

Title: **Thursday, February 26, 1998**

Des.subcom: **Envir. Protect.**

Date: 98/02/26

5:56 p.m.

[Mr. Boutilier in the chair]

**Designated Supply Subcommittee – Environmental Protection**

Boutilier, Guy C., Chairman  
Amery, Moe  
Carlson, Debby  
Coutts, David

Ducharme, Denis  
Gibbons, Ed  
Langevin, Paul  
Magnus, Richard

Pannu, Raj  
Strang, Ivan  
Thurber, Tom  
White, Lance

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay; I'd like to call this meeting to order. We have a procedural motion that is required prior to commencement of the meeting. It reads as such: be it resolved that the supply subcommittee allocate, according to Standing Order 56(7)(b), as follows – I don't know if I have to read that off, but I do believe that it does talk about that which all three House leaders did agree to. Then if someone would like to move the motion.

MR. MAGNUS: Done.

THE CHAIRMAN: So moved. All those in favour?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Opposed? No one opposed.

Also, in order to allow the allotted time for each of the opposition parties, I'm prepared to entertain a motion to indicate if you want to conclude earlier than the four hours pursuant to orders 56 and 57. The motion has to be unanimous to do that. So is someone willing to move that?

MR. MAGNUS: I'll move it.

THE CHAIRMAN: So moved. Is there agreement?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Anyone opposed? So that's unanimous.

Therefore and according to the schedule, Mr. Minister, you can have your opening remarks, and then from there we'll go into the allotted time for the opposition.

MR. LUND: Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: You're welcome.

MR. LUND: Just as part of the procedure, so I understand it, describe to me how you see this working.

THE CHAIRMAN: Essentially, it's my understanding that you have up to 20 minutes for introductory comments, and then from there there are two hours of allotment for the opposition over the course of the four hours. However, based on my previous discussion with the opposition, they've agreed to go forward with their questions in their time period that's allotted, and then from there there's a motion for wherever you want to conclude, if that's okay.

MR. LUND: Yup. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Before I get started, I want

to introduce the staff that I have with me here tonight. On my immediate right is Jim Nichols, the deputy minister. Jim, of course, took over the position of deputy minister only a matter of months ago. Then to his right, the assistant deputy minister in charge of forestry, Cliff Henderson. To his left is Ray Duffy, acting director of finances for Environmental Protection. Then to my immediate left, Morley Barrett, who is the ADM for natural resources service, and Doug Tupper, who is going to be responsible for environmental services.

Environmental Protection's business plan for 1998-99 to the year 2000-2001 is one that builds upon the key directions and initiatives of our previous plan and Budget '98, the Alberta government's most recent fiscal plan. In doing so, it puts both the department and the province in a position of strength as we enter the next century. The business plan sets the course for the Ministry of Environmental Protection for the next three years and incorporates the activities of the department as well as the Natural Resources Conservation Board and the Environmental Appeal Board.

As I mentioned earlier, our consolidated business plan builds upon the results of previous business plans, dedicating resources to the efficient, effective, and responsible delivery of the ministry's core businesses: the wise management of our province's renewable natural resources and the management of environmental hazards that may pose a risk to people, property, and resources. Over the next three years Environmental Protection will work to reduce overlap through regulatory reform, continue working to harmonize the environmental management roles and responsibilities between various orders of government, and manage the increased volume of environmental assessments generated by economic growth in the province.

My ministry is also committed to the ongoing pursuit of the objectives identified by Albertans in last year's Growth Summit. Albertans demonstrated clearly in the Growth Summit that development must consider environmental and social values, not just economic ones. My ministry is committed to sustainable growth and development as a key principle of our mandate.

As part of our ongoing business plan and process Environmental Protection has reviewed the statements which define its missions, operating principles, core businesses, goals, and performance measures. We have fine-tuned our business to more accurately reflect our contribution to the Alberta advantage and the Alberta government's core business of people, prosperity, and preservation. The ministry's three key goals as outlined in the business plan reflect how our core business will be delivered. Taken together, they show that Environmental Protection continues to be an effective, performance-driven organization capable of meeting the challenges of the next century.

There are three main goals. The first is "to protect and maintain Alberta's high quality air, land and water for the health and enjoyment of Albertans." Our second key goal is "to manage Alberta's renewable [natural] resources for the continued prosperity and benefit of Albertans." Finally, our third key goal is "to protect and manage Alberta's natural [heritage] for present and future generations." These three goals demonstrate our commit-

ment to the needs of the environment and the expectations of the public and our stakeholders. This responsiveness is exactly what's needed to keep Alberta's environment and economy strong.

In fiscal year 1998-99 our ministry budget of \$292 million with a staff component of 3,157 full-time positions will continue to deliver the high-quality environmental programs across the province that Albertans have come to expect. Environmental Protection's '98-99 consolidated expenses budget includes a reduction of \$16.2 million and 169 full-time equivalent positions. These reductions are not new but were indicated in last year's plan as reductions in administration and program costs.

The Ministry of Environmental Protection has carried out an extensive review of all its functions to ensure that they support our corporate objectives in the most efficient and effective way possible. This functional review has helped us focus on our priorities. My ministry is always looking for ways to improve the delivery of services. As a result, we have streamlined our processes and significantly reduced our administration costs. We have continued to restructure. Just recently, with the new announcements of the ADMs, we have reduced from four ADMs to three, and I think it's important to note that this department at one time had 10 ADMs. This reduction in administration has continued on down through the system.

We have stopped doing many things. For instance, some of my ministry's responsibilities have been transferred to delegated administrative organizations, or DAOs. These are nonprofit organizations specifically created for this purpose.

Along with streamlining we are allocating department resources to better meet the challenge of environmental management and to support the Alberta advantage.

Renewable and nonrenewable resource industries are growing and expanding. At present there are a number of major projects, totaling \$20 billion in capital investment, requiring environmental assessments and approvals. Industry will also be coming forward with additional new projects that are currently in the development stage that will require our attention. These projects are part of and contribute to the Alberta advantage. It is my ministry's legislated obligation to co-ordinate these assessments and ensure that environmental quality is not compromised. This growth places increasing demands on my ministry. My ministry has therefore budgeted an additional \$2 million to ensure that the review of assessments and other regulatory components occurs in a timely and efficient manner.

Through our regulatory reform program my ministry is also continuing to reduce red tape and eliminate those regulations that are no longer necessary. Regulatory reform maintains that same high level of environmental protection while ensuring that department resources are used more effectively and efficiently. For example, regulatory reform helps ensure that staff spend less time processing approvals for activities that pose low environmental risk and more time enforcing our stringent environmental regulations.

In line with these efforts my ministry will also continue to support and pursue the objectives of the national environmental harmonization accord. This accord is a framework agreement that commits federal, provincial, and territorial governments to work in partnership to achieve the vision of the highest level of environmental quality for all Canadians. It was signed last month by all federal, territorial, and provincial governments, with the exception of Quebec. The accord improves environmental protection in several ways: it provides for better co-operation and co-ordination between governments, it clarifies government's role, and it helps governments avoid duplicating each other's environmental activities. My ministry is committed to the accord and its

further development. The accord represents a significant step forward in more effective and efficient environmental management.

**6:06**

In closing, I believe that our new business plan builds on the foundation we've laid in our previous plan. It's often easy when talking budgets, dollars and cents, to lose sight of our number one job. Environmental Protection's priority has always been and always will be to protect, enhance, and manage Alberta's environment and natural resources. Our new fiscal plan allows us to meet this responsibility in an efficient and cost-effective manner. Environmental Protection will continue to use resources wisely and exercise responsible fiscal management while focusing on our core business and remaining accountable to the people of Alberta. Most importantly, we will carry on the tradition of sustainable resource management and responsible environmental protection that makes Alberta an outstanding place to live.

I'm now anxious to answer your questions.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Minister.

First on the speaking order we have Edmonton-Ellerslie, then Edmonton-Calder, then Edmonton-Manning, and then Edmonton-Strathcona.

I might add that in a rotating cycle we have 108 minutes for the opposition, the Liberals, as well as 12 for the New Democrats. So the first three will go to the Liberals, and then I understand maybe Dr. Pannu may want to use his 12 minutes in its entirety at once.

**MR. LUND:** Mr. Chairman, so that I understand it. The way we've done it in other years is that when they ask questions, we will respond. That's the beauty of this procedure, because we have with us the ADMs and Ray Duffy. So we should be able to get in-depth answers for you.

**THE CHAIRMAN:** Okay. With that, we'll go to Ms Carlson.

**MS CARLSON:** Thanks. And we'll follow the format of one question and two supplementals.

**MR. LUND:** Sure. However you want to do it.

**MS CARLSON:** I'd like to thank everyone for coming. It's certainly nice to see you all again and the addition of Doug. It's great to see you here.

My first question, Mr. Minister, is on your opening comments. You stated that development is a key principle of our mandate. Could you expand on what you mean by development in this context and where that's taking you?

**MR. LUND:** Well, development is not the key, and I didn't say that it was the key. I said that working to protect the environment and managing our natural resources is key, and that's in co-operation with the people that are doing the developing. I think it's extremely important. We always say and always understand that if you have a strong economy, you're going to have a strong environment; if you have a weak economy, you're going to have a weak environment. So the two go together. That's the balance that we have to strive for within this department, to make sure that the environment is protected and that the natural resources are managed in a sustainable manner yet development will occur.

**MS CARLSON:** So could you just expand for me on how it is you see that a strong economy drives a strong environment?

MR. LUND: Well, if you want to go to the socialist countries and look at where there's poverty, the environment takes a backseat to everything. They're worried about where they're going to get their food, where they're going to sleep, those types of things. If you get a strong economy so people have got the enjoyment of their surroundings, that drives them to protect the environment.

You always see it in cycles even in Canada. When the economy is strong the environment is more on people's minds and you have more of a focus on it. When the economy is low, they tend to back off on that focus. But if you want to really see the difference, just go to where there's real poverty, and you will see it: the environment takes a backseat. So that's why we say that by having a strong economy, we have a strong environment; we have a strong environment focus. We plan on continuing that focus even in the downturns. You will see that in the minds of people. I mean, polls show that all the time. When the economy is poor and you do a poll, what are the important things that people are looking at? The environment drops down. As soon as the economy goes up, the environment comes up with it. That's a very important observation to be considering.

MS CARLSON: Okay. My final question is also on your opening comments. What criteria do you use to evaluate whether or not you have enough people working in the field and subsequently, then, enough people to evaluate the results; in other words, the results being reported to your department?

MR. LUND: Well, when you're talking about approvals, then we look at how fast can we turn these approvals around. How long are they in the department before they're approved? We have some targets. For example, on things like seismic projects we hope that we can accomplish a seven-day turnaround. There are targets in other areas where we want a turnaround. The reason that I mention this \$20 billion in investment that's coming is that there are major projects involved there. We've put \$2 million toward that part of the department so that in fact we can handle those in a timely fashion.

As far as the other areas where you talk about reports coming to the department, we need to have the ability to address those reported incidents, if you will, in a timely fashion. Now, one of the things we're doing within the department – if you remember, the old departments had stovepipes. We're breaking those stovepipes down as silos. So you may have a fish and wildlife person going out and inspecting a spill, or you may have forestry go and do it, or you may have somebody from parks. That's why I maintain that in this department, while we have reduced totally by over 1,500 people, we've got more eyes and ears out there now than we used to have. They used to be in silos, and somebody from forestry would not necessarily be picking up on a spill. But that's the cross-training we're doing; that's one of the reasons we're moving people into the same offices. If you go into some of our offices today, you'll see a parks person and a fish and wildlife person and a forestry person all in the same office. You didn't used to see that.

I know that one of Doug's objectives in his area is to be moving out more people in the area of pollution control, inspections, that kind of thing. Would you care to make a comment, Doug, on that?

MR. TUPPER: Yes, that's in fact what we're moving to, and we're going to move quite quickly to do that, to get more decision-making out in the front lines and more collaboration across the department than what has been traditional with the old organization of governments or any bureaucracy. It's getting far

easier now, with the design of the department structure, to do that.

On top of that, there are some other activities that we're doing. We've invested strongly in technology, which is actually helping us a lot in terms of detecting problems and being able to react to them quicker than in the old days. We had a lot more people, but we didn't really have the capacity we have now.

MR. LUND: Morley, do you care to share some of things you're doing in your area?

MR. BARRETT: Thanks, Mr. Minister. In natural resources, which encompasses the water, parks, and fish and wildlife functions, we're taking a lot of steps. We're just about to go forward to provide greater integration at the field level, including a lot of what we call integrated working teams at the community level, our area office. We're trying to get all these functions represented as a one-window service to the public out there, where there's a lot of interactive support for each other, a lot of training relative to priorities within a local area, and a community level service that we've always strived for but have never had in place to the extent that we're about to launch in '98-99. This comes from the fact that it wasn't all that long ago that parks, fish and wildlife, and water were in different departments. There's been quite a culture to bring together and to get in a real integrated working function. We've been taking steps in the last two or three years to go there, and we're going to take another big step this coming fiscal year to do more of it, to have everybody in cross-training and activities of sharing priorities, amassing work teams that will respond to issues and respond to public needs.

6:16

MR. LUND: I'll just give you an example. Two and a half years ago one of our inspectors from Red Deer stopped in at my place coming back from an inspection he'd been on out around Nordegg. A complaint had come in that an oil company had broken a sump open and let it all run out in the bush. He came into Red Deer. A man went from Red Deer out to Nordegg to look at it. We've got forestry people at Nordegg. There was no reason in the world why that person had to come out of Red Deer and spend a whole day to go way out there only to find that the report was false.

Under our new system the call may go to Red Deer, but it will come back to Nordegg, and the person that's closest – if it's a forestry officer, he goes out and he has a look. Now, if there's a real major problem and we get into having to gather evidence and samples and all that sort of thing – if it's just gathering samples, we probably will have our forestry people trained so they can actually do that. But if it actually gets to the point where they have to start cleaning up a spill, for example, then our experts would be called.

I guess I should stress here that one of the difficulties and one of the problems that we're having is false reports. That costs us a lot of money because there's no way we know, when somebody phones in, if it's a false report. That was just a prime example. The reason he stopped in at my place is because it was a local person that had phoned and I know her, and he felt that he should let me know what exactly was the whole story. It was a total waste of a day, and it was a Saturday to boot. So that's the kind of thing where we think we can do an excellent job with the manpower we've got by doing business differently.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Edmonton-Calder. Mr. White.

My understanding is that we in fact do not have to use just the

constituency name. We can be somewhat informal by saying just the last name.

MR. WHITE: Yeah, you just nod and I'll start.

THE CHAIRMAN: You're on.

MR. WHITE: My questions will relate primarily to the forestry area, Mr. Henderson's area. To start off, I'd like to speak and ask about the areas that are dealing with the budget, the hard-nosed stuff. That's probably 169. With your explanation of the grouping and cross-training, it answers some of the questions, but I understand this whole area is down some 6 percent in cost and it's all coming out of the provincial operations. Now, that would probably explain some of it, but it doesn't seem to be that the resources are going to the regions; they're just simply downsizing. So you're not moving people to the field; you're just downsizing in there. What operations are you in fact not going to be able to do this year that you have done in fiscal '96-97, fiscal '97-98?

MR. LUND: You're on page 169?

MR. WHITE: Yes, unless I've got a different colour book than you.

MR. LUND: Cliff, did you want to speak to that?

MR. WHITE: It's entitled . . . [interjection] Yeah. It's a difficulty. You guys don't have the same books. We had this trouble before.

MR. LUND: But the numbers are the same.

MR. WHITE: Oh, are they?

MR. HENDERSON: Well, we've transferred some FTEs internally. We carried out our business plan reductions in the provincial areas by – for instance, I amalgamated our land administration unit and our program support units, so I developed some savings with managerial positions there.

MR. LUND: Did you want to comment on what we won't be doing this year that we were doing last year?

MR. HENDERSON: The other major area we changed was that we created a DAO for our reforestation programs. Now we've transferred that to this organization, and they carry out reforestation to our standards. We inspect, and they actually do the work. So we've moved some of that job to the private sector, but we've maintained control on it by inspections to our standards.

MR. WHITE: A supplementary then. This is just one example of the areas that you're not doing, I gather, just one. Certainly there could be others, so perhaps you could answer then. But in follow-up to the DAO, could you give us – maybe not now, because this time is limited – another descriptor of how this is conducted? The budget lines certainly don't show that that function is performed by an outside source and who funds it and how the work is affected. I gather that the standards are maintained the same.

MR. HENDERSON: Yeah. The major area that you're probably looking at is in the land administration area?

MR. WHITE: Yes, that's land administration.

MR. HENDERSON: Okay. We've developed better processes to process land dispositions. We have electronic systems now that can transfer the application out to our districts and a better referral process with our other agencies to make sure that we cover all the conditions of approval, as mentioned earlier, even by all our people being in the same office. So we've developed a lot of streamlining that allows us to reply back to industry with the terms of condition for their dispositions. Over and above that, for instance in the oil and gas area and pipelines area, we now require what we call a field environmental assessment. We expect the industry to come into our office with a very comprehensive plan of how they propose to go out and do the work, so this puts us in a supervisory role. We can check and ensure that their program is correct for the area, and this saves a lot of the legwork that we did on behalf of industry a few years ago. It's working very well. They've reacted to this by hiring qualified field technologists and foresters to do these kinds of assessments and bring a complete package to the government before they start work.

MR. LUND: Things like cutting plans for example. The FMA holders and the quota holders do those and then submit them, whereas years ago forestry did them. So we've become an auditor and an improver as opposed to doing the legwork. As far as the vegetation inventories, we don't do those. Those are the responsibility of the FMA holder. We still do it in programs like the MTU wood program, but those are small volumes.

MR. WHITE: Correct me if I'm wrong, but that was done last fiscal year, that you moved into this area. I remember that was last year you moved.

MR. LUND: Yeah, that's true, but we've now got even more of the quota holders doing it. And we've got committees, the MTU wood program in the community. We have local committees, and we're moving them to a position where in fact they will hire a forester or they'll hire a consultant. They will put together the plans and then submit them to us for approval. These plans take a lot a work, a lot of time. Really what's it's doing is taking a map and designing your cutting plan, looking at the inventory, and all of those kinds of things. So if somebody else does the legwork, it's easy to audit it.

MR. WHITE: To your standards.

6:26

MR. LUND: Yeah.

The last question in the area, I guess – and I understand you're going to send something on the record about the DAO and how that works in that particular area. In forest management proper you were talking just a moment ago about having forestry submit – is that the list? – so you would be able to downsize your office staff. If that were the case, would not the field staff then be going up in the field operations? As I remember before, out of the central provincial offices you would send foresters out to negotiate a cut plan with FMA holders and permit holders, and then it would be done. So you've downsized in the office – I can understand that – but then with your new system you're going to have approvals out in the field. Then you're going to add some of that work to the field operations, and you haven't added any resources. Is that manageable?

MR. HENDERSON: Well, it is because of the process that we

have in place for transferring the information from Edmonton to the field. For instance, in forest management we have developed a better data bank for inventory. We have developed some data-sharing agreements with industry so that we have ready access to inventory information, which allows us to approve and review their proposed plans easier and faster. So from that point of view we could downsize some staff in Edmonton.

At the field level we have maintained our same level of district officers since 1972. While we have had staff reductions, we are still carrying our same basic frontline district officers for community service.

MR. WHITE: Thank you.

MR. GIBBONS: Mr. Chairman, I'm going to start off with the yearly asking of the question on Dutch elm so that it's on the record. Thank you last year for the \$180,000 from Agriculture into your department. If you can check into that, because I couldn't see anything in the Agriculture budget. For the Dutch elm disease last year there was a plan to have only \$20,000 for the whole province. Sometime in the spring \$180,000 extra came over from Agriculture into this, making it a \$200,000 budget. Do you know if that is going to be the same case this year?

MR. NICHOLS: I haven't talked to Agriculture, and I don't know if that's the case.

MR. GIBBONS: Okay. Just for the record's sake, it's like I'm asking the question.

MR. LUND: Yeah. We'll get back to you in writing. One of the things that will happen, if we have manpower available, is that we will make them available for this project again this summer. Mind you, we're getting pretty nervous about the possibility of a bad fire year with the weather conditions that we've had.

MR. GIBBONS: Okay. I'd be very remiss not to ask another question from the municipality critic area, where I am. As I visit MDs throughout the province, is there some kind of revenue generating that can help them out on the secondary roads for all the logging trucks going up and down? We're getting to the case where logging has been historically there, which is one thing, but in the case, guilty as myself, where I select log my farm, you're looking at more trucks on the roads and the roads being torn apart. So it's just something that I'm bringing back as a complaint.

MR. LUND: Yes, and there have been motions at the MDs and Cs. Of course, if you've heard it, I think I've probably heard it 10 times as loud, because it is a big concern. The real major concern comes where the mill is in one jurisdiction, the trees in another, and the municipality that has the trees is not getting any assessment and paying for the road. It is a big problem. The same situation does occur in some municipalities with the oil and gas industry as well. We have increased, albeit not a lot, the resource road program in Alberta Transportation. That's partly to alleviate this problem.

What a lot of municipalities have been suggesting is an increase in the stumpage. I caution that discussion right now. If anybody really thinks, for example, that pulp mills can pay more, they should just take a look at what's happening in B.C. Right now, today, the folks that have got quota to sell to the United States that are in solid woods products are okay. They're not rolling in the dough, but they are making a bit of money. But those that

don't have a quota, now with the Asian flu, if you were depending on the Japanese market, you've got a major problem.

What I'm getting at is that we did change the stumpage rate. When was that? Three years ago or so?

MR. HENDERSON: That was 1994.

MR. LUND: And we tied it to the market. We take a percentage over the base cost. As the market goes up, we take a higher percentage, so it keeps moving up. If we were to go and change that stumpage now, after the companies have just agreed to this new formula, I think we would run into a great deal of resistance, and quite frankly, we know that a lot of the mills simply could not afford it.

To address the problem, we have been asking the forest industry to work with the municipalities. On some of these roads there are joint agreements between the province, the municipality, and the forest company. That's the way we would like to move. I know that there's not enough money to satisfy all of these needs, but for some of them there are some agreements that are coming out where both the industry and the municipality are partnering with the government to address that problem.

MR. GIBBONS: Just to add to that, under forestry management – and I'm not sure whether this has been addressed before and whether or not your department doesn't do it totally. This comes from a lot of discussions with the mills and so on. Is there some kind of control on who and what type of person does the logging in our province, instead of the gravel truck guy that shuts down at the end of October and just massacres the land and leaves it? I don't know what you've got there, but it's a question to you.

MR. LUND: Yeah. That's a very good point. We've been working with Grande Prairie College to set up some kind of operators' training school with an environmental focus. You're absolutely right. You turn a greenhorn out there on a D8 Cat, and they can do a pile of damage in short order, as can these big feller bunchers. That side is one that we have been trying to address. Quite frankly, the companies, particularly the FMA holders, are very cognizant of that problem, and some of them simply will not hire people that haven't had some training and experience. There are getting to be some very, very good contractors out there. They're very, very careful and make sure that they're not doing environmental damage.

Of course, we have been assessing penalties where we find that people are abusing the environment, and we will continue to do that and continue to step it up, because that is a big concern of ours. Where possible we're trying to encourage winter logging, a difficulty though because in some processes, particularly if you're making veneer, you cannot allow the fibre to get too dry. It splinters in the process, so you end up with a lot of rejected material simply because it's laid too long and dried out. So they're caught somewhat because they can't leave it down too long, and that means summer logging. But it varies quite a bit too. In southern Alberta the summer logging is not so bad. As you move north, it's worse.

6:36

MR. GIBBONS: Thank you. And just to put it on record, your department has come out and inspected my place, and everything's clear.

MR. LUND: Yeah. But that's private land. I'm glad to hear that they did take a look.

MR. GIBBONS: They have been out there twice.

MR. LUND: By the way, I didn't tell them.

MR. GIBBONS: Okay.

MR. LUND: I didn't know that you logged.

THE CHAIRMAN: Next we have Dr. Panu. You have a grand sum of 12 minutes.

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I have a few small questions. On the departmental income statement, which is page 179, I notice that for the premiums, fees, and licences, timber royalties and fees, the estimates are around \$70 million, and the comparable last year's forecast is \$102. There's about a \$32 million estimated decline. Would you kindly make some comments on it?

MR. LUND: Yup. That relates back to just what I was talking about, how the stumpage is tied to the price of the product. We're forecasting that lumber prices are going to be down from last year and down enough that we will be collecting quite a bit less stumpage. Another fly in the ointment is that quota that the U.S. has on, because we may see some reduction in production as well. Quite frankly, I think we're going to have to revisit our formula, because right now the problem we've got is that this price is based on the U.S. price. The Asian market has really dropped off. So now that we've got a quota that prevents our producers from selling into the U.S. – we've got people that used to sell into the Asian market, and that was a good market, a good price. Now that's fallen apart, we've got operators out there that are paying the stumpage based on the U.S. price, yet they're trying to sell product into the Asian market at a very reduced price. So we've got some problems out there.

It's really not totally fair, and it was the way the federal government applied the quota that's causing our problem. They applied it, and they went on historical data. If you have a mill that has just started in the business, then in fact they may not have any quota even though they were a pretty big producer. We pushed for and wanted the quota to come to the province, and then our plan was to allocate it back out based on their annual allowable cut, prorated, and that would have taken care of some of these new operators. But we do have some fairly new operators that are in big difficulty right now, and it's partly related to the stumpage and the way we charge it.

DR. PANNU: You alluded in your remarks to the need to perhaps revisit the rates because of the slump in the Asian market. I don't really know what part of Asia is where the majority of the markets are for Alberta timber.

MR. LUND: Japan.

DR. PANNU: Japan, I think it would be.

Watching the TV this morning, certainly the Hong Kong market index is coming back up quite rapidly, recovering, and I suppose Japan is in fact even in less serious fiscal difficulties. Some people begin to think of Indonesia, and then they translate everything that's wrong with Indonesia to every other place. So I hope the department doesn't act in haste in revising these rates downwards in order to compensate for the presumed difficulties in the market in Asia.

MR. LUND: I'm very pleased to hear that the economy is picking up again. I can assure you that we wouldn't lower it across the board, but we needed to look at those folks that don't have quota that were depending on the Japanese market, and they're trying to send into a very depressed market. As far as Indonesian material is concerned, when you get into the solid wood products, they're not a big competitor. We've got a far better, superior product.

DR. PANNU: My next query is related to page 178, again in the revenue section up near the top, environmental protection and enhancement fund. Again I notice that there is a considerable discrepancy between the forecast funds for '97-98 – that's the year ending next month – and the estimates for the new. What assumptions have been used to establish this new estimate?

MR. LUND: You have to understand the way the money finds its way into the fund. Back when the fund was set up – this is incremental money to the old rate, and so a percentage of the money in the increased price of the fibre is what goes in here. So this percentage drops faster than the royalty and the stumpage that you saw on the other page, because you've got a base that goes into the other one; this one is incremental to that. So if you come back down to the base, all of the money would go into the stumpage, into general revenue, and you wouldn't end up with any in here. But if you understand, the percentage comes down faster than the other one that's going straight across, so that's why you've got a bigger percentage drop here than you have to general revenue.

DR. PANNU: Given my very limited time, let me rush through two other questions. Hopefully I can get some information on these. I would like you to go to your KPMs, page 175. I must have looked at these pages last year as well, but I can't recall the reasons why these KPM tables stop at either '96 or '95. That's a very general question. For example, the one on reduction of municipal solid waste to landfills stops at '95. We are into 1998. There's a three-year gap there. I wonder what that stands for, why we don't have targets for '96, '97, '98. To the very bottom.

MR. LUND: No, no. I see it, and I'm just trying to go in my mind what date – if one of my staff can tell me, it escapes me right now why that is there. I remember asking that same question.

DR. PANNU: The same is true with the air quality index, and as I went through the next pages, 176 and 177, I noticed that there's a pattern. So either there's one generic reason or there is a serious oversight.

MR. LUND: Well, we'll get that answer for you. I don't know right offhand.

DR. PANNU: Okay. On page 176, surface water quality index. In my short tenure as MLA and in travel around the province, I hear growing concerns, albeit perhaps at this moment largely among urban town populations, about the potential crisis that might arise to surface water quality in this province due to the fact that all kinds of commercial/industrial activity, including the growth of large size hog processing plants and large feedlots around the province, is developing, causing concern to people that the surface water quality may be in jeopardy unless special attention is paid.

I look at this table here, the Oldman River situation, and for recreational purposes there's poor quality shown for upstream

Lethbridge. I was in Lethbridge about three and a half months ago, I think it was, and that was a matter of considerable concern to about three dozen people that I happened to meet at a meeting. At that time, of course, the concern was aroused also in relation to the possibility that a new hog plant might come into Lethbridge. The latter, I understand, is now in some sort of question.

Similarly, I think there are other parts of the province as well where this concern is growing. So this chart here, page 176: I don't know how you would assess it. Is it a good report on the health of the surface water quality, or is it a poor one? What's needed to improve it?

**6:46**

MR. LUND: Well, we're fortunate that since this was produced, we also now have that report from CASA on water quality. It's unfortunate we hadn't done that about 10 years ago, because clearly it indicates that the water in the province is not too bad, but there were some flags that went up and there are some things we have to do. Clearly, this chart indicates that as well. What the water quality turns out to be depends on the various parameters you're measuring. As you can see here, we talk about "recreation, aquatic life, and agriculture" and then the different ratings. That report that we just received is more comprehensive and I think really points to some areas.

You mentioned the expansion of plants, for example. Well, it meant the expansion of urban centres also is a major concern, because when you look here at the North Saskatchewan River, upstream of Edmonton recreation is good; downstream, not acceptable. Aquatic life: upstream, good; downstream, fair. And then as far as agriculture, really the agriculture measure is more chemicals in the water. In the aquatic life, it could very well be nitrogen, phosphorus, those kinds of things that are not harmful for agriculture but harmful for aquatic life. Then recreation: of course nobody likes to go into the water recreating below a sewer plant. So that's the kind of thing.

To address the agricultural issue, we are working right now with the Minister of Agriculture to beef up the codes of practice, and we will be looking at how we can put teeth into those so that they're actually legislated. We will be addressing the groundwater issue in a more substantial way than we currently do. It was interesting that in that report we don't have a major problem with groundwater. It's surface water where our major focus has to be an immediate sort of thing. We hope to have that discussion paper out very shortly so that people can comment on it, and then we'll be taking action to implement it.

DR. PANNU: I wonder if you or your staff could draw our attention to the portion of the budget – we are dealing with the budget – if in the budget there is a response which reflects your understanding of the nature of the problem with surface water quality and that something needs to be done about it.

MR. LUND: I don't accept that cuts in budget mean bad water. I just don't think they're related. I think we probably need to pay more attention to the water issue than we have in the past, and that's what we intend to do.

DR. PANNU: May I?

THE CHAIRMAN: Do you want just another second?

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your generosity.

MS CARLSON: Thank us. It's our time.

DR. PANNU: And my colleagues on the Liberal side and the minister for his forbearance.

My last question. I'm trying to figure out here – frankly, I haven't had enough time today to look at it closely. We did issue a press release on the basis of our preliminary analysis of the budget, and in that we picked up the increases in park fees for camping and for the backcountry. There were some new fees, and there were some increases in fees. Why is it that those increases are being brought in? Why is the department not in fact trying to encourage more Albertans to . . .

MR. LUND: Encourage which? I'm sorry.

DR. PANNU: Encourage Albertans to use provincial parks. And in order to do that, why doesn't it give them incentive by decreasing those fees rather than increasing them? There are some new fees here; for example, for backcountry and for day use of these parks. I'm asking for some rationale as to why this introduction of new taxes.

MR. LUND: Well, they're not new taxes; they're user fees. When you talk about reducing them, I ask the question: where is the money going to come from, then, to pay the cost of operating them? Because, quite frankly, we still are spending \$28 million on parks. We've tried to move and are moving the camping grounds and those recreation areas out to facility operators and contractors. You just cannot operate them at a lower fee. What we did was open it up. In fact, we used to charge a flat rate across the province for a stall, and it didn't matter whether it was on Wednesday or if it was on Saturday. Now we changed the schedule so that there will be a minimum charge and then there's a maximum charge. People are jumping to the conclusion that that means every price is going to go up.

You have to remember that we are also giving longer term tenure. We believe and know that in the private sector if you're a businessman at all, you want to build a business. Well, you don't build it by charging a fee that chases everybody away. So I'm not convinced that every one of these parks is going to see an increase in price. True, the parks that have a high use and demand, especially on weekends, probably will, but I think you're going to see some real bargains in parks during the week because we've allowed that flexibility. In that \$17, which is the maximum, there's \$2 that will go back to infrastructure in the parks. So for the camping privilege it's \$15, and that's the very maximum. Incidentally, you won't find a privately owned one that is that cheap.

If you look at the camping fees in B.C. and Saskatchewan, you will find that they are slightly higher than ours. It's really interesting when you look at B.C. Incidentally, that's an NDP government out there and has been for quite a while. And guess what? They are pretty nearly entirely operated by facility operators.

**6:56**

DR. PANNU: Obviously I've run out of my time. This is not the place for a debate. We can engage in that another time, but I disagree with you on this particular issue.

Thank you very much for answering my questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Dr. Pannu. I'd be disappointed if you didn't disagree.

MS CARLSON: My next set of questions is going to be on fish management.

MR. LUND: Fish management. Oh, good.

MS CARLSON: We're now seeing some local media from around the province talking about the impact that the lower fish stocks are going to have on local economies, particularly tourism in the area, and when we take a look back at what your department has done, as far back as 1982 you came out with a fish management policy that talked about maintaining the viability of the populations. During that time period your minister, Don Sparrow at that time, took a very active interest in this. From then up until recent years you've been getting warnings from a variety of groups saying that better management of the fish stock is required. Northern mayors in 1991 put forward a motion, the Lakeland Tourist Association in St. Paul. In fact, I think the member from that area was at one of those meetings talking about concern about the government having failed to pay attention and continuing to neglect specifically northeastern fisheries. So I am wondering what happened between then, when you recognized that there could be a problem, that there was a problem, and now, when we see the recent notices that have come out about the depleted fish stocks. What went wrong with your program that we're in this kind of situation now?

MR. LUND: I'll get Morley to speak a little more thoroughly on this topic, but you have to recognize that over the last four or five years we've been doing major studies on these lakes. You're primarily talking about lakes? We've been studying various species in those lakes. Some plans were put in place two years ago, three years ago. Yes, the stock is way down, and I guess it's one of those things that in hindsight probably we should have some put some bans on back in '92. But Morley will be able to give you more detail on what we are doing now and the prognosis for those lakes.

MR. BARRETT: Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'd like to speak briefly to not only what we're going to do but why, as you put it, everything's got to the stage it is now. In the northeast I think you only have to ask the residents there what the water table has been like for many years. Species like pike, which is the primary species there, and perch are really dependent on flooded grasslands or marshlands in the spring for their spawning habitat, and when those conditions aren't there, you'll lose the essence of a year of productivity. We have lost many years in a row in the northeast.

Now, that's not to say that we aren't concerned and that we haven't been concerned over the last few years as well. We've looked at it from a priority of species. We've addressed, as the minister has said, walleye as the number one priority. We addressed it three years ago. We're now working on pike. We've put into place new management plans for other concerned species, like a provincial catch-and-release program for bull trout, made it the provincial fish species. We've implemented the policy on grayling and some new changes in grayling. We're looking at the whole eastern slopes trout fishery, trying to get ahead of the pressure.

That's another thing that should be remembered. We have approximately 200 people fishing on a lake or whatever unit you want to look at per hectare or per square kilometre in Alberta for every one fishing on a lake or hectare in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, or Ontario. Two hundred per. We have more people fishing in Alberta than Saskatchewan and Manitoba combined. Our surveys have shown that people are spending more time fishing because there's more leisure time and they're more mobile. Development of our road networks and our parks system and the increased

access over the last 15 years has greatly increased the pressure on these waters. You could actually plot it, see the difference in the response and the stability of the fish population. If you put a gravel road to it, you can see a change. If you put a paved road to it, you can see a change. Put a campground at the end of that road to the lake, and there's a major impact. Then you have to respond.

Another thing that is worth considering: it's a major form of recreation for folks. It's something that is dependent on the resource, but it's been an open-entry access to the use of the resource. Anybody that wants to go fishing can fish. You don't have to qualify. You don't have to enter a draw at this stage. It's been a real asset for families and people who enjoy it from that perspective. But that also puts pressure on it, and at some point you have to react. No one likes to react before, but with the increased pressure, increased access, increased efficiency of fish finders, all these other technologies in the last 15 years – it comes from the tournament approach, an increase in technology. It's all resulted in the need to take some steps.

I would also say that in our very extensive consultation programs the consistent response that we get by and large is that people want to enjoy the aspect of fishing. So our approach is to try to recover the stocks where necessary, maintain them where possible and where we need to, and put the emphasis on fishing and not on the killing of fish. If you can't sustain the productivity that's going on in the lake, you're going to be in trouble, so we have to balance it. There's no other option. For example, the recent major review of the eastern slopes fishing policy and regulations indicated a very, very high demand for catch-and-release waters, tremendous support. There's a significant number going in, and that is likely going to be the trend in many areas.

MR. LUND: I just want to as well make a couple of comments on the commercial fishery, because some of the lakes that you referred to do have a commercial fishery. We've tried to reduce the number of commercial fishers. Now we've created another classification, a commercial recreation fisherman. Is that what we call it?

MR. BARRETT: Commercial recreation types.

MR. LUND: Yeah, exactly. We're trying to reduce the number of nets and the number of poles to reduce the take on some of those lakes, and that's been going on for some time.

Now, as Morley indicated, there are some other causes, natural causes, that have created a problem as well, but now we've got down to where we're going to have to make some more decisions. Do we want a true commercial fishery in the province or don't we? If the answer to that is yes, then we're going to have to deal with the recreation and commercial nets that are out there, and there's a very substantial number of them.

MS CARLSON: Okay. The last available information that we had on the northeast region of the province indicated that more than 50 percent of the recreational sportfish in Alberta were caught there, but only about 10 percent of your total budget dollars were assigned for that region of the province. Can you tell me what the budget for the northeast region is for the current year and how the money is going? So some sort of allocation on the breakout between fish habitat, raising fish and restocking, and monitoring for poachers and that. I'd be happy to wait for that information because I'd like some specifics.

MR. LUND: We can give you the number for the northeast.

MR. BARRETT: I can deal with some of that if you would like.

MS CARLSON: Okay. Sure. That'd be great.

MR. BARRETT: The northeast boreal as a regional summary has \$2.8 million in the fish and wildlife budget, and that is equal to the highest fish and wildlife regional budget we have anywhere in the province.

Now, the other thing is complexity. The northeast has not sustained, as ranked in recent surveys, 50 percent of the catch. It's not near that, but that high ranking in fact has been part of the problem because of the high yields that have been taken out of those waters, which are more than can be sustained. But we have no decrease in that area. In fact, we have put new fisheries biologists in Fort McMurray, new fisheries biologists in Lac La Biche. Two years ago we put two more staff members for fisheries in Cold Lake. So we're really beefing up that operation from a fisheries' perspective. We've got three in St. Paul. We've got two working in the Athabasca area. These are all fisheries staff, biologists and technicians. The largest provincial staff in the province we have in fisheries is in the northeast boreal region.

7:06

MR. LUND: We'll look at *Hansard* and see if we can get those details. There's another source. I'm not sure how much money the Alberta Conservation Association might be spending in that region as well. So that could be complementing some of our expenditures.

MR. NICHOLS: Another thing we've done, too, is we have changed the structure of the organization, as the minister talked about earlier. We're removing those silos, so we don't now talk about the fish and wildlife component out there. In fact, the regional director for the northeast region is also responsible for the parks program, and he has a combined budget. So if in fact we had something that was a real issue or we had a problem out there, he can access funding from the other parts of the department that he's responsible for.

MS CARLSON: Okay. As a point of clarification what would you define as a problem?

MR. NICHOLS: I'll give you Slave Lake as an example. There was information coming back from some of our officers and whatnot that they were having an enforcement problem and a noncompliance problem at Lesser Slave Lake. The regional director there was able to work with the headquarters directors. He was able to work with other regional directors, and we could move staff up there, both uniformed staff to increase the surveillance in the enforcement effort and plainclothes officers that work out of Edmonton to do some undercover work. We also hired some summer people up there to do education, creel census, and things like that. So we put a major effort in there to first of all act as a deterrent against the offences continuing and to get a handle on what's coming on. So it's not back down to just one budget for one problem or one area.

MS CARLSON: Sure. Okay.

My third question, then, is: how much of the responsibility for fish stock management and enhancement has been delegated to the Alberta Conservation Association? Is that what it is?

MR. LUND: Yeah, the Alberta Conservation Association. We're

not delegating specific responsibilities to them. They've got that money. They've got a board. They make the decisions where that money is going to be spent. Of course, we work together on various projects, but we don't say to them: you have to do such and such. We've got a real good understanding between our staff and the Alberta Conservation Association and work very closely. They assist us by giving us information, and of course our staff are very cognizant and they work with them to make sure that they understand where we see there are problems and how we can work together.

Morley, do you want to make any more comments on it?

MR. BARRETT: Yes, just briefly to illustrate clearly some of the relationships. There's a very important relationship that we have with them and they with us. We have not delegated any of our mandate. We are responsible for managing fish and wildlife resources and for all the legislative components thereof. For example, if we jointly have a dialogue, which we do on an ongoing basis – we have a member sitting on their board – and determine that a priority might be northern pike in the northeast boreal region and the fish stocks therein, then we'll make that priority clear to them. They, in fact, will review it, structure money to support studies, inventories of the various lakes, and we would share the data, analyze those results, and make regulation changes in response to data. We would make the regulation change, but they would provide information that supports our jointly acknowledged priority. So if you look at them as providing the information data ammunition, doing the monitoring work by and large, us retaining the management responsibility and acting on it in a regulatory sense, that maybe will give you a better feel for the division between the two.

MR. LUND: There's another group called the WISE Foundation. They don't have a large sum of money, but we work closely with them as well. They work on various projects that relate to wildlife, of course, but some fish.

MS CARLSON: Thanks.

MR. WHITE: Just a matter of clarification before we leave the last one, and I direct this to Mr. Henderson's area again, the DAO there. I didn't clarify the information you're going to send back subsequently, and that's just a one-pager on the description of what they do and what they're paid and all that surrounding that and how it comes out of the budget and where we'd find it in the budget.

MR. LUND: So that would be the FRIP that he's wanting information on.

MR. HENDERSON: Right.

MR. LUND: Okay. Yeah, we'll gladly get that.

MR. WHITE: The other question I had – probably Mr. Duffy is better to put this to, Mr. Minister. I'm looking at last year's estimates, and it is the old proverbial soup and nuts here. I mean, I can't figure out what – some of the line items change so much, and I can see a new item in forest management and there's the dedicated revenue put in where it wasn't last year. But I still can't get numbers from one year to match.

MR. LUND: Let me help you. Like I said, we've gone from four ADMs to three, so some of the functions that used to be in

corporate services you will now find in both environment management and natural resources.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Oh, me too.

MR. LUND: Well, yours was the minor part, I think.

Quite frankly, I haven't followed it all right across either, but when we went to three as opposed to four, the dollars out of that fourth were spread around through the other departments. Those functions are still there, but they're just reporting through a different ADM.

MR. WHITE: Did that follow through also, then, in the capital investment?

MR. LUND: Yeah. Ray can speak more thoroughly to it.

MR. DUFFY: It goes across directly.

MR. LUND: Yeah. It's difficult to try to follow.

MR. WHITE: It's nigh impossible to compare last year's then.

MR. LUND: Well, you'd have to see the functions of each one in order to follow it.

MR. WHITE: And then do a big chart.

MR. LUND: Trust us. You don't have to do it.

MR. WHITE: What do I do for a living again? Somebody check it. He's asking me to trust him? Wait a minute here. Read this line tomorrow, Ty, and you'll laugh.

MR. LUND: I will laugh. It's true.

MR. WHITE: We'll have to at this point. So he can't do anything else differently.

There is in your recent publication – I won't go into it in a great deal of detail today, but I wonder if you could provide for us a copy of the enhanced forest management task force, 1997, not just a copy of it but who put it together, basically the *raison d'être*. I can guess why, but I'd like a paragraph as to why and what it cost and what the resulting actions will be from it. If you could kind of put that together. You reference it in this document, and it's one of those that I don't think I know of or have heard of before.

MR. HENDERSON: We have developed just a framework document for enhanced forest management, so I'll be able to provide that to you. That's been developed co-operatively between us and industry, and we are in the process now of more working committees, which will flesh out the implementation document, but I'll send you the umbrella document.

MR. WHITE: Good. That would be really good.

Further to this document, is this the summary, or is the report the legacy?

MR. LUND: That's it. That's the framework for implementation.

MR. WHITE: That's the whole enchilada. Okay. All right. Thank you, Mr. Minister.

MR. GIBBONS: Mr. Minister, the Growth Summit seems to be one thing that I'm really affixed to, but in the part where you start on the business drivers on page 230, how will a new model towards sustainable development and growth be addressed through the integrated resource management? It's part of this whole system we've got in reading it here. I'll repeat it. How will a new model of sustainable development and growth be addressed through the integrated resource management?

7:16

MR. LUND: Do you want to comment on it, Jim? I'm not sure just exactly where the question is coming from.

MR. GIBBONS: Like, are you going to start working with the Growth Summit?

MR. LUND: Oh, the Growth Summit recommendation.

MR. GIBBONS: Yes.

MR. LUND: Which page?

MR. GIBBONS: Page 230 under business drivers.

MR. LUND: Oh, I'm sorry. I wasn't following you. [interjections]

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you for going through the chair on those nice comments.

MR. LUND: I see it now. I'm sorry. I was on the wrong page.

MR. GIBBONS: Now, I can add to that. Does this also involve joint work with the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and so on? Are you joining up with all the other ministries?

MR. LUND: Well, there's a commitment among ministers that where there's interface, we will work with those other ministers, and of course Agriculture is a main one.

MR. NICHOLS: And rural development and so on.

MR. LUND: Yeah, to some degree, but when you get down to the real work in the field – public lands for example. We manage the land; they manage the lease on the land. Of course, on this issue with the intensive livestock, we will be working together, because there's an overlap with the two there.

MR. GIBBONS: That was provincial.

Now I'm going to ask my next question. Do you want to answer that first one?

MR. NICHOLS: Yeah. At the present time a lot of the decisions are made based on integrated resource plans. We don't have them in place over the whole province. They're very time consuming to get in, sometimes take 11 years. We have a committee of senior directors and ADMs working on a new process to deal with integrated resource management, and we have a model that has been developed. It hasn't yet been taken to all the deputies. It will go to the deputies, and if they're comfortable with it, we'll then take it to the respective ministers and probably through the SPCs.

What it is is a document and a strategy that will ensure that

integrated resource management is taken into consideration, that Agriculture, Energy, Environmental Protection are all part of the process. It will rely very heavily on the forest management plans but not in the state they are now. They will see some changes in the focus of those. As you may be aware, under the new water legislation there's a requirement that we enter into water management plans, and these will not be just water management plans based on the allocation of water but will be based on the management and conservation of water. Those types of things will be what we'll use as tools to ensure integrated resource management.

MR. GIBBONS: The federal and provincial governments signed an agreement on harmonization earlier this year. Where are we sitting with that one?

MR. LUND: Well, currently we've signed the accord and then three subagreements on environmental assessment, on standards and inspections. There are still some seven subagreements to work on and eventually sign. I'm pushing that the next one that we spend a lot of time on will be enforcement so we have an enforcement policy across Canada and make sure that the enforcement is not an overlap and duplication as well. It's going to, I think, assist a great deal in the streamlining of environmental management. I believe you will see more consistency across Canada.

Of course I was very anxious to move forward with the standards. We're very proud of our standards. If other provinces come up to our standards, we'll be extremely happy. That doesn't mean that we're going down to theirs. We are going to maintain our standards. We're not lowering them. But it does cause some difficulty when you see – particularly if you go down to eastern Canada and look at the standards for their pulp mills, for example, and how those relate to ours, we're way ahead on the standards.

The inspection side right now. Does it make any sense when a federal inspector goes out to a plant and catches a sample and two hours later a provincial inspector goes out and catches a sample and they each send it in, testing for basically the same thing? That's happening. Why would we do it? We need to have one inspector go and catch that one sample.

The environmental assessment subagreement basically at this point probably solidifies our bilateral agreement on environmental assessments. It doesn't go as far as we would like. Quite frankly, the federal government has to change their legislation in order for this harmonization to work, because quite clearly right now there are a couple of court cases that have got nothing to do with the environment. They're all to do with process. The only way that can change is if the federal government will change their legislation. Hopefully, they will see their way to do that.

The Cheviot mine is a very good example of how the bilateral can work. In that one, leading up to the environmental assessment, both the federal government and provincial government sat down and worked out the terms of reference. Once that was agreed to between the two levels of government, the province took the lead, but when you got to the hearing, it was a joint panel, a federal representative on the panel. Then when they went through the whole process and came out with certain recommendations or conditions, both levels of government ended up approving the permit, but we've still got permits to issue, like under the Water Resources Act. We invited the federal government to put a representative on to work with our staff to make sure that we were satisfying their needs before we would issue the permit.

Also, on the grizzly bear plan, to mitigate the impact on grizzly bears. Once again we asked the federal government – that was a

condition in the approval, that there be a plan put forward to mitigate the impact on grizzly bears – to work with us and have a person on that panel. I think that it can work, but as you know, there's a court case going on on that very project. They're not challenging that there's something wrong with what's going to be done, but it's the process. They're going to court because they don't believe that the federal government followed their process. That's what's so frustrating. If somebody was so upset that there was something missed in the environmental assessment and some issue not addressed, that's one thing, but to go to court on the process, that's the kind of thing that we have to clear up. It drives industry crazy. They don't know where they're going to end up at the end of the day, and it's doing nothing for the environment, and that's the part that I'm frustrated over.

MR. GIBBONS: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Minister.

THE CHAIRMAN: Debby.

MS CARLSON: Okay. My questions are still on fish. [interjection] Well, I need to know some more information about them.

MR. STRANG: She hasn't caught her limit yet.

MS CARLSON: I'm reeling a few in though, let me tell ya.

THE CHAIRMAN: Would you like this all recorded in *Hansard*?

MS CARLSON: Well, they have to stay awake too; right?

I have a list before me of the water bodies requiring walleye regulation changes in 1998. It's a list of the lakes particularly in the northeast section where new limits primarily of zero tolerance for a catch are indicated. I'm wondering if the Lac La Biche Regional Fisheries Advisory Committee was consulted on the list of lakes for zero tolerance?

MR. LUND: Go ahead, Morley. That's the technical stuff.

7:26

MR. BARRETT: I don't have that list in front of me, nor do I probably need it for my answer. I'd be pleased to speak to it.

When we looked at walleye management in the province three years ago, as I said previously, it was broadly acknowledged that there were some concerns with the population in terms of its sustainability. We held over 20 workshops throughout the province involving people broadly, of course through St. Paul and all that area as well that you're speaking of, and arrived at a management approach that was unique, that is finding great favour across North America. I'm proud to say that we're the leaders in this, an approach that was as follows. It was using a bunch of acknowledged and agreed-to appropriate criteria to classify the stocks in lakes; i.e., the number of age to maturity, things like the population of breeding fish, the recruitment or the young coming into the populations, the number of year class, the growth rates of fish, all indices of health of a population in a water body.

Using that category, lakes were placed into either a trophy, a stable, a vulnerable, or a collapsed population. The criteria are established. So when we go out, as we spoke previously, when it's monitored by the ACA or by ourselves, and the results indicate, based on agreed-to criteria, that that lake should go into one of those four categories, that's what's happened and that was the agreed-to process. We will no longer have a situation where we have to wait for 10 years to see what's going to happen. We're going to act very quickly, because we've already agreed up

front what should be done when we see these things and these types of results coming back. So that's why it happened and that's why we moved quickly.

MS CARLSON: I have no problem with that.

This list I have is a zero tolerance for all lakes except for Pinehurst. The new limit there is three fish, with a larger size requirement than previously. Could you tell me at some point which category they fall into now that it's the only lake you have listed that does have a catch limit in it and why Beaver Lake, which is right next door to most of these, is not on the list and doesn't seem to have a new limit? Even though it's been identified as one of the lakes that has a falling population, Beaver is not on the list.

MR. BARRETT: Well, Beaver has a higher productivity rating. Much of this is related to the suitability of spawning habitats within a water body. Walleye have two types of spawning habitats. That's the inlet streams – they spawn in the streams in the middle of May during the runoff, when we have it – and in some places in a sort of rocky or shoal habitat which is serviced by windward action on the windward slopes. So some lakes that are well favoured have a higher productivity rating, and Beaver Lake is one of those. It is sustaining itself based on surveyed criteria. Again, that is the beauty of this system. You can respond very quickly and provide protection when needed and provide opportunity in the other direction when allowed. So there is a difference.

The best example is right next door to Lac La Biche. Lac La Biche, 10 minutes away, has a zero bag and very few walleye. It was a great walleye fishery some decades ago. The difference is, of course, that the population was highly vulnerable to a very small, limited area of breeding habitat in the Owl River by and large. We had lost that population, so we're trying to recover that through a stocking program. It's classified as collapsed because it's not self-sustaining yet, whereas Beaver Lake is self-sustaining and is not a stocked population.

MS CARLSON: So as a point of clarification, then, you're saying that the situation has reversed since 1987, when you had an Alberta fish and wildlife division report that stated the walleye harvest in that area was exceeding production.

MR. BARRETT: In Beaver?

MS CARLSON: Yeah.

MR. BARRETT: When I'm giving this answer, please bear in mind that I don't have the lake survey results in front of me, with some of the 120 lakes up there. I haven't seen it, but that would be the indication, that it is one of the more productive lakes which we know of for walleye. Nevertheless, it still has a pretty good level of protection.

The three-fish limit is not a very significant level of protection. It's the size limit that is the more significant level of protection, because the three-fish or four-fish or five-fish limit only becomes a factor when people are catching those numbers. If you're not catching them, if you're averaging one fish a day, it doesn't matter whether the bag limit is 10 or 20. So it's regulated primarily through the open season dates and size.

MS CARLSON: Okay. Would you, though, provide me with the category classifications for Pinehurst and Beaver at some point?

MR. BARRETT: Yeah. I think I can probably provide you with all the categories in the province, if you'd like, for walleye.

MS CARLSON: That would help. Thanks. That'd be perfect.

My final question on this topic for now is: do we have healthy, sustainable walleye populations capable of natural regeneration in and above the reservoirs as a result of the walleye stocking since 1990?

MR. BARRETT: The answer unequivocally is no, and I'll tell you why. We consider a population healthy and sustainable when it's sustained by the natural progeny of the stocked fish. The maturity rate is anywhere from seven to 10 years for stocked walleye to produce. This is an incredible statistic for people that aren't familiar with it. You know, a white-tailed deer born in the spring can breed in the fall of the year it was born in as a fawn, and in good, healthy conditions 50 percent of them do. But a walleye that's maybe 15, 16 inches long might be six, seven years old and immature. So an average of about eight to 10 years to mature for a female walleye. For those ones stocked since 1990, some of them will be just starting to mature, the very first ones, and we'll have no progeny recruited into the population as yet. So it'll take longer than that.

The good news is that in some of them, the survival rate is really good, and you hear good stories of fishing in some of those populations. But the key is to protect them, because they're the only spawners we're going to have for now. We're dependent on those fish to produce the progeny which could sustain the population.

MR. WHITE: I'm going to quit relying on the member from up in northeast Alberta and start relying on the other one, because the last time I went up on his recommendation, I didn't catch a damn thing.

MR. STRANG: He had them all in a pen.

THE CHAIRMAN: I think it's time to move on with this discussion. Just a hint.

MR. WHITE: Yeah.

I'd like to turn back to a discussion that we started last year on the potential of modification of stumpage rates independent of use. I know you talked about it at one time, and I think Ontario tried it. I'm not too sure how successful it was. We all know, as we're experiencing now and as we experienced a year ago, the bottom sort of went out of pulp. I think the minister mentioned the difficulties in the eastern market and the American market so that the stick lumber or solid lumber is going down now. So if one looks at it from the point of view of the owner of the resource and to always allow for the mobility of the market, would it not be a reasonable assumption to put a stumpage rate in an FMA, to put a rate that is independent of the use, whether it be pulp or stick?

MR. LUND: Well, as you can appreciate, some of the FMAs have a stumpage rate built into the FMA, so we can't change that. But one of the things we are doing is defining a sawlog, and whether you pulp it or chip it and put it into a board or saw it for lumber, you will pay the sawlog rate, which is based on the solid-wood price. We're looking at how we can tie in the fibre that's used for OSB and how we can have a price for it.

Your idea about regardless of use is a little bit difficult. For example, a plywood plant takes a very good bolt and it's labour

intensive, so its cost of production for that veneer is pretty high. If it goes into plywood and into the market for plywood, it's competing with OSB. OSB is produced cheaper than plywood. Now, you would actually put that veneer plant out of business if you went to a flat rate and charged them the sawlog rate for every one of those bolts that's going into that plant.

7:36

So I think we need to continue to have the price tied to the end product. In the case of this veneer that I'm speaking of, with it being very labour intensive, you've got more people working. So in fact out of that same cubic metre we generate revenue in another way, by those people working as opposed to just taking it out of stumpage. I think this idea of tying it to the product with some bells and whistles – for example, we don't want to see good big sawlogs chipped up and put into pulp. That's why we've gone to this method where we're defining a sawlog, and if it hits that and you've put it in pulp, well, you're going to pay the higher stumpage.

MR. WHITE: I wasn't an advocate; I was just questioning.

MR. LUND: Oh, okay. I was afraid you were advocating it.

MR. WHITE: No, no. That would be foolhardy. Actually, I should probably leave forestry now. We don't have that much time left, and I need some other questions answered. I do want to get to waste and water, so I'll just pass along.

MR. GIBBONS: I want to talk about wildlife areas, and one I'm going to jump into, because I hate having a lot of these questions that I can't get in the House.

One comes from Ivan's area, in between Hinton and the park, where you've got a resort area – this can tie in with tourism – where you've got the Black Cat Guest Ranch. There's going to be a lot of forestry in that area, and they're going to go in there through the next while. That area at one time was all part of the park, and then because of the juggling of the parks and whatever the history is, it is not in the park anymore. But it is a nice, beautiful area. A question on this coming to me from meeting the people out there is: when you've got a tourism industry that is doing all right, why are we letting somebody go in and log it and not have any plans to kind of reserve the area? The wildlife movement in there, from what I understand – I haven't got everything with me, but I got quite a big package sent to me not too long ago. I think I since passed it on to Debby. Do you know any of that area in there that I'm talking about, around the Black Cat?

MR. LUND: Yeah. I've been there.

MR. GIBBONS: Okay. That's one complaint.

The second one. Because I don't like having questions and not knowing where the areas are, I took a jaunt up to the Chinchaga area about the fact of it having been designated as a special area and then afterwards giving out the logging on that particular strip. I wonder if I'm getting the true facts on both those areas.

MR. LUND: Well, as far as the Black Cat Guest Ranch is concerned, by the tone of your questions you seem to indicate that if you go in and log, you're not going to have any wildlife, and that's just simply not true. As a matter of fact, it's quite the opposite, and that has been shown. If you go out to Weldwood and go into their FMA and go and talk to their biologist, they've

got a lot of numbers that indicate there's more wildlife in there now than there was when they first started in there.

MR. GIBBONS: In the Weldwood area?

MR. LUND: In the Weldwood FMA. Now, this happens to be in their FMA as well, the Black Cat. Clearly it shows that wildlife do better.

You have to have some disturbances in that timber, whether it be man-made or fire, in order for regeneration. Ecosystems are a living entity, and if you let them overmature, they will eventually die. A good example of that is the national parks, Banff and Jasper parks. You do not find, except around the town, a lot of wildlife. Why? Because we don't have fires in there anymore, so the timber has matured. It gradually squeezes out the habitat for the ungulates particularly, and the same thing would happen eventually in a lot of the forested area outside the park.

As far as the tourism side of it is concerned, yes, there is concern. One of the things we insist is that the companies work with the local people, the local operators, the other users, and accommodate them as well as they can. Then I've always got to throw in: if you leave it and do nothing, how long do you think it's going to be before it will burn? It will eventually burn or else a disease or something will happen to it eventually. If you have a massive fire, if that's conducive to good tourism, I guess my opinion of what I would want to go and look at is quite different than somebody else's.

MR. GIBBONS: Can I throw something in on that then?

MR. LUND: Yes.

MR. GIBBONS: On that particular issue, on tourism. It has been logged for the last 30 years, so it's not as if it's dense bush or whatever. I know about the burning part of it because that's the first couple of questions I was asking. It has been logged, is what my information is, and the only thing I'm asking is if maybe you can emphasize, and probably help take the heat off Ivan too, the fact that it can be looked at as preserved in around the tourism area there.

MR. LUND: Well, yeah. That trail is one of the big concerns. Weldwood has already talked about how they're going to only cross the trail once. They believe they can do that. They're going to try to make sure that they're not impacting the trail except in that one place that they would cross it.

We require in the FMA, of course, that they have an advisory committee. Weldwood has taken the initiative and now is setting up a local committee dealing just with that area. They're asking the people that are having difficulty with it to sit down with them and work out the plans so that in fact the areas they cut will have a minimum impact.

I don't know if you've had the opportunity to see some of the modeling that the companies can now do, where they simply get the elevations and do a cutting plan and then you see on the computer what it would look like from various points, like along a trail. It's just amazing what they can do to mitigate the visual effects of logging in certain areas. I'm sure that they'll be able to work out that whole issue in there.

As far as Chinchaga is concerned, you said "designated." There's nothing designated up there. There was a nomination. If, in fact, we were going to say, "No activity in a nominated area," we would have basically shut down the forest industry while we're going through this process. I can tell you that down

in the old Bow-Crow forest there was only a little piece left up in the northeast part of the old Bow-Crow forest that was not nominated. If we said, "Once it's nominated, no activity," that whole forest would have been shut down, and all of those mills would have been out of fibre. It's in an area called B-7, where there were some licences issued, and quite frankly it's very questionable whether, in fact, that area that – you have to appreciate there was a big area nominated. It's very questionable whether there's even a connection to Halverson Ridge and the valley of the Chinchaga, because they're pretty much unrelated.

I'm not prejudging what will eventually come out of the whole thing, but quite frankly you have to recognize that people play games with this process that we've put in place. It's annoying, but that's part of the problem we have, when people start playing games with the process that you've put in place to try to address a program. You know, I was annoyed when I saw these things happening. I'm not saying that that whole nomination was mischief. Not at all. I think some people felt threatened.

7:46

MR. GIBBONS: Are you saying that they're playing games with nominations or playing games with . . .

MR. LUND: Nominations.

MR. GIBBONS: So it's nominated, but it's not designated.

MR. LUND: There's nothing designated up there.

MR. GIBBONS: So Manning Diversified has the contract.

MR. LUND: Yes, Manning Diversified has a quota, and the area they got a permit to cut in this winter is in the influence area of their quota.

MR. GIBBONS: In the valley?

MR. LUND: No.

MR. GIBBONS: It's not in the valley?

MR. LUND: It's on the sidehill.

MR. GIBBONS: Okay. Thank you.

MR. STRANG: Is this early or what?

MS CARLSON: I have a couple more fish questions.

AN HON. MEMBER: Oh good.

MS CARLSON: They like this. They say: it's quite entertaining; please ask more. Right?

MR. WHITE: There are some fishers around here that are kind of interested in this. We tend to listen to this kind of stuff.

MS CARLSON: Yup.

Tonight we've talked quite a bit about walleye. Can you tell me what kind of holistic approach you're taking to the restocking in these lakes and the ones in the southern lakes that you've done in terms of not upsetting the predator balance or the other fish stock balances.

MR. BARRETT: When you go fishing . . . Do you want me to answer? I'm sorry. I just made a presumption there.

MR. LUND: I'm learning as well. Please continue.

MR. BARRETT: In most cases we are not, with some notable exceptions, introducing any exotics into the system. The difference – you're correct; we are doing that in the southern Alberta reservoirs, where even whitefish and walleye are in fact being introduced, but the other species in there are really similar to what's in the water system that feeds those reservoirs. In fact, over long periods of time they seek their limit.

You asked: what are we doing for the ecosystem in the approach? That is a really key area and one of primary interest to us. It's right back to the minister's opening comments in terms of sustainability and the organization. The Water Act is, in fact, going to be one of the key vehicles which will allow us to do more integrated planning on a watershed basis. So we'll be looking at factors influencing water flow, use, balance, sustaining in-stream life, and all factors with an integrated team in a better format than we've ever done before in this province. We'll be having the various experts and disciplines represented at the table and decision-making at the same time.

Now, the predator balance. You know, they're interesting; they're academic. I would ask, of course, at what level you want a response to that question. There's feeding birds on the larvae.

MS CARLSON: Maintaining a natural balance I think is what I'm after.

MR. BARRETT: Okay. Well, one of them is by not introducing exotics – we have a very tight policy on exotics in the province – by using species that are in fact managed to maintain the competitive edge as we try to recover them. There's nothing that we're doing in a deliberate sense to upset that balance other than to provide opportunity for fish to mature, to grow, to spawn, to seek that balance that's there, to work within the capabilities of the productivity of the system. It is not at all in our interest to favour one species over the other. We're not putting trout in those eastern reservoirs. It's not suitable. So we're respecting things like: cold water fish go in cold water systems; warm water fish in warm water systems. We're not stocking predators by and large, with the exception of walleye, and only stocking those where the population is barren or was depleted to the point where it won't recover where it has traditionally existed. So we're not competing.

A really good example, just to recognize that it's even more complex than that, is genetic influence. Cold Lake is a good example where the lake trout is recovering. We're not stocking lake trout in there because the best science indicates that your best long-term hope is to support the recovery of fish by the genes that are in that lake as opposed to stocking on top of them and creating an inferior genetic pool. That's what we're doing, and we're seeing a very nice recovery with the new management system in Cold Lake, as an example. It's the same with walleye.

So we're introducing reservoir fish as a stocking source into reservoirs. We're using river-spawning fish as a stocking source into the lakes that we have introduced into our stocking program where there is a river-spawning system available to them. So we're looking at all those types of systems.

MR. LUND: I think you might want to expand on what we're doing at Pigeon Lake, where you have multi species, and how we're trying to minimize the human impact on the fishery by the zoning and that sort of thing.

MR. BARRETT: It's very difficult to keep up to my minister when he has all the details.

MR. LUND: Well, I just find some of these things very interesting; how we zone lakes, for example, for the sports fishery because of the various species that are in that lake.

MR. BARRETT: In that case, in Pigeon Lake, we have three primary situations and species. We have whitefish, which is the product that's sought after by recreational fishermen and commercial fishermen. We have a pike population in many areas throughout the lake and a stocked and recovering walleye population. So for walleye, it's catch and release, total protection of all fishing in the spawning area at the time when they're spawning, even for pike. So total protection of a critical habitat.

For commercial fishing we're doing a lot more zoning and more experimental test-netting to determine at what depths they should be fishing at certain times of year, to try and fish at a time when the whitefish are separated by depth and habitat from the game species, which are the pike and the walleye. So through creative zoning we're trying to of course minimize the impact on the primary sports species, which are pike and walleye; allow access to the primary targets for the commercial fishery, which is the whitefish; and doing it both by time and zone, net size, and depth of net setting. So it's fluid. Every fishery is assessed and lessons learned and moved on. It's very sophisticated management on some of the lakes.

MR. LUND: You'd also be interested to know that the pelicans are causing a major problem for us, greater than the fishermen in some specific areas.

MS CARLSON: Those two comments bring to mind how you enforce a catch on these programs or on poaching in general with the kinds of cutbacks that we've seen in the department.

MR. WHITE: Catch a pelican?

MS CARLSON: Yeah. Catch a pelican. Sure.

How are you managing that? Are you relying upon citizens who live in the area, or is there some sort of volunteer report system? I mean, I've done a lot of fishing, and there's a lot of people who don't do catch and release.

MR. BARRETT: If I may, Mr. Minister? We have maintained our field enforcement staff by and large in the province. Not only that; we've expanded it greatly by integrating in a work-plan level both the fish and wildlife officers and the park ranger staff. Secondly, of course, we do have the 1-800 number for Report a Poacher, which is widely advertised on road signs and elsewhere. So there is that opportunity.

The other thing I'd like to stress, because I'm a real strong believer in it, is that we're doing a lot more public education and hopefully will continue to do more. I think it's more important to educate people and have them understand what the problem is and have them have the mind-set that they want to comply than to try and catch them doing something wrong. In fact, that's the goal of the things we're doing with the eastern slopes, the walleye workshops, the new pike steering committee we have going for pike management: not only to arrive at a proper management scheme but to give it enough profile so people understand why it's needed and what the steps are put in place to achieve, thereby understanding their role in it. Then hopefully we'll get a higher

level of compliance, with enforcement just being a secondary tool when a problem exists, and it does exist. But we still have a very strong field staff in place.

7:56

MS CARLSON: Have you taken a look at doing any things like urban communities do with volunteer Crime Watch, where you have people in the community who are out there during peak times reporting back or taking out fish and wildlife people to the problem areas or anything of that nature?

MR. LUND: Well, of course, with the 1-800 number people can report this at any time.

Morley makes a very good point. As we do more education, the compliance goes up, but also the awareness. People are more inclined to actually tell somebody if they catch them doing something wrong like not releasing a fish that they should and that sort of thing. A lot of people are not a bit bashful about going right up to the individual and telling them what they've done wrong. That peer pressure is very, very important out there for us. So we believe the education side of it is one that we have to put a lot of emphasis on.

THE CHAIRMAN: I just wanted to jump in and say that we have about five minutes left, just for everyone's benefit.

MR. NICHOLS: Just specific to your comment on rural Crime Watch. Our Report a Poacher is closely affiliated with that, and we're part of that program. It's a big part of that program.

The other thing is: one of the biggest potential impacts on particularly the walleye fishery is the illegal black market in it, and we have a covert operation that's second to none in Canada. They're very, very successful in that area.

MR. WHITE: Not wanting to let my old friend Mr. Tupper off here at all; you can't fall asleep that easily. The questions centre around some solid waste landfill disposals. I've been keeping track of a couple of them, notably the Rimbey one first. Another would be Ryley. It occurs to me, in management by professionals, how can one allow a project to proceed and watch a project proceed and be there during construction, knowing that it was not in compliance with an earlier ruling, and subsequently rule against it later? I mean, if there are some difficulties here regarding sub judice, I'll understand.

MR. LUND: I don't follow you when you say, "knowing that it was not in compliance." Quite frankly, what happened is that there was a permit issued. The company was told as soon as the appeal first appeared that in fact there was going to be an appeal and that the conditions of the permit could change. As it turned out, the appeal did proceed. The appeal board in their judgment felt that there needed to be a certain depth of liner. That was something our experts had addressed, but there was some difference of opinion. The appeal board has the ability to stipulate a condition. So to say that we knew as they were constructing that they weren't in compliance is not accurate.

MR. WHITE: Do you mean all the time they were constructing until the ruling in the hearing they were in compliance?

MR. LUND: The department notified the company. I wrote a letter to the company telling them that there was in fact a hearing and that the appeal board has the ability to vary the permit. You

as a municipal councillor have dealt with development appeal boards. This is no different. When your development officer issues a permit in the city of Edmonton and somebody appeals it, the Development Appeal Board has the ability to change that permit. So if anyone starts construction of anything when it's under appeal, they're doing it at their own peril.

MR. WHITE: The difficulty is that municipally it's 60 days from the time of appeal to the time of a ruling.

MR. LUND: No, no. You've got 60 days to appeal. But we don't have anything like that written in because these are of course much bigger. There's a limit on how long you've got to appeal, but there's no limit on how long it takes for the appeal because, of course, they can be extremely complex, as this one showed.

MR. WHITE: Okay.

The last questions centre on BODs and the discharge. Are these BODs taken by the mills themselves or taken by your people, your field staff? Are they taken relatively often? The BOD is not the sole determinant. The volume in any one input versus the volume of the stream would make a difference. So is there a BOD measure done on the water quality measured downstream in some kind of set format?

MR. LUND: Go ahead, Doug.

MR. TUPPER: I'm not quite sure if I got the question correctly, but we do have a number of aspects of checking on BODs. In the department we do ambient monitoring. We have routine monitoring programs in the rivers to pick up what's happening, actually, in the river. We also do what's called synoptic monitoring on selected rivers on a periodic basis. Staff will essentially follow a slug of river from the headwaters to where it leaves the province, follow that water all the way down past all the inputs, and collect a wide range of water quality information including BOD. So there's that.

We also monitor discharges from plants. They do it as well, but staff do monitoring on an audit basis and a periodic basis to check on the results that we are receiving from industry.

So there's a whole range of things. I wasn't quite clear on your question in terms of the mix of BOD, but we have a number of

ways to determine the water quality and what's impacting it in the river.

Of course, in the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act with renewable licences, as licences come up for renewal, improvements that can be made in plants are then required. That improves the water quality in the river, and we have that whole process of sampling so we know what's happening out there in the rivers.

**8:06**

A good example of in fact the whole process the province has for assessing impacts on rivers is the northern river basins study, which we did co-operatively with the Northwest Territories and the federal government. That study had some very interesting results. It showed that in the northern rivers, Athabasca River for example, notwithstanding all the concern about dioxins and furans, the study recommended that we don't ever bother looking for them again, because they're just not there.

We've also found that with more mills on the rivers the water quality is getting better. Again, it's nice to see. As the hon. minister said, compared to other parts of the country – and our federal colleagues have pointed that out to us too – Alberta's standards are by far the best. The quality of our northern rivers, as an example, is the best in the nation.

THE CHAIRMAN: I have to apologize for jumping in, but it's with a great deal of regret that I say it is 8:07, in accordance with Standing Orders.

I want to thank the minister and the senior officials for answering questions tonight and responding so rapidly to the questions posed. Also, I want to thank and recognize the Official Opposition for their questions and, again, the minister and staff for responding. Also, I want to thank the members from the Conservative team, who have really asked tough questions in putting the minister's toes to the fire tonight.

I am prepared for a motion to adjourn.

MR. THURBER: So moved.

THE CHAIRMAN: Moved by the hon. Member for Drayton Valley. All those in favour? Anyone opposed?

[The subcommittee adjourned at 8:07 p.m.]