

[Chairman: Mr. Oldring]

[2:05 p.m.]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Good afternoon, everybody. We'll call the meeting to order.

I want to begin by welcoming you, Mr. Minister, to our official part of the Heritage Savings Trust Fund select committee meetings. We're delighted to have you and members of your department with us.

I should say that, as you know, we've just recently come back from a very successful tour of Kananaskis Country. We were in the very capable care of Mr. Ed Marshall and Margaret Qually, who displayed a tremendous amount of enthusiasm and pride in sharing some of the things we've been able to develop at Kananaskis Country. So it was a good trip, and it was very helpful for the committee members. I understand it was the 10th anniversary last weekend. We would have liked to have stayed for the rest of the week and celebrated it with you, but some of us had to get back to other commitments.

But on that note, Mr. Minister, I'd like to turn the meeting over to you to introduce the members of your department who are with you. I would say that we would invite you to add any opening comments you might have further to the excellent video and slide presentation we just witnessed. Then after that we'll turn it over to questions from members of the committee.

MR. WEISS: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and through you to members of your committee, I welcome the opportunity to be here today and will certainly follow your course of direction with introductions.

While it was the 10th anniversary of Kananaskis, this lady is celebrating her 19th. It's Margaret Qually, the director of public affairs for Kananaskis Country management.

No stranger, as you have indicated, Mr. Ed Marshall, to my right, is the managing director of Kananaskis Country.

To my immediate left, Dr. Barry Mitchelson, Deputy Minister. If I might add, ladies and gentlemen, and through you in the Chair, Mr. Chairman, in all probability this will be the last opportunity I'll have to share with Dr. Mitchelson, as Dr. Mitchelson will be returning to the private sector at the University of Alberta. I might add that it's been a great association. His contribution through and to our department for the citizens of Alberta has certainly been a rewarding one, and we'll miss him. I'm just so pleased he could be here today in his wrap-up and assistance in preparation and the dedication he's brought to the Department of Recreation and Parks, in particular these two programs as well.

To the immediate left of Barry Mitchelson is John Weins, the manager of financial planning and management for the finance and administration division of Recreation and Parks.

Just beside John is Kyle Clifford, in the recreation development division of the department.

Beside Kyle and one aisle over is Fred Wilton of our recreation development division, who, of course, was responsible for what I feel was a very informative and interesting recap and slide presentation as it relates to the MRTA program.

Just behind us -- and we put them in the back purposely, because they're the two who talk the most -- Mr. Tony Myers. And he should be talking the most, because he's the manager of our public communications. When he stops talking is when I'll begin to worry. Sitting beside Mr. Myers is Carol Shields, the executive assistant to myself and I certainly don't think any stranger to any of you. We welcome any response or communications you may have through to Carol as well.

Mr. Chairman, if I may start out by saying once again that I certainly really appreciate the opportunity of being here today. We believe in the programs and believe in what your committee is doing and the importance of the delivery of these to the citizens of Alberta. More specifically, it really gives us an opportunity to present some of the highlights on these two key program areas that are being administered through Alberta Recreation and Parks. These programs, as you've indicated, have already been outlined to you in some supplementary form, and we'd like to be a little more specific as it relates to the municipal recreation/tourism areas program and the Kananaskis Country recreation development program.

I'd like to proceed by outlining our progress in detail in the MRTA program and have a brief discussion of the Kananaskis Country recreation development program and, as well, provide some concluding remarks and, of course, invite any questions you may have.

I would anticipate to the members of your committee, Mr. Chairman, in all probability about a 12-minute review or capsulization of our overall programs and certainly I'm not going to endeavour to take up their time and would welcome the opportunity to have lots of time to spend in questions as well.

I'd like to look briefly, then, at the municipal recreation/tourism areas program and, of course, reiterate that once again the purpose of the program was to provide funds for capital development and, most importantly, operational cost of the recreation facilities throughout the province, as was seen on the slide presentation. The initial emphasis on the program is really the development of basic outdoor recreation facilities. As you saw through the slide presentation as well, we've certainly done that in all instances. It's also intended to support initiatives by municipalities and particularly nonprofit groups in the provision of services and facilities that will provide local recreation services and, more importantly, attract visitors to various locales and enhance and improve the tourism initiatives.

Well, the question I want to ask back to you -- and perhaps answer in its own way -- is: how does the program work? Well, it's really straightforward. The maximum amount of funding under the capital phase of the program, as you're well aware of and as outlined, but to re-emphasize, is \$100,000 per site. Now, I say that's the maximum, because in some cases, of course, we have not committed the maximum. These capital grants are available to develop and upgrade primary outdoor recreation facilities in such areas as general picnic areas, boat launches and docks, beaches, park development, campsites, golf courses, ski hills and other recreation facilities that would include such support services as upgrading of water and water supplies, drinking water, parking lots and, in the southern areas, a very interesting one, irrigation systems, which is a very important aspect of water management and one I hope your committee will address in other areas as well.

Both municipalities and community groups are eligible to apply, and we'd like to emphasize that community groups are certainly most eligible to be involved. Emphasis has been given to municipalities and community groups that are located in electoral constituencies with a substantial rural component of it. We felt, of course, that with other programs your committee was responsible in delivering, our emphasis would be in the rural communities. Sites are selected following a regional analysis of existing private-sector locations so that we're not in conflict or competing with or hurting or endangering the private sector as well.

Now, once the capital phase of the project is completed, the

MRTA grant recipients are eligible to apply for operational grants. The grants are a very significant part and one of the most important components of the program that you people have allowed us to administer. The grant period is 25 years of some \$20,000 per year being awarded to those successful applicants. Of course, this ensures then that the program is able to be maintained in a safe and usable state, and the facilities that were constructed under the program will be continually upgraded to ensure they'll be there for citizens in years to come. All these funds are allocated from the General Revenue Fund for the operating grants.

So just to recap, the basic details are as I've said: once again, to provide up to \$100,000 capital grant per site, the emphasis being directly on the recreation component side of it, along with assessing the tourism potential and the opportunity, of course, then to make application for the 25-year operational grant. It's helpful for all of us to be aware of the operational details of the program. In my view, the exciting aspect of the MRTA program is the opportunity it presents to the communities and, in turn, to the people of Alberta. The program could be assessed this way or divided into three specific areas to the long-term benefits because of not only the social benefits of the small communities as a direct derivative of the program but the economic benefits. I won't go into the long disorientation as far as the economic benefits, but I'm sure you're all well aware that most of these facilities where there is \$100,000 being committed to a site -- through ongoing volunteer labour and support and manpower services and through the community or the service club or whoever is involved, the \$100,000 really only becomes seed money. In most cases we find three or four times the amount of dollars being committed, which gives, of course, and provides long-term returns and low initial investment. So the economic benefits are ongoing and certainly beneficial to each and every community.

The social benefits are an interesting one, because recreation and leisure life-styles play a very important part in rural communities. We're pleased that communities have pooled together to develop their own municipal recreation/tourism areas and have brought back the families-to-the-park concept, are so involved and show a great deal of pride in their communities in their overall participation. In achieving these goals, they worked very hard and, of course, worked together, and that is a key in itself, a key to seeing a ball game or a family outing or an overall community involved. It's a great experience I'm sure many of you have shared and enjoyed, whether it be at an official opening or in ongoing visitations to the municipal recreation areas.

There is a direct small community benefit through the tourism end of it, in that the expenditures and benefits from the MRT program are spread throughout the province, that they're not just concentrated, then, in cities and national parks and they, too, have an opportunity to attract and to share in and enjoy some of those indirect spin-offs. I believe Albertans throughout and across the province recognize this government's commitment and this committee's commitment to the small recreation developments in the communities. It truly provides an environment which fosters local responses to local opportunities, and I would hope it would continue and be ongoing for many years.

Mr. Chairman, these benefits are truly substantial, and for all of us that are living and enjoy the rural way of life and come from small communities, I'm sure we certainly recognize it.

In the 1987-88 fiscal year, as you heard earlier, some 27 projects were funded under this specific program, and these 27 pro-

jects represent an investment of some \$2 million in our province, which contributes significantly as well. The program has now been operating for two years, which you're certainly well familiar with, and during that two-year period the funds the department has received from the Heritage Savings Trust Fund have prompted the development of some 51 projects. Now, those 51 projects in total heritage investment dollars represent a total of some \$5.475 million. In '88-89 an additional 36 sites will be funded, and once these sites are funded, it will bring the total of capital investment to some \$7.475 million.

The program, while it may appear relatively small, contributes and is compatible with other government initiatives of tourism, economic development, and diversification. And I certainly want to put emphasis on: while it may appear small to some degree, it is a very, very important program and of long-term benefits to the rural communities, again.

I can assure you, Mr. Chairman, that I as minister responsible, along with our department staff and personnel who have all been involved in the rural communities, am most pleased with the program. At this time I would like to compliment the staff for their commitment in working with individuals -- communities as well -- and for the impact this has on the lives of so many Albertans and the communities in which they live. In short, I think that you and ourselves, through delivering of your program, have created a maximum impact with limited dollars, and the return on these investments will come and be beneficial for many years to come.

Now, the second portion of our funding projects through your committee, of course, is Kananaskis Country. It has seen substantial expenditures in past years but, of course, is on a wind-down phase as far as funds that have been committed at this time, and we're dealing in particular with this year's expenditures. Including this year's expenditures, the total heritage investment in Kananaskis Country, as was seen on the audiovisual, is now approaching the quarter billion dollar mark. I say "quarter billion dollars." To be exact, it's some \$224,613,300 of the Heritage Savings Trust Fund money. And I truly believe it's not been expended but really has been an investment in Kananaskis Country and an investment for Albertans for a lifetime.

The expenditure in Kananaskis Country during the '87-88 fiscal year was light in comparison to previous years. We've discussed that on many occasions in the Assembly, and of course we'll have the opportunity to answer questions in that relation as well.

In '87-88 a budget of some \$3.9 million was established, with expenditures of approximately \$3.4 million. The funds were expended, Mr. Chairman, as follows: for the citizens' advisory committee, some \$13,800; and major buildings, facilities, and utilities, of which the Kananaskis Village infrastructure accounted for the majority of these funds -- that total expenditure was some \$3,215,800, to be exact. In the campgrounds and day use areas, some \$145,900 was expended. This brings the total of the '87-88 fiscal year, as I've said earlier, to \$3,375,500.

The past summer has truly been a very busy one for Kananaskis Country, and I am glad you and your committee had the opportunity to be there and see firsthand. The campgrounds were full, and generally by Thursday evenings prior to long weekends they were reaching maximum capacity. Of course, when the weather was good as well, the campgrounds were full every weekend. The Mount Kidd RV Park was practically reaching its capacity during the entire summer. Of course, the Kananaskis Country golf course was playing at capacity almost

every single day of this season.

Our interpretive programs were well received, with a full house for every performance. I would like to give you a little bit of statistical information, because it was interesting to note that the final performance, that was held on September 10, played to one of the largest audiences ever. To those who have been to the facility and know firsthand what it is to sit in that little outdoor theatre, to imagine that the amphitheatre itself accommodates some 300 people, there were, Mr. Chairman, and to members of your committee, over 1,100 in attendance during the final performance. So it certainly shows that not only is the need there but the interest is there, and that's most important. Don't just build a facility and not have users. Of course, utilize it.

I am just about near my concluding remarks, Mr. Chairman, but I can't leave without in conclusion making reference to the William Watson Lodge, of course, that being the facility for disabled and senior citizens. It had a waiting list this summer, even after the expansion to more than double the accommodation capacity. For 12 months of the year the lodge is running at some 95 percent capacity, with the summer months . . . I should say that the average for the 12 months is some 95 percent, and the summer months averaging 110 percent, if you can imagine it that way. Of course, that's because of the lack of beds. Some people are using sleeping bags on the floor in their cottages, to be with their friends and relatives at those high peak periods. So what we are doing is accommodating extra people during those times.

Without a doubt, Mr. Chairman and members of your committee, Kananaskis Country is a success story, and I'm proud of the work, dedication, and commitment of those who created that success. I would encourage you to review in future years as well, to members of the committee, the possibility of further development of a role model such as the William Watson Lodge in other parts of Alberta.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, the contribution from the heritage fund benefited Albertans in many, many ways. In particular, both the programs we've discussed today served to instill a sense of participation in the enhancement and the protection of our natural environment -- and one we must never lose sight of -- as well, to emphasize the importance of a healthy life-style. I believe these projects, supported by your committee of the heritage trust fund, provide opportunities for each and every Albertan to celebrate and to use the endless potential of our great outdoors. It is a pleasure for me to be part of this heritage development and for our team in the department to share as well.

I thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for allowing me the opportunity to express those words today.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Minister, for a very excellent and comprehensive overview.

We'll start with our questions now, and I'd recognize the Member for Little Bow, followed by the Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, to the minister. A comment first of all. I want to say that I appreciated the tour we had of Kananaskis, and the service of your staff and the availability of information was excellent. I would have to say that I've been very impressed with the development. The comment I get from my constituents, I guess, in the overall pattern as we go forward is that we want to try and maintain that natural state of Kanas-

as much as we can and not let it become overcommercialized. I think that's the political statement I hear from my rural area of Little Bow.

The question I'd like to raise with the minister, Mr. Chairman, is with regards to the municipal recreation/tourism areas. In the previous fiscal year my constituency had the opportunity of receiving one of those \$100,000 grants, for which we were quite thankful, and it's been well utilized. What has happened since then, though, Mr. Minister, is that the expectation has just ballooned. When I was allocated the first \$100,000, I had difficulty finding an area where I could expend it or have it directed. At the moment I have five communities vying for this \$100,000, and they want it all, each one of them. My question to the minister: is this common across the province at the present time, and what implications do you see for the heritage fund because of that?

MR. WEISS: Well, Mr. Chairman, if I could address the direct question first, I'd like to make a comment as it relates to Kananaskis in the remarks the hon. Member for Little Bow has expressed. I guess the word "success" could be used as it relates to the MRTA program. I don't think any one of us in this room envisioned the overall popularity and success as it relates to rural Alberta. Yes, we have created a problem, but it's a healthy problem. It's a healthy problem in that Albertans and the communities in particular wish to participate.

So I could only relay it back this way to the member. I'm hopeful your committee will recognize that as a true success story, and hopeful the future consideration for funds to expand the program and to enhance and build and allow other communities within your constituency and others to be able to participate in what I say is a very worthwhile program -- I'm very, very hopeful and optimistic that proposals that would be submitted would be met with and share the optimism that I have.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, to the minister. Could the minister put any numbers? Like, mine have increased fivefold. What is the demand across the province at the present time from the rural constituencies for that kind of facility? Have you any dollar number? Like, we have the total committed dollars from the heritage fund as around \$11 million in that five-year period.

MR. WEISS: Mr. Chairman, I could best answer it this way, and I'd ask Mr. Wilton and Mr. Clifford perhaps to respond as well, because to provide you with the exact numbers -- I'm not aware of the exact number to date. But we go with the number of applications. For example, last year we dealt with some 47 applications, and we're only able to deal with a portion of them. Similarly, it is occurring this year, and perhaps either of the two gentlemen could tell us how many applications we have on file exactly at this time, or close to it.

MR. WILTON: At this time we have in the order of 45 to 50 applications over and above what was funded in the current year. So it is substantial, and it's a very popular program.

MR. WEISS: That would indicate, Mr. Chairman, that we have approximately double the amount of applications we'd be able to proceed with at this time if all were eligible and would meet the criteria. I'm not saying at this time that they all do either.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Do I have one final one, or have I finished?

MR. CHAIRMAN: You can tell the seasoned politician the Member for Little Bow is. He began his first question with two questions and a supplementary, and the process is for one question and two supplementaries. But we have to recognize the seniority he carries in the Assembly, so we'll give you your final supplementary.

MR. R. SPEAKER: In terms of the expectation of the programs -- and I'd like to come back to a different subject later, Mr. Chairman, if you could add my name to the list again -- is it generally perceived by the rural constituencies that this is a one-shot deal and you may not get another chance? Because like in the current fiscal year, there are only 27 \$100,000 allotments available. How is the minister handling that in terms of making that information available, or is that left up to the respective MLAs, to defend their own position?

MR. WEISS: Mr. Chairman, it's a very fair question and a very tough one, because I guess I have to accept the responsibility as the person to have to say no. None of us wants to say no, but in this particular case, where we'll not be able to deal with all those applications, we'll be responding with a letter from myself and alerting the MLAs as well that we'll not be able to deal with those individual applications.

Mr. Chairman, if I may add, I believe Dr. Mitchelson would like to supplement as well in relation to the question.

DR. MITCHELSON: There would be two comments. One would be that the program definition as it presently exists would say that there's eligibility up to \$200,000 per constituency. I think some MLAs have been very prudent and attempted not to create false expectations, and therefore you would see that there would only be two applications come forward if they supported funding for \$100,000 for two sites. From my perspective that's wise counsel that we as staff would give to MLAs, because when you create expectations that exceed the financial capacity of a program, it becomes very difficult for all of us.

I think the only other thing we would have an obligation to you if we came forward with any kind of recommendation for program modification would be that we would feel responsibility to be able to tell you the utilization statistics, not on a site-by-site basis but all sites across the province, if we're thinking about camping: moving to capacity, recognizing the remainder of the provincial system as well as the private system. And I think in the future we have to be very careful to make sure that the blends, the allocations across the province for all the systems -- so that we don't get oversupply rather than undersupply. I think really that's the intent of the question: what is oversupply, undersupply, and are we wisely investing moneys in the facilities?

MR. WEISS: Mr. Chairman, if I may conclude. It was not a question, but I'd like to be a little specific as it relates to the opening remarks by the Member for Little Bow with regard to words or phrases he used: maintain the status of Kananaskis Country, and the word "commercial." I'd like to assure him, through you, Mr. Chairman, and to members of the Assembly, that it was never the intent or the policy of the government to use or pick up on what was called the Frank King concept, to build and develop some 40,000 rooms or pillows or beds -- whatever terminology may be used -- but it was my responsibility as minister to bring to my cabinet colleagues and caucus any changes that should or may be made as it relates to ongoing

amenities and development. I've referred to such things as perhaps the phasing in or development of a second golf course, the improvement of the equestrian trails, the need for an all-round, four-season park and development of walking or hiking trails and things in this area. So there was no major plan, nor is there any major plan, for government to accept the Frank King concept.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

The Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche, followed by the members for Cypress-Redcliff, Lloydminster, Vermilion-Viking, Wainwright, and Little Bow again.

MR. PIQUETTE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to thank the minister for appearing today before the heritage committee meeting, and all his officials.

I'd like to start off, I guess, by trying to expand a bit more in terms of what the Member for Little Bow was alluding to. There appeared to be, in terms of a statement made by yourself as the minister, a discrepancy between your vision of the future development of Kananaskis Country and the Premier's viewpoint that the plan that was advanced for Kananaskis Country be adhered to. Has that internal politicking been resolved within the cabinet in terms of: are we at the end of the Kananaskis Country recreation and development plan? I mean, I think all members of the committee are quite impressed with the facility at the present time, but there's no doubt that from what we've been told for a number of years, this is pretty well the end of that investment for the heritage trust fund.

MR. WEISS: Well, Mr. Chairman, that's very interesting, because I would welcome the opportunity to clarify. I believe the hon. Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche referred to confusion or remarks made by myself in difference to others in particular and made reference to members of cabinet. There's certainly no confusing issue or statement made by myself, only what media has reported. Media did report that I was supportive of development. I stand firm on that. I am supportive of future development in Kananaskis providing that it meets the guidelines and criteria of the original proposal, and if there are to be any major policy changes, that would then be addressed by cabinet and caucus colleagues. When I say "support change," I support the changes I've briefly referred to, with the amenities development and the possibility of a second golf course, which, by the way, Mr. Chairman, through you to all members of the Assembly, was part of the original proposal as well but has never been proceeded with.

But I would like to state that -- and I said in the Assembly on that side, and I believe my words could be quoted something like this: I hope the Kananaskis development will never see the end and the need, because of what the ongoing needs are. As a changing climate for citizens' needs -- to see that now we've gone from some 500,000 to four million visitations -- we're going to have to keep addressing their needs, whether it be for improved campground facilities, upgrading the overall park and development.

So, Mr. Chairman, one of the components would be to involve the private sector, perhaps, in a golf course development. But at this time I would not want it to be misleading or anybody to be of the opinion that I would like to see, and anybody to believe, that there would be no more requests for dollars for Kananaskis Country. We have a capital program to maintain, and I just can't say enough about -- as I'm sure you're pleased

with the facilities -- our concern of the overall expenditure. But I hope we would be able to continually build and develop as well.

MR. PIQUETTE: There's no doubt the infrastructure is there, and I think the private sector should be the ones now, if we're going to be completing the master plan, to be the main movers of growth there.

My next question is relating to, of course, something that you and I share quite deeply, and that's the need to apply heritage trust fund money to an Alberta North Lakeland concept for recreation development. One of the things I'd like to point out to the minister is that with pulp and paper mills being proposed in the Lac La Biche forest, there is a need to move very quickly in terms of setting aside land for future parks development in the Lakeland region, which comprises 75 percent of the sandy beaches in the province of Alberta. I know we have four or five million people coming into Kananaskis Country, but the potential for northern Alberta if a first-class park was developed would be immense as well, which would help to diversify the economy up in that part of the country.

When is the minister going to be making recommendation to his cabinet -- and I made a proposal here last year that we set aside a \$75 million fund for an Alberta North concept or a Lakeland regional development concept -- so that we can go on with developing the kind of rich heritage we have in that part of the country? Can the minister make comments relating to what his future plans are in view of some of the, I guess, forestry developments which will force the government to act now before a timber allocation destroys the . . .

MR. WEISS: Well, Mr. Chairman, I look to you for advice, and perhaps I could comment by saying this: I thought we were dealing with past expenditures and not looking to open or be philosophical as to future programs and deliveries. Of course, I took the liberty -- and I apologize -- in my opening remarks, talking about future programs, the expansion of MRTA, so I assume the leeway should then be extended to the hon. member.

I'm very pleased to see, though, that the hon. member is using my statistics and previous statements as they related to the development of a country north concept. I could take up the balance of the committee's time in speaking to the issue; I don't think that's fair. I would like to just assure the hon. member that under the Department of Recreation and Parks, land has been set aside and reserved in the Lakeland division for future development. The projects -- we're well away and our department has been working on. In view of financial restraint and with the government's objectives, of course, to keep our expenditures in line, there have been no new developments take place. As well, as the revenue sides increase with such recent announcements as OSLO and other projects and we see that trend in the upward acceleration on the revenue side, I'm sure the hon. member will be more than pleased to share with me and his colleagues, then, the future exciting developments and projects that we do have on the table and would hope to be able to bring forth and present at that time.

I share with him his concern, and I certainly don't wish to minimize it or leave it with any member or any member in the Assembly that I don't agree with them. I certainly agree with them. It's just a matter of the how and the when.

MR. CHAIRMAN: A succinct supplementary, if we can shorten the supplementaries up a little, please.

MR. PIQUETTE: I thank him for his reply, but I guess I'm looking for some hard facts.

In the MRTA funding program, which I think is a good grass-roots type of program which, as the Member for Little Bow has indicated, is creating a lot of interest -- and there is a lot more that, you know, could be done if there is a larger fund allocation for that program -- is the minister, in view of the popularity of the program, looking to expanding that program and possibly fund the program based on the regional type of area as opposed to the minister making his own decision? I'd like to see, I guess, a recommendation of the decentralization of the decision-making process in the way that these municipal recreation/tourism area plans are decided, which would be in view of the committee towards an action plan. Has the minister given any thoughts to that?

MR. WEISS: Well, Mr. Chairman, that's very, very important, that it would be brought out as to the decision-making process. I wouldn't want the Assembly or your committee, Mr. Chairman, to be under any implied statement that it is a decision made by myself on an exclusive basis. I would ask either Mr. Clifford or Mr. Wilton to expand in a little more detail the actual process, so that the member and all members would be familiar with it, because it's a very, very highly processed system that we use to evaluate and rate. What we do is use the guidelines and criteria before we get to this decision-making stage, and with some balances to the geographics and so forth. So perhaps either gentleman would just give us a little cursory review of those stages in the process.

MR. WILTON: Yes; okay. We take all the nominations we receive over the course of the year, and we start early in February to assimilate the information out of them. We look at about eight or nine different criteria: things like their geographic location in the province, the things we mentioned today in our presentation; whether there's a conflict with the private operator; the location of a site in relation to major tourist routes and its potential for tourist attraction; how it's going to contribute to the community; whether it's just a community recreation resource or a regional recreation resource. We put that in a matrix form, we assign a weighting to it, and from that we come forward with recommendations on which sites we are proposing to fund in the current year -- any one year. And of course, there is a refinement process going through that whole thing.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. WEISS: Mr. Chairman, I'd just supplement by saying that before we reach this final decision-making, yes, I am involved as the minister responsible. But we sit down with slides; our staff and field personnel have been to all sites personally, reviewed them. I've tried to see as many as possible as well. We sit down and look at them, go over them in detail, and then we make a value decision and judgment call. It isn't on any basis that any one person should receive any more weighting factors than any other.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Member for Cypress-Redcliff, followed by the Member for Lloydminster.

MR. HYLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Firstly, it's inter-

esting to note the Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche making comments related to the Alberta North concept of a park. I think there was a member from a constituency called Fort McMurray-Athabasca who had either a motion on this committee or a motion in the Legislature some three or four years ago relating to an Alberta North type of park.

But back to the subject at hand, that of Kananaskis. I would like to ask the minister or the staff if they've got a list, and if we could have that list, of the distribution of people who visit there: those from other parts of Canada and the parts of Alberta that they come from. I understand we now have a better handle on statistics, and if we could see if the comment -- the doubters are sometimes saying it's only for the people from Calgary and south that visit Kananaskis and nobody from the north ever visits. I wonder if we have a better list of statistics on that that could be shared with the committee.

MR. WEISS: Well, we welcome to share that with you, and, Mr. Chairman, through you to the members of the Assembly, Mr. Marshall will respond. I would like to indicate, though, that with the year of the '88 Winter Olympics having been completed, capturing on that wind of opportunity has been very interesting, because we probably have built tourism and tourism traffic throughout that whole corridor from the dinosaur country park to Waterton and to the national park system. We've contributed by being a drawing card, by selling ourselves, and certainly it's paid off in significant numbers. As far as the areas of origin and destinations, Mr. Marshall will be pleased to provide you with that information.

MR. MARSHALL: Thank you, Mr. Minister and Mr. Chairman. I can't go quite as far as a "where from in Alberta" breakdown today, but we did bring some figures that I think may interest your committee members. Firstly, to explain that our source of information is from visitor surveys and from campground registrations and from people who sign in our visitor books and so on, so the numbers are not 100 percent accurate. We know they can't be, but they're as accurate as we can make them. And of course, the numbers I'm going to give you don't quite add up to a hundred because some people, when you ask where they're from, will tell you it's none of your business. So there's a no-answer category in this thing, but it's just the tail end.

With respect to daytime visitors -- noncampers or nonguests in hotels for 1987 -- on the basis of surveys, Mr. Chairman, 88.9 percent of the respondents were from Alberta, 5.6 percent from other provinces, 3.4 percent were American visitors, 1.4 percent were from elsewhere around the world, and the tail end is those who didn't answer. With respect to camping, '86 and '87 together show 88.8 percent Albertans, 6.1 percent from other Canadian provinces, 3.4 percent from the United States of America, 1.2 percent from elsewhere in the world. The others, we just don't have the numbers; there's no answer. We could break that down further with respect to Alberta if it was really wanted, Mr. Chairman, but I don't know what that's going to tell you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's good. Thank you.

Supplementary, Member for Cypress-Redcliff.

MR. HYLAND: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would appreciate at least the Alberta portion being broken down so that we can see if we are getting people from all over the province, because I

think that's one of the things he said they're finding at William Watson Lodge, that 19 percent or thereabouts of the visitors are from Edmonton and north. So it's coming, and I would appreciate at least the breakdown of those figures. I guess they show that still, even with all the advertisement of the Olympics and everything, it's still remaining pretty much a mountain park for Albertans at a reasonable price. That's one of our guidelines to it, and it looks like it's still staying there.

MR. WEISS: Please keep in mind, Mr. Chairman, through you to the hon. member, that the statistics refer to '87 prior to the Olympics. We, of course, thought that would change. But I would also conclude by saying, Mr. Chairman, that that also supports what I referred to in the response to the Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche: the need and the possibility of looking for another area for facilities such as William Watson Lodge.

MR. HYLAND: I've got one more, right?

MR. CHAIRMAN: A supplementary.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Chairman, this is related to the municipal parks. I would encourage the minister and his staff, when they're developing another program relating to municipal parks: be careful with the list of applications you have, because some of us have had people come to us and say, "Look, we're allowed approximately two each or a combination thereof if you want to split one" -- which was what I did -- and they may be misleading in that in one constituency there'll be five applications. In my constituency there'll be one, or half of one, that's left. So if you're going to expand it, at least come back to us all and ask us how many we're holding, or how many people we've talked to and told: if another program comes, we'll get your application there, but till one comes, in rough terms, it's been disbursed through the province, and we're full.

MR. WEISS: We certainly accept that as advisement and would take it into full consideration, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Member for Lloydminster, followed by the Member for Vermilion-Viking.

MR. CHERRY: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, last year I spoke about urban parks, and that's my subject again this time. I guess what I'd like to say about the urban parks program -- and it is finished now with the five parks being put in place -- but I guess until you live by one and see what you can do with the dollars allotted... I think, first of all, a big bouquet to the government. I'm sure everyone over here would agree that it was one heck of a good program: five parks. The one, of course, I'm speaking of is the Lloydminster park. Being there this year at different times, I can assure you that the park was very, very well used. There isn't a weekend goes by that there aren't some activities in that park. Throughout the summer months, of course, it was used extensively, and in the winter, with the winter activities, again it's used very extensively.

Is there any proposal being put forward that we can branch out to other communities with the urban park program, say, into smaller towns throughout the province, that they can have this commitment? Of course, the dollars would have to flow, as I realize, but I guess that's my main question. Are you studying

this, that we can go forward with something similar to that in the years to come?

MR. WEISS: Well, Mr. Chairman, I have a hard time to be specific, but in generalities I would first like to say that I appreciate the Member for Lloydminster's sincerity and his raising it, as he refers to the fact that there is an urban park in his community. I'm very grateful that he would point out the significance of what it means to a community, to an area.

As indicated by the hon. member, there are five communities that have benefited under the urban parks program, to approximately some \$87 million. The tourism potential, the number of users, particularly young people and children, boys and girls -- the numbers are unobtainable; we just know it's in the many, many, many thousands. It will remain a priority of mine and this department. We have developed the proposals to our cabinet and caucus colleagues. Unfortunately, as I also referred to one of the hon. members earlier, it's one of those proposals that, because of funding, we have been unable to proceed with. I would hope in my tenure as minister -- and I'm thankful to the hon. Premier for having left me in the position in the last change -- to be able to reach that attainable goal, and I believe it is attainable, to see that other communities may benefit, too, through an urban parks program.

But could I conclude it this way, Mr. Chairman, through you to your members: it will be only these members here that will make it possible. It's through their assistance, their direction, and their leadership that we'll see that all communities throughout Alberta could participate in a program such as the urban parks one. I can't speak highly enough about it. I can't make any more stronger recommendations. The dollars have to be there. It can't be on a limited basis, but I believe we could expand it and include more communities, even at a lesser funding level, at top dollars. But we're ready; many of the communities are ready. I just hope that your committee can at one time or another address it in a satisfactory way.

MR. CHERRY: Okay. My other question is about Kananaskis Country. Perhaps this is directed more at Ed Marshall than the minister. I look at the William Watson Lodge, for example, and I'm sure that for nine months of the year anyway that is probably full. I wonder what percentage in reservations you would have to turn away because of the capacity that it has, Ed, whether you would have any figures on that.

MR. WEISS: Mr. Marshall, would you like to respond, please?

MR. MARSHALL: Mr. Chairman, I didn't bring the turnaway numbers with me; I'm sorry. I could have, but I didn't. If you want those answered to the committee, I would be pleased to answer. We talk about 100 percent at William Watson Lodge, and that is the case most of the time. A greater truth: it's more like 110 percent some of the time, just because you have hideaway beds and that kind of thing. But whether we are accommodating one person for every three or one person for every two and a half that want in -- I'd prefer not to just shoot from the hip on it, if you don't mind. I'll give it to you if you'd like it, but it's significant.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any further supplementaries? Member for Vermilion-Viking.

DR. WEST: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To the minister, I

guess. I'm going back to the MRTA, the municipal recreation/tourism areas grants. They have been very beneficial in rural Alberta from two points of view: one, with the no-strings-attached type grant, and the allowability to develop them on a municipal basis. The people feel that they are part of the progress of development of these, rather than it being run totally by departments. Of course, the operating funds have made them functional for years ahead.

My point -- and it follows up just the opposite to what the Member for Little Bow has pointed out -- is that many areas have prudently designated only two or three major developments in their constituencies, because you just can't spread them far enough apart to make the impact beneficial. So for the future has the minister considered allowing stacking of programs to enhance the projects that are already under way? For \$100,000 we've gained a lot in some areas, but another \$100,000 on top of the same project area would really develop some nice tourism areas, greater expansion of that tourism area, with a bigger bang for our buck. On a double expansion in the future you could probably get a lot more out of some of these areas than you could spending several hundred thousand in other areas. Have you considered that?

MR. WEISS: Well, Mr. Chairman, it's very interesting. I guess it could be said that if the \$100,000 were to be considered as seed money, then we should plant the rest of the crop and then water it and watch it grow. I guess in this case the member's submission is certainly a very valid one and one that we would be more than pleased to take into consideration should there be extra funding available -- should and if. I find it very interesting. I know there are many areas that could have increased expansion, whether it be in size or facilities or whatever, so it's a very interesting one. I've not honestly been asked that personally until this submission now by the hon. Member for Vermilion-Viking, but we would be pleased to follow up on his suggestion.

DR. WEST: I appreciate that.

I guess one other question, and I'll tailgate over to the Kananaskis park. In the constituency several times over the last couple of years I've been approached on the availability of low-cost night rentals in the Kananaskis area. People have made the comment, whether they're informed or not, that Kananaskis, as an availability to everybody in Alberta, has too high priced rooms at the lodgings that are there. They wonder why the private sector couldn't establish more equitable lodgings at \$50 or \$45 a night on a twelve months a year basis rather than the anywhere from \$90 upwards to whatever they are that have been stated during peak seasons. The average Albertan says, "Sure, I can take my tent, I can take my trailer, I can find lodging, or I can stay in Calgary and go back out." But they say that that doesn't make that Kananaskis park available to a lot of people on a reasonable night rental right on-site. They don't want to bring their trailers; they don't want to bring their camps. They want to go into a motel/hotel. Are there any plans to develop in the private sector more lodging at a more reasonable rate?

MR. WEISS: Well, Mr. Chairman, I'd ask Mr. Marshall to supplement as well.

First, I'd indicate to the hon. member that his analysis of the overall situation as it reflects to all Albertans is certainly true. In the closing portion of his remarks he did state that, yes, there are tenting facilities or recreation vehicle facilities and others

available, which then means that Albertans from all sectors and all walks of life can enjoy and participate in using Kananaskis. Tenting, backpacking, and walking and hiking, as I'm sure Mr. Marshall will reiterate, are a very large component and represent a large proportion of the users.

Mr. Chairman, I believe the hon. member said "any plans" for the staging or development of facilities in the \$50 level or whatever level would be used but at less value than what is there now. I would like first of all to say that the three major facilities that are developed, the three major facilities, were developed because of the commitment to be provided during the Olympics. Of course, the private sector decided in their best interest that that was the type of facility they felt they needed to accommodate ongoing tourists and visitors, and of course, they have to rationalize their pricing structure by the overall economics and cost factors and, as well, take into consideration the private-sector facilities in other areas in the proximity, such as Banff and Lake Louise. We as government are not here to tell the private sector what they should or could charge. That, of course, would be under the combines Act. They in turn have set their own rates, and whether they are able to maintain those or not, I have no idea. It's their prerogative. What I can say is that they offer a good, first-class, comparable facility to anywhere in the area and to anywhere else.

As far as the overall plans at this stage, we do not have -- and I'd emphasize so it's fully clear and understood -- we do not have on the drawing board at this time nor are entertaining any firm proposal to develop any plans for other types of accommodation in that \$50 vicinity the member refers to. I would like, though, to state that there are other areas in the near vicinity of Kananaskis Country, such as Canmore, where there is private land and land available through Alberta Housing as well that potential developers would be looking at for further development in those price ranges the member refers to. So it's a very interesting one. I recognize the need, but at this time we do not have anything in place that's able to address it. But I certainly would like Mr. Marshall to comment, because he was so deeply involved in the initial stages and development and direction of the three existing facilities.

MR. MARSHALL: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chairman and Dr. West, if I may. You have identified or had identified for you what is unquestionably something of a gap in the offerings to Alberta citizens. That's the important thing. We have tried to the extent that we are able to make Kananaskis Country available for all Albertans who wish to use it, and there's been a breadth of things created or developed to make that possible. But it is appreciated that not everybody can afford the level of hotel that's there and that not everybody wants to go camping. There are some who would like to come and stay in Kananaskis Country overnight at a somewhat more affordable price. We have in fact had one development out there, a small facility called Mount Engadine Lodge, south of the south end of Spray Lakes, which is probably at a level below the one you're talking about. If I could use the expression, it's a rather deluxe hostel as opposed to a modest motel. That's the best way I can describe it.

With respect to the Heritage Savings Trust Fund -- and it's been our job to be trustees of quite a lot of that money -- this last year, the year we're in, is just a very small year, less than half a million dollars. So there are no government plans, no sites identified, for anything of the kind that you are describing. But neither, in truth, have we had a meaningful proposal of any con-

sequence from anyone in the private sector, saying: "We'd really like to do this. We'd like to go after that \$50, \$60, or \$70 market, whatever it is." We don't have one in front of us. We never have, and believe me, there's hardly a week goes by that I don't get something bounced off me, what somebody would like to develop in Kananaskis Country. But nothing of what you describe, sir.

I promise you it's recognized as a gap, and perhaps someday it would be possible. It's the best answer I can give you.

DR. WEST: I'll have my final supplementary then. I would ask the minister: do you believe that we've set the standard so high at Kananaskis as far as buildings and structures that we have created an exclusivity to the people who already built the hotel there, or run the hotel there, that we're going to preclude in future generations any other private sectors being able to come in and build something that will be able to give that cheap an accommodation? So the question again is: have we set the standards so high on buildings and what have you in Kananaskis that we're going to preclude future generations, where there may be less income to the province or less income to the development, the chance to build and use the facility?

MR. WEISS: Well, Mr. Chairman, I'll ask Mr. Marshall to respond as well, but first I would like to go back to our initial discussion, our philosophical discussion as it related to the Member for Little Bow, when we talked about future development and amenities. And the word "commercial" was used. This is where people who have a pride in ownership and a pride of use, in the restrictive use to Alberta and as Alberta's park, are saying, "We do not wish to see any such future developments or any changes or any new commercial structures." You've identified, sir, a very definite need and a very definite gap. I as the minister responsible, then, will certainly carry that message through and have. If there were to be a private-sector proposal that would come forth, we would certainly entertain it. We would carry it through the Kananaskis Citizens' Advisory Committee, which would have the first opportunity to evaluate the proposal and to assess the overall need which -- I support what you're saying -- is there.

I don't believe we've precluded or set any standard. That's up to the industry themselves, to say whether they can market. I'm not in the marketing end of the hotel business, to say that the rates should not be what they are today. They and they alone can best determine whether they can be in the market next year, if it's a 70 percent occupancy or an 85 or a 90 percent occupancy. We do know that there are concerns, and you've just re-echoed them.

Mr. Marshall, maybe you would supplement on that, because of your firsthand knowledge of the area as well.

MR. MARSHALL: Thank you, minister.

Mr. Chairman and Dr. West, I don't think what we've tried to achieve in Kananaskis Country with respect to doing things well has any particular effect upon what is charged by commercial hotels for a night's accommodation. We've tried to do things as well as we know how to do them in order to make sure that what was done was well done. In fact, we had pretty clear direction on that, and we've followed that direction. But some of those things -- most of them, in fact -- are free; there's no charge for those things at all. That, of course, doesn't apply to the hotels which the government didn't develop. Infrastructure was provided. But the infrastructure wouldn't be much different

whether it was for a \$40-a-night facility or a \$140-a-night facility.

Again I would say that there is a gap there. Winter and summer there's a gap in terms of providing the kind of accommodation that you've addressed. If a proposal comes along from the private sector, it'll be a judgment to deal with it when the time comes. We have zoning. We're not easy guys to deal with, but we try to be fair, and we try to give everybody a good hearing.

MR. WEISS: Mr. Chairman, I have to come back in. I'm sorry to take time of the members, but I neglected to point out what Mr. Marshall has just raised with regard to the facilities: they're there for all. That, of course, is within the village association itself; that is, the complex with the little store, the rest and relaxation room -- I guess that's the term you could use -- and there's a spa and a tub. These facilities are available whether you are staying at the lodge or not. We have many, many campers -- tenters and all -- who use that facility. There is no charge to come in and sit down and read a book on a rainy day or to have a little bit of a respite away from a family. Or one may be out on a walking trail and say, "Hey, I'd just like to go in and sit down and enjoy a little bit of solitude." That's there; we provide that. That's what your tax dollars have done through this; providing it is part of the commitment through the other facilities as well. It's a very integral, very important part of the park, and I'm sorry I neglected to point that out.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Member for Wainwright, followed by the Member for Lethbridge-West.

MR. FISCHER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to begin by taking this opportunity to wish Dr. Barry Mitchelson, our retiring deputy minister, well in his new career. I know he's worked hard on recreation for this province for a number of years, and I would like to commend him for this work and dedication that he's given this province.

I'd like to just make one statement, what Dr. West is talking about with our accommodation. We did have an opportunity to stay in the lodge when we were there, and the \$150 price . . . That would accommodate six people quite easily; it must have been over 1,000 square feet. I don't think that's very expensive. To begin with, I'm sure it would be tougher to get a booking for it than the actual cost.

My question I have -- and we did enjoy our tour around the park very much. I'd like to know what the actual operating cost of the Kananaskis park would be to the government. I guess it comes maybe out of the general fund and not out of the heritage fund, but could we have some kind of a net actual cost?

One of my other questions would be then: do we get some income from the agreements for providing the infrastructure for some of these buildings?

MR. WEISS: Yes. I'd ask Mr. Marshall to respond, but just to follow up a little on the hon. Member for Wainwright when he refers to the cost, I'm glad you would indicate that, as far as the total accommodation in some units. I do know that one particular unit in the inn, for example, Mr. Chairman -- to let your members be aware -- while it does rent for some \$250 . . . It sounds very expensive, and yes, \$250 is, to you or to me or to any Albertan, I'm sure. But it does accommodate 12. A quick calculation is about \$21 or thereabouts, then, per person. During the ski season -- because remember Kananaskis Country is

not just a summer park or a recreational area; it is an all-season, multipurpose park. The skiing facilities are world-class, and of course Kananaskis Country is known now throughout the world. Nakiska on Mount Allan is hopefully going to be used very extensively recreation-wise this year, because the limitations during the Olympics . . . But if you took 12 skiers at \$21 apiece, that's pretty cheap recreational skiing no matter where you are.

So I thank the hon. member for bringing that out, and I'd ask Mr. Marshall to respond directly to the Member for Wainwright.

MR. MARSHALL: Mr. Chairman, you know me well enough that I just can't let an opportunity go by. It's about \$13 million, and it should be about \$16 million. Now, that is the budget under the direction of the Minister of Recreation and Parks. There are other budgets, and I don't know what they are. Alberta forests, for instance, is responsible for forest protection. Obviously, they have a budget. Alberta transportation has a budget, but I don't know what it is. I just pay the bill for the improvement district. But in answer to what I think was your question -- what does it cost to deliver this recreation opportunity? -- my first answer was, I think, what you wanted. Okay?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Any supplementaries?

MR. FISCHER: Is there some income from our agreements with the hotel people, as we provide the infrastructure for them?

MR. WEISS: Well, certainly, Mr. Chairman, and to the hon. Member for Wainwright, there are separate votes as it relates to the expenditures for Kananaskis and, of course, which come before the Assembly and which at that time all hon. members have the opportunity to question and, hopefully, support the overall expenditures Mr. Marshall has indicated because of what he sees as an ongoing need. Because parks do wear out, and they do need upgrading, and they need ongoing funds.

Specifically as to the hon. member's query: is there any income derived from any of these private-sector groups that we have working contractual agreements with? Yes, there is. In the Assembly I've had the opportunity to file those documents as they relate to several of the facilities. It is public knowledge, the agreements as they relate to the ventures. To go into them at this time, Mr. Chairman -- it's very detailed, very complex, because each of them varies in their own manner, and of course some are related to the number of users, work on a percentage basis as it relates to income and to gross sales, and others relate to some monetary value affixed to the overall land use. But that information has all generally been made public, through to the Assembly.

MR. FISCHER: My other supplementary question then. I was very happy to hear the high percentage of Alberta users in that park, and I'd like to go a little more specific, to the golf course and the very moderate dues that are being charged for such a first-class facility. The setting of these dues: I would hope we do have some control on that. Do we?

MR. WEISS: Well, Mr. Chairman, that's very interesting, because the direct responsibility does fall to the minister of the department. We are involved to ensure that Albertans and those users have direct benefits, but at the same time we must look at the overall economics to ensure the viability for the operator and to the long-term operation of the facility. As the hon. member

has pointed out, though, we believe they are modest, in line, contrary to what an awful lot of citizens would relate to. Without the full knowledge many people start off by saying: "It's excessive, It's too expensive. I can't afford it, and there's no way we'll ever go out to that luxurious, palatial facility." The current rates are just around \$24 which, if one were to compare to our national parks at \$32 and \$35, comparatively speaking, I think the world-class facility that's offered at Kananaskis is not only modest in relation to others but worldwide -- not North America, worldwide -- offers the lowest fee for service comparable to the type of facility anywhere in North America. If one were to take the European market in particular, they'd find it almost embarrassing to think that the fee is as low as it is.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

The Member for Lethbridge-West, followed by the Member for Lacombe.

MR. GOGO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to ask a series of questions on Kananaskis not because the urban parks system in Alberta is not important or the MRTA is not important, but I think Kananaskis in many ways is the flagship of our parks system. I'd like to ask the minister a question, and perhaps a couple to the father of Kananaskis over there, Mr. Ed Marshall, who has been in it since its inception.

A comment was made a moment ago by Dr. West about the price of rooms, and I think comment was made that government does not set rates. Well, I would simply advise that we have a quarter billion dollars of taxpayers' money in that country, \$40 million probably in infrastructure, commit a million or more a month to operating it. And even in the cafeteria in this building we set the food rates. So government has a responsibility, I think, to determine the affordability of accommodation.

My question to the minister, however. Is there an agreement with the developers, Financial Trustco or CPR -- and for those who don't think CPR doesn't run the country, they run two of the three hotels in Kananaskis -- or something in writing where this government has agreed not to allow development of any further accommodation in Kananaskis park?

MR. WEISS: Well, Mr. Chairman, that's very interesting, very direct. I will respond directly first by saying no, and then I would go on to reiterate that the words used by the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West I certainly appreciate, when he refers to Kananaskis as being the flagship, because we certainly look at it in that perspective as well.

The hon. member also went on to state that we have a responsibility. Yes, we have an indirect responsibility as well. We certainly want to see those operators or proprietors succeed, and to that end we will share and give them the best of co-operation that we can. But as far as the overall setting of rates, we're not in that position to actually request or directly have them set a rate. That may be more applicable or more appealing to what the hon. Member for Vermilion-Viking has referred to. In particular where there is some financial backing in the way of loan guarantees and others to those facilities, it certainly is in our best interest to see that they succeed. But at the same time, the hon. member must know and understand that if one invests in something, one has the right to hopefully succeed but at the same time knowing full well that the other end of that spectrum is the right to fail. We certainly hope that would never happen, but we're not going to be proponents to determine that by exclusivity, either for or against. So there is directly no

agreement that would preclude any such future development.

MR. GOGO: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Marshall, you'd made reference to the fact that the campgrounds are grossly overbooked. I don't understand whether or not we have a reservation system, but my concern is best related by a comment. Coming back from Kananaskis a month ago, I had an unfortunate incident on the highway and I was picked up by a visiting couple from New Hampshire who had seen Kananaskis, seen Alberta, particularly Nakiska on ABC television during the Olympics. They flew from Boston to Calgary to see Kananaskis. That's the sort of popularity that place has. Recognizing the increased demand, Mr. Marshall, and the overbookings of the campgrounds, have you as director of Kananaskis made -- and I hope the minister doesn't mind my asking the question -- recommendations to the minister that the campground facilities be expanded in Kananaskis for the next coming year?

MR. MARSHALL: Mr. Chairman, Mr. Gogo, we would very much like to develop an additional campground in the south end of the Spray Lakes. That's where we are most desperate. Our second most desperate area is between the south end of Peter Lougheed Provincial Park and Highwood House, countryside where you have recently traveled. If we could make a call for private-sector development of one of those facilities, we most certainly would. If we could obtain government funding for either or both of them, nothing would please us more than to proceed with it. I think this is the kind of development that the minister was talking about that could continue in Kananaskis Country without causing any noticeable disruption to the countryside or anything of that kind.

We have ongoing needs for such things, but we do not have them in a program, and we cannot have them in a program at the present time. Our Heritage Savings Trust Fund days are behind us. We might wish it would continue, but the money just isn't there, sir. That's the best way I can answer you.

MR. GOGO: Final question, Mr. Chairman, to Mr. Weiss. Recognizing the popularity of Kananaskis and the diversity of the people who visit Kananaskis, and I understand privately from Margaret Qually that inquiries have never been higher, is there, Mr. Minister, the assurance to this committee that having Kananaskis in place, the administration of Kananaskis will continue to receive sufficient funds -- I understand it's \$13 million -- to operate Kananaskis Country so that we do not end up with a beautiful facility able to be utilized by a lot of people but not having sufficient funds to administrate Kananaskis Country?

MR. WEISS: Mr. Chairman, that's both very interesting and to a degree hypothetical but, I think, certainly deserving of an answer. The best I can do is perhaps try and summarize this way. As stewards of the resource it's our responsibility to ensure that those facilities, along with Recreation and Parks facilities throughout the province of Alberta, are maintained to the best possible standards that you and I as custodians of those facilities can administer. To that end Kananaskis Country, as I mentioned to the hon. Member for Wainwright, is categorized under a separate budget expenditure. Those budgets, along with the other portion of funds through the department, which total approximately \$100 million, all have to receive budget approval and be voted on by all hon. members of the Assembly, of course, of which you are one. So it is with your gracious sup-

port and your input that when I appear before this Assembly requesting approval of our expenditures and for our overall budget, we would not only receive support unanimously but would perhaps hopefully receive direction, that the priorities committee and others would be listening to all hon. members that there is a need to ensure those funds are there.

Whether the \$13 million-plus is sufficient -- I have to best determine that, in working very closely with the managing director as well as the deputy minister of the department for the overall responsibility of the department. If I judge that wrong, then I am truly not the custodian and the person that I should be in accepting that responsibility. I hope, Mr. Chairman, through to the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West, that that is a fair answer to a very difficult question. All of us in this Assembly would like to say that for each and every project that affects our own individual constituency we should have more money and more funds to deliver and have for our programs. But we also have to accept financial responsibility within this government to ensure that we don't go beyond the means, so that your children and my children and others will not inherit that legacy of debt that we know is out there if we don't control it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
The Member for Lacombe.

MR. R. MOORE: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I have a couple of questions. They're not related, so I'll forgo any supplementaries if I can have the two, one after the other. Having said that, first of all there's an important link in the road program for Kananaskis Country that was originally there in the planning, and we haven't proceeded too far because of financial restraints. That's the Powderface Trail. Have we done anything in the past year -- survey work or site improvement -- to advance that, or is that just one of those things that is nebulously hanging up there?

MR. WEISS: Well, it's interesting, Mr. Chairman, that the hon. Member for Lacombe would raise it. There's another hon. member that I've heard from on many occasions who's not in the Assembly today; it's a very dear subject to him, I believe. That, of course, is the Member for Calgary-McCall.

I welcome the query, and I believe Mr. Marshall has responded in the past. I'll ask him to add to it, but it's a case of the Powderface Trail being caught up in the "powder" at this time and not having the rest of the goods to complete the "face" of it. But maybe Mr. Marshall would supplement it.

MR. MARSHALL: Mr. Minister, Mr. Chairman, thank you. I'm happy to answer you, Mr. Moore. There were four road projects that somehow became casualties in Kananaskis Country. One of them was the Powderface Trail, a delightful route between Sibbald Flats on the north and the Little Elbow on the south. Nothing is being done on it; nothing can be done. We have no funds to do it. We are having a grader make a pass at a couple of spots to widen the trailhead, and we might fund the odd load of gravel now and then. That would make the trail and the pull off useful. But nothing else is being done or can be done. It was a casualty, along with the north end of the Smith-Dorrien/Spray trail as it comes out from Canmore, the south end of Highway 40, and the paving on Highway 68. They were all major casualties. But one of them was the Powderface Trail, a delightful drive on a nice day, but otherwise I would recommend four-wheel driving.

MR. R. MOORE: Mr. Chairman, this is to Mr. Marshall also. Ever since Kananaskis Country construction began, we've heard a tremendous amount of negative criticism about one aspect of Kananaskis Country. This Legislature has heard it time and time again from the Official Opposition, and it was expounded immensely by their media friends, and that was the white sand in the golf course. It was brought forward as a tremendous misuse of public funds, extravagant, on and on and on, and it created an impression with many Albertans of irresponsible use of our dollars for the rich.

Now we've had the experience of that golf course operating over a few years, and it was my impression last week when we toured there, talking to golf course officials, that this white sand actually was the best investment, the most economic investment, and the best use of public funds when it comes to putting sand on a golf course, inasmuch as it hasn't had to be replaced. It's there, it's serving, and there isn't an additional maintenance cost that would have been involved with ordinary sand. Now, Mr. Marshall, were those officials telling me right, that at this point in time, it was a good, economic purchase?

MR. WEISS: Well, I would like Mr. Marshall to respond, because it's certainly an interesting one. I used the word earlier in your programs, Mr. Chairman, the word "investment." What an investment. Like water finds its own level, sand found its own level too. Maybe it'll come back to haunt those, with that white sand, because those decisions were good, clear-cut decisions made by my predecessor the hon. Peter Trynchy. They were so valid and so right. I just can't say enough about it, because it's just saved you and I as taxpayers and the citizens of Alberta many, many thousands of dollars because of not having to replace the sand or upgrade. Initial costs were very insignificant in relation and comparison. But, Mr. Marshall, I know you'd love to answer that.

MR. MARSHALL: Thank you, sir.

Mr. Moore, when we were in the process of selecting the sand for the Kananaskis Country golf course, I looked at so many samples that I thought I was in the soil business. I think it was 26 or 28 that we actually had come before us. Every table was covered with grains of sand. We selected the sand that was from this magnificent pit at Golden on the basis that it would do the best job of any sand that we could possibly obtain for the Kananaskis Country golf course. I wish I owned a piece of the company called [Mountain] Minerals in Lethbridge that has the pit out at Golden, because they're never going to be able to produce enough of this sand to accommodate the golf courses that want it today. You're seeing many more golf courses with white sand, but it's not our sand. In some cases it is, but in most places it isn't. It's not good enough. It's a masquerade, that they've got the same white sand that we've got.

We have not replaced as much as a wheelbarrow full of the original sand at the Kananaskis Country golf course. It's turned out to be the biggest bargain, the best bang for the buck as far as I'm concerned, in all of Kananaskis Country. People thought the price was outrageous because it was \$42.50 a metric ton FOB the golf course -- FOB right into the sand trap, if that's where we wanted it. We were paying \$39.50 for sand from an Edmonton pit to do our tees and our greens. It's another special kind of sand for which the white sand isn't adequate because the pH isn't right. But it's not just sand out of the pit that we've got; it's a manufactured sand. Each grain clings to each other grain and makes it stay put. It also makes it very playable. If

you watch the golf course time after time, you'll never see puddles of water in it, and it doesn't bake.

We sent samples of all of our sands to Texas A & M University. They didn't know where it came from. They were the ones that ran the tests to decide the suitability of this or that sample for use on a golf course, and they said, "This is the sample." It just happened to be white. I promise you: the way they came back and described that sand, if it had been chartreuse or yellow or purple, I think we might have used it, because it was so good. It happened to be white. Following that, some people said some dumb things: that we picked it so it matches the snow in the mountains, which of course was just a bunch of baloney.

In any case, I'm glad you asked the question. If I had to do it all over again, if my job depended on it or my life depended on it, I'd still pick that sand at \$42.50 a metric ton. Okay?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Any further supplementaries?

MR. R. MOORE: I told you, Mr. Chairman, that I wouldn't have a supplemental. Would you allow me a comment?

MR. CHAIRMAN: One last supplementary.

MR. R. MOORE: While you're considering it, I'll say it. I just hope that one of our members here today will take that back to his caucus and that we'll have an official announcement in the paper apologizing to the citizens of Alberta for some of the misstatements they've made in the past and the image they caused out there.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for Little Bow.

MR. R. SPEAKER: No comment, Mr. Chairman. It was political fun, and I guess that's part of the game over the years.

The question I wanted to ask was stimulated by the presentation on Kananaskis. The comment was, I think, that part of the park couldn't be opened in May because of a budget shortage. Two of the other members have raised this question in part already. The question I ask of the minister is: in the past have projections been made in terms of the impact on the departmental operating budget in terms of these Heritage Savings Trust Fund programs: the municipal recreation/tourism program, Kananaskis, the urban parks program? Have you done projections as to the impact on your budget, and will you be able to meet the commitment in full in the current year and in, say, the next three years by budget projections?

Today I went back and reviewed your current fiscal budget, and note in there that in the area of Recreational Development -- if I can get it out there far enough so we can both see it -- your budget was reduced by 15 percent. Your overall budget was reduced by some 11 percent, which indicates to me that if that trend continued or was even maintained as is, taking into consideration an inflation factor, we will run short of operating commitments that we're making as public servants or legislators. My question is: how has the minister considered this in the past? Will we be able to operate the facilities? We're increasing expectations, and I only see that creating a greater demand from the rural municipalities and the various interest groups and from us as legislators. Can you keep the thing in hand? Have you wrestled with this question, and how do you see the projection for the next fiscal year?

MR. WEISS: Well, Mr. Chairman, the hon. member is very astute in both his facts and his research in referring to the specifics. To the hon. Member for Little Bow: I appreciate your raising them for two reasons, because you've pointed out some very interesting statistics that we, too, recognize. The word "trend" that you referred to will not continue. I can give the hon. members the assurance that the recovery period that the hon. Premier refers to -- we're in a more stabilized period, not forecasting or predicting major, significant reductions as we've had in the past.

We as a department had to accept some responsibilities, as well as others, in saying, "Where can we best look at saving dollars?" I'll be the first to admit to the hon. member and to members of this Assembly that some of those decisions were probably not the best decisions, and I accept the responsibility for that. If there are areas that we can improve on and correct, those are the areas we certainly will. I don't think it's been too late in any of those areas to overcorrect, overreact on, but if there are areas of concern that can be best met individually in the member's constituency and others, those are the areas of responsibility that I'll be focusing on. In particular, though, I believe we can meet the commitments, and I accept that as a challenge.

I also would like to refer to the comments as they related to the audiovisual and the utilization of certain areas at certain times. Please keep in mind, Mr. Chairman, through to the hon. Member for Little Bow -- and I'm sure he's well aware -- that parks uses are cyclical. There are certain times or periods of the year that they are more in demand than others. So what we did in our overall estimation of trying to determine where we could best use and allocate dollars and expenditures as well was to say, for example, that some of the farther out or lesser used or perhaps less utilized park sites or camping areas would maybe not come on stream in the first portion of the year. Maybe there were road factors, where we knew that the roads were not completely dry or that the area itself had not had full accessibility in the early spring periods. So those were the areas we didn't open up at that time.

But the one thing that we perhaps didn't read correctly, Mr. Chairman, also as the Member for Little Bow referred to, was the use. Our overall expectations of usage were much higher. So in some of those calculations we've erred on the wrong side, and I would assure the hon. member that those are the areas that we will be bringing back into balance as well. I think it's fair that you've raised them, and I appreciate your allowing me that opportunity to explain in a rational way as well what we're endeavouring to do and why we did it. It wasn't at any time just saying: "Hey, you can't go there because we don't have any dollars. We're never going to open up that particular area." It was to our best knowledge; we were doing it in that manner.

I believe it would be only fair as well to ask Dr. Barry Mitchelson to respond, because this was an area we worked on for many, many hours and spent many hours of discussion and evaluation as to how we could come to some of these decisions as well. So, Dr. Mitchelson, would you mind commenting as well, please?

DR. MITCHELSON: I guess the issue is one of balancing a budget. First of all, you have to have the commitment to do that, and it doesn't matter whether you're running a household budget or a government budget. We're one of the members of the team, as a department within the government. When there was a stated commitment to balanced budgets, we looked at all our clients or consumers, whether they be municipalities, users

of the provincial parks system, whatever. From my perspective I can say in good conscience that the strategies we chose were ones that we believed would have least impact. As a consequence of our experience over the last two years, when there have been reductions, I can say in good conscience that I still believe they were the best strategies to have the least impact on our clients. None of us likes to cut our budgets, but it was a reality at that time, and we did it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Member for Little Bow, a supplementary.

MR. R. SPEAKER: Just to supplement that first question. As I mentioned in my earlier remarks in my first question, the consumer demand is increasing because we're building facilities out there right across rural Alberta. That's the first thing.

The second expectation that's building greater demand is the thrust in terms of tourism opportunity. I see that impacting your budget. What do you say to us as the Heritage Savings Trust Fund committee, that we proceed to, you know, try and expend more moneys in these areas, that we allow for more capital works to proceed? Because when we make that decision here and recommend it to government, the consequence lies at your doorstep to operate many of these types of programs. I guess my question is: would you encourage us, as the Heritage Savings Trust Fund committee, to allow for more capital expenditures if available, or have we gone as far as we can in terms of budget capability of the department of recreation and tourism?

MR. WEISS: Well, Mr. Chairman, I think those remarks are certainly bringing it to focus and directly to the concern. I'm going to ask Dr. Mitchelson as well to close on the remarks that I express, because he's been so keenly interested in reaching our goals and our objectives and through his past seven and a half years has certainly recognized some of the trends, the changes, the needs of people from those who first started with tent trailers now moving into recreation vehicles and others. Of course, the trend for those who backpack and will use and enjoy the equestrian centre -- there are trails -- and others, all-terrain vehicles, and the multipurpose concept that we talk about in Recreation and Parks.

Mr. Chairman, I couldn't say it any stronger than -- no, I wouldn't use the word "encourage" to this committee to expend or utilize more dollars or allow us to have more dollars. If I had to and if it would mean anything more, I would stand on this desk and I would shout it and I would ask and I would plead for more dollars if that's what it takes, because I sincerely believe that there are 2.3 million-plus Albertans out there who need to have more recreation facilities; to ensure that both the ecological concerns and the pristine conditions and the overall leisure-life programs are there for many, many years to come; to address the needs of our citizens because they've changed so dramatically. You heard from your colleague to the immediate right, the Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche, when he talks about development in other areas. Those are the things that I'm talking about when I say I would plead. I wouldn't do anything to encourage you, then, in your words, to try and ensure that there are forthcoming dollars to allow projects to proceed.

I know Dr. Mitchelson would love to supplement it. Dr. Mitchelson?

DR. MITCHELSON: As far as how we budget, any budget proposal that we would come forward with, either capital or operating dollars, is done on a multiyear basis. So the bottom line is

that you see a bottom line on a multiyear basis in anything that we come forward with.

I guess the next question is one of tourism. I can only say how officials prepare information. If the projections are true regarding tourism, then there's obviously a decision: do we want to be in the tourism business or not? The information that we would provide as it would relate to any tourism proposal would be, number one, what are the costs? What is the time as far as capital recovery from a government perspective? And third, what would be the impact as far as the provincial economy is concerned? So anytime any proposal would go forward that would be rationalized from the tourism perspective, you're looking at a provincial economic stimulus financial statement, as well as a return on government dollars as far as investment, and third, actual capital and operating costs. Those are the elements that we would put into any data that would go forward for consideration, and from my perspective I think it's a thorough and responsible financial analysis to those kinds of undertakings.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche.

MR. PIQUETTE: Thank you. I guess we have a battle here between the north and the south, which is good to have.

Going back to the MRTA and the response the minister made before. In view that the minister indicated that each MRTA application is thoroughly investigated before approval and that you have a set of criteria that has to be adhered to before final approval is given, I'd like to ask the minister what justification he had when two projects were approved this spring in the name of an individual MLA without any specific project being identified. It was without naming any specific project, and if that set of criteria is supposed to be applied across the province, why did that take place?

MR. WEISS: Well, that's very interesting, Mr. Chairman. The hon. member refers to a constituency known as Three Hills. I don't think that's any secret, and I wouldn't want it to be misinterpreted or the Assembly to go away misinformed that there was any attempt to hide or withhold any information. The overall guidelines and criteria have been laid out, as was indicated. The hon. member had made application for specific projects. Due to some problems that had been encountered under the guidelines and criteria, we were not able to proceed at that time, but the initial approvals were given. As the minister responsible I honoured those commitments, and the announcement was in that stage, so it would allow the hon. Member for Three Hills to complete those projects and have them finalized to make sure that they met all conditions. There was at no time any attempt or endeavour to withhold or to favour a member from one side or the other. I'm sure Mr. Wilton would like to add as to the current status of those proposals, if it were required as well, but those were the only projects for that constituency of Three Hills that received funding, so it wasn't as if there was more than what was under a normal allocation or allotment.

It's interesting, Mr. Chairman, that the hon. member refers to the north/south. I understand the third and final saga is on television in the next day or two. He might look to see what the results are and who does come out winners. I think we all in the province of Alberta will come out winners in our overall needs as they relate to recreation and not as it relates to a civil war or an argument between each other, because I don't wish to get embroiled in that type of an argument, just to try and address the

needs for all our constituents.

Mr. Wilton, did you wish to comment on the status?

MR. WILTON: Sure. Those projects that went forward were the ones that were recommended: Irricana and Beiseker. One's grant has been currently paid out. The other application is in, and we're in the process of paying that out now.

MR. PIQUETTE: Mr. Chairman, I hope that practice doesn't happen again, because I think it was a very unusual kind of occurrence.

In my responsibility as the Tourism and Recreation and Parks critic I did some surveying of the Edmonton market with the view of making the minister aware that in northern Alberta we have a captive market here in the city of Edmonton. A lot of city of Edmonton people tend to travel outside the province for their holidays. In the little mini survey I conducted, I found that over 50 percent of Edmontonians travel outside the province for holidays, a tremendous loss of money that could be spent within the province.

One of the things that was identified in the survey that I conducted was: not enough adequate spaces for campsites, et cetera, in the Edmonton north area. Of course, with the mountain parks being very occupied, that becomes even more of a problem. Has the minister carried out such market analyses in terms of justifying taking a look at the need for park development in northern Alberta, because of the fact that, you know, even at Kananaskis, one of the things that I'm quite surprised at is that 89 percent of tourists are Albertans? Basically, our market is Albertans, so we can build on that market. Has the minister conducted such a survey to put together a good argument for increased funding?

MR. WEISS: Well, Mr. Chairman, through to the hon. Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche, we certainly have ongoing surveys to determine needs, use and effective utilization, and the trends.

It's interesting to note that the hon. member refers to development in the north. Just a quick recap: there are extensive renovations taking place in Gregoire Lake, some million dollars over a two-year program; Thunder Lake; Long Lake just recently reopened and dedicated by myself this summer, some \$4 million; Franchere Bay. In the north in particular we've had extensive development in renovations, upgrading, and retrofitting, into the many millions of dollars. So yes, we are aware of those needs.

We've recently announced a further major development in

the Miquelon Lake area in the constituency of Camrose, which will serve the 600,000 and some plus Edmontonians within that region as well, which is very popular and very heavily utilized; a major expansion development at Wabamun, approximately 56 kilometres west. I can go on area by area. I don't think that's the point, Mr. Chairman. I just really want to get out, though, that sometimes . . . To the hon. Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche: yes, I can appreciate being a critic and critique, but I don't always accept being critical. That to me is of a different manner. I'm proud to defend the overall expenditures as they relate to north/south and look forward to the ongoing expenditures and commitments that I outlined earlier to the hon. member. There is no area that has had as many dollars spent, with the exception of Kananaskis, which is an entirely different concept and a different expenditure. If this committee were to say, "We'll give you \$221 million over the next 10 years to do what was done in Kananaskis," I'd gladly say that we'd deliver the same program, but that's not what we're looking for and that's not what we believe should be taking place.

I just want to assure the hon. member that there is no preferential treatment given when it comes to any of the members in this department as to where the money should go or how it should go, as it relates to the development and upgrading of our parks system.

MR. CHAIRMAN: On that note, Mr. Minister, as I look at the time, on behalf of the committee I want to say thank you very much to you, sir, and to members of the department who are with you. It's been a very helpful afternoon and a very frank exchange of ideas. On behalf of the committee I, too, would like to take this opportunity to wish Dr. Barry Mitchelson well in his new endeavours. The committee has appreciated the cooperation and the courtesies that he's extended us in the past, and we know that Alberta is a better place as a result of Dr. Mitchelson's efforts. We wish him continued success and good luck in the future.

MR. WEISS: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and all members.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Motion to adjourn? Moved by the Member for Lacombe. We now stand adjourned until tomorrow morning at 10.

[The committee adjourned at 3:59 p.m.]