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Standing Committee on The Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act

Monday, September 17, 1979

Chairman: Mr. W.E. Payne

1:35 p.m.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Gentlemen, Mr. Clark's request that we be tardy this afternoon notwithstanding, I'd like now to bring to order this meeting of the select committee and in your behalf welcome Mr. King, the Minister of Education. As is our custom, I'll ask Mr. King to introduce his departmental official, and then perhaps to make some opening comments before we revert to a question period.

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

I have with me this afternoon Dr. Ken Nixon who is the project director for the Alberta heritage learning resources project. That means, just to be technically correct, that he is not an employee of the Department of Education at the present time. He is seconded from the department to the project.

The project is very well described, Mr. Chairman, on pages 13 and 14 of the annual report of the fund. I will therefore be quite brief, drawing your attention only to a couple of points, after which I would welcome questions and observations from the members of the committee.

I would begin just by giving you a brief expansion on the content of the project. What is called Project 1 is the Alberta heritage books for young readers. Project 2 is western Canadian literature for youth. Project 3 is Alberta literature for senior students and adults, and Project 4 is in three parts: the Kanata Kits are Project 4.1, and the junior atlas and relief model of Alberta is 4.2; the flora and fauna kits are Project 4.3.

The display which you see in front of you has been taken entirely from the Legislature Library downstairs, and therefore represents that material which has been produced and distributed throughout the province. That material, as you see it, will be found in every public library in the province and, depending upon the grade level to which the material is directed, will be found in the schools of the province. The only exception is the relief map of Alberta, which I think many, if not all of you, will have already seen; a large 4 by 8 topographical relief map of the province, a limited number of which were painted, most of which were delivered to schools unpainted in order that painting them could be an educational project.

The project is, with one small exception, on schedule, and we estimate that we will have underexpended our budget by \$300,000 at the conclusion of this project. The decision has already been made to expend that \$300,000 by extending the production run of some of this material in order to make it available to a wider population, particularly to our senior citizens in that some of the additional material will be placed in senior citizens' homes, lodges, and drop-in centres.

We expect also to extend its availability by increasing the translation of some of the material into Ukrainian and French, and we expect thirdly to

increase the distribution of the material by putting some of it on tape for the use of blind students in the province.

I think it would be appropriate, Mr. Chairman, if I concluded this afternoon by listing membership of the advisory committee which has directed this project, and then by making a brief comment about what they have achieved.

I have named Dr. Nixon who is seated with me this afternoon, the project director. Other members include the Hon. Dr. J. W. Grant MacEwan, former Lieutenant-Governor of Alberta; Dr. James H. Gray, author; Mrs. Mary E. Dawe, the editor of *Heritage Magazine*; Dr. R. Douglas Francis of the Department of History, University of Calgary; Dr. Beverly Mitchell of the English Department at the University of Alberta; Dr. Hugh Dempsey, author and head archivist, Glenbow Institute, Calgary; Dr. Ted Van Eeken, Alberta Cultural Heritage Council; Miss Celine Belanger, graduate student, now graduated; Ms. Gwen Polonark, teacher; Mr. Gordon Conway, businessman.

Three people also under contract to the project, and ex officio members of the advisory committee, were Mr. W. P. Lockhart, Dr. E. A. Mitchner, and Miss Teresa Ford.

The project has enjoyed some notable success. They dealt with in excess of 600 titles in selecting materials for the western Canadian literature for youth project, among whom were numbered 453 western Canadian authors. In the project Alberta literature for senior students and adults, they screened 500 titles in order to choose 30; the Canadian content, the Kanata Kits, there were 256 publisher contacts. Through all the projects almost 5,000 copyrights were searched in order to gain permission for the use of the material.

More than 1 million books were bound in Alberta. More than 26 different Canadian publishers contributed to the work of the project.

The effect was threefold, Mr. Chairman. First of all we have this material, complete in and of itself, a notable achievement and of significant benefit to the educational exercise in this province.

Secondly, quite apart from the material in the project, we are now aware of significant literary works produced in western Canada and in Alberta. I want to emphasize that there is a lot of work that was discovered during the course of this project which has merit in and of itself, and the decision as to what to include or exclude was a very difficult one. We know about western Canadian literature in a measure that goes far beyond what is represented in the project.

Thirdly, of course, there has been the economic benefit in the development and strengthening of a printing and publishing industry in western Canada.

With those remarks, Mr. Chairman, I will conclude and would prefer to have questions or comments from the members.

MR. NOTLEY: Mr. Chairman, the minister indicated that the publishers were from western Canada. Would that be the case with all the work that has been published? Have we just dealt with western Canadian publishers or have we gone beyond western Canada?

MR. KING: No. I'm sorry, Mr. Notley, if I left that impression with you. I shouldn't have. The 26 publishers were Canadian and ranged all across the country. Other than the publishing we did ourselves, I think it is correct that the majority of those publishers were located in Ontario or Quebec.

MR. NOTLEY: So if I could just follow that along, Mr. Chairman, all the authors would be western Canadian, I would take it. Do you have a breakdown of the publishers? Let's look at the \$2.7 million expended. What would be

the breakdown of that \$2.7 million between, say, Ontario, other than western Canadian publishers and the publishers in the four western provinces?

MR. KING: All the publishing was done by the project and was done in Alberta. When I say that we related to publishers, I mean we did that only in order to get copyright permission or releases so that material could be printed in the context of this project. There were a couple of cases, and Dr. Nixon will be able to give me the specifics, in which as a condition of giving a copyright release, they wanted an undertaking that some work would be done by the publishers in other parts of the country. That was particularly Project 3. If you want a breakdown we could provide it to you.

MR. NOTLEY: The minister has indicated that the project -- and I think it's a fair statement -- has been helpful to the western Canadian publishing industry. But what I'm interested in, Mr. Minister, is some sort of breakdown on how many publishers in western Canada in fact have participated in this project, and what part of that total \$2.7 million went to them, as opposed to printing, apart from someone else in eastern Canada having the name of the publisher, but having it printed here?

MR. KING: I'm not sure now that I understand your question. First you were asking for a breakdown of those who contributed from outside western Canada, that is Ontario.

MR. NOTLEY: Yes.

MR. KING: Now you would like a similar breakdown for all those within western Canada. Is that right?

MR. NOTLEY: No. What I would like is a breakdown between Ontario and the west. You have indicated 26 publishers have participated in this program. What I'm really interested in is how many are in western Canada, and what part of that \$2.7 million went directly to stimulate a western Canadian publishing industry.

MR. KING: Would it be sufficient to provide this information to you later, Mr. Notley? Our problem is to distinguish between publishing and printing. With the exception of Project 3, all the work was done in Alberta: printing, publishing, and binding.

MR. NOTLEY: I realize that, Mr. Minister. But there would be certain cases, I would take it, where you would have to separate the printing from the publishing, would you not?

MR. KING: Yes, that's right. I don't have that information available to me at the moment, but it is available and we can provide it to you.

MR. NOTLEY: I think the thrust, Mr. Minister, of what some of us are interested in -- we've had a long standing-printing industry, and that's fine, and one would expect the material to be printed in Alberta -- and the question I'd like clarified is: to what extent did this program assist in the development of an indigenous publishing industry?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. King, if I may, could I suggest that that information be supplied to my office, and then I in turn will direct it to Mr. Notley and a copy to other members of the committee?

MR. KING: Yes.

MR. NOTLEY: Agreed.

MRS. FYFE: Mr. Chairman, has the material distributed to the schools been in quantities that would be sufficient for library purposes, or can they order additional materials for classroom purposes?

MR. KING: The distribution has varied from project to project, but in at least some cases the distribution has been on a classroom basis, 30 copies of some parts of the project. One of the extensions of production I didn't mention, and should have, is that we are increasing that volume from 30 to 40 in some cases, to take cognizance of the fact that's necessary in some school situations.

I could give you a breakdown on the distribution. There were approximately 2,000 flora and fauna kits produced in the first run and, as I mentioned, we're going to be extending that run, producing additional flora and fauna kits for senior citizens' homes, lodges, senior citizens' drop-in centres, and correctional institutions. But the first run was 2,000.

There were approximately 120,000 copies of the junior atlas of Alberta produced; 1,500 of the 4 by 8 mounted relief maps; about 400,000 books in the Alberta heritage books for young readers series in sets of 36; 400,000-plus of the western Canadian literature for youth series in sets of 40; 2,000 of each of the 30 volumes of the Alberta literature for senior students and adults series; and 1,000 each of the 16 Kanata Kits.

MRS. FYFE: What discussions would you have had with the curriculum planning board -- or whatever its exact title is -- as to utilization of the material within the prescribed curricula?

MR. KING: The curriculum branch of the department was, in a sense, seconded to direct the production of one of the projects, and the field staff consultants of the field services branch of the department have had in-service preparation for all parts of the project as it has become available. In addition to that there have been other in-service activities that have prepared in the order of 200 teachers in each case for the use of the material.

There is also for each of the projects a teacher's guide, which we believe is comprehensive, clear, and straightforward, and which advises teachers on the use of the project materials within the context of the Alberta curriculum.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I wonder, Mrs. Fyfe, if I may invite Mr. Appleby to introduce to us the group of legislators from Hokkaido who are in Mr. Speaker's gallery?

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

It's really a pleasure to welcome the members of the Hokkaido Assembly who are visiting us today. They're taking part in the environment conference and have called on our Legislature.

Standing up, second from this end, is the Vice-Speaker of the Assembly, Mr. Hara. We have also Mr. Aoyama, the vice-chairman of the Liberal Democratic Party; Mr. Toshiro Ichikawa, the chairman of the Hokkaido Assembly; and Mr.

Mitsuya Furunizu who is the director of the procedures division of the Office of the Assembly. They have an interpreter with them, standing at this end, Paul Kashiwara.

Thank you very much for the privilege, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mrs. Fyfe, with a further supplementary.

MRS. FYFE: I know that some of the material has been made available to members of the Executive Council. Would the same consideration be given to all Members of the Legislative Assembly?

MR. KING: Yes, Mrs. Fyfe. Before I expand on that, I should have made one other comment about your earlier question.

It's important to understand that this is to be used as supplementary material to the curriculum in use in Alberta. None of this material is core material in any Alberta curriculum.

With respect to your last question, I have had a number of representations made in that regard, and so am arranging to have a copy of the project, which is Alberta literature for senior students and adults, delivered to each Member of the Legislative Assembly. The suggestion I made to the cabinet at the time they received this material was that they should first of all familiarize themselves with it, as representative of the project, and that after that they could consider its use or distribution in the constituency. I'll provide the same to each Member of the Legislative Assembly.

For the same reason, because I think it's important that all members of the Assembly should understand the value of the project and, I think, the regard with which it is held by the people of Alberta, when the flora and fauna kits are produced in additional numbers for distribution to senior citizens' homes and lodges, and correctional institutions, I will invite each Member of the Legislative Assembly to advise my office whether or not he would like to be involved in the distribution of this material to the senior citizens' homes and lodges in his constituency. At the option of each member, the flora and fauna kits will be provided to them for distribution, or alternatively will be distributed directly by the project managers.

MRS. FYFE: Mr. Chairman, I think that material will be received very warmly, and I think we would all like to apprise ourselves of the material and, as you say, familiarize ourselves with it.

I just have one question. I'd like to go back, relating to the curriculum. Do you see that in the future this material would be incorporated directly into the curriculum, rather than just a resource material? I realize in the context of that question that there are many teachers who would do that directly, but I'm just wondering if there would be more directive from the curriculum branch?

MR. KING: Frankly, I don't think I would favor that, although I would certainly be prepared to listen to representations. Just because I don't like the provincial department, any more than is absolutely necessary, telling teachers in the local classroom what kind of material they should be using in support of certain curricula objectives, I think that we have a role in laying down curricula objectives, but I think the teacher is responsible for deciding, within the context of her own classroom, what material best achieves an understanding of those curricula objectives. I wouldn't like to tell teachers

in what way they have to use this. I'm hoping that it will be well used on its merits.

MRS. FYFE: Just to make a final comment, I don't think it's often having to tell, but the textbooks are made available for the user, so it's often a matter of economics, isn't it?

Thank you.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, to the minister. Might I just make an initial comment? I note from the publication here that it seems to me that Dr. Nixon looks not nearly as tired as the publication mentions. I commend you on the work that has been done.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to know how many times the advisory committee chaired by Dr. Grant MacEwan met, and the kind of input it made; the sequence of events where their recommendations went.

MR. KING: They met regularly, every two months, until the conceptual work was concluded. They were advisory in the development of the conceptual framework, but they were not advisory in the production questions.

MR. R. CLARK: So would they have met 20 times?

MR. KING: No, because the period from initiation to initial production decisions wasn't nearly that long. Dr. Nixon suggests it would have been more in the order of seven or eight times.

MR. R. CLARK: And did their recommendations go to the steering committee?

MR. KING: Yes, certainly.

MR. R. CLARK: If you've done that already, Mr. Minister . . .

MR. KING: No. I could well have done, but I didn't and I'm happy to take this opportunity.

The steering committee, as opposed to the advisory committee whose members I earlier listed, consisted of: again, Dr. Nixon; Mr. Frank Crowther, who is associate director of curriculum, Alberta Education; Mr. M. Adamson, associate director of curriculum, Alberta Education; Mr. Ken McVey, senior consultant, film and literary arts branch, Alberta Culture; Mr. John Patrick Gillese, director of film and literary arts branch, Alberta Culture; Mr. Ed Kennedy, assistant director for mapping, Alberta Transportation; Mr. Frank McGuire, executive director of communications and production, public affairs division of Alberta Government Services; Mr. Georges Robert, Alberta Teachers' Association; Mrs. Jean McDonald, Alberta School Trustees' Association; Mr. George Pinchbeck, superintendent of schools, Strathmore, Alberta; Mrs. Margaret Elliott, vice-principal of Balnoral junior high school, Calgary. And again, ex officio members, three project directors: Mr. W. P. Lockhart of the project; Dr. E. A. Mitchner of the project; and Miss Teresa Ford of the project.

MR. R. CLARK: The second area, Mr. Chairman, if I might. Mr. Minister, I notice from the brochure and from the comments you've made since I came in that the project is getting close to the winding-down stage. Are we going to be looking at a similar kind of possibility for resource materials in other

areas with our school system? I think the work that has been done is well done, but are we looking at this as a means by which perhaps we can get some other needed resource material into the hands of our educators?

I ask the question because of the precedent here, but also we have now established the precedent, rightly or wrongly, in Alberta of taking money out of the heritage fund and using it to finance our libraries at the universities in Alberta.

MR. KING: First of all I have to say that on the basis of the public's early experience with this project, they appear to be responding very positively and have made a number of suggestions for what I might call follow-up projects based on the same model. We have had representations made that we should do a project involving the fine and visual arts, involving a western Canadian or Canadian encyclopedia, or involving the production of second-language materials. So we have received a number of suggestions. The list is not exhausted by the three I described.

The fact that we have received those suggestions indicates that the public is responding positively to their experience with this project, and I appreciate that. It does seem to me, though, that there would have to be some considered evaluation of our experience with this project before we would make any firm decisions about successor projects.

First of all, there is the question of whether or not this kind of work is appropriate to the Heritage Savings Trust Fund. You phrased your question and said, I think, "rightly or wrongly", leaving open, it seemed to me, the question of whether or not this was appropriate to the Heritage Savings Trust Fund. So for my part I would appreciate an indication from members of the committee as to whether or not they think this should continue to be the kind of activity that is recommended for financing by the fund. If we are agreed that it's within the ambit of the fund, then there are two other questions. The first is organizational and the second is the exact project. I listed three alternatives to you. We might go with any or all of those. The other question, organizationally, is whether or not, even if we want to encourage publishing in Alberta, we want to do it with this particular vehicle. We said when we began this project that we hoped it would encourage the development of an indigenous Alberta publishing capacity. To a certain extent I think that it has, but we don't have hard information on the extent to which we actually accomplished that goal, and whether or not we have got that publishing industry past some critical point, to the point that it can stand on its own feet and do this kind of thing without government support or with a lower level of government support.

To summarize, there is first of all the question about whether or not programs like this are appropriate under the ambit of the fund, and I think you people could give a response to that.

Secondly, there is the question of the particular type of project we would involve ourselves in if the answer to the first question was yes, and there is the third question about whether or not organizationally we would do it the same way we did the last, or would we rely more directly on the private sector.

MR. R. CLARK: Mr. Chairman, a follow-up question to the minister. Mr. Minister, let's assume for a moment that the publishing capacity has certainly been enhanced as a result of this project. I'd be very interested in your reaction to the point of view that's been passed on to me that a rather fragile publishing capacity has been developed, or aided, by this project, and

that if we go through an extensive period of evaluation and so on, much of the progress which has been made in this publishing capacity will be -- perhaps "lost" isn't the right term -- certainly sidetracked unless there is some commitment before long, whether it be this kind of project or other projects that would lend themselves to a frail publishing capacity. How do you react to that, Mr. Minister?

MR. KING: I don't want to study any patient while the patient may die on the table.

MR. R. CLARK: (Inaudible) the books, not the publishing industry.

MR. KING: The patient is the publishing industry, and the first point I wanted to make is that I don't think the patient is in that bad shape. I don't think there is any danger that as the result of our examining our experience we are going to impede the progress of the publishing industry in this province. I think they have demonstrated pretty considerable competence in the space of the last few years.

The second point I wanted to make is that printing of this material has had limitations placed on it. We've printed enough for now. We've printed enough to meet the needs of the schools, the senior citizens' homes and lodges, as that need is measured today. But this material is going to wear out and there are going to be new generations of students coming along and new senior citizens' homes being built. In the future there's going to be a need just to reprint some of this material. That opportunity, which could be quite significant to the publishing industry, exists for them now. We have the copyright to Project 1, Project 2, Project 4.1, and Project 4.2. The only ones over which we don't have free rein, as it were, in deciding about re-publication are Project 3 and Project 4.3. But with respect to the ones I listed earlier, there's a good opportunity there for the publishing industry to take if they choose. All the risk has been taken out of the venture at this point. The conceptual and developmental work has been done, layout work -- if they want to -- has been done, an audience has been guaranteed. So, as an interim measure, while we evaluate the project to this point, I fall back on the position that the publishing industry has strength in this province and has demonstrated it. Secondly, there is an interim activity they can participate in as a direct result of the project that I think would be beneficial to them.

MR. R. CLARK: Might I just make one comment, Mr. Chairman. It seems to me that the evaluation has been somewhat done.

MR. KING: Then it must have been done by someone else, Mr. Clark, because you know what an open-minded individual I am.

MR. R. CLARK: I know you, anyway.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any further questions of Mr. King?

MRS. FYFE: I just think that it's a very commendable project, there's no doubt about it, and I certainly support the development of future projects for my input into this committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: With that then, Mr. King, I'd like to thank you and Dr. Nixon for appearing before this committee today.

MR. KING: (Inaudible) comment briefly if I could on the note that Mrs. Fyfe struck, because I consider myself very fortunate to have come into the Ministry of Education after all the work was done so that I can enjoy my association with a project which I think has demonstrated its merit. The project director, Dr. Nixon, all his staff, the advisory committee, and the steering committee deserve a great deal of credit, as I think does the Legislature which initially voted the money for this project. I am in the best of all possible worlds at the moment.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just before I call for an adjournment motion, then, a reminder that we reconvene tomorrow morning at 10:30 with the Associate Minister of Public Lands and Wildlife.

Would you also make a note that I have tentatively rescheduled Dr. Horner for 1:30 on Tuesday, September 25. I have reached that agreement with his office, but he hasn't yet had an opportunity personally to confirm that. That does not represent a new day. That simply replaces what had been our first consideration of recommendations meeting.

Could I then have an adjournment motion?

MR. NOTLEY: I so move.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Notley, thank you. Until tomorrow morning at 10:30.

Meeting adjourned at 2:10 p.m.

