

[Chairman: Mr. Ady]

[10:40 a.m.]

MR. ADY: I would like to call the meeting to order and to welcome the Hon. Steve West, Minister of Recreation and Parks, and his department people, who have agreed to meet before the committee today.

Before we turn the time over to them, I would like to mention that our committee did visit Kananaskis park, and we express appreciation to Mr. Ed Marshall and Margaret Qually for the great hosts that they were to us. They have a very concentrated program organized, and we all benefited for having been there. We appreciate the presentation we just had earlier. I apologize for having to interrupt it, but I did feel that as chairman I needed to have the committee extend the time because it does infringe on the time they would normally have had to ask questions. I appreciate their indulgence in that regard.

Mr. Minister, we would like to turn the time over to you. We would like you to introduce the people that are with you, and then after your opening remarks we will turn the time to questions. If we could proceed in that manner please.

DR. WEST: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. We are pleased to be here today before the select standing committee on the Heritage Savings Trust Fund. Before I start, as you say, I will introduce the people here. To my far left is Julian Nowicki, who is Deputy Minister of Alberta Recreation and Parks. Beside me here is Doug Balsden. He is section head of the community recreation facilities section and directly involved in MRTA, or the municipal recreation/tourism areas. To my right here - I always like people on my right - is Ed Marshall, the managing director of Kananaskis Country, and Margaret Qually, who is Kananaskis Country public affairs officer. Seated in the gallery is my trusty executive assistant, Joel Thompson. I am pleased to have this support with me today.

I want to lead into the discussion on these various programs we have by saying that I think that, as you have seen by the overview just recently, the municipal recreation/tourism areas and Kananaskis Country fit well into the objectives of the Heritage Savings Trust Fund as set out a few years ago. If we revisit those, perhaps you could concentrate on that as you think of your questions to come forward, but those objectives were to save for the future heritage of this province certain elements that could be delivered by the Heritage Savings Trust Fund. It was to strengthen and diversify Alberta's economy and to provide opportunities to improve the quality of life for Albertans to come. I believe that these programs, the municipal recreation/tourism area and Kananaskis Country, exemplify those objectives to the fullest. I think that my children, your children, and future generations will certainly be proud of the fact that we took the foresight to set aside these beautiful recreational areas, the conservation of them, and the protection of the environment.

Now, as has been directed previously, the municipal recreation/tourism area that we are looking at today is some \$2 million in 35 projects. Some of you who are new on the committee may have a question as to the details of this. Let's say that these were projected in 1985 to be \$100,000 increments set forth to develop recreation and tourist attractions throughout the province of Alberta in concert with the municipalities or communities out there. They carry, also from the General Revenue Fund, for 25 years, a \$20,000 operating fund. Those funds will come out of the budget of Alberta Recreation and Parks over the next 25 years. These \$100,000 allocations go to some 41 constituencies, and through the life of this program,

developed in 1986, some \$300,000 will be available to each of those constituencies. In recent years they have been broken up in increments anywhere up to \$100,000 so that each municipality could access various levels of the \$100,000: some \$50,000, some \$75,000, some \$25,000, and some the full \$100,000. The management of this has been communication and applications through the MLA and the communities and the various associations and people developing these sites throughout Alberta.

I think the biggest notable thing in the history of this program is that we have got the best value for our dollar that you could possibly have if you think that by the time this program is finished we shall have some 250 sites across this province. With an investment of \$12.3 million we will have developed over 3,200 campsites in the province for those dollars. I think it's an infrastructure for availability in the future for tourism potentials as well as enjoyment by various communities.

We could never have achieved this directly through the Department of Recreation and Parks and the development of these by the government without the communities. That is the beauty of the municipal recreation/tourism areas program, and it will go down in history as one of the best thought out programs brought forward in this province.

Kananaskis Country. I think as you watched the tape that was just given to us, you could see that over the 10 years it was developed, there were many ups and downs in its development, but now as we see it evolve into its 11th year, we see the potential of this 1,640 square miles of pristine environment that is protected for generations to come. Such individuals as Ed Marshall here, who was given the mandate to develop this, to build it, have gone through those ups and downs that I've talked about, but now we are into the management of this beautiful piece of land in this province, and I think that as we move forward in the future . . .

MR. MITCHELL: Point of order. Mr. Chairman, I hate to interrupt, and I do greatly appreciate the presentation we've had to this point. The tour was excellent; the films were excellent; the hon. minister Dr. West is making some excellent points. However, time is limited. We may get no more than an hour now and barely a quarter. We have a lot of questions, and we'd really appreciate the chance to ask those questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Hon. minister, about how much more time did you want to take with your initial comments?

DR. WEST: Well, in accepting those comments by the hon. member, I'll just stop this presentation and accept your questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Minister. We'll call on the Member for Edmonton-Centre for the first question then.

REV. ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There are a number of things I'd like to ask. But I guess a priority in my view, in terms of being a northern Alberta MLA in a sense: could the minister give a breakdown in terms of the heritage trust fund dollars that have been allocated thus far, whether it's in total or through MRTA? Just what is the percentage in terms of northern - we've heard of three regions: northern, central, and southern. What's the breakdown in general terms, the overall percentage in those three different regions, getting to the point that the northern part has been somewhat left out of the

equation?

DR. WEST: It's a fair question, but if you understand the principles that were set out on the delivery of this program, it's \$300,000 per 41 constituencies, and they have been set out across the board, going to each constituency on that basis. So it means that by the end of this each constituency – north, south, east, or west – will have the equal number of MRTA sites. Now, as far as the specifics, as time evolves some constituencies are further ahead on their representations and their programs than others. Doug, could you give an overview of that? Has there been much variance?

MR. BALSDEN: No, there hasn't. Approximately 16 constituencies of the eligible 41 have received their full \$300,000 allocation, and there are 25 others that will in this year or in the final year receive the moneys to top up to \$300,000. Because of the larger geographic area of the constituencies in the north, on a map it may perceive to be an inequity, but it's clearly, as the minister has indicated, by constituency.

REV. ROBERTS: Of course, the dollars that were put into Kananaskis Country and others skew the overall figures going into the southern part of the province. Is there a strategy, then, to look not just at a constituency level but an overall level in terms of further developing recreation and tourism areas in the northern part of the province other than on just a constituency-by-constituency basis?

DR. WEST: As it relates to the heritage fund and these estimates, I would say that in this program there has been no indication of any continuance from this program. It will deliver \$12.3 million throughout the province. I would just say that outside of these programs, on our municipal recreation and tourism areas, the Department of Recreation and Parks will continue to look at opportunities throughout the province to ensure that all Albertans have access to proper recreational venues.

REV. ROBERTS: One more supplementary. It's been my understanding that the Northern Alberta Development Council in fact has made certain recommendations and is trying to push hard in this regard. Are you aware of those, and have you been working with that council to develop strategies in more of an ongoing way?

DR. WEST: I would say yes to that directly and say that the Department of Recreation and Parks is working at the present time to look at innovative, new direction in northern Alberta.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
The Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

MR. PAYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm sure it won't surprise the members of the committee nor the minister that one of my particular interests today, of course, is Fish Creek Park, after which my constituency is named and at the edge of which I've had the privilege to live for a number of years. I think it's appropriate to use this forum to convey to the minister and his officials some questions or concerns that have been raised by my constituents with respect to the park but perhaps prefacing those with the observation that I think the people of my constituency, if not Calgary and beyond, are intensely proud of the park.

There's no question that intensive use is made of that park by a great many Albertans. We're certainly very, very grateful and feel very fortunate to have what I presume is one of Canada's largest urban provincial parks nestled right in the middle of the constituency.

Having said that, I wanted to draw to the minister's attention several concerns, and the first has to do with access. It's one thing to have a great urban park resource, but it's another to take into account the great difficulty of access on the part of two of the largest suburban communities that border the park. I'm referring specifically to Lake Bonavista and Lake Bonaventure on the north of the park and the new but large and growing community of Douglasdale on the east. Briefly stated, the residents of Lake Bonavista and Lake Bonaventure, which number several thousand families, are unable to move south from their communities across Canyon Meadows Drive and into the park without great difficulty and incurring the risk of physical injury, which happens very frequently. It's necessary for those people, by and large, with bicycles or even automobiles, which is the ironic situation, to drive either to the eastern edge of the park to access through Bow Bottom Trail or to the west. So on their behalf I would like to indicate to the minister a great interest in easier access for those populous communities, and in subsequent correspondence I will convey to the minister and his officials suggestions where those access points could be very easily accommodated.

Perhaps I should treat that as my initial question and then come back with a supplementary or two.

DR. WEST: Yes. I appreciate the points you make. I visited this park this summer, and it is a beautiful urban park in the city of Calgary. I have identified some of those areas you've talked about, and I'll be looking forward to your suggestions on direct access points. There is a set piece of land there that hasn't been developed yet that could be. I think it's been targeted for a golf course. I think there are some access points to be made in a footbridge across the river there, at that point.

MR. PAYNE: Your reference, Mr. Minister, to a footbridge: that's with specific reference to Douglasdale at the east?

DR. WEST: Yes.

MR. PAYNE: Okay.

DR. WEST: As far as Lake Bonavista individuals, you will have to come forth with your suggestions at that point, because I haven't identified those. I will always be willing to look at those to see if they can be addressed, but under our budgetary concerns.

MR. PAYNE: My first supplementary, Mr. Chairman, has to do with the advent of commercial enterprises in the park. A number of constituents – and this is by no means a unanimous point of view, but it's a sufficient number that I feel obligated to raise it in this forum today. Some concern is expressed that what is a very beautiful, natural, close-to-nature resource may be at some at least philosophical if not functional variance with the advent of commercial enterprises; in particular, the mountain riding bike rental facility. It's sort of a two-pronged concern: one, the appropriateness or otherwise of a commercial facility there; two, the risk of injury to pedestrian traffic occasioned by short-term renters of those bikes riding at speeds that are not

appropriate and in places that I suspect are not appropriate as well.

DR. WEST: You have identified something that is ongoing throughout the whole province: the balance we reach between those that want some types of experiences – perhaps it's riding bikes and that – and those that want totally pristine experiences without any evidence whatsoever of mechanical or commercial involvement. That has been brought forward to me before, and we continue to look for answers, as we do throughout the province, for the interaction between such events.

Might I say that Fish Creek Provincial Park has a great cross section of different environments. I think of Sikome Lake at the one end, where on a hot day you can get 20,000 to 22,000 people jammed in. People like that type of environment. They tend to want to access the water, yet it's in direct contrast to those that may want the pristine experience of walking through almost a wilderness environment that's there. I also understand there has been some question about some of the subdivision developments close to the park. We look at all those areas, and I will continue to try to find solutions, with the understanding that common sense must rule the day.

MR. PAYNE: Mr. Chairman, my final supplementary flows from – no pun intended – the minister's reference to Sikome Lake. The minister used the number 20,000 to 22,000, and I'm sure that's an accurate estimate. My personal observation is that it's going to be one of the most popular water resources in the province. The minister, however, is aware, I'm sure, of the widespread discontent in the southern part of the city resulting from the delay in the reopening of the lake. Just to acquaint members of the committee: the lake, with my concurrence – I was involved in that decision – was shut down to enable the rehabilitation of that lake. I had made a public commitment on behalf of the government that that lake would be in operation early in '89, and as the minister well knows, I think it was August before that lake was officially reopened. I got a lot of very hot calls on the hot days in July about that lake. So I would appreciate a comment as to what appeared to be an interminable delay in getting that lake operating. Secondly, I would appreciate some public comment from the minister, hopefully a reassuring comment, with respect to the quality of the water.

DR. WEST: Yes. You identify one of the pitfalls of any construction and development of this magnitude. The Sikome Lake, of course, for those that aren't aware, is a 15-acre man-made lake that has a liner in it to keep the water from moving out. The liner was a problem because in the cold days in the spring of this year you couldn't lay it down, and it was delayed because it might crack or it wouldn't fit properly. So we had some problems there.

The other thing is we had to bring in sand, if you like. There was a problem with the first development of sand because it had too much clay aggregate in it and created a cloudiness in the water that wasn't aesthetically pleasing. Therefore, we had to move from the Calgary area to the Red Deer area to access sand that would have the filtration that would allow cleaner looking water.

The actual cleanliness of this lake through filters and that is being addressed constantly. If you can imagine 20,000 people on a hot day wading in a pool of this size that is about 15 feet deep at the centre, you can well imagine the amount of filter and

perhaps chlorine and chemicals you must use just to balance out some of the natural things that happen in water by human beings. It's an ongoing thing. As I say, we'll address it with common sense. We have tremendous filtering capacity there. It ran at its fullest capacity this summer.

We ask the people of Calgary to forgive us for those construction problems that we've run into, but those are some of the things that must be addressed with common sense by all humans in this province.

MR. PAYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, one issue in the province, of course, is the designation of ecological areas. Assessments indicate that there are about 17 different general ecological regions in this province and that probably we have set aside reserves of one form or another to reflect two of those ecological regions. The minister has indicated in the past that he has put a freeze on the development of new parks or the designation of new parks.

This is going to be directly relevant.

MR. PASHAK: Point of order.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. PASHAK: If we refer back to the questions asked by the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek – we're dealing with Heritage Savings Trust Fund expenditures, and maybe these questions are all appropriate, but are we getting into the estimates or are we . . . I guess I'm asking the chairman to make sure that we're in fact dealing with heritage questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. I suppose, hon. member, we do need this to relate to . . . [interjection] Fine; as long as it does. Then I suppose that satisfies your concern. As long as it relates to the heritage fund expenditures.

MR. MITCHELL: I can see where the member might be concerned with the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek's comments, but mine will definitely relate to the heritage trust fund. Thank you.

We're told that the minister – and in fact he's told us – has frozen the development of new parks. This is a concern, of course, because while the development of parks is frozen, other land use decisions haven't been frozen, such as forestry management agreements in the areas. Is the minister going to reconsider that particular policy? Would he in particular reconsider that were the heritage trust fund to set aside money to help him identify, designate, and establish 15 more ecological reserves?

DR. WEST: Mr. Chairman, the hon. member has comments about the ecological reserves program, which is totally outside of any of the programs being discussed here today. It is under legislation in the Wilderness Areas, Ecological Reserves and Natural Areas Act under the Department of Recreation and Parks.

There has been no statement – and I reiterate, no statement – made by this minister or this department on stopping the development of parks in this province. I put on hold the

development, to have a look at and manage the ecological areas. We have 11 designated today, and we have another three waiting for notation. That may be the program you're alluding to, but it has nothing to do with provincial parks, recreation areas, Kananaskis Country, or any of those. So I want that on record: that statement was never made.

MR. MITCHELL: It certainly could have something to do with the heritage trust fund should this committee decide that it should have something to do with it, and that's what I'm pursuing.

Will the minister be making a commitment that if it took help from the heritage trust fund – and we could give him that – he would be prepared to set aside ecological reserves that would reflect the other 15 ecological regions of this province?

MRS. BLACK: Point of order, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There's a point of order.

MRS. BLACK: I'm sorry; are we not dealing with 1988-89?

MR. MOORE: The heritage trust fund.

MRS. BLACK: The heritage trust fund.

MR. MITCHELL: We can make recommendations though.

MRS. BLACK: Recommendations should come at a later point, Mr. Chairman, not at this point.

MR. CHAIRMAN: With respect, hon. member, my understanding is that the ecological reserves were not funded under the Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act or from the fund. If I can just draw on your question, are you indicating that you're advocating to the minister that they should in the future draw on the fund for their funding? Secondly, I'm not sure that they require a great deal of funding. It's more or less a set-aside of an area for an ecological reserve, and there's not any great amount of expenditure that would be necessary to call on the fund to pick up.

Maybe I could have you carry on from there.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate what you're saying, but my understanding is that these hearings are so that we can develop ideas and thoughts and backgrounds so we can then present recommendations. One recommendation I am pursuing is the possibility of establishing heritage trust fund funding to assist this department in ensuring that by the year 2000 this province has set aside areas that reflect each of the 17 ecological regions of this province. So that is the nature of my questions, and I will continue along that line.

What I'm asking is: does the minister believe that it would be possible, were he to have sufficient funding, to set aside ecological reserves to reflect all 17 ecological region types in this province by the year 2000? If so, would it be facilitated, assisted, by heritage trust fund funding?

DR. WEST: Just so I can answer it directly, we have now established 11 out of the 17 on record, with three that have gone through the public hearing process and are awaiting dedication and one with public notation on it. So we've done 14 out of the 17 to date. I would be surprised if it would take to the year

2000 to address this.

But as far as the dollars involved in this, I do not think it's an area for the Heritage Savings Trust Fund. As the chairman has pointed out, these are public lands that are already under government notation, so they don't take a purchasing direction or a large sum of money. The operation of them is ongoing and can certainly be looked at with the different management plans involving the public of Alberta.

I share with you your concerns on ecological reserves. In the last three years we've dedicated 11. We have moved very quickly in a short period of time and have dedicated 11 and gone through the public process of identification on three others. So we're at the 14 level out of the 17 that you've discussed.

MR. MITCHELL: I'm sure you've dedicated 11. The question is whether they encompass all 11 areas, 11 different ecological regions. My information is that they don't, that in fact they, in total, reflect two.

To move on to the question of parks development, which may in fact include ecological areas and assist in this program, is the minister stating that if given the choice between further expansion of Kananaskis – which is a first-class park, and the government's to be congratulated on its development, no question. If given the choice, would this minister support further expansion of Kananaskis or the development of parks of that nature – not, perhaps, as elaborate as Kananaskis – in the north or elsewhere in this province?

DR. WEST: In direct answer to that, I am committed to development of conservation of environmentally sound areas for people in Alberta to have recreational opportunities for their leisure time as well as developing tourism potential. I am committed to that, and I will be constantly looking at areas to do that with. I have said previously here today that we as a department are looking at development in the north.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay.

Hon. Member for Wainwright.

MR. FISCHER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the opportunity to meet with the minister and his officials this morning. I also would like to say a special thank you to Ed and Margaret for that beautiful trip we had again this year out to Kananaskis Country. You certainly make our work a lot more enjoyable when you take us on that kind of a working trip.

Also, I'd like to say that I was very impressed and enjoyed the rescue team performance that they did for us at noon on that trip. I think that was something that our people in Alberta need to know about, what kind of a rescue team we have.

I guess that when we get talking about the expenditures in Kananaskis – how we've come to date, where we've come to – our movie brought us up to date fairly well, but in our estimates for 1989-90 we have don't have any money allotted for any expansion in Kananaskis. We did look at a number of areas there. Certainly the place is full in the summertime. There's lots of room for expansion, and I'm thinking of the campsites and recreation vehicle spots and so on. Are there any thoughts of expanding that in the upcoming years?

DR. WEST: As minister, and having been a short time in the portfolio, I have certainly looked at the historical position of Kananaskis and where it is today in relation to what you've just asked. We have had, of course, in the last five years many

proposals brought forward by the private sector to the Ministry of Recreation and Parks and through Ed Marshall, who may make a comment here on that, with indication that they would be willing, with direction and proper notation by the government, to develop certain facilities and directions within Kananaskis Country. As well, we have developed such things as a camp with the Solicitor General as far as looking after certain remand centre individuals in the province. But what you say is a double-edged sword. If you develop Kananaskis further with large expenditures from either the heritage fund or General Revenue Fund, you will certainly come under some scrutiny with the tight budgets that we have in the province today. But I as minister, of course, am always willing to look at private-sector initiatives as long as they balance out to the general motif and direction of Kananaskis Country.

Ed, would you make a comment on any of those that have come forward?

MR. MARSHALL: Mr. Minister, thank you. Mr. Chairman, I think it's fair to say that we can exercise the same degree of control with any commercial undertakings in Kananaskis Country in the future that we've been able to exercise in the past. In other words, I have very little fear of those things that might get approval in terms of disturbing Kananaskis Country for what it is and what it has been and what we've tried to preserve. When there are proposals for golf course development, for instance, additional campground development by the private sector and so on, we can handle them as they come along. We're prepared to say yes if the government is prepared to say yes. Then certainly the same rules that we've applied to ourselves would be applied to any others who come along. I don't think you need to have any fear of a runaway commercial development in Kananaskis Country, and certainly I think we could accommodate more people better than we are able to accommodate now without disrupting the countryside in the process. I think, Mr. Minister, that probably answers it. If it doesn't, I'd be glad to oblige.

MR. FISCHER: Thank you. One other concern, I guess, that we all have is Albertans using this park compared to our tourists that are outside of Alberta. I understood that some of the figures are showing that we're slipping a little bit in use by Albertans. Is that a true assessment? Are they declining?

DR. WEST: Perhaps Ed could address that. I think that as each year goes on . . . He's just finished a summer direction, and maybe his visitor services and that . . . He could let us know what that trend is right now.

MR. MARSHALL: Mr. Minister, Mr. Chairman, no figure is going to stay absolutely stuck on anything. I mean, the percentage of use by Albertans is so high that it's almost overwhelming. At certain times of the year certain facilities are almost altogether consumed by Albertans, particularly at the beginning and at the end of the year. But a mix is injected into it by the fact that there are hotels out there now. People can come from further away, and they do come from further away, and this changes the mix a little bit. You couldn't get a hotel room in Kananaskis Country tonight with a bribe. The place is absolutely full. There are Canadians and Americans there in the forest business, and of course I would venture to say that if you looked at hotel registers tonight, perhaps fewer than 10 percent of them might be from Alberta. It's just the way it is because

it's a convention. These things have the effect of mixing up numbers from time to time. But the average person hasn't got a hope in the world of getting a campsite in Alberta at high season - at least out there in high season - unless they come from Alberta. A guy from far away, by the time he gets there, they're already full. But reserved campsites, of course, can be reserved from anywhere, so happily we do get a mix whereby quite a few dollars each year earned outside of Alberta are spent in Alberta. I think that's the best answer I can give you, because we don't know exactly where every person came from every time. We know those who sign their names in the book, but not everybody signs their name.

DR. WEST: I might just balance that with the reality that tourism travel in Alberta balanced out recently, from some stats from the Department of Tourism. Over 80 percent of the tourists in Alberta still are Albertans. Foreigners coming from outside of the country itself make up 3 to 5 percent. So when you start targeting that there are percentages of foreign visitors taking over the tourist industries at this point . . . We would certainly like to see more tourists in the province of Alberta, but by no means are Albertans being taken over by outside tourists. They are the major component of tourism in the province of Alberta.

MR. FISCHER: I guess maybe you got the wrong slant on it. I didn't mean to say that I felt Albertans were not treated fairly with that. I think certainly they are, but it does kind of come down . . . I know we have to have a balance. Do we have kind of a policy in place for Kananaskis so you have, say, an 80-20 balance, or do you have some kind of guidelines like that in order to try and control it a little bit? It does come with the number of hotels and the cost of hotels and that kind of thing. Has there been any thought about hotel expansion or commercialization?

DR. WEST: You've asked two questions. The answer to your first question is that the policy for Kananaskis Country is still in place. Of course, it's a matter of record that the policy is that it is not proactively advertised outside the province of Alberta. Therefore the access to it is done by word of mouth, and it mainly goes to Albertans. There's no set policy on figures and numbers. That would, in my mind, not be a practical thing to even implement.

As far as new hotels, there is no direct plan at the present time on expansion, but there are a couple of proposals sitting before the department at the present time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Hon. Member for Calgary-Forest Lawn.

MR. PASHAK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. If I may, I'd like to beg your indulgence and the indulgence of the members of the committee, because you did give the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek some latitude. I'd just like to make a comment on some observations he made about Fish Creek Park. My wife and I frequently walk in Fish Creek Park, and I've almost been forced off the prepared trails in Fish Creek Park because of the problem with bikes. It is a serious problem in that area.

But in any event, my concerns today, at least at this point, have to do with Kananaskis Country. Whereas I support entirely most of the expenditures in that area and the general concept and I think the province has done a great job in terms of

opening up that country for a range of Albertans, I really have some difficulty in going along with public dollars being used to provide elitist type facilities such as the golf course, the hotels, and the ski hill, in spite of the fact that I like going to the hotel and using those things. But I really honestly believe that I should pay for those if I'm going to use them, in a way that's different from what other Albertans might pay if they use camping facilities and horseback facilities and picnicking facilities and things like that. So my question really has to do with the golf course to begin with, and it's: how many public dollars have actually gone into that golf course? And as a corollary to that – you may treat them as two separate questions – is there any way that the public treasury can be reimbursed for those costs through what you charge people to play golf on that course?

DR. WEST: Well, in direct answer to your question, I will turn over to Ed Marshall, who was present during the construction phase, and let him answer the first part of the question, and that has to do with the golf course itself and how it evolved.

MR. MARSHALL: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chairman, the first cost of the golf course, clubhouse and all, was for all purposes about \$10.2 million. It's a matter of record. A few hundred thousand dollars have been put into it since then with minor improvements, and the golf course operators themselves, the company which operates it, have put in a great deal of money. They've had a very heavy capital expenditure, much more than I would ever have expected. Now, I don't know how much further you want me to go with that. You know, it does return a very respectable dollar – at least, I think it does – to the province through a percentage of gross revenues which the operators pay every year. But I suggest, and I say with all due respect, if the government wanted to sell the Kananaskis Country golf course, I think there'd be a lineup from here to Rocky Mountain House to buy it, because it's a very, very successful enterprise. I'm sure that's the case. I mean, if people didn't want such things to happen, they wouldn't be trying to build further golf course capacity out there. That's the best answer I can give you. I hope it's thorough, Mr. Minister. Maybe there's something else there that I missed.

MR. PASHAK: So the total cost of the golf course, the clubhouse, developing the greens and all the rest of it to the province is \$10 million, and we get a rental back that will allow us to recover that \$10 million over a period of time. How long would that period of time be? Are we putting additional moneys into that as the years go by out of the heritage trust fund? I mean, what's the overall financial picture, I guess, of the . . .

MR. MARSHALL: Mr. Chairman, I have to answer that fairly. We were part of what is called the heritage savings capital projects division, and capital recovery was never stated as an objective of the capital projects division; at least it hasn't been for as long as I've had anything to do with acting as a trustee for the Heritage Savings Trust Fund in an expenditure sense. It wasn't an objective, and it wouldn't have been a realistic objective because nobody would live long enough to make a nickel out of a bicycle trail, for instance. It was not an objective with the golf course; it's to provide a magnificent golfing facility for the people who want to use it, and as it turns out, most of them are Albertans because they get first dibs at it. If there were other thoughts about it, well, I'm sure the golf course could

be sold. I'm not suggesting anything of the kind, but it's not like people wouldn't want to buy it if the opportunity existed. I don't know what sort of hoot and holler there'd be if anybody wanted to do it, but . . .

MR. PASHAK: I'd like to ask the same question relative to the hotels. What's the province's total investment in the infrastructure in the common areas to support the three hotels that are located at the Kananaskis site? I know there are loans out of the heritage trust fund at minimal interest. Is there any attempt on the part of the province to recover those costs through a levy on people who stay at those hotels?

DR. WEST: I think, on balance, it might be interesting for you to know the breakout of Kananaskis Country on the \$225,000,068. If you want it in block areas, the major buildings, facilities, and utilities are \$42,000,468 over the period. That's the common areas and various development of buildings and service buildings in the area. The campgrounds and day-use facilities and trails were \$44,000,743. The foothills trails and primitive campgrounds that are throughout this, and you saw on the thing that there are 75 camping sites and various trails, were \$10.665 million.

I think what Albertans have missed – and as I say, I'm glad you brought this out – was that \$121,000,329 out of the development of Kananaskis Country was the regional roads program so that Albertans could access it. The actual development of the hotels that are there are a private-sector development except for the common area. Of course, I could send you later a breakout of the total dollars spent in various areas; I think that would be easier for you. I will get the member and the committee – I'll provide you with a breakout of the various expenditures, of which we have about 150 itemized, including such things as the Kananaskis Village planning and design. But so you have that understanding: the actual cost of some of those hotels where the private-sector involvement went out on limited partnerships and what have you, but the common areas were brought into play by these sums.

But I balance this out, because it's something that I use periodically. To me it was amazing that there was \$121 million in roads spent out of this large sum. I found that that was something that Albertans should be aware of so they know that the access to the Eastern Slopes and this area was facilitated through these roads. Of course, when they get there, they do want the facilities; they have asked for various levels of facilities. I have traveled in the last four months, as Minister of Recreation and Parks, throughout this province. I have asked Albertans about Kananaskis Country, and I, on balance, have to say that I have never met a soul in this province that has been to Kananaskis Country that now criticizes it.

MR. PASHAK: I just want to say again that I am completely supportive of the general concept and development of Kananaskis Country, and I think that money has been, by and large, well spent. My only point was that you have elitist facilities in that area that only the wealthy or above-average income people can really afford, which are the golf course, the ski hill, and the hotels. I think people in that category should pay for those facilities; that's all. It's just the principle. My questions all had to do with whether or not the users were paying the public purse back, but you've answered those questions.

Do I still have one set, Mr. Chairman?

MR. CHAIRMAN: No. You've used your supplementaries.

MR. PASHAK: Okay, but I'd like to go back on your list.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Member for Clover Bar.

MR. GESELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I know . . .

DR. WEST: Mr. Chairman, may I comment once before we leave that last member's?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I believe that would be acceptable to the committee, if it's brief.

DR. WEST: Sometimes we leave things hang that should be addressed. You made a point that it's only the elite that can access or use these facilities. The fees at the golf course were put in at a level so that all Albertans could afford them. You can actually golf on that course as an Albertan cheaper, in respect, than you can on many of the golf courses in the province today for that style of golf course. And the ski hill is not out of line at all with any of the other ski hills in this country. Average Albertans therefore can afford to access these. As far as the number of available rooms on the hill, it makes it difficult for those hotels to tie into the resource with the numbers that they have. I don't know what your comments are as to whether the elite or the average Albertan can afford to stay in it, but I've traveled this country too and have seen hotel rooms throughout in our major cities. By no means are they out of line in many areas when you put multiple people in the same rooms.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I believe we should adjourn that debate. Thank you, Mr. Minister, for those additional comments.

MR. GESELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I hesitated originally in my question, because the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark was not - he has now left the Chamber, but he passed between me and the Chair, and that took me aback a little bit. I think it's against our procedure, and I will take it up with the member separately.

Mr. Chairman, and to the minister, I really appreciate the commitment that the minister has given us today about the recognition and development for park and conservation areas throughout Alberta. I really appreciate that, Mr. Minister. But I want to ask specifically about the urban parks program, particularly the Capital City Recreation Park, which I understand consists of some 3,000 acres of parkland, a large number of regional parks that are linked, some hiking trails, signs, pavilions, and picnic and a large number of recreation facilities. Work, I understand, is continuing to consolidate that park and acquire additional land. The total investment, as I understand it, is some \$43 million, and I believe there has been a recent designation of some additional \$15 million.

My question to the minister is: with this amount of funding designated, is there additional land that needs to be acquired? I'm trying to get at the benefits, the improvements, that will be generated by this commitment of funding in this particular Capital City Park.

DR. WEST: It's a good question, and you've identified that Capital City Park has certainly been a tremendous development in the city of Edmonton. At the present time, in '88-89, there

was no designation to urban parks from the heritage fund, but going into this year and announced last year was a new \$82 million, 10-year program going to some 11 cities in the province of Alberta for urban park development.

Presently, this year of course, the design money made available to the city of Edmonton for the Capital City Park was \$150,000 for design of future parks. The city of Edmonton Parks and Recreation Department along with the council have identified a plan projected into the future of some \$48 million for extended development, taking the North Saskatchewan farther to the west and going through by Fort Edmonton and that area. The lands that are involved in there I think are pretty well held at the present time, although there are continual donations, I guess, being made. We had one recently that was donated by Mrs. Imrie through the Parks Venture Fund of some 6.5 acres across from Terwilliger Park. I just say that the city of Edmonton will be developing those plans, and those plans do take in the river valley: continual extension and development of trails and cross-country ski trails, walking paths, small rest areas, and park development. It is a tremendous plan, and it's something that will certainly serve the people of Edmonton for many, many years. It's tremendous.

The \$15 million you targeted has been targeted to the development of Capital City Park over the 10-year program and, of course, will go as an adjunct to the moneys that the city themselves will put up in the development of that \$48 million - projected, I might say. Those are the targeted costs that they have projected till now. A tremendous park.

MR. GESELL: Thank you. With your indulgence, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to stray from the main question a little bit and talk about the MRTA program and perhaps even the provincial parks situation, Kananaskis as an example, tying into the question that Rev. Roberts asked about the fairness and equity of that program, the \$300,000 allocation for certain areas.

Now, in my mind, Mr. Minister, there are certain areas, certain constituencies, that perhaps have a little bit more potential for recreation and tourism than others. And although the allocation is fair, I believe, I think there needs to be some recognition in certain areas for that additional potential that could be realized. Is there a plan or program or strategy that you have by which that could be implemented? If we could realize that for those areas, I'm asking.

REV. ROBERTS: Stettler.

MR. GESELL: No, I'm thinking of Beaverhill moraine.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Is the question clear?

DR. WEST: It's a targeted question, and I appreciate the member's concerns in that area. This program has a distinct policy, and there are no plans at the present time to change that. Those areas of the province, regardless of constituency boundaries, that have a greater potential and resource, we constantly look at them for recreational and park developments. I don't think that the MRTA program was specifically targeted to take over provincial parks or provincial recreation programs. They were a community-based program to help many, many constituencies develop an infrastructure for their own use, for the community use, as well as those traveling through their areas, regardless of the resource. So we get comments that some of the resources and development around - dollars that were spent

weren't as well spent as maybe some area where they had lots of trees and lots of lakes. But that wasn't the total intention of the municipal recreation/tourism area. It was to provide an opportunity to all Albertans to access a facility of recreation, and development with what they had at hand. For those you talk about that have greater potentials, that have the Dinosaur Provincial Park and those things, we develop those at another level in another program.

MR. GESELL: Thank you. My final supplementary, Mr. Chairman, has to do with the recognition of the fund, actually, in creating some of these opportunities. I'd like to say that the working visits we've had . . . I have to admit that I wasn't aware of all of the great things that have been done through the fund, and I assume and I expect that the average Albertan is not aware of the great things that have been done with the fund. I would want to ask the minister if there's some strategy or some initiative to develop some recognition for some of these creative and great achievements that the fund has done for Alberta, these excellent opportunities that we have for our future.

DR. WEST: Well, it's an excellent point, and I would ask that the committee perhaps in their deliberations discuss this area. I believe, as do many, many people now that have traveled this province and seen the development over the years, that many Albertans are not aware of the potential of their own province. If we could break down that atmosphere of controversy between all parties and get to acknowledging the beauty of this province and the infrastructure on a common level, I think we could go ahead in the future on a much more positive nature. And I think that we should communicate to the people of Alberta so they can build on that positive feeling. To the present I think our communications have fallen short, although there has been tremendous work done in what you saw today, but not enough Albertans see that. I would certainly ask that the committee, in all fairness to Albertans, look at this, because negativism about your province, when indeed it is a beautiful place and has beautiful infrastructure, cannot be productive to future generations.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Member for Edmonton-Avonmore, followed by Member for Calgary-Foothills.

MS M. LAING: I hadn't actually put my hand up, but I do have some questions. [interjection] No, but I have some questions. I mean, it's probably not fair.

I guess I would like to make a couple of points in terms of the elitist type of facilities that we've heard reference to. Even if you say the costs are comparable to those in comparison to other areas of the province, I would suggest that that is still out of the range of many people. So to simply say that hotel rooms compare to those in urban areas or that golf course fees compare to those in other golf courses still doesn't answer the question that in fact many Albertans cannot afford those. I guess the question I would say, and my concern, is that there is a kind of development that appeals to a certain class of people, but it does not include as much development for things like swimming pools that include a whole family, rather than a golf course. I'm wondering if there could be some redirection of the kinds of programs that are being targeted and if, in fact, you only go to the communities and answer their needs or if there are some kinds of initiatives taken to say we want the kinds of

funds that would go on golf courses, going to programs that would, in fact, include a much wider range of people.

DR. WEST: It's an interesting thing you do discuss, and without getting into an elaborate discussion on who targets what part of Kananaskis and what the cost is, I think out of 3,000 campsites there are lots of opportunities on a camping level for people to go there, and it isn't a high cost, except the travel to get there is certainly a problem. But I would await again the committee's recommendations as it relates to Kananaskis Country. By no means, as we go into the future, are all things set in stone.

We would like to keep the distinct nature of Kananaskis in one piece, but if there were an opportunity to produce rooms that are \$35 or \$45 or \$55 a night - I'm using that as an example - then perhaps we should visit that. What you're saying is that the accommodation present there now precludes Albertans. There will always be preclusion of Albertans. Right now even the cheapest rooms in Alberta preclude some Albertans, no matter whether it's in the city or in Kananaskis. But I would like to have your results of your discussions on what consideration is given to Kananaskis in the future and what is meant by accommodation that accesses more Albertans. That definition is difficult.

MS M. LAING: Just in response to that, I guess I would say that could be generally taken for all funds that are allocated out of this fund, not only just to Kananaskis Country.

The other question arose in regard to the recovery of capital costs. Again, it would seem to me that a distinction should be made for capital costs that have been spent to support nonprofit or the kind of more or less free facilities like hiking trails - that people can participate in those kinds of activities - as compared to the capital costs for infrastructure and facilities that are then leased to the for-profit sector. So has consideration been given to making a distinction in terms of recovery of capital costs to those very two distinct sectors?

DR. WEST: In general terms, the answer to your question is no, it hasn't been separated out on that basis except by the private contractors that use the ski hill or that sort of thing to continue the operating costs with what they recover by charging. But as far as differentiating, I have given you the sums, and I'll send you these. We have differentiated the costs involved. What you're asking is if we addressed those in recouping those moneys. Again, I think generally Albertans do appreciate the total amount of money spent at Kananaskis Country, and they feel they all have the opportunity to access and use them. To preclude some Albertans by trying to recoup with a greater sum, you would only eliminate more Albertans, because then you would have to charge a higher fee for the golf course where there are Albertans now that can't afford the golf course, as I've pointed out. If you took the bluntest of what you're saying, you would preclude most Albertans from those set areas you're talking about while the rest would just walk on the walking paths. Now, I'm not in favour of that at all.

MS M. LAING: I have a supplementary. In response to that, then, I guess my concern is not that you increase the cost to the for-profit sector but in fact recognize that we have given a great gift to the for-profit sector, who then benefit not only from the natural resources of this province but also from the moneys from the heritage trust fund. Why, then, if this is such a profitable endeavour, would we not consider administering it ourselves

through the public sector or through the government instead of having the profits from what we hear is very important go into the for-profit sector?

DR. WEST: Well, far be it from me to get into a discussion of economics here today, but I could take time, and I'll take you aside sometime, to teach you about private-sector operations versus government operations. One of the things is that it would cost the government to operate those facilities probably 20 to 40 percent more dollars than can be achieved by having private-sector operators that use their delivery of programs the way they do in the private sector. And I don't think it's proper for any government to be seen to be operating ski hills and golf courses in direction.

MR. PASHAK: What about packinghouses? [interjections]

DR. WEST: Mr. Chairman, I would ask the committee to pull themselves together.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please proceed, Mr. Minister.

DR. WEST: Well, I just say in answer to your question that I do not believe it is in the best interests of Albertans to have the government running those. The private sector delivers the programs to us, continues the infrastructure, and does it at a better cost to Albertans than the government would be able to achieve. I think the initial investment by the province of Alberta through the heritage fund was in direct concert with the objectives, as I stated in the beginning, of the heritage fund.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for Calgary-Foothills.

MRS. BLACK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to start off and thank the minister and his department for the presentations this morning. Like my colleague from Clover Bar, I had no idea how much development and how many facilities were already in place throughout the entire province. I agree with the minister. I don't think Albertans really appreciate how fortunate we really are, and sometimes we need to have presentations like that and maybe have them go out into the public so people can say, "Thank goodness I'm an Albertan." Because we certainly have received a lot of benefits.

My question was somewhat touched on a few minutes ago, but I'm interested in the urban parks program. I know phase one was concluded in 1987, but as an urban MLA I'm interested in the phase two side of the program, which I understand is going to be an additional 10-year program with a commitment of approximately \$82 million. Under this program there seems to be a potential that some of the funding will be coming towards Calgary. I was wondering if the minister could identify the types of parks or programs that will come under phase two and if any of those programs will be identified within the Calgary area.

DR. WEST: Yes. Phase two of the urban parks is, as you've said, an \$82 million project over 10 years. In the '89 budget year a million dollars was advanced out of the heritage fund for design and implementation, a million dollars spread over some nine new urban parks. Those nine parks – and you asked where they were – will be in Edmonton, Calgary, St. Albert, Fort McMurray, County of Strathcona, Fort Saskatchewan, Camrose, Spruce Grove, Airdrie, Leduc, and Wetaskiwin. Now, the direction, as you have said – the Member for Edmonton-

Meadowlark had stated the urban park in Edmonton. Calgary, at the present time: I'm not aware. I might ask Doug where they're at in their planning and design. But they will be in balance with Edmonton as far as this program goes, and as I say, we will make sure Edmonton and Calgary are treated equitably and fairly in the program.

Where are we at with those, Doug?

MR. BALSDEN: Well, as you've already alluded to, Edmonton has developed a substantive concept plan for the expansion of the river valley system to their extremities. In the case of Calgary, Calgary is a little bit further behind. They're looking at a number of areas within the municipal jurisdiction, including some lands around Nose Hill, including trail linkage systems which perhaps will link with existing systems along the Bow River or into the Fish Creek Park area. We're just in the process of meeting with some of the officials from Calgary now to come up to speed with where they're at with their specific planning needs. They will be getting the same amount of support the city of Edmonton has received.

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Chairman, just a personal supplemental. As the MLA for Calgary-Foothills, which has the lovely Nose Hill Park in the centre of my riding, we are similar to my colleague from Fish Creek. The northern part of Calgary is also growing very rapidly, and we have many new communities in the north in MacEwan and Sandstone and Crowfoot. We would be very appreciative if we could be looking at some development in the north part of Calgary.

DR. WEST: That's probably a good comment, but as far as the city of Calgary goes, you must deal with their department of recreation and parks and city council.

MRS. BLACK: I see. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Member for Lacombe.

MR. PASHAK: Mr. Chairman, how many are left on the list with 10 minutes to go?

MR. CHAIRMAN: There are five more on the list.

MR. MOORE: To you, Mr. Chairman, and on to the minister. We really appreciated the presentation this morning, and it's always good to meet your staff. They are very knowledgeable and pleasant people and good friends of Albertans. So it's nice to meet them again and hear about the things that are going on in your area.

However, I want to talk about the utilization of heritage trust fund money and where it should go. If we take Kananaskis Country as an example, here we have developed with heritage trust money I guess you would say the premium recreation area in Canada. Now, it's developed and in place. But then go ongoing costs, Mr. Chairman, and there are ongoing demands for other things within that area. Because of the absence of the Member for Calgary-McCall on this committee, I'll point to the Powderface Trail. That was a real project that he wanted to see go ahead and hasn't gone because the funding from the heritage trust fund wasn't available. Now, we know the fund is capped at the moment, and it's difficult to carry on and expect the heritage trust fund to put in these additional things like the Powderface Trail, roads, and campsites. There must come a

time when these areas should be funded out of general revenue. The heritage trust fund did its role. It put in, as I say, a terrific recreation area. But now, because the funds aren't available, we are holding back growth of those areas. Shouldn't there come a time, Mr. Chairman, to the minister, when we say this is now the responsibility of general revenue? Transportation would put in the Powderface Trail, say, or whatever, those access roads become that, and the demand would be made to general revenue for these types of things.

DR. WEST: Well, that is an excellent targeted question. I had started out in the beginning - when I was talking and the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark wanted me to quit, I was going to allude to the fact that we had been in construction for 10 years, and the managing director here, who had done a tremendous amount of work in that phase, certainly knows what capital costs are and development. Where we are at now is in management of Kananaskis and maintenance. With the ongoing budgets that we see in 1989-90 - and I believe in fiscal management - I believe that in the future we are going to have to facilitate the developments in Kananaskis within our existing budgets to a degree. The General Revenue Fund - and we're not talking about that today - has some \$13 million targeted at the present time to the operations of Kananaskis. Due to the great management skills of Mr. Ed Marshall, we will ensure that the capital developments and maintenance within Kananaskis Country, the upkeep, will stay the same, and he will do it with the general revenue budget that he has.

Would you like to make any comments on that?

MR. MARSHALL: That really didn't leave a lot of room for comment, Mr. Chairman. Just let it go at that. However, we'll do all we can do with what we've got. We'll do it with a smile on our faces. We'll do our best to take care of all who come and preserve the assets that were created with the Heritage Savings Trust Fund.

DR. WEST: I'll just add to it. Your targeted question says that we should spend more money out of the General Revenue Fund on the development in Kananaskis. That will be tough with the same restriction on fiscal management. I would ask the committee therefore to diligently discuss that at another time and bring forth your recommendations.

MR. MOORE: Supplementary, Mr. Chairman. There's always been considerable concern from private campground operators wherever there's a provincial park in the area. I have it in central Alberta. We have two provincial parks there, and the private campgrounds feel that because the provincial park is in their area, it's unfair competition to them, their tax dollars going. Now, that will always be wherever there's a provincial park or a national park; we know that. However, under your municipal recreation/tourism program, here we have basically a going project between the government and the local areas. It's a halfway thing, and it seems to be working out very well in my constituency where we have the private sector involved with government in providing these parks and recreation facilities. Is this receiving the same type of criticism from the private campground operators, or is this more of an acceptable way of developing parks in these areas? I'd like to know how th

campground operators basically . . . Are we meeting some of their demand that we leave government and let the private campground take over?

DR. WEST: You're saying, are we meeting the demands of the private campground operators when we're developing MRTAs?

MR. MOORE: I'm sorry. Under the municipal recreation program, it's sort of joint between the local area and government in development of them. You know, there are service clubs getting involved and so on. Is this satisfying the local campground operators that have been opposed to government being involved with campgrounds?

DR. WEST: I can't totally comment, and I'll get Doug to make a few comments on it. I know that in some areas it does infringe and there are comments from the private campground operators. I think it's a responsible government that does not interfere to the fullest with the private campgrounds, and we will constantly look. I'm sure that Ed can comment on how Kananaskis addresses it. I mean, the costs in there are not conflictive with the private sector and the costs in our parks, and that will be kept abreast of the private sector to make sure we don't interfere. But specifically MRTAs: how are the comments coming on those?

MR. BALSDEN: There are 164 sites currently under the MRTA program. Probably a third or more, perhaps 35 percent, have no campground facilities. They are indeed golf courses, trail systems, sports fields, ski hills, what have you. So in that respect, where those kinds of facilities are located in the corridors where private campgrounds exist, they are complementary to the tourist sector in attracting people to use golf courses and the private campgrounds that are close by. There are some areas where the proximity is quite close, but usually those are in areas of high-density use such as the Hinton-Jasper corridor or the north-south corridor near your constituency, Gull Lake and the lake areas around there. There has been some concern expressed by some private campground operators, and we try and ensure that as much as possible there is not an undue or conflicting interest financially for them. We think it's been successful so far.

MR. MOORE: I have another supplementary. Because of the time, I move we adjourn, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, if you could just hold your motion for adjournment, I'd like to thank the minister and his department people who've come to be with us today. I appreciate their frankness, and I'm sure the committee does. We anticipate being able to come up with some worthwhile recommendations for your department, and certainly the comments and information you have given us today will help us to accomplish that, Mr. Minister. So thank you very much. And another thank you to your people who hosted this in Kananaskis.

Now I would entertain the motion for adjournment from the hon. Member for Lacombe.

[The committee adjourned at 12 p.m.]