

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Tuesday, September 21, 1993**

8:00 p.m.

Date: 93/09/21

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order. As is our custom, this evening we're in committee stage, Committee of Supply. For the many people in the galleries, I would remind them that this is an informal stage, where people are indeed able to take off their jackets, to bring in a coffee or a juice, and to engage in whispers within this Chamber, and that the rules are very much relaxed.

head: **Main Estimates 1993-94**

Environmental Protection

MR. CHAIRMAN: We would call upon the Minister of Environmental Protection for his comments to lead off tonight's debate.

MR. EVANS: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and colleagues. I trust, Mr. Chairman, that you don't expect me to whisper, but that went for all the other hon. members who may have some other things on their mind during my presentation.

I'm very, very pleased to present to the Committee of Supply for the first time the estimates of the Department of Environmental Protection for 1993-1994. I'm particularly pleased to be making this presentation, Mr. Chairman, because this is a brand-new department. It's an amalgamated department, and I'm very excited to be the minister responsible for it and to be working with some 4,000 dedicated Albertans who are part of our team in Environmental Protection. As many members will realize, previously this portfolio was the department of the environment, the department of forestry, lands and wildlife, and the parks department, which has had a few different births over the past few years. Certainly now parks is well ensconced in Environmental Protection, and we hope to keep that part of our portfolio as part of Environmental Protection for many years to come.

Mr. Chairman, the estimates we're bringing forward tonight are really a new way of doing government business, and certainly in the '90s all governments have to look at ways to streamline their operations to make them more efficient and at the same time to deliver service to their customers, the public of the province of Alberta. We in Environmental Protection also realize that in this time of fiscal restraint we have to look at economies in every single part of our budget. We have to be creative in our budgetary process, and again we have to maintain customer service at the highest level possible, given fiscal reality. We are attempting to eliminate duplication and to streamline all of the services that we provide. Albertans can expect and indeed they deserve the high level of service from this department that is its tradition and will be its level of service in the future.

Over the past 10 months, Mr. Chairman, the department has been focusing on amalgamation, reorganization, and introduction of our new environmental legislation, the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act, which became law on September 1, 1993. Alberta Environmental Protection is committed to managing the entire environment as a whole instead of just in pieces. Therefore, we've created an integrated department with integrated decision-making, and this integration allows the department to provide better and more efficient service to our customers, the citizens of the province. I regret being repetitive, but I think it's extremely

important that I do focus on that customer-service orientation of our department.

We're also regionalized, Mr. Chairman, to serve Albertans better. We have, as I mentioned, a little over 4,000 staff, and we are located in over 120 communities in Alberta. When you take a look at the map of Alberta and transpose Environmental Protection, you see the extent of the involvement of our natural resources portfolio on the landscape of our province. This amalgamation that we've been undergoing since December 15 of last year is certainly changing the way that we do business. We're merging our offices in many of these communities that I talked about. We're trying to provide a one-window approach to our customers. Our regional offices are staffed with professionals from various disciplines who are communicating with each other. Therefore, decisions that are made that affect our environment are no longer made in isolation one of the other; they're made through an integrated approach to resource management.

Our commitment, Mr. Chairman, is to the preservation and protection of our parks system, of our forests, of our public lands, the planned and thoughtful management of our water resources, and the preservation of our entire natural environment. We'll continue to ensure that a balanced approach is used to managing Alberta's natural resources and this precious environment that we call Alberta.

Despite the growing concerns with fiscal restraint I believe that protection of the environment remains one of the top concerns of all Albertans. The public will not accept profit at the expense of the environment. They now expect government and industry to do whatever possible to protect our plants and our animals, our land, our water, our air, and our people. In turn, government realizes that it has to take a new approach to managing the environment. No longer can we look at our natural resources separately. To effectively manage our environment, we need to balance the needs of all parts of that environment. So it's become apparent that our old environmental legislation could no longer adequately address those needs and changes. We have a new and strengthened department and new, improved legislation.

I want to pause for a moment just to give credit where credit is due, and that's to our Premier, who had the vision to see the importance of amalgamating nine pieces of environmental legislation into one, of working through a very extensive public involvement process, so that when the Act was finally passed it had gone through a number of transformations. It had involved Albertans from every walk of life, had given them an opportunity to input into that process. Amazingly, despite the amount of heat that environmental issues faced at the time the Premier as the then minister of the environment brought that legislation forward initially as a draft Bill, it went through with very, very little controversy. Again, that's a credit to him, a credit to his staff, and I'm very, very proud and pleased that those staff are members of my department.

Mr. Chairman, our department's commitment to achieve protection improvement in the wise use of our environment is now represented by 10 firm principles which determine all environmental decision-making in the province of Alberta. If I may, I'm just going to go through them quickly. They are: shared responsibility, leadership, public involvement, action on environmental protection, polluter pay, legislative and regulatory action, integrated decision-making, intergovernmental co-operation, sustainable development, and improving our environment for future generations. The principles focus really on involvement, on accountability, and on shared responsibility. AEPEA, the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act, incorporates these new concepts and the new technologies that weren't available when

environmental laws were first written in this province back in 1971. AEPEA reflects the government trend to integration and streamlining of service delivery, and it combines, as I mentioned, the nine pieces of legislation into one.

A significant cause of those changes now occurring within the department rests with the way that government is doing things and involving the public in a process of much more direct consultation on how we manage our resources and our environment. This is very important in this era where the demand for recreation and commercial use of natural resources continues to increase.

Increased input from the public along with comprehensive policy developments that are ongoing in our department, such as the natural resources management and conservation policy framework, the forest conservation strategy, the water management policy and legislative review, Special Places 2000, and of course AEPEA will allow the department to deliver cost-effective programs and services to Albertans.

8:10

So where are we now, Mr. Chairman? Alberta Environmental Protection has displayed the tough fiscal management expected of all government agencies. In the last four years we've cut expenditures where we thought we could cut and still maintain that level of service that I talked about previously. In fact, compared to the 1992 budget, we've achieved a \$29 million reduction in our operating budget. That has been achieved through a \$10 million reduction in staff payroll as a result of the early voluntary options program, \$1.25 million reduction in the Action on Waste program, \$800,000 in savings from eliminating the acid deposition research program, \$1.6 million savings in maintenance, repairs, supplies, expenditures in our provincial parks in Kananaskis Country, a \$2 million saving in operational costs for Lands and Forests Services division, and a million dollars reduction in the forest insect and disease treatment program. Along with that, we've saved \$4.2 million by the department decreasing contributions to various cost-shared initiatives, including the waste management assistance program, the HELP program, Help End Landfill Pollution, the biting fly assistance program, and the Alberta water management and erosion control program.

The savings, though, Mr. Chairman, don't end there, because we've also found an additional \$2 million in reductions to offset higher forest fire costs as a function of our increased responsibilities to eliminate going back to government and asking for special warrants. Therefore, as members will see when they look at the estimates books, our budget is about \$334 million this year. The depth of these reductions is even more significant when one considers that our current budget is \$38 million less than it was in 1990-91. That budget was \$372 million. Again, we did that through some creativity and through some tough decisions.

There are a number of programs that I'm sure hon. members are going to want to discuss tonight, and I look forward to their comments. What we are trying to do in Environment Protection is create a simpler system. We're trying to eliminate bureaucracy, allow our staff to respond to environmental concerns faster and to provide better customer service. We want to be diligent in the implementation and enforcement of our new legislation. We want to be sure that Albertans are aware that polluters pay. Most importantly, we want to remain committed to the protection and the management of our natural resources, which is a very sacred trust that we have, for today's Albertans and for future generations.

I look forward to the comments and the questions of hon. members on both sides of the House with respect to this important portfolio.

Thank you very much.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Are there any comments, amendments, or questions?

Sherwood Park.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A few comments to the Minister of Environmental Protection. First of all, I want to start by congratulating the hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane on his reappointment by the Premier as the Minister of Environmental Protection, minister responsible for forests, parks, and wildlife. I just want to comment at the outset that I'm pleased that the member has been able to continue in this portfolio, because I think that at this point in time it's important that there is continuity, with the inclusion of the new Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act coming into force this year. I'm also pleased to say that I'm glad I'm debating the budget tonight with this particular minister, because I know he's got a very thick skin. I know that if we get involved in some rigorous debate tonight, he won't become indignant or righteous or slow down the proceedings of the Assembly in any way. We'll just be able to continue on. I know that he's going to continue to operate in that manner and in that vein.

Mr. Chairman, the implementation of the new Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act: I think Albertans felt that they waited a long time for that legislation, and they're going to be watching very closely to see how that legislation is in fact interpreted, how it's dealt with, and how the department deals with the new provisions of that Act. Granted, it is a culmination of some of the old legislation that we had, as the minister referred to, and also through an extensive consultation process. All that now is behind us, and Albertans are looking to see how this legislation is going to be treated by the department and certainly by the government and in fact by all Members of the Legislative Assembly.

I just want to make a further comment that the minister alluded to. Certainly initiated by the then Minister of Environmental Protection and now the Premier, because he did make reference in debates last year, we seem to have transcended and overcome some of the animosity that has previously existed between environmental groups and industry. We've now been able to sort of come together and perhaps treat the new legislation as being a victory for both sides of many of the environmental issues.

There are still many people – and we've seen examples here where Albertans still do not accept that environmental protection is good business and is not an obstacle or an impediment to economic development. As the minister alluded to and certainly with the Round Table on Environment and Economy, there was a demonstration that environmentally sound business is good business. That Round Table on Environment and Economy identified Alberta's vision of sustainable development, and it concluded that it's possible to have both a healthy environment and a sound economy.

The government has through this Assembly endorsed the goals of sustainable development, but we still do not have a specific strategy in place to achieve these goals. I think all members should recognize that sustainable development goals will indeed form part of economic development as environmental protection and economic development come together. I want to remind the minister of a mind-set and an attitude that still exists out there and, in fact, exists in here, certainly on both sides of the House. I can assure the minister that some of the debates he may have in his caucus I also have in my caucus on the fusing of environmental protection and economic development and the fact that they're not polarized.

I recall the hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House specifically asking a question to the minister about a new cement plant development that would be under construction in his constituency and asking the minister about an environmental impact assessment that may or may not be required on that particular facility because of the transition period with the new Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act. When the minister said that an EIA would not be required, the hon. Member for Rocky Mountain House responded to the minister by saying, "That is certainly good news." He agrees with me. He also – and I believe this is also a direct quote – referred to the environmental impact assessment process as "those unnecessary hearings."

You see, we still have an attitude here, Mr. Minister, that thinks that a process like environmental impact assessments are a complete waste of time in economic development in Alberta. Now, in recognizing that, I'd suggest that both the minister and certainly I, myself, have a great deal of work to do in our caucuses to try and change those attitudes, because we simply can't stand by while statements are made that a process like the environmental impact assessment, that was endorsed by Albertans, that took years to build into that legislation, is a complete waste of time.

As I've said, Mr. Chairman, the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act took a long time to come. It did receive Royal Assent on June 26, 1992, and finally came into force on September 1, 1993. Many Albertans have legitimately asked the question "How come it took so long?" and I know the answer is given that that was the time required to prepare a significant number of regulations that go along with the Act.

There is circumstantial evidence, Mr. Chairman, that the Act was delayed to allow a number of significant projects in Alberta to continue well into the future without having to fall within the parameters of the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act. We noted that Weldwood of Canada, the pulp mill at Hinton; Daishowa, the pulp mill at Peace River; Weyerhaeuser at Grande Prairie: they each received their operating renewals without having to look at the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act, and their licences have been renewed for five years. I believe that's also the case for the Alberta Newsprint Company. We have not had confirmation that in fact that operating licence was renewed for the period of five years. Perhaps the minister could inform us of that this evening.

MR. EVANS: Three years.

8:20

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Just before the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act came into force, Al-Pac received its operating licence for a three-year period. Again some of the circumstantial evidence is rather overwhelming as to why it took 15 months from Royal Assent to having the Act come into force. I have stated and I'll state again that I accept the three-year licence for Al-Pac – it having been granted – because the northern river basin study data will be in, and we will then be able to take a close look at whether or not Al-Pac is operating as efficiently as possible and whether or not it's in fact doing significant environmental damage.

[Mr. Sohal in the Chair]

There are a number of what I would refer to, Mr. Chairman, as provisions in the Act that failed to recognize the concerns of Albertans, as the minister alluded to, the full public consultation process. One of the things that was expressed by Albertans was the fact that the draft Bill and in fact the final Act carried with it

far too much discretion. I've alluded to that previously in the House. There were some comments made in the Report of the Environmental Legislation Review Panel of 1991, which the hon. Minister of Environmental Protection chaired. In the overview of comments it stated:

Too much discretionary power vested in the Minister, the Lieutenant Governor in Council . . . and the Department's officials was the most frequent criticism with respect to the proposed legislation. This very broad discretion may suggest that "Government simply wants the flexibility to appear stringent while remaining lax."

There may be some indication, Mr. Chairman, that that's in fact what's happening.

Some other comments that were made in that report:

The "sweeping discretionary powers" given to the Minister and the Lieutenant Governor in Council are, some presenters said, "the most disturbing aspect of the proposed legislation," particularly when there is no appeal beyond the Ministerial level.

- the proposed Act gives the Minister "too many virtually unlimited powers but sets out no rights for anyone";
- the discretionary powers may have potential negative impacts on business planning and economics;

Certainly a fair comment there.

Other comments:

- the power of the Minister or Cabinet to exempt any person, company, or event from the legislation is "totally against the spirit of environmental protection."

Now, notwithstanding those comments contained in that report chaired by the minister, the Act was not changed, and in fact all of those discretionary powers continue to exist in the Act. I think it's unfortunate, and I think it detracts from the legislation, and I hope that it will in fact not impede the proper introduction of that new law.

One of the other concerns that was expressed is the reference in the Act to participation by those who are directly affected who can participate in public debate on environmental issues. Now, again, in that report "directly affected" was the term used, and now we've seen in some examples that it has been used in its narrowest sense. A comment out of that report in the area of environmental impact assessments. Quote:

Many submitters criticized the Alberta Environmental Protection Act for limiting opportunities to participate to the proponent and "persons directly affected". Similar concerns were expressed to the EIA Task Force. A number of submitters pointed out that in uninhabited areas of the province, environmental concerns could go unrepresented if the test were one of "directly affected".

This is a further quote, Mr. Chairman.

The panel recommends . . . that anyone with a legitimate concern (not necessarily a legal interest) should have the right to participate in the process.

Now, again I remind the House that the minister chaired that, and that recommendation was not included in the Act. We still have a situation where only those who are directly affected can participate in the process.

I've referred, Mr. Chairman, a number of times to the environmental impact assessment process, and with having the Act now come into effect and in observing the ERCB hearings with respect to the Syncrude expansion, there is a concern seen by many Albertans that one of the fundamental foundations of this Act appears to be crumbling. Albertans understood that under this Act projects designated as mandatory activities would automatically have to go through the environmental impact assessment process. Members from the minister's department have stated the case that this is not necessarily how the Act is going to be implemented by the department. Certainly if we do not automatically have the environmental impact assessment process implemented with

mandatory activities, it's a fundamental change from what Albertans understood this Act was going to be all about.

A comment to the minister. I think that his leadership is required in this particular area to clear this matter up. There is uncertainty on this issue. If in fact that is the case, I think that a lot of the goodwill, which I spoke about previously between Albertans concerned with environmental protection and industry and government and other groups, that has been created by the minister and by previous ministers may in fact be jeopardized if that's the way this Act is going to work.

There are other deficiencies in the Act that bear mention. Some of the wording in the Act is uncertain. It is uncertain for business, it is uncertain for industry, and it is uncertain for all Albertans. I refer specifically to some wording that appears in the Act throughout: "significant adverse effect." Now, certain provisions in the Act deal with where individuals or parties under the Act cannot discharge where it may cause or has caused significant adverse effect. The term is not a defined term. Neither is the term "adverse effect" a defined term. Sometimes you find in the Act "significant adverse effect," and sometimes you find in the Act "adverse effect."

Again, for businesses and for industry who are trying to get a handle on this new legislation, they're not going to know whether it's significant adverse effect that applies or if it's adverse effect that applies. I know that the minister will appreciate that good counsel acting for any client who may find themselves on the wrong end of a prosecution will simply argue that while it may have been an adverse effect, it wasn't a significant adverse effect, and the onus of proof will be on the department to prove that. It's unfortunate because it's going to cost Alberta taxpayers a lot of money to find out exactly what this terminology means when they are discussing those issues in court, and I believe that's where a number of these issues are going to end up.

Another terminology that's of concern again to industry is: accepted industry practice. This term is used where hazardous waste has been treated by a process that is an acceptable industry practice and the residue that remains is not hazardous. Now, if the process is undertaken but your process is not accepted industry practice, the residue is hazardous waste. Industry is certainly going to ask what is an accepted industry practice and what isn't. There is little certainty in this provision of the Act, and again industry just doesn't know.

Another terminology under the Act that's not a defined term: persons responsible for hazardous waste. I can see situations where the department through the minister and departmental members are going to serve an environmental protection order on a person responsible for hazardous waste, and the debate is going to rage as to whether or not they were the person responsible for the hazardous waste or whether it was some other person. So again the point of the statement is that there is tremendous uncertainty in the Act, and we need the leadership of the minister to clear this up.

It's important to note that oil field waste is excluded from the provisions of the Act. It was not originally, but over time oil field waste has now been excluded from the provisions of the Act. I think what this demonstrates, Mr. Chairman, is that while as the minister says, Environmental Protection is a large and significant portfolio within this government, it can't come even close to the Department of Energy. The Department of Energy is going to tell the Minister of Environmental Protection when environmental protection will be tolerated and when it won't. I think it's of concern that we now have to look at the source of the hazardous substance rather than the toxicity or the characteristics of that hazardous substance and how it should be dealt with. Certainly

we're going to be concerned that if regulations dealing with oil field hazardous waste are not included in the minister's portfolio, we see equivalency in how those toxic substances and those hazardous substances are going to be dealt with.

8:30

There are some other concerns, Mr. Chairman. The Act allows for liquid hazardous wastes to be acceptable in landfills. Members should note that this is contrary to the guidelines set out by the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment. Their guidelines are that no liquid hazardous waste should be acceptable in landfills.

We have an interesting situation at the Pine Lake landfill. That particular landfill has had a number of problems. While it's classified as a municipal landfill, its specifications probably surpass that of an industrial landfill. I expect that industry may want to dispose of its liquid hazardous wastes into that municipal landfill because it meets all of the specifications of an industrial landfill. I hope the minister again will take note of that and deal with the situation that I think will probably come along at some point in time. I hope that we can solve some of the problems of that Pine Lake landfill.

Pine Lake really just raises the issue that we have to deal in a comprehensive way with the whole area of land filling in the province of Alberta. The old nuisance ground of 20, 30, 40 years ago may have been fine to be dealt with through public health at that time, but we're now in a situation where land filling has become extremely complex. It needs to have proper and sufficient resources to look at appropriate sites for land filling and a full, complete, comprehensive provincial plan for how we identify sites for landfills and how we identify the type of landfill that we are. So I encourage the minister to take a look at this whole area of land filling as a comprehensive provincial matter.

The tire recycling regulations and provisions of the Act did come into force on September 1, 1992.

[Mr. Collingwood's speaking time expired]

MR. COLLINGWOOD: I'll allow another speaker to continue.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Medicine Hat.

MR. RENNER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure for me to rise this evening and go through the estimates for this department. Like the Member for Sherwood Park, I too would congratulate the minister on his reappointment. I've had occasion to have dealings with the minister since I've been elected, and I've found him to be most co-operative, very easy to deal with, his department officials very easy to deal with. We had a local issue in Medicine Hat with regards to our hospital incinerator, and we came to a very amiable and fine solution to that. I congratulate the minister on helping me with a local problem. I think we came out just fine on that one.

I would like to deal with a few specifics from the budget tonight. We'll start out with program 2. There's an item, Land Conservation and Reclamation, and I would assume that this has to do with cleaning up chemical spills and that type of thing. I see we have a budget of \$3.4 million, up somewhat from the year before. It would seem to me that forecasting chemical spills and cleaning up environmental damage would be sort of like trying to forecast forest fires. The minister has already indicated in this House that he is attempting to do just that in budgets for this year. I'm wondering if the minister might be able to indicate, much as

he did in forest fire management, how the budget is doing in this area as well.

In program 4, I would like to deal with Wildlife Management. In this area I would like to maybe relate to the House a conversation that I had with one of my constituents, who was most concerned about the lack of pheasant and the pheasant hunting season in southern Alberta. As members from this area may know, southern Alberta historically has been world famous for pheasant hunting. In the last few years the populations of pheasants have been drastically reduced. In fact, pheasant hunting season has been reduced from about two months to one week just because the population is so low. There are hatcheries with release programs and a number of alternatives that are in effect to address this situation. What this gentleman told me made a whole lot of sense, and I think maybe I would like to have the minister's reaction.

He explained to me that many years ago, in the '50s and '60s when irrigation was just getting started in our part of the province, most of the land was irrigated through flood irrigation of one kind or another. There would be a main canal of a reasonable size. The land had been leveled. They'd flood the land. There were a number of areas that could not be irrigated just because of the fact that they couldn't be leveled; it wasn't economical to level such a huge parcel of land. So there was a lot of natural habitat for the pheasant in southern Alberta. As irrigation technology began to advance, we started to see the introduction of sprinkler irrigation. First of all, we had hand-move irrigation systems, still maintaining the main infrastructure of the irrigation canals. We then moved into a wheel-move. Wheel-moves again could expand somewhat more. The land didn't have to be as level as before. However, what we have predominantly now is pivot irrigation. The irrigation ditches are to a large extent no longer in use. The water comes to the centre of the field in an underground pipe. What used to be irrigation ditches have now all been levelled off. They are all farmed. A lot of the natural habitat formerly available to pheasant is no longer there. My constituent feels that to a very large extent this is the reason why the pheasant populations have decreased so much.

He also pointed out to me that when the demand for irrigation water became much larger through the pivot irrigation systems, the main canals had to be expanded. All along those main canals there was a good natural habitat for pheasant in the form of willows and all of the different weeds and everything that grow up around irrigation canals. His concern was that when these canals were widened, rather than widening one side of the canal, the canal was widened by removing both sides and in so doing removing all of this natural vegetation, the willows and everything, there again contributing to the loss of habitat for the pheasant. My constituent was asking me if there was any way that this government could institute some kind of a habitat conservation program aimed specifically at the bird population in southern Alberta. I'd like the minister to address that.

In program 5, Mr. Minister, it's 5.3, Reforestation, that I want to talk about. We have roughly 4 and a half million dollars for Quota Reforestation and \$4.9 million under Reforestation. I would like a little bit of clarification on the difference between those two.

I would just like to address the whole subject of reforestation. I certainly applaud the minister for making this a priority. I think we as Albertans must see reforestation as a priority. I think it's very important that the whole concept of sustainable development is based upon reforestation. Without it, certainly, we cannot continue to have economic growth in the province.

8:40

As it relates to my constituency, members may or may not know that the Medicine Hat area is widely renowned as a greenhouse area. The greenhouses in the area started out growing flowers. They have now gone into a very large production in cucumbers, but there's a new crop in the Medicine Hat area which I find very interesting in that some of the greenhouses are now germinating and growing seedlings for reforestation. Down in southern Alberta where we don't have too many trees, we're growing millions of seedlings. I would wonder if the reforestation that we see here is all of the reforestation that's going on in the province or if private developers, private forestry companies, are involved in reforestation as well. If the minister could maybe give us some indication of what percentage of reforestation is done by the province and what percentage would be done through private forestry companies.

I'd also like to deal with 5.5.9. This is Insect and Disease Management. I note that the budget in this area was reduced by approximately a million dollars, and this does give me some concern. I think that again, keeping in mind the sustainable development and the fact that our trees and our forests are such an important resource to it, it does concern me to see that the budget is cut in half. I wonder what the result of this will be on insect control. Certainly, as I say, coming from the south, my knowledge in forestry and trees is not that good. The only forest area that we have in our area is the Cypress Hills. I know that there has been an infestation of some type coming into the Cypress Hills, and we certainly wouldn't want to lose such a beautiful natural resource as the Cypress Hills due to insect predation. I am concerned that we don't let these insects get away with ruining our beautiful environment, from a purely tourism point of view and of course from an economic point of view.

I would also like to address program 6, Provincial Parks and Kananaskis Country. I'd like to compliment the minister on moving into privatization of provincial parks and maintenance of provincial campgrounds. A number of provincial campgrounds in our area have been recently converted to privatization, and certainly the people that have been in discussion with me are most pleased with this. I think it's working out extremely well. I guess I would like a little bit of explanation from the minister on the financial impact of this privatization. How do these deals with the park management companies work? They collect the camping fees, I know. I'm wondering exactly what was the net result of this privatization on the minister's budget. As I say, I think it is an excellent program, and I think it should be pursued, but it would be interesting just to know exactly what the impact is on the budget.

The final area I would like to address is program 8, Special Waste Management Assistance, and in particular 8.0.1, the Alberta Special Waste Management Corporation. We show here expenditures in the amount of \$24 million, and I would assume that there must be some offsetting revenues that go with those. I'm under the impression that this would refer to the Swan Hills facility. I would like to know what revenue is generated out of that facility. I wouldn't think that the total \$24 million would be total outlay. We do bring waste into this facility, and I would assume we charge to have the waste incinerated and disposed of in a safe manner. I think it would be interesting to all members just to know exactly what the net cost is in this area.

Mr. Chairman, that's all the questions I have for this evening. I thank the House for taking the time to listen to me.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Redwater.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I, too, would like to congratulate the member. I think I have by letter anyhow, but now I'll do it personally. I don't know; in the House he mentioned that he's getting control of his portfolio, and I hope so. He comes from a constituency which probably has more glaciers than any other constituency in the province, and he moves at the same speed, I've found, when it comes to trying to solve things.

I have one project, just to remind you: falconry. There's a falconry club in Alberta that does more than hunt gophers with them. The minister has been sitting on a decision there for three years, I think, or three and a half years. Even falcons can hatch eggs faster than that, Mr. Minister.

MR. EVANS: I've only been here since December.

MR. N. TAYLOR: But if I am going to talk on the ministry, I'd like to tackle it a little bit from the philosophical. I have two or three specific questions, but more philosophical. I think this minister would be admirably suited to do so. One of the hard things he and anybody observing it must find is that the environment department is both an administrative department and a policing department. I don't think those two functions work together. We've found that in the administration of law and in legislation and everything, policing and administration are best separated. Yet when you look through the budget and look at the huge items the environment has – let's take land, water, and air, the three major elements – I don't really see why the minister of the environment is going out there restoring land and moving on land conservation. The minister of the environment should be in a position so that if another department in the government is misusing land or doing something in such a way – or private industry; it doesn't matter – he should be able to step in and try to discipline and bring law and order and also bring common sense to the handling of the resource.

Mr. Minister, outside Education, your department was maybe the most important that we had. Education develops the raw resources between the ears so we can do something in the future, but your department is to try to preserve and conserve resources for years to come. Yet in your department you have exploiting tendencies which should be eradicated. In other words, if this government continues what they're doing now in the way they run their ministry of environment in administration, the demand for an environmental ombudsman, which will be another increased governmental cost, is going to be almost impossible to stay away from. This is why I think the minister should move into that policing area, causing us to save money, and let the department of public works, for instance, restore land or conserve land. There are other departments, I'm sure, that can do it.

We go on. I mentioned land, water, and air. Water resources. Well, I'm not sure the department of the environment is going to come up with the proper decision time and time again in irrigation and the use of water if they are also in the position of being in charge of bringing water to the farmers. That probably could be better done by the department of agriculture or public works, and the minister of the environment should be there to police. We just heard the hon. Member for Medicine Hat bring up an environmental question. As an old pheasant raiser, he's quite right that we've destroyed a great deal of the pheasant cover in central Alberta. Now, mind you, it isn't all ditches. A lot of it is along the roadside where the municipalities, in a fit of cleanliness, you might say, poisoned the road allowances and got rid of our trees and everything else. But the fact is that the minister of the environment has to make a decision between delivering and moving water to the farmers and an environmental decision,

protecting the flora and fauna for generations to come. Here again, a conflict of interests. He's an administrator and also a policeman.

When it comes to the quality of air control, he's probably in a little better position there than in any other area. Yet the three major oxides we all worry about . . . There's one advantage in being an old engineer. When I first came out of school, the only oxide they worried about was NO₂. Nitrous oxides, which came out of Trail and gold mine areas and zinc and other smelting areas which we had little to do with here, caused a great deal of poison. Then as we understood our chemistry a little better, it became sulphur dioxide, popularly known as acid rain. We went to the SO₂ end, and we've got some rules on SO₂. The last one that's now sending everybody in a panic, of course, is the warming effect of CO₂, carbon dioxide.

I'd like to mention one thing. Although I know the minister is not a scientist, he could be a philosopher. If he were to extrapolate what's going on, extend the curve, as we get more and more knowledge, you'll notice that about every generation we add another gas or another emission in our air that is hurting people, that is a bother. We started out with the oxide of nitrogen, then the oxide of sulphur, then the oxide of carbon. Now, if you extrapolate that, I'm sure there are a lot of other chemicals in the air bothering us today that we don't know about. We're going to wait until we find a selenium shortage or zirconium or whatever it is, or one of the rare earths or maybe one of the rare gases will cause something that we don't know about today. But why wait? Why does society have to wait until we're in it? Because it's in a vaporous form and maybe hard to find, we are emitting into the air tonnes and tonnes of emissions, whereas years ago we wouldn't even think of putting a liquid into our ditches and streams. We belch into the air. I know it can't be stopped overnight, but we don't even have monitors.

8:50

Out in my area there are a great many sulphur plants and gas plants, and they have some monitors out there for SO₂, none for NO₂ – of course, you don't need that – and none for CO₂. You can more or less make a guess at well analysis, how much you're putting in the air. We analyze for SO₂, but we don't analyze for any of the other chemicals that cause ill health. Of course engineers – and I am one, being the same the year over – unless something's been proven to kill you for a generation, won't accept the fact that it can kill you. In other words, you've got to have a whole bunch of stiffies out in a row and a bunch of doctors certifying that somebody's died from something before the engineers are convinced that maybe they will do something.

The fact is this: in many areas, particularly all around the edge of Edmonton, because it is an industrial area, we have gas wells and oil wells pumping in and being processed. You can ask any nurse, anyone else, about asthma and other illnesses out on the east side of Edmonton. You can look at the banks of the North Saskatchewan River from Fort Saskatchewan on out there, probably one of the nicest areas in the province to locate: beautiful green hills, and trees looking down the valley, even looking over Edmonton. Nobody's there, not a soul. Hardly any buildings. Why? It's downwind from all the petrochemical plants and everything else. Sure, we engineers will say, "Prove it; has it killed anybody?" Nobody wants to, let alone the engineers themselves. I often think that maybe most of our engineers for different petrochemical and engineering companies should be made to live – the only place they'd be allowed to have is a house downwind from their plant, but you'll never see them dumb enough to do that. They always go upwind. So what we have is

very little monitoring outside of gases that we know caused trouble two or three generations ago.

If I may move on a bit, I'd like to put one specific question in here. When we were talking about saving our land, water, and air resources, the Member for Medicine Hat touched on it when he mentioned that many of the greenhouses are now planting and raising trees. In my constituency, of course, we have the huge government-owned Pine Ridge Forest Nursery. I'll make a very blunt question, right to the point, because I know that although he moves with glacial slowness, Mr. Chairman, he's another Nijinsky when it comes to sidestepping a question. This question is very simple, very simple. In this mood of privatization, which is nothing more than a method of trying to balance the budget by selling everything you can't lay your paws on, does the minister intend to privatize the Pine Ridge nursery in the next year?

MR. EVANS: Am I?

MR. N. TAYLOR: That's the question. That's what I'm asking you.

MR. EVANS: You want to privatize it?

[Mr. Herard in the Chair]

MR. N. TAYLOR: I'm asking you. That's the way it goes, this way. That's the way the game is played.

Does the minister intend to privatize the nursery? We have a lot of employees out there who would be very interested. If Medicine Hat is moving into making trees . . . Mind you, in the old days you couldn't take a tree any further than, I think, a hundred miles – you couldn't replant a tree that hadn't been seeded and raised within a hundred miles. Now, if you tried within a hundred miles of Medicine Hat . . . You know, I've got an interesting story. When I was about your age down in Medicine Hat, we had an old dog that was ready to expire, about 14 years of age, and it had never seen a tree. So at 14 we loaded it in a truck and took it all the way to Taber just so it could have a tree before it died. That just shows you what . . . [interjection] I knew Medicine Hat would laugh at that one.

But to move on, that's one question. Put it down. Do you intend to privatize Pine Ridge?

Now we move on to fish and wildlife. What bothers me here, Mr. Chairman, is that there seems to be almost no recognition by this government of the fact that through the last 10 to 12 years the law has become very, very clearly established that priority for wildlife runs, one, conservation; second, sustaining natives; thirdly, nonnative hunting. Whether we like it or not, the courts have established it that way. Yet this department, fish and wildlife, and this government show no recognition of that. They pit hunter against hunter, native against hunter, when the fact is that the law quite clearly says you have to manage your wildlife in such a way that you give sustenance to the natives and then hunting to the nonnative. This department shows no glimmer . . . If the last half of the 20th century has come through into that department, I have not seen anything. There may be a glimmer, there may be a flicker when he moves his eyes now and again. But I'd be very, very interested in what the long-term plans for fish and wildlife are in such a way to bring our wildlife back to amounts where nonnative hunters can hunt, bring the money in, bring the revenue.

What plans do you have? You can't do it by edict. They tried an edict way back in the Sheriff of Nottingham's day to say that deer couldn't be hunted by anyone but the Queen, and Robin Hood paid no attention to it because there was nothing in it for

Robin Hood. If he let the deer go by in the spring, the Queen got it in the fall. We have the same thing with our native population. The way this government runs things, what profit motive, what incentive, what reason would a native have to try to conserve when it'll all be farmed out and sold to the highest bidder? There's nonnative in the fall. The natives have shown that they're very, very good managers of wildlife when you give them a trap line, when they see a direct economic advantage connected to it.

This government seems to be totally unaware that that movement is out there. It's been recognized by much of the rest of the world where the aboriginal population has a claim on wildlife and fish, and then after that the rest, the nonnatives, come in. Certainly we can build back this industry. Instead, the minister of the environment – and I'd see very little evidence – leaves roads open so access is handy for poachers of any type, native or nonnative. There's no effort made to try to cut down accessibility. Our game is under pressure. It's not only the irrigation ditches, where, as the Member for Medicine Hat pointed out so well, our coverage is taken away. Even where we have forests, we build roads in to every moose yard, every place elk will gather. Anybody can go out that's got a four-wheel drive.

While I'm on native land, I want to ask the minister . . . There's something in the elements, Mr. Chairman. I'm just pausing for a moment until he finishes his conversation, because I want the question to register. I know he has his acolytes up here that might tell him what's going on. Nevertheless, the second question I want to be very specific about is Native Land Claim in the elements in the Government Estimates: Supplementary Information. One point six million dollars is in there, and I think that's on page 34. I fail to understand what Native Land Claim is doing in the department of environment. Maybe you could just explain to me what it's about. What's a native land claim doing there? There probably is a good reason. [interjection] There is a good reason. I'll take your word for it.

The last question – and I'll move along – is that Special Waste Management up at Swan Hills. Well, I remember that very well, because in one of the earlier by-elections many years ago when I ran against our more famous House leader up here, I proposed the idea that we could put a waste management facility into Swan Hills. But at that time I didn't think of it as a golden egg for some friend of the Tory government. What I can't understand is that if we're still subsidizing it at \$26.2 million – and it's on that same page, as a matter of fact – versus \$28 and a half million a year before, when are we going to get out of subsidizing the waste plant? If we have to pay that kind of a subsidy per year, what are we doing dragging private individuals along? I don't quite understand the point. Usually, if you have to put that kind of money into a facility to make it fly, there's no need to have a private part there. You're either giving them a gravy train, or you should pay them out, tell them to go home, and run it all yourself. I don't quite understand the relationship.

9:00

On the other hand, maybe you can privatize it. I know the hon. member that usually sits in the seat on your left, if you'll pardon me – he's not usually left of anything, but the one on your left usually, the minister farther over two. I'm sorry; on the hon. member from Hanna-Oyen's right, Chinook's right, if you can believe that. That individual hasn't got around to privatizing the waste plant. I just don't understand why we're putting \$26 million a year into something that's partly owned privately, part publicly. Now, you may be able to build a very good, good reason for it.

Those are three questions. They're not intended to bring down the government, they're not intended to really keep you awake all night, but I would love to have an answer.

Thank you.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Vegreville-Viking.

How about Calgary-Mountain View?

MR. HLADY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I had a couple of questions this evening for our minister of the environment. Some of the things that we're seeing and the trends that are happening right now in our environment are: looking at privatization in different areas and looking at ways that we can save money through the environment. I think it's become a fairly expensive \$320 million budget yearly, and that is something that comes directly out of the taxes and the provincial budget. There are a number of areas in different parts of the United States and in Canada where we're seeing privatization happening. It seems to be effective in many, many other locales, so I think it's something we should consider here in Alberta as well. There are many areas, from overnight camping facilities to day use parks, that we can look at for privatization. One of the other areas in our environment is looking more progressively at possibilities and seeing things such as the waste management plant. It will be interesting to see how the results work out through there and what we will see happening in the burning of the PCBs.

Kananaskis Country is a very original area compared to other provinces. I don't think other provinces have an area that is designed the same as our Kananaskis Country. We are a little curious in regards to the costs of Kananaskis Country, and we're looking at expenses of almost \$8 million, \$7.7 million, for 1993-94. I'm just a little curious on the revenues that we do and possibly see out of Kananaskis Country. If there's any possibility of getting some of the details on the leases on the golf course, Nakiska, and what kinds of situations we're seeing in those particular areas, it would be very helpful to us as well. Some of the roads going through Kananaskis Country in the wintertime are closed down, and access through there to the southern part of the province is not possible during the winter months. I was wondering if that was for strictly environmental reasons. Or what were the exact costs to possibly keep that road open for people to access other parts of this province?

We have many areas in our Environmental Research that are happening in this province. A question that might be considered is: why are we not doing that under more specific areas, such as the ARC? If there's a cost right now of \$10 million per year, as we're estimating for '93-94, are these being best served through Environmental Research, or is this something where we could maybe access and create a better use of our money by doing it through the ARC?

I think that's about it for the questions this evening for me. Thank you very much.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul.

MR. LANGEVIN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I, too, would like, Mr. Minister, to offer you my personal congratulations on your reappointment, and I trust that you will dispense your duties in a very caring manner. I have to also extend to you some appreciation from one of my constituents who applied for a permit under the new environmental protection Act. He received his permit within about a week, and it was permit number one, which

was issued to operate an asphalt plant in this province. He really appreciated the way that he was looked after, and it was done in time for him to get on with his contract.

There were quite a few comments made already on the environment, and I would like to touch mainly on forestry this evening. Forestry has a long history in this province. When the settlers and the pioneers came to Alberta, I think the two backbone industries that kept this province going were agriculture and forestry. The family and medium-sized sawmills played a very important part in forestry in this province for many, many years. In those years we harvested our forests and produced dimensional lumber only, but as the province opened and the people got more modernized and expanded, we saw the pulp mills arrive. Especially in the last few years, from the '70s on, the present government made some great efforts to attract multinational and mega projects to Alberta, and people like Al-Pac and Daishowa and many others were attracted to this province. In order to satisfy their great appetite for forests and for timber, some FMAs, forest management agreements, were signed with these big operations.

My concerns, Mr. Minister, this evening are a few about the FMAs. When you enter into these contracts with them and you sign an FMA with a company like Al-Pac, which is about 10 percent of the total landmass of Alberta, there are numerous family and medium-sized sawmills around this area whose supply of timber is threatened. I understand that you have in the agreement some commitment by Al-Pac to supply to the local sawmill operators the incidental spruce that they come across during their harvesting of aspen lumber. But what's happening and what we've seen so far is that a lot of that spruce is going straight to the mill. It's not being made available. In one instance I've seen, there was an advertisement and some of it was made available. But Al-Pac has the option of setting their offset cost, their cost of harvesting the timber, piling it, their profit that they might lose instead of processing it into pulp. They set this offset cost, and if the local operators are not able to meet that price, then there's no deal and the logs will go to the plant.

I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, if you would be prepared to look into that and to ensure that the spruce and the pine in that region, if it's sizable enough and useful for a private sawmill, be made available to them on a financial arrangement.

Also with the signing of the FMAs, these big companies that are so hungry for timber cannot do any selective logging. Everything is being clear cut in the area. They do; they clear cut a large tract of land, sometimes many, many acres in one tract. I don't know if we have the background information and if we have enough data now that we can assure ourselves that this clear-cutting is not too harmful to the environment. I would like to know, if you have some of this information available, if you could make it available to us.

9:10

What happens in the boreal forest when you do some clear-cutting, you dispose of forest and you clean the forest where there are seven, eight, or sometimes quite a few species of trees in one patch. When you come in and reforest, you reforest with one specie or two at the most, and in Alberta usually we use white spruce or pine to reforest. When you have a single-specie forest, it's more susceptible to insects and to disease and bugs, and it's a forest that might cost us more to nurture along so that it would grow to maturity. I think the multispecie forests are easier to care for, and they're less susceptible to insects and disease. So I would like you to maybe give us some information on how we are going to cope with these single-specie forests, if we have a program to look after that.

Also, when we signed quite a few of the FMAs, I understand that the owners of the FMAs did their own inventory account themselves. I raised a concern in this House on September 1 about the Alberta Newsprint Company, where they now have realized that they're short by about 30 percent of the inventory that was taken in 1980. At that time, Mr. Minister, when I pointed it out in question period, your answer was that the formula has proven not to be accurate, the initial formula that was used, and now apparently there's a new formula in place. I would like to know: what is the difference between the two formulas? Of the FMAs that we now have signed over to big companies, how many of these FMA inventories were taken under the old formula? I'm wondering if we are also 30 percent out with Daishowa and 30 percent short with Al-Pac. If this would be the case, this would cause enormous problems there, because I think they probably need all the timber that's available in that FMA. So I would like to know if it's been assessed on the old or the new formula. Also, how many areas in Alberta were reassessed? As you reassessed them, what percentage of difference did you find between the old and the new formulas?

Another area that I would like to ask about, Mr. Minister. In 1975 we set the stumpage rate in this province. There has been no reassessment or re-evaluation of that rate that I know of till now. I understand that you're looking now. How soon would your department be recommending a new stumpage rate for Alberta? If we set it in 1975, it's coming 20 years old, and it hasn't even kept up with inflation. So I think maybe this is a loss of revenue that we might be able to look at without penalizing the users too much but just having a good value on the stumpage.

Also, Mr. Minister, as we sign all the FMAs and we sign large tracts of land to multinationals or to big companies in Alberta, I'm wondering if we haven't gone too far. We might have caused a problem for this province to implement Special Places 2000. The draft copy came out on November 20, 1992; it was put out by this government. On the first page of the vision statement it says:

The vision of Special Places 2000 is to complete a protected areas system that achieves the goals of protection, outdoor recreation, heritage appreciation, and tourism.

Looking at the map in this draft copy, there are quite a few areas proposed to be protected. I think we have to protect these areas before they get damaged and they're not available anymore for protection. I wonder, Mr. Minister: have we signed some FMAs that would infringe on the proposed map in the draft copy of Special Places 2000?

Also, I'm quite anxious that we would approve this document. I think it's urgent that we look at the heritage river system in Alberta and join it. I know that the Clearwater River, which comes from Saskatchewan, is protected in Saskatchewan. When it comes into Alberta, it falls under the FMA agreement with Al-Pac, and it's not protected in that area. I would hate to see Al-Pac have the authority to go in there now and to harvest the timber close to the river. Until we do enter the system and we have it protected, I wonder if your department would have some negotiation with Al-Pac and ask them to stay away from the river banks until we make a decision on the heritage river system in Alberta and we decide which rivers we're going to protect and, when we protect them, how wide an easement on each side we're going to look after.

I also had some concern about the cost of operation at Pine Ridge, but my colleague Mr. Nick Taylor raised that issue. He asked you if you had the intention of privatizing. I'd be interested in your answer to that. I also heard some rumours from that place that the seedlings that are produced in Pine Ridge by users are not the same quality of other seedlings in Alberta. Is that just

a rumour, or is that a fact? Why does that come about? That has been raised to my attention on two or three occasions. I'm wondering if the seeds that they use in Pine Ridge are the same seeds that private enterprise would use. Do they come from the same forest, or are they a different specie or a different type of tree that we're trying to produce there?

I also have some concern for the lakes and the stock of fish in northeastern Alberta. I understand that the anglers are getting about 80 percent of their catch in the northeastern Alberta Lakeland region, but if we look at the budget, we realize that maybe 25 percent of the money that's used for restocking and looking after fisheries in Alberta is used in that region. So I'm concerned. I don't think you can keep a good industry going or a tourism attraction going if you draw out 80 percent of its capacity and you only invest a quarter of your investment back in that area. That's a concern. I was wondering if this could be equalized, and if we're producing in that area most of the tourism fishing, the anglers, maybe we should look at reallocating money to make sure that we can sustain that industry and that it doesn't go short. Then everybody's the loser.

Thank you, Mr. Minister. I will await your answers.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member Red Deer-South.

MR. DOERKSEN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I'd like you to refer to the documents which is where I'm going to address my questions in a couple of areas. The government estimates, the big book, has two revolving funds in there. One, the Forestry, Lands, and Wildlife Revolving Fund. The estimates for 1992 under a section there under Revenue called Land Information Alberta Enterprise estimated revenue of \$2.6 million. Actual revenue was \$47,000. That's a nonachievement of an objective. Conversely, the expenditure, then, under '92-93 called for \$3.5 million; actual expenditures were \$866,000. So if you compare those two '92-93 estimates, we're looking for about a 74 percent recovery rate. In actual fact our recovery rate was 5 percent. Some explanation of that would be in order.

As well, the projected '93-94 estimates are looking for a 50 percent recovery rate, and since in the past there was only 5 percent, are we not overestimating our ability to achieve those results? So an explanation on that would be appreciated.

9:20

If you turn the page to 137, we're now looking at Water Resources Revolving Fund. A compliment is in order here. On the equipment rental we were looking at a 99 percent recovery in the estimates, and the actual was 105 percent recovery. Well done. I am concerned that we're still projecting a net loss this year in terms of revenue versus expenditure, and I'm wondering if this shouldn't be a full recovery revolving fund.

Then moving over to 5.7.2, which talks about Native Land Claim Settlements. In 1992-93 the estimates were \$1.8 million. I can't find anywhere in any of the documents what the actual expenditure was on it. Okay? It would be interesting to know - I'm not sure if you can estimate that - what our potential liability is.

MR. EVANS: I'll give it a shot.

MR. DOERKSEN: Okay. Well, it is potential liability. If it's in our estimates, we obviously think that there is a potential. I don't know a whole lot about that particular area anyway, so that's why I'm asking for the explanation.

On those specific questions, Mr. Minister, I will sit down and let somebody else carry on.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Sherwood Forest; I mean, Sherwood Park. Sorry.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I believe it was the Member for Redwater who made reference to Sherwood Forest and some of the inhabitants of that particular area, which I doubt was under any forest management agreement.

I appreciate, Mr. Chairman, the opportunity to just continue. I wanted to quickly go through some line items for the minister and then let other members have an opportunity to speak on this budget debate.

First of all, just some observations on the line items. The element details do contain more information this year, so compliments to the government for more information in the line items. I note that the overall budget for the department is down by 10 percent since 1991, a little bit of difficulty with exact comparisons because of the reorganization of the department, in fact having lands and forests now amalgamated into that. I also note that the FTEs have moved from 4,261 to 4,051. As the minister alluded to, part of that is through the voluntary program. I hope, though, that we can be sure that we're not reducing manpower in critical areas like enforcement, fish and wildlife areas, those sorts of areas, because it's important that we maintain the proper complement of personnel in that particular area.

Specifically, Mr. Chairman, starting on the line items with program 1, 1.0.1 is now the new estimate for the combined ministerial department. I note that there's a saving of 7 percent with the combination. I thought it might be a little higher than that. I wonder if maybe the minister could give us some explanation of why it is only 7 percent. Again, I thought it might be a little bit higher than that. Line item 1.0.5 is the Communications budget. That's down for this year, and I felt that perhaps in the year the new legislation takes effect, there might be some increased activity in informing Albertans about the new legislation and how it's going to work. Perhaps we could just get a bit of an explanation on why that particular line item is down this year.

Moving to line item 1.0.7, that refers to the Standing Policy Committee on Natural Resources and Sustainable Development. Three questions to the minister here. The first question is: why is this showing as a departmental expenditure? It should be a committee of caucus, not a department expenditure. The second question: I'm wondering why the budget is not shared with the departments of Economic Development and Tourism, Labour, and Energy, because those particular departments form part of that standing policy committee. The entire budget is through Environmental Protection. My third question, with respect to the capital investment column, is: what is the \$5,000 capital expenditure for this committee for?

Moving to program 2. The Member for Medicine Hat previously referred to line item 2.1. The question here is whether this is our portion of the joint federal/provincial program on the HELP sites. If it is, what's our portion of that? It's an increase over the 1992 estimates, and my question here is: are there more sites that are being reclaimed, or further explanation on that particular line item?

Moving to 2.3, which is Standards and Approvals, I'm wondering if the increased funding in this line item is for the implementation of the clean air strategy. We've heard a great deal about the clean air strategy report. It was endorsed by the government in June of 1992 and has not yet been implemented. I'm wondering

if there is money in the budget for it and, if it is, where it's coming from, if this is the particular line item.

Items 2.3.1 and 2.3.2 deal with Air Quality and Water Quality. Certainly under water quality the issue that arises there is the disposal of toxins into our river basins, the Athabasca River and Peace basins. I appreciated the minister's comments at the beginning of this evening – and he's made them previously – about watching where we control our costs and where we can look at further revenues. As I understand it, there is no cost to apply for approvals for these kinds of activities, and I'm wondering whether or not the minister is considering looking at a cost of application for approvals under the new legislation.

I want to move to item 2.4, Wastes and Chemicals. There's a decline in this particular budget of 29 percent. I guess the question to the minister simply is: why is there this significant decline? Under 2.4.1, again I've alluded to the HELP program. I'm just wondering whether it's under this line item or if it was under the previous one. If it's here, I note that there's a significant reduction in this line item, and I'm wondering why, if that is part of the HELP program.

Under 2.4.3 there is no specific line item for Action on Waste, and there is a line item on Action on Waste in Economic Development and Tourism. So I'm wondering why there is no separate line item. How can Action on Waste be shown to be accountable if members of this Assembly don't have the line item to refer to? I think the Action on Waste program is too ad hoc, and I think that we should consider phasing out that program and perhaps looking at something that's a little bit more structured in terms of its accountability to the Legislative Assembly.

Items 2.4.4 and 2.4.5: I want to compliment the government for protecting these programs. The minister has alluded to it, but I know that in his particular department there were not across-the-board cuts. In fact specific programs were looked at, and we appreciate the fact that these important programs were looked at and maintained. So, again, compliments to the minister on that.

There is some concern, as the minister will know, about ground water levels, particularly in northeastern Alberta, particularly Cold Lake. I'd like to know what the minister is doing to protect our aquifers and if the minister has given any consideration to restricting use of fresh water by the oil industry in that particular area.

I want to move to items 2.5.1 and 2.5.2 and am just wondering, to the minister, why there's a significant increase in Investigations. I applaud that, that there's an increase in line item 2.5.1 but a decrease 2.5.2. I'm just wondering if you can give us an explanation on that.

9:30

I want to just take a minute to mention that under the new AEPEA municipalities are going to have some of the downloading of the cost of investigations and environmental compliance. If a particular site is a contaminated site, the minister has the opportunity to require the municipality to clean that up. If they can't recover the costs from the landowner, it simply becomes an extra tax levy on that particular land. For individuals and companies that are less concerned with environmental protection, what it means is that no doubt that municipality is going to become the proud owner of contaminated sites when the owner lets that land go on the tax assessment. What it means is that municipalities are going to have to spend more money making sure that industries and landowners in their areas are adhering to the strict compliance. I think that's something that all members should know

about what's going to happen in their towns and counties and IDs and MDs.

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

Line item 2.7, Mr. Minister, is Strategic Management and Regional Co-ordination. The mandate of this in the budget estimates is very similar to the mandate for the Environment Council of Alberta. I know the minister talked about trying to avoid duplication, talked about amalgamation. I'm wondering whether or not we might strengthen the mandate of the Environment Council of Alberta and move some of the strategic management and regional co-ordination activities from Environmental Regulatory Services in program 2 over to program 9, and let's strengthen the Environment Council of Alberta for some of the activities that appear to be a duplication in the description of those programs.

If I move to program 3, the total for the program is down by 9 percent. Under 3.2.1 what jumps off the page is that the Director's Office budget has increased by 113 percent while the whole program has dropped by 9 percent, so I'm wondering if the minister can explain that increase.

Under item 3.1.2 could the minister explain the construction costs on the surface water development operation? What's being constructed on this?

I note that the Water Resources Act is still under review and that in January of this year the government did allocate more permits for irrigation of more lands in southern Alberta. I'm wondering why, when the Water Resources Act is still under review. I've also got a concern that there may already have been overallocation of water resources.

Fish and wildlife, program 4. Compliments to the government for maintaining enforcement. In looking at its budget here, it looks like the reduction is primarily in the program support area, and that's also appreciated. Concern about the expenditures of stocking lakes in Alberta: I'm wondering whether or not there's ever been a cost/benefit analysis. I understand there's a significant amount of winter-kill in the stocking program, and I wonder if maybe the minister could just allude to that with respect to fisheries.

I'll move to program 6, as the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul dealt with program 5. With respect to parks and Kananaskis, line item 6.6, this particular budget has increased by almost 30 percent for redevelopment and construction of Kananaskis Country. I'm wondering if the minister can give us an explanation on the increase of that particular budget, and again noting that the budget is down.

Under program 6, in terms of the parks, a couple of comments. The minister did in fact allude to Special Places 2000. I'd like to suggest to the minister that we have to work faster to set aside these areas. Other activities are going to encroach, and it's going to be that much more difficult to implement the Special Places 2000 if we don't get on with that. I recognize that the open houses are going on now, and I want to encourage the minister to move quickly. For all members of the Assembly, you should know that Alberta is now the only province in Canada not to have entered into the endangered spaces program or the heritage rivers program with the federal government. Another area of concern in terms of the Special Places 2000 is that public lands other than the forest reserves have been moved from Environmental Protection over to agriculture, from multiuse to single use, and it's going to again be that much more difficult to allocate appropriate places in the Special Places 2000 program.

Program 9, Mr. Minister. I did in fact already refer to that. Again, I'd like to see the increased profile and budget for the Environment Council of Alberta. I wonder if the minister might also comment on the future of the Environment Council of Alberta at this point and what executive search is under way for a new executive director with the announcement of the retirement of Dr. Krawetz.

I think those are my only comments. There may have been one on program 8. No, that was already asked by a previous member. Those are my questions.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

MR. JACQUES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I, too, would like to extend my congratulations to the minister on his appointment. For many years in the private sector in the forest products industry I had many dealings with the department of the environment. I noticed that in 1989 very substantial changes occurred, and they have occurred on a continuing basis since that time. It's a credit to the minister of the day and also to the Premier, who was the previous environmental minister.

I do have several issues that I would just like to leave with the minister if he does have time to comment on. They are all forestry related. The first one, with regard to nurseries, was touched on by the Member for Redwater and it was also raised by several other members, in terms of nursery stock, quality standards, et cetera. There is quite a mixture within the province in terms of supply sources and whether it be from a government nursery or whether it be from other nurseries within Alberta or indeed nurseries from outside of this province. There's a long history, which I'm not going to go into, but I think there is a development process that we have seen that has over time, and particularly in the private sector, resulted in an on-average much better stock. I think it's very important, Mr. Minister, particularly in terms of the Free to Grow standards that were established the better part of three years ago on reforestation, and I think the whole principle of the government assuming the responsibility for nursery stock, and seedlings in particular, is one that should be re-evaluated in lieu of the Free to Grow standards where indeed FMA holders and even quota holders have very strict standards that they must adhere to over a period of time, as you're fully aware. I do believe that the standards are there, and it therefore behooves the operator to ensure that they have the best quality stock on a continuing basis. We all recognize that the nursery operations are very much like farming because they're dependent upon a crop of cones, which produce seeds. One must select seeds from areas typical of which you are going to be reforesting. They must match in elevation, topography, soil conditions, and those types of things.

9:40

The second item, Mr. Minister, and again I don't know whether it's an issue that is currently being addressed by the department, but it does have implication in cross ministries and that is with some form of integrated land use policy that would better define what I would call marginal forestry land or, marginally, even white zone areas. I think there are many examples in the province where we see areas that are truly defined within the white zone but at the present time are, quote, forest areas. The reason they are not generally in the white zone at this time is because they are very marginal agricultural land. As we have seen over the years, the evolution recently between the conifer demand versus the deciduous demand, those lands that perhaps contain deciduous indeed would hold a better promise in the longer term to be

managed as forest lands than they would be in terms of agricultural lands. So I would be interested to know whether that particular issue at this point in time is under consideration by both your ministry and the ministry of agriculture.

The third issue, Mr. Minister, is an environmental issue in terms of the NRCB. I go back to June of 1992, at which time I had the pleasure of attending a conference in Edmonton, which I believe was the first one that had been held by NRCB, which was outlining its mandate, the issues, and the processes as they saw it at the time. It was relevant at that particular point in time because it wasn't too long before that that a proposal by GAP had been made to the government and there was a lot of speculation as to the process that would be involved, and most certainly NRCB was a critical one and will be.

The issue of the day was the fact that NRCB indicated that their position relative to FMAs was such that they would be including an evaluation of the FMAs, which of course then led into the question that that's assumed that the FMA largely had been put to bed at that point in time. However, the forestry of the day indicated that they would not grant an FMA unless NRCB approval had been obtained; in other words, be conditional upon. There seemed to be somewhat of a closed loop situation on it. It was identified as an issue at that time. I am asking the question as to whether any further progress has been made on resolving that issue. It led into considerable discussion because of the timing implications that one could possibly get into if that situation arose, the timing being the FMA versus the NRCB. I'm not suggesting which is the right solution, but I think the issue is one that if it hasn't been resolved, I would encourage the department to give it a high consideration, because I think there is the anticipation that there will be major forest products operations making proposals in the near future, and it would be one that we would not like to see impede the total length of the approval process.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Rutherford.

MR. WICKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Basically, I just have a couple of questions, but I first want to comment on one particular area that is of growing concern. It's been discussed in the House on previous occasions, and that's the question of hunting in northern Alberta. Of course, the concept of joint management, joint control is now being advanced, and I would certainly hope that the minister is going to move in that direction and that the final solution is going to be a solution that accommodates the rights of the aboriginal people, the Treaty 8 people, but at the same time also respects hunting as a recreation for those that like to participate in it from the point of view of recreation.

A couple of questions, Mr. Chairman. I don't want to try and put the minister on the spot here, but he was very, very closely linked with the previous minister of the environment in that I always kind of saw him as - well, it was just a natural that if that side was to form the government again, he was to become the minister of the environment, so I think he was closely linked with the previous minister of the environment. One area of concern that came up in this House that we never, never had the final report on, the final outcome of was the Ice Age Company. The Ice Age Company, of course, for the new members, was a situation where there was initially approval given to allow the concept of the development of Ice Age, I guess, on the mountain-tops, however it was to function. [interjection] On the what, Mr. Minister?

MR. EVANS: Glacial ice.

MR. WICKMAN: Right; exactly. There was some type of settlement to satisfy the parties that had spent some dollars in the initial environmental impact studies, that I gather were requested by the previous minister of the environment. I'd just like to know what the final outcome of that was.

Secondly, one of the areas that I have some difficulty with in the Department of Environmental Protection is trying to deal with certain aspects of the department when it comes to making inquiries. On a number of occasions I got the comment back that we have to funnel everything through the minister, that if you have a particular request, you have to direct that to the minister. It makes our job as members of the opposition very, very difficult in that it becomes much more cumbersome, and it takes a much longer period of time. Now, there's a small number of ministers that do tend to operate in that particular fashion, and I would ask the minister if he would please recognize us, even though we are opposition, as being representatives of our given constituencies that we were elected in. We're here trying to do a job. We're here trying to resolve problems on behalf of our constituents, and we're trying to get information on behalf of those constituents. So any manoeuvring, any chain of command, any control whatever that allows us to operate or to get that information or to get those problems resolved that much more quickly of course benefits those Albertans that live in our particular constituency.

Those are the only areas of concern that I want to raise this evening, Mr. Chairman, and I would hope that the minister gets the opportunity to respond to them.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Minister of Environmental Protection.

MR. EVANS: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I very sincerely want to thank all of those hon. members who have participated to this point in time in the debate this evening. The questions have been really quite excellent and show a good knowledge of environmental issues. I think it's a compliment to those members who have participated. They're representing the environmental issues of their constituents quite well. I will do my best, recognizing the time of course, to answer as many of the questions that have been posed as succinctly as possible. I think I'll start with the first presentation and just go along from there.

The Member for Sherwood Park began. There were a number of concerns raised by the hon. member, and he did refer to the process of the environmental legislation coming into effect. Now, on the one hand, Mr. Chairman, the hon. member was talking about what he thought was perhaps circumstantial evidence leading to a conclusion that there were delays in passing the legislation. On the other hand, however, he was talking about the importance of having public input into this very important piece of legislation.

9:50

I think what's important for hon. members to realize and understand is, again, that this Act is very, very comprehensive. It is the piece of environmental legislation in the province of Alberta. It is literally a piece of legislation that is looked on with great envy in other parts of our country and indeed all of North America because it is so comprehensive. The process is looked on very, very positively by other jurisdictions as well because it was so public input oriented. I assure the hon. member that from the very beginning this dedication to public input, this dedication to ensuring that Albertans felt that this was their legislation, that it was something that they would buy into, was very, very well stated and constantly stated by the minister of the environment. It was a commitment that the Environmental Legislation Review Panel that was established by the minister of the environment,

now our Premier, made. I was very proud to represent government on that panel as the chairman. We ensured that we gave everyone who came to the 13-odd locations that we were in around this great province more than enough opportunity to make their points, to listen to their points, and to ensure that we took action on those points by bringing those matters to the attention of all of our colleagues back in the Legislature.

Now, the hon. member has focused on discretion. We have had some discussions on this issue of discretion. It's recognized that the report that we prepared commented on discretion. It said that we recognize that there is some need for discretion, but it should be minimized. There should be a system in place that has checks and balances and that minimizes that discretion. The hon. member, I think, if I heard him correctly, said that there were no changes made on that issue of discretion. I take issue with that, hon. member, and I'm pleased to provide you in due course with some specific examples of where that discretion was limited beyond the draft that we were looking at when we were going around the province.

Now, the hon. members also talked about some of the terms that are used and the lack of definition of some of those terms. Well, again it relates back to the complexity of the issues that are dealt with in that legislation. Indeed, some of the things that will come over time in terms of practice will put some definition on these terms. I hope and trust that that won't be through expensive litigation, because I think that's a disservice to the people of Alberta. We'll just have to see. I know there was certainly a sense of goodwill but that terms like "accepted industry practice," "persons responsible for hazardous waste," et cetera, were terms that had some background in fact. They had been dealt with before, and there was some precedent for those terms.

The hon. member then went on to talk about some specifics, and he was talking about landfill issues. In particular, he made reference to the Pine Lake landfill. That landfill site has gone through a very significant review. The landfill itself is in the process of coming to be at this point in time. There are funds that are dedicated to that. It's about five kilometres, actually, north of Pine Lake. I passed over it during the summer, and I think that it shows a very positive and proactive approach to waste management in the province of Alberta. Very good soil samples there, and I think it's going to work out extremely well. But we will certainly keep the hon. member's comments in mind.

I'd like to move then to Medicine Hat. The hon. member made reference to a concern he had about what program 2, specifically Land Conservation, was referring to. I'm just trying to find the section here for the hon. member so that I can give him a definition. We're talking, hon. member, about surface disturbances here. I think you made a reference to whether or not this related back to hazardous wastes. It really does deal with surface disturbances that industry could create and specifically deals with the issuance of development and reclamation approvals, if that's helpful. I hope it is.

There was also a comment made about pheasants and the decreasing numbers of pheasants in south-eastern Alberta. I did have the opportunity to take a viewing of the pheasant hatchery at Brooks over the summer. Recently, hon. member, you may be aware, the responsibility for that facility has been moved over to Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. I know my colleague the minister has also gone to that facility over the summer. We're in a position where we are able to assist those who are going out hunting in that area. I know it's extremely important both to you and to the hon. Member for Bow Valley – a big tourism opportunity for both of you. When you look at the amount of money that is generated by fish and wildlife pursuits in the province of

Alberta, hon. member, it's really quite extraordinary. I do have some figures here, if I can just put my finger on them, to give you some information about what kind of moneys we generate. I think that will also give you an idea of how important we feel this industry is and how both agriculture and Environmental Protection feel that continuing to support this industry is a very important part of our economy. It's around here somewhere. I'll try to find it later on, hon. member, if I may.

You did talk about habitat, and I think it is extremely important.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister, your comments are worth all of us hearing, and when you turn around, then you fade out.

MR. EVANS: I apologize, Mr. Chairman. I'll move back into view and into the speaking range.

I was just talking about the importance of habitat. The department is involved in a number of initiatives, and one in particular I'd like to talk about is the North American waterfowl management plan, which recognizes wetlands, recognizes shrub growth, the types of things that I think will ensure that we do conserve our habitat over time. I'm very much aware of this, and I'm sure that if the hon. member makes some comments tomorrow night, when the estimates of my hon. colleague the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development are before this committee, he'll also get the agricultural perspective on this.

The member was also asking about the difference between Reforestation and Quota Reforestation, 5.3.3 and 5.3.2. Quota Reforestation, hon. member, is dealing with areas where we are restocking on quota land. That's where the industry has already paid a fee to the province to carry out that work. The hon. member may realize that for all FMAs and quota allocations where industry produces more than 200,000 cubic metres of fibre, they are required to have their own reclamation plan. With lesser quantities than that, the industry can make a payment to government, and government then carries out the reforestation. So that's Quota Reforestation.

The other, Reforestation, is dealing with reforestation of areas that are harvested on nonquota lands and areas where we've had timber destroyed by fire, insects, disease, or industrial activity.

Seedling growth. I think the hon. member was asking some questions about seedling growth, but I think I'll wait until I get down to the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul to answer that just because there was a more specific question on seedling growth.

Provincial park privatization. We have about 17 parks now that are privatized, and it is certainly my intention to continue to privatize wherever it is economical to do so. Again, we are service oriented, Mr. Chairman, and we want to ensure that we can do that in a cost-efficient and cost-effective manner and give an opportunity to our colleagues in the private sector if that opportunity is there.

10:00

Revenue generated by Alberta special waste management. Mr. Chairman, we're not raising enough revenue out of that waste facility at this point in time to make it economically viable, but let us be clear that the reason that facility came into existence is because Alberta decided to be at the leading edge. Alberta decided to accept responsibility and show the rest of our country what environmental responsibility was all about. So in 1987, when that facility opened, it was a joint venture agreement between the private sector and the government of Alberta. We own 40 percent of it; the private-sector partner, Bovar, owns 60 percent.

Can I move on, then, to the questions from the Member for Redwater? He was talking about the problems of administrative and policing functions in our department. I think what's important to recognize, Mr. Chairman, is that we are now taking an ecosystems approach in our department. It's very, very important that we recognize that. We are trying to ensure that everything we do looks at the total picture, and that's consistent with the report from Bruce Dancik, the expert panel report on forestry in the province of Alberta. There was a question asked, though, about whether we were dealing with the economic side, and I want hon. members to realize that the forest industry development division of forestry, lands, and wildlife has actually been moved over to the Economic Development and Tourism department.

The Pine Ridge privatization. I'd like to just give hon. members a little bit of information on Pine Ridge. It is just part of a very big picture in this province. Pine Ridge supplies about 16 million of a total supply of about 72 million seedlings around the forest industry in the province of Alberta. Again, I had an opportunity to visit Pine Ridge over the summer. I'm particularly impressed with the research capability of Pine Ridge, and I know that that research capability would not be dealt with were we to just be depending on private enterprise. Yes, there are great private enterprise opportunities, and I think we can both have our cake and eat it too.

What are we doing about natives? Well, along with my colleague the minister responsible for native affairs, the Minister of Family and Social Services, we are working toward ensuring that our responsibilities for native claims are met. There was a question asked by one hon. member about where the settlement amount was from last year, the \$1.8 million. That, actually, along with the amount that we had to pay for additional fire protection, is shown at the front of our estimates. If you take a look at the original 1992-93 budget of \$334,904,000 and if you add to that \$26 million, which was fire protection, and aboriginal land claims of \$1.8 million, you get a total budget of \$362 million, Mr. Chairman.

There was a question asked by Calgary-Mountain View about how we generate more income in the department. We do generate about \$68 million in income through the department. Again, our budget is \$334 million, so we are somewhat short. We are looking at ways of increasing that, Mr. Chairman, and I would appreciate input from hon. members on that.

Lac La Biche was talking about the sawlogs and about Al-Pac and about clear-cutting. Well, certainly we are taking responsive action along with industry. Al-Pac is working with the Alberta Environmental Centre to look at ways to reharvest, to ensure that we not only cut in smaller clear-cuts – in fact, the largest one that Al-Pac is doing now is about 16 hectares – but that we leave stags and that we deal with reforestation in a positive way.

Stumpage fees. Yes, as of last September the then-minister of forestry, lands, and wildlife advised that he was going to be reviewing stumpage fees. Back in 1982 we went from a British to a metric system, so we have had about a 20 percent increase as a result of that.

Heritage rivers. I think heritage rivers is a very important component of our Special Places 2000 initiative, and I'm very much in favour of it. There have been some concerns raised by municipalities in terms of what the impact would be on those municipalities by designation. We're trying to deal with that, and then away we will go from there.

It looks like my time may be up, so I'll sit down for now.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Edmonton-Rutherford.

MR. WICKMAN: Well, I spoke enough so that he could turn around and then get back up and speak again, you see. So he can finish answering the questions.

MR. EVANS: Mr. Chairman, given the hour – there are many, many questions here. It would take a very significant amount of time to deal with them. I undertake to provide answers to all of these questions to hon. members. In my role as Deputy Government House Leader, I would move now that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Clegg in the Chair]

MR. TANNAS: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions of the Department of Environmental Protection, reports progress thereon, and requests leave to sit again.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: You have all heard the committee's report. All in favour?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. EVANS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We've had an interesting evening, but given the hour I would move that we now adjourn until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

[At 10:11 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Wednesday at 1:30 p.m.]