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6:03 p.m.

[Mr. Boutilier in the Chair]

Designated Supply Subcommittee - Environmental Protection

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

Ducharme, Denis
Langevin, Paul
Magnus, Richard
Olsen, Sue

Pannu, Raj
Sloan, Linda
Strang, Ivan
Yankowsky, Julius

THE CHAIRMAN: I'd like to call this meeting to order. This is the official designated supply subcommittee for Environmental Protection. At this particular point I'd like to welcome all members of the Assembly, from both oppositions and also members from the government.

First, I am prepared to entertain a motion, and I understand that Mr. Yankowsky has a motion to put forward at this time.

MR. YANKOWSKY: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Pursuant to Standing Orders 56 and 57, I would move that the designated supply subcommittee on this date, March 25, now conclude its consideration and debate on the 1999-2000 estimates of the Department of Environmental Protection prior to the conclusion of the four-hour period allocated.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. That requires unanimous consent. Then from that, based on that motion, we will move forward with a brief introduction from the minister, then 12 minutes to Dr. Pannu, and then the Official Opposition for the remaining two-hour period - okay? - if there is agreement. All those in favour, say aye.

HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

THE CHAIRMAN: Any opposed? No one opposed. That is unanimous.

Therefore we will begin with the hon. Minister of Environmental Protection, the hon. Minister Lund, and then following him will be Dr. Pannu from the New Democrats and then subsequently the Liberals for the remaining two hours.

MR. LUND: Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good evening, colleagues. Before I begin, I'd like to introduce the staff that are here with us. At my far right we have Fred Moffatt, who is director of the protected areas. Then next to him is the ADM of environmental services, Doug Tupper; the ADM of forestry and public lands, Cliff Henderson; the director of financial services, Bruce Perry; and on my left the deputy minister, Jim Nichols.

Looking over the minutes from last year's meeting, there was quite a bit of interest from subcommittee members about the performance measures found in our business plan. Before I move on to some of the department's goals and business plan changes, I would like to go over a couple of the areas of the performance measures that brought out questions last year. The performance measures are found in the estimates package after Goals, Strategies, and Key Activities.

The first measure you will see is Air Quality Index. It rates air quality as good, fair, poor, or very poor using selected locations around the province. There has been a fair bit of interest from my colleagues about the air quality in specific parts of cities and in specific regions of Alberta. Information for specific monitoring stations is available on the Internet through Environmental Protection's web site.

The air section of our web site links to the Alberta ambient air data management system. This system shows the locations of monitoring sites and provides detailed reporting information on air monitoring results for a range of parameters. I mention it because the performance measure looks at overall air quality, not specific stations. The specific information might be of interest to members' constituents around the province.

Another frequently asked question is: why isn't the performance measures data up to date; that is, why is some data available for last year whereas other data is only available for two years ago? Some of the measures require data from sources outside the department. Some measures have huge data sets which require data entry, assessment, and quality control. Other measures have data that are available after the business plan is prepared. As we receive the data, it is incorporated into the measures.

The surface water quality index raised some questions last year about the ratings of various test locations. I just want to clarify up front that the index is based on a stringent department assessment of compliance with water quality guidelines, not on trends in concentrations of substances in the river water itself. For this information the detailed data need to be reviewed and assessed. I found it interesting that upstream over 96 percent of water quality tests are meeting the guidelines, and even downstream roughly 90 percent of tests meet water quality guidelines. Although this water quality index presents interesting information of value to the department, I realize that information on specific parameters is probably of more interest to the general public. My department is currently developing a new water quality index which will replace this one in future reports and business plans. I'm hopeful that this new measure will be showcased in the 2000-2003 business plan. I hope I have addressed the key concerns raised by my presentation last year.

You have a copy of the business plan with financial figures at the beginning. For the most part, I'll just leave it to you to ask the questions you might have in specific areas about the financial figures, but I would like to point out some of the 1999-2002 business plan changes. There will be a \$2.94 million provision for the Alberta water management and control program in addition to an existing budget of \$2.65 million. Two million dollars will be added as new dedicated revenue to support park operations; \$700,000 will be put toward new dedicated revenue for a spatial data warehouse. There will be an additional provision of \$2 million for the ministry's regulatory processes, and \$17 million will be added as an additional provision for fire reclamation.

A final change, which I would like to address now, is the \$45 million increase for nominal sum disposals. These are simply the values of lands or properties which the department will be turning over either through transfer or sale to municipalities within the province. For accounting purposes the amount must be tracked, so that is the reason for this addition.

Overall, these changes result in a \$72 million increase when compared to the '98-99 estimate. The total 1999-2000 estimate is for \$363.72 million for the ministry. In previous years Alberta Environmental Protection's business plan was closely linked to the Alberta government's core business goals of people, prosperity, and

preservation. This year's plan builds on the key directions from previous plans, including strong direction from the growth summit, and maintains ties to the government's overall direction and goals.

You may notice that Alberta Environmental Protection's mission statement has been updated since last year. My ministry made the change so that the natural resources service, the environmental and land and forest services within the department are working with a common mission in mind. The new mission was written to closely parallel the government's core businesses that I mentioned a moment ago. The revised mission statement reads:

As proud stewards of Alberta's renewable natural resources, we will protect, enhance and sustain our environment through wise management. We are a committed team that will ensure the sustainable development of these resources to support a healthy environment, a prosperous provincial economy and a high quality of life for Albertans.

I think it's easy to see how the final three points tie to the core business of people, prosperity, and preservation.

With that link in mind, I would like to use those core business areas to work through Environmental Protection's three-year business plan. First, with people. While there is a strong people component to every part of a healthy environment, certain strategies and key activities outlined in the business plan relate directly to this aspect of the government's business. The following are some of the ways my ministry will achieve its goals in this area. Staff will develop and deliver educational information and/or programs on topics such as climate change, forest management, forest fire prevention, biodiversity, water quality, and protected areas issues as outlined in the environmental education strategy.

Environmental Protection will continue to participate in the sustainable communities initiative, which helps increase the capacity of community members to maintain environmentally, economically, and socially healthy communities. We will continue to provide industry and the public with information on review requirements and decision reports of the Natural Resources Conservation Board, the Environmental Appeal Board, and environmental protection and resource management programs, issues, and initiatives of the department through publications, the Internet, and information centres.

The department will maintain telephone hot lines so that the public can report wildfires, poaching, hazardous spills, and any environmental contaminations; to allow Albertans the opportunity to present their views on environmental protection and resource management through participation in project reviews held by the NRCB or through the appeals process established by the Environmental Appeal Board; and to obtain stakeholder input on new directions and, by doing so, provide Albertans with opportunities to contribute to environmental protection and natural resource management.

6:13

Other strategies and key activities that contribute to the people component of Alberta's core business include, one, providing flood protection by monitoring water flows, making the public aware of flood risk areas, and providing flood warnings; two, implementing a human resource plan for the department and for boards consistent with the government's corporate human resource development strategy, that requires succession planning and leadership training; and three, identifying staff development strategies, continuous learning and support opportunities, recruitment strategies, and opportunities for staff mobility.

Prosperity. Alberta's economy and therefore our quality of life are strongly tied to this province's abundant natural resources. Developing these resources in a sustainable manner is an important part of

Alberta's long-term prosperity and my ministry's work. Albertans have told us that by carefully developing these natural resources, we can continue to have both high-quality social programs and a healthy environment. To support these goals, the following key activities are among those that Environmental Protection will use to maintain environmental protection as our economy continues to develop.

We will lead the development of a governmentwide sustainable resource and environmental management strategy for the Athabasca oil sands. Environmental Protection will develop, maintain, and utilize guidelines for the conservation and management of public land and forest resources in consultation with Energy and Agriculture, Food and Rural Development. In partnership with Economic Development my ministry will work with potential forest resource users to ensure that a balance is maintained between use of the forest resources and sustainability of that resource. In addition, we will administer the approval process for allowing use of public land and forest resources which are managed by Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, and we will promote and support sustainable natural resource based activities associated with Alberta's water, fish, wildlife, and park resources. Other strategies and other activities in support of maintaining Alberta's prosperity are detailed in the business plan.

Preservation. The prosperity of this province is an important objective for the Alberta government. Our success in this area is the reason Alberta's economy continues to be among the top performers in the country. While the benefits of high employment, low taxes, and accelerated debt repayment are all positive signs of that prosperity, we need to continue to make sure we strike a balance between our continued economic well-being and environmental preservation. Once again, my ministry has developed several strategies and activities that relate to the long-term preservation of our environment.

We will, one, continue to develop and improve guidelines, standards, and codes of practice to protect Alberta's air, surface water, and groundwater quality in partnership with Health, Energy, Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, and other departments and jurisdictions as necessary; two, work with industry to minimize the production of hazardous waste and ensure proper treatment and disposal of such waste; three, support research in priority areas such as air, land, water, climate change, sustainable ecosystems, environmental assessment, and regulatory systems; four, prepare management and recovery plans for fish and wildlife species of concern; five, pass the consolidated Natural Heritage Act and develop related regulations and policy foundation documents; six, provide effective forest fire detection programs and wildfire suppression activities within the forest protection area and adjacent zones; seven, monitor and control major forest pests and diseases and manage problem wildlife; and finally, establish acceptable levels of protection for natural resources and ecosystems.

In addition to the core business goals of people, prosperity, and preservation that I have just outlined, another major focus for the government is to look for ways to reduce overlap between government departments. As part of this shared service initiative my ministry will work with other departments including Economic Development, Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Energy, and Public Works, Supply and Services as well as the federal ministries to co-ordinate activities and provide more efficient, cost-effective service and program delivery to the people of Alberta.

Some of Alberta Environmental Protection's business plan strategies and activities to achieve these are to

- contribute to the development and implementation of government's strategic direction on climate change and greenhouse gases with Energy and other departments

- develop regional resource and environmental management strategies and plans in partnership with regional municipalities, Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Economic Development, Energy and other stakeholders
- implement the Northern Rivers Ecosystem Initiative as recommended in Northern River Basins Study, in partnership with the federal [and territorial governments]
- contribute to national efforts to harmonize the environment management roles and responsibilities among federal/provincial/territorial governments by developing sub-agreements to the Canada-Wide Accord on Environmental Harmonization.

These subagreements include

- monitoring and reporting, enforcement, environmental emergencies, and research and development in consultation with Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs.
- assist Transportation and Utilities, Municipal Affairs and Public Works, Supply and Services in disaster recovery planning
- prepare parks and protected areas management plans with the input of Economic Development, Agriculture, Food and Rural Development and other departments as necessary.

One of the benefits of shared service delivery is that resources, both human and financial, can be used more effectively to meet the department's goals. This is just one of the ways my ministry will continue to stay the course of fiscal responsibility.

In addition to evaluating alternative service delivery methods to improve efficiency including partnering and cost-sharing of services with other ministries, Environmental Protection will also employ the following strategies and activities to further manage our costs.

Manage Environmental Protection's infrastructure for long term use and benefit [to] contribute to . . . a government-wide Three Year Capital plan for infrastructure

Each of the strategies that I have mentioned here can be found under one of the four broad ministry goals. The four goals for this business plan are

1. Protect and maintain Alberta's high quality air, land and water for the health and enjoyment of Albertans.
2. To manage Alberta's renewable resources for the continued prosperity and benefit of Albertans.
3. Protect and manage Alberta's natural resources and ecosystems for present and future generations.
4. Continuous improvement of Ministry and shared government services that support the delivery of Ministry and government core businesses.

These four goals and the accompanying strategies and activities to achieve them will guide my ministry's work through the coming year and over the next three years.

In his address to the province Premier Klein said that we must strike the right balance between fiscal responsibility and quality of life here in Alberta. The steps outlined in this year's business plan provide that balance for the people of Alberta, for our economy, and for our environment.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. At this time we wanted to revert to the introduction of visitors, but we're not going to do that. Therefore we will move on to the New Democrats with the allotted time. This is being recorded, and I haven't mentioned any names in accordance with the rules.

Dr. Pannu.

6:23

DR. PANNU: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Minister, for giving us a fairly detailed overview. Since I have only 12 minutes, I'll focus on one area, but I do have a couple of general

observations that I want to share with you. I notice in the business plans on the very first page, page 132, the second sentence there from the top: "The ministry is committed to managing the environment in a way that protects and maintains the landscape and its diversity." I wonder if the word "diversity" does in fact include a reference to biodiversity in general, or is it only landscape diversity? I would certainly be happy to hear from you as to whether the word "diversity" is used in a broader sense to include a reference to biodiversity. That's a very general observation.

MR. LUND: Yeah. That is used in a general term.

DR. PANNU: I want to move on quickly to goal 3, starting on page 137, which deals with "protect and manage Alberta's natural resources and ecosystems for present and future generations." The performance measures refer to "species at risk." I notice that there's a reference here to "aquatic environment." That's the one that I see here. I wonder if plant species are included in your goal or not. I don't see a reference to it in the statement. I assume we would all agree that plant species would be considered as part of natural resources, but I see some omission here, and I would like you to comment on that.

On page 140 I have a question that I would like to ask you. I came across the table at the top of page 140 in last year's annual report of the department, and it's the same table that appears here as well a year later. I wonder if you would explain why we haven't moved beyond 1996 in terms of reporting on it. We have only '95-96, the two years. This table refers to water quality. It deals with water quality. Why is it that we are stalled at year 1996?

Then I will go on to the species at risk section on page 141, and that's where again I see there's a general reference to the fact that 538 species were reviewed, and these "include 370 birds, 90 mammals, 60 fish, 10 amphibians, and 8 reptiles." There's no reference to botanical or plant species here. So this in a sense, I guess, confirms my concern about an absence of any reference to a commitment to paying attention to the plant species.

Now a few questions. I have seven questions altogether, Mr. Minister, and you will excuse me for rushing through them. I hope you can hear me and stop me if there's a problem with the question, and then I can explain it to you.

Now, on page 141 the table at the bottom of the page shows that of 538 species of animals in Alberta, 2 percent are at serious risk and 9 percent are vulnerable in those two categories. Together, then, 11 percent or 1 out of 9 of these species are at some risk. Do you feel it is acceptable to have this level of risk, and what are your plans to address the problem of at-risk species? That's my first question.

The second one. Many of these species at risk have critical habitats in the special places areas and our five categories of parks, et cetera. How do you plan to address the issue of protecting these species in these areas - I'm not sure if I'm right here, Mr. Chairman; you will give me some guidance - in light of the changes that you are proposing on the legislative side? I say that because of the existing dispositions in those areas where these critical habitats exist. I would like to address this issue as to how you see the protection of these species relative to the manner in which you want to deal with the existing dispositions and their possible renewal.

The third question. The Chinchaga area is one of the least-disturbed large foothills region areas remaining. It has few oil and gas dispositions and is free of coal dispositions. Daishowa-Marubeni is willing to support a trade for wood supply elsewhere, and perhaps Manning is likely to agree to a trade as well. Given that, do you believe that the huge annual Alberta cut, AAC, which is shown at the top of page 141, is still achievable were you to

declare Chinchaga as a protected area if it was returned to you by the present leaseholders? That's the next question.

Number four. In terms of the operating principles that you enunciated at the beginning of the business plan - and they are good principles - on page 133 your first operating principle reads:

We promote the wise use of our renewable resources within ecosystems so that future generations may continue to benefit from them.

Under this principle, how do you see, then, allowing hunting for grizzly bears, which is one of the 29 species at risk? Is there a problem of on the one hand allowing the hunt of grizzlies and on the other maintaining and respecting this principle that you yourself seem to endorse and in fact underline in your plans?

The fifth question. Again, one of the principles - the fourth one, I guess - is that "we provide Albertans with the opportunity to contribute to decisions that affect the environment." A good principle again. I support it. Now, thousands of Albertans belong to the Alberta Wilderness Association, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, and the World Wildlife Fund, and yet at least in terms of my understanding their input to your department on the development of policies with respect to environmental protection related to your current initiatives and having to do particularly with the phasing out of dispositions in the protected areas in their view has been totally ignored. Would you return to the fourth principle and pay attention to, listen to these thousands of Albertans who have serious concerns that they have communicated to you with respect to the proposed new initiatives you have before us in this session?

Two more questions remaining, Mr. Chairman. I think I'm doing all right on my time.

THE CHAIRMAN: You have two minutes left, Raj.

DR. PANNU: Okay.

Again you say that you intend to "prepare management and recovery plans for fish and wildlife species of concern." I saw it on page 136. How many of the 29 animal species at risk have recovery plans already in place in your department, and how completely have they been implemented or initiated at least? Many of the 303 plant species most at risk have recovery plans. When will the remaining animal and plant species get recovery plans at the present rate? So if you'll give us some idea in terms of plans, how you're going to address the issue of these endangered or vulnerable species.

6:33

My last question, sir. You also intend to implement the northern rivers ecosystem initiative as recommended in the northern river basins study - you just made reference to it in your introductory comments - in partnership with the federal government. This NRBS shows on page 136 that water quality has human health implications at the level of "concern: action required." I guess these are some of the categories used to indicate what the problems are. This "action required" is on the McLeod River below Hinton, the Wapiti River below Grande Prairie, and the Athabasca River below Fort McMurray. What's being done before year 2003 to protect the health of people using this water in these areas and the quality of water in those areas?

Thank you, sir.

THE CHAIRMAN: Dr. Pannu, I just want you to know that you were right on the 12 minutes. You were choreographed.

Essentially at this time under the rules of course the time is now allotted to the Official Opposition. So at this point I would direct the floor to Ms Carlson.

MR. LUND: We'll get answers back to the New Democrats on these questions in writing.

DR. PANNU: Okay.

MS CARLSON: Could we have a copy of those answers?

MR. LUND: Yeah. Those will be public.

THE CHAIRMAN: So, as agreed, they will be provided by the minister on the questions you posed.

Thank you, Dr. Pannu, for posing some very good questions.

DR. PANNU: Thank you very much, and thank you, Mr. Minister.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Ms Carlson.

MS CARLSON: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Minister and everyone, for attending again this year. I'm looking forward to an informal chat with lots of answers like we had last year.

To begin with, in an overall perspective can you tell us why it is we're losing 202 full-time equivalents?

MR. LUND: I'm sorry. I didn't . . .

MS CARLSON: The staff reductions: 202 full-time equivalent staff. Right? Could you just tell us a little bit about why that's happening?

MR. LUND: Go ahead, Doug. You seem to understand the questioning.

THE CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry. The chair couldn't hear exactly what the question was. I'm sorry, Deb.

MS CARLSON: Okay. There's a staff reduction of 202 full-time equivalents in the coming year, and I'm asking for some clarification on that.

MR. PERRY: I believe we're referring, Mr. Chairman, to page 185 of the estimates, manpower authorization. Essentially the ministry, as the table presents, is going from 3,157 to 2,955, which is a reduction of 201.7 FTEs. These FTEs were for the most part vacant FTEs, a surplus, for example, from the delegated administrative organizations which were moved out of the ministry approximately a year ago. So there were some vacant FTEs there. It was more of a housekeeping exercise. There's no sense carrying a lot of vacant FTEs, and essentially due to redeployment and changes within the ministry, these positions were no longer being filled.

MS CARLSON: We're seeing a change in the way the budget is presented. There's little specific detail now about programs as compared to other years. Many of the line items have disappeared, and much of the budget is now grouped into the regions with no breakdown. Is this the way you anticipate presenting the budget in years to come? It's a little bit hard for us to follow, and more detail would probably reduce the number of questions we have.

MR. LUND: I guess we'll take that as a comment. Yes.

MS CARLSON: Great. That will be good.

Okay. If we can talk now about the staff who have moved to the regions or who have not moved to the regions. What's the status in terms of their employment? Will many of them lose their jobs, or will they be redeployed?

MR. LUND: Well, the fact is that the reorganization is pretty much complete. There are a few positions left to fill, and perhaps Jim can give you more detail on exactly those numbers and where they're at.

MR. NICHOLS: Yeah. I don't have the specific numbers. The process we went through is that in fact the vacant positions we had in the regions we advertised internally, and we had people redeployed. Those exercises have finished, and we are now trying to fill some entry level ones in the regions. So that process is finished for all intents and purposes.

MS CARLSON: For our purposes it would be helpful if we had a summary of what the division does under environmental regulatory services and corporate management services. Could you give us some more information on that?

MR. LUND: Do you want that in writing, or do you want to go through it right now?

MS CARLSON: No. In writing would be perfect. That would be good.

MR. LUND: Okay. That would be more efficient use of time.

MS CARLSON: Sure. Excellent.

The regulations being reviewed at present. Could you tell us about what it is you're doing, perhaps even in writing there too, provide a copy or something of that nature, because I see that according to strategy 2.2, there's a fair amount of regulatory reform going on.

MR. LUND: Under the whole regulatory reform process we do have a number each year that are going through Gary Friedel's committee. I don't know if anybody has got a list of them here tonight, but we can once again give you that in more detail.

MS CARLSON: Sure.

In that review is there an opportunity for public input on draft proposals?

MR. LUND: Before we can pass any regulation or anything done with the regulation, it goes through that public process.

MS CARLSON: Okay.

Does that review also examine how able the department is to enforce the regulations?

MR. LUND: Yes. The whole process of course is to get rid of redundant regulations that are not useful. Any new ones we have to take through the public process, and then of course we look at how they can be implemented.

MS CARLSON: Okay.

My next set of questions is on cumulative impact, and I guess really in the budget they come under goal 1. We've had some correspondence on this, Mr. Minister, and in one of your responses you said to me that the department along with the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board has the necessary regulatory and administrative procedures in place to ensure that oil and gas and industry development addresses environmental and cumulative impact issues. So we feel that they are general zoning plans but they don't really deal with the cumulative impact on several areas, and I'm wondering if you can be more specific on exactly how the long-term cumulative impacts in this instance are considered.

MR. LUND: Doug, do you want to take that one?

MR. TUPPER: Sure.

MS CARLSON: Let me give you an example maybe. What if there are several pipelines in an area? What do you do to encourage them to follow the same route rather than dissect the landscape? And then any other comments you'd like to make.

MR. LUND: Oh, well, pipelines of course go before the EUB. We're not the people who approve those. They do have in place a policy that they will try to put them in a corridor as opposed to many pipelines, but of course carrying different products from different locations to different locations, you're not going to be able to put them all in one corridor. I thought you were maybe speaking of cumulative effects of emissions, for example.

MS CARLSON: Well, that too.

MR. LUND: Doug, if you want to.

MR. TUPPER: Yeah. What does happen is that as part of the environmental impact assessment process any new entity - for example, a plant going into the Fort Saskatchewan area - has to model its emissions and provide us with information on the impact on the broader area, the ambient impact, and those are all looked at in the context of the whole area. That's done now as part of the environmental impact assessment process and also the public hearing process that's around that.

6:43

One other major effort we're doing on cumulative effects is a review in the entire oil sands area. In partnership with industry and local stakeholders and the federal government we've recently initiated a cumulative effects study for that area. Again it involves all the stakeholders that identify themselves or that we identify. That's ongoing, and we've got a substantial investment in that. In the first year about \$1 million from the \$2 million that's been identified by the Legislature to assist with these reviews is going to be used for the cumulative impact assessment in the northeast.

MS CARLSON: So do you have specific criteria that you use?

MR. TUPPER: I'm not clear what you mean.

MS CARLSON: Okay. When you're assessing the cumulative impact in an area, exactly what are you assessing and what are you measuring it against?

MR. TUPPER: What we expect will come out of this study is of course an assessment of the long-term development, the interrelationship with the various resource users; the cumulative impact on water, for example, both in discharges and in the taking of water. We'd expect to see the impact on air shed also assessed as part of this overall framework. Then as part of that framework as each entity comes forward, it'll be assessed in terms of the learning that's happened in this overall cumulative effects assessment.

MR. LUND: When we speak of emissions, our standards, when we measure those, that's ambient air. That's not necessarily in the pipe. So we can easily measure the cumulative effect on the air shed by testing what is in the air, but the calculations can be done up front on what effect that may have. So it's the ambient air that we are

testing, not end of pipe. Well, we test the end of pipe too, because that of course is important, but we make sure that the cumulative effect meets our standards. It will not exceed, and if there's any place that we should be getting close, then we'll take it very seriously and go back and study it.

MS CARLSON: So that deals with short-term effects, but what about long-term effects?

MR. LUND: Well, the cumulative effect that you're talking about is when you pile project on top of project, and of course when you're talking about air shed, that moves. It doesn't stay stagnant. So when you talk about long-term effect, I think you're probably referring then to, like, health studies: what is the long-term effect? There's been a number of studies done. It's extremely difficult to monitor them to come up with definitive - there are so many variables. I remember when the Caroline plant, the big Shell plant, was coming in. A professor of health out of the University of Calgary spent about 18 months trying to put together a health study so that she could measure this thing over time. She finally gave up because in that particular area the population is too sparse, it's too transient, and there were just too many variables. She couldn't put it all together.

So while we'd love to be able to say that this is the effects of 50 years, it's an extremely difficult thing to put together. We're still trying.

MR. NICHOLS: Probably one of the best examples of this type of work was the northern river basins study itself. That was three or four governments together a number of years. I think it was \$12 million. It looked at three water basins, and it looked directly at the industrial impact on that. It came back saying that in fact it was in pretty good shape. There are a couple of hot spots, which we're working on now. That is one type of thing we use. The other thing, as the minister alluded to, is that a lot of these things have to go through either the NRCB or the EUB, and they have to do a lot of that work. This department is present at those hearings. We review the plans and everything to make sure that all the environmental concerns are addressed.

MS CARLSON: Who sets the standards for the EUB?

MR. LUND: Which standards are you referring to?

MS CARLSON: Well, okay; let's talk about pipeline corridors. If they say that a company making a proposal meets the criteria, who establishes that criteria? We get into this situation all the time, where they blame you and you blame them.

MR. LUND: Well, when you're talking about the routing, then the EUB has as a policy that they will use a corridor wherever possible, and that's just standard practice. Whenever a company puts forward a proposal, if they're not in a corridor, then the EUB will send them back to study why not. So that particular one.

When it comes to things like emissions, we set the standards. While the project may go through one hearing conducted by the EUB, they've still got to get a licence from us before the project can proceed. This all comes out in the hearing.

MS CARLSON: Cumulative impact, then, is more than the air passing over your heads on to some other location. It's what the plants and animals and people in the region breathe in. It's what falls into the soil and stays there, be that through the water or the air. That can be significant. I think we've seen some indications in the

Peace block, gas flaring, and in the Cold Lake area where people are starting to have some concerns that are important to be recognized and acknowledged. I'm not sure that I'm convinced by what I hear or what I see that those kinds of long-term cumulative impact effects are recognized or even seriously considered when additional development is considered in an area.

You know, in isolation a development may not hurt the ecological integrity of an area, but when it's one more in a series that have been developed over a series of years, sometimes it can tip the ecological balance. So I don't know that I'm convinced that what you're doing in that regard has that kind of a focus.

MR. LUND: I'm not sure. When you mention Cold Lake, I suspect you're thinking of the arsenic in the groundwater. So far there hasn't been any study or scientific proof that there's any connection between that arsenic and the activity, but there are some ongoing studies. So that one the jury is still out on.

MS CARLSON: So let's take that for an example. I agree with what you're saying there, that there are experts on both sides of the fence, but it looks to me, quite likely, having extensively reviewed that information, that while industrial development in the area has not caused the naturally occurring arsenic to increase, it's causing a flow through and causing the arsenic to change in its molecular development to become a little more of a concern.

Let's say there's even only a 25 percent chance that that is in fact what's happening. I would think that you as a department would be wanting to evaluate that and consider that in terms of how permits are given and what kind of access is increased out there and how you deal with the residents in the area. I would think those would be things you'd be considering.

MR. LUND: We do take it seriously, but I've got to emphasize that so far there has been no study that links it directly. I'm not getting into an argument whether it is or isn't.

MS CARLSON: Right.

MR. LUND: Quite frankly, the jury is out on whether there is a direct connection. I don't know.

You mentioned flaring. The EUB have established that flaring will be gone. They're phasing it out. Nobody will be allowed to flare in a very short period of time. So I think we've taken that very seriously, that there may be an impact. Once again, there hasn't been science that shows there's a direct impact, but we're not waiting to see, to prove it one way or another. There's been enough work done to know that incomplete combustion of those materials end up in the stack, and a lot of that has to do with temperature. It's not really helpful, not helpful to the environment, so let's get rid of it. That's what we're doing.

6:53

MS CARLSON: Okay. But with all due respect, part of your policy there in terms of waiting until there is absolute evidence is a policy of shutting the barn door after the horse has escaped. Don't you think you have a responsibility to anticipate, that given the kinds of changes that are happening in the province, you need to be a little more proactive in this area?

MR. LUND: I just finished saying that they're going to be outlawed. We do not have the proof that there is a direct connection, but we're not waiting to find out the proof one way or the other. They're going to be gone, and that's not going to take very long.

MS CARLSON: So the question my colleague has here is: how much research is the department initiating now, funding and establishing these links? I think that's an excellent question.

MR. LUND: We're right in the midst of trying to set up a major study that will look at this issue. So far there's been some work done. Every one of those studies - and I've read them all - says that they can't make a direct link. However, they all recommend more work, and we're right in the midst of doing it right now.

MS CARLSON: How much money on research?

MR. LUND: We don't know how much it's going to cost. There will be a number of players involved, but we don't know what that number might be. What I have said I want to see is a study that provides some concrete analysis so that we know what is happening. That might be very expensive. As Jim mentioned, the northern river basins study: that was a \$12 million study. These things are very expensive. To do it right, it's expensive, but we've got to know. So we're going to do it.

MS CARLSON: So once again I'll ask: how much money are you spending now? What is the budget? With whom are you doing the studies, and are they longitudinal studies? How many years are they going to be going over? So if you could provide that information.

MR. LUND: I can't right now because the terms of reference haven't been finalized. We don't know. There's just a whole number of things we don't know yet. Our goal is to come up with the answers so that we don't have this problem of not knowing.

MS CARLSON: The studies that you're doing: will they be private or open to the public? What's the process going to be?

MR. LUND: Once they're finalized, they'll be public.

MS CARLSON: What about the ongoing process? Will you have access to public input throughout the process?

MR. LUND: Access to public input?

MS CARLSON: There are a number of groups, I think, throughout the province who have been very helpful over the years, being at the table and part of developing the research plans and sitting on some of the boards.

MR. LUND: Oh, I'm not interested in another Mickey Mouse study; I'm just not interested in it. When we move forward on this, we are going to have experts. We are not going to fool around with some more Mickey Mouse studies. I'm just not interested in those anymore. All those do is create more questions. I want some answers.

MS CARLSON: So you're talking about involving people like David Schindler in the process?

MR. LUND: We don't know who will be involved.

MS CARLSON: I don't see any money in this year's budget. Does that mean we're talking relatively long term?

MR. LUND: It likely will take a number of years to do a study. That

northern river basins study: five years. To do a proper study, it's got to be over a reasonable amount of time. So that's what we'll be doing.

MS CARLSON: I think the question is: how long can we afford to wait? Even in the short term do you have budget dollars this year to start this process?

MR. LUND: No, we don't. We'll do it internally. We likely won't even be the major funder. Not likely.

MS CARLSON: You know, that's really not acceptable. How can you say that you don't have the budget dollars to do it, that you're going to do it internally, when we've seen aggressive staff cuts over the past few years? We have concerns coming in from the field all the time that the level of inspections that used to be there, that was good for the industry and good for the people, is not there any longer. It seems to me that you're saying that you're committed to doing this, but we're not seeing any money coming behind it.

MR. LUND: Well, we'll find the money along the way. When we get it developed and get all the players in, it'll be there.

MS CARLSON: So if there's no funding at this stage, who is going to own the information at the end of the day? If you get funding from a private corporation, it's their information, not yours.

MR. LUND: Oh, well, I'm not interested in getting into a study that is going to be hidden. We want it public, and it will be public. These Mickey Mouse studies that have been done: different people claim them. We're not interested. This will be a major study, and the result will be public. We have nothing to hide, and we want to know the answers. So why would we keep it private? [interjection]

MS CARLSON: Yes, that's true. If you don't pay for it, the information won't belong to you.

What do we do in the meantime?

MR. LUND: Well, like I mentioned to you, the flaring is going to be phased right out. We have, as you saw today, the most stringent standards in North America. We measure cumulative effects, the ambient air. We're moving along doing what we can. I don't think that things are in that bad a shape.

MS CARLSON: Well, some of the key indicators, like the fish population, would indicate that somebody has made some mistakes along the way.

I'll ask some questions now on the management of oil field waste. We know that oil field waste is exempt from the Environmental Protection and Enhancement Act, that the department is responsible for maintaining quality of land and water. The spreading of the waste drilling mud on frozen land near Rocky Mountain House: that was reported earlier in March of this year, this site . . .

MR. LUND: What was reported by Rocky?

MS CARLSON: The spreading of waste drilling mud on frozen land near Rocky Mountain House. I think you remember that report.

That site was visited by one of your fish and wildlife officers, who determined that it's not a fish-bearing creek, so he doesn't see any fisheries issues. What about water pollution and contamination of land? How do you deal with those concerns?

MR. LUND: Well, the analysis that was done showed that that was pretty much clay. Doug, do you have the detail on that one?

MR. TUPPER: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Actually, it's the subject of an ongoing investigation, and when that's the case, we don't normally make public statements about what we found.

MS CARLSON: When it's over with, will you?

MR. TUPPER: When it's over with, the information will be made available.

MS CARLSON: Okay. Good.

Do you review the current practices permitted by the AEUB to determine the cumulative impact of the disposal of drilling wastes on lands?

MR. LUND: Doug, go ahead.

MR. TUPPER: We have a number of opportunities where we work co-operatively with the EUB on matters of joint interest - that's oil field waste and so on - and often establish either memorandums of understanding, or information letters, as they call them. We have a very close working relationship with the EUB with respect to things that are disposed of in Alberta.

7:03

MS CARLSON: Do you know how many acres of land are covered with drilling mud each year?

MR. TUPPER: Off the top of my head, no.

MS CARLSON: Do you have access to the information? Could you get it for us?

MR. TUPPER: I could ask them. I don't know.

MR. LUND: See, those are covered through the EUB, but we could try to get that from them.

MS CARLSON: I think you need to know that information. I mean, that's part of the cumulative impact concerns that we have.

THE CHAIRMAN: Just on that point. You're asking the cumulative effect of essentially the run-off?

MS CARLSON: Well, no. Now drilling mud is spread on land, and we're asking how many acres are being spread in a year.

MR. LUND: Oh, I thought you were talking about the material from landfills, farms.

MS CARLSON: Well, that's my next question.

MR. LUND: We can attempt to get that information, but I'm not sure that we can, because I think a lot of the companies make an agreement with a landowner and spread it. It's tested; it has to meet standards. I'm not sure that anybody has got that number, but we can find out what they might have.

MS CARLSON: Once again this comes to the essence of my concern about cumulative impact. Yes, it's tested, but now we have this stuff being spread on farmland, land, dumped in landfills. They have high

concentrations of heavy metals and other contaminants. Some of it eventually does, I know, oxidize, but I don't think anybody has studied the long-term impact of having this gunk on our farmland.

MR. LUND: If you have any proof of heavy metals being spread, we'd like to know that.

MS CARLSON: Okay. We'll get you some information on that.

And, too, am I right in this, in thinking that you can landfill that stuff now?

MR. TUPPER: Which? The drilling mud?

MR. LUND: I'm not sure.

MS CARLSON: Yeah, any of the oil field wastes with heavy metals in them.

MR. TUPPER: I'd have to get the information for you because I'm not clear on what heavy metals are in there or whether they are there at all.

MS CARLSON: Right. My understanding is that that's an allowable practice now and that in fact that was a regulation that changed a few years ago. They were supposed to be required to be burned or incinerated or something else, cleaned up in some manner, but they can be dumped in landfills now. So what that does, I think, is there's no incentive for companies to treat it in a more progressive fashion, which would be to get rid of those heavy metals, because it's more costly to do that than to just take it to a landfill.

MR. LUND: I might be wrong, but I think you're confusing the drilling mud and the material, the sludge, that comes out of storage tanks and this sort of thing and then goes through a recycler. I think that's probably what you're talking about.

MS CARLSON: I'm talking about anything that may have fallen into any area where we have a pump going, so any kind of spill, any of the hazardous waste at an oil field site. I think currently a lot of that can be dug up and dumped in landfills, and lots of it contains heavy metals.

MR. LUND: We'll have to get you the standards on what can go into a landfill.

MS CARLSON: Okay. This was one of Bovar's concerns - right? - because originally they were supposed to get all that waste.

MR. LUND: Okay. Now I know for sure you're talking about the stuff that goes through a recycler.

MS CARLSON: But even more than that.

MR. LUND: No, no. That's what it is. I knew as soon as you mentioned that material. There are some industrial landfills - what is it they call them? Class 1? - where they can take the industrial waste. It's true that they can take some of that material. Of course it has to be tested, and there are some standard levels they can handle, but above that they can't. So we'll have to get that for you.

MS CARLSON: Our information would indicate that there are a lot of landfills in Alberta that are taking waste that has serious heavy metal contamination in it. I'll get you more information on that.

MR. LUND: Please do.

MS CARLSON: I think it's a serious problem. I think Lloydminster has got one that's taking quite a bit of material at this stage, but I'll get you more information on that. We see it as a fairly serious problem.

Okay. Just one final question on that. Do you guys keep any records or review the records kept by AEUB to determine the potential environmental impact of the waste that essentially they're monitoring and responsible for setting standards for? How much communication is there between you guys? Because really we go to them and they say: not our responsibility; it's your responsibility. I talk to you and you say: well, these standards are set up by AEUB, and it's their responsibility to enforce and monitor.

MR. LUND: But are you talking about a standard there, or are you talking about . . .

MS CARLSON: Both. Do you see the records, do you review the records, and who sets standards?

MR. LUND: Jim or Doug, do you want to . . .

MR. NICHOLS: Well, I guess you'd have to give us a specific example. It's pretty tough, because in some areas we set the standards; in some areas they set the standards.

MS CARLSON: Okay. That's what I need to know. Maybe I need that level of detail.

MR. NICHOLS: If I can give you an example, if you go back to the case you talked about, this dumping on the private land and the comments that the officer made. This department also administers and enforces the federal Fisheries Act, and you may have a case on private land or other land where in fact it's permissible to dump something, but if it went into fish-bearing water, it would be a deleterious substance for that purpose. So I suspect that the officer's comment was that it didn't go into fish-bearing waters; therefore there's no charge under the Fisheries Act. Okay?

MS CARLSON: Okay. Is there a book somewhere that says what you guys are responsible for and what they're responsible for? We'd like to review that.

MR. NICHOLS: Again, we could give you a listing of the various pieces of legislation that in fact we enforce. We can take action under the environmental protection act; we can take enforcement action under the Public Lands Act, the Fisheries Act, and numerous pieces of legislation. Really it's tied to the specifics of what the impact is on the environment or on the water body.

THE CHAIRMAN: If I could, as chair, could you make reference in the budget document to specifically what page you're referring to at that point? Both of you actually. I just need to keep abreast of where you're at in the book.

MS CARLSON: Well, these are essentially program 2 questions.

THE CHAIRMAN: So are they kind of all over?

MS CARLSON: Yes, but that's part of the problem of how this budget is laid out, Mr. Chairman. The way it's set up now is that there are a number of issues that fall under each specific program, so essentially I'm still in program 2.

THE CHAIRMAN: So it could be to numerous pages you're . . . Okay. Thanks. Please continue.

MS CARLSON: Just to get back to that, the standards, who sets the standards then? Tell me again.

MR. NICHOLS: Again it depends what you're talking about. If you're talking about somebody running an operation and putting some effluent into the river, we would set the standards.

MS CARLSON: So how am I supposed to know what the rules are and who to go to if there's a problem? The public as well. I mean, I think I'm reasonably knowledgeable on what's going on here, and I have no clue who's responsible in some of these instances, you guys or them.

MR. LUND: We operate a 24-hour line, and if someone phones from the public and it turns out that it's something for the EUB, we take the call and transfer it directly to the EUB. We don't play any silly games.

MS CARLSON: But there must be some federal guidelines here. There's got to be some guidelines in terms of your area of responsibility, stuff that I can check. When an issue comes in to me, I want to check my checklist and say: yes, this is your responsibility, or no, it's AEUB's.

MR. LUND: We can give you a chart that will show you.

MS CARLSON: That would be a good start. Then if we have more questions, we can pursue it. But right now it's very confusing. Okay.

Still program 2, Mr. Chairman, the Tire Recycling Management Board. I think I've spent many, many, many hours this past year with people who are concerned about this. We've got lots of complaints that truckloads of tires are being brought in from the U.S. and shredded at a facility near Calgary. What checks are undertaken to ensure that the tire board only pays compensation for shredding tires that originate in Alberta? These are the passenger tires, not the large truck tires.

MR. LUND: So the recycler gets paid?

MS CARLSON: Uh-huh.

7:13

MR. LUND: If a recycler has a contract with the tire recycling board, they will get paid.

MS CARLSON: If they come from the States.

MR. LUND: If the tires come from the States?

MS CARLSON: Yeah.

MR. LUND: Well, I'm not aware of . . .

MS CARLSON: Maybe this'll be just for your information. If you could look into this - I'll give you a couple of questions here - and sometime in the future, just in writing, tell me what you've found out and what the practice is supposed to be. We don't always get full information from the tire recycling board. If you guys get involved, I'm sure we will.

In addition to that, we've been told that a shredding facility near Calgary has occasionally refused to accept Alberta passenger tires from specific companies in spite of the fact that they're accepting tires from out of province. So we want to know: is this possible to happen? Is there no requirement that operators have to take Alberta tires first? What checks are in place to ensure that this happens? Seeing that these operators are getting reimbursed, we think it should be open doors to any Alberta company, and they shouldn't be reimbursed for tires that come from either outside of the province or outside the country.

The Auditor General report on the DAOs. In his '97-98 report he pointed out that although "the Department has begun to address the accountability issues surrounding DAOs," they still need "to define quantifiable goals and measures against which the success of these DAOs can be measured." Can you tell us what progress has been made in this regard?

MR. LUND: Well, we've brought the DAOs under the freedom of information. We've brought them under the records management regulations. We've told them that they need to do three-year business plans, they need to set out goals and objectives, they have to have measurements, and we need to see all of that. This relates to any regulated activity that we have transferred to the DAO. The DAO could have some other activity we're not interested in, but if it's something that we have passed to them, that they're responsible for through our legislation and regulation, then we need to have all that information.

MS CARLSON: Okay.

MR. NICHOLS: The other thing is that we have a member of the department sitting on the board, a senior member.

MR. LUND: That's right.

MS CARLSON: Okay. Yes. I'll move on to program 3 and water management. There's a 23 percent increase in operating expenses. Could you tell us what the increase is for? We think it might be to develop the water management plans.

MR. LUND: Which page is that?

MS CARLSON: Program 3.1.3, so that would be on page 170.

MR. LUND: Well, what's happened there - and I mentioned it in my comments - we have that \$2.9 million a year for the next three years. What has happened over time - this is a cost-shared program with municipalities. We have had municipalities fund the program up front, and then we would pay our share over time. As a consequence, we had about a \$8.8 million deficit, so Treasury has given us the money over a three-year period that will remove that deficit and still get the \$2.65 million for our regular program.

MS CARLSON: Okay. What's the time schedule for the development of the water management plans, and how is the public going to be involved in that process?

MR. LUND: Well, of course as you know, under the act we are required to set out a process to develop the water management plans. We're to do that for all of the basins within three years. We're going to of course start in southern Alberta, concentrate there.

Jim, I guess perhaps you'd better outline a little more in detail just how we're going to handle that.

MR. NICHOLS: The water act commits the ministry to developing a plan for creating these water management plans, and we had to do that within three years. We have started that already. In fact, we have the first draft of the plan down to the minister's office now. When we get approval to go out to the public with that, it'll go to the public, and we'll get public input. After that, we will then come back and develop the process that will be used to do these management plans. When that's in place, then we'll start the management plans. As the minister said, the south will be the priority.

MS CARLSON: Okay. Good.

I'm not sure. Does the amalgamation of fish and wildlife and parks officers come under program 4?

MR. NICHOLS: Program 3.1.2.

MS CARLSON: Okay. Good. I want to know a little bit about their training, their firearms training, and the job functions and reasons for the amalgamation if you could give me a little background on that.

MR. LUND: Well, starting with the reason, over the last two, possibly three years in some areas we've been using some fish and wildlife officers in parks. We haven't gone in the other direction. If you look at when parks have their busiest season, of course it's during the summertime. Fish and wildlife's busiest season is in the fall. By training the parks folks to a level so that they can handle the fish and wildlife function - and there are about 75 individuals - we'll be able to then have those extra 75 people active, assisting the fish and wildlife folks in that busy time for them. Then during the summer, when the parks people have their load, we'll be able to make better utilization of our staff around the province.

We have areas now where maybe we only have a fish and wildlife officer in the area and no parks person. Well, the fish and wildlife officer will be able to take over. Of course, in the fall we end up with the other situation. We have a parks person and maybe one fish and wildlife officer, but it's awfully handy to have at least two in an area during the hunting season. So that's the reason we're moving that way.

The training. The parks people have law enforcement training already, but they will have to take some extra training in the field of fish and wildlife in order to meet that standard. Jim, if you'd care to add any more on the whole training issue.

MR. NICHOLS: Okay. One of the difficulties we had before is that parks officers didn't have authority outside of the parks to carry on some of the work that has to be done, so we'll be increasing the authority. At the present time they're trained on the use of force, the use of batons, the use of pepper spray. That will be increased to include sidearms.

The other thing is that we're going to have a responsibility to do some enforcement under the water act, and it only makes sense to have our fish and wildlife officers and park officers trained to do that. So it's going to be more than just park officers and fish and wildlife officers being rolled together. It's going to be taking over the added responsibility of doing water act enforcement, parks work, fisheries work, and wildlife work.

MS CARLSON: So this is upgrading of current personnel, or are you adding?

MR. NICHOLS: It's going to be both. Everybody has to meet the standard.

MS CARLSON: Right.

MR. NICHOLS: New people coming on will have to meet the standard. They'll know what it is.

The other thing is that in the parks area we have an awful lot of seasonal people. We will bring those people on with the qualifications, and they can do the expanded role also.

MS CARLSON: Okay. Can you tell me at some point in time how many FTEs that will be? Do they have territories or regions that they're assigned to?

MR. NICHOLS: There'll be 64 districts.

MS CARLSON: Sixty-four districts. And approximately how many will you expect to have per district? It depends, I guess.

MR. NICHOLS: It depends.

MR. LUND: We already move them around. If we have an area that we deem as sort of a hot spot, we will move people in there.

MS CARLSON: Right. Move them in.

Okay. So if I could get at some point how many FTEs that is, that would be helpful.

MR. NICHOLS: It would be roughly 220, 250.

MR. MOFFAT: There are 200 permanents right now, plus we have seasonal, and that varies depending on whether or not we contract out additional park services. I think we're around 200 to 220 FTEs.

7:23

MS CARLSON: Okay. Thank you.

Back to surface water quality. In the business plans on pages 139 and 140 we see that the quality of water in the Athabasca River both at Athabasca and Old Fort has declined in every category between '95 and '96. So if you could give us some information on who's responsible for that - municipalities, pulp mills, runoff, or forest reparations - and what you're doing to address those problems.

THE CHAIRMAN: What page was that, Debby?

MS CARLSON: In the business plan, 139 to 140. It's the surface water quality index.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Thanks.

MR. LUND: At what location were you looking?

MS CARLSON: The Athabasca River at Athabasca and Old Fort. They've been declining; right?

MR. LUND: Jim, did you want to go ahead and explain?

MR. NICHOLS: The rating is based on a number of tests, and it's the number of times that in fact the test may fail. If you look further down, you'll see, for example, that to get "good," you need 96 percent. If you got 95, it would drop into a "fair." So what happens with a lot of these things is that these are not just year after year; these are long-term impacts. They can be due to different types of spring thaws, we may get more runoff from the surrounding area, it may be low water, or it may be high water: various things like that.

MR. LUND: That's why we want to change the way we measure this, because it doesn't really give you a good picture of what's happening within the stream. Just to have one of the components fail, one point, then you lose a whole grade, and that doesn't give you a fair measure.

MS CARLSON: So what are you going to change it to?

MR. LUND: Try to somehow show the various parameters. Jim?

MR. NICHOLS: Well, we're trying to work through CCME and work with some of the other jurisdictions, federal and provincial, to come up with a common standard that in fact will do the measurement we want, plus we can compare it with other jurisdictions. But it's a fairly difficult area, and we're still working on it.

MS CARLSON: Right. So could we take a look at the data that was available there to see whereabouts the samples were not meeting standards both there and upstream of Edmonton and Red Deer, where they decline from "good" to "fair," some information. If you could just send it to us, we'll look at it and send it back or whatever. Okay?

MR. LUND: We do have a copying machine. Our budget isn't that bad.

MS CARLSON: Thank you. I prefer you to spend it on enforcement or community impact studies or something like that. We'll come over and look at the information if that will help you guys out.

With that, I'll pass the questioning on to my colleague. Thanks.

MRS. SLOAN: Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, and members of the department, I would like to start my questions with respect to the northern river basins study. My questions will be specific in that area, and then I'd like to ask some general questions with respect to the relationship between environment and health status in the province.

The northern river basins study examined the cumulative effects of pollution in the northern river basins, and it was completed in '97. I would like to know what progress has been made with respect to implementing those recommendations. Is there any ongoing monitoring since the completion of the study? What funds have been allocated for monitoring? Is the work being done solely by Alberta, or is the federal government continuing to work in partnership on that initiative? Have there been more studies done on fish? We're aware that there are fish advisories on some rivers due to the high levels of mercury from natural sources and dioxins. Has there been more research to indicate what substances could be causing the adult sexually immature fish found in the northern river basins? This is especially important to those who rely on fish as a source of their diet.

In relation to the same study we're wondering: will there be further environmental work as a result of the northern river basins study human health monitoring program? This, we're aware, is an offshoot of that. Really, how was the budget for that project broken down? How much of it came from Environmental Protection, and how much came from Alberta Health? That information would also be helpful.

THE CHAIRMAN: Is that on the \$12 million, do you mean?

MRS. SLOAN: Both on the seed money that was provided initially

and on any subsequent work that's being done in that regard. We'd like the breakdown of where that money is coming from and I guess who the major funder is in that regard.

MR. LUND: Do you want some answers now, Linda?

MRS. SLOAN: On that particular section, that would be great.

MR. LUND: Okay. Jim?

MR. NICHOLS: As I recall, the original northern river basins study was funded by the province of Alberta and the federal government. There was participation by the government of the Northwest Territories. The governments of Saskatchewan and B.C. were invited to participate; they didn't, although they did sit on some of the meetings as observers. The total funding, I think, was \$12 million over five years, and it was funded equally.

There wasn't a health study per se on the northern river basins study, but there was a companion study that was financed, I believe, by the federal Department of Health and the provincial department. We made sure that we had connections between the two groups so that the information we gathered could be used by them and the stuff they gathered could be used by our study. The health study continued on well past the northern river basins one.

The northern basins finished their study and released their report. All levels of government have reviewed it. We accepted the recommendations, and we're working on implementing it now. To give you a list of what exactly we did, I have to go back. I don't have that.

MRS. SLOAN: Could you provide us with a written outline of the recommendations and what actions are being taken, what progress has been made in that regard?

MR. NICHOLS: Yes. I can do that.

THE CHAIRMAN: Just on that point to add clarity. As a matter of fact, in my time as mayor of Fort McMurray, there was about a year's delay in this. The actual study was extended an additional year. It was my recollection that it actually received an additional perhaps million dollars on top of the \$12 million because it was incomplete at the end of the five-year period. I'd be curious, I guess, to know that as well, going from the top of my head.

MRS. SLOAN: Mr. Chairman, unless you'd like to join the opposition, which is a possibility, we could discuss that at a later time.

THE CHAIRMAN: I'm just trying to enhance the discussion this evening as always.

MRS. SLOAN: And we appreciate your being alive to the subject.

THE CHAIRMAN: Does someone have some answers? You'd like some answers now if they have some.

MRS. SLOAN: I've received some and a commitment to provide some written updates.

MR. LUND: Doug has some more information he can provide.

MR. TUPPER: Just a few more comments to make. The federal and provincial governments and the Northwest Territories government all reviewed the northern basins study report. We did it together and

jointly came to a unanimous agreement on the response to all the recommendations. It was really a remarkable thing.

Our representations to the federal government resulted in what's now called the northern rivers ecosystem initiative, which is to address the question of things like the endocrine disrupters you talked about and the sexual maturity of fish. They're also called gender benders. It's because it does take a long time, if ever, for some fish to mature. We're aware that it's a problem around the world; it's not just in northern Alberta. In fact, our pulp mills are perhaps among the cleanest, which is a good reason to go in there and study the whole issue of endocrine disrupters. There are a lot of dirty pulp mills in eastern Canada and other parts of the world that can cause a little problem.

The other part around the gender benders is that the problem, the phenomenon has been detected where there are no pulp mills. It's of great concern to resource managers everywhere, so northern Alberta's going to be a place where we're going to find some answers. That's going on right now. The federal government is putting in I think about a million dollars over five years or a million dollars a year. We'll get you the number, but it's a joint effort.

Again we're working together. Our department is putting in the resources for monitoring and a lot of those other in-kind activities, so it's a real partnership.

7:33

MRS. SLOAN: Just a related question to that. How much are you actually contributing budgetarily to the monitoring aspect of implementing that study? Does anyone know?

MR. NICHOLS: I don't know how much we're spending on the monitoring. Two things we're doing is we're looking at some additional monitoring but making sure the monitoring that's required of industry and whatnot by our licences and all our enforcement systems is also compatible and can be used for the study.

MRS. SLOAN: Could you provide the amount in writing to us if it can be located?

My second set of questions is going to be referencing not specifically the business plan and budget of the department of the environment but the Health Trends report published by the health surveillance branch of Alberta Health. Now, I hope that I'll be given some leniency in doing this, because it was a major disappointment for me to look at the department of the environment and see that there was no correlation or acknowledgment of the health impact of some of our environmental issues.

On the contrary, Alberta Health has recognized in a number of areas, within the health surveillance branch, that there are environmental issues that they are monitoring and reporting on. So in future years I think it would be a very encouraging sign if within the department's report there was, whether it's encompassed as performance measures or other aspects of the reporting document, some acknowledgment that there is overlap and an outline of what the department is doing in that regard.

Now, just in my own rough and certainly not at all in an expertise sort of way I looked at the regional differences in infant mortality, congenital anomalies, breast cancer mortality rates, prostate cancer mortality rates, and cervical cancer mortality rates. The health surveillance branch has kindly provided geographical breakdowns of where those occur in the highest incidence, high, average, low, and lower incidences in the province. If you turn, then, to the environmental aspect of their report and look at the reporting on the use of herbicides, insecticides, and fungicides and the reporting on other sources of water contamination, intensive livestock use and gas

flaring, there is definitely a concentration and even to the untrained eye, so to speak, a relationship between the higher incidence of these health problems and some of the environmental issues that we've been discussing this evening. Yet when I look at the department of the environment's report that is not something that's encompassed, and I believe it should be.

In all of those sections that I mentioned, Alberta has led the country in the incidence of mortality and has been showing very little progress in decreasing the incidence of infant, breast cancer, cervical cancer mortality, so in that respect I think it requires our collective effort, and I would like to see the department define environment and monitoring in a much broader respect and report on it similarly. I'm not sure if there's any response to that.

THE CHAIRMAN: Mr. Minister, if you would. I do know, certainly from a sustainable development perspective, that some of the items you brought up - you know, we want to make the link to our budget here, but I've heard the minister on numerous occasions talk about sustainable development being not a program but ultimately a way of life, and many of the things you described this evening really are impacting that way of life. But I'll ask the minister to maybe add to . . .

MR. LUND: Well, what we've just heard of course are issues that are directly under Health. One of the things that we are looking at is how the two departments work together. We're not denying that Environment has a role to play. We believe that, but I don't believe we will be the lead department in this activity.

MRS. SLOAN: Are you prepared to be an equal partner though?

MR. LUND: Well, I guess what happened up at the Swan Hills waste treatment plant is a good example where the two departments worked very closely together. We provided a lot of support for the health studies that were done there. I see our role very extensively in that field, where we would be providing a lot of information and technical work on the environment side to what Health is doing, setting up studies to try to determine if there is a cause and effect. And if there is, then of course that requires this department to do something new relative to standards and licensing.

MRS. SLOAN: I'd like to seek your commitment in providing to the public - there are a variety of reports that are under way and that are itemized, specifically an evaluation of pesticide application, volume and practice in the Alberta context, which are being undertaken by Environmental Protection in conjunction with Alberta Health. I'm wondering if we could ensure that a copy of that is made available as soon as it is completed.

MR. TUPPER: There are a number of studies being done in a whole variety of areas respecting the environment - pesticides is one area; another is pesticides and rainfall - a whole host of things that we want to be on top of in this province to ensure that we're out in front of problems before they happen. That may be one of them, and if there's a list that you have, certainly when the reports are prepared, we'd be pleased to share them.

MRS. SLOAN: I'll just quickly identify several others: the joint study involving researchers from Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Environmental Protection, Health, the universities of Alberta and Calgary, attempting to identify the contribution of livestock production to the level of giardia; another, contaminants in the North Saskatchewan River; the Oldman River basin water

quality study; and there is also a working group, the CASA flaring working group. It may not be a report, but there may some working group minutes.

MR. TUPPER: If I might on that, that group did report to CASA with some recommendations, which subsequently have been acted on by the government. They recommended that some of the royalty provisions that discouraged collecting and using that gas be dealt with, and that was done. As the minister spoke about earlier, the phasing out of flaring was another recommendation.

MRS. SLOAN: Could we be afforded, again, sort of a written copy of those recommendations and the steps taken?

MR. TUPPER: We could pass on the report.

MRS. SLOAN: That would be great. Thank you.

My final area of questions before I allow my colleague to go again is in relation to the joint children's initiative. Again, I would express my disappointment. When I looked at the partners who have been signatories to that initiative, the department of the environment was not one of them. As I reviewed the four goals, that is initiatives undertaken, in all four there were references to our physical environment. It struck me as very odd, given the acknowledgment of the part that the environment plays in the healthy development of children, that the department of the environment was not a signatory to this.

7:43

I'll just reference those aspects of the goals in that initiative. In goal 1 "Alberta's children will be well cared-for." The specific reference states that "Albertans need to ensure that our children have a permanent, stable and nurturing environment," that they "pursue an active lifestyle," and "be part of a healthy and active community."

In goal 2 "Alberta's children will be safe." The reference there speaks to "communities must be strong, providing children with security and freedom from danger." Now, you could define danger, of course, in a variety of ways, but environmental danger, in my opinion, is one aspect of what we should be attempting to protect children from.

In goal 3 "Alberta's children are successful at learning." Again, "children must acquire skills to lead an active, healthy lifestyle."

Similarly in goal 4 "Alberta's children will be healthy," and this is where the most direct references are made:

It is now recognized that health is determined by complex interactions between individual characteristics, social and economic factors, and our physical environment. . . We need to ensure that children are healthy even before birth, and that they are provided with the knowledge and supports to continue to make healthy decisions throughout life.

So that initiative is under way, and I'm wondering if the minister would care to entertain his department becoming a signatory to that initiative.

MR. LUND: That is a children's initiative. We don't just target children. We believe that all of the citizens of Alberta need to fall into that category, and that's why we are, as I said in my opening remarks, continuing to be involved in the initiatives with communities so we can see these safe things that you talk about: clean water, clean air, correct sewage disposal, all of those things. Those are our responsibilities, and we're taking care of them. So I don't know us being a signatory to that particular initiative, because quite frankly they are targeting the children in a very separate way. We're looking at the broad picture so that all Albertans, the adults - if the adults

don't have a safe environment and the things that you talked about, the children aren't going to have it either. So it's important that we look at the whole population as opposed to singling out children. The lifestyle of adults has such a major impact on the children, and that's why it's really important that we target children in a special initiative. But I don't think that doing it through environment is going to accomplish anything beyond what we're already doing.

MRS. SLOAN: Well, I would submit, Mr. Minister - and it may take more than a couple of rounds to convince you of this - that Health and Social Services and Justice and Community Development could all work and achieve an environment that is conducive to an optimum upbringing for a child. But if we have a physical environment in this province that through environmental violations of water and land and soil and air is placing our children at risk, whether it's in utero or afterwards, all of that work is for naught. All of the other departments' work is for naught. What I'm saying is be a leader, take the long view, and get on board now. It's going to be a long-term initiative. Environment plays a huge part in that, and I would like to see in next year's annual report a section that reports on the environment. I acknowledge it's not just the environment for children, but they're the future generation, and if we delay addressing some of the issues today, we're going to pay for those things in the future.

I'll leave that with you and pass it back to my colleague from Edmonton-Ellerslie.

MS CARLSON: Thank you. I think what she's saying is that it's more than targeting children; it's making a commitment to be a part of the solution.

I'd like to move to program 4, land and forest service, and specifically, first of all, 4.1.1, forest management. We've seen the dollars there stay pretty well constant. Can you tell us what that budget is used for, and does it include audit and field inspections? Page 172. You thought you got to sleep. You don't.

THE CHAIRMAN: Deb, what page are you on?

MS CARLSON: Page 172.

MR. LUND: And what was the question again?

MS CARLSON: What's the budget used for, and does it include audits and field inspections? Vote 4.1.1, forest management, \$23.5 million?

MR. LUND: Cliff, do you want to go ahead and answer that one?

MR. HENDERSON: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Item 4.1.1 includes field inspections and audit programs on forest operations.

MS CARLSON: Okay.

So we've seen that between '92 and '97 staff in the forest management division has decreased by approximately 50 percent. How do you expect to cope with this reduction and still manage the forests effectively? You must have some sort of game plan there.

MR. LUND: Well, I can start off, and then Cliff will give you more detail. A lot of the things that our staff used to do, like management plans, inventory, those sorts of things - we have moved that responsibility over to the FMA holder. Our staff go over the management plans, the cutting plans once they've been developed by the FMA holder. Of course the company can't start operations

until they've been approved by our staff, but we are not out there in the field doing the actual on-the-ground work that we used to do.

Cliff, did you want to add some more to the change and how we're coping with the reduction in manpower?

[Mr. Yankowsky in the chair]

MR. HENDERSON: Thank you, Mr. Minister. We're focusing the staff on our legislative responsibility, which is assessments of programs, program approvals, AOP approvals, and focusing also on enforcement through an audit process and accountability from the person doing the operation in the field.

MS CARLSON: Okay. So that answers, then, why they can now attempt to maintain the same standards when they've got such larger areas to cover. Don't you think there's some merit in doing spot audits as opposed to just things that bubble up from the reviews you do on the paper?

MR. HENDERSON: That's a good point, and in fact we do do spot audits during the course of the year. Our officers are involved in all parts of the landscape from stream crossings to whatever the area of activity was from the industry, and we do view in an unannounced manner where they're operating.

MS CARLSON: Okay.

So in '92 one person was responsible for monitoring about 1,700 square kilometres, but by '97 this area has increased by 63 percent to 2,800 square kilometres. You say that they're still effective.

MR. LUND: But the role, as we described, is quite different. A lot of the on-the-ground and, if you wish, bull work is done now by the company, not our staff. Our staff, as the ADM has indicated, do the auditing, do the approvals . . .

MS CARLSON: The paper pushing.

MR. LUND: Well, it's a different role. It certainly is. They are managers now as opposed to out doing the grunt work.

MS CARLSON: Okay.

In response to a motion for a return, Mr. Minister, you supplied us summaries of meetings of the Alberta Forest Management Science Council from May of '96 until spring of '98. The last item supplied to us is dated January 22, 1998. I'll just give you some background and then tell you my question.

The council provided a revised definition of sustainable forest management based on the concepts of ecological integrity and social and economic values. They state that social and economic values are integral to the selection and attainment of the desired future forest and point out the need to deal with nontimber values. They say that the social and economic values may be identified and addressed through a public involvement process. So my question is: what action has been taken to implement the council's advice given that report, and has there been any attempt to set up a public involvement process to address the social and economic nontimber values?

7:53

MR. HENDERSON: Mr. Chairman, as each FMA holder presents their detailed forest management plans and annual operating plans, they have a public advisory committee that comments to the contents of the plan.

MS CARLSON: Okay.

The council also recommended that a trade-off analysis framework as between timber and nontimber values needs to be developed and tested in a public format. Has this been done?

MR. HENDERSON: I don't think we've completed all that goal yet.

MS CARLSON: Do we have some time lines on when we expect that to happen?

MR. HENDERSON: I could provide you, through the minister's office, an outline of the implementation plan.

MS CARLSON: Okay.

Is the council still functioning?

MR. HENDERSON: Yes.

MS CARLSON: Can you tell us how many of the recommendations you have considered and are in the process of implementing or have implemented? Sometime in the future in writing would be okay.

MR. HENDERSON: I'd have to reply to you in writing.

MS CARLSON: Yeah. That would be fine. Thanks.

Fire suppression. There's another \$17 million in lotteries there. That's 4.3. Can you tell us what that's for? Is it for fighting fires or helping to recover from last year's fires?

MR. LUND: That's reclamation from last year's fires. One of the things that happened last year is that a lot of the areas that had been treated - in other words, they had been harvested and then either trees planted or somehow the area was treated. They burned. Of course through that process we lost the trees, but there was no seed there as well. So we're going to have to go back and reforest. We spent \$10 million this year, and then this coming year we'll be spending another \$17 million in those areas.

MS CARLSON: Okay.

Back to vote 3, Cold Lake, the groundwater there. You're monitoring now, but could you tell me why it took so long to get that under way?

MR. LUND: I'm sorry. I missed that.

MS CARLSON: The groundwater monitoring that's happening there. You're doing it now, but we're wondering why it took so long. You could have started it back in '88 I think.

MR. LUND: This is the groundwater monitoring?

MS CARLSON: Yeah. Cold Lake. It's the arsenic situation.

MR. LUND: Okay. I thought I heard you mention Cold Lake.

MS CARLSON: Cold Lake, yeah.

MR. LUND: I'm not up to speed on that one.

MS CARLSON: Okay.

MR. TUPPER: Actually, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, groundwater monitoring has gone on for years in that area, done both by the

department and also by industry at the direction of the department. More extensive monitoring was done as a result of some injection well failures that happened to Imperial, but monitoring has been an ongoing, long-term thing. For example, one of our indicator wells near Bonnyville has been in place for a long time. So it's not a new thing to us I guess is the answer to your question.

MS CARLSON: Okay. Then I'll change the nature of the question a little bit. You've done, I think, periodic and spot audits, but I think now you're doing something that's a little more sustainable. Would that be correct or incorrect?

MR. TUPPER: I'm not clear on exactly what you mean: we're doing something that's "more sustainable."

MS CARLSON: Our information would indicate that over the past few years you've done periodic spot audits and checks on a few landowners but nothing that's comprehensive.

MR. TUPPER: Okay. What you may be talking about is some of the investigation being done as part of that arsenic issue. On some of those audits the sampling has been done by the company to determine what is in that water. Those were at the direction of government. So if I'm clear that that's what you were talking about, that was in response to, again, the issue of blowout and also a review of their expansion plans.

Part of the whole EIA process is to review all of the things they propose and try and identify and predict the impact it would have on the environment. When things have been noticed that were odd - for example, high salt levels or what have you - then the company has been directed to go back and get more information. That would be the process that was followed there.

MR. NICHOLS: In that case, too, when they in fact found the evidence of the arsenic levels - and that wasn't actually part of the initial investigation - we sat down with Health, and then Health started doing some additional surveys and testing on water supplies and whatnot for the local people. They advised people about it. So some of that's still ongoing. That was a partnership with Health.

MS CARLSON: Okay.

Will the area being monitored now be extended until you find the boundaries of the high arsenic levels?

MR. TUPPER: Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, we already know, for example, that at the Bonnyville well, which is one of our long-term water quality monitoring stations, we have high arsenic levels, and there's no industrial activity to which we can attribute the cause. So we have been working with Health in fact on identifying the problem of arsenic in groundwater, not just in that area but in other parts of Alberta as well where it's been detected.

MS CARLSON: What's being done to ensure that people in the area have pure water to drink?

MR. TUPPER: What's happening now is that the local health authority, as the deputy minister identified, is doing monitoring, is working with the local people, and the matter is still under study. So where there's a situation where someone is at risk, the health authority will be taking action.

Now, on the issue of so-called pure water, I guess the question there is: whose responsibility is it? If it's an industrial responsibility, then it's clear where that will fall. We don't believe that's the case.

If it's a natural situation, then people will be alerted to it and will be assisted in making decisions around treatment or another source.

MS CARLSON: Okay.

Speaking of areas of responsibility, I'd like to talk about ditches for a moment. We get concerns from municipalities and individual landowners about who's responsible for ditches along highways and secondary roads in the province. Municipalities seem to think it's not them. Some landowners think it's not them. They point a finger at you guys. Can you tell me what you do in that regard?

MR. LUND: Okay. Under the former act, the Water Resources Act, if an individual or municipality were to drain water, they had to get a licence. A landowner: if it's not the consolidation of sloughs, then they have to get a licence. If a municipality is redirecting water, they are to get a licence.

MS CARLSON: So if there are environmental concerns about what's happening in the ditches, who complains to whom, and who acts on them?

MR. LUND: In order to get a licence from the department, there is a number of criteria that have to be met; like, no erosion, an inadequate outlet. So I don't know. I suspect you have an instance that we need to know about to answer your questions properly.

MS CARLSON: So if there's a concern about some environmental contamination in a ditch, who fixes the problem?

MR. LUND: What do you mean by environmental contamination? Do you mean erosion?

MS CARLSON: No. I'm talking more about dumping, runoff.

MR. NICHOLS: I think we're getting confused on the term "ditches." You're talking about a water drainage ditch, and I believe you're talking about a ditch on a road.

MS CARLSON: I'm talking about a ditch on a road, yes.

MR. NICHOLS: She's talking about the ditches that form part of the road.

MR. LUND: Yeah. But even so, if a municipality was going to drain along a ditch - I guess it started out as drainage. Now it's turning to a dumping problem, contamination from dumping.

MS CARLSON: We have both. We have examples where there's been dumping.

MR. LUND: What's being dumped?

MS CARLSON: Oil field waste in some instances.

MR. LUND: Oil field waste?

MS CARLSON: Yeah.

MR. LUND: Well, let us know about it.

MS CARLSON: Okay.

What about in the case of seismic holes and the gunk that runs

down there and gets into the underground waterway systems. Who's responsible for that?

8:03

MR. LUND: The company is required to plug the hole so that surface water cannot enter the hole. That's the responsibility of the company. We inspect the project once it's completed. If people know of holes that haven't been plugged, we'd like to know about it so that we can require the company to go back and fix it.

MS CARLSON: Do you inspect all of those or spot-check?

MR. LUND: Well, you can't go to every hole.

MS CARLSON: If somebody complains, that's the only time you go out and take a look at them.

MR. LUND: For sure. Probably all they have to do is contact the company, because the companies know they're supposed to put a plug in them. Sometimes the plug is down. It's not sitting right on the surface. If it's put in properly, it will be down. If you put it on the surface, it'll get pulled out. So just driving by, you can't tell in a lot of cases. You have to have a probe that you can feel down with.

MS CARLSON: Okay. Let's deal with that first. How far down should it go, what happens when they pop up, and why don't they plug them or fill them in from the ground up? I know some naturally fill in themselves. First of all, how far down do they go?

MR. LUND: They're supposed to be 18 inches below the ground surface, I believe it is.

MS CARLSON: Eighteen inches below the surface is the start of the plug? Then how far down does it go?

MR. LUND: What most of them use is a cap that they push down. I believe it's made of plastic, and it's made so that as you put it down, it sets itself in so that it won't be washed up. It takes a lot of force to push it down any further. Why aren't they plugged all the way? We are doing some work with the geophysical people to see if there's any benefit to plugging them to the bottom.

[Mr. Boutilier in the chair]

You've got to recognize that there's some dynamite that's put down the hole. We don't have evidence of a lot of damage, contaminated groundwater. This has been going on for over 50 years, and I have been exposed to it for that period of time. We have four wells, four different locations. We've had seismic there for the last 50 years all around us, and we haven't had one sign at all of any type of contamination. Now, just because I've had that experience, that doesn't prove anything, but we don't get reports of contamination from the seismic.

MS CARLSON: You said the plug goes down 18 inches. How deep is the plug?

MR. LUND: Well, it's tapered. It's probably about six inches.

MS CARLSON: So a couple of feet down it's sealed off, and then anything below that could potentially have flow-through water.

MR. LUND: I'm not a hydrogeologist, but I've had the benefit of talking to our staff. In most cases if you stop the possibility of water coming in from the top, the deeper you go, the more pressure you get. This idea that the water is going to go down . . .

MS CARLSON: No. I'm talking flow-through; I'm not talking about the water going down.

MR. LUND: Flow-through?

MS CARLSON: Well, between the ground and the hole in the ground.

MR. LUND: Of course, you're assuming that a hole stays open.

MS CARLSON: Okay. Well, we'll debate that some other time.

Can you provide to us reports of industry compliance regarding seismic holes by company for the last five years? We'd like to know the percentage of monitoring checks that were compliant and the percentage of violations and the numbers of seismic drilling by company and any cumulative impact you've got on it. Do you have any of that kind of information?

MR. LUND: We can get whatever we have compiled. I hope you don't want it for five years back. It could be a very massive undertaking to get all that information from over the past five years.

MS CARLSON: Well, why don't you give us what you've got that's reasonably current, and we'll see from there.

MR. LUND: We'll make an effort to get that.

MS CARLSON: Okay. Give us something to look at.

Where in this budget is the money for the reclassification of protected areas under the Natural Heritage Act, and has the work been done to determine which category each area will be reclassified into? I don't know where to look for it in here. You're reclassifying areas under the Natural Heritage Act, the bill that's now under debate. That will have some costs associated with it, I'm sure. I don't know where that is in the budget.

MR. NICHOLS: Any cost there would be under 3.1.5.

MS CARLSON: Right. Okay. Have you done some work already to determine which category each area will be reclassified into?

MR. LUND: Not to any extent. One thing that will not happen is that the sites will not lose the protection they have today. As a good example, the Willmore wilderness area today has legislated protection. That will come over as the management plan, and it therefore has legislated protection similar to what it has today. With the Kakwa wildland once again we've got some management principles in place there. It will come over as it is today.

Fred, I don't know whether you want to add any more to it.

MR. MOFFATT: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Part of the reclassification is that once the act goes through, we're going to be doing the foundation document, and that'll describe more the purpose and the rationale of all the protected areas. It was very much in the proposed document that we put out. That's part of it. Once we go through legislation and we get the classes through, then we can basically go back and look at the sites. So from that perspective, we have existing management plans, which we're going to be honouring as

we go through. We're doing a number of management plans related to those sites now, because we have a lot of existing sites already in the system.

MR. LUND: Yeah. A lot of the sites already do have a management plan. For those that don't, we will have to develop one. But they will come across with the same protection as they have today.

MS CARLSON: One of the problems for us in that bill is that a lot of the decisions can be made after the fact, after the legislation is passed, by regulation. Quite frankly, we don't think you have a very good track record in terms of enhancing legislation and have concerns that what will be put in force there will open up more roads to litigation as opposed to enhancing protection. So, you know, without the concrete evidence in the bill, there's not a lot of room to believe that it's going to happen down the road.

MR. LUND: Well, we'll see what we might be able to do, but the fact is I don't understand why we would reduce the protection. I don't understand where that rationale is. The bill is enabling legislation. What the bill does is it describes the maximum that can happen in various classifications, but then there's a management plan that can tighten up. Like I say, the Willmore wilderness will come over as a wildland. Now, it says that in a wildland you can't have a motorized vehicle. There will not be a motorized vehicle in the Willmore wilderness, because the management plan says that there can't be. That's how the act will work.

When you look at the Kakwa, for example, there's a falls on the Kakwa River, and there's a road over to it that's been there for decades. There's a trail that goes on down the river from the falls. Now, we classified the area as a wildland. It will come across as a wildland. That's why you need to have the act allow a motorized vehicle in a wildland, because you have an area like that that has got a trail in it. They can't go off the trail. So we are faced with the option that if we don't have the option to allow motorized vehicles, then we have to take that area out of the designation or not allow people to go in there. People have been going in there for decades, so people would not accept now being shut out of going into that area because we're designating it as a wildland. That's the principle of that bill. That's why you have to have those abilities, and that's what enabling is about. But it won't allow for any more of the area except that trail that is already there and has been used for decades.

8:13

MS CARLSON: But we have you saying that, Mr. Minister; we don't actually see it in the legislation. When you take a look at the document that came out, that was a summary of the findings from the summer, and the actual act, there's a whole bunch of "trust me" in there, and we want to see it in black and white.

MR. LUND: You've got it in black and white. I just put it on.

MS CARLSON: Well, it doesn't come close. We hope that you seriously consider some of the amendments that are brought forward, at least if not ours then those that we'll be bringing forward on behalf of the Environmental Law Centre Society or perhaps some that you'll be bringing forward yourself.

MR. LUND: Well, we're going to bring some, and one of the things we're looking at is this whole transition.

MS CARLSON: In all seriousness, it would be very helpful if the

legislation was tabled for a little while, if more public consultation was done on the bill as it exists now, and if it was brought back in an amended fashion.

MR. LUND: Leaving it sit till fall is not an option. We cannot complete the special places program unless we pass that bill. We are having trouble hanging onto the grasslands today, and if we play around with this, we will lose the grasslands. I can tell you that. I'm working very hard on another major piece of grassland. If there's any hint of that bill not going through, we won't get it. They just will not agree. It is absolutely crucial that that bill pass this spring. If it doesn't, then kiss the grasslands good-bye. We've been on the verge in many areas of losing it. We've managed to convince the folks to stay with us, that we'll get the bill. They are saying, "We want to see the colour of your eyes," and they mean it. They'll be gone if we don't get that bill. That's not a threat. That's reality, and that's why I am so set on getting that bill through this spring, because I want that grassland. I want it in the system. If we don't get the bill, we don't get the grassland. It's that clear.

MS CARLSON: Well, you're making that statement in a background where you have said that if the boundaries of Lakeland don't do what you need them to do, then you'll move the boundaries. In that kind of an environment you can't expect people to come onside with a bill like this, that is nothing more than a framework. It doesn't give enough detail.

MR. LUND: Well, there's one way of helping us on that thing at Lakeland. You could go talk to your kissin' cousins and get them to agree that the pipeline can go through the air weapons range, because that's where we want it to go. That's where we want it to go. But if I can't get it in writing that it can go through there, if there is ever one applied for, then we've got to somehow allow the pipeline to go through that area. If you go up there and go way around the west side of the park and come back, you will do more environmental damage than you will going down between the air weapons range and the recreation area. We want it to go through the air weapons range, so if you can help us to get that in writing, we'd be very, very thankful.

MS CARLSON: As I recall from reviewing a letter that you sent to the Minister of Energy, your first choice was to have it go through the lake.

MR. LUND: I'm sorry?

MS CARLSON: Well, I remember reviewing correspondence that we FOIPed on this particular issue, and your first choice was a wish: too bad the pipeline corridor couldn't go right through the lake. I think that's the kind of a climate that people have a hard time understanding. I don't know how you ever think you could put a pipeline and those high-voltage lines on a weapons range. To me that doesn't make sense.

Anyway, how much time do we have left, Mr. Chairman?

THE CHAIRMAN: You have about four or five minutes.

MS CARLSON: Okay. We've got another question that, once again, comes under I think fallout from talking about some of the landfill sites and waste disposal in general. We have an issue developing where we have someone who wants some answers on how the department monitors the dumping of human waste by private septic operators. I don't know if that comes under vote 3. Can you tell me who monitors that? I'm talking about the human waste disposal.

MR. LUND: Doug, do you want to comment on that?

MR. TUPPER: I'll have to check. I believe that's local boards of health, but I'll have to get that answer.

MS CARLSON: Okay. If you could. If it's your department, then how often are there violations, and what are the penalties for infractions? That would be excellent.

MRS. SLOAN: Can I just add?

MS CARLSON: Sure.

8:23

MRS. SLOAN: I guess I'm wondering. I'm not completely accepting that it would be Health if the dumping is occurring in an area where there is direct runoff into a lake or waterway.

The other part of the scenario is that if a private septic operator is dumping on a piece of farmland with the farmer's agreement, who goes in and assesses that violation? If it is deemed to be a violation, which I would expect it would be, what are the penalties both to the private operator and to the farm owner?

MR. LUND: If they're dumping near a stream, that's handled exactly the same as any other waste that's a deleterious material. They would be charged under the Fisheries Act if it's found that that's what's happening.

I'm really, really disturbed by your comments. Tell me; if a farmer has 200 or 300 head of cattle on his farm, are you saying that it's going to be against the law to empty the septic tank on the farm? Where is there some reality, where's there some common sense in this whole scenario? I mean, I think it'd be absolutely ludicrous to expect farmers to take their septic tank waste to wherever they would take it - I've got no idea where they would take it if they couldn't dump it on their farm, when they've got hundreds of animals on their farm. It's shocking to think that you'd force people to do such ludicrous things as that.

MRS. SLOAN: My example was not implying that the farmer is dumping his own family's waste on their land. My example was if a private septic operator is servicing an area and makes an agreement with the farmer that he will dispose of that waste, the cumulative waste he pumps out of his septic tanks, in that area and the area is in a vicinity of a large waterway or lake.

MR. LUND: Well, I'm sorry; I didn't connect it with the waterway or lake. If in fact the material is getting into a water course, then it would be treated as a deleterious material, and they would be fined.

MRS. SLOAN: All I would seek is perhaps some written correspondence on that matter. Who in fact does monitor it? Have there been any violations in the course of the last fiscal year? What are the penalties, and how are they enforced? Thank you.

THE CHAIRMAN: We're in our last minute or so, but just in fairness, perhaps some final comments.

MS CARLSON: Sure. I have just one more question - if you could answer at some point in the future - on recreation and protected areas, 3.1.5. There were five last year, five provincial recreation areas that were tendered but not awarded to contracted operators. If you could tell me what will happen to those sites this year. You told us that there were 37 sites that were divested between '94 and '97, and we'd like to know what the fate of those was.

So once again this year, gentlemen, thank you very much. You gave us a lot of information that will, I'm sure, result in many more written questions and questions in the House. Thank you for the opportunity.

THE CHAIRMAN: Okay. Well, thank you to all members of the Assembly and the minister and his staff and members of the committee. This essentially concludes our meeting tonight, in accordance with the Standing Orders. I'm prepared for a motion to adjourn.

MR. YANKOWSKY: So moved.

THE CHAIRMAN: So moved. All those agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Opposed? That's carried. Thank you very much and have a nice weekend.

[The subcommittee adjourned at 8:24 p.m.]

