

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

Title: **Monday, October 4, 1993**

**8:00 p.m.**

Date: 93/10/04

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I would ask the committee to come to order.

head: **Main Estimates 1993-94**

### Environmental Protection

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'll call on the Minister of Environmental Protection to make any comments that he might wish to, and then we'll get into the debate.

MR. EVANS: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It seems like only yesterday that we were debating these estimates. I am delighted that we do have another opportunity to debate same. As I think most hon. members are well aware, in past governments, with a number of departments and a 25-day review period for estimates, it was sometimes difficult to get all of the estimates on. Now with a leaner and a meaner government consisting of many fewer departments and much more responsibility for a number of ministers, quite frankly, we have an opportunity to revisit estimates.

There was a very lively discussion on September 21 regarding the estimates of the Department of Environmental Protection, and I know that there were a number of members who did not have an opportunity to ask their questions. So rather than go into yet another preamble, I would like to give members on both sides of the House the opportunity to ask any additional questions, and then I can get to the job of trying to answer same.

I would, however, like to make one correction that happened during the remarks by the hon. Member for Sherwood Park. It's on page 399 of *Hansard* from September 21. It was during his discussion of operating permits for a number of forestry projects, and he was talking about the Alberta Newsprint Company and had presumed that that was a five-year licence. I made a comment off the cuff, which was recorded by *Hansard*; I said that it was a three-year licence. In point of fact it's a four-year licence, hon. member. I just wanted to correct that for the record.

That being said, Mr. Chairman, I look forward to additional questions from colleagues on both sides of the House.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.  
Sherwood Park.

MR. COLLINGWOOD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, I'll just spend a few minutes and bring forward some other items that may not have had a chance to be debated last time. I also wanted to mention to the hon. minister that it is fortunate that we do get another chance to debate these estimates. I appreciate that in previous years, with the number of departments, that was not always possible, so it's nice to have the opportunity to do that.

What I'd like to do, Mr. Chairman, is just go through a number of specific programs that we have often heard about and seen with respect to Environmental Protection strategies. The reason I want to do this is that I want to try and get from the hon. minister a picture as to what the priorities are of the Department of Environmental Protection. We see that in the estimates there are nine programs that we debate, and there are a number of line items in the summary by element. What I'd like to do is see if the minister

can provide us with perhaps an overall picture and an overall plan of where the Department of Environmental Protection is going.

We've often had debates in this Assembly about the need for and the importance of public consultation. Certainly the hon. minister has heard me say that we concur entirely with the need for public consultation, and certainly in the area of Environmental Protection it's essential. It's extremely important. The hon. minister may recall that in the last debate in this area I alluded to the concern we had that consultation or delays seem to occur to allow certain activities and certain events to take place that have an impact on the Environmental Protection area, that because of appearances of delays are allowed to happen.

I want to just go through a number of programs that we've heard about and offer my comments on the timing that's involved and see if we can get some definitive answers from the minister on just exactly what the status of the projects is and when we can start seeing some action rather than just some talk about these various programs. I think we need some leadership from the government in this area so that we can actually get into an implementation phase rather than just a consultation or a follow-up stage.

One of the programs we've heard about, Mr. Chairman, is the Clean Air Strategy for Alberta. Now, as I understand it, the concept for the Clean Air Strategy was originally launched in 1990, and there was a fairly major press release about two years ago, I think November of 1991, that announced the comprehensive nature of the strategy. As I say, that was about two years ago, and we're still waiting for some indication that there has been an implementation of the strategy or at least some ongoing plans for when that strategy is going to be put into place. What I'm looking for from the minister is perhaps some indication why it's taking so long to implement the Clean Air Strategy. I think we've heard from all sectors of Alberta society. They agree that the process the government has gone through is excellent, the strategy is excellent. Really, the question now is: why can't we get it implemented, and why is it taking so long? I leave that with the minister.

Similarly, in the area of forestry management through the Dancik report, it's been a number of years since we actually heard and started discussing this issue. Once again, it's taking a great deal of time before we actually start to see some implementation of that report. Now, I know this evening one of the other hon. members is going to refer specifically to that for the hon. minister, so I won't dwell, but certainly the question again is: why is it taking so long for us to see some positive steps?

Similarly, Mr. Chairman, the water resources policy for Alberta. June of 1991 was the first discussion paper on wetlands policies. We have recently had the interim wetlands policy come forward, but as of October 1993, we still do not have a draft new Water Resources Act. Again, it seems to be taking an inordinate amount of time to get through these processes. This is again a two-year stream. Again, the question to the hon. minister: what's happening? Why is it taking so long. How soon are we going to see some action in this area?

We have had debates, Mr. Chairman, with respect to the heritage rivers project. Now, I know the minister spoke about this very recently in the House, but again, just in terms of timing, we did have a task force look at this in the spring of 1991. In April of 1992 a commitment was made by the then government that we would in fact join the heritage rivers project. In September of this year, when the minister did speak on the issue, he said he believes the holder of the forestry management agreement will conduct itself as a good corporate citizen and ensure that we don't lose the benefit of the Clearwater River to the heritage project. Now,

that's fine, but I think we still need some leadership from government, from the minister's department, to ensure that in fact we can protect this area under the heritage rivers project and that we aren't going to rely simply on the good corporate citizenry of that particular FMA holder and hope the river is protected for this particular project. Again, I know the minister has said we're moving on this, but we really do want to see some action, and perhaps he could comment on that for us.

Just a quick note as I'm identifying specific projects that the Department of Environmental Protection is working on. I note the news release of September 30 entitled *Special Places 2000 Credited for Improved Environmental Rating*. What this news release speaks to, Mr. Chairman, is that the World Wildlife Fund has improved the grading of Alberta primarily because of the initiative of *Special Places 2000*, and this is through the World Wildlife Fund looking at endangered spaces. I think the government should be commended on this. The project started last year, about November of last year. The election did intervene in that. I commented to the minister earlier that I thought it was excellent of him to bring this back on and get it up and running very quickly.

#### 8:10

I guess what I want to say here, Mr. Chairman, is that we need to know that in the time frame that we've got – which isn't that long; we're down to only seven years now to the year 2000 – we have to make sure that we designate sufficient lands to provide for all of the ecosystems that we want to provide for in *Special Places 2000*. The figure has been used of about 12 percent of the province's lands to be set aside for *Special Places 2000*. That was the figure that we had used for the endangered spaces. We are now at about 2.6 percent of designated provincial lands, which would include provincial parks and various other designations of lands that are protected in the province, and we're at a figure of about 8 percent of federal lands as well.

Certain areas – critical wildlife habitat, prime protection zones – do not as yet have any legislative protection. We apparently saw, with the glacier ice company situation, that they don't have legislative protection, and we need to work quickly to make sure that we're not going to compromise areas in Alberta that are prime candidates for *Special Places 2000* because we wait too long in implementing the process and we allow resource exploitation or other activities to in fact compromise those areas that could be set aside for *Special Places 2000*. So I know and the minister will certainly want to reaffirm that the public consultation process is ongoing right now for *Special Places 2000*. The government is being commended for its efforts in that area by the opposition and certainly by many Albertans, who are very pleased that the government is moving in this direction, but I do want to make sure that we do not compromise areas that could be set aside as candidates for this project because of other agendas that the government might have. I leave that with the minister.

Another area that I just want to mention in terms of delays, with a question to the minister then about where we are in this area, is in the area of tire recycling. We have lost probably several years of economic development opportunities because the government has failed to act in a leadership role in making tire recycling available to small business in Alberta. It has happened in British Columbia. They are well ahead of us just in terms of the small business opportunities that they have been creating that Alberta has not.

Now, this issue, Mr. Chairman, actually goes back some time. It was in fact I believe in May of 1991 that the government finally issued proposals for tire recycling projects, and that was after

what I understand was a 16-month consultation process. Now, two projects were awarded, but as members may recall, there was a significant amount of negative publicity surrounding that approval process. What happened at that point is that the tire recycling process came to a screeching halt. The Tire Recycling Management Board was then created. That was, I guess, consistent with the government's new hands-off policy. It is no longer in the hands of government; now it's in the hands of a Tire Recycling Management Board. In September of 1992 we then had the \$4 tire tax implemented, with funds going to the Tire Recycling Management Board. We are now in October. We had the tire recycling regulation come into force in September of 1992. That has now been ongoing for a year. The only project that is under way is the tire incineration project; there are no tire recycling projects as yet. The minister has again called for proposals, at least in Northern Alberta, and is certainly, as I understand, reviewing those right now, and will probably have some information for us in the near future about those particular projects. Again, we are in a situation where years and years have gone by where we do not have a tire recycling industry. We have missed opportunities for small business in Alberta. We do not at this point, as I understand it, have any activity in southern Alberta in terms of tire recycling initiatives.

I think another problem that's arising is in terms of a tire collection network. Certainly the Tire Recycling Management Board had stated previously that one of the benefits of using Inland Cement and Waste Management of Edmonton is that they would start the process of a tire allocation network so that all tires in the stream could find their way into the system. I understand that some municipalities are having to in fact select specific size tires and stack those specific size tires for Waste Management. So they're taking their time, their resources to actually segregate the tires within certain parameters that WMI requires and taking their time and their resources to stack those tires so that Waste Management will in fact take them.

I don't think there's any benefit accruing to those municipalities for having to take the time and the resources to actually have to do that. The concern here is: will there, then, have to be other containers and other segregation processes and other stacking provisions for other tires not in the stream going to WMI? That's obviously a concern, because it doesn't sound like the kind of network that had been anticipated originally is in fact being set up.

So ultimately, Mr. Chairman, my question to the minister is: when are we going to hear about the recent application? What's going to be happening to finally get our tire recycling industries off the ground here? Maybe he'd comment about getting tires into the stream.

Another area seems to have taken some time to actually come into being, Mr. Chairman. You'll recall that the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act itself took a year from when it received Royal Assent to when it was proclaimed in force. That period of time was to develop the series of complex regulations for that legislation. One of the very important and integral pieces of paper that we in Alberta still need is the Alberta users' guide for waste managers. We were assured that the complete users' guide, not just the schedule but the complete users' guide, would be available by the end of September. Now, I realize that that date has just come and gone, but we still do not have the Alberta users' guide for waste managers. As far as we know, it is not available publicly as yet. Certainly with respect to understanding what the regulations are and what the rules are for the disposal and handling of hazardous wastes, that's obviously important to get. So I'd ask the minister if he could provide us with some information on

where we are on in fact getting the Alberta users' guide for waste managers.

Mr. Chairman, I did mention this briefly when I was speaking to the budget estimates for Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. I know the minister was present to hear those comments and will probably have seen them in *Hansard*, but I do want to simply ask the question again to the Minister of Environmental Protection. Essentially the question is: why were public lands transferred to the department of agriculture?

Just in brief, in 1992 the government addressed the issue of transferring public lands to the department of agriculture, and at that time it stated that public involvement would be requested before that occurred. In December of 1992 the government announced the transfer of public lands to agriculture, and that came into being in January of 1993. Shortly after that was the Minister of Environmental Protection did indicate that that was an error, and the transfer was in fact rescinded by order in council. Shortly after that, January 28 of this year, the Minister of Environmental Protection and the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development did announce that there would be joint stewardship of public lands, day-to-day management to be taken care of by the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development with final say on public lands left with the Department of Environmental Protection.

8:20

To the minister. Essentially, Mr. Chairman, I need assurances from him that he appreciates that the grazing leases are not owned by the lessees, that those lands are owned by the public of Alberta, that they are for a multiple-use purpose and should not be compromised to a single-use purpose. I'd like him to assure us that there are no plans to restrict public access to the public lands and that neither he nor the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development have any plans to sell public lands.

I want to just touch briefly, Mr. Chairman, on air quality monitoring. Again this is a subject that has come up for debate recently in this Assembly. I know the minister has indicated to the House that he's going to consider the request from the city of Edmonton to look at considering updating the inventory of air quality monitoring. I think it's important that we do that. That inventory is now a number of years old, and I think it's important that we look at not just how we monitor but exactly what we monitor. We do not monitor for hydrogen sulphide, nor do we monitor hydrocarbons in the air quality index. I think it's important, as I've mentioned previously, to residents of Edmonton, residents of Sherwood Park, residents in the vicinity of Refinery Row, certainly residents of Fort McMurray, anywhere we've got some refining and heavy industry, that we look at exactly what it is we are monitoring. At present the way we collect air pollution data, the way we monitor air quality, is that a computer collects the data from the previous day, and then subsequent to that the data is reviewed.

I'll finish with one point. I'd just like the Minister of Environmental Protection to again consider looking at the air quality monitoring aspect, as we discussed before.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.  
Rocky Mountain House.

MR. LUND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First of all I want to congratulate the minister on his reappointment to his portfolio. I'm sure that he will continue to do a fine job in that portfolio. I also want to thank the staff, the deputy minister and his assistant deputy ministers and those that worked so hard here in Edmonton.

I've come to have a great appreciation for their tremendous dedication and hard work, and I would hope that could be passed along to them.

I also want to mention two or three people in the field as well that are doing just a super job in the Rocky Mountain House constituency, and those are the superintendent of the Rocky-Clearwater forest reserve, Lorne Goff, and a couple of his rangers, Bob Glover in the Rocky district and Andy Gesner out at Nordegg. They're not only doing a tremendous job as it relates to their expertise in the forestry industry, but also their community involvement. That is extremely important, because we get this link between the people that are looking after the forest for our good and the people that are using it. That is extremely important. Mind you, there are several other people out there that are doing excellent work as well, but they'd be too numerous to mention.

Moving on to one concern that I have, and that's the problem the Alberta environmental research trust is currently having. They seem to be somewhat in limbo. They know that they have \$200,000 out of the lottery funds, but the \$300,000 that used to come from Alberta environment is no longer there. This money was matched by industry in most part over the last couple of years, so in fact when the province was putting out some half million dollars, there were matching funds coming from the industry. As a matter of fact, in many cases in excess of 50 percent was coming from industry. We were really getting pretty good mileage for those dollars, but they currently are having some difficulty in really pinning down their direction, what they are going to be doing. I know they have a number of applications, but they are reluctant to deal with them because of the problem with not having direction.

I should have commented earlier about the move, what has happened with bringing forestry into Environmental Protection and that whole field. That is a real fit, with the exception of forest development, which of course moved out of Environmental Protection. That, too, I believe was a good move, because they really were in conflict when you had a branch that was promoting development and then another branch looking after the protection. This seems to be a better fit, and I'm sure it will be more useful in the future.

Moving over a bit to parks, once again I want to mention some people in the field. The regional director for the central region, Bill Cadre, out of the Rimbey office is another excellent person. He does tremendous work with the public. He is able to settle any issue that I've had on the table. I've been able to work with Bill and some of his staff and get them resolved, and believe me, there are some pretty contentious issues arise occasionally. Of course working with him out of Sylvan Lake, the ranger there, Dave McRae: once again, it's really good to see the way he's been able to build up a rapport with the town of Sylvan Lake and with the summer villages around the area. The years that I was the MLA for Sylvan Lake and now with the summer villages, I haven't had one complaint about Dave McRae. When you consider that 40,000 people come to Sylvan Lake on a weekend, you have to appreciate that they must be doing things right out there or else we'd be getting a lot of complaints. So I wanted to mention those.

One issue that I know seems to always be coming up is whether parks should, in fact, be taking over the forestry campgrounds. I totally disagree with that. I believe that the forestry folks that are servicing those are doing it at a very efficient price, and they are interacting with the public in a proper way. I would really encourage that we don't mess that process up too much, because it's working very well certainly in the Rocky-Clearwater forest.

Of course the new Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act was just proclaimed and the regulations that go along with

that. A lot of good stuff in there, but there are some areas that really concern me. I think one of the main concerns I have is to do with the environmental impact assessment process. I'm afraid that we have now set up a vehicle where we say to some people: "If you can go out there and you can make a hoist on that developer, we'll provide you the vehicle. All you've got to do is be the driver." That really concerns me. I think it's probably much too easy for some of the so-called professionals in the field to access the hard-earned cash of the developer. I'm afraid that if we don't do something about that, we're going to end up scaring off some investors. I know of an incident in the Rocky constituency right today that is very close to doing that, and it really bothers me, because it's a good development. The community is totally in favour of it, yet it's vulnerable to that problem.

There's a problem that we have with the level of Sylvan Lake. It requires a major upgrading of the drainage system out of the lake in order to have the ability to lower it when we get a long period like we've just come through, starting in 1990 and including this year, where the lake level just simply because of the weather has stayed very high. It's interesting to note that the flow out of the lake is only about 10 cubic feet per minute. That takes 40 days to lower the lake one inch, but if we have temperatures above 80 degrees, it will go down an inch in one afternoon. When we have weather like we've had, with excessive rain and cool, cloudy days, the lake simply is staying too high. I know there are some engineering studies going on and they're working on it, but we have to start at the Red Deer River and work back or else we're simply going to flood out a bunch of farmland. I think that's wrong when we flood private property.

### 8:30

In the wildlife management area the professional guides and outfitters association have come out with a suggested program that I think is very worthy of us having a look at. What they're proposing is that there would be two sheep licences sold each year, one for nonresident, one for resident. The idea would be that the department would determine in our management plans where we may have a couple of rams extra, and the proceeds from the sale would go into a fund for sheep habitat enhancement. Apparently in the U.S. they're doing this in some of the states, and it's netting quite a large sum of money. Some of those are going for a hundred thousand dollars. So I would encourage the minister to have his staff look at that and bring it forward.

The last time the estimates were up, I heard some comment about the upstream oil waste and that it is not covered under the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act but rather by the ERCB, quite properly by the ERCB in my opinion. The last thing we need is these companies having to go to two different places to get instructions on what to do, or in the worst case scenario we have an inspector from the ERCB and an inspector from environment out there on site when one could do. It just makes a lot of sense that it would remain with the ERCB. Those people have expertise in the field. Certainly I know that the regulations they're working under are compatible with the regulations under the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act.

One other issue I would like to raise has to do with the Environment Council of Alberta. Now, I know they've done a tremendous amount of good work. I have a lot of respect for Dr. Natalia Krawetz; I think she does excellent work. I really question whether the time hasn't come that we take a very hard look at the mandate of that group and see if they are really necessary, so I would encourage the minister to do that.

Now, going directly to some numbers in the estimates book, looking under Environmental Impact Assessment Review, I see an

increase there. I'm curious whether that's because we feel that under the new Act we're going to be doing a bunch more of them or just exactly why it's there. That begs the question, then, in fact it's because we're going to be doing a bunch more of them, why it was we didn't seem to be suffering any great hardship or problems under the old system and now we've got to start doing a bunch of these. I certainly observed in the proceedings that occurred at the time of the Shell development some very disturbing things; for example, one person getting over \$104,000 for intervening. It didn't change anything, by the way.

Moving down to Industrial Wastes, vote 2.4.1, I see a huge reduction. I'm wondering what has occurred there. Is it because we've got Alberta pretty well cleaned up, or is industry taking on much more responsibility? Why have we been able to reduce that number by that much?

The Alberta Environmental Centre, 2.6.1: I assume that's Vegreville. I'm curious whether in fact we've been able to work out a system where we can recover more of the costs through fee-for-service. I know in discussion with some folks out there it seemed like with some processes that they've patented, because of the legislation and the problems we have trouble collecting on that patent. There seems to be some kind of a hang-up there. I wonder if we've been able to do anything to remedy that problem.

Moving over to Quota Reforestation, 5.3.2, and then also Reforestation, 5.3.3, I assume that's for the commercial timber permits and the local timber permits. I'm wondering what percentage of the costs we are recovering under those sales. I know that there is a dollar number that's tagged to the price that they pay for the timber. That's the price that goes for reforestation. I'm wondering what percentage that number is of these expenditures that show up in the estimates.

Pine Ridge nursery, 5.3.5, an excellent facility doing a tremendous job, I think is a necessary operation for us to continue in the research and development area. But I'm wondering if it wouldn't be possible to look at privatizing the portion that is simply producing trees, if we could look at something there, because the expenditures there have certainly increased dramatically. Once again, I wonder what kind of recovery we are getting out of the seedlings there.

Under Timber Management I'd like to know what Forest Revenue means. Fire Detection, 5.5.5. I see a fairly substantial decrease. It would seem to me that Fire Detection is a very good investment, and I'm wondering how we managed to reduce the money we're spending. Does it mean we are having less coverage? Just exactly what's happening there?

[Mr. Clegg in the Chair]

Then the Fire Operations. I notice that we are reducing the budgeted number. I guess if we have another year like this year we're okay, but I think the average has been somewhat above that \$34 million. So I just bring that out.

Then Land Related Information Services, 5.8.5. I know some private-sector people are very interested in getting into this, and I'm wondering if the minister has done anything along that line. I see we're even increasing the budget in that element this year. How much money are we recovering from the sale of information as it relates to that program?

With those few brief comments, I will let someone else have an opportunity.

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

MR. LANGEVIN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a few comments also to the hon. minister of the environment, and I'll restrict my comments mostly to forestry. I have some concern about the logging on private lands. I don't believe that in this province we have any regulation to control the logging on private lands. Some private lands are logged by private operators who do have a great concern and take care of their soil properly, but we do have some private lands where the soil is very sensitive. The soil is not conducive to agriculture after being logged, so these people will strip the soil and have no obligation to protect it in any way, maybe putting it back into some grass or reforestation. I'm wondering if your department of the environment would have a plan to propose to resolve some of these concerns. This private land if left unattended would only turn into bad erosion plots and would be degrading. You see, with the increased attractive price of logs at this time, especially with the saw logs that are shipped to B.C. from Alberta, some of these people would probably have enough logs to sell off a parcel that would be worth two or three times what the parcel of land is worth at this time. Once it's stripped of its logs, there's no more revenue because it cannot be adapted to agriculture. They probably are able to walk away from that land and just let it be repossessed through tax recovery. If there's no regulation, it's just a burden for them to hang on to this piece of land.

8:40

I'm also quite concerned about the availability of timber to small sawmill operators. I've brought that up before. We have sawmill operators, especially in my riding – I think we have 15 of these people – who would cut between half a million to 2 million, 3 million, 4 million board feet a year. They're quite small in size compared to the multinationals operating in this province, but they do supply a source of employment locally. They do supply a good source of economic activity in the local towns. Because they are local and they don't have a head office out of the community, all the money is put back in the community. I think it's quite important for the local economy to keep these private sawmills alive and operating fairly well. It's one concern that I have, and that concern has grown more serious lately because of the signing of quite a few FMA areas in this province. That threatens the livelihood of some of these operators. I think in some FMAs you've taken some steps to make incidental logs available to these people, and I wonder if we could re-evaluate that to see how it's working and if it's working in fact according to plans and if it is supplying the right number of saw logs to these operators.

I also have a concern regarding wildlife. In this province wherever wildlife gets extinct or lowered to a dangerous level where you have to stop hunting, it's often because roads are put into wilderness areas. I had a good look at Al-Pac. Al-Pac, as you know, is about 10 or 12 percent of the total landmass of Alberta. Maybe 80 percent of that FMA region at this time has no roads and no access, but if you look at their map and the infrastructure road grid that they're proposing in order for them to harvest all that timber, there are going to be roads cut across that wilderness area. What this is going to do is make it easy for hunters or poachers or anybody to travel these roads 12 months of the year. A lot of the wildlife in that area will be in danger. I know they have to have roads to harvest the timber. At this time I think all roads that are made become public roads; anybody can use them. Is there a way that we could look at restricting traffic on these roads? Once they're done harvesting in a certain area, can we dispose of the road, take it out of commission so that people cannot use it? In this wilderness area is probably a centre

where we can rely on a supply of wildlife. This wildlife moves out slowly, and it's made available to the fringe area where people can hunt these animals.

In the Dancik report that was produced – and I'm sure you're quite aware of this report; it's called Forest Management in Alberta – on page 26, items 17 and 18, there's quite a concern about the identification and management of wildlife. They refer to these roads and mapping. They also refer to the process to extend the inventory of species versus habitat relationships so that we would have a good understanding of where each species is and which habitat they need and what damage we can do when we go into a wilderness with new roads.

I have a concern also about the older forest. There's quite a movement sometimes, and you hear many environmentalists very keen on saving all of the older forests. I think you have to strike a balance in that, because if some of our older forests get too old, it gets to be of no use to loggers because you get splinters increased because of wind damage and that. If it's an area that we'd like to protect for the public, like a wilderness area similar to the one east of the Lakeland park, maybe what we should look at in these instances is having selective logging in there. If we had selective logging, it would not destroy the appearance of the wilderness area. We could remove a certain percentage of the old growth forest and give room for the new forest to come up and provide jobs. This would mainly look after the small sawmill operators, because the big operators would not be too interested in selective logging. But if it was made available in some instances, in some reserve, I think the small sawmill operators would be very interested in this selective logging. It would guarantee them a livelihood, it would not deteriorate the appearance of the park, and I think it's maybe something that we could seriously look at.

I'd also like to know at this time how we're doing with Grand Alberta Paper. I understand that they are making estimates of inventory. How far are we from signing an FMA with these people? Do we have our own check on the inventory that they're going to conduct on their own? Are we going to conduct one to guarantee, ourselves, the accuracy, or are we going to take their own? Do we have some input on how they do it to satisfy ourselves that the wood is in fact there so that we don't end up with a shortage like we've seen with Alberta Newsprint, where there was a shortage that showed up 10 years later, which could create problems for them and for the province? If there's a shortage of timber in a certain FMA, it also creates a bigger burden on the small sawmill operators, because if the holder of the FMA is short of his own timber, he's going to be pushing to have more control, and the small sawmill operators are slowly pushed out eventually.

These are the main concerns that I have at this time, and I await your comments on these.

Thank you.

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

MR. N. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I made some notes here I think I'll find. Yes. I wanted to add on a bit to the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul's request for information on just how the department of the environment interfaces with damage done on private lands, just how the inspection comes in. The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul mentioned timber, but I am particularly concerned by some of the damage left by permitting seismic companies to go across the middle of a section because they want to get more detailed seismic, rather than going around the road allowance. They make a deal with the landowner, especially out in some of the brushy country where there is very

poor farmland, and they doze through. Of course, if the landowner does not request that the timber be stacked or put aside or anything, they just whistle it through. Because they don't have to do any cleanup, they can give more cash to the farmer.

Now, I know that maybe leaves the government in an embarrassing position, but a lot of these cutlines can start erosion. It'll affect neighbours; it'll affect road allowances. As we know, environment is a full neighbourhood problem. It's a full community problem. It's not just the individual, although the individual may own the land and say that he or she can cut wherever they please. I was wondering if the department of the environment is considering any sort of policing or looking at the cutlines on private lands to see that indeed the same quality of standards that the government demands itself on its own Crown lands is maintained on privately owned lands. Not that you're sticking your nose into the person's ownership rights, but you are representing the community as a whole in seeing that nothing is done that will cause harm to the general neighbourhood.

I also notice – I'm jumping around a bit here – Groundwater Protection in your vote 2.4.5. This has always been a problem or a bother with me. As a geologist who has operated in many countries of the world, this is one of the few political jurisdictions that I know of that will allow you to take fresh water either out of an aquifer or subsurface or out of the surface and use it to chase out oil. No self-respecting Arab would be caught dead doing anything that foolish, taking a barrel of fresh water to push out a barrel of oil. Yet I believe, unless the minister can correct me – and maybe the minister will be more up to date – that between a third and half of the water that we use to go down wells in Alberta to chase out oil or repressure gas is fresh water. We just don't have that amount, and there's no reason, when we're sitting on the whole Pacific Ocean here, why they can't pull up saline or nonpotable water and use that to chase out oil.

**8:50**

I'd be interested if the minister has any long-term aim. He may not be able to do it overnight, but I'd like to see the government say something like in four years we'll see no fresh water used to repressure an oil field. Right now it seems to be kind of a loosey-goosey effort. The former minister, now the Premier, did, to his credit, make some moves, but they were very halting and very – I wouldn't say they were as slow as the present minister was, but they weren't any more effective than the present minister. [interjection] The Member for Rocky Mountain House is giving me a bad time here.

The other question. I had no success with the minister of the environment's two predecessors, or was it three, in trying to get farmers the right to hunt deer where the number on their land exceeds the number that are compatible with good farming practices. It seems that the fish and game allow . . . Pardon?

MR. LUND: Two licences.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Yeah? Well, I'm very interested in it. Rocky Mountain House says he can get two licences. Maybe it has expanded.

I have a lot of trouble out in my neighbourhood. It seems to be difficult to shoot deer that are eating your hay. You can get bow and arrow permits and shotgun permits but just old-fashioned putting them in the freezer isn't allowed unless you do it in season, and that doesn't seem to be very reasonable to me. Not that a property owner should have the right to go out and do anything and pull a Robin Hood, but the fact is that if the deer are a nuisance, you should be allowed. You're allowed to trap

muskrats, you're allowed to trap gophers, but deer – I know everybody thinks of Bambi and Walt Disney and they break into tears if you talk about eating a deer, but if they're in huge numbers and ruining the fields, I think the farmers should have some method of controlling them.

The other area. To the minister: I had no success talking to your confrere the Minister of Energy on coal bed methane. That's called CBM: capital C, capital B, capital M, like in Charlie, Baker, Mary. As gas prices go up, it's going to come on more. It will become a huge source of natural gas because, interestingly enough, when you take the water out of a coal seam, it'll produce gas for the next 30 years, and they can be drilled much closer. They can be drilled at 10 to 20 acres spacing, but we do have a problem. One is that they have to have the water pressure taken out of them. The water in most cases is brackish to fresh, so if we just pump the water into the streams and go off – I'll agree there are rules to see that they can't pump brackish water and dump it on the surface, but there don't seem to be rules that stop you from pumping fresh water out of a coal bed seam and just letting it go down to sea, to wherever it goes, to Hudson Bay I guess.

Secondly, the other environmental danger in coal bed methane is that you get so many wells drilled in an area that you run into, well, just the use of the roads, the excess use of the roads, the destruction of timber that's in that area, or the taking of farmland out of production because there's so many wells in it, because the coal bed drilling is needed. I really get the feeling that we're flying by the seat of our pants. I was a pioneer in coal bed methane exploration in Wales and in west England, and I'm still involved in the state of Washington and some in the lower Fraser Valley. I don't get any impression that we're thinking ahead here at all. I get the impression that we're flying by the seat of our pants, and when trouble comes . . . Now, mind you, that's the old Mackenzie King adage of running government: it's no use solving the problem before the public is aware that there is a problem. You've got to make sure it festers a little bit, and then you reach out there and solve it. But I think this is a case in environment where you can't pull the Mackenzie King philosophy. You should maybe start to try to solve the problem before the public is aware that the problem is there.

The other area I have problems with because I represent a constituency that runs up to the edge of Edmonton: the department of the environment still seems to be using the old-fashioned system of saying this gas plant could put so many tonnes of sulphur in the air; this gas plant could put so much carbon dioxide; this plant can do this; this plant can do that. I think we've long since got on a per plant basis for the environment, and we should be operating on air sheds. That's similar to a watershed, but air moves in clearing and prevailing areas. For instance, out in my constituency you'll never catch an engineer living east of the petrochemical alley. Nobody would be that crazy. Mind you, they'll tell you that it won't do you any harm, but they wouldn't dare live there themselves. They all live on the west side. Why? Because the air shed makes it clean and sweeps everything the other way. It's sort of like putting in your drinking water well downstream from your septic tank. It's not a very wise idea, and this is exactly what we're doing in Alberta. We used to follow an old adage many years ago that if you put a tall smokestack on the petrochemical plant, it wouldn't come down until it was in Saskatchewan, and that was good enough for cleaning up the environment.

But I think that now the minister should be looking at air sheds per se, or maybe we'd talk about trading in sulphur rights, if you want to call it that. Many air sheds, I think, around Edmonton – the basic air shed, northwest-southeast, that comes from, say,

Morinville in the northwest out to Sherwood Park in the southeast is supersaturated now. Yet in my constituency there's a company called Norcen, which would probably never take the prize for being environmentally conscious, wanting to expand the plant in that air shed that's directly northwest of Edmonton. I think it's not only in that area where we have dairy products, but I think the city of Edmonton itself should take a very close look at what is happening northwest, because they lie in the air shed. I get the impression from this department that you're still walking along with your blinders and saying, "Well, the plant is so big; it does so many million cubic feet, so many Btus, so many sulphur – okay; you can only do so much sulphur." That's silly if they're shoulder to shoulder and upwind from nearly three-quarters of a million people.

The other thing I'd like to touch on for a second: has the minister done any work on central sewage collections? We still have a huge number of ponds that overflow each year, and it's figured that Mother Nature will take care of it, but we have one or two sewage ponds – most communities have one, and they're allowed to overflow and be pumped out. They overflow so much each year, and they're also allowed to be pumped out. I think probably by and large Mother Nature does do pretty well, although I'm old enough to remember when you could drink water out of nearly any creek in Alberta. Now if you did that, you'd have to be crazy. The point is that we still have a system – I believe last time I looked there were nearly 250 or 300 sewage settling ponds in this province that dumped into creeks and rivers. There may not be a system around it right now, but I wonder.

We're such great pipeline experts. We've got pipelines going from every little sick gas well to a main trunk line. We've got pipelines all over the place. Has there been any work done on pipelining our sewage into large central sewage treatment plants? Actually, the Minister of Municipal Affairs has done so well at privatizing alcohol that maybe the minister of the environment should talk to him about privatizing sewage collection. As a matter of fact, I think he would be very good at recommending that. He's spent most of his life examining what animals pass through as to see what their illnesses were. So why not give it to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and maybe work with him to do a little bit of investigative work about collecting sewerage around the province and using large plants? It might make money. It might be all right if we could have a little boost from the government to tell communities that they should be helping pipeline into central facilities. That's used when the population concentration is high, but I think we might be getting close enough to that in a rural way. I'd be interested in hearing what they would say.

#### **Point of Order**

#### **Reflections on a Member**

DR. WEST: A point of order. Mr. Chairman, this is the second time in the House that the hon. member has referred to my profession in, I think, less than a professional manner. Under 23(i), (j), (k), and all the rest on behalf of the veterinary profession of Alberta I think I deserve an apology.

MR. N. TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, I think he's probably quite right. I should apologize for referring to him as a veterinarian, because many people, the veterinarians I know, wouldn't think that what he's doing now is honouring the profession. I agree with him. We shouldn't do that. With that, I will sit down.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

9:00

#### **Debate Continued**

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Highwood.

MR. TANNAS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I can't get into the area of gasification that the previous member was dwelling on.

I feel a little bit like the issue that I want to address. He who wants to spend the money – the minister is forced to listen to he who will approve of the relinquishment of the money. Now, that goes back to any little kid that approaches grandpa for some money or to Parliament when the knights met the king at Runnymede 800 years ago.

I want to talk about an issue in my area that is part of my area and part of the hon. Member for Little Bow's. Some years ago there was a proposal for a Little Bow dam and reservoir. I think this is probably part of it anyway. It comes under program 3, Water Resources Management, Mr. Minister, where first of all there's Surface Water Development and Operations and Water Resources Administration and certainly Water Resources Planning and Co-ordination and perhaps Data Collection and Inventory. In any event, there's been a long-term need for water in southern Alberta, and those people who chose to start their ranches and farms on the Little Bow or in that vicinity long ago realized there was a long-term need.

In the early part of this century representation was made to the federal government, who had control at that time of the water resources. About the time of the beginning of World War I a canal was dug that took water from the Highwood River primarily during peak times and put it into the Little Bow, which was an intermittent stream; that is to say that it had flow during rain and in the spring runoff but dried up during the year. This water was for primarily three purposes: for domestic, for livestock, and for any municipal use that might be there.

In about the 1960s we saw the beginnings of sprinkler irrigation on the Little Bow. Although irrigation is a time-honoured thing on the Highwood River and its tributaries – some of the early ranches that established there in the 1880s and 1890s had irrigation rights, and some of them still hold those irrigation rights that were issued, again, when the dominion government held sway over such things. In the 1960s anyway, Mr. Minister, Mr. Chairman, sprinkler irrigation began, and in the '70s and '80s increased licences and increased use put an ever greater demand on the Highwood River. Then in the mid-1980s we experienced a real dry period, the kind of period that Captain Palliser had predicted over 120 years before. People in the area required an assured supply of water. Some of those communities were very much larger and required an assured supply of water. As well, larger domestic consumption occurred because of a number of Hutterite colonies and a number of water co-ops in the area. For all of those kinds of reasons, then, an increased demand was made.

In the late '70s, early '80s people of the area formed committees and eventually pushed the government long enough and hard enough that in the late fall, early winter of 1988 the government agreed to a proposal to construct a dam on the Little Bow and build a reservoir for an assured supply of water, but it required water coming from the Highwood River. A series of meetings went on with consultation with the general public and with the interested public, going on for meeting after meeting, month after month for approximately four or five years. First of all, an in-stream flow needs assessment was made in a kind of public way. Then an environmental impact assessment has gone on for some time. There is a general agreement, and that's part of what I wanted to talk about. I'm worried about the general agreement. What happens if the Natural Resources Conservation Board turns

this down? Then that whole plan goes out, and we get back to my area.

The Highwood River area in the High River reach has a number of problems. The Highwood River, as many people know, starts in the mountains in the south end of the Kananaskis Country and flows at a rather rapid gradient till it hits approximately a couple of miles west of the town of High River, and there it almost flattens out. When you think of the name of the river, Highwood, it goes back even to times of David Thompson and Peter Fidler, the early fur trade explorers, and to the early settlers and North-West Mounted Police people who came along, and suddenly out of the flat plain these trees jumped up and there was, of course, the Highwood. When you look at the river at High River, there's almost no bank, no valley. There's valley up to the west, and there's valley farther to the north and east. This flat area is a low grade, so what happens is that it's subject to periodic flood.

So the Highwood area has three problems, not just a drought problem, which Little Bow has, but it has a flood problem. We haven't had a big flood. Some of you might remember the 1990 flood. That flood was only a one in eight- or a one in 10-year flood, approximately 10,000 cubic feet per second. When you realize that there have been floods well in excess of 20,000 cubic feet, you know that we might have another one sometime, hopefully not like the Mississippi, but it is a flood-prone area. In any event, there's a second problem associated with that, even in the lower flow periods: erosion. As the stream winds back and forth, many people who have settled on that area find their houses endangered. The third one, of course, is the drought, low flows. There are any number of people who draw water straight off the Highwood River.

A federal/provincial study was made on the flood, and one of the things that is identified by earlier studies is that there is a possibility of constructing upstream of High River major floodway outtakes from the river which would then help to protect the town from that danger of flood, help protect the banks from erosion, and that flood water could be stored in reservoirs to the north and to the south of the Highwood River. Two reservoirs in the Tongue Creek Canyon would handle a fairly significant amount, and the Squaw Coulee to the south could be made to handle a considerable amount of water. Then that would give the town that protection for flood and erosion and provide a reservoir to provide the people on Little Bow with their assured supply of water. They wouldn't have to have the dam, they wouldn't have to change the long canal, and they wouldn't have to dredge the Little Bow Valley for a considerable amount of time.

I'm not advocating that we change everything that's been planned – I can see relief written all over the face of the deputy minister as well as the minister – but if this other fails, we still have those needs both in Highwood and in Little Bow.

### 9:10

Another item that has come in because of the study, the environmental impact assessment and the in-stream flow needs, is a river moratorium which has gone on now for five or six years. That means that the town of High River is rather strapped if they want to increase their water usage, even though it's not taken from the river directly but taken from wells. They have to go to expensive systems to try to prove to someone that somehow that water didn't come from the Highwood River, and Okotoks is faced with a similar kind of thing. This is rather expensive for those communities.

I guess the questions would be: if there is a glitch with the ruling on the Natural Resources Conservation Board hearings, would the minister give consideration to the three needs of the

Highwood, the flood and erosion as well as the drought, and would the minister be prepared to look at both the town of High River and Okotoks, who are growing communities who need to have increased amounts of water, to see to it that they are able to access their water needs without a great deal of extra testing expense – certainly there's expense in getting it, but testing expense that proves a dubious point?

With that I'll conclude my remarks, Mr. Chairman.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have several comments that I'd like to make about this department's estimates, and I will just make them briefly.

My first comment relates to vote 4.2, Wildlife Management. I would really like to raise this matter in a sense, if to accomplish nothing else, to accomplish reading into the record a number of species in our province that are endangered or threatened or vulnerable in various categories and in various ways, because when I looked at this list of wildlife, which has been categorized according to the World Wildlife Fund Annual Report on Canadian Endangered Species, 1992, I was really quite shocked. I think I might reflect the feeling of a number of Albertans that somehow our environment really is unscathed, that we have broad tracts of unencumbered land, wildlands, that somehow we have an environment that really hasn't been encroached upon in the way that environments around the world have been.

When I saw this list of animals which are in one way or another or to one degree or another endangered, threatened, or vulnerable, I was really and truly shocked, and I thought it would be useful to mention this list of animals in the Legislature this evening. According to the World Wildlife Fund categorization, there is a group of animals which they categorize as being extirpated; that is to say, an indigenous species no longer known to exist in the wild in a place like Canada but might exist elsewhere. Amongst those animals that once existed quite freely in Alberta, we see the grizzly bear plains population; the swift fox – while we have begun reintroduction in 1989, the population is still quite small, being between 150 and 225 animals – the greater prairie chicken wiped out in Alberta about 1962 due to certain agricultural practices, which one might anticipate and have to prioritize of course, and the use of pesticides. I'm not arguing against the use of pesticides. I think this draws our attention to the problems that ultimately can be created, that there are trade-offs, and that somehow there are costs that perhaps we take for granted because we don't see them day to day.

[Mr. Tannas in the Chair]

Under endangered species: the mountain plover, the piping plover, and the whooping crane. Under threatened species: the wood bison, which is threatened now due to the drying out of the Athabasca delta; the burrowing owl, which has become threatened due to, among other things, the use of carbofuran – now there is some attempt to get rid of that – the ferruginous hawk, the loss of prairie grassland threatens its survival; the loggerhead shrike, western population; the sand verbena; the western blue flag.

Amongst those species that are vulnerable, that is to say that are at risk in Alberta because of lower, declining numbers, we rank the grizzly bear. High estimates have about 850 grizzlies in Alberta. Other experts would say they are between 300 and 500. It's a very startling figure, I think, even if the high figure is accepted, that there would be only 850 grizzly bears in Alberta.



The woodland caribou, the trumpeter swan, and the peregrine falcon are amongst the animals that are in one way or another threatened, under pressure in this province, Mr. Chairman.

So it brings me to two points. One is that I think we can too easily take for granted that Albertans' relationship with the environment, with species such as the ones that I have listed, with environmental ecological areas and regions is a very, very special part of what we are as a people. Again, we take it for granted. I think so often we hear that we're very Americanized and that there's almost no distinction, but when I think about being an Albertan, when I look at my sons growing up as Albertans and the time we spend in the mountains and the time we spend biking through an Edmonton river valley or the time we spend elsewhere in this province, in the Tyrrell, the Drumheller region, I realize very, very powerfully that we are different as a people.

We are therefore different culturally from many people across this country, many people across North America, and certainly different from many, many Americans because of the impact of our environmental surroundings on us as people. I see it when I look at my sons and how they grow up differently from a child who is growing up in some major urban development or centre in a very urbanized part of, say, the United States of America. I believe that that can slip away from us. We can begin to take for granted that while we really are not unlike other North American people and there isn't much about us that is different and distinct and needs to be preserved and that somehow, because we watch all that American programming, we just inevitably and inexorably will see our cultural distinction, our cultural characteristics, what we are as a people that distinguishes us, slip away and it won't matter. Well, it will matter.

One of the most important features of being an Albertan is the very, very special geographic and environmental surrounding that we find ourselves in, which to this point is not in terminal jeopardy but certainly needs attention. When we look at the list of animals that I have read into the record this evening, I think it really, for me at least and I think for many Albertans, brings home the importance of that environmental difference to our cultural characteristics, to what we are in fact as a people.

So when I put it in that context, I am simply at odds' ends to consider the delays that this government seems to be perpetuating in bringing in these special places, the ecological reserves system. Why is it that this isn't a hurried and an urgent project? The fact of the matter is, Mr. Chairman, that while we think it is there and it isn't in jeopardy and while we take it for granted day after day, many of the ecological spaces in this province are themselves in many respects vulnerable. They need attention quickly and urgently, and I think it isn't too much to ask of this government. Certainly, something that I believe implicitly and explicitly Albertans are willing to accept, in fact want accepted, is a broadly based, properly implemented system of ecological reserves without very much more delay.

**9:20**

I'm very concerned about the issue of air quality. I think we have probably pretty good air in Alberta compared to many areas of the world. That doesn't mean to say that it is something we should not be concerned about. I'd like to emphasize what my colleague for Redwater mentioned about the importance not only of measuring the sources of air pollution, for example, and how the levels may be indicated or measured by measurements like that but how important it is to have ambient air quality measures and how important it is to relate those ambient air quality measures to air sheds. It isn't enough to say that if one plant, one sulphur stack produces only so much sulphur, then everything is okay,

because of course if two produce that much sulphur, it's I guess half as likely that everything is okay, and if 50 or 60 or 70, as is the case in the region around Edmonton, then all of a sudden the notion of air quality or of emissions quality from a single smokestack doesn't make very much sense. At what point does the government say that we must consider ambient air quality and we must begin to relate to polluters – and I don't mean that in pejorative sense – cause them to relate to the broader issue of how these things accumulate? We all have an equivalent interest in that, and I think it's very, very important that the government address that, not in the traditional way of source measurement, emissions measurement, but ambient air quality measurements throughout a system of air sheds defined across this province.

That brings me to my next point, and that is, the health effect. Now, I relate this to my comments on air quality and its relationship to health, but of course many environmental issues ultimately will relate to health. Let me just talk about the impact of one feature of air quality and health and underline the very important relationship between environmental pollution and health. Alberta has some of the highest rates of asthma in the country. Studies indicate that we have the highest rates of death in young people from asthma in the country. This isn't somehow a random phenomenon. There must be a relationship, I would argue, between air and asthma. I think that while there may be many reasons for this occurring, that relationship must play a role. I think it is very, very important, specifically with respect to asthma and its relationship to air quality, more generally with respect to the environment and health considerations, that we never forget the importance of that relationship and that we begin to understand in many broad areas of policy, environment policy in its relationship to health care policy in particular, that these things cannot be forgotten.

I'm sure we all have a personal experience. I'm aware of a young boy who is an exceptionally good athlete, who plays hockey with one of my sons, who brings a ventilator to hockey games, and for whom it is a burden to have to live with asthma at eight years of age and with whatever prospects there may be for him to shed that problem. This isn't something that is abstract. It isn't something for me that therefore is technical. It is something that relates very specifically to that boy's quality of life, to his ability to pursue his physical and athletic interests in the way that most young boys and young girls in this province simply just take it for granted that they should be able to pursue them. He has to consider and live with that. I think it hasn't happened as a random chance.

The statistics are compelling to say that there is something amiss in Alberta's air quality that raises that prospect. We can't simply sweep it under the table. We can't simply say that it isn't a problem because we're not acknowledging it. I think the first step to solutions is to acknowledge that there is a problem. What we will find despite this gnawing fear that somehow acknowledging these problems will limit development and economic success is that in fact if we identify problems properly and deal with them properly, not only do we solve the problem but we probably in this case would achieve even greater economic well-being.

I would like to also just make one comment that it isn't just air quality. I think more and more – and the Minister of Health I'm sure is aware of this – we will see environmental pollution, environmental issues, begin to take an ever greater toll on our health care condition, and that a government, a people, a society that is thinking ahead, certainly in times like these when it is important to cut costs and find efficiencies, must emphasize preventative health care. While there are all kinds of things that we can do in that regard, we certainly must begin to emphasize

the environment as a health care consideration in not only our environmental planning but in our health care planning.

Mr. Chairman, my next point isn't simply unique to this department, but I raise it in the context of these estimates because it is an important issue, I think. The minister's department does raise revenues from a number of sources: stumpage rates, parks fees, and any other number of sources. I think it would be an important accounting improvement if we could see revenues recorded in these kinds of budgets against the expenditure in the same program, the same vote. I simply think that it would focus attention to revenue-raising capabilities and focus attention on the other side, against the amount of money that goes into these kinds of projects. I'm not saying at all that a park has to break even, but I think it would focus us much more on value for money, on what we are getting for the money we invest in these kinds of projects. It would allow Albertans to assess and see them, and I think it's simply an important and relatively easy addition to the budget process. It would provide information for us, and it would be useful for many Albertans.

Under vote 5, I'm interested in the Pine Ridge Forest Nursery. I had the pleasure of visiting that on the heritage savings trust fund. I'd like to think that that is a success and that it provides a much needed and important service for Albertans in the area of reforestation. I think it is a prime candidate for privatization. We already know that there are private groups that provide seedlings, that perform this service, and I'm not convinced that the time hasn't come for the Pine Ridge Forest Nursery to be considered for privatization. I have a fervent belief that, if not always, certainly today government has to be very vigilant in determining what it is that government should do, what it is that government no longer can do and mustn't do, and make absolutely certain that what it should be doing it should be doing with excellence, it should be doing extremely well. If it is doing something that it otherwise doesn't have to do, then that distracts from what it should be doing and doing well. I think it is safe to say that over the years government hasn't done what it should be doing as well as it might. This is a candidate, I think, for privatization. If the minister isn't considering it, I would like to ask him why, and I would like to encourage him in that direction.

Finally, I would like to raise the issue of tradable permits. I was really encouraged, I think it was last session actually, when one of the Conservative private members had a motion – I forget exactly who, and I'm sorry for that – calling for government to explore the use of and to begin to implement tradable permits. I fundamentally believe that if we are to solve environmental problems, much of it will be accomplished by harnessing business, encouraging business through various incentives – not just regulation but various incentives, certainly economic instruments – to see that there is some value or to structure some value for them in our economy to reducing pollution. Tradable permits have been utilized with some success in the United States and perhaps elsewhere in the world, and I think it would be worth while for us in Alberta to begin to pursue them in limited ways at first, if we can, to experiment even, and to see what they will lead to.

**9:30**

Not inconsistent with this but another point I would like to make with respect to the importance of measuring environmental costs, measuring environmental values and inputs to our economy and the impact that will have on people's thinking: I would like to see the government begin to put at least through the environment department a measurement on environmental inputs to various economic enterprises either directly under the control of government or more broadly in our society. This is a big job. I'm not

saying it can be done overnight in every case, but I think the minister of the environment in his annual report, perhaps in limited cases in other departments – Energy, for example – could start a trend not only with government but with the private sector as well in exploring ways, exploring methodologies for valuing environmental inputs. If you can't measure it, you can't manage it, Mr. Chairman. I think it would be a very creative, very innovative step and not a costly step at all, a way to nudge our society along on these issues.

Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Fort McMurray.

MR. GERMAIN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I find myself twice in two weeks having to follow the hon. Member for Redwater in my comments. I must say it's a bit like being the second horse in a two-horse parade: the view sometimes never changes. Mr. Chairman, I do want to assure you and tell you that I continue to study the member carefully, and I'm trying to learn as much as I can from him.

I want to go over a number of points tonight, but in fairness, given the lateness of the hour, if the minister will holler across how much time he needs to sum up his commentary tonight, I will try and fit in the balance of the . . .

MR. EVANS: I'll be about four hours.

MR. GERMAIN: Well, I'll try and make my comments brief. I won't number them because that would create an aura of expectation that I couldn't live up to here.

The first commentary I want to make, Mr. Chairman, has been eloquently touched on by other speakers, but I would like to re-emphasize it. That is the cost of environmental approval process reviews in this province. While these reviews are all very important for the environment in protecting the biomass we leave to future generations, we want to create a balance in this province of not breaking the camel's back every time a development goes forward. There are a multiplicity of check-in points in the review process – for example, the ERCB, the environmental reviews the federal government gets involved in when navigable waters are involved and some of their other overlapping jurisdictions – and I would urge the minister to work with all these regulatory bodies that touch on the environment to try and streamline the process as much as he is able to keep costs down.

I want to comment as well that the minister's department has been producing around the province a series of regional resource plans. These regional resource plans are very well received. The resource plan in Fort McMurray was well received, and when the minister's staff came to Fort McMurray, they were well received. I want to point out, though, that one of the individuals who was received as well as any of the other speakers at the resource review was the local superintendent of the Alberta forest service, a fellow by the name of Armitage. I would like to use this opportunity through the minister to have him congratulate that member.

There are other forestry issues starting to impact on Fort McMurray, Mr. Chairman, and the reason for that is obvious. Fort McMurray does not begrudge Athabasca or Al-Pac or any other area their moment in the sun, but we are concerned that a large part of the Al-Pac forest land use agreement covers the area and the forests around Fort McMurray. There are also other pressures developing from other local users of lumber in the Fort McMurray area. I want to direct the minister's attention to one particular forest user, Northland Forest Products, that is trying very hard to

get additional lease property for the purpose of development in the Fort McMurray area. Northland Forest Products is a good corporate citizen that has employed many native individuals over the years, many people who otherwise would be out of work. I would urge the minister, in connection with his budget planning, to try and make allowances for some of the forest workers to get their particular leases and get leases so they can . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: I wonder if the committee could come to order. I know there's a debate going out into the lounges. I would invite those who wish to carry on a debate to go there while we have this one here.

MR. GERMAIN: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

The other issue that is of some concern in northern Alberta is reforestation. Now, the minister of the environment will appreciate, but some Members of the Legislative Assembly may not, that small producers of lumber products are allowed to pay a fee instead of reforesting on their own. That fee is set on a broad average basis. In some cases where lumber is hard to access and reforestation costs are very high, in those areas the operator will elect to pay the fee rather than reforest because he can't do it for the same price. The minister may wish to look at keeping the reforestation costs equal to the government's costs to encourage all forest operators to do their own reforestation and not buy into the system on a money saving basis.

The next point I want to encourage for the House and the Minister of Environmental Protection is the use of external seedlings. Now, I recognize that in a free market environment it is difficult for the minister to control where seedlings come from that are planted in this particular province, but I cannot believe and will not believe, Mr. Chairman, that we in Alberta cannot grow seedling stock that is as good as the seedling stock that comes from other provinces. If the minister of the environment can do anything to encourage "made in Alberta" seedlings, he will create jobs in this province and will encourage the reforestation subtrades that will develop.

The next point I want to make is the issue of consolidated financial statements in the area of environmental protection. It was touched on eloquently before, but there are at least four major categories where consolidation would be helpful in seeing the entire picture. It would help the Minister of Environmental Protection because it would give him the ammunition he needs to bring forward sound environmental processes. You will remember, Mr. Chairman, because we are both the same age – perhaps you're a little younger than I, but we're approximately the same age – that environmental interest in Canada has a way of moving in a cyclical way. It was a very hot topic in the '60s. It is a hot topic again in the '80s and the '90s. If the Minister of Environmental Protection had a fully consolidated financial statement, he would not have the difficulty that occurred a couple of weeks ago when the Alberta forest service had to unilaterally drop the maintenance of a gravel pit in northern Alberta, not because it doesn't make the government good money but because that money is segregated in general revenues and, as a result, it is sometimes difficult to grasp that with government control of that pit it was a beautifully working, almost flawless system that has now been dismantled.

The next issue I want to touch on is the lake levels. Now, Mr. Chairman, I don't expect the minister of the environment to start saying in this House that we on this side expect him to increase the rains or increase the snows in this country. He isn't able to do that. But what the Minister of Environmental Protection is able to do in lakes that already have government weirs on them – one

that comes to mind is Gregoire Lake in northern Alberta near Fort McMurray. There is a provincial park on that lake. It is the only source of reasonably priced recreation for the residents of Fort McMurray. The lake water is dropping to a dangerous level. There is a weir on that lake already. All the Minister of Environmental Protection has to do is suggest that that weir be closed to bring up the lake water and preserve that valuable resource.

#### 9:40

We have another large lake in the northeast corner of this province, Lac La Biche. It is the cornerstone of some of the future planning for recreational facilities in this province. Mr. Chairman, that lake is dying. That lake is dying, and it is going to be more difficult to return the lake than to preserve the lake. That lake desperately needs a weir built on it, and I would encourage all members of this House to get behind the Minister of Environmental Protection and encourage him to find the resources to place a weir on Lac La Biche. Failure to act would lead to the destruction of that lake as drought exacerbates conditions in northeast Alberta. With the death of that lake, we will lose a valuable tourist resource that provides many jobs in that corner of the province.

It is not possible for me to talk on environmental issues, Mr. Chairman, without touching on the issue of Al-Pac and the impact it has on Fort McMurray. It has two or three major impacts on Fort McMurray, some positive in the creation of jobs and in the stimulation of the forestry industry around Fort McMurray, but obviously there are some negative impacts.

One negative impact is the way in which clearing of trees occurs in the Fort McMurray area. There is one highway, 63, that links Fort McMurray with the rest of the province. The highway is narrow in spots, it is in poor condition, and it is dangerous in spots. One of the helps the highway gets is the buffer of trees that acts as a snow barrier so snow will not drift in in spots and close off the highway. It is very important to people traveling that highway that the trees on each side of the shoulder be preserved. I would ask the minister of the environment to deal with the issue of preservation of forests along highways at some point in his budget planning.

Of course the second obvious concern for the residents of Fort McMurray from an environmental point of view and an environmental budget point of view is to ensure that there are not budgetary cutbacks in water studies in the Fort McMurray area. We get every single ounce of drinking water out of the Athabasca River which, plain and simple, is downstream from the discharge into the river from the Al-Pac plant. Al-Pac is welcome to carry on a successful, environmentally sound business. The minister seems confident that they are doing so, but I want to urge the minister to be vigilant, to properly budget and prepare sufficient budget resources so he can continue to make that assurance to the residents of Fort McMurray.

Finally, the northern versus southern river basin study. The river basin study is an important part of determining whether or not there is pure water in the north. Now, Mr. Chairman, about 65 percent of the landmass of Alberta lies in the north, and that is where the largest supply of our clean drinking water and our recreational water resource is located. I'm curious, from a budget point of view, why there are less funds devoted to the northern river basin study than to the southern river basin study.

I see that I've cut into the minister's time, so I will conclude my comments at this point, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Calgary-*Buffalo*.

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll be brief. I want to raise just three matters while I have the opportunity to put them to the hon. minister. The first one has to do with a concern I've received from a number of my constituents in the Scarborough area in Calgary. These are people who live across 17th Avenue from the Alberta Children's hospital. There's been a litany of complaints and concerns brought to my attention by those constituents relative to the incinerator at the Alberta Children's hospital. The complaints relate, firstly, to noise and, secondly, to concern about stack emissions from the Alberta Children's hospital.

I've had some discussions with administrators at the Children's hospital and some individuals in the hon. minister's department, but I continue to have expressed and communicated to me the concerns of my constituents. So I want to ask the hon. minister to advise me either now or subsequently by correspondence as to what steps have been taken to monitor emissions from the stack at the Alberta Children's hospital and when waste from that hospital and other hospitals is going to be totally diverted to Beiseker, where I think there is a more modern facility to dispose of those waste materials. In the meantime I'm interested in any plans that the minister has to address both noise and emission concerns from that incinerator at the Alberta Children's hospital.

The second item has to do with access to information. One of the things that's been proposed and discussed both in this jurisdiction and in others is ensuring that there's a positive obligation on the minister, the head of the environmental department, to disclose to the public or to an affected group of people information about a risk of significant harm to the environment or public health or public safety. I'm interested in knowing from the hon. minister if we currently have specific policies which require senior people in his department to charge them with that kind of a positive obligation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order. Could we have order? Thank you. Calgary-Buffalo.

MR. DICKSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The third and final item I wanted to raise with the hon. minister of the environment was simply the question – I was hoping to get a status report on what I'll call the creosote recovery project on the Bow River immediately west of the 14th Street bridge in the city of Calgary. I'm interested in what the projection is now in terms of when that project is going to be concluded and the extent to which it's anticipated that will be successful in removing all or virtually all of the contamination from that creosote leakage.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. minister.

MR. EVANS: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I want to begin by thanking all of the hon. members who participated in tonight's debate. Given that this is the second evening we've dealt with these budgetary estimates, I guess I was somewhat optimistic that I could cover not only the questions that were asked tonight but also the plethora of questions that came from the last opportunity to deal with these estimates. Reality has now set in, and I recognize that that would unfortunately be impossible.

I would like to begin, though, by just referencing the interest that was shown tonight and on September 21, the sophistication of the questions and the breadth of the questions and the various areas of the province where members have gotten into this discussion. I think that proves the importance of the Department of Environmental Protection and the significance of that department to all hon. members in this House, particularly the Minister

of Municipal Affairs who just passed me a note about the importance of this department. I applaud members for taking so much time to become involved in environmental issues in the province of Alberta.

I must say that this is quite a challenge, to be the head of this department, Mr. Chairman, because there are so many issues that come to the fore. I would like to begin with Sherwood Park's questions. What are the priorities of the department? What does the amalgamation mean? What does the consolidation mean? Well, it means that we've tried to deal with forests, lands, the wildlife issues, tried to deal with environmental issues, and we tried to deal with parks issues in a comprehensive way. We have tried to amalgamate the department so that the people that we have in the field and in the city of Edmonton at the administrative level have a degree and range of expertise that will allow us to deliver service to the people of Alberta in the best way possible.

I want to get specific, Mr. Chairman, by dealing with some of the initiatives that were brought to my attention and to the attention of all hon. members by the Member for Sherwood Park, because I think that will give a sense of where we are going. I may take a little bit longer to do that and not get to so many specifics on some of the line issues that people have brought up, but I think it's important.

9:50

First of all, the hon. member was talking about the clean air strategy. Not only are we in Environmental Protection responsible for the clean air strategy, but the synergy exists between our department and the Department of Energy. We are working with the Department of Energy as one of the major contributors to both our economics and the positive bottom line that we have in the province but also to air emissions. Let's be clear about that. The industry has very ably and enthusiastically taken on the challenge of the clean air strategy. It has taken a period of time to get to the stage of implementation. The Minister of Energy and I met with the clean air strategy committee in the last 10 days. We are very close to them coming forward with a number of recommendations, some that would be short term that would not require any rededication of moneys – in other words, that could be dealt with with moneys that are available today – some that would require if they are approved some reallocation of funds, and then some that are longer term issues that may require substantial funding and will have to involve a change in government policy. I'm looking forward to the formalized process beginning once the report comes from the task force, and then the Minister of Energy and myself will bring that forward through our standing policy committee process and to cabinet for endorsement at the government level.

Let me be clear, Mr. Chairman, that the reason this is taking a long time is because it is a process which is both private-sector and public-sector driven. It involves the industry. It involves a number of environmental, nongovernment organizations. It involves government through people that we have seconded to this process, and it's very complex. That's not to say that we can't make progress. That's not to say that I presume that we have done as much as we should do in dealing with clean air issues in the province of Alberta. I think we've done a good job on water matters, and I think we've done a good job as well on the soil matters, but we have a ways to go on the clean air issue, and we are moving forward on that.

The forest management report, that's the Dancik report: both the Member for Sherwood Park and the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul asked about how we were moving ahead with that. Well, I think we've made substantial progress with that because Dr. Dancik and his panel recommended that we institute public

involvement at the very earliest stage in forest management. Now, I think industry has voluntarily gotten on side with that by setting up advisory committees. They are dealing with everything now right up to and including annual allowable cut, harvest regimes, harvesting schedules. I had an opportunity actually just last Friday to talk to Dr. Dancik at the Alberta Forest Products Association annual meetings. I hope I'm not speaking out of turn here. He expressed to me satisfaction with the process and satisfaction with the way that both industry and government are responding to the recommendations he made.

I'll just compliment the industry for a moment, if I may, Mr. Chairman, on its forest care document and the way that it is trying to get out around and about Alberta to ensure that people are aware of the importance of sustainable forest practices, the Free to Grow standards that we have in the province, and some of the positive steps that the forest industry are taking.

The Water Resources Act again has taken a fair bit of time because it is an important piece of legislation, and we wanted to be sure that the public were fully informed of the legislation, of the history of the legislation, and were on side with the changes that we were intending to make. The major change, quite frankly, is that under the old Water Resources Act it was really a utilization of a resource based piece of legislation. As time has gone on, we have dealt with that legislation beyond the mere words that are in the legislation, and we are requiring as a department, as a government that water management take place so that we ensure that there will be sustainable quantities and quality of water all over the province. We want to make sure that we incorporate that philosophy into the Water Resources Act.

We've had a number of stakeholder involvements. We've had a number of recommendations. There are some more recommendations that will be coming to me this fall. I hope very soon, before the end of the year, to if possible have perhaps not a draft piece of legislation but an issues paper to go out and get input from Albertans much the same as we did with the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act, and then to allow Albertans to have a time to come up to speed with this, then to prepare a draft piece of legislation and have that dealt with.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'd just like to again ask for the courtesy of the committee to listen to the minister while he gives his answers. If your discussion is so important, and I don't doubt that, you're welcome to go out. The Whips are off. You can go out and engage in conversation in the lounge.

Hon. minister.

MR. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I know that hon. members are anxious to get back to their offices and do another two or three hours of work before they rest for the evening, so I will try to be speedy in my remarks.

The heritage rivers process is extremely important. I am committed to that process. As we've said before, we wanted to make sure that all of the parties that would have input into that process – and particularly municipalities, which under the recommendations of the advisory committee would have to promote and be the sponsor of a designation of either an entire watercourse or part of that watercourse – were on side with the philosophy. I've had meetings with some of the municipal authorities, their umbrella groups, and I think we are getting very close to that. I certainly want to bring that forward again for review and implementation.

In terms of the Al-Pac issue and the Clearwater River it's not strictly a matter, hon. member, of asking that industry or that individual FMA holder to abide by what we consider to be

proactive steps and ecologically prudent steps. Because they're managed in a multiple-use philosophy, we do have the opportunity on all FMAs to take certain lands – volume, I'm talking about – out of an FMA without recourse. Now, that's not a significant amount, hon. member, but we would have that recourse if we couldn't get an agreement with the FMA holder. I don't expect we're going to have a problem with that.

With respect to Special Places 2000, again this is not just Environmental Protection; we're working in concert with the Department of Economic Development and Tourism. We have completed the public input process. The committee is now in the process of preparing their final report, and I hope that will be in my hands by the end of October. I think the public input has proven once again that the paper is sound, that Albertans are in favour of the recommendations that have been made in general terms. Along with my colleague the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism and Deputy Premier I look forward to reviewing the recommendations and then dealing with those through the standing policy committee and on to cabinet and then being endorsed as government policy.

10:00

On tire recycling I take issue with the hon. member who says: is this an initiative that is giving opportunity to small business in the province of Alberta? It certainly is. We have a cottage industry in Alberta right now. We want to encourage that cottage industry. We put money into the cottage industry through the tire fund, which will ensure that they have an opportunity to do research, to do marketing so that they will continue to grow. In fact, I would say that the immediate and short-term goal of the tire board is to encourage the, shall we say, upper level or advanced tire recycling initiatives that we've seen some examples of and had many proposals on. In the meantime, though, we do have an obligation to try to deal with an environmental problem, and that's our main problem at this point in time.

The approval that's been given to Inland Cement to deal with many of the passenger tires is not strictly an incineration proposal, and I think it's extremely important to get that out to Albertans, Mr. Chairman. It is also a recycling proposal, because it takes the steel from the belts and puts it into the clinker, which reinforces the cement. We are also recovering energy from the burning of those tires, and we are saving on fossil fuels, which are nonrenewable fuels. So it's a many-faceted proposal. Again, the high end recycling is the long-term goal.

I think I'm going to just deal with a couple more of these and then take my place, Mr. Chairman, just so members will be waiting with bated breath.

The users' guide for waste managers deals with hazardous waste. It's a very, very comprehensive and quite sophisticated piece of work. It's something in excess of 150 pages. We're very close to having a final draft on that. I think that because of the complexity we're going to want to have it reviewed by the stakeholders, but I expect that we'll have something published and ready for review probably by the end of October.

Then when we get to public lands, just very briefly, there's never been a transfer of public lands. I want that to be perfectly clear. All public lands are owned by Albertans. This department and government in general are the stewards of those public lands. Because a number of public lands, in fact about 7 million acres of public lands, have been under agricultural disposition, sometimes for two and three and four generations, it was felt that agriculture could manage those public lands on a day-by-day basis but under a multiple-use philosophy. That's the only change that we've had. The world does not come to an end. I think we're operating quite

well under this regime, and I continue to work closely with my colleague the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development on this.

Air quality monitoring. No question that it's important not only to have in-stack monitoring but also ambient air monitoring. In terms of enforcement, if you only had the ambient air monitoring, Mr. Chairman, I don't think our enforcement would be worth a hill of beans. I've mentioned before in the House that Ontario looked at implementing an in-stack monitoring system such as we have in Alberta, but they have so much more industry and so many more pollutants going into the air that they found it would not be possible for them to do it. They just could not afford it. So they do strictly ambient air monitoring. We do both. I'm looking at the types of monitoring that we're doing to see whether we can improve it, but I feel very confident that we have the best of both worlds. We're looking at the air shed by the ambient air monitoring, and we are also looking at the specific stacks to ensure that if there is a problem, we get to it immediately. We can trace back to where that pollution is coming from, and we're in a position to enforce if we do not have the proper steps being taken by the offending industry.

There are so many more issues that have been raised by hon. members that I want to address, and I undertake to address each and every one of these issues by correspondence to hon. mem-

bers, but in view of the hour, Mr. Chairman, I would move 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: Thank you. All in favour of the report?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. ACTING DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed, if any? Carried.  
Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. EVANS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I don't know about the rest of the members, but I've had a very enjoyable, interesting, and challenging evening.

[At 10:08 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.]