

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

**Title: Wednesday, May 30, 2007** **7:00 p.m.**

Date: 07/05/30

head: **Committee of Supply**

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, we will call the committee to order.

head: **Main Estimates 2007-08**

**The Deputy Chair:** The committee has before it estimates for four departments today: Agriculture and Food; Tourism, Parks, Recreation and Culture; International, Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Relations; and Justice and Attorney General. We shall allocate 45 minutes per ministry. It's a private members' day, so the 45 minutes will be spent back and forth. Should there be no further speakers, then we will move on to the next ministry.

### Agriculture and Food

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. minister, would you please introduce your guests first.

**Mr. Groeneveld:** Well, good evening, Mr. Chairman. I'm certainly pleased to have another opportunity to speak about the 2007-2008 Agriculture and Food budget and the strategic investments that we're making this year. Agriculture is a priority for this government, and it's been my honour to serve as the Minister of Agriculture and Food for the past five months.

Our ministry demonstrates a real commitment and a passion for the industry, and I'm proud every time I meet a new member of the Agriculture and Food team. They're not only knowledgeable and professional, but they are clearly passionate as well. As a group they are very committed to ensuring that Alberta's agriculture and food industry grows and thrives.

Mr. Chairman, with me today are a few of these dedicated individuals to help bring you information on this budget and the important work of our ministry. They are my deputy Rory Campbell, AFSC president and managing director Brad Klak, assistant deputy minister Faye Rault, and senior financial officer Jim Carter.

Agriculture has been an important part of Alberta's history and remains a cornerstone of this province. It is a big part of the economic foundation of Alberta and the heart of our rural communities. To put the industry's contribution into perspective, we are the second largest agricultural producing province in Canada. Alberta had \$7.81 billion in farm cash receipts in 2006. The \$9.6 billion food and beverage industry generates 27,000 jobs in Alberta. Also, in 2006 our agricultural and food industry generated \$5.8 billion in international exports, and that's roughly one-fifth of the nation's agrifood exports.

Like other Alberta sectors the agriculture and food industry is growing in size and scope and holds even greater potential for the future. Our current business plan takes into consideration the challenges facing our industry today and outlines how we're working with the industry to take advantage of tomorrow's opportunities.

Our current goals, core business, and strategies support the Premier's government-wide priorities. Our objectives line up with these priorities, and in particular our programs are designed to manage growth, build a stronger Alberta, and improve our quality of life. We are strategically linked to the government of Alberta business plan. The agricultural growth strategy and the agri-

environmental strategy are two initiatives that contribute to the goal of having a prosperous economy and managing growth pressure.

Mr. Chairman, the Premier's mandates to me for the Ministry of Agriculture and Food speak directly to our ability to be competitive and sustainable. We are laying the groundwork for an institute that will help turn our concern for the environment into market opportunities. We already know that Alberta's farmers can earn a living in partnership with Mother Nature and are good stewards of the lands, so building on this is a natural fit.

Another Premier's mandate is to develop a transition program for agriculture to succeed within the boundaries of any World Trade Organization agreement. This work will be critical to competing on an international level. The success of our farmers also depends on ensuring that they have access to capital for their businesses. The Premier has asked that we work with our partners to ensure effective agricultural financial services.

Our strategic investments are having a positive impact on our competitive position. The total Agriculture and Food budget for 2007-2008 is \$1.026 billion. Overall, our funding commitments haven't changed dramatically, but I'd like to highlight some new funding. Mr. Chairman, \$1.1 million in a new workforce strategy funding. As one of the top four areas impacted by labour shortages, this is important funding for agriculture. We've also seen some increases in funding to ongoing programs, such as \$5.7 million directed to the Canada/Alberta farm water program, an increase of \$4.3 million.

I'd also like to point out that many of our programs are demand driven and tied to our statutory commitments. We are influenced by what happens outside our provincial borders. Our needs vary from year to year. That is why you will see some of the areas of funding go up or down slightly from year to year, as we target resources where and when they are needed.

As I'm sure you are aware, our farmers routinely face some hefty cost pressures, such as fuel and fertilizer prices, which are dictated by the world market. The Canadian agricultural income stabilization, or better known as the CAIS program, responds to these pressures. This budget provides \$3.63 million for CAIS to meet our commitments under this national program. As we continue to press for a better national program, Alberta has made necessary improvements, and compared to other provinces this government goes above and beyond to support our industry. For example, in 2006 and 2007 we invested approximately \$300 million for the Alberta margin enhancement and the Alberta reference margin initiative. That's support that only Alberta producers benefit from.

When our farmers were impacted by years of consecutive drought on top of low commodity prices, we were the only ones to take on a bigger share of the crop insurance premiums, and Alberta is the only province to offer what's called the spring price endorsement coverage to help manage their commodity risk. Overall, Alberta's farmers and producers are in a better financial position than previous years. Crops have started to rebound and commodity prices are increasing, two elements that are key to our ability to compete.

Mr. Chairman, further good news is that Budget 2007 aggressively addresses growth issues and industry pressures. However, actions must be realistic. We cannot exceed what is affordable and sustainable. Sustainability is a key theme that you will see run throughout our business plan: rural sustainability, industry sustainability, environmental sustainability. Agriculture operations are acutely aware of the need to protect our air, land, and water, the very future of this industry. We're finding solutions that result in rewards for both the environment and the economy. Sustainability means adapting to change, a theme that the Premier tapped into when he set out our priorities.

Staying competitive is a priority for industry sustainability. Just yesterday we took another step towards this mandate. I announced a competitive initiative and appointed a group of agriculture and business experts to identify ways we can enhance our competitive edge. New competitors and technologies, the growing demand for biofuels, market changes in developing countries, labour shortages: these are just some of the things influencing our competitive environment. We need to stay ahead of these changes. We need to determine the concrete actions we can take. The steering group is going to help us do just that. What is key to their work is the industry-wide approach I have asked them to take.

Each member of the steering group brings a wealth of knowledge and experience from different agricultural sectors, but they will apply that history toward identifying balanced solutions. Long-term profitability of the entire industry is the goal here, and we've dedicated \$450,000 to identify steps Alberta can take.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. minister, while the clock is set for 45 minutes, we were hoping that we wouldn't be going beyond 10 minutes to allow more dialogue between the minister and members.

**Mr. Groeneveld:** Absolutely, Mr. Chairman.

**The Deputy Chair:** So if you are about to wrap up, maybe you can wrap up, or you can finish off when you get a chance to answer the next question.

**Mr. Groeneveld:** Why don't I stop there?

**The Deputy Chair:** Very well.

7:10

**Ms Haley:** I wanted to first off, I guess, say that agriculture is one of my favourite departments. Minister, you have a great department with great staff that work very hard on behalf of Alberta farmers and ranchers, and I'd like to congratulate you and them for the work that you do.

I wanted to start my questions by asking if you could give us an indication of the recovery of the beef industry from the BSE crisis that we were in just a few years ago. If you could give me an indication of where we're at on our cattle numbers. How are we doing with packing plants, reducing our herd sizes, the aging cattle that we had as a result of the border closures? If you could give me an idea of where we're at with the United States right now with regard to some of the older cattle, above 24 months, above 32 months, that type of thing. How are we doing in our negotiation with them to have a completely open border again? Do you see that as a possibility, or is it still going to be more of a boxed beef kind of an issue? I am particularly interested in the packing industry because I know that they ramped up a little bit when our borders were closed. I'd like your impression of how they're doing, just anything on that side.

I also wanted to ask you about irrigation districts. I know that we have a program where we help with some money going out to the 17 irrigation districts on their canal rehabilitation. I'm particularly interested in the Western irrigation district and your impression of how they're doing, where they're at with their canal rehabilitation. You know, are they in any difficulties? What's just your impression of that, Minister?

On the Water for Life strategy, while not in your department, the irrigation districts could play a vital role in helping us with our Water for Life strategy. I'm wondering if you're working with other departments on sort of a cross-ministry issue, where we can make

sure that we're dealing with the irrigation districts for the betterment of all Albertans.

My third area of questions is under the WTO and the GATT system. Minister, I'd like to know where we're at right now. When is the next round of negotiations going to take place? Will the supply-side management issue be raised again, and if so, how do you see that one working its way through the WTO issues? If it goes the way people anticipate it will over a period of time, do you visualize our Alberta poultry industry, for example, as being able to withstand the pressure of an open-border position on the supply-side management?

The next one is under ag societies, Minister. I'd like your thoughts on how well they're working. Are they still fulfilling what their original intent was, which was to enhance the rural way of life, or are they more recreation facility focused, more working with urban communities? Has that shift occurred? Is that a permanent shift, do you see, as opposed to enhancing a rural way of life? If so, is this an appropriate use of that money, or should it be something more going through a CFEP issue, where we're dealing with 20 arenas or helping with swimming pools and skating rinks and that type of thing?

The second-last question is on the land-use management plan. I'd like your impressions of Agriculture's role in that, Minister, and how you see the land-use management plan actually affecting agriculture. Is there a way to work with industry and recreation and parkland and everything else so that we can have a sustainable agriculture industry in this province without worrying about somebody being offended by agriculture in some way, shape, or form?

My last question is on the horse-racing industry. I'd like your impression of that industry: how many horses there are in the province, what kind of volume of sales are being done. The last I heard, it was between \$300 million and \$400 million. I'd just like to get a sense of the economic impact of horse racing in the province as well as just the general horse industry. As somebody who raised quarter horses for a number of years, I know how much money we spent. Never made any but spent a lot. So I would just like a sense from you if that's actually something that your department thinks about, works with, or has any need to be involved in.

With that, Minister, I'll sit down. Thank you again for the opportunity.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Groeneveld:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I certainly knew that the hon. member would come up with some good questions, and I'll endeavour to answer them and give my opinion in some cases, I guess.

Where are we at post BSE? Of course, I don't have to tell anyone here that June 2003 was the mighty date that started this. At that time having the border shut a hundred per cent was to put it mildly, I guess, devastating to the beef industry. But not only the beef industry; it caught a lot of the sheep and the elk. A lot of the industry was caught up. It's not only my opinion, I guess, that we certainly have not totally recovered from BSE.

We came out at that time with some innovative programs to help the beef people in particular, and to say that they saved the beef industry would probably be reasonably accurate, I think. I guess hindsight is 20/20, and we'd probably do something different if that happened again. Heaven forbid that it should happen again that the border would close.

I visited the department here a while back, just talking to some of the people, and they talked almost fondly of the BSE days. They were so busy in the department trying to keep ahead of where we

were, the programs we came out with and the monies we made available and the set-aside programs, et cetera, that it was a real issue for them to keep up. The department did well, and probably the industry came out somewhat unscathed to what might have happened.

The hon. member was asking about the older-type beef cattle. I'll address that a little bit later.

Moving along, when the borders reopened for cattle under 30 months of age and we started shipping cattle out, of course, that certainly had a positive effect on our cattle industry. However, I guess what happened there, you know: I think we worked with the thought of having more of our cattle processed here. We did have to do it because we couldn't export, so they all were processed here. We all know the story of how Albertans and Canadians in particular came to our rescue and virtually ate a mountain of beef. They're still doing it. The average beef consumption is still up. However, once the border opened again, we're now shipping cattle south again.

I guess what's kind of scary right now is that now that we're shipping cattle south – and we've got to remember that these are cattle under 30 months of age – we are now shipping more cattle to the U.S. than we were in 2003. Not that that's a bad thing, but what's happened in the process is that our processed beef has started to come down, and the exports have started. It's scary to say that we're almost in the same position we were in before. Heaven forbid, but if that border shut on us now, we'd be right back where we were. We really haven't increased our slaughter capacity a whole lot. Yes, we've got some small ones going, but all of our slaughter capacity is impacted by labour shortages and the herds. Because the older cattle can't be exported, our herd numbers are older. We still have to get these older cows consumed or whatever.

The hon. member talked about what we call the rule 2 decision. They said that when rule 2 comes into effect, we will presumably, if we get permission, be able to export these older cattle. Now, having said that, there were a lot of parameters around there. The rule 2 decision is forthcoming. They had a comment period, and my understanding is that the comment period is over now, but I think it's still a 60-day period before any decisions will be made. That's my understanding right now. Hopefully, yes, the border will become a hundred per cent open.

7:20

That just increases the problem that we have. We're exporting these cattle again as a raw product. I've heard the comments out there: maybe you people haven't learnt a lot from the BSE crisis because we're pretty much back where we were. We may talk about this a little later. That's why now with the biofuel things and whatnot and the cattle and just the price of feed going up, our department has put together a competitive marketing group that's going to bring all of the livestock people into one room, and we've got a steering committee put together with some experts. We want to bring all the livestock – the poultry, the hogs, the cattle – into one room and try and deal with the situation we're at now because we're just, kind of, in the same situation where we were, and it's just not where we want to be at this time; that's for sure.

Irrigation. The hon. member certainly knows a lot about irrigation because she lives right in the middle of it. I understand that. It's an important part of our agriculture. The irrigation lands account for what? About 4 per cent of the land and about 17 per cent of the value of what we produce out there at this time. It's a major contributor to our rural development; that's for sure.

I've spent some time with the irrigation people. It's interesting because I had never been directly involved with irrigation. I think

that right now we have not increased our water usage, but just through efficiencies we irrigate, I think, about twice as much land as we did originally, and the irrigation districts are servicing a lot of the small towns with water and whatnot. We're committed to working with these people. To tie it in to where you were going a little bit with the Water for Life strategy, I think it's so important: that aspect, the irrigation aspect, particularly in southern Alberta where, as you know, we can get a tad parched and dry at times.

I had some frustration in the last couple of years that I've been here about where Water for Life was going because we talked about it, but we didn't do a lot about it. I guess that was kind of my impression. The irrigation people certainly are doing something about it. Now, I'd suspect it's not because of anything great this government did. I think these people on their own probably picked up that efficiency.

I think we're putting additional funding of \$3 million into the irrigation program and the Water for Life strategy this year. Hopefully, that's going to work up some interest because the Water for Life strategy, environment, that's the buzzword where we're at now; that's for sure, and rightfully so.

The WTO. I'll quickly move on to that, Mr. Chairman. Yes, the WTO does seem to be showing some signs of movement, moving ahead right now. We at one time were almost booked to go to Geneva to talk to the WTO. It's been pushed back a little bit. We're getting the word now that things are moving, and probably there will be a meeting scheduled.

Supply management people. Yes, this does concern them. Our position on supply management as the government of Alberta has not changed. It's exactly where the previous minister was at. We support supply management, but we also understand that this puts them under some risk. I don't think we'd ever get to the point anymore, perhaps, where the borders would have no tariffs on them and they'd be wide open, but certainly there could be some reductions there.

In our mandate, as you've probably seen, there's a transition time, a period there where we are to work with the industry in a transition program. Now, I don't think that makes supply management particularly comfortable hearing that. There's no doubt about that. However, you know, we certainly don't want this thing just to happen and not be prepared for it. We as a government are going to be prepared for it, so we can only hope that the supply management people will work with us. I'm not trying to scare anyone. We haven't changed our position, but this could change. I was in supply management myself, and I kind of got out of the business because I thought that with WTO my quota would be worthless. Bad decision. That was a lot of years ago, and now the supply management quotas, of course, are worth a lot of money.

The ag societies. I think probably where we're at with the ag societies – I think there are 297 ag societies, and 286 are small ones. Those are the ones that I'm kind of concerned about myself. I have made a commitment that I wasn't going to do a whole lot of looking at the big nine, so to speak, until we did something with these smaller ag societies. As the hon. member knows, probably the four ag societies that surround Calgary, which we are familiar with, really are considered small ag societies that really serve an awful lot of people out of the city and, of course, in the acreage area, where they're very busy.

At any rate, ag societies are still the backbone, I think, of Alberta, to be honest with you, and they play a role in the rural economies. One thing that the ag societies keep bringing up to me – and I really kind of appreciate where they're trying to go – is that they're very concerned about farm safety. I would like to see us get somewhat

more involved in farm safety myself because they would be the perfect vehicle for the education, and they themselves want to go that route.

Mr. Chairman, there was quite a list here. The land-use management, of course, is being led by Sustainable Resources. I facetiously say "thank goodness" because this is going to be a tough one, and I'm glad that it didn't totally fall to Agriculture. But we certainly are going to be a big part of it. We have to be a big part of it; there's no doubt about it. At this stage of the game, I guess, we're fully engaged and have resources dedicated to the land-use framework. Sustainability is a key issue for the numerous interests to be addressed with land use. Our team, you might say, in the department is striving to do just that.

Having said that, I'm also trying to encourage all people, when I go out and do speak in the agricultural areas, to make sure they do attend the meetings that are going on. I think that's absolutely critical because – same old story – we can criticize all we want, but if you're not part of the game, if you're not there, it doesn't help a whole heck of a lot.

The racing industry. I don't know if we have a magic answer to where that's at. Of course, it's managed by Tourism, Parks, Recreation and Culture. We have agricultural people available to provide supports and maintain that connection to Agriculture, but the fact that the breeding industry is really an important part, you know, I guess that's where the Agriculture part of it fits, probably.

Anyway, what physically are we doing? I think that probably we should give you a written answer to that because I don't think I'm going to answer it very well. I know that when we meet with the people on the breeding side of it, that's the Agriculture part.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. minister . . .

**Mr. Groeneveld:** You betcha. I'm at the end of my list.

**The Deputy Chair:** Just for your information we have only 15 minutes left for you, and I still have three other speakers. I'm just making you aware. I don't want to cut you short, but we'll recognize the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat next.

7:30

**Mr. Mitzel:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It gives me great pleasure tonight to be able to rise to address the Minister of Agriculture and Food. I must also say that I find the staff of Agriculture and Food to be second to none with regard to agricultural knowledge and professionalism and, certainly, their timely response to any and all the concerns that I have brought to them.

Before I get into what I wanted to talk about, very quickly, Mr. Minister, you mentioned the spring price endorsement. I can certainly tell you that that was very well received and much appreciated. You also mentioned that the crop prices are rebounded, but also the input costs have more than doubled. I think we have to remember that in agriculture – where else? In what other type of industry do you have a way of life where you have virtually no control over the costs and certainly no control of the prices of the commodity that you raise? As I mentioned, it's a way of life, and that's why people do it.

I think I'll get into one point that you haven't had a chance to mention yet, and that's why I bring it up. That's traceability. I think that having the ability to enhance our traceability system is important for a number of reasons. It provides quick access to good, up-to-date data, which I believe is essential in responding to any animal health emergency. Without this, the time and effort of a slow response can come at a great cost, including economic loss and the risk of the spread of animal disease.

Never has it been so evident, especially since June of 2003, as you mentioned, Mr. Minister, and the border closure because of BSE, that traceability is one of the single most important means of renewing our beef export industry. I think we're also aware that a good traceability system is becoming an expectation of the domestic and international marketplace. World-wide customers are demanding more information about the food they're consuming. With an effective traceability system Alberta will be ready for this emerging market demand and will see greater market growth as a result. I believe the future of our cattle industry depends on our ability to market our cattle, both boxed and live, to the world and in particular the United States. Traceability is one of the reasons we have now renewed our trade with the United States, and other countries have come on board as well.

As the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere mentioned, we still have some issues with the OTM, or over 30 months, animals. I believe the number of animals considered as culls that are OTM are around a million that are in the system. In some cases OTM animals have records of origin, and these are probably some of our purebred varieties, but I think we're mainly talking about our commercial cattle herds. While a good traceability system benefits market access in good times, it can also prevent borders from prolonged closure during a disease outbreak.

I have a few questions regarding the recent OIE ruling granting Canada controlled risk status for BSE, a decision that was welcomed by our beef industry. Can the minister tell me how this recent ruling reflects or impacts Alberta Agriculture's budget? Who is paying for this new system, and who is monitoring and administering it? Will there be changes as a result of this ruling? How will it impact our traceability and food safety measures and initiatives? Perhaps a more important question which has been there is whether it has the full support of producers.

I have many ranchers in my constituency that belong to the Alberta Beef Producers, and they're mainly cow-calf producers. In the last communication with me they expressed concerns that the regulations were very onerous on them. They cited additional costs and the need for additional handling of their animals. These animals aren't pets, and they don't have names. Actually, they're handled as very little as possible. They're also concerned with the perceived need for multiple tags needed and hung from the ears of these animals and the potential for these tags getting caught in such things as fences and feed bunks and being lost. This is also coupled with the extra record keeping requirement. The penalties for not keeping up with these are also a great concern. Perhaps the minister might want to speak on this.

I know that electronic chips embedded in the necks of the animals are perhaps the newest and the best way to keep track of the animals in their respective herds, but is this available at a reasonable cost? Given what I mentioned in the last two questions, are there any financial incentives available to do this?

My last questions: does this traceability system put us in the forefront in the world? Will we be recognized as leading the world with our system? Will it really make a difference? Is our system going to be able to give confidence to all of our global customers?

I'd like to thank the minister for being available, and I'll await his answers. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. minister, followed by the Member for West Yellowhead.

**Mr. Groeneveld:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'll try and get through this a little quicker than I did last time in the interest of time here. Anyway, to answer the questions on the effects of the

budget, the department has already put \$3.6 million into new funding to enhance food chain traceability and \$20 million over three years to help operators comply with the feed ban. Of course, the feed ban, we know, goes into effect July 12.

Who's paying for or monitoring or administering the new system? That's still being developed, Mr. Chairman. It's a shared federal/provincial funding arrangement. The industry has invested in the CCIA, the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency, for those who don't know. It's not just beef, of course. All livestock commodities are involved in this. That involves sheep, poultry, hogs, and cattle, just to mention some.

Mentioning the OIE, how it impacts our initiatives. The OIE decision, Mr. Chairman, is based on policies and actions. Sometimes we say that with tongue-in-cheek because it's supposed to be developed on sound science, but sometimes the policies get in the way. We have to commit to staying on that path, however, the next step being the enhanced feed ban. We can't relax our actions. We've talked to the federal minister about the feed ban and probably some unexpected costs in there. Alberta certainly is stepping up to the plate on that. I think that probably Alberta might perhaps be the only province that is as ready as can be for what we're going to have to face when July 12 comes along and the ban goes into effect.

Do we have full support of the producers? Actually, I guess, you never get full support, but the first step, the beef producers, you know, have created the CCIA, which is certainly working on the issue. I guess you might say that they've been leaders in the industry. There are concerns about the costs going forward; there's no doubt about that. We certainly are working with the CCIA on that.

Additional costs and additional handling. Current federal legislation already requires that all animals be tagged, and I think that probably the people that the hon. member has been talking to certainly fully understand that. We've been working with the CCIA to make it easier to put information into the systems. Of course, I talked about the SRM costs, and Alberta is the only province that has committed more than its federal/provincial share. We've raised the cost concern with the federal government, as I said, and we will press the federal government to be prepared for what's probably going to come down.

Multiple tags. The objective, Mr. Chairman, is one electronic tag – and that's what we're aiming for – with multiple pieces of information. It will not be the conventional dangle tag that we're used to seeing, which the CCIA came out with originally. They are the button tags. Yes, it's still not a hundred per cent. You can lose the button tags as well, but it certainly has improved maintaining the tags. Will it cause extra record keeping? Yes, it will. But, you know, the CCIA's system is based on farmers keeping adequate records, so I think to probably stay competitive in this world, we farmers and cattlemen – and I'm one of them – have to step up to the plate. You know, we've got to work with the farmers, but we also have to educate them and educate ourselves to the fact that this is the day and age where we have to get the record keeping up because a big part of traceability is the information on those tags.

7:40

Just talking about those tags, we say that there's going to be more information on those tags. I think that's absolutely essential, and then I think the average cowman or livestock person will see the benefits of what's available off those tags, and it will improve their breeding program as well. The new tags are going to be electronic. As I said, they aren't the dangle tags that we're used to. The information on those tags, the issue I just talked about, is important.

Also, the device reading those tags. We get warned all the time by the cattle people out there about our IT system. We have to have the most modern system available out there. There are some trial runs right now. I think there's one in Strathmore, as a matter of fact, where the animals are run through the chute in multiple lots. There are some pilot programs out there where the scanner will read all these cattle. They have to be, I think, within 200 metres of the cattle, which is certainly an improvement from the system that we've been trying so far. So the IT system has to be modern-day technology, and it has to work in the pilot project; otherwise, it isn't going to be accepted.

Is it going to put us at the forefront, leading the world? We would like to think so. It's going to help us get back in the market quickly, and it's probably going to take up to four years to be competitive. Enhanced traceability, in my opinion and my department's opinion, will give us access to some new markets, and that is so important. As the conversation we just had with the previous questions, it will meet what consumers are demanding. It has to, or it's not going to be accepted.

Mr. Chairman, I thank the hon. member for the questions, and I'll sit down.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. Member for West Yellowhead, you have two minutes to put your questions on record at least.

**Mr. Strang:** Okay. So he won't be answering them. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

I guess, I've got a couple of items I want to talk to him about. If he can go to his budget for 2007 on pages 76 and 77, if you look at his performance measures there on the value-added products that he's developed, he shows that 2005-06 has got 42, but he's got no actual for 2006-07. Yet in 2007-08 he's looking at 90. So there's a missing figure there. I just would like him to let me know on that.

Then on page 78 what I'm wondering about is that with Bill 32 that we got, is this going to move forward to where we're going to look from the farm gate to the plate so that we can make sure that when we're selling our product, the retail outfit can show exactly where that animal came from? Is he going to work forward with the utilization of the tags? I'd appreciate it if he could let me know on that one.

The other issue is on the aspect on what technology and finance assistance is available to farmers and small business owners to start and operate the biodiesel or ethanol plants in rural Alberta. That's basically your goal five, page 81.

I'm saying this for my colleague from Lacombe-Ponoka. I would pretty well say that's under your goal 1, and this is with the elk industry. Shouldn't we recognize this as a fully integrated agriculture entity separate from wildlife, and shouldn't there be harvest preserves?

Then, I guess, my other question. When I go to the government estimates for 2007-08, if you look at your budget on page 47, I guess I have a little bit of wonderment when I look at the aspects of your infrastructure assistance for municipality waste water. I'm just wondering, when you forecast for 2006-07, you had \$9,073,000, and you're only estimating \$5 million for 2007-08, yet . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** I regret, hon. Member for West Yellowhead, but the time allocated for the Department of Agriculture and Food has now lapsed.

I'd like to thank the officials that have participated by providing support to the minister for their attendance today. Thank you so very much.

## Tourism, Parks, Recreation and Culture

**The Deputy Chair:** Before I recognize the hon. minister, I just want to welcome the officials and inform them that should they need a glass of water or a cup of coffee, just raise your hand. A page will come by and will be able to provide you with water or coffee.

The hon. minister.

**Mr. Goudreau:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to present the estimates for Tourism, Parks, Recreation and Culture for 2007-08. Joining me here today are a few of my key department staff who help keep my ministry running very, very smoothly. On my right, Fay Orr, my deputy minister; Sue Bohaichuk, the acting assistant deputy minister of culture and community development; Dave Nielsen, acting assistant deputy minister of parks, conservation, recreation and sport; behind me, Bob Scott, assistant deputy minister of tourism marketing and heritage; on my immediate left, Pam Arnston, executive director of financial services. Also, seated in the gallery are Anne Douglas, my director of communications; Wilma Haas, acting assistant deputy minister of strategic corporate services; Susan Cribbs, executive director of policy, planning and legislative services; Bernie Mac-Donald, manager of recreation services; as well as Wendy Rodgers, my executive assistant. I think I have just about all of my staff with me tonight.

Mr. Chairman, Tourism, Parks, Recreation and Culture is Alberta's quality-of-life ministry. Our vision is to foster a superior quality of life to make Alberta one of the best places to live, work, and visit. Our mission is to promote, develop, and preserve tourism, culture, and heritage in support of vibrant, active, and inclusive communities. The work of our ministry touches the lives of all Albertans. With our population growing every day, it is vital that we continue to invest in the well-being of our growing communities for current and future generations. That's why Budget 2007 focused on managing growth pressures, one of our government's top priorities. With your approval and support our department will help meet some of the challenges we are facing.

I was charged with addressing three priorities under this new ministry: establishing an MLA committee to develop recommendations on a community spirit program for charitable giving; developing a plan for provincial parks and recreation areas; and the third one, developing a cultural policy for Alberta. I'm very pleased with the progress we have made so far in these important areas. Of course, our ministry encompasses a wide variety of programs and services, and we have many other priority areas that have received support through Budget 2007.

Our 2007-08 program expense is \$756 million, a net increase of \$300 million, the majority of which is one-time capital grants. We have allocated \$140 million a year for the next two years to create the new major community facilities program. This program will help nonprofit groups, municipalities, and aboriginal communities build, maintain, or upgrade recreational and cultural facilities for public use. Another \$80 million in one-time capital grants will support major athletic facilities, fairs, and exhibitions. We have allocated \$40 million for the first year of a three-year \$69 million commitment to the Calgary Olympic Development Association capital renewal project. These commitments have been made in response to the incredible growth and demands we are experiencing. Other budget allocations have also been based on the need to grow along with our population.

We have listened to what Albertans want and what Albertans value. The rights of all Albertans are always of the utmost importance. Educating Albertans and protecting their rights are key to

making our province a safe and welcoming place to call home. Ninety per cent of Albertans say that the Alberta Human Rights and Citizenship Commission is important to ensuring that our rights are protected in our province. With that in mind we will increase support for the commission and for programs promoting fairness, diversity, and inclusion by 7 per cent.

7:50

Another important group representing the interests of Albertans is the Francophone Secretariat. The secretariat represents more than 205,000 francophones in our province. An 8 per cent increase in its budget will support initiatives promoting French language and culture and will help to preserve a rich part of our heritage.

Another great example of what Albertans value is Alberta's artistic and cultural community. Mr. Chairman, most Albertans, 87 per cent of them, feel that the arts are an important contributor to our quality of life. That's why we will invest \$65.9 million in arts and cultural programs this year. The Alberta Foundation for the Arts, which supports festivals, exhibits, artists, and more, received an additional 4 and a half million dollars in lottery funding. This is an increase of 20 per cent over last year.

Lottery funding for the Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks & Wildlife Foundation will increase by 15 per cent, an additional \$3 million, over the previous year. This foundation uses its total budget of \$26.6 million to support the Alberta Games, provide grants to more than 100 associations, to train coaches, and much more. With 82 per cent of adult Albertans participating in some sort of recreation or sport, this is a valuable investment, an investment in healthy, active lifestyles.

In addition to increased funding for entities like the AFA and the Sport, Recreation, Parks & Wildlife Foundation we are also investing in provincial facilities. We will address services and maintenance in our provincial parks with an \$8 million injection. That means more conservation officers, interpreters, maintenance and gate staff to serve visitors and protect our land and facilities. As we celebrate the 75th anniversary of Alberta's provincial parks this year, it is a perfect opportunity to invest in these valuable resources.

Other provincial facilities receiving new funding are provincially owned museums and historic sites. Four million dollars more for these attractions will help with operating costs and refurbishing displays and exhibits. The Royal Tyrrell Museum has already unveiled its plans to renovate a permanent gallery. Head-Smashed-In Buffalo Jump will produce a new presentation for their main theatre, and exterior and exhibit improvements will be done at Historic Dunvegan, Stephansson House, and Fort George and Buckingham House.

Our museums and historic sites are major attractions for Albertans and other visitors alike, attracting some 850,000 visits in 2005. Promoting even more visits to our sites and other Alberta attractions will increase in the coming year thanks to a \$9 million boost for tourism marketing and development programs. This boost is due to a combination of increased visitation, more rooms available, and higher room rates, which means more collections under the tourism levy. These additional funds will help us attract visitors from key markets and will allow us to focus on emerging markets as well. Albertans continue to be our largest market and represent about half of Alberta's total tourism expenditures. With new Albertans arriving every day, we will continue to encourage people to explore our province and all it has to offer.

Increased funding will also go towards developing new and improved tourism products that will help us be competitive in an increasingly competitive industry. Initiatives like the Canadian badlands come to mind. The Canadian badlands are being branded

as Alberta's next tourism icon. Reaching from Stettler in the north to the Montana border and all the way from just east of the Queen Elizabeth II highway to the Saskatchewan border, the Canadian badlands include an impressive mix of history, art, culture, and adventure perfect for any traveller. Drawing more visitors to Alberta with new and interesting attractions and experiences like those found in the badlands will bring more money to our province. Tourism, Mr. Chairman, already generates over \$5 billion for Alberta's economy and employs more than 103,000 people.

Our other investments in the arts, recreation, and parks not only help improve our quality of life but will make significant contributions to our economy. Recreation and sports grants generate impressive returns. Every grant dollar generates \$5 in community spending. Our volunteer organizations and nonprofits employ 176,000 people and have an economic impact of \$9.6 billion.

Finally, our provincial historic and cultural sites contribute \$61 million to our economy, while our parks contribute \$1.3 billion.

Mr. Chairman, it's clear that my ministry's efforts to improve Alberta's quality of life and address growth pressures also make an impressive impact on our economy. By supporting the 2007-08 estimates for my ministry, you are supporting our efforts and helping us make Alberta one of the best places to live, work, and visit.

I would now be pleased, Mr. Chairman, to answer any questions.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

**Mr. Strang:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll start by referring to your government estimates for 2007-08 for the general revenue fund. First of all, I want to thank you very much, especially on the major community facilities grants, page 355. That's going to work very well for the communities.

If you can give me an explanation on page 354 under recreation and sports where you've got hosting major athletic events. For 2005-06 you had actually \$2,175,000. There's no showing for 2006-07, yet for 2007-08 you're only \$500,000. So what happened to \$1,675,000? You know, if this is for the Winter Games and Summer Games, we're always having a lot of trouble. You know what transpired in the second last one up in your area where everybody had a partner, and it puts a lot of stress on it. We've never had that function raised at all since its inception. So I really strongly believe we have to move forward on that.

You look on page 352, the third item there under expense. I see you've raised it \$14,436,000. I don't know what all you've got in that one there. So I'm just wondering if you can give me an explanation on those.

Then if you go to page 313 of your budget plan for 2007 and your goal 4, speaking on the aspect of tourism and increasing your visitation and that. What I'm looking at is your strategy 4.1: develop and partner domestic and international marketing programs. If you could just sort of elaborate where you are on that.

Then a couple of other ones that I'm looking at. If you can give me an update on where we are on the recreation corridor review. I mean, I'd certainly like to know where we're at with that aspect.

I noticed you mentioned in your opening remarks the aspect of the Tyrrell museum, that you're going to do a lot more there. But we've got a lot more to offer in Alberta, and we're always trying to get tourists to come to Alberta, stay that extra day or so, and I'd strongly suggest that we really work on the aspect of a dinosaur trail. We can move into Tumbler Ridge. They're finding a lot of aspects there now that we're working with British Columbia with TILMA. Then we go through Grande Prairie and Grande Cache and then on the way to the Tyrrell museum. I think we've got a real thing to sell there.

I know I had asked this question earlier today of the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development as they're looking at the aspect of the Yellowhead corridor and looking at some tourism destination sites. I'm just wondering: what involvement are you going to have with these tourism nodes that they're developing in the Yellowhead corridor and especially in the Brûle area. As you realize, you have the Alberta Outfitters Association there, and they're questioning the aspect of moving into that area, especially with a lot of that land in there. Sure, it's not under your jurisdiction, but basically it's a lot of leased land for Alberta Outfitters.

8:00

On the subject of Alberta Outfitters I'm wondering if you could just give me some insight on the aspect of where we're at with looking at moving forward with them, possibly to look at some licensing of areas that they can operate in. I know that we've got some class 1, class 2 operators. You know, with the Willmore wilderness park we've certainly got to make sure we keep that as pristine as possible. I'd strongly suggest that we sort of work with the different groups, especially the Alberta Outfitters. I'm just wondering where we're at with the aspect of tenure and transferability.

I've got one more. You know, we're talking about tourism, and I wonder how far we're going with ecotourism. Also, another area that is working: I know we're looking at doing some partnership with Jasper and with Grande Cache with the aboriginal tourism. That's a huge area, too.

You had mentioned that Alberta parks are looking at the aspect of their 75th anniversary. Well, Jasper national park on September 14 will have their 100th anniversary, so I hope we're going to work cooperatively with them, too.

I'll leave you with those. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Goudreau:** Well, thank you very much. I want to thank the hon. member for the questions. Initially, just some quick comments on the major community facilities grant. As you are aware, we have \$140 million approved this particular year and another \$140 million that's been approved for the following year. That's what we're committing to spending. Mr. Chairman, that's broken down into four different sections, with about \$35 million allocated to each of the larger cities of Edmonton and Calgary and another \$35 million to the smaller cities as well as \$35 million to rural Alberta. We really believe that the facilities are very much needed. We're looking at major recreational facilities, some health-related type facilities in terms of facilities that promote active participation.

On the Alberta Games, basically, you look at the budget going from \$2.175 million down to \$500,000. I need to indicate that in 2005 \$1.3 million was used to pay for the World Masters Games. There was another \$250,000 that was used for the cross-country ski World Cup, another \$125,000 that was used for the world half marathon, and half a million dollars for the 2007 Western Canada Games. What's being budgeted now is the Western Canada Summer Games: half a million dollars.

Now, your comments on page 313, goal 4. I might reiterate that goal:

Develop and partner domestic and international marketing programs for Alberta through Travel Alberta that support the Strategic Tourism Marketing Plan, which outlines both domestic and international target markets and strategies to increase visitation, length of stay and expenditures in all regions of Alberta.

Certainly, we do have general sales agents that are working

around the world. They're hired. We're targeting Australia, Japan, Korea, Great Britain, and Germany. We're working very, very closely with the media in those particular locations to encourage visitations and to get them familiarized with our province.

On the rec corridors, Mr. Chairman, the Member for Livingstone-Macleod is working on that and is co-chairing our committee, our group, and is leading that. Basically, we recognize that trails are very, very important to Albertans and to our communities, and there is a need to manage recreational trail networks right across the province. Certainly, there's a need to have better outdoor experiences.

We want to look at a designation program that will help Albertans be involved in trails and, eventually, have better experiences and lead healthier, more active lives. Certainly, funding is available in our particular budget for the operation of the Alberta recreational corridor designation program as soon as that particular program is ready for implementation, and we anticipate that to happen rather soon. There's \$500,000 that has been allocated this year for that particular activity and another \$400,000 for the next two years following that.

Just some quick comments on the Dinosaur Trail. Certainly, there's a lot of work that's being done in different parts of Alberta. You're familiar with the work that we've done at Drumheller, the improvements that we're doing there, and the additional designation in the south. We recognize the fact that dinosaurs followed the whole length of the eastern part of the province of Alberta. We're looking at, you know, that whole area that can be exploited and developed and encouraged. We are working with a group out of Grande Prairie, as you're aware. Tourism in Grande Cache as well, the death race. Future development of the dinosaur tracks interpretive centre. Longer term tourism development could really include some secondary types of developments in those areas. We really believe that, you know, the whole Dinosaur Trail can become a very strong international icon or a draw for that.

With the outfitters, you're aware that we've met with them, and certainly through Sustainable Resources we're going to continue to work with the outfitters to try to accommodate them. Your comments about licensing of areas has to be reviewed. You know, we're mandated and committed to working with them as to how we might be able to accommodate them.

Ecotourism. We've met with individuals just in the last couple of months. Certainly, that was one of the big discussions that was there. There is a need to look at it. I don't believe that we've got anything formally planned for this year's budget. Basically, we're looking at those areas.

We want to enhance, as well, aboriginal tourism. We recognize and believe that they have a very, very strong role in the tourism areas of the province of Alberta. There are some activities that are already happening with that particular sector, and we want to keep on growing and developing the aboriginal tourism. We've got a committee that's looking at the whole aspect of aboriginal tourism, and certainly we will keep on working with that committee to have some ideas flow through and grow that particular sector.

Mr. Chairman, certainly, the member is right: this year is the 75th anniversary of our provincial parks. We are looking at some major improvements to a number of our parks right across the province. Hopefully, we will be able to join forces with Jasper to make sure that Jasper will have a successful 100th anniversary as well at their particular park.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne.

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Thank you. I want to talk about your core business 1: manage Alberta's provincial parks and protected areas and promote recreational and sport opportunities. You know, in my constituency for years we had great roadside campgrounds. They weren't provincial parks, but they were places where tourists, international tourists – I had lots of family from Holland that loved to stop at those places and camp and enjoy the scenery. All of these in my area are either closed or turned over to the county and now have gates on them. But I do have one great park, and that's Carson-Pegasus provincial park. I think it was built when there were, you know, just a little over 2 million people in Alberta. With the price of gas I can see an early trend that's started: lots of folks coming out from Edmonton spending their complete holiday at Carson-Pegasus provincial park rather than going to B.C. or Jasper or longer destinations.

**8:10**

One thing that I'm getting loud and clear from my constituents – and I think, Minister, you've had an opportunity to talk with Leo Zelinski, the chamber of commerce president, and others from my community saying that we need to expand facilities. You know, we haven't had an expansion on camping stalls in our area for an awful long time. I wouldn't expect you to have this information today, but I would kind of like to know: as the population of this province has grown, have camping stalls grown equally? My observation in my constituency is no. I wonder if you have those kinds of stats. It would be interesting.

[Mr. Mitzel in the chair]

You know, it goes back to that quality of life issue. Both residents and visitors have enjoyed our camping facilities, but they're getting harder and harder to get into. I'm wondering: where in your budget have you addressed the expansion of camping stalls in provincial parks? Where in your budget have you put aside some money to talk about P3 opportunities in expanding our existing parks? I think that a P3 may be an opportunity that we might have overlooked. Maybe your staff has done that.

I do want to mention, while I'm looking up at the gallery, two staff members who worked for me when I was minister of government services and acting minister of innovation and science. I always recognize a bright minister when he surrounds himself with bright people, and you've got two of the brightest around, I'll tell you that.

But I'd like some information on where we're going. Where in your plan have you allotted dollars to expand those core business opportunities that you talk about in core business 1? I'll sit down and hear from you on that.

**The Acting Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Goudreau:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Certainly, the Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne asks some very, very important questions and has some very timely comments as well. I need to indicate that, you know, initially the roadside campgrounds were basically privatized as part of the changes that were made in the early '90s. A lot of them were picked up by the local municipalities, yet others where no interest was shown actually got shut down and closed. Having said that, presently we have over 13,000 camping sites in the province of Alberta. We recognize that our provincial population has grown quite dramatically, and we also recognize that there is a need for more of that.

We are spending \$19 million on infrastructure projects, and they'll



cover quite a number of parks. I need to indicate that Carson-Pegasus this year will get about \$600,000 in upgrades but more so toward the sewer facilities, the water facilities. We're going to be upgrading the water treatment system at Carson-Pegasus, and we'll keep on working on all of our parks for that. My mandate was to develop a parks program and, certainly, to look initially at a needs assessment – that's what we're doing presently – for what's required and then come back with, you know, additional requirements for additional parks in the province of Alberta.

Our parks operations budget for '07-08 is set at \$39 million, just about \$40 million, and that's about a 17 per cent increase over what we were spending in previous years. So we are heading in the right direction. We are growing. We are committed to expanding our parks. We're adding full-time equivalents, people, there to run our parks better. We're adding conservation officers. We're adding, you know, interpreters, visitor service representatives, so we're hoping to be heading in the right direction.

You talked about P3s. Certainly, it's a great idea, and if the opportunity is there to entertain P3s, we will do that. We are hoping to enter into longer term contracts with our operators to allow them to make some necessary improvements, improvements that are required in our parks. If a contractor, for instance, wants to set up shower facilities or maybe a small swimming pool in a particular park, that he be allowed to do that providing he's got enough time to recoup his cost: we're really looking at those areas.

**The Acting Chair:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

**Ms Haley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I just have a few questions for you, minister. The first is with regard to our park area, the actual physical area, including special areas, if you could give me a sense of what we're doing with that, how large it is. My understanding is that we have set aside approximately 12 and a half to 13 per cent of the province into a special areas program, but I also understand that we've not created any additional staffing – if we have, I'm not familiar with what it is – to look after these areas. I'd like your thoughts on that and what we're doing with them and how we can maintain or manage them without putting more resources into them. Do you see down the road a sort of master plan concept for the special areas of what you'd like to see actually being done with them, or is the idea just to freeze them and keep them the way they are?

I'd also like to ask you a little bit about film now that it's in your department and it's all back together, if you can give me a sense of where you see it going. Are we going to be able to increase the funding into the film development program by 10 per cent a year, which is something that we were trying to get done a couple of years ago in a Treasury Board situation? Will you continue to pursue that so that they know that they have growth on a continual basis, that they can continue to expand the film industry in our province until they reach sort of a critical mass?

You have an area of your department that helps with different sporting-type functions. You have a director of, you know, for example – I don't know – canoeing or kayaking or something, just as a thought, you know, but they really don't have a lot of resources to do much below them. I'm wondering if you've looked at that concept, at the various directors you have for different sports to see if there's a more effective or comprehensive way to deal with the sporting issues in our province. On the other hand, if it's truly a great system that we have now, I'd just appreciate your telling me that.

The other comment, minister, would be on our CFEP grants. I know that we've got additional money for the major capital projects,

but we're still missing the point on the CFEP grant, and that is: it's been a \$125,000 maximum grant, I think, since the inception of the program probably over 20 years ago. Costs have gone up dramatically since that time. Everybody's wants, needs, and expectations have gone up dramatically, but we're still dealing with \$125,000, sort of a capped grant. For a \$12 million project that somebody's trying to build, it doesn't go very far anymore whereas it used to. On a \$2 million project \$125,000 was a fairly substantive amount. Are you looking at changing the parameters of that program and, if possible, getting money from a major capital side but rolling it into a CFEP program so that MLAs would also have some input into what the priorities are for their constituencies?

I couldn't help but note that in Calgary's major capital grant they're already over \$500 million in asks compared to the 40 or so million that they're going to get. It reminds me of the centennial project that we came up with a few years ago, where we had about a hundred million dollars and about \$2 billion worth of applications. Now that we've created this storm, how do we maximize the good that this amount of money can do for the city of Calgary or for surrounding communities that will be dealing with a different pool of money? How are we going to deal with the massive overask that we're going to get on this program?

Those are my questions, and your thoughts would be appreciated.

8:20

**The Acting Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Goudreau:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Certainly, the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere has some very, very good questions. Her first one was on the special areas and sort of the special places, as we call them. There were quite a few new areas that were added. As a matter of fact, 81 were added under the special places program between 1995 and 2001, and 13 areas were expanded. We have currently about 278 permanent ministry staff and about 300 seasonal staff that provide interpretation and work within all of our parks. We're adding, as I indicated in my previous comments, to the numbers of people that will be working in the parks. Our budget will allow us to hire 34 additional permanent park staff and about 60 additional seasonal staff, and we're also adding, as I had indicated, conservation officers, maintenance service workers, and, again, interpretative and visitor information staff and gate staff.

The just a little over 500 protected areas cover about 27,530 square kilometres of the province of Alberta, and that's about 4.1 per cent of Alberta's land base. That includes the 69 provincial parks that I talked about and over 250 recreational areas or special areas. Different areas have different designations. I think where we're at at this particular time is to develop management plans for a lot of those new areas that were created, and we're at that particular process. We're working on a lot of those areas and, actually, adding and developing some of the management plans that are required for that.

The 12 per cent figure that you identified includes national parks. If we just look at the provincial side, then we're at about 4 per cent, but when we put in all the national parks, we're at that particular level.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

On the film side our increase to funding is 23 and a half per cent in 2007-08. That's about a 3 and a half million dollar increase to our budget in this particular year. Our intent is to grow that. We're getting tremendous interest in Alberta and tremendous interest in

what we have to offer. Some of the facilities that we have, the attractions, the province itself lead to more interest from producers, and certainly there's a keen interest there. With the added production comes, you know, increased interest. Increased interest means more applications, so more pressures on the film front. Basically, we're hoping to have it grow.

We're hoping to work with the industry. We're looking at potentially a new funding program for the industry to try to stretch our particular dollars a little further. We're looking at a pilot project with a couple of features whereby we might get two series occurring in the province of Alberta. We're very, very close to signing an agreement on those. That in itself would use up probably a fair amount of our film budget, but we'd probably just about double the economic activity of the film industry in the province of Alberta. The interest is certainly there. We want to grow it. My intent is to try to get additional money in the future. I think we're going to be okay this year, but at the rate that things are growing, we're going to be short in the future.

On the sports side we do have sports consultants, and we are working with various groups. We've got individuals there. Again, the whole sports side has received an increase in funding. My ministry is probably one of the luckiest ministries. We were able to accommodate and allocate additional funds in just about all of the sectors, so, you know, we have been able to allocate additional dollars to them.

On the CFEP one your comments are right, member. We have not changed the \$125,000 maximum. It's not our intent, at least my intent, on a short-term basis to see any changes there, and certainly that's why we came out with the major facilities program. The major facilities program is designated to cover anything over and above the \$125,000. And you're right: the requests so far, those that we know are coming towards us, already are at \$1.3 billion, and the list is growing on a daily basis.

We do have \$140 million this year, another \$140 million next year, but we need to point out one thing. If I total that \$280 million and if that covers, say, a third of the cost of new projects, we can probably cover about \$800 million worth of new construction or improvements to major facilities, so it will take a good chunk out of the \$1.3 billion of requests.

We will have a challenge to prioritize. In our larger centres we'll leave it to our members to make priorities within their community. When it comes to the smaller cities and to rural Alberta, it will be more of a challenge. Certainly, we'll have to look at them on a project-by-project basis and try to assess the importance of the individual projects as well as try to be equitable right across the province to ensure that some of our money is spent throughout the province, that some of our money is allocated to projects that will meet the greatest needs and provide the greatest service to Albertans.

**The Deputy Chair:** Any further questions? Anybody else?

Well, Mr. Minister and officials of the Department of Tourism, Parks, Recreation and Culture, thank you so very much for supporting the minister and providing him with the assistance.

### **International, Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Relations**

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Boutilier:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure to be here. It's a pleasure to stand and be here. First of all, I'd like to introduce my deputy minister of many years of experience and service, Gerry Bourdeau, who is with us here today, and I thank Gerry and members of the ministry who are helping us tonight.

It's a pleasure to present the estimates for the new International,

Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Relations, referred to as IIAAR. IIAAR means that I am not a pirate but, quite the contrary, the direct opposite of being a pirate, ultimately helping the 3.4 million Albertans in what we are proposing in this 2007-2008 budget of \$67.6 million.

This is, I want to say, quite a collage of ministries coming together from aboriginal relations and, of course, dealing with things such as the Métis settlements and Métis nation as well as dealing with our foreign offices as well as, of course, dealing with intergovernmental relations relative to working with the federal government and our territorial and provincial governments across Canada.

There is no question, in my humble opinion, from the work that Alberta has done in the past many years and, of course, of our Premier, who was also in this ministry as minister, that Alberta is without question a leader when it comes to the leadership role it plays in terms of intergovernmental relations as well as aboriginal relations in dealing with other important stakeholders across this country. I am very proud to say that we are looked on, this ministry, as perhaps without question one of the most experienced and senior ministries when it comes to a comparison to other provinces and territories. Specifically, Quebec has a very good reputation in their intergovernmental, federal/provincial relations, as we observe, and I want to say that Alberta is without question there, if not and then some, when it comes to what we do in terms of leadership in this country.

With this budget I will work with what's most important: the Premier's six mandated priorities in my ministry, two Canadian intergovernmental priorities in terms of co-ordinating Alberta's approach to intergovernmental relations but also developing and enhancing our intergovernmental strategy, and we've had some very good success in that.

**8:30**

One international priority, of course, is enhancing Alberta's international presence in trade relations, especially with our neighbours to the south, the United States. I might add that our budget is about \$2.16 million less this year, is what's being forecast. But it's interesting to note that one of our key components that we had in terms of last year and our one-time spending was the Smithsonian event, where truly Alberta showcased the world in Washington, DC, in terms of dealing with the international presence in trade relations with the United States. It was a huge success. In fact, we've received calls from the 10 provinces and three territories relative to the success that we had at the Smithsonian Institution last summer, which many ministers and MLA colleagues and our Premier, of course, visited during that time, in strengthening our relationship with our neighbours to the south.

I might also say that we have three important aboriginal priorities: finalizing the aboriginal consultation strategy, finalizing the long-term Métis governance funding, and building aboriginal self-sufficiency. These priorities, of course, cross most of my ministry's core businesses, and we look forward to working to address the specific key components arising from the Premier's mandate and our core businesses. For example, to finalize aboriginal consultation, we first need to help First Nations complete and share traditional land-use studies as they can better participate in consultation. I think that is an important part of our road map that we are moving down with very good success.

I might also add that through Alberta's 10 international offices and the Alberta international marketing strategy, referred to as AIMS, we are also working very closely to increase Alberta's – and I repeat this; I know that the hon. Member for West Yellowhead is

listening intently – \$81 billion in exports. You ask me how much: \$81.1 billion in exports in terms of what we are doing within our Alberta international offices across the world.

We also will review our international offices in light of Alberta's changing needs. It is very important to ensure that the right priorities are in the right place in this changing global economy. For example, the offices help export-ready businesses find markets, but also we are likely to recruit more workers where it comes to an identified need.

It's important to note that when it comes to workforce capability, this province and our Premier have a priority of Alberta first, other provinces and territories second, and international third. We will never stray from that approach where it's Alberta first, interprovincial second, and then, of course, international third. Because of the tremendous work that we are facing in this province, it is clear that the successes we are having in the international market in foreign workers is important, but we continue to work with our stakeholders, with unions, and with others in terms of how we can have an Alberta first, interprovincial second, and then, of course, from national to international third.

Adding two new aboriginal relations divisions and international offices in trade resulted in a fourfold increase in ministry staff, and of course some amalgamated areas such as human resources, communications, and the newly established corporate services now have more staff but not new FTEs to serve the larger ministry.

Let me just summarize to say that the \$67.6 million that are serving 3.4 million Albertans is very small by government standards, but I want to let you know that some things are like dynamite. Dynamite may be small, but it does come with a big bang. I might add that there is no question that this \$67.6 million comes with a big bang. The Smithsonian, the work we're doing interprovincially, the work we're doing with aboriginals are just excellent examples of that huge success, and I want to thank our staff for the excellent work that they are doing in carrying out this road map of moving and continuing to move Alberta into the 21st century.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

**Mr. Strang:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It's always great to follow the Minister of International, Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Relations. I've got just a few questions. If he could turn to Budget 2007, page 214, under his goal 2 I don't see anything in here that is stating that we're looking at possibly opening up an Ottawa office. I know that 2(b) in his performance measures has worked very well in Washington, DC, so I'm just wondering if we can expect anything on that.

If you go to page 215 – and we're talking about TILMA; that's his goal 3 – I'm wondering if he anticipates any effects on the aspect of logging for the simple reason of partnership there and also working some type of a partnership with the aspect of tourism.

Then if I can sort of switch back to goal 2. As you realize, for a number of years we've had the softwood lumber tariff on the nation of Canada, and of course Alberta has paid a lot into that, and a lot of our different sawmills have paid a lot of money into that. I know that it has to work through the federal government before we start getting any money back on that, and I just wonder what he's doing on that so that we can get it back and get it back working in Alberta so we can move forward.

Then, I guess as a last remark, as you know, with the interim Métis harvesting agreement we're looking at a date of July 1 for the new agreement to come in. I'm just wondering where we're at with that scenario. So if you could give me some information on that, I'd greatly appreciate it.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Boutillier:** Well, thank you. I want to say, first of all, on the softwood lumber agreement, which is so important, that the new Canada/U.S. softwood lumber agreement ends decades of past disputes and future litigation. I think we can all agree that rather than spending money on the legal profession, we're able to in fact really use our energy and money and financial resources in a positive way of helping Canadians, Albertans, and of course our neighbours to the south.

The U.S. has a history of launching new litigation when decisions are favourable to Canada. That is not a surprise to us. The deal is not perfect, but in exchange for no new litigation Canada accepts some limits on its softwood exports. It is not free trade, but it's managed trade, I think is what we refer to in the 21st century. There were two options to limit softwood exports: a higher export tax with no quotas or a lower export tax with a quota. Alberta, our province, chose, working with our other ministries, an export tax with no export quotas. Industry pays a higher export tax when prices are low but also no export tax when prices are high. Of course, this is favourable, and prices are very low right now, so industry is paying the highest tax. Now, that, though, of course, will change when prices go back up, which I think is so important. Our colleagues in Sustainable Resource Development are also working with industry to implement the softwood lumber agreement.

Pertaining to TILMA, the trade, investment and labour mobility agreement, I want to say that this is an excellent example of barrier busting. How do we help ultimately a trading economy of people, the second largest in Canada, 7.7 million people between B.C. and Alberta? I want to say that at our joint cabinet meeting of B.C. and Alberta last week, both our Premier and the Premier of B.C. talked about how we can move this forward even quicker because of the incredible benefits of trade that can help our taxpayers and our voters when it comes to barrier busting, and that's exactly what is taking place when it comes to TILMA.

Pertaining to the issue of the Ottawa office, I'm very pleased to say that at our CPC meeting there was unanimous support by all of our colleagues for the Ottawa office, but as the hon. Member for West Yellowhead is very familiar, we are doing a review of all of our offices, the 10 offices, and in our budget we have earmarked just under a million dollars for an Ottawa office. But we think it is very appropriate at this time that we review all of our offices – where we are, where our resources are being spent – before we determine to make a final decision if, in fact, that office is the most appropriate use of our resource.

**8:40**

So what we have done is we have factored in the Ottawa office with the other foreign offices, that the hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake is doing and reviewing with the hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright and also with the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat. Obviously, we are taking that approach to be able to work collectively to be able to do the best review so that the financial resources will be directed in the best way to yield the greatest results for the province of Alberta in the next many years.

I think we're on the right track. Other provinces are paying attention. The Premier of Ontario has called our Premier of Alberta asking him for information and tips on TILMA. It really is clear to me that Alberta continues to lead on the intergovernmental side within this nation, and I'm very proud to be the minister of intergovernmental and international relations when it comes to leading in such important aspects.

I hope that answers the hon. member's questions.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

**Ms Haley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I just have a couple of questions, and I promise to be nice. I'm interested in the Métis settlement side of things, to know how that's going. Last year there was a lot of discussion. They had asked for an increase in funding, Minister, to try and get them to the point where they could be more self-sustaining in the Métis settlement concept. I understand that there was money given to your department to do this.

Now, the real question here is: when do we stop funding it? What is the transition period for them to go through so that they can be a small municipality concept where they have their own property tax and can work on an industrial base to increase their tax level? I'm interested in that side of it. I understand the concept of trying to help them get started, but it has to stop at some point.

They also asked for their own version of a heritage savings trust fund concept, where they wanted government to set aside a certain amount of money so that they could draw on it on an annual basis. It was not something that I was in favour of, although I understood their reason for wanting to do it. My question, then, with regard to how to help them create their own sustainability, comes back to the casino concept, Minister, that all of the First Nations will be sharing in some of the revenue for various charities inside that portion of aboriginal affairs, but I don't think the Métis settlements are part of that. So is there something on that side that can be done?

My other question on First Nations would be this. In the States one of their versions of First Nations through their casino concept also set up a series of scholarships for their own children growing up on a reserve, getting a great education, being sent out, becoming chartered accountants or lawyers or educators or professors and various things. Part of the requirement on the granting of their scholarship was that they had to come back and help the next generation develop their skills so that there would be literally a seamless transition between the reservation, with their own lifestyle, versus the rest of urban United States, where there could be a very good transition and a very good working relationship between both sides. I'm wondering, when you're looking at aboriginal affairs, if you look at anything like that, some modelling that you may be able to pick up on from the States on how maybe to make things work better on the reservations so that their standard of living improves in a similar pattern to our own.

My last comments would be on your international offices. Years and years and years ago I had an opportunity to do a presentation to then Premier Peter Lougheed on the need for international offices. The point was never for those offices to do everything for us as businesspeople. We were in an export business on both grain and purebred cattle. What we needed at that time was the government's ability to help us open some doors in other nations like Japan, China, Venezuela, or Peru, places like that, and even into Mexico. It was never about the government having to spend huge, vast amounts of money on, you know, big, fancy, palatial offices. It was always about helping us as businesspeople be able to access their business community. We needed somebody to help introduce us.

I'm wondering, when you're looking at your international presence, if you not only just appreciate that you're reviewing the offices that we currently have to make sure that they're meeting the needs, that we were trying to help Alberta as an export province, but also going back and looking at the original concept of what it was to do, which was to help open doors for businesses in this province. Part of your review, I'm hoping, would also encompass stakeholder input from not just large corporations but the SMEs, the small- and medium-sized enterprises, that actually go out with one person and try and sell, you know, a \$500,000 contract or a million dollar

contract on goods and services as well as on big petrochemicals. There are a lot of smaller companies, and we need to continue to encourage them to develop here and to encourage their expertise.

Your thoughts on those types of things would be appreciated.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Boutilier:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to say that the last suggestion is an excellent one relative to our international offices. As much as we are exporters of \$81 billion, I totally agree with the hon. member, first and foremost, that government may have a small role to play, but government is not there to tell business how to do business. I think markets, which I am a full advocate of, will dictate those businesses who will be successful and those businesses who will not be successful. Ultimately, the fate of a business will be determined by how they read the market.

The approach I have taken with foreign offices, I want to say, is that, number one, this is not just simply a government review. I'm pleased to say that the hon. . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. minister, I just want to draw to your attention that we are live on webcast gavel to gavel. Unfortunately, the camera is in this direction, so you may just want to be aware of that.

**Mr. Boutilier:** Well, I'm a bit shy of television cameras, but I will try to do my best.

Actually, on the foreign office side the suggestion by the hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere is so important, that this is not just about government; this is a partnership. It's a partnership of how we collect from not only our key stakeholders, but I believe at the end of the day that if our international offices are successful, it will be Alberta businesses that are out there talking about the important support they've received because of the international work that we've done working with them as partners.

I'll give you a couple of examples of offices that are so important. For instance, I'll give you a good-news story: Olds College. The Alberta office in China put the Olds College in touch with a Chinese business and is supporting project work and student recruitment work. The trade office is identifying potential partners and keeping Olds College informed of business trends. Ms Pat Bidart, who is the dean of agriculture, technology, and college assessing, says this, and I think it's an excellent example on the important topic the hon. member mentioned: I've worked directly with international offices in China, Taiwan, Korea, and Germany. All of the offices have provided excellent support and assistance when we have contacted them. I have worked directly with the China office since 1999, over eight years, and whether it was assistance in identifying projects, determining market forces, or finding out an institution that dealt with management, the Chinese office had the connections and Olds College had the need, but the offices that we had were the ones that were being used.

Another example is Poon McKenzie Architects if I could use a small example. They were seeking to expand on the international market their consulting services into overseas markets. Rather than government saying what you should do, what we did was we partnered. The Alberta office in China supplied market research and information, created contacts with Chinese clients and networks, and provided advice and logistics of international expansions. The architect Mr. Stephen Suen said that he would have never have been able to make contact with Chinese clients and sign a contract without the support of the Alberta international office in Beijing; it was our first international project, and we look forward to many more

because of the assistance of the Alberta government and the Alberta international offices. So that's a compliment to our people that we have in those offices that are doing important work.

8:50

I might also say that on the international offices not only are we reviewing, but in this changing world and global economy, we are also looking at the BRIC, which is referred to as the countries of Brazil, Russia, India, and, of course, we now have two offices in China, both in Hong Kong and in Beijing. In fact, some financial people have met with me, and they are suggesting that the key part of China in dealing with financial markets and investment dollars is perhaps not in Beijing, as much as that's where the political discussions take place, which we play a role in. They also talked about Shanghai as being the Wall Street or, shall I say, the Bay Street of Canada in Chinese markets. So it's something we will be reviewing as well, determining if, in fact, our offices are located in the right area.

The BRIC of Brazil, Russia, India, and China. Obviously, we are already in China. We are not in Brazil, we are not in Russia, we are not in India, but that will also be part of potential opportunities.

We are also looking for the important point that the hon. member mentioned, and that is their stakeholders, what markets and what businesses are saying in terms of where they think the Alberta government can play an important role politically in helping businesses become successful in what they know best to do, not what government knows best to do. Our job is to help open doors, which, of course, we'll continue to do.

I also want to say that in establishing our foreign offices review committee, their responsibility will be in terms of assessing where our offices are, the costs that are associated with it, but also determining the global economy and emerging needs in terms of assisting Alberta businesses in terms of how we can better integrate when it comes to international operations.

We are also taking a look at the mix of services, their locations, and if, in fact, we are getting the best value for our dollars. I must admit that I have been using not only stakeholders such as independent businesses; I also welcome the valuable advice I've received from many of my colleagues who have travelled around the world relative to offices they've visited. Of course, I've always appreciated the important input. In fact, I know that the hon. Member for Peace River has done some extensive travelling and given me some very important input when it came to particular offices around the world. I have factored those in and am making important decisions relative to how we can get the best value for our dollar with the office, the resource, and with our people that we have there. So I thank him for the important input that we have received regarding that.

Now, on the important point of Métis settlements I want to say that ultimately one of the mandates is self-sufficiency for our Métis settlements. What's really important to us in this example is that prior to 1990 Alberta provided almost 100 per cent of the settlement funding. Today the settlements as a whole are generating a significant amount of revenue that is required to meet the needs of their communities. I applaud the settlements' leader, Alden Armstrong, and his executive, whom I've met with on numerous occasions.

Statutorily mandated payments from Alberta to the Métis settlements ended, many may not be aware, in '06-07. But after negotiations and in terms of this goal and principle of self-sufficiency Alberta agreed to provide \$9 million to the settlements in '07-08 in one-time funding. The reason behind that is that the bulk, \$7 million, was divided among the eight Métis settlements for contin-

ued provision of essential services, but the remaining \$2 million – and this is an important point – will be provided to the settlements' council pertaining to the submission of their acceptable work plan, which they are working on as we speak, that they are intending to have in to us by some time during this summer, and that is predicated on the \$2 million that will assist them in their business plan in being successful towards self-sufficiency.

So I'm eager as minister to be waiting for their business plan of achieving the goal that the hon. member has mentioned when it comes to self-sufficiency. The intention is that the Métis settlements will move even closer to self-reliance, which I know is a goal of both their leaders, their people, and certainly this ministry. We continue to do very good work there.

I will conclude my comments at this point.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne.

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Two issues I want to talk about. First, on core 2, promoting and strengthening international relations. Some 20-plus years ago the province twinned with the province of Hokkaido. At the time the town of Whitecourt took up the challenge from the province and became a twin community with the town of Kamiyubetsu in Hokkaido. I've had the opportunity twice to travel to Kamiyubetsu, and I've had the opportunity maybe a dozen times to host mayors, dignitaries, students in my home over the years.

You know, this relationship that we have has gone a long way in our community to promoting and strengthening the relationship between Hokkaido and Alberta, Kamiyubetsu and Whitecourt, but more so it's given the students of both communities huge opportunities. We now have Whitecourt students that have studied the Japanese language. They have gone over on the JET program – I don't know if you remember the JET program on Japanese education opportunities for teachers – and taught English in Japan. We've had young teachers marry into Japanese families.

We're really getting a great relationship, but it's very hard to keep up to the generosity of the Japanese communities. You know, we fund raise to send our students and others over. The town will sponsor the mayor at times or council members, but it's really hard to match the generosity of the Japanese community because they tap into cultural grants. Kamiyubetsu taps into cultural grants from the province of Hokkaido and from the Japanese federal government. I'm just wondering if there's anything in your budget that my community members, especially the students, can tap into as some funding for these exchanges. It's a great opportunity, and I would encourage everyone out there that's listening to get involved and to know a bit about these exchanges. So my request is: what's in your budget to help promote what the province of Alberta has started?

The second issue I want to talk about is goal 6, the aboriginal relationships. In my band, the Alexis Indian reserve, the chief, Cam Alexis, is one of those chiefs that works very hard for his community like most chiefs that I know you work with. He's also the Treaty 6 housing director, so he has a responsibility to bring increased housing to reserve and off reserve. I know that the federal government is directly responsible for the on-reserve housing issues, but we have opportunities within municipal affairs now. I think there was a \$48 million or \$49 million grant, and recently some announcements made on off-reserve native housing. So I'm wondering where in your budget or where in your business plan you have people that make my chief aware of these programs because they really have to go and dig for these programs and news releases. They don't hear about this stuff. Where do they hear it from your department? Where is that communication?

So, Mr. Minister, at this time just the two issues, core 2 and core 6. I'd like to hear from you on those.

9:00

**Mr. Boutilier:** Well, thank you very much. They're very important. I want to say to the hon. member – and I might also say the former mayor of Whitecourt, of course – in these twinings of the province of Alberta, in actual fact, we have 14 twin communities across many nations. Whitecourt, in your area, is certainly one that is a model for others in terms of the success that has been had regarding education. As a teacher I can say that it has been heralded as a model for other provinces to follow. That's a compliment to the leaders in Whitecourt-St. Anne and, I might also say, to the hon. member, who was the mayor back when the twinning was taking place.

I might add on his question regarding our inner core budget that I'm very pleased that our funding is going up to help our municipal associations. When it comes to that, we're adding an additional – it's under \$10,000, but it is intended to assist in building on the partnerships and strengths that have been developed over the last 20 years. So I believe that is very important. I might say that we have had cultural exchange with so many nations, and the one that he mentioned tonight is just an excellent example that this is truly not an expense but an investment in terms of that. I say that as a teacher in terms of so many of the exchanges we've had between our educational institutions from Japan, from China, from many other municipalities across Alberta.

As a former municipal affairs minister I know that the hon. member very much is aware of the fact that as we work collectively in these partnerships, municipal affairs is playing a key role in working with our First Nations, the Alexis band, that the hon. member talked about. Actually, the hon. member has a very, very good point. I've met with the minister of municipal affairs and have talked to him in terms of how we can continue to have a cross-ministry initiative. The hon. member is absolutely correct: we have excellent programs in this province on housing and so many other issues, but sometimes many communities and First Nations are not aware of them. So I see our role in this upcoming year of enhancing that communication with our cross-ministry initiatives. We have many cross-ministry initiatives, and I might say that one of our key ones is with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing because, clearly, housing has been identified within our First Nations and Métis settlements, and there is absolutely no reason why.

So the hon. member, I know, has probably already talked to the chief relative to the fact that this program is available. I appreciate his letting the First Nations chief know what is available. Ultimately this is about: how do we enhance housing in First Nations areas in this 21st century?

I continue to work with our minister of municipal affairs enhancing the advertising, where we can have a brochure sent to our First Nations and Métis settlements and the Métis Nation of Alberta Association president, Audrey Poitras, with our First Nations Treaty 6, Treaty 7, Treaty 8 grand chiefs, but also with Eldon Armstrong in the Métis settlements. It's an excellent example of how we can enhance with the excellent programs the province of Alberta has.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Anybody else wish to participate in this particular segment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

**Mr. Zwozdesky:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I just want to chime in on one point, and that's with respect to certain international issues as they pertain to Ukraine. The minister is well aware of one of the councils that comes under his purview, and that is the

Advisory Council on Alberta-Ukraine Relations. I think the minister would also know that there are a number of very important issues that face the nation of Ukraine and particularly the government of Ukraine as we speak. They have just recently, for example, agreed to go to a general election sometime in the fall. That's a tremendous step forward, a mark of co-operation, if you will, between President Yushchenko and Prime Minister Yanukovych.

That having been said, however, one of our roles that we play as we keep an international spotlight on these types of situations is to see where it is that we can be of some assistance and, perhaps, where we can also learn something from our friends and cousins elsewhere in the world. So my point here is with respect to some follow-ups that need to be done with the country of Ukraine as given rise to by two previous missions to Ukraine by our former Premier.

Now, this current minister is very well aware of some of these issues, and I'm just wondering if somewhere in the plans in the not-too-distant future there might be an opportunity for a follow-up mission, if not by the minister then perhaps by some others, in order to follow up on the many initiatives and many opportunities that exist in the oil and gas, the petrochemical sector, the agricultural sector, of course in education and in health care, on environmental issues, and so on.

So I'd just like a comment, if I could, from the minister on his feelings with respect to that particular set of questions.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Boutilier:** Thank you very much. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek is absolutely correct in terms of the important relationship we have with Ukraine. I want to also thank him for the excellent work he does as chairman of this important provincial and, really, international committee, and I might say that in terms of a follow-up I look forward to the hon. member as chair of this important committee and with his vast amount of experience representing our ministry in a return mission to that area. I might also say that I do know that our Premier has also expressed an interest, and it's a matter of determining the timing of the mission. I believe that this is without question an excellent example of the partnership we have.

Of course, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek is very familiar with the special guests that we've had visit our province. Our Premier with his background and with the hon. member's background and as chair of this important Alberta-Ukrainian committee that we have, a future mission is very important in terms of not only what we have but also building on the strength of the partnerships we have.

I want to also thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek for recognizing the excellent work of the committee members from across this province who, of course, have played a key role in the many relationships that we've built with Ukraine. I see the future looking brighter and better when it comes to subsequent missions, and I am quite convinced that within this next year a return mission to Ukraine and building on our strengths that we've established is without question within the purview of this ministry. I might say, certainly, that this important Alberta-Ukrainian committee that we have is an excellent example of how we build on that. So I want to thank the hon. member for raising this and indicate that it is on our agenda relative to funding such an important mission in the next year.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** For his support and assistance to the minister I'd like to thank the official that accompanied the minister.

## Justice and Attorney General

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Stevens:** Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I was here two nights ago, and I did outline at that particular point in time the budget of the Ministry of Justice and Attorney General and indicated, essentially, that there are some net \$30 million for operational expenses in this budget that were not there last year and that those particular dollars are going in a number of places.

In the criminal justice area they're going into additional prosecutors, some additional 10 prosecutors and 12 support staff, to help respond to the increasing workload and the complexity. So we have, for example, five new family violence prosecutors, three new prosecutors to handle an increased caseload and megacases, one new prosecutor for the integrated market enforcement team, and one new prosecutor dedicated to the education and training of our junior prosecutors. All of those are areas where there is a significant need for additional support staff, so it will be well used.

In the court services area one of our major projects and, indeed, from my perspective our major project in the go-forward is to implement the justice information management system, or JIMS. This is the new information management system that will be available to all aspects of the justice system, whether it be the courts, the judges, the prosecutors. We are at this particular point in time dealing with what they call legacy systems; in other words, the ones that are on their last legs. So this year's budget has \$2.5 million in new funding, which is allocated to the JIMS project, which will be used to cover project start-up costs for this multiyear project, one that will be ultimately dealt with over the next few years if, in fact, the current timetable is maintained.

9:10

One of the other areas where we are putting additional resources is ticket processing. The increased population and the Solicitor General's traffic enforcement initiative have resulted in more tickets being written, and our experience has been that more of those tickets are now being challenged in court. We are putting \$3.8 million into this particular area to deal with the increase, so we will be able to hire an additional 25 Provincial Court staff. We're paying additional dollars, some \$216,000, to the justices of the peace as a result of the recommendations of the justice of the peace commission in 2006.

Under the legal services division we're putting \$3 million into the aboriginal law area, which deals with some complex aboriginal litigation against Alberta, and some of that money is also going into the area of aboriginal consultation. There's an additional \$2.1 million going into support for the Legal Aid Society of Alberta. Legal Aid, of course, provides assistance to those people who principally are in need of criminal law talent, but there's also a family component, and the total amount this year will be \$45.3 million, money very well spent.

The Public Trustee gets some \$700,000 additional dollars to hire new staff. The Public Trustee administers the estates of dependent adults, decedents, and minors. This money is much needed.

The medical examiner gets \$342,000 in new funding to provide additional dollars for physician earnings and funeral director overhead in rural Alberta among other things.

Maintenance enforcement is an incredibly successful program with some 50,000 active cases, collecting close to \$200 million annually on behalf of 65,000 Alberta children. The budget for maintenance enforcement this year is \$17 million, which is a \$2.1 million increase, and will lead to the hiring of 18 additional collection officers, which will improve the ability of that particular department to provide much needed services to the families in Alberta.

We have \$1.5 million in new funding going to the Crime Reduction and Safe Communities Task Force, which is one of the Premier's initiatives supporting the concept of providing secure and safe communities in Alberta. That particular task force has now gone to 14 communities throughout Alberta over the past couple of months, led very capably by the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. There will be a symposium in Calgary later in June. I believe it's on June 19 and 20. Following that, there will be a report later in the summer from the task force to the minister, and hopefully we will be able to have that reflected in some measure in the business planning for the following year.

There are additional dollars being put into the bill forfeiture collection team. That is the team that ensures that money owed to the Crown is recovered if an accused breaches bail conditions. There are some \$500,000 additional dollars, which will provide for six new collection officers.

Sixty-five per cent of the ministry's budget is related to manpower, Mr. Chairman, and the fact is that a large part of the dollars that I have talked about are going to additional manpower. With respect to the existing manpower we have built in \$5.7 million to manage inflationary pressures, including manpower.

There is \$4.3 million allocated to address the ministry's capital requirements, including \$2.8 million in capital funding to complete the installation of technical infrastructure and equipment at the Calgary Courts Centre, which is on time, on budget. At this point in time the total cost of the Calgary Courts Centre will be \$300 million. We anticipate that the builder will turn over the keys around the end of July, and over the course of August and September there will be a move into the courthouse by the Court of Queen's Bench and members of the Provincial Court, that are currently in four separate locations. By the end of September all will be fully operational, and indeed some of the courts will be operational in August of this year in the new space.

Mr. Chairman, those are some of the highlights with respect to the ministry's 2007-2008 budget. If there are any questions, I'd be happy to take them at this time.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

**Mr. Strang:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. To the hon. minister. First of all, I must compliment the task force that you sent out on crime reduction. It was very well received. I want to thank the RCMP from Edson, Hinton, and Jasper for coming. It certainly shows that there is a concern out there. It was very well received by the people that were there in the workshop. I sure hope that we can move forward on some of those initiatives.

On your business plan, page 227, what I'm wondering about – and you explained a bit about it in your opening remarks – is the Traffic Safety Act and the enforcement on that. There still is quite a bit of concern with a lot of the traffic accidents we're having now. I'm just wondering what you perceive will transpire in the short while to get a lot of these traffic violations handled in a quicker manner so that people are going to learn from the aspect of the speed and everything that we have to slow down and be a lot more cautious.

One of the other questions I had was on your goal 2, pages 228 and 229. There seems to be real confusion. I don't know how we can get it out to the public; hopefully, your task force is doing that. People have a hard time understanding the civil and the criminal justice systems. I'm just wondering if there is some kind of way that we could work with some better type of advertising or get some information out so that we can help a lot of people because we seem to have a lot of confusion on that.

Then on your goal 3, page 229, you spoke about your maintenance

enforcement. Just one precautionary measure I'd like to state on 3.6. I know that they're doing a good job, but sometimes it's the attitude. I realize that it's a tough portfolio in that aspect. If you're the claimant, they're really nice to you, and conversely, if you're the debtor, they treat you like a criminal in a lot of aspects. I've had a family in there and worked as a go-between for them. It works out well, but I understand that it's a tough scenario to work with on that. I mean, we do have some people that are trying to get out of it, and I think they should have the responsibility of looking after the children because the children are our asset. But if you could just sort of mention that to them, I'd greatly appreciate it.

So if you can give me some insight on those few things, I'd greatly appreciate it. Thank you.

**Mr. Stevens:** I appreciate the comments from the hon. Member for West Yellowhead. The task force, indeed, has been doing a very good job. As the hon. member knows, they've been to 14 different locations throughout the province over the past two months. Those locations have been north, south, east, west and reflect a variety of different settings. There has been a good turnout from stakeholders – that would be justice and community stakeholders – within those communities who are anxious to participate to ensure that their input is heard by the task force.

9:20

One of the principles behind the task force is that the justice system – and I'm talking about the police and the prosecution when I talk about the justice system in this sense – is really the catch basin for the problems of society and that it is not enough to simply put more police officers on the streets and more Crown prosecutors in the courtrooms. That will not address some of the issues that we are facing. We have to work upstream and develop some techniques which are going to divert people out of the justice system into more creative and productive roads toward active and healthy citizenship in our communities. That is one of the things that we are hoping Albertans will be able to help us with in terms of best practice, in terms of where the priorities should be as we move forward. Without doubt, there are also ways that we can protect our communities in a typical or more standard justice way, and we're interested in hearing from Albertans on that score too.

I'm very hopeful, hon. member, in receiving a good result from the task force. I think that the summit that we're going to have in about a month's time will be very useful. And I do know this: each of the members of the task force at this point in time is very appreciative of the opportunity of having gone through the province and having talked to Albertans and is very hopeful of coming up with meaningful recommendations for this minister and this government.

With respect to traffic situations and how to deal with those, the hon. member will know that the Solicitor General over the last year or two has been able to put significant new resources on the roads in terms of sheriff officers to patrol the highways. That has in fact given rise to a significant number of new highway traffic tickets, principally speeding, and that is one of the reasons why we are adding additional resources in processing those in this budget.

One of the things that we are also doing, hon. member, is bringing in the electronic ticket. There has been a pilot project here in Edmonton to test it. At this particular point in time – and we're talking about speeding tickets here – about 90 per cent of those are paid voluntarily by the people who receive them, and 10 per cent proceed to court. The 10 per cent that proceed to court need to ultimately be paper tickets, but the 90 per cent can be done electronically. We estimate that as we bring this out in fullness, we will be

able to save something in the order of I believe 380,000 hours of processing time by the people who currently do it, which will provide significant new resources. So we'll be able to redeploy within the system to other needs of the justice system.

Education is always an issue with respect to the justice system, and it's an ongoing interest of ours. At this particular point in time we do have a program to bring education into our public education system. We brought in a module – I believe it was last year – for the grade 3 level. We have one that's anticipated for grade 6 and then grade 9. We work with the folks in the public education, legal education field. There's an organization called PLENA, which I think is the Public Legal Education Network of Alberta, or words to that effect, and we try and provide some assistance to public education, legal education in that sense.

I can tell you, hon. member, that we've also just brought in an initiative called LInC, which stands for legal information centre. It is designed for people who are using our courts but who otherwise are not represented by legal counsel either by choice or because they cannot afford it and there is no assistance at this point in time available to them. In other words, they do not qualify for legal aid. The first of these was officially opened about a month ago here in Edmonton. I had the opportunity to go there. There's a kiosk on the main floor of the Law Courts in Edmonton, and then in the library there are resource people who can work with the folks in giving them education on how to fill in forms, where they can go for additional information. The librarians are prepared to assist them, and indeed there is the ability to refer them out to groups such as the Centre for Equal Justice in Edmonton, where free legal advice of certain sorts can be provided. So that is education, if you will, of a sort relative to civil and criminal justice here in the province.

With respect to the maintenance enforcement program, you're absolutely right; the people who are there are very, very busy. As I indicated in my opening remarks, there are some 50,000 files in Alberta that are open at this time. I believe there are 65,000 children who are the beneficiaries of this. If I recall correctly, the number of contacts on a monthly basis that the staff deal with is somewhere in the vicinity of 80,000 or 90,000 per month. There's an incredibly high caseload. The fact of the matter is that maintenance enforcement are well trained. They do an incredible job. Admittedly, because of the volume, mistakes are made. We recognize those, and we apologize for the mistakes that are made on occasion.

Indeed, as minister I can tell you that there are a number of complaints that are done up in response form that I send out to people. I can tell you that many of them are simply a recitation of fact for people who have a need to understand how the system works. We deal with orders that are granted by the court. We do not have the ability to amend those orders. Often the frustration that people have relates to the fact that they do not believe that the orders that are being enforced are appropriate to the circumstances. Those folks are told that it's necessary for them to go back to the court of originating jurisdiction so that they can address the matter.

I appreciate the hon. member's comments with respect to the need for addressing the needs of the clients. There's constant client recognition training being provided within that particular area, and everybody is very mindful of it. I think they do an incredible job. Certainly, it is something that has to be an ongoing aspect of maintenance enforcement so that everybody is in fact treated fairly. But, hon. member, at this particular point in time I think that given the load, given the nature of the assignment – that is, the collection of dollars from people who sometimes may not feel that it's appropriate that they be collected from them for people who feel that they need these dollars in order to get by every month in a very minimal way; I mean, given that often that is the situation that



people are dealing with – they do a very, very fine job indeed. But I do acknowledge that we can always strive to do better.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne.

**Mr. VanderBurg:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A couple of items. First I want to talk about goal 2: promote a fair and accessible civil and criminal justice system. I want to tell you how impressed I am on the mediation process. The Provincial Court civil mediation settlement rate is about 65 per cent. I'm just wondering: in your budget are you planning on increasing that opportunity for mediation throughout the province? You know, it is available in the larger centres, but it isn't available in our smaller centres. I think we could increase the actual use of mediation if it was more widely known and more widely used. It could be more widely used.

Goal 3: provide access to justice services for Albertans in need. I guess that if there is a complaint I get on a pretty regular basis, it's about legal aid. The expectations from Albertans using legal aid are pretty high. They think that legal aid can do everything for everyone accessing it. I'm just wondering if, in your budget, there is an increased allocation for legal aid.

9:30

Moving on to goal 4, improving the understanding of and confidence in the justice system. You know, we seem to get decision after decision that the public doesn't agree with. Just a simple one like the last one: Albertans widely accept that you should have a picture on your driver's licence, but a decision that comes out of the justice system opposes what the government of Alberta says. We have a piece of identification that's needed. It's our driver's licence. I know that this could be for further review, and I'm not going to ask you to comment on it, but it goes to the point of the confidence in the justice system. We have our local RCMP members do an admirable job with the tools that they've got to work with out in rural Alberta, but time after time the criminal element, you know, hires himself a good lawyer, and they get off on some technicality. Again, that doesn't bring us the confidence in the justice system that we need.

So those are my three issues. I'd just like some brief comments. Of course, I don't want to put you in a position with the Hutterite licence issue. That's just an example that I wanted to use.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Stevens:** Well, I thank you very much, and I do appreciate the comments from the hon. member. The mediation program is, indeed, an excellent program. Since I became minister some two and a half years ago, I can tell the hon. member that I've had the opportunity to appear in a number of communities to announce that the mediation program in a provincial court was expanding into their community.

Like much of what we do in Justice these days, it is dependent upon the community to establish the resources to allow that particular program to go forward. For example, in mediation you need people within the community who are prepared to become trained mediators to gain the experience so that they have the minimum threshold to go out and offer services like the ones that you are talking about. You have to have a community that is prepared to, in some fashion, either send people away to be trained or bring in trainers to allow people to be trained as mediators and then, as I said, people who are prepared to be trained. We've been able to do that in many communities. We now have it in Calgary, Edmonton, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Red Deer, and I believe that there are

perhaps one or two other communities where that, in fact, is also present.

But I can tell you: as minister I feel that mediation is the way of the future. Mediation is very, very successful. As the hon. member indicated, it has a 65 per cent success ratio in provincial court or something to that effect. That means that people who go through the program resolve their matters short of going to court. They almost assuredly do it in a less stressful fashion. They have a resolution that they agree to as opposed to one that is imposed upon them, which is the case if they go to court. So it is very much a win situation for the individuals who have the dispute, and it's a win situation for the courts because time that otherwise would be spent in the courts taking up time of our staff, whether it be the court staff at the counters or whether it be the court staff and the judge in the courtroom, can be spent on cases that, in fact, need to be tried.

Hon. member, I can tell you this: we continue to emphasize alternative dispute resolution. We continue to say that this is an area that we want to expand, but our ability to move it into areas where it is not today has a lot to do with the communities. If we have the will within the communities, I can tell you, this ministry will work with them to try and bring it into those communities. We will do all we can to continue to expand that program.

With respect to legal aid, as I indicated in my opening remarks, this is an excellent program. Indeed, Alberta has, in my estimation, one of the best, if not the best, programs in the country. I say that for a couple of reasons. First of all, the people who are part of legal aid Alberta are volunteers as the board of directors. There are paid staff, obviously, but the board of directors are very committed to this particular exercise and do a wonderful job in providing guidance. We have been able to provide additional dollars to legal aid so that they are able to meet their commitment.

The legal aid program in Alberta provides not only a criminal component but also a civil component, principally in the area of family but also in immigration. When you go to other jurisdictions in Canada, principally what you find is criminal only; in other words, there is no family.

When I go to my federal/provincial/territorial minister meetings, the very first item on the agenda in terms of priority of my counterparts is a plea to the federal government to provide us with long-term funding because what has been happening recently is year to year and, secondly, to increase the amount of funding because like so many federal programs it began as an equal contribution, and over time it has become principally a provincial contribution with a smaller and smaller federal contribution. While we do appreciate the federal contribution, and we couldn't do what we're doing without it, the fact of the matter is that we are asking for more.

The other thing that my colleagues ask for – and, by the way, I agree with all of this; it's just that this is always the way; this is the number one priority – is to expand it into family, expand it into civil.

We are putting more dollars in, some \$2.1 million this year. I think we will be fine this year. It's always a challenge for the legal aid people to do what they want to do, and there is so much more to be done.

One of the things I can say that I'm very proud of in Alberta that is a companion piece to legal aid is pro bono, or free, legal advice that the legal community provides. Calgary Legal Guidance is the prototype program in Alberta. I believe it's been in existence for some 25 or so years. It's been around for some time. It is the template that has been used to expand into Edmonton with the Centre for Equal Justice, which is in the process of being renamed. It got set up within the last several years.

Just two or three weeks ago I was in Lethbridge for the official opening of the Legal Guidance clinic there, a wonderful street-front

facility. I believe it's in excess of 50 per cent of the lawyers in Lethbridge – and there are some 80 or so lawyers in that particular legal community – that have signed up to provide pro bono legal services. Essentially, what we're talking about is to provide advice to people who have legal issues, whether they happen to be landlord, tenant, criminal, civil. It doesn't necessarily mean that they go to court. In fact, typically they would not go to court. There might be the odd exception. But the fact is that these members of the legal community are dedicating a set amount of time per month, month after month, to provide that type of service.

In this 100th anniversary of the Law Society of Alberta I can tell you that that body has as its anniversary initiative established a \$200,000 pro bono Alberta program, essentially a not-for-profit society, which is going to add management and guidance and leadership to the whole area of pro bono within Alberta. So as we go forward, you will see more of this pro bono, I think, offered by the legal society, not only in Calgary and Edmonton and Lethbridge but in other communities.

I think that one has to give recognition to and applaud what the Law Society of Alberta is doing to complement the Legal Aid Society of Alberta because it is fundamental in a democracy, in my estimation, that people do have access to legal services, particularly when their liberty is at risk – that is, in the area of criminal law – but also in the area of family. As we all know in this Legislature – certainly, I don't think there would be any dispute from any of the members – families are the core of our communities, and family law is so essential to ensuring that those disputes be resolved quickly and appropriately so that people can move on productively in their lives.

9:40

The issue of public confidence in the justice system is an ongoing one for this minister. I think it's one of those situations, however, where what you read about are the minority of cases. It's sort of as one of our previous Premiers liked to say: you hear about the plane that crashes; you don't hear about the thousands that take off and land safely. One of my remarks earlier was: 90 per cent of traffic tickets are paid voluntarily by the people who receive them; 10 per cent are challenged in court. We are doing very well in receiving convictions, if you will, for people who are charged.

The ones that we read about in the paper are the tip of the iceberg. They are the notorious ones, typically, and they are the ones, obviously, that are going to court and that are being fought out. Having said that, I do understand fully what the hon. member is saying because as Minister of Justice when I read the paper – and I do – I say to myself, because it is my department that usually has something to do with these cases that you're referring to: what is that all about? And often what it is is the newspaper reporting of the case. In other words, the way it is reported doesn't necessarily reflect the situation when one inquires into it.

One of the things that we have done in Alberta Justice is that we have said to prosecutors in certain situations: it's incumbent upon you to talk to the media, to explain to the media at the end of a case when you know there's an interest in the case why it is that the case was resolved by the court in the fashion that it has come. We feel that that's useful in the sense that the information at least is going to the media. Of course, there's always the issue of whether or not it's reported and the fashion. The information ultimately has to make it into print. But we do understand that, and it is a matter of constant concern.

What we do, essentially, with respect to the cases that we have is: we follow a principle, and that principle is that we proceed with prosecutions if the evidence produces in the estimation of the prosecution a reasonable likelihood of conviction. That is the test

that is applied in the initial trial. That is the test that is applied after a trial in consideration of an appeal. It is always that way, and it should always be that way.

I think it would be abhorrent to anyone if they said you were using some principle other than that objective assessment of the evidence as you understand it to proceed with the prosecution. You would not want us, for example, to say that we are prosecuting somebody because of a political reason. So that is the standard, and that is an area where we need to educate people better. I can tell you that sometimes it is very, very difficult to get that type of message across, but most of the cases that do get the headlines typically are on the basis of an assessment of the prosecutors or an assessment of the court at the end of the day that the evidence falls short of where it should be.

I can tell you that the prosecution service is very successful, generally speaking. We want to be more successful, and we are trying to expand the number of prosecutors that we have. I think in the last two years we've expanded by some 25; we've got another 10 this year. We've added judges to our provincial court over the last couple of years, so we are expanding the number of people who can address the justice issues. That's one of the ways that I think that we will get better justice and quicker justice, if you will. But we are challenged because there's an expanding number of cases, and the complexity of the cases is expanding.

Charter cases are complex now. Twenty years ago a breathalyzer or an impaired case would be dealt with in an hour. Today it may be a day or two days. That's all because of the nature of the Charter and the Charter arguments that are used. Organized crime is very, very complex today compared to before. We have the advent of the Internet, and that has made life very, very complex. So the nature of the work that the prosecution service does is much different than it was, but I can tell the hon. member that we are very, very concerned and mindful of the issue of public confidence in the justice system and are working on it continually.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, I have exhausted the list that I had before me, and if there are no further speakers, I'm willing to ask the committee to rise and report progress. The hon. Member for Calgary-Egmont.

**Mr. Herard:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I was intrigued by the discussion that the minister was having with respect to all of this. I just wanted to make a couple of brief comments and a couple of questions. It's to do with traffic enforcement. One of the things that I was impressed with was the Victoria weekend statistics of enforcement that took place just in that one weekend alone. One of the things that intrigued me was the number of people who were essentially stopped that had previous issues or previous warrants out against them and were in that way brought back into the justice system.

When I hear about electronic ticketing and the benefits of, you know, 380,000 hours' less work and all of this sort of stuff, I say that that's great except that there are two issues with respect to electronic ticketing. There's, of course, the issue that many people see this as essentially a cash cow type of robot law enforcement. The big issue and the one that I want to ask about is that if we, in fact, rely upon electronic ticketing, electronic surveillance, and so on for the bulk of our law enforcement, then the chances of someone being caught driving without insurance, without a driver's licence, without a properly registered vehicle, or who is a fugitive from other issues – the chances of being stopped are a lot less. So I'm wondering if there's a safeguard or at least a study of statistics that will take place to show that we're not gaining on one side and losing on the other,

which in my mind would be a whole lot more serious if, in fact, it's easier for people to get away with all of these other infractions.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Stevens:** Briefly, Mr. Chairman. I thank the hon. member for the question. The issue of electronic processing has more to do with the administration of the ticket internally rather than the issue of how the ticket came to be in the first place. What we're talking about is a situation where after the ticket is written internally, the processing is electronic rather than paper. Really, it's simply that the volume of tickets is so great. I think they estimate something in the order of three and a half minutes per ticket electronic versus paper, and that adds up to the 380,000 hours because the volume is so great. So it really doesn't address the initial contact, if you will.

9:50

**The Deputy Chair:** Any others?

There being no further speakers, the committee will now rise and report progress.

[Mr. Shariff in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Mitzel:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions for the departments of Agriculture and Food; Tourism, Parks, Recreation and Culture; International, Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Relations; and Justice and Attorney General relating to the 2007-2008 government estimates for the general revenue fund and lottery fund for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2008, reports progress, and requests leave to sit again.

**The Acting Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report?

**Hon. Members:** Concur.

**The Acting Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Hancock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that we adjourn until 1 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; at 9:52 p.m. the Assembly adjourned to Thursday at 1 p.m.]

