seen before, and we know what the health outcomes of those are going to be in all ways. I just spent weeks going into every school in my riding and talking to the principals of those schools on what they're doing and how they're advancing some of their rec policies and how well it's going to line up with our strategies that we're about to launch. That's why I'm very pleased to have this new assistant

deputy minister join us who will create a focus around this in government, working with education, working with health care.

One of the things that we walked out of that meeting with this year is the determination that we as recreation sports ministers can no longer get together and talk about this without health and education present. For the first time we're looking at bringing a triministry group together this summer in the month of June from every province with all three ministers or at least somebody at a high enough level in their ministries to make a difference in this area. You're right. We can't be in silos in this thing. It's probably one of the biggest threats I see on the horizon when I look at outcomes for health, not just in children but adults.

You got into my business plan. You talked about the percentage of adults who participate in recreational activity. I asked about that number. I thought that it seems high at 80.4 per cent. I found out that you just have to say you worked out once this year, and you get included in that number. So when you compare it to the kids who are at 75.5 per cent who are moderately active in their leisure time, it's not a true reflection because adults just have to work out once in a year and they get to be included in the number. Your numbers, actually, make a whole lot more sense to me.

We can say kids aren't active, but I don't know about the rest of my colleagues. I don't know how many of you have been down in the belly of the Leg. in that little room where it's pretty tight. I always think it's a little smelly down there and a little tight. We need an air-conditioning system down there. I have seen the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie down there once or twice, so I know he goes out and runs that treadmill. But how many of us are getting there, adult-wise not just kids? We often point to the kids, but adults are in the same position.

When you asked me about the Active Alberta policy, you're right. It's still in draft form. It's in process right now in government, and we're getting close to bringing it to what I call fruition through our policies. My hope is to bring it forward sometime this summer or this spring. It's ready. We've worked really hard on it. We have consulted across the breadth of this province. I've seen some of the greatest recreation minds around this particular piece, from education, from health, all in making what I consider to be real suggestions, not just: "Here's a great body of research" or "Do some research here." It's how can we get people more active? If you don't integrate it back into their lifestyle, it rarely works. That artificial "We're going to do this" doesn't work particularly well.

One of the things that I've been working on with the schools just in my riding is that I've been taking the book *Spark* to every school, and I've been saying: "You know what? If you don't believe that activity is good for the heart and the cardiovascular and everything, this book says the first beneficiary is the brain." If we want kids to learn maybe just like not nutrition, we also need activity levels in kids. Some of the work that's being done around getting kids active and seeing better educational outcomes: all those things have value. I have to say that I'm very impressed with some of the creative things that I saw in those schools. I'm so impressed with that particular body of work that's been done at least in my riding. I don't know what all ridings look like. Every school had a bit of a different twist on it, very clever ideas on how to integrate it and make it fun for kids so that it wasn't labour intensive and onerous. It made it part of their life. I was impressed.

We also spoke as ministers over this area about where we could best target activity opportunities for kids. There was pretty collective agreement that the after school programs need to be really focused on as an opportunity because parents are getting home exhausted after work, and sometimes if they can just feed their

kids and get homework done and get them to bed, that's all they've got left in the tank. So if we have this window of time after school and we are running after school programs . . . [Mrs. Ady's speaking time expired]

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

The next 20 minutes will be at the discretion of Mr. Boutilier. Do you prefer to go in exchange with the minister, or do you want to use the first 10 minutes?

Mr. Boutilier: It's certainly an honour to exchange with the minister and her beautiful and wonderful staff.

The Chair: Please.

Mr. Boutilier: Thank you very much, and good evening to everyone. It's indeed a pleasure as a member of the Wildrose caucus to ask important questions relative to the budget and the accountability of that. So let me start. It's often said that the Ministry of Tourism, Parks and Recreation should perhaps be changed to the Ministry of Happiness. Would you agree with that, to the minister?

Mrs. Ady: I am happy.

Mr. Boutilier: She is happy. Being happy is important. Of course, the minister of community and culture and development or whatever his ministry is called: there is the suggestion that perhaps there's duplication in that happiness. I was wondering if the minister would feel comfortable by taking over that ministry that is now, of course, part of – I think it's Lindsay – the hon. member who is the minister. Would you be agreeable to taking over the ministry of culture simply because of the fact there appears to be a duplication of that happiness mode and to minimize the overheads? Would you contemplate doing that as an efficiency effort in light of the ministerial overhead and the ministers' offices overhead, that amount in the millions? It would seem to me that you would be a perfect one to take over that ministry. Would you be agreeable to doing that?

Mrs. Ady: Well, thank you, hon. member. You know, sometimes I do feel guilty in here because I always say, you know, that I have to go and hang out in the parks and stand at the head of Lake Louise and watch our Olympic athletes, things that are very tough to do. It's a very onerous job. I always count it as a privilege, actually, to be able to represent Alberta. I think we live in a pretty special place, and I always feel like it's an honour to be the representative at the opportunities that I have to represent us.

As far as duplication with culture, this used to be one ministry. I remember when the hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace had it. He had tourism. He had parks. He had sports and rec. He had the cultural piece. He had so much in a single ministry. I think that there was a recognition that it was very, very hard to represent quite that much even though he was going full tilt. I know that for myself, we call it a bit of a weekend ministry. You spend a lot of weekends away from home because much of what happens in this province happens on the weekends. There's a call from one end of the province to the other. I know that the hon. Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace, when he had the combined ministries, was just being run ragged. He couldn't support it all. So there was a determination to create the split at that time.

That being said, our departments are still pretty interwoven in some ways. So when you talk about the duplication piece, I have sports and recreation in my portfolio, but often the Minister of Culture and Community Spirit would have those things that have

to do with some revenues that would build, you know, facilities like rec facilities, and he might be engaged in portions of helping the celebration at the Olympics. If you remember the Olympics, I was providing Alberta House and the train and all that came with that, and he brought all the cultural talent from this province to get up on that stage for us. In fact, I remember the Alberta Ballet putting on this premiere performance to bring in the opening of the Olympics. So that kind of happens across the breadth of the province.

Sometimes we overlap. Sometimes we end up working together. We become this kind of what I call an incredible tag team, basically, when we put our ministries together and our focus together on an event. Grey Cup is a great example of that that just happened here in Edmonton. I remember both of us being in the parade. I wore my Stampeder hat, of course, so I got booed down the streets of Edmonton. It was great fun. I really quite enjoyed that. He was of course working with me because of the festival piece that was going on at the same time. So there's no question that we sometimes overlap.

7:50

Now, you're asking me a budget question. I just want you to know that Tourism and Rec currently shares several ministry support services with Culture and Community Spirit. We share information technology services. We share human resources. So we've had a lot of things that we've been able to kind of help mitigate because we share them. We've reduced our 2011-12 ministry support budget by 5 per cent compared with the 2009-10 actuals, and a lot of that's come because we've been able to sit down together and say: what can we share? Yes, we've got to run all over the province and support all these different pieces, but we don't have to have separate administrative pieces. So we have done some sharing in that area, and I think it has saved some money.

Mr. Boutilier: Thank you. I appreciate the answer. Of course, highlighting then versus now obviously indicates the economic times. I think it's fair to say – every member of the Assembly can agree – that what was then versus now is a different economic circumstance. I think the decision on the creation of the ministry was at a time when the economics were very different. I know the minister would agree that as all Albertans are tightening their belts in the economic recession that we have been facing, perhaps so, too, the ministry and the government of Alberta should do the same.

I see the minister shaking her head in acknowledgement of, you know, connecting with Albertans. That's why the potential of tightening our belts by continuing to offer an important service but at the same time eliminating, potentially, some of the duplication could be there with one ministry. As you probably are aware, the Wildrose believes that in the economic circumstance we're in today, we potentially would go from 23 ministries down to about 16.

My question to you. From a budgetary perspective of those 16 – there's talk about merging Advanced Ed with Education, merging Justice with the Solicitor General, which are natural because they were in another manner before. It would be interesting. If there was another fit for your ministry, would it be the one that is being held today? If you were the Premier and you were going to look at how we get the best energy and the best action in serving Albertans, what ministry or ministries do you see your ministry being merged with or, more importantly, you taking over and letting the other ministries worry about that and not you? In terms of taking them out, are there one or two ministries where you see a natural, shall I say, common ground that you could fit under? What would that be?

Mr. Taylor: A five-point plan for world domination.

Mrs. Ady: Yes. I could take over all the ministries, run and operate them all so brilliantly.

I don't know what that has to do with my budget. It seems to be a little off-road, in all honesty, hon. member. But I can just say that, you know, there are always synergies between departments. I mean, obviously, when I go to federal-territorial-provincial meetings, I see a different combination of all these ministries across the land. I attend three different FPTs every year because every province combines them differently. Sometimes you'll see my sports and rec piece combined with health, right? Sometimes I'll see the tourism piece combined with culture. You know, I've seen so many different iterations across the country.

Yeah, there are lots of ways to organize, but I can tell you that I find Tourism, Parks and Recreation to be a full-time job, in all honesty, to support all the way from getting to that outdoor hockey game that was held up in your constituency – and a fine job they did of that, by the way – all the way down to southern Alberta to eat corn in Taber. After a while moving around this province – it's a big province with lots and lots of opportunities.

I would say that it would be difficult for me to come out and say which ones we should be – another one would be, maybe, economic development. Obviously, I share offices out there in the world with the economic development people because we've got our tourism strategy out there. So there's overlap in lots and lots of areas when we talk about . . .

Mr. Boutilier: International relations.

Mrs. Ady: International relations.

I mean, there are lots of ways to combine things, but that's the Premier's job, not my job, and really has not much to do with my budget, so I'll let others think about those things. Again, there are lots of ways to combine.

Mr. Boutilier: Okay. Well, thank you. I can only ask the question and hope for some thoughtful forward thinking into the future. That's what we're doing in the Wildrose, forward thinking. With a three-year-old we always not only want to be down the road; we want to be around the corner, which is really important, and that is the expectation of all Albertans.

Let me for a moment just go back to a couple of things you mentioned about the Olympics. Actually, I thank you for the time when you extended an invitation for me to travel on the government plane to the Olympics, but I chose to take the \$99 special on WestJet with my wife. I must admit the Olympics were really quite a celebration for all of Canada.

I want to go back for a moment to your mandate letter because I've been troubled over the years. There have been rumours that it's been an unelected fiat who has been drafting the mandate letters for the ministries with no connection to democracy or to Albertans, actually an unelected who drafts them, and then the ministries get them. It was a concern I expressed when I was on that side because I always have felt that the mandate letter should, first of all – I'd like to ask you if you have had the opportunity to consult with Albertans. I know you have consulted on many examples that you can give.

In fact, I want to touch on one in a minute, which, of course, was the issue of Bill 29. I, first of all, applaud the ministry for withdrawing in the last session. When Bill 29 was introduced, of course, the Wildrose indicated that it should be pulled. Given the fact that this minister did exactly that, pulling it, I thought, was bold. Confident ministers are not afraid to get up and say: "Hey, you know what? We have to take a second look." In fact, that's a

refreshing view that I know the Wildrose caucus would like to see in other ministries and the government.

Having said that, given the enormous, of course, feeling from Albertans I think the minister did the right thing. In fact, actually, we're just learning tonight that one of the leadership hopefuls to become the next Premier has decided that Bill 36 should be repealed, which is really quite interesting. Of course, you'll hear that tomorrow in question period. In the meantime, we're very proud, again, as the Wildrose that former ministers are listening to our ideas. That's the ultimate form of a compliment.

I want to say that three years ago I know your ministry had done significant consulting with groups over Bill 29. You would have been minister during that time. One has to ask the question, though, with all due respect: how much money did the government spend on those three years, which ultimately ended with the withdrawal and the repeal of the bill when it was pulled? If you don't have that answer today, I'm certainly quite prepared to get that in writing. It would be helpful to me.

I want to bring it back to the issue of when the unelected fiat is writing mandate letters to ministers on behalf of the Premier. I think we all know who we're talking about. The issue really is: wouldn't it make more sense that you're consulting with Albertans first, before you go ahead and develop the mandate letter as opposed to, basically, after ministers are given mandate letters? The reality of it is that it's a mandate letter that's drafted by an unelected fiat up in the Premier's office. So, in my judgment, the consultation part of that is what's missing. This ministry has done very well in consulting, for instance with Bill 29. I think it takes a strong character to say: "You know what? Maybe we didn't hear enough, and maybe we need to go back and do more."

My question was, one, your mandate letter: did the ministry go out and consult with Albertans on what they thought of the mandate letter that was drafted by an unelected fiat? Second of all, if not, is that how the gap begins to be created in what happened in Bill 29? Bill 29 was part of, essentially, the mandate letter that was erected by the unelected fiat, of course, through the Premier's office. I'd appreciate your thoughts on that.

8:00

Mrs. Ady: Well, the hon. member asked me a lot of questions that don't have a ton to do with the budget, but I'm always happy to take and answer any question that comes my way. As far as the mandate with Albertans and Bill 29 I just want to go on the record that I actually think Bill 29's time has come. One of the reasons that Bill 29 became apparently evident to me is because of the consultation that was coming and because of the mandate letter I had been given around parks.

When the hon. member talks about, "Should they come from Albertans?" and the needs of Albertans, I do think it came from there. You're right. We spent three years working on the Plan for Parks, and I can't tell you the exact number, we'll get that to you in writing. We spent three years talking to Albertans. We watched that Plan for Parks move in, move out, move in, move out. When I finally put my hands on it and we went out for some of the final consultative pieces, what I recognized right away is how passionate people are about parks and sometimes how diverse their opinions are about parks and how many groups are at play. So we worked really hard at trying to create some balance.

When I went back to look at the legislations that existed in their day – and I know I said this a lot as we introduced Bill 29 – I saw such confusion. Now, some people don't agree with me and say: oh, there was no confusion. I would say to you: well, there were four different acts, seven classifications, 30 exceptions to the classifications. In fact, when I looked at the wall that the park guys

had on the variety of classifications and what could happen in individual parks and what couldn't, with all the sticky notes on it, not even they could tell you with certainty in all circumstances what was true. I said: "The one thing that I know about Albertans is that they actually love this land. They want to take care of it, but sometimes it's just a bit hazy." Sometimes in a classification in one park it would mean one thing and in a different park another.

As we looked at that and consulted, like I said, over the three years, we came up with this concept or idea that it was time to introduce something new that would create that clarity and also would not only create conservation but balance it with the recreation and the use that we have in provincial parks systems.

When we looked at things that happen up in legislation, they get locked up there. But land is an active, breathing thing, and sometimes we needed to be able to go in and create some better controls even though the legislation that it sat under didn't even allow some of those controls. The example I always use is Bruderheim. It's a recreation area. It's got lots of quads going in there. They're setting fires everywhere. In fact, we can't put the fires out because it gets underneath and we're going: you know, it would be more appropriate for them to be on trail systems up in Redwater. But because of the nature of how it's locked in legislation, I don't even have the right to go in and make sure. You can't come into this Assembly every time you've got a land management issue. That's why we came up with Bill 29.

What I recognized when we got into the legislation was that there were areas that needed to be improved, and in fact this legislation is something that I want to stand the test of time not for just today but for another decade. So we looked at some of the categories that some groups were very concerned about that needed even more protection, perhaps. The ecological reserves and the wilderness areas: I heard a lot about those two areas. In fact, they only really represent 4 per cent of the entire provincial parks system; 96 percent still needs to be managed in some other way. But I recognized there was some fear around those things and that perhaps we needed to take a further look at some consultation on how we could create some certainty around that.

When I talked about even the categories or zones that we wanted to place over the land base, I thought, you know: what would be wrong about pausing and taking some time and going out and actually testing, market testing with Albertans the names of those zones to see if they even resonated, if they even suggested the activity that you were trying to drive towards. Those are the kinds of things we thought needed to happen.

You're right, hon. member. I felt like it was important to pause, to go out and do that work and ensure that we were ready and that consultation happened. I can tell you, though, that that got driven from the Plan for Parks, and the Plan for Parks came from consultation. So much of my mandate letter actually came from those sources. I would suggest to you that Albertans are very interested in that. I'm happy to take the amount of time it takes to get this Parks Act correct because I would like it to last.

Mr. Boutilier: I appreciate the minister's comments. I might add, observing your staff that are with you tonight, in particular I can only say that when you have people from Environment and, not only that, people from Fort McMurray, clearly your ministry is a star compared to others. There is no doubt in my mind about that. I can assure you: I have not been noted for saying a lot of compliments about things, but you perhaps may be one of the few ministries I will offer that compliment to.

I'll take my seat.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Boutilier.

The next 20 minutes will be at the discretion of Ms Notley. Would you like to exchange with the minister, or do you want to use the 10 minutes and then 10?

Ms Notley: No. I think the easier thing would be to try and do a bit of an exchange, and we'll see how that goes.

Maybe what I'll do is just start, then, following up a little bit on the conversation you were just having with the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo about the Parks Act. We talked about where we've come from with respect to the Parks Act, but I'm curious about where we're going with respect to the Parks Act. In particular, I suppose the first thing that I would simply ask. I see you have in line item 3.2 a \$712,000 increase, I believe, which is the policy and planning line item. I'm wondering: is that there to account for some form of increased consultation on a new Parks Act? Or if that's not where we would see the money for additional consultation on the Parks Act, I'm wondering if you could tell me where we would find that.

Certainly, I'd be the first to say that I was not part of the extensive consultation that preceded the act. I came to it as a little bit of, you know, an MLA-come-lately as a result of being contacted by a very vocal and passionate and well-organized group of ever-growing numbers of Albertans who were very concerned about what we saw in Bill 29. A number of them said that although they had previously been consulted on the parks policy, they didn't actually believe that they had been substantively consulted in any meaningful way about the proposed changes to the Parks Act.

I join with previous speakers in congratulating the minister for pulling the act. I assume, then, as part of the going back to the drawing board or giving it a bit of extra thought, that there will now be an opportunity for there to be more substantive consultation on some of the concepts that were introduced in the act.

That is my first question. It's related to the plans for future consultation. Who will be consulted, when will they be consulted, what will the format of that consultation be, and where would we find the line items for that?

There are some substantive issues with respect to the bill that I'd like to see as well, but since this is more of a budget conversation, maybe I'll start by just asking those questions.

Mrs. Ady: Thank you for kind of following up on the Parks Act. I do think it's one of the critical things that the department is engaged in right now. I'll start by saying that we welcome all MLA-come-latelies to parks because we think the more support and help that we get, the better product we will come out with. When it came to the Parks Act, we spent an awfully long time coming up with the Plan for Parks. I have to say that it was probably one of the more thorough consultations I've ever seen government put together. Probably three major drafts of the Plan for Parks went out, came back, went out, came back. I finally felt like we came to what was a balanced document at the end of the day.

8:10

When it came to the park legislation, you know, we looked at how we as an organization can use the tools that exist today to help protect the land and create this balance that we've said we're going to achieve in the Plan for Parks. When we looked at it, we recognized this need. We went to a lot of work to create it. There was consultation that was happening, but I would agree with the hon. member: when it came to the actual description of the act, I think we needed longer on that. That became apparent to me quite quickly. Even though we could have brought amendments in in the last session and maybe answered some of the issues, I've always found it's a better idea to go out and make sure that

everybody's really hearing and understanding where you're heading. I mean, some of the environmental groups have told me: if you give us everything we want, the highest grade we're ever giving you is a C minus. You know, I'm an A-B student, not a C student, but I've recognized that there are some limitations into how much agreement that you're always going to get.

I wanted there to be good understanding. I think as I met with those groups that were most agitated at that time, I recognized that they needed more opportunity and we needed to be better at describing to each other. That being said, in the Plan for Parks we use the word "balance."

I've got to tell you that when we talk about the provincial park system, we are talking about the land or the place where most Albertans spend their recreation time. Yes, we have some beautiful federal parks. But when you're camping in that community campground, that's a provincial park. If you're out hiking in the Kananaskis, that's a provincial park. If you're one of the 3 million visitors at Fish Creek provincial park, that's a provincial park. So we have a lot of users of our park system, and they're Albertans. I actually think that I value their opinion as well.

I'm trying to create this time a consultation policy on this park legislation that gets a wide net of users. People say: don't use the web. Well, when we do our survey, most Albertans tell us that that's how they want to interact with us, that open houses and things are labour intensive for them and that they can actually best come in and out of this consultation policy online.

I referred earlier to the 130,000 people in the campground reservation system that we have, and I don't remember how many more we've had join – I gave the number earlier – just this year alone. We now for the very first time have the opportunity to actually ask an awful lot of stakeholders what they value and whether things resonate with them and work for them. So I've asked my department to go back and design this time a consultation policy that will in a way capture a really balanced viewpoint on the things that we're going to do going forward in parks.

People write me and say: you need to pay attention to this international group or this group that's not. I was getting a lot of letters, frankly, not from the province of Alberta in the consultation for parks. I'm not saying that they don't have expertise. They do. But I'm the minister of parks for Alberta, and I want to ensure that they have a voice also. So this time I've asked the department to take these changes that we're making and go out and market test them with the people that are actually making those campground reservations and actually using the park system. Get some feedback from them as well because I think we can have a huge voice come back in and see if it's actually resonating. I think it's not a bad idea. It's taking a little more time or I'd be back in session this time, but we weren't ready. That's what we're designing right now.

They keep saying to me: will there be open houses? You know, I can't say that at this point in time. I've had a lot of open houses. I'm not sure they're always the best vehicle because sometimes they capture the same group over and over again. Those voices are important, and we'll have them in, but I also want to hear from Albertans that are using the parks this time. I want to know if that zone resonates with them. I want to know if they know what that activity suggests to them. I always say that when an Albertan steps into the park, he should be able to know whether he should have a fishing rod in his hand or a camera, you know, or what it is that's going to be allowed in that system so that they can comply and take better care of it.

Look for us to be unleashing that as we head into the summer months. We have in the past used survey systems of park visitors and different ways of capturing information in parks, but we now

have a new vehicle that I think is going to be very useful. We'll let everybody have access to it, but we want to see what is resonating and make sure that we're creating that important balance that we're looking for out of Plan for Parks.

There were things in that park legislation – and I was asked earlier about it – that are also pretty important, the foundation being one of them. A great opportunity for people to donate and help us support a parks system. Obviously, I've got lands and other things donated, and the sports and rec guys have it. That's why there's "wildlife" in their title. We always thought it because they were teenage athletes, but that's not the wildlife we're talking about. So we would like to see that foundation come into being. It's an important part of the parks act and one that, you know, we're hoping we can get back to.

The parks advisory council, another huge piece.

Ms Notley: I don't mean to stand up and interrupt. There's lots of substantive conversation that we could talk about, the components of the parks act, but since this is mostly about budget, you know, if I could get a chance to get to that. I could easily go on for some time about things that appear to have certainly been absent from the first draft of the Parks Act.

In relation to my question I asked about whether there was a particular line item where we would find the expenditure planned or if there was any additional expenditure planned for the consultation process. What I did get out your answer, though, raised another couple of questions for me. The first one. You're talking about developing a consultation policy. Will that be released prior to your reliance upon it? I'm not suggesting it would be the case for you because, certainly, not on the Parks Act but with the parks plan I think everyone agrees that there was good, healthy conversation there. But the government has a strong record in other areas of manipulating the online surveying process to get the answer that they want. It is not actually a particularly credible source of opinion measuring, depending on the nature of the questions that you ask.

Earlier today I had a debate with the Minister of Energy about the conversation that his ministry is alleged to have had with Albertans about their opinions on nuclear industry. Of course, the questions that were put to people in the surveys were ridiculously loaded and undermined the credibility of the work that was produced. Of course, as a result it also rendered it not a wise use of taxpayer money. I don't expect but, in the context that we're in right now, need to ask that we don't see the same kind of unwise expenditure of money on the part of the parks department in terms of their consultation process.

As well, in terms of the consultation process, of course, there are open houses where you inform people, and then there's the process whereby you ask very weighted questions of people who may or may not actually understand the context in which the questions are being delivered, which then, of course, also raises the question of the value.

Then there's also the process where people do actually put in their opinions, and as the other people that are being surveyed become aware of the other opinions, their opinions then develop. That, of course, is why it's valuable to have a to-ing and fro-ing with Albertans and also an opportunity to have whatever results you get from, you know, phase 1 of the consultation shared with people who are interested in this issue so that they can then respond, so that it's not a question of people responding to questions in isolation without necessarily understanding the particulars and the details around what it is they're being asked. That's really important to me, too.

So my first question is: will you release the consultation policy before you run with it? The second thing is: will we get a public

release of what it is the government has collected, not a spun summary of what information the government has collected but what the actual feedback was around that? I think it's obvious, as you rightly identified and as others have rightly identified, that our parks are something that everybody cares about. That person that camps, you know, three times a summer or four times a summer in campgrounds that are not necessarily world heritage sites: they may be there, they may have an ATV, they may be using the fire, they may be doing all of these things, but they may also really care about those more highly protected parks. If you don't ask them and put the question to them, then you're not getting a valid answer.

Those are my two questions. Perhaps you can get back to me in writing about that because I want to get a couple of other things on the record.

8:20

I'd like to jump over quickly to the issue of the Castle region. I know we've had some conversations about that already, and I certainly did hear your comments about the fact that this has been sort of punted over to SRD for them to manage the issue. However, I have some concerns and also some questions arising from that.

We have with the Castle special management area, as you know – I mean, Alberta recreation, parks, and wildlife initially recommended that it be a provincial park in '74, and then the Alberta Natural Resources Conservation Board recommended that it be protected in '93, and then in '98 Parks Canada did a study that showed that Waterton was being threatened by activities in that area. Then we had the AEUB acknowledging that biological thresholds for some key species in that area have already been surpassed. Then we have the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation identifying the Castle special management area as one of 14 areas on the continent that are the most biologically significant and threatened.

Having said that, I'm fully aware of the land-use framework and the process under the land-use framework. I'm also fully aware that I've heard nothing from this government but promises for future action around the land-use framework, regional advisory councils that someday will manage to collaborate and get together and do all the cumulative impact stuff and negotiate with all the parties and come up with a plan that's remotely binding, but it hasn't happened yet, and there is absolutely no reason to believe it's going to happen very soon.

Meanwhile, while that's happening, you know, there could be arbitrary, unfettered parks designation going on in the same way that there's arbitrary, unfettered industrial development going on. We are not dealing with cumulative impacts in many key sensitive areas of the province, and while we sit on our hands coming up with a plan under the land-use framework but not actually making it binding, industrial development goes ahead willy-nilly. There's no reason that you as parks minister cannot act the same as any one of the many operators in the lower Athabasca region and just march on in there and create a park in line with the 40 years of requests that have been made by experts and community members to make this a special area.

The Chair: Ms Notley, in the interest of the balance of time could you get to the questions that you have?

Ms Notley: I actually don't think I've been anywhere nearly as long as the minister was in her first response, so thanks, but I will get to it.

The Chair: Actually, we're timing it, and that's a legitimate comment on my part, so please focus your questions.

Ms Notley: I'll get there – thank you – when I get there.

My first question, then, is: why have we not gotten to the point that there's been activity? There has been industrial activity pending the endless failure of the land-use framework and the regional advisory committees to come up with anything binding. Why can there not be parks creation pending the unending inability of the land-use framework and the regional advisory committees to come up with anything binding?

Mrs. Ady: Sorry I went long last time. I was waiting for a chirp, and I didn't hear one.

I said it earlier. You know, you keep saying I keep punting it over to SRD. Well, that's because it's Crown land right now; it's not park. So for me as the parks minister to answer the questions as to why a park is not a park at this point in time is difficult. I can say to you that the land-use framework is the plan for looking at overarching land use in an area or a region, so that is the opportunity for new park and the designation of new park. Until such time I can't answer questions as to why there are activities going on on Crown land that have existed, you know, for a time, right? Some of those activities have been going on for many years, so you need to wait until the estimates of the sustainable resource minister, who has that land base. I don't at this time. Until I do, I can't answer questions on it.

Will the land-use framework speak to this? I guess we wait and see what that particular RAC brings, but that is the process, and that's what we as parks work with at this point in time.

Relative to your questions earlier on how we ask questions, I agree with you. I could go in to anyone and say: do you like parks? Who's going to say: no, I don't like parks. I mean, there are ways you can ask loaded questions. We try really hard with our stuff to get independent researchers to make sure the questions are objective. I don't need to go and spend a lot of time and money asking questions that don't answer the questions that we're trying to get to. We use independent people to help us with those.

I know right now we have and are accepting e-mails on the park legislation. We will be looking at it this summer and trying to come with the technical briefing this fall. Yes, we always publish online the things that we've heard. Around this particular subject we think it's important to hear from a variety of stakeholders.

So the commitment that I can make to you is that we don't make up the questions so that they're meaningless – we're trying to get good information – and that we do put online what we hear. Good, bad, indifferent: you're seeing it all.

Ms Notley: You are going to release the policy before you use it?

Mrs. Ady: We will be, yes.

She's saying that verbatim might not be possible and that some people might not want their comments to be public, but I think you can catch the spirit of what they're saying still.

Ms Notley: I was talking about the policy, not the outcome.

Mrs. Ady: Exactly. Right.

When we come up with the end piece, you know, we will be putting that online as well so that all can see what we've heard through the consultation. Again, we do think that online has value and that it is a tool we should be using. As far as the to-ing and fro-ing, we'll probably have some of that as well, but that is a way to capture a larger audience base, and that's what we're shooting for.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Taylor, the next 20 minutes are yours, please.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you very much, Chair. If it's okay with the minister, we'll continue on in this format, back and forth.

The Chair: Please do.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you very much. I'm going to pick up where the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona left off if I can, please. It's on the issue of Crown land belonging to the Ministry of Sustainable Resource Development. Minister, you've talked so far about the notion that you really can't do much with that. You can't answer questions about SRD land and its potential to become park land. I know this veers a little away from the budget numbers precisely, but since we've been discussing this, you know, fairly frequently this evening within the context of your estimates, I'm going to continue with this.

Are you doing enough to try and get the ear of the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development and his department? It seems to me pretty clear that the Castle area is well established in the scientific literature as an area of very, very valuable ecological integrity, for lack of a better word. I think that integrity is at some degree of risk. I think it is at risk and under increasing pressure as we go along. I think that once you've logged the area, block cut it or clear-cut it, whatever term you want to use – I know the Minister of SRD would prefer block cutting, but it's the same darn thing – you've done permanent harm to that ecological integrity. Nature has a funny way of restoring herself but never exactly as she was before. A natural area, in my view, is certainly better than a manicured area, but a natural area is not the same thing as native habitat.

I think there's some urgency here to do something about the Castle area, and I'd like to hear what you have to say about your interaction with the Minister and Ministry of Sustainable Resource Development and, frankly, whether you're putting enough pressure on the folks who make money by cutting down trees and developing wilderness areas and going after resources to recognize that this is an area that needs protection, that needs the protection of your ministry.

Mrs. Ady: Am I putting enough pressure? Obviously, I work very closely with the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. One of the reasons I say that is because much of what we do – you're right – is fairly married; we're married together in ways. We often have a lot of what I call the same kind of care of land.

When it comes to the Castle region – and I can't emphasize this enough – there is a land-use framework in place. I sit at the table. My job is to be the advocate for the future development of parks and the parks that exist in this province. As that land-use framework through RAC gets discussed and comes back to us, my department and myself lay out what we think is the right answer, and we actually, I think, are some of the strongest advocates at the table for the future of that.

8:30

Do I win everything? No. Would I like to win everything? Yes. Do I think that the minister of sustainable resources is not managing the land base? Sometimes, in all honesty, hon. member, when I look at the things that they do – they're using a lot of what I call good conservation tools on their land base. I run into problems, frankly, because it is a park, where we're not using sometimes the best conservation tools.

I think automatically of Cypress park right now. We're spending almost a million dollars going in to kind of fire-smart that thing because it's old growth now and because we have suppressed all fire in that region. Now I've got a whole bunch of fuel sitting in that park, and the worry is that one little spark off the

edge of that park is going to take the whole thing. So we're spending a million dollars going in there and doing some things that good conservation tools today would probably take care of, but because, you know, we don't always use them in parks, we don't always have that opportunity.

When I talk to the hon. member from the Peace region, who has built his career in this area, he talks about things that we use now in our conservation tool box that sometimes you can't use in parks. Wood Buffalo park is a great example of where we fenced it in and said: we won't use anything. We've got disease coming over the border and other issues.

We work closely because they're the ones out on a sustained land base that are also watching and looking at those things. They have a lot of the science that we need, actually, sometimes to preserve the very parks that we're trying to preserve. So, yes, we work closely together.

When it comes to the acquisition of new parks, there is a policy in this government, and it's that we will follow the land-use framework. That RAC is coming. The South Saskatchewan is the second one up. We're going to see what those recommendations are. Will I be at the table pitching for new parks? I'm always at the table pitching for new parks. Always. We'll wait and see what happens from that, but that is the process, and that's the process that we're following as a government.

I think that we do interact on this in healthy ways. Whether we end up with what you think should happen, I can't speak to that yet, but I will be advocating in that I work closely with him.

Mr. Taylor: Well, I really should be asking this question to the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development, but since it's your night and not his and since you sit around the table with him, I'm going to ask you. What's the timeline on the development of the land-use framework, on the RAC for the South Saskatchewan?

Mrs. Ady: Well, I would be speaking to the minister of sustainable resources. I can only tell you that I know it's in process right now and that I don't know what the outcome date for that particular RAC would be. I know that we have to sit down and review it at this point in time. We've been working very heavily on the first, the lower Athabasca region. That has been the focus, and we know that that's second. Where its exact timeline is: I would ask the minister that question because I'm not aware of the date.

Mr. Taylor: Okay. I'll try one more question along the same line on the Castle area. Is there any means by which you can advocate for a moratorium on development within the Castle region until the RAC is done?

Mrs. Ady: I would say no. Obviously, there are leases and there are agreements that are going on that are legal entities that are there right now. Until such time as that changes – you know, the logging has been going on in the Castle for many, many years. I can't speak to exactly how much and what and where and how. Those are, again, questions that I would bring up with the minister of sustainable resources.

Mr. Taylor: Goal 2.1 on page 111 of your ministry's business plan says: "participate in the implementation of Alberta's Land-use Framework through linkages to the implementation of Alberta's Plan for Parks and the development of a provincial recreation management strategy." Here's where I think – well, I'm not sure. We'll find out over the course of the next few minutes whether we have a difference of opinion as to what's important in our park areas or not.

Developing a recreation management strategy is undoubtedly important, but I would suggest that a provincial conservation management strategy is equally if not more important. I think that when we go back to the debate over the Parks Act, Bill 29, last fall, this was one of the fundamental problems with the act as brought forward at the time, this was one of the fundamental sticking points, and I think this is one of the fundamental points that you recognize you've had to go back and do considerably more consultation on. There was a lack of prioritization in Bill 29 to conservation, and I still don't see it in your business plans here. I still don't see what Alberta's parks conservation strategy looks like and why it is not included as a priority initiative.

Mrs. Ady: Well, hon. member, I think that if you went into the Plan for Parks, you would see the word "conservation" as the first word that we're using in there. We say that it should be a balance between conservation and recreation. There are some that say to me that it should just be conservation, and I keep saying that there has to be balance. Yeah, we need to protect environment. We need to make sure that we are doing the right things for the land base but at the same time give opportunities for people to enjoy being on that land base. When I look at this strategy in my business plan, that we participate in the implementation of the Alberta land-use framework, we are looking at conservation areas versus recreation areas. We're looking at both, right? Both are important, but there always has to be balance. That's the thing.

The main message that I got from the Plan for Parks and the consultation was: yes, protect lands so that we have them for the future of the province, and protect important watersheds and all of those pieces. But some would say to me: that is your job one; it is your only job. I continue to say that there has to be balance. That is what Albertans have told me, and it's the message that resonates throughout that Plan for Parks. As long as that needs to exist, yes, I agree with the one, and I will continue to work on that. I've even acknowledged that maybe we needed to strengthen that in the legislation, and that I think you will see when we come back.

Mr. Taylor: Okay. I'm glad to hear that, Minister, because while you may see it as a case of balance, I think there's an order to the balance. First, you have to determine what land you're going to conserve and the level to which you're going to conserve it before you open it up to any consideration of what kind of recreation can take part in that land, whether virtually none, extremely passive, low-impact recreation, a little higher impact recreation, rip the crap out of it with an ATV or a quad, or anything in between: riding horses through there, riding mountain bikes through there, that sort of thing.

If you approach it from the perspective that we're going to go in here with conservation on the one hand and recreation on the other hand and that we're going to maintain that balance as we go through the inventory of parks and protected areas that we have, then in fact, in effect, nothing is protected because everything is open to recreation. If you don't look after conservation first – well, you only get one chance to do that. You can't conserve that which has already been significantly disturbed or disrupted, and I think the minister knows that.

I think one thing that I did pull out of Bill 29 last fall was at least an intent and a desire to perhaps determine that there could be some other areas of less ecological importance that could be opened up to quads and ATVs and more high-impact recreational activities to take the pressure off the areas that we really should protect. The problem was that we weren't strong enough on the protection side of things last fall.

Mrs. Ady: Yeah. Hon. member, if I was to go to the executive summary of Plan for Parks, here's the message. "Parks are essential to the quality of life that Albertans enjoy. They conserve our natural landscapes and wildlife habitat, and offer a broad range of outdoor recreation opportunities." So I would agree with you. You do have to decide what you're going to protect, and one of the ideas or the thinking in the parks legislation was that in the zoning we would actually be able to go in with a fairly good tool.

Mind you, down in this operational piece, that we called it and that everyone was kind of suspicious about, it gave us the opportunity to go in there and look at a land base and say: "There's too much pressure here. We need that pressure to move here, which is more appropriate. Where are good, strong trail systems, and how can we get quads on trails and not just ripping up the landscape just because it's, you know, a recreation area?" Could we create a zone within there that says: "You know, for a time we're going to give this land a rest. Even though it's sitting in legislation as a rec area, for a while it's going to be a zone 1 or a white area or whatever or however we describe it"? It gives us that opportunity. I agree with you that until we decide how we're going to manage that landscape, anything can go in certain areas, and it's not appropriate.

8:40

Mr. Taylor: I would like to hear this minister say that there are some areas that don't just need to be given a rest for a while but need protection for all time.

Mrs. Ady: Well, I would agree with you. There are some things that we know people can go in and use inappropriately, and that scar lasts. It's not like it grows over in a year and it's gone. I mean, we can go in there five years later, and there's still a scar there. You know, there are just some things too fragile to play on. That's just the bottom line. I think of some of the trail systems that we've seen created and the opportunity around recreation trail use that could actually give us a management tool out there that would be important to the future. Half a million quads are out there on our landscape right now. Those are things that we have to think about. This idea that we can just go out there and use it anywhere, anytime, anyhow has to end. It's just not preserving the landscape the way that we want to see it preserved.

Mr. Taylor: Okay. This may bring the discussion around full circle – I don't know – but the business plan makes no specific mention of increasing the amount of protected land and parks, which Albertans have expressed as a priority. Are there any plans to expand these? Will legislation from priority initiative 2.2, to support further implementation of the plan for parks through new parks legislation, address this? When are we going to see such legislation? Is this the return of Alberta Parks Act 2.0?

Mrs. Ady: Well, I think it's going to be a more robust bill. That's for sure. That is my hope. I mean, I wouldn't have pulled back if I didn't think it needed a bit more of a robust look.

If the bottom-line question that you're asking is, "Are we going to add new parks?" we have been adding new parks all through this process. Since I've been minister, I think of the land bases that we've brought in and the land bases that we've opened, some real jewels for this province. Do I think more can be done? Always. Am I hoping that the result of a land-use framework will help us identify some of those? Of course. Can I predict to you where those will be at this point in time? No. That's work that's happening right now. But as minister of parks, yes, I would like us to see a better creation.

But I would like to remind the member that this province has done a lot already, with 14 per cent of its land base in parks. I'd like you to show me somewhere else in the country that's there. Again, for those that will dismiss the federal parks system at the same time and say, "Oh, you can only count the provincial system in your stats," I always say that you can't dismiss the Rocky Mountains. They're just too big. Wood Buffalo park is just too big. So 14 per cent of the land base: that's a really great start. Is there more opportunity? I think there will be, obviously. I'm going to be opening a new park in Calgary – I'm hoping you're coming – just a real jewel. It's going to be a real jewel for the city of Calgary. Will these processes allow that? I think they will. Where and how and when: I can't predict that.

Mr. Taylor: I'm not sure if I got the invitation to the park opening. What's the date? What's the time? What's the place?

Mrs. Ady: That's still being discussed, hon. member. You know, we're getting ready. Obviously, the snow has got to lift off the ground, and as deep as it is this year, I can't predict that. It might still be snowing in June at the rate it's going. Ski season is going really well. We might start skiing, actually, down in the city if it keeps up much longer. But it's coming. Stay tuned, and we'll for sure invite you.

Mr. Taylor: Okay. The online news today says that the big melt has hit Calgary. It always snows in June sometime in Calgary anyway, so that was a pretty easy prediction to make.

I can't show you another area in the country, Minister, where the combined federal-provincial inventory of parks and protected areas is necessarily any greater than 14 per cent, but I can show you another country where it is. That would be Costa Rica, which is in excess now, I believe, of 25 per cent. So with the appropriate will, it can be done. Ecotourism, as the minister undoubtedly knows, is a pillar of economic development in a country like Costa Rica.

Now, there are many, many differences between Alberta, perhaps the most blessed piece of real estate on the planet, and Costa Rica, which is, I would argue, probably from a natural perspective, from an ecological perspective, from an ecodiversity perspective one of the most blessed landscapes on the planet, but it doesn't have the resource base. It doesn't have the economy. It doesn't have the diversification of opportunity that we do here in Alberta.

Nevertheless, the minister talks a great deal about tourism opportunities in this province, about recreation opportunities in this province. Maybe this is just wrapped into what you're thinking of when you talk about it and you just don't perhaps articulate it in the same way that I'm used to seeing articulated in the Lonely Planet guidebooks or something like that, but I don't hear you talk about ecotourism. It would seem to me that when we have those Rocky Mountains off to the west, when we have Wood Buffalo up in the northeast, when we have the Cypress Hills, when we have Writing-on-Stone, when we have the rich diversity of landscapes that we have here, if there's anywhere in the country with a tremendous opportunity to develop its ecotourism sector, it should be this if for no other reason than to take some of the world-wide propaganda pressure off us around oil sands development. So what are you doing in that area? Talk about that.

Mrs. Ady: Ecotourism. The hon. member is right. It's becoming something that's definitely landing on the tourism scene. But when I talk to operators, say, in our parks, our national parks, they'll tell me they invented green. [A timer sounded]

The Chair: Thank you, Minister, Mr. Taylor.

At this point we'll go to Mr. Johnston and then, I think, Mr. Rodney.

Mr. Johnston: Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the minister and staff for being here on this lovely evening. Budget 2011 sees Tourism, Parks and Recreation take a 3.9 per cent, or \$6.8 million, reduction from the 2010-11 forecast. This is in addition to a large reduction in 2010-11. How will Albertans feel this decrease?

Mrs. Ady: Well, hon. member, I think I spoke to it before, but just to repeat, we obviously collect the tourism levy, and there's a two-year gap – right? – so we sit behind two years. We knew during the recession that there was a dip because the revenues come from a hotel levy. I always say that when it comes to tourism, everyone who enters this province and stays in a hotel is a tourist. I don't care if you're coming for business. I don't care if you're coming for recreation. I don't care if you're coming to visit friends and family. You become a tourist in my world.

Because business was obviously hurt, we know those smaller hotels out and around all over Alberta saw very much a reduction. We know that others didn't travel as much or go on vacations during the recession as much. There was a two-year gap, but we went significantly higher, almost \$10 million higher. So the new tourism, or Travel Alberta, corporation said, "Wow. We can look forward two years. There's a dip coming. We're going to peel money off these high years and put them in a sustainability fund." It looks like a drop, but because Travel Alberta has a sustainability fund, they're well prepared.

Two years from now, when we see the recovery, because we're already seeing the recovery in tourism in this province, I think they'll be able to come over that gap. There won't be an interruption in the planning that we have going right now for telling the rest of the world what we have that's so special that the hon. member was talking about, ecotourism being one of the major new players in the field.

Mr. Johnston: Then on page 322 of the main estimates, line 4.3, recreation and sports facilities grants, and line 4.4, hosting major athletic events, for 2011 and 2012 there's no funding, nothing allocated. How is this going to affect sports in Alberta?

Mrs. Ady: Well, hon. member, you're going to some specific lines. So for 2009-2010 that 4.3 line, what you're seeing there is the \$9 million grant that completed our commitment to WinSport Canada for \$69 million. That was money that was actually flowing through my ministry to WinSport. I know if you've driven down that particular highway, you've noticed that massive new structure at WinSport. That is the completion of that program.

8:50

I think one of the greatest things that we have done and that the Olympics in Vancouver gave us the focus on was the renewal of our Olympic facilities and even the future of what that's going to look like. That's why you're seeing it there. That's the completion of that program, and then it's ending. That's why what looks like a reduction isn't. It's just a flow-through funding.

I spoke earlier to this idea about the hosting of major athletic events, that we are moving money from the tourism development fund over to sports and rec because they're the ones kind of in charge of some of that hosting of the games. So we do have a one million dollar move-over from one, from the development so that we can continue to participate in that. We think those are good tourism events in this province.

Mr. Johnston: Thank you.

I'm going to state the obvious here, but then ask a question. There's an economic spinoff to hosting these major events, I would think, these major athletic events. If so, why the elimination of the funding?

Mrs. Ady: Yeah. One of the things I've learned as the minister is that absolutely everybody that's having an event comes to me and says, "You've got to give me a million bucks here" or "I need \$500,000 or \$1,000 here because I'm going to have this event, and it's tourism, and that's going to, you know, be really good for you." I have kind of learned that lots of people can have events, and they're great, and it adds to the product that we have to offer in the province of Alberta. It's not always attached to tourism, maybe in a peripheral way, but we know there are some events that happen that do matter.

I spoke earlier about the Arctic Winter Games in Grande Prairie, that they just hosted. I mean, it was a fabulous event. I was up there. The hotels: you couldn't find a hotel room. You couldn't find a restaurant. You couldn't find anything in Grande Prairie because the world had come, at least the Arctic world had come, to Grande Prairie.

That being said, it's really easy to say: "That was a wonderful event. We did so well." But you do need good tools that measure. So we commissioned a study to measure the impact of the 2010 Arctic Winter Games. We're about to receive that report back, where it tells us in real terms what we really received.

I hear the same thing of the Olympics. People say to me: "Well, what was your benefit from the Olympics? Even though they were off in B.C., you spent money on those." We had money flow through our department, you know. We ended up with the Alberta train. I was getting tons of questions about that. "How could you have a luxury train at this time of recession? What's its real value? Do you have a way of really measuring that?" I kept using \$70 million and the other pieces. I actually asked Travel Alberta if they could give me hard data, something that I could share with my colleagues that would show the benefits of that.

We are saying now, today, that we had a \$93 million return on our \$3 million investment for the train in unpaid press across the world. We had a certain amount of it that happened before the Olympics, I think \$40 million of it pre-Olympics, \$50 million during the Olympics, \$3 million post, for a total of \$93 million. They're telling me that they actually have marketing pieces that go out and measure that reach out now on awareness and on product awareness. So we were able to kind of move out there in a real way and come back with real numbers.

When we look at these events, some things are just intuitive. You know you're making money. But how much money are you making? Are you doing the right things with what you've got? When we get that report back, I think it's going to be important information, and we'll use it to kind of guide our strategy as we go forward when other groups approach us and want to throw other major events. How much money should we be putting into them?

Mr. Johnston: Just a final question, Minister. I think each ministry was given a mandate, and I'm just wondering about the challenges that you and your ministry have had to face, if you've met the expectation of your mandate.

Mrs. Ady: Yeah. I was actually looking back at my mandate letter. You get so involved in the work sometimes, and you wonder if you're getting there. My mandate letter asked me to continue to work with the implementation of the land-use framework, I think probably some of the most important work we're doing today. A

lot of things you do in space and place, and then some things actually have a really far reach. The land-use framework implementation potentially will be some of the most important work that we do as we try to balance what's happening out on that landscape. A lot of questions around it right now, a lot of angst, but some of the best work we're probably going to do.

The other one is to participate in the implementation of the land-use framework through linkages to the Plan for Parks.

I would say to you that I think we have moved these files significantly. Certainly, the Plan for Parks and our park legislation: we've put that out on the landscape. Real debate is happening right now. I think it's going to be one of those things where as we sit back and think of our time in the Legislature, we are going to say: "That was a good thing. In spite of how bumpy and hard and intense that work was, it really mattered." I'm actually really pleased with some of those things, and I feel like we are making progress in them.

In tourism I really think we've advanced the game. In some ways the province of Alberta is looked at right now as the leader in this country when it comes to how to set the corporation up, how to really market. We have some of the smartest marketing talent around that file that we've ever had. In fact, one of the problems I have right now is that everybody is coming in and trying to steal our talent because we've coalesced so much great talent around the file. You watch as the tourism marketing is about to spring forward in this province. We call it goosebump moments. Calgary just called it the wow moments. We're learning who our clients are, how we attract them.

The one thing we're learning is that you can have a pretty picture – everyone can throw a pretty picture out there – but when you can actually put somebody in that picture doing something that you want to do, that's going to put it really high on your bucket list. We think that we're going to be able to demonstrate that and that that corporation has come a long way to advancing the awareness of this province and the opportunities that this province is going to have in the future.

Mr. Johnston: Thank you.

Thank you, Chair. That's all.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Johnston and Minister.

Mr. Rodney, did you wish to speak?

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Chair. In light of the hour and the fact that our good minister has faced a barrage of questions, I will take my 11 questions and roll them into just one if I may. Let's face it. There's a whole lot that can be found on the website on all sorts of materials and in places like the public accounts. Now, this fine minister knows very well of my past, present, and future involving active living initiatives and my support for those sorts of ideas and for what she and her department members are doing. We're all advocating like so many Albertans that care so much about that. We care personally and professionally and politically.

I suppose, Minister, you can just address the active living initiatives. Can you comment a little bit on the resources that your department has dedicated to these kinds of projects this year? Maybe outline some of the work that you're doing with other ministries and whether the strategy is finalized, any kind of details like that that would have to do with planning, funding, and actual activity in the future and in the near term. Albertans care about this a lot. They'd like to be involved, and they'd sure like to hear a

little bit more of the great news that I know you have to share.

That's my one and only question.

Mrs. Ady: Well, thank you, hon. member. I just, first of all, want to compliment you on your private member's bill, saying: let's get outside; let's get outside; let's get outside. One of the problems that we have in the winter is activity levels. To have spring bust loose and have that, you know – we'll see how that bill progresses through the House. I for one will be supporting it and want to thank you for your continued advocacy in this area as well.

We've got \$1.9 million in the AS – I call it the longest name in government – budget allocated to lifestyles for this year. We're getting ready, as I've said before, to launch an active Alberta policy, and my hope and my desire is that that will happen in a few short weeks. We have been working with 11 different departments because we have recognized that we all have a piece of this and we all have a piece of the responsibility.

I know that the departments have been working together and doing the consultation across the province. For the first time the ministers are now sitting down to discuss this particular policy. I would say to you that all ministers have a piece of this financially in their departments today. How can we work together to not send out a bunch of multiple messages on activity? How can we coalesce that into a single force and say what's going to matter and what isn't going to matter?

9:00

I think that we're making some progress on this. Research keeps continuing to tell us the benefits. I just continue to say: it's time to acknowledge that research is there, that it's been done, but we need action on the activity file. It's going to be, again – and I said it earlier – one of the most important pieces of work, I think, we also do around the health of Albertans and the well-being.

I am just amazed and stunned at how quickly activity levels in children have fallen. I didn't think you could make a child inactive. I raised four boys. I always say that they ripped the paint off the walls. I painted the hallway so many times that it was a square foot narrower, you know. This idea that children are sedentary and aren't moving and aren't active is just amazing to me, yet only 11 per cent of the kids of this province are active enough. That's not a great outcome for health and for our well-being.

I thank you for asking the question. Please look for that policy. Anything that we can do throughout these 11 departments we should be doing together. We should be united, and we should be focused. That's my hope for this policy in the future.

Mr. Rodney: Hear, hear.

The Chair: Thank you. No further questions from Mr. Rodney. Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, thank you, Minister, for your presentation this evening.

Pursuant to Government Motion 5 the estimates of the Department of Tourism, Parks and Recreation are deemed to have been considered for the time allotted in the schedule. I would like to remind committee members that we are scheduled to meet next on April 18, 2011, to consider the estimates of the Department of Municipal Affairs.

With that, I'd like to thank everyone and declare that this meeting is adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 9:02 p.m.]

