

3 p.m.

Tuesday, October 29, 1991

[Deputy Chairman: Mr. Jonson]

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Good afternoon. I'd like to call the committee to order. This afternoon we have with us the Hon. Ralph Klein, Minister of the Environment, and his officials to deal with those matters of his responsibility which come under the Heritage Savings Trust Fund, which are land reclamation and irrigation headworks and the main irrigation systems improvement program.

Welcome, Mr. Minister.

MR. KLEIN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Please proceed with opening remarks, and we'll have questions.

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to first introduce my officials. Today we have with us Bill Simon, assistant deputy minister of financial services, and Jake Thiessen, who is the director of development and operations for water resources.

Mr. Chairman, as I've done in past years, I would like to distribute these maps, if I can. These maps show the various works under the headworks and main canal program. I think it's a useful map in illustrating the amount of work that has been done thus far and what remains to be done under the program.

Mr. Chairman, as all members are aware, my department is responsible for two important programs under the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund. They are the irrigation headworks and main irrigation systems improvement program and the land reclamation program. The irrigation headworks and main irrigation systems improvement program not only provides water for irrigation but also provides for a wide range of multipurposes such as domestic water supply for southern Alberta area residents, municipal and industrial water needs, water-based recreational facilities, and wildlife enhancement. In short, it is the lifeline of southern Alberta and is the system that was and still is primarily responsible for the wealth and prosperity of that area of our beautiful province.

The primary objective of this program is to ensure adequately sized, efficient, and reliable water supply delivery systems to all 13 irrigation districts and to the Berry Creek region in the special areas; that is generally the constituency of Chinook. Major emphasis was placed on modernizing the existing systems to improve their operational capability and delivery efficiency and on controlling seepage from the canals to minimize damage to adjacent farmland and, of course, to conserve water.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to reiterate at this time that this program is essentially a program for rehabilitation and upgrading of existing main conveyance systems. Just to explain a little bit further, these are systems that are outside of the irrigation districts but are the conveyance systems that deliver water to the systems. They are then taken over by the irrigation districts and distributed internally through a system of laterals.

Built during the early part of this century, the headworks system of some of the districts have been in operation for over 60 years. Improvement and upgrading of these systems is necessary in order not only to meet present-day demand but also the expanding level of multipurpose water use. After six decades of continuous operation the conveyance structures and the main canals of these systems have deteriorated badly and, for the most part, are in very poor condition.

I had the opportunity, Mr. Chairman, of going down to Vauxhall just recently to participate in the sod-turning ceremony for the

improvement that is to go across Expanse Coulee leading to the small community of Hays. Basically, that system is to replace a siphon, and if you could look at that old wooden siphon, then you would know what I'm talking about. There must be at least a million holes in that siphon, and water is spouting out all over the place. What they have to do each year is pour sawdust into the siphon; it works its way down and temporarily clogs up the holes. That's the kind of thing that we have to replace. Therefore, a major rehabilitation program is urgently required in order to provide for the uninterrupted operation of these systems for a reasonable length of time.

The program to rehabilitate the headworks system was initiated in 1975 and significantly expanded in scope following a government decision in 1980. That decision was to proceed with an integrated water management plan for southern Alberta. This program is a 15-year program ending in 1995. Work has been initiated on all components of the program, and by March 31, 1991, approximately 80 percent of the program was complete. The total expenditure on the program to March 31, 1991, is \$472.8 million.

Construction of all internal and off-stream storage reservoirs has been completed. These include the Badger Lake reservoir in the Bow River irrigation district, the Crawling Valley reservoir in the Eastern irrigation district, Forty Mile coulee reservoir in the St. Mary irrigation district, and the Keho enlargement in the Lethbridge Northern irrigation district. All these reservoirs are now operating at full capacity. I might add that these reservoirs have created a tremendous recreational resource in southern Alberta; for instance, in Keho Lake there is now an enhanced fishery, for the first time introducing a walleye fish that far south. It's just a tremendous recreational resource that simply wasn't there before.

The reconstruction of the Lethbridge Northern irrigation main canal was completed in 1988. Two projects in special areas – namely, the Deadfish diversion project and the Sheerness blowdown canal project – are also complete. The replacement of the Pinepound Coulee siphon, a major conveyance structure in the Waterton-St. Mary headworks system, was completed in 1989. A milestone in the program was reached in 1990-91 with the completion of the St. Mary River irrigation main canal. This is one of the largest irrigation systems in the world. This is a canal that is 283 kilometres long, and of course it's a major component of the irrigation headworks and main irrigation systems improvement program.

Other accomplishments under this program in 1990-91 include completion of the West Arrowwood siphon replacement, which again is a major conveyance structure on the Carseland-Bow headworks system, completion of the east branch canal rehabilitation work under the program in the Eastern irrigation district, and the Western irrigation district main canal, stage 2, was completed on schedule in 1990-91.

Mr. Chairman, that about sums it up for the headworks and main canal program.

Turning now to the land reclamation program, I'd like to make a few comments regarding this very popular, very productive program. The government allocated money through the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund to the land reclamation program in 1976. The current program was renewed on November 2, 1988, for a five-year period, to '93-94. As members know, because we've gone through this before, the objectives of the program are basically to return lands as closely as possible to their original capability and carry out reclamation research on industrial disturbances of land to determine methods of minimizing such disturbances and to provide for early certification of reclaimed

lands and, of course, through all of this, to create local employment for many Albertans.

In the last while the most common projects have been municipality oriented and consist of abandoned landfill sites, sewage lagoons, water reservoirs, sand and gravel pits, and other nonmunicipal projects such as mine hazards, which I expect will increase in intensity over the next few years as coal mining becomes less and less and the number of abandoned mines becomes more and more. To March 31, 1991, a total amount of \$37.7 million has been expended on the program, resulting in around 1,300 individual reclamation projects. Mainly, these projects are small, but they have been significant in terms of the environmental damage that they have caused, scarring our landscape and really taking away from the natural beauty of this province. This expenditure of course has enabled much needed reclamation research to be undertaken to find out better ways of reclaiming our land.

3:10

Speaking of the research component, this component began in 1978, and it's been very successful for a number of reasons. First of all, there's co-ordination within the program. The program is managed by an interdepartmental committee that co-ordinates government research so that there is no costly duplication of effort. It involves industry. Each of the four major research program areas is managed by a joint government and industry committee. This ensures that industry has a stake in the research and greatly improves the chances of rapid field implementation of findings. Of course, since industry is involved, it also involves co-funding. The Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund budget has been augmented by funds from private industry as a direct result of their involvement in the research program committees. So projects with the Alberta Research Council and the Alberta Environmental Centre have also been jointly funded.

Since 1978 the research initiative has produced 60 technical reports for use by government, industry, and the public to ensure that all sectors have access to up-to-date information for planning environmentally sound developments. Furthermore, two of the publications have been used as textbooks in postsecondary education facilities, testifying, Mr. Chairman, to the quality of Alberta's reclamation research. During the 1990-91 fiscal year you will note that a total of \$2.3 million was expended under the land reclamation program. Of that, \$490,000 was expended in research, and the balance enabled us to work on 98 individual reclamation projects across the province, most of which were abandoned landfills.

So I think, Mr. Chairman, it's important to note that Alberta's landscape is still scarred by the remains of a wide range of past activities. As I mentioned earlier, the program terminates March 31, 1994, and I guess if I can just sort of raise a little flag here, I would like to ask members of the committee to begin thinking about the future of this program, because we have identified a lot more sites and we would like to do as much of this reclamation as we possibly can. It indeed is a true endeavour to protect and preserve the heritage of this province, and the heritage, of course, is what this province was long before man was here to disrupt it.

On the operational side and within current policy and guidelines there is a need for continued work on the remaining disturbances. There is also the opportunity to address other environmental disturbances, such as abandoned railway lines, abandoned irrigation canals, abandoned municipal wells. In addition to these, the environment can be further enhanced by expanding the program to include *remediation of contaminated orphan industrial sites*. We're starting to hear more and more about these sites, Mr. Chairman, sites that were heavily contaminated many, many years ago

through environmental ignorance and now are becoming the responsibility, I guess, of taxpayers to contain and in some cases decontaminate at great cost. All of this, of course, would be very costly and would require a new policy direction from the government, but that's for another time.

On the research side there is need for long-term data collection on projects already initiated. There is also need for expanded work on oil sands tailings, sludge, and for the reclamation of oil and gas well sites.

We've done a lot of work, Mr. Chairman, through the land reclamation program, but the more we do, the more we see remains to be done. With that I would be very pleased to entertain questions.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

West Yellowhead, followed by Lloydminster.

MR. DOYLE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to welcome the minister to our hearings today. It was a great overview he gave us in regards to the state of the environment in our province, although there's a lot of work to be done, as he has indicated.

I am looking at the annual report of the Alberta heritage trust fund. Some \$2 million was spent this year for land reclamation and \$37 million in total, as the minister indicated. What really gets me, Mr. Chairman, is the fact that you have some companies out

there who reclaim their own land at their own cost; for instance, Cardinal River Coals in the Coal Branch in West Yellowhead, who built a massive lake in a pit, reclaimed all around it, enhanced the bighorn sheep from some 45 to 350-some and have in fact exported some because they're such healthy animals. Yet at the same time we're paying for other companies who just walked off and left these behind. Is there no possible way, Mr. Chairman, to the minister, that we could get something back from people like those who owned rail lines and those who had coal mines and oil companies and tailings? Now we're asking the taxpayers to pay for it out of the heritage trust fund. Is there no way we can collect some of this back for this reclamation when we have companies like, for instance, the miners at TransAlta at Lake Wabamun and Cardinal River Coals, Luscar Sterco, Obed, and those companies that are reclaiming and, in fact, enhancing the environment through better wildlife, fish, and lakes and streams?

MR. KLEIN: Yes. The hon. member makes a good point, and the point is that unfortunately we have to pay for, perhaps, the past sins of others. Not that people were personally and purposefully sinful then. It occurred through environmental ignorance mostly, and it occurred in many cases.

The degradation of these sites that I'm talking about occurred long before there were laws requiring companies to put in place reclamation fees. In many cases the agencies responsible are no longer around, and it's very, very hard to find those who were responsible for the degradation initially. For the most part these sites are so-called orphan sites. Nor was there any responsibility at that particular time; in other words, all these companies played by the rules of the day. For instance, prior to 1974 there was no reclamation requirement for coal; prior to 1976 there was no reclamation requirement for pipelines; 1972, no reclamation requirement for sand and gravel pits. Very simply, there were no laws, no requirements for people to put in place those kinds of funds. After those dates, of course, they were required. The coal company that you referred to obviously with this pit was required to put in place an amount sufficient to reclaim that land, and they were able to do it. We, of course, administer that fund.

MR. DOYLE: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, to the minister. I forgot to welcome his two assistants, whom he apparently forgot to introduce also.

MR. KLEIN: No, I did introduce them.

MR. DOYLE: Oh, I missed that. I must have been copying my records. I apologize.

MR. KLEIN: I'll be glad to introduce Jake Thiessen, who's director of development and operations for water resources, and Bill Simon, who is assistant deputy minister, financial management.

MR. DOYLE: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, my question would be in regards to the canals that were built in southern Alberta. I had the opportunity last year to travel with the heritage trust fund committee to several of these irrigation systems and, in fact, some 20 years ago was involved with building power lines into many of those sites down there. Indeed, it's time to shore up some of the leaks along the spillways, and I'm pleased that you have done that.

My question would be in regards to the \$473 million that has been spent thus far in the irrigation headworks and the main irrigation systems. Do we expect to spend much more in that area? Could you give us an indication: in the next five, 10 years hence how much per year?

MR. KLEIN: I'm advised there's about \$111 million. That takes us to about the \$500 million that was originally committed. The program ends in 1995, so there are four years left on the program. Now, I don't know at this particular point whether the amount of money that was put in place way back in 1980 is going to be sufficient to complete all of the projects there, but right now unless there is a policy decision or direction to the contrary, the project comes to an end in 1995.

MR. DOYLE: Yes. At \$39 million a year as of last year it wouldn't quite get in underneath the \$500 million that was allocated.

MR. KLEIN: It would be about \$584 million, to be precise.

MR. DOYLE: I guess my final question, then, I'll have to put around the Oldman River dam, Mr. Chairman, and that is the flue coming out of the bottom of the Oldman River dam. I had previously asked the minister of, I believe – not public works; somebody that was before us. He said it was the responsibility of the Department of the Environment now that the water is running through.

3:20

MR. KLEIN: No, it isn't yet. Jake, you can correct me if I'm wrong. We don't take it over until – when? – April 1 of next year. It's still under the department of public works.

MR. DOYLE: Our heritage trust fund only goes to the end of March 1991, so we're only guesstimating what the money could be spent on from March 1991. Will funds be going towards putting a turbine generator in those flues that come out the bottom of the spillway? Does the minister have any knowledge of that?

MR. KLEIN: Mr. Chairman, I would respectfully ask that the hon. member ask that question of the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services because we aren't responsible for any of the

capital portion of that dam. We will, however, be responsible for the operation.

MR. DOYLE: Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
The Member for Lloydminster.

MR. CHERRY: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon, Mr. Minister, gentlemen.

My question is on reclamation. I understand that you said earlier that the sites that have been looked at, either tended to or whatever, are in the 1,200 to 1,300 range. I know what a job this project has done, because coming from rural Alberta, I know there were a lot of garbage pits unattended, you know, old sites that have now had reclamation on them and are fertile again and growing different types of crops. I guess the question I would raise, Mr. Minister is: has the number of projects – they must be winding down now considerably to what it was at the start. Are you finding, for example, that last year there was still a considerable number of sites out there that needed tending to?

MR. KLEIN: Yes, there are about 500 sites that we've identified, but as I indicated in my opening remarks, there are additional problems now starting to occur. That's just why I flagged that you might want to reconsider the expiration of this program and where we might be going in the future. About 500 smaller sites have been identified that need to be reclaimed under this program, and we can probably do those within the existing program envelope.

MR. CHERRY: Mr. Chairman, my other question would be the research side of it. As indicated in the annual report, we have support for research projects. I wonder if you want to elaborate on it at all, Mr. Minister.

MR. KLEIN: Well, this whole business of land reclamation and waste management – and I say "waste management" because one falls into the other. In many cases the reclamation of, say, an abandoned oil well site involves also extracting the oil, making sure that the hydrocarbons are disposed of safely, and making sure that the waste materials, wherever deposited, are also deposited in a safe manner. So there's a tremendous amount of research going into the kind of equipment that can accommodate these extractions, basically the kind of waste management technology that should be used to accommodate these wastes that are now being referred to as special wastes.

There's a lot of research being done, for instance, in the Red Deer River valley, a very good example, where a number of gravel pits were reclaimed under this program and a beautiful park system was created. One of the problems there was that a lot of these gravel pits had been tremendous breeding grounds for mosquitoes. There was just a terrible problem with mosquitoes in the Red Deer River valley, even worse than it is in the Saskatchewan River valley sometimes. It never occurs, of course, in the city of Calgary, where the wind blows a little bit more. That's not just the political wind.

What evolved out of that, Mr. Chairman, was a biological mosquito control program. That came about as a result of some of the reclamation activity. We were able to accommodate that very specialized research under this program. The Red Deer River valley, for instance, through the city of Red Deer is quite unique in that there is absolutely no spraying of mosquitoes whatsoever. It's all done through biological alternatives, a tremendous program

that eventually will benefit, hopefully, mosquito control and eradication throughout the province.

MR. CHERRY: Mr. Chairman, that finishes my questions. I'm glad that you're talking about the mosquito population. I know around here there seems to be quite a number of mosquitoes in the summertime also.

Thank you, sir, for allowing me to ask my questions.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My first question to the minister concerns his responsibility for irrigation construction and improvement, the headworks program. I know he knows, and I'm going to reiterate it, that I have a concern that it's not that appropriate for his department to have that responsibility. My belief is that it's a public works' responsibility and his department should have the responsibility for reviewing it and ensuring that whatever's done is done in an environmentally sound manner. It is, I believe, an inherent conflict of interest. I've asked this question before. I would simply like to know whether the minister has moved more to my position on the matter. Has he recommended to the Premier that this responsibility be moved more appropriately to the public works department?

MR. KLEIN: Well, the answer's no, Mr. Chairman.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Chairman, I wonder whether the minister could tell us: has his department done any work on global warming and the implications that may have over time, certainly within our lifetime, for irrigation needs on the one hand but also for the ability for us to find the water to fill an irrigation system such as the one that he is constructing in southern Alberta?

MR. KLEIN: Yes, of course. Because of what is happening, particularly in northern Alberta and climatic changes generally, we're starting to look not only at the effect global warming has on changing the ecosystems but also what contributes to it. Of course, we have under way an advisory committee now writing a report, the result of numerous public consultation processes to develop a clean air strategy for this province. A major component of that clean air strategy was how this province buys into national and global programs to reduce CO₂ emissions. Now, once that's achieved, of course, then we play our part in reducing emissions that contribute to greenhouse gases.

We're also looking at what we can do to sustain and maintain water levels. Those problems not only occur in southern Alberta through irrigation. As I speak, there are problems in northeastern Alberta with a number of lakes, there are problems with some rivers in central Alberta, and certainly we're experiencing problems in southern Alberta. As a matter of fact, really a manifestation of that was the physical construction of the Oldman River dam. A lot of people will say that that dam was simply constructed to accommodate a handful of farmers – the word "handful" to those in opposition usually seems to be the dramatic way of saying it – while in reality that dam was put in place as a water management project, understanding that the levels of the Oldman River were falling. This was a way to store water, to release water, and to wisely use and manage our water. So we're looking at it.

You may argue, hon. member, that this isn't an environmental measure. Well, I will argue that it is, because what we're doing is conserving water. Through becoming involved in the proper

rehabilitation of these canals, we're conserving water. We're making sure that we reduce the amount of water that now evaporates. We're reducing the amount of water that now seeps onto the land and becomes useless and in some cases harmful. We're decreasing the amount of salinization that occurs from the water forcing the salts up through the ground. So this is, I believe, an environmental endeavour as much as it is a water management endeavour.

3:30

MR. MITCHELL: Great. I guess to some extent we have a sad dilemma in Alberta. As global warming evolves, if it does – and there's a strong indication that it will – we find that on the one hand one of our main economic staples, the energy industry, clearly contributes to it, and on the other hand our other economic staple, agriculture, clearly is disadvantaged by it. Ultimately, in a sense your answer on the irrigation projects is an indication of how government is moving in the long run to conserve, to redress that imbalance or that confrontation of interests. Has the minister given more thought in a broader environmental context as to how he is going to in the future balance that conflict of on the one hand one economic initiative creating a huge problem in the perhaps not so long run for another economic initiative, both of which are fundamental to this province?

MR. KLEIN: It's one of the numerous environmental issues, of course, that is being addressed not only locally but through the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment. As a matter of fact, it will be a major topic of discussion at the next meeting of CCME especially as it relates to global warming and air emissions and gases that contribute to the greenhouse phenomenon. Aside from that, I think we have put in place a number of mechanisms. You know as well as I do that there's no easy answer to all these questions, this question of attaining sustainable development. As a matter of fact, the question now is whether "sustainable development" in the new scheme of things is even a proper term, whether it should be sustainable development or sustainable environment. Maybe Gro Brundtland will have to write a brand-new book and come up with a new phrase.

These are physical questions that have to be resolved through science and technology, but they're also to some degree philosophical questions in that a proper definition has to be arrived at and a lot of thought has to be given in a human sense as to what is that proper balance. We have in place now mechanisms that will hopefully help government arrive at those conclusions, such as the Round Table on Environment and Economy, where the agricultural debate is very much an issue within the discussion room of the round table. As a matter of fact, that is their main target right now, to define sustainable development, to present to this government a plan to achieve sustainable development not only in the agricultural field but in energy, forestry, and so on, and all other areas that affect the environment.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

The Member for Calgary-Foothills.

MRS. BLACK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wanted to go back to the minister's opening comments where he talked about the land reclamation fund that we've had in place. I think the people of Calgary must probably be more aware of old problems that have come back to haunt us down the road, particularly when they drive down Memorial Drive and look at the creosote spill in the river. I'm pretty sure it wouldn't come under this program, but it's very obvious that there are some sites there. I'm wondering if under

the research projects we're finding faster, better ways of identifying these old sites and faster and better ways of cleaning them up. Considering that we've been in this process since, I guess, 1976, have we made some major inroads into identification and cleanup?

MR. KLEIN: Well, yes. I'd be glad to provide the hon. member with a list of the research projects that were undertaken. There were in all about 17 research projects, I believe, and they tried to address a wide variety of questions including soil replacement, depths. I mentioned the appropriate reclamation of well sites and methods of reducing oil sands tailings, sludge. That's going to be a huge problem in the future. I just don't have a list of all the projects in front of me, but there is the reclamation research annual report that details all the research programs and gives a little bit of information on what they hope to achieve through their practical application.

MRS. BLACK: As a follow-up, Mr. Chairman: with the new environmental protection legislation that is out for review right now, with the regulations and the tremendous advances that we've taken to secure and protect the environment, with industry now being held responsible and accountable for their actions, will the research projects be available for their environmental departments to, say, purchase, to utilize within their own industry packages?

MR. KLEIN: We're more than happy to share virtually all the information that we have relative to research activities: that done at the Environmental Centre at Vegreville, that done through the Alberta Research Council. We have a wealth of information available in our libraries both here and at Vegreville. All this information, of course, will be made available upon request to those interested in undertaking a reclamation program.

With respect to your first question, yes, the new legislation clearly provides for stringent measures to be taken to ensure that adequate reclamation funds are put in place and not only the reclamation funds be put in place but that the developers of new industries that have the potential of polluting will be responsible for that site 25 years after the decommissioning of a plant. So you can't just shut down the plant and reclaim it and say, "Okay; I've done my job," and then five years later a lot of pollution occurs. Maybe he just covered it, and maybe it looked really good on the surface. If there was evidence that contamination still remained, then that person would be responsible 25 years down the road. So it's very stringent legislation, I would say, but really reflects today's environmental realities and expectations relative to the responsibility of the polluter to pay for the pollution he or she causes.

MRS. BLACK: Finally, Mr. Chairman, if we're expecting, and demanding almost, through our proposed legislation that industry will develop reclamation funds within their own corporate body, I'm wondering if from the projects that have already proven to be successful and that you have in the annual report, we could couple our own reclamation fund with the sale of some of that technology so that companies wouldn't have to go through the R and D process in-shop, that they could buy the technology, probably at a discounted rate, from this fund and create a fund within a fund.

3:40

MR. KLEIN: Well, that's an interesting concept, and it's an interesting use of an economic instrument, if you will, to accommodate industry at a reasonable cost and at the same time allow us to recover our costs. The new legislation, by the way, allows for that. If you read the legislation and the regulations associated

with it, you will see that there is a provision that allows for the creation – what is it? – of economic instruments to look after specific problems of environmental protection and enhancement. So this indeed could be done.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Edmonton-Beverly, followed by Clover Bar.

MR. EWASIUK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, when I rate our various portfolios across the floor, I think yours is probably a very important one in terms of priorities and where we should be putting particularly our heritage trust fund money. I feel the moneys that we have garnered from the nonrenewable resources indeed should be used in large part to deal with things like irrigation improvement, land reclamation, and areas where we can enhance the environment for our future generations. So I certainly have no difficulty with what is being done here.

Those are sort of industrial and other areas. I'd like to look right in our backyard, at what we're doing for the environment and dealing with environmental issues. There are a number of recycling projects under way, and they're working quite well. I know your department's had some part to play in those as well. My question, then, perhaps is: are we doing enough, particularly in terms of research and development, to improve, to deal with and handle the recyclables, to encourage entrepreneurs to get involved in that process? Like the motor oil that someone raised just recently, old tires and things like that, medical wastes, those kinds of things: what are we doing in that respect? Are you looking at some financing from this fund to work in that direction?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: To clarify here, I hope that this is tied into land reclamation in the sense that it deals with landfills. I just caution the committee members to direct their questions to any relationship to the responsibilities under the Heritage Savings Trust Fund.

My apologies, Mr. Minister. Please proceed.

MR. KLEIN: Well, I'm not quite sure, Mr. Chairman, if you want me to answer or not. I'm glad to answer. But you're right; I think we'd have to go some distance to sort of tie it into either one of these programs. Certainly we couldn't possibly tie it into the headworks/ main canal program but perhaps to land reclamation in that it somewhat relates to the whole issue of landfill and what we do with those landfills down the road in other forms.

I did allude to it, hon. member. Reclamation now relates actually quite significantly to waste management. When you reclaim land, usually that land is contaminated in some way or another, so you've got to find out what you're going to do with the contaminated properties. So, yes, it involves some research, and I did allude to that in decontaminating, for instance, an abandoned oil site. In fact, in some cases where it's heavily contaminated, you can actually extract the oil and use that oil again. By the way, when you're talking about another form of recycling, some of the sand is used to make some of the finest sand traps on golf courses, you know, if it's contained in that kind of sand. So there are recycling components.

But getting around to your other question, right now we've augmented our operating budgets by about \$6 million to bring in a project called Action on Waste. That program's been in operation now for about six months. We will, during the budget process, have to have an assessment of that program to see if members of the Legislature will approve just as much money or perhaps more for the next year.

MR. EWASIUK: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Chairman, my question was related basically to landfill sites and land reclamation. What prompted me, actually, to ask that question was that I looked at the minutes of last year's hearings, and the minutes quote the minister as saying that he was possibly using trust fund moneys to help municipalities develop environmentally safe landfill sites. That leads me to another question. Is there such a thing as an environmentally safe landfill site?

MR. KLEIN: Part of the research component, yes. The research component could relate – well, there are environmentally safe landfill sites. As a matter of fact, we're trying to get the city of Edmonton and the surrounding counties and municipal districts and towns and villages to buy into it, and it's called a regional waste management system. Rather than just identifying a dump, we enter into a program, co-operatively, of comprehensive waste management where there's good source separation – which there is already in the city of Edmonton: a tremendous recycling blue box program – where there are perhaps different methods of mechanical separation at site, where you bring into play the new concepts of waste management, including composting and mechanical separation, proper transfer stations to feed into these sites, depots and storage space for recyclables, compacting equipment. There are all kinds of things that can be done to achieve a comprehensive waste management program and reduce the amount of waste that goes into those sites, and the national objective is to reduce that waste by 50 percent by the year 2000.

Of course, the more you use other technologies to treat wastes, the less goes into the landfill, and when it comes to reclamation, of course, you don't have to spend as much money to reclaim this land. It becomes much less of a problem if it's done right in the first place. That's what we're trying to achieve, but it's very, very difficult, in all honesty. It's hard to bring all the politicians from these jurisdictions together and get them not to think dump. I say to everyone: "Don't think dumps anymore. Think waste management, comprehensive waste management, co-operative waste management." But it seems that when they get into this frame of mind, they say: "Oh, that's all nice and fine, but what about the dump? Where are we going to put it?"

MR. EWASIUK: Not in my backyard.

Thank you, Mr. Minister. I certainly wish you well in getting those politicians together and resolving that problem.

Mr. Chairman, if I may, and I hope I'm staying within the framework of what we're doing here today. I commended the Minister of Agriculture when he was before us several days ago for the work that's being done on irrigation areas, and I concur that that needs to continue. My question to him, and I think he suggested it should go to someone like yourself, was on the expansion of the irrigation projects further north. I'm alluding to the problems that seem to be developing in the central northeastern part of the province where we've experienced a fair amount of drought in the last several years. I know there are some programs to assist those farmers, but there seems to be perhaps – I don't know – a trend that may require some assistance relative to irrigation or some form of water systems supplies. Again, I would think that it would come under the irrigation funding of the heritage trust fund.

3:50

MR. KLEIN: I don't know if the answer is irrigation, but certainly we're starting now to take a good, hard look at some of the water managements in the north. We have identified different problems in different regions of the north. For instance, in the

High Level region a lot of good agricultural farmland becomes totally unproductive through excessive flooding. In the Slave Lake area we find that a lot of silting is now occurring as a result of the tremendous flushes that happen each year on the East and West Prairie rivers. We're finding in the northeast part of the province – the part that you refer to, hon. member – that indeed there appears to be a lowering of the lake levels, and we're experiencing drought conditions that never happened there before.

So I think that sometime along the road we're going to have to look at what we can do to enhance our existing programs. We have programs of lake stabilization, erosion control, flow regulation; it's all part of water resource management. I guess what I'm saying is that for years and years we've had these programs in place, and they've worked well. But you can't keep applying band-aids; you can't keep doing little bits and pieces of corrective surgery. I don't know if irrigation is the answer. In some cases and in some very specific instances, it might be; I don't know. But certainly proper water management is the answer.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

Just before proceeding, I would like to respectfully remind the committee that although I'm sure the questions are well intended, I think we're going beyond the particular projects and the mandate as far as it relates to the Heritage Savings Trust Fund. I would like committee members to please take note.

The Member for Clover Bar, followed by the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MR. GESELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate your note, but I want to explore maybe some future projects that we should be looking at that may be funded under the Heritage Savings Trust Fund. The first one I want to talk about really – with your permission, Mr. Chairman, I'm sort of looking ahead a little bit rather than at the projects we've undertaken in the past.

MR. FISCHER: Getting gold out of the silt.

MR. GESELL: Well, maybe.

First of all, good afternoon, Mr. Minister and staff. I want to talk a little bit about waste management. It was touched upon by you briefly and also by the Member for Edmonton-Beverly. Your department and the Department of Municipal Affairs have actively assisted the 19 municipalities in trying to resolve this situation, but frankly, Mr. Minister, people out there have some difficulties. They believe that what is being looked for is a dump – not a waste management solution but a dump – and that's where the main objection comes. I'm wondering: is there an avenue? I've tried to explore some of them; for instance, introducing a recommendation to this committee which was passed in the past two years about an environmental investment division that might consider projects of an environmental nature to enhance the quality of life, one of the objectives of the Heritage Savings Trust Fund. But the response has been that that should be considered under the capital projects division. Well, perhaps a proper regional waste management facility rather than a dump could be developed in the Edmonton metropolitan area, and perhaps it could fall under that capital projects division. I would want to have some comments from the minister with respect to that type of direction.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: A question, if I might respectfully ask.

MR. GESELL: I'm asking the minister if there's a possibility to utilize Heritage Savings Trust Fund dollars under the capital

projects division towards a regional metropolitan Edmonton waste management facility.

MR. KLEIN: Well, I guess if you were to ask me, I would say: lookit; give me all the money you want, and I'll provide all the programs you want. Sure.

MR. GESELL: It's an encouraging response.

Mr. Minister, we provide now assistance to the regions where the municipalities combine to find solutions to waste management, even though the waste management responsibility lies with those municipalities.

MR. KLEIN: That's a tough one. What we're saying to these municipalities – and there's nothing secret about it – is that some of them have already developed regional sites, so let's see how we can possibly use that in an expanded regional scenario. Some of those counties are now looking for regional sites and to set up their own transfer systems and so on. What we're saying to those counties is: well, let's buy into this comprehensive waste management system and see how we can use the funds that would have been designated to that site to develop a regional system, a superregional system, if you will. There are some dollars available under the regional sites development program providing everyone wants to relinquish a little bit of what was coming to them to develop their sites individually.

What we would like to do, quite frankly, is look at the Edmonton situation as a pilot, to see if this can be done on a sort of superregional basis. But I have to tell you that it's very, very hard to bring these political forces together. You're absolutely right; they don't want to talk about a comprehensive waste management program. When it gets down to the nuts and bolts of the issue, they say, "Well, that's fine, but where are you going to put the dump?"

MR. GESELL: Exactly.

Mr. Chairman, I've got a supplementary. It's not quite related, but it deals again with a project that may be suitable for consideration by this Heritage Savings Trust Fund committee. My understanding is that the environmental research centre at Vegreville has undertaken some research work on individual sanitary disposal systems. It was stopped somewhere along the line. We've got approximately 400,000 individual systems out there, and they vary from plugged up fields for acreages to actual surface discharges where the area is large enough for people that live in the rural area. To me it's of concern because it affects our environment. Would you recommend that there should be funds made available from this Heritage Savings Trust Fund – again the capital projects division, I would assume – to investigate this matter and try to find some solutions that would help to alleviate this problem that, in my mind, may create some environmental difficulties in the future?

MR. KLEIN: You're talking about individual sewage treatment systems?

MR. GESELL: There was some research done on individual sanitary sewage treatment systems, yes.

MR. KLEIN: If Dr. Weaver from the centre were to contact us, we would be glad to look at that program. Certainly it relates in some respects, I guess, to some of the land reclamation components, where because we do reclaim old sewage treatment systems – you know, lagoons and so on. I don't know what research has

been done, but the way you're describing it, it certainly sounds as if it would fit into the research component of the reclamation program.

MR. GESELL: I think I'll leave it at that. Thank you.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, followed by West Yellowhead.

MR. MITCHELL: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I draw the minister's attention to the first recommendation that the committee passed last year. It was a recommendation proposed by the Member for Clover Bar:

That a new division be created under the Alberta . . . Trust Fund, the environmental investment division, and that investments from this division be considered for projects that will provide . . . benefits to the people of Alberta, and so on and so forth. The response was – and I don't know who exactly responded in this way, probably the Treasurer – that investments which will enhance the environment or which will reduce pollution may currently be made under the capital projects division or, if they will earn a reasonable return, under the Alberta investment division, and therefore we don't need something separate for these purposes.

I wonder whether the minister accepts that response or whether he would prefer to see a separate environmental investment division under the Heritage Savings Trust Fund.

4:00

MR. KLEIN: Well, I think we've got enough on our plate right now. As I've replied to the hon. member, I'll take all the money I can get, but the Treasurer has a very, very difficult job, too, in determining priorities and so on. To be quite frank with you, every minister thinks his or her department is the priority department, and when it comes down to the crunch, the Treasurer has to make some very tough decisions. I understand his tough decision with respect to this particular matter, and I'm willing . . . Yes, at some time I would like to see that kind of fund established, but we have two very significant and very costly programs in place right now. I guess when these projects come to their end, then we can look at perhaps revisiting the hon. member's original motion. We're all facing tough times, and we're all doing various realignments of programs to try and overcome them and use as best we can the financial resources available to us.

MR. MITCHELL: It's clear from a review of the Heritage Savings Trust Fund annual report that the Energy department has been extremely successful in enticing the Heritage Savings Trust Fund to invest in energy projects. I think a rough figure that I've added would indicate that at least \$1 billion of the heritage fund has gone into energy projects. Obviously there have been some real entrepreneurs in the Energy department selling the heritage trust fund, the Treasurer, on investing in this kind of project. I wonder whether the minister could tell us whether he has been petitioning the capital projects division and the Alberta investment division for investment in environmentally sound or special environmental demonstration projects which would, therefore, make this statement, "a separate division for these purposes is not necessary," a true statement.

MR. KLEIN: Well, as a matter of fact we have, and there are some examples. There's an incineration project, for instance, at Wainwright. [interjection] Right. Certainly through the Action on Waste program we're trying to demonstrate that we can assist

municipalities, for instance, in accommodating industries that will add value to recyclables. We see now the tremendous public interest and corporate interest that has come about as a result of our call for proposals on tire recycling and disposal.

It's interesting that you would say this, because there's something that's happening. What I'm saying now and what a lot of people are saying, I guess, is that the environment is no longer a cause or an issue. It's that too, but it's also a business opportunity, and we're now seeing that starting to evolve. The energy industry has been around for a long, long time. Environmental industries per se – some of them have been around for a long time. I mean, there have been scrap metal dealers since the beginning of time, but the new exotic industries that are looking after today's complex environmental issues are just now starting to evolve. So through our Action on Waste program and through some I guess at this time ad hoc programs, we're looking at various things, and perhaps there will be a day when we can say that substantial sums of money should be put into developing a full-fledged environmental industry in this province. I concur that we've got to take that through that first step.

MR. MITCHELL: I encourage the minister to do whatever he can do to hasten that day, and I'm sure he is.

My next question concerns the initiatives of a company like TransAlta – and I'm sure there are others – which is to be congratulated for its effort to pursue and establish its new conservation measures: its incentives to use better lighting, its incentives to use more efficient electrical motors and that kind of thing. The disappointment, I guess, in that is, one, that perhaps it's not very many companies; TransAlta may, in fact, be alone in that. Two, it's not really that broad a program in TransAlta's case; and three, it is an area that needs a great deal of attention, particularly in Alberta where electricity means carbon dioxide.

Can the minister see where funds in the heritage trust fund could be used to support the kind of initiative that's been undertaken by TransAlta, to see it more widespread in Alberta, embraced by more companies, perhaps with some greater government involvement as is the case in B.C. with respect to subsidies, incentives to buy high-efficiency refrigerators?

MR. KLEIN: Perhaps. As I said before, we're trying to get a handle on this whole question of air emissions and how we reduce carbon dioxide and sulphur dioxide and volatile organic compounds and how we reduce all these emissions. Perhaps one of the recommendations will be that the government spend more money. I don't know if they're going to recommend specifically out of what fund to address these particular problems.

As I said before, of course I would like to have this money to do all these great and wonderful things, but there are priorities. As the hon. member knows, Mr. Chairman – you've been sitting here for days and days and days – if you gave all the money to me, I guess there wouldn't be much left for anyone else, would there?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
The Member for West Yellowhead.

MR. DOYLE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll try not to be as vicious as my Liberal colleague. I appreciate the good words he said about TransAlta. Perhaps the member should know that the right-of-ways are probably still being sprayed by Tordon and other chemicals that other people aren't allowed to use.

Mr. Chairman, my question would be in regards to the minister's indicating there are 500 reclamation and research project sites identified.

MR. KLEIN: Yeah, 500 remaining.

MR. DOYLE: I was wondering if the minister could indicate to me whether they'd be in the north, south, urban, or rural. Where would most of them be? Would they be rural or urban?

MR. KLEIN: I would say probably in rural Alberta, and most of them still are old municipal dumps. I mean the kind of thing that we ought to appropriately refer to as a dump. We see them all over the place. If you ever get up in a helicopter . . . I don't want to identify certain areas of the province, but there are some areas and some counties that have been less careful than other counties in creating unsightly dumps. Well, hon. member, you know what one looks like because you have one in your constituency. But as more MDs and counties get involved in regional waste management systems, the more these dumps disappear.

So what do you do with those sites? You have to reclaim them, and I would say that by and large most of them are old municipal dumps. You've been fortunate in your own constituency in that you now have a good regional system in place, so you know personally how those systems work. It's just a matter now of reclaiming the old dumps that the system has now replaced.

MR. DOYLE: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I was pleased that Environment was involved in cleaning up and putting proper facilities in the riding of West Yellowhead. Lots of money went into those, and they're doing a good job for the environment.

I was wondering also about the irrigation headworks. On page 44 of the annual report, there's \$1.4 million left in the Environment budget and \$202,000 under land reclamation. Would that money be expended to this date, or was that put back into the heritage trust fund? It's on page 44 under Environment. It says unexpended money: \$1.4 million and \$202,000. Or is that being used in ongoing projects over the summer?

4:10

MR. KLEIN: That reverts to Treasury.

MR. DOYLE: Treasury, or to the heritage trust fund?

MR. KLEIN: To the heritage trust fund.

MR. DOYLE: Okay. Mr. Chairman, I was interested when the minister was talking, being an avid fisherman myself, and I especially like those walleye. Are these walleye protected over the winter, or do they freeze out, or are they spawning in those particular canals? Is it longtime enhancement for the walleye population in the canals of southern Alberta, or is it just a somewhat . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, how does this relate to the headworks?

MR. KLEIN: It's an interesting question. I wouldn't mind replying because I'd like to know what the answer is. So I'm going to have to ask Mr. Thiessen here. He advises me that Keho Lake, where we've introduced walleye, is just a lot deeper than it used to be. It was just a prairie slough, and now it's a full-scale lake. It's a beautiful long, long lake, and it's quite deep. The question was relative to spawning.

MR. DOYLE: Are they spawning? Does the population grow year after year, or do you have to continue the transplant?

MR. THIESSEN: Oh, yes. The pike and the walleye will spawn in those lakes.

MR. DOYLE: They do spawn and travel up the canals?

MR. THIESSEN: The canals are shut down in winter, so they can't overwinter there, but in the reservoirs they certainly overwinter.

MR. DOYLE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think that was my three questions or more.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: It was, yes. Thank you.

The Member for Edmonton-Beverly, followed by Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MR. EWASIUK: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just one question, I think, and it's on land reclamation. I know the work's been done there. What sort of follow-up do we have in place on sites? I have a particular site in mind where the plant operations were there prior to the Act being in place, and operated since. They've shut down; they've been gone for a while. Some creosote has reappeared on the surface water ponding and so on in the site. What sort of follow-up do we do on these kinds of sites? How do you get involved through the fund to the land reclamation program?

MR. KLEIN: Well, firstly it wouldn't be funded under . . . This is a private operation, a private firm?

MR. EWASIUK: It is sort of almost an abandoned one; like you were saying, the orphan type of site.

MR. KLEIN: Well, it would then be identified if we couldn't track down the original owners. We would try and extract everything that we possibly could out of this owner. Understanding that we don't have, or didn't have at that time, much legislative strength, we would still try and get as much out of the previous owner as we possibly could. Certainly we would issue an order to have whoever was responsible clean that site up and take care of the contamination that existed. If not, we would go in and clean up the site. It would be declared an orphan site. Basically, we would pay for it, but normally it wouldn't come out of this particular program. This program basically involves municipal dumps and old wells and sewage lagoons and so on.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

The Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Chairman, if the Heritage Savings Trust Fund is a fund that is designed to ensure, secure – whatever the words that are used – the future of this province, clearly one of the most significant issues facing the future of this province is its environment. Very little, relatively speaking, is invested through the Heritage Savings Trust Fund in issues of true environmental significance. I think the minister would have to agree that irrigation may be given an environmental slant, but in fact its initiation wasn't environmental; it was agricultural. Could the minister give us some insights? Knowing that we cannot give him all the money he wants, if we could give him some of the money that he could use, what would his priority be? What project, one or two, what program, one or two, would he ask us aggressively and vehemently to fund? What's his priority in this?

MR. KLEIN: My priority generally is the wise use and protection of our environment now and into the future. That's my priority. Within that general statement I guess there are hundreds of components. I mean, you're asking me a question, Mr. Chairman, that relates to the trust fund and what would I as a minister like to spend out of that trust fund. Well, I would like as much as I possibly could because, like the hon. member, I think that the environment is extremely important, and I would like to spend it on all components of environmental protection. I would like to spend it on components that relate to clean land and clean air and clean water, research, and all the things that will ensure that we maintain and keep forever a beautiful province. But to ask me today what is my priority, I really couldn't say, because what is my priority today might out of circumstance be quite different tomorrow.

MR. MITCHELL: I find that answer somewhat worrisome. If we can't ask the minister today what his priority is, if we can't expect that the minister would come before a body that should have – although it probably doesn't; maybe he's acknowledging the truth of this committee – some impact . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order, hon. member. We don't need to editorialize. Please pose your supplementary question on a relevant matter.

MR. MITCHELL: The New Democrat member editorialized just slightly before, and I think . . .

MR. KLEIN: Hon. member, I said my priority is the protection of our land, our air, and our water. Now, what could be more important than that?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Let's move on to your supplementary question, please.

MR. MITCHELL: I guess what I'm saying is if the Minister of the Environment is concerned about making some progress on that, one would hope that he would have specific initiatives on his mind at all times. If this first recommendation and its response is to be true, then he would want to come before a body like ours and say: "Look, I've really got these projects. This one is one that I feel is important, and I want to do something about it. Will you help me do it?" I'm asking him: could he give us an idea? Like, do you want us to subsidize the compact fluorescent bulbs? Do you want us to educate people on . . .

MR. KLEIN: I've got lots of priorities, but some of them don't relate to this . . .

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Order please, hon. members. The Chair must intervene here. The question has been asked; the question has been answered. We do not need to repeat that again, but certainly the member has two supplementaries coming. If there are other issues to raise, please proceed.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: On the heritage trust fund.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: On the heritage trust fund, yes.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Chairman, there are programs in here, for example, that are educational programs. One is the workers' safety program that we fund, and so on. That is a precedent for educational programs that could be implemented with respect to

the environment. Could the minister see, for example, his department utilizing heritage trust fund money to promote with Albertans the idea that they should drive smaller cars, that they should therefore produce less carbon dioxide because they have an obligation to Albertans, to the world, to provide some leadership in reducing carbon dioxide emissions?

MR. KLEIN: Hon. member, through the Chair, we do that, and we do it very effectively. We aren't doing it through the Heritage Savings Trust Fund; we're doing it through the operational budget. We have a phenomenal educational department within Alberta Environment that produces all kinds of materials, that goes out and trains teachers and holds community meetings, assists communities in various environmental programs to give them tips on ways to protect and enhance the environment. That's already been done. A phenomenal amount of educational material is produced through Alberta Environment, but it just happens to come through a different component.

MR. MITCHELL: Is there a way that we could use heritage trust funds to develop something more concrete than simply an educational process then, that we could develop regulations, that we could investigate those that are used elsewhere in the world to say we're going to make it more difficult for you to drive big cars - like the one the minister drives, for example - that produce too much CO₂?

4:20

MR. KLEIN: Again, hon. member, there are other mechanisms to achieve these kinds of things, and we're working on them. For instance, through the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment, there is a national objective, and we're part of the overall buy-in to reduce automobile emissions by 50 percent by the year 1994. All right? We're part of that process. So within the operational side of the department we have programs in place that are leading toward meeting that objective in 1994.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Thank you.
That ends the chairman's list of speakers.

MR. DOYLE: Mr. Chairman, I just have one thing to comment to the minister; that is, we now have four New Democrat governments that will be assisting him in protecting the environment.

MR. KLEIN: What's that?

MR. MITCHELL: Just like Barrett's government.

MR. KLEIN: I'll be very interested to see what they do with the Bennett dam, and I'll be interested to see what they do with pulp mill standards. I'll tell you that for sure.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I understand there's a further speaker on a further topic; we've had notice of that. The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

The minister and his officials, of course, are quite welcome to stay for the rest of our discussion.

MR. KLEIN: No thanks.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I would like to take this opportunity to thank you, Mr. Minister, and your assistants and advisers for appearing before the committee today and for the effort that you've made to respond to all of the questions.

MR. KLEIN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I understand that the Member for Calgary-Mountain View wishes to raise an issue.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate you recognizing me. As you know, after our meeting this morning with the Minister for Public Works, Supply and Services, I'd asked the chairman whether we would be receiving the financial statements for the most recent fiscal year for Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation. He indicated he was trying his best - and I know he was - to try and get those for the committee, but is it still correct for me to assume that those financial statements have not yet been made available to the committee?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: That's correct.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Mr. Chairman, then I'd like to make a motion. I don't know whether the committee will support me or not, but it's one that I would like to make, and it would be that the meeting with the Hon. Ray Speaker, minister responsible for Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation, be postponed to a later date pending receipt by the committee of the annual report for Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation and an opportunity of a minimum of four working days for members to review it.

I know that this was raised last year, as I said in my comments this morning before the meeting of the committee, with the annual report for the heritage trust fund itself, and I noticed that as a result of the comments made last year, this year we had the annual report well in advance of our meetings so that we could review it and prepare ourselves for questions, debate, or discussion. I think the same ought to apply here, particularly, Mr. Chairman, given that Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation has been effectively wound down, so far as I'm aware. There may be some important factors in that annual report; I have no idea. It may be routine; I have no idea. But the fact that it's not available to us concerns me a very great deal.

Now, some of us who don't live in Edmonton are heading to our homes and constituencies tonight. Even if it's delivered to our homes here at the Legislature tomorrow, we may not get it until the day of the meeting, which just does not give us, in my view, adequate time to review it and to prepare our questions for the minister. I just think it's unfair to the workings of the committee.

I feel a minimum of four working days would be acceptable. Perhaps if others think that's too onerous but would agree with the thrust of the motion generally without making reference to "a minimum of four working days," I'd be prepared to drop that. I do think that we should just simply ask the minister to go over his schedule and find another time when he could meet with our committee.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: A motion has been made. The Member for Calgary-Foothills to speak to this motion, followed by Edmonton-Meadowlark, followed by Lacombe.

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Chairman, more for clarification from the Member for Calgary-Mountain View. When he talks about the report, I'm assuming he's referring to the interim report, because I gather that if it's the annual report that's gone out for print, the minister would not be able to speed that up due to print requirements. Are you referring, Calgary-Mountain View, to the interim report that we were expecting to receive this afternoon or later this day?

MR. HAWKESWORTH: In previous years we've received, I think, something without the glossy paper, just the basic information and the content of the annual report and the audited financial statements. That's really what I'm getting at. I don't need the final, printed copy. That's not important; it's the information to me that's important. So if that's the interim as opposed to the annual report, then that would be fine with me. Just the audited financial statements would be really what I'm looking for, and any discussion that management includes with that I'd appreciate receiving. That's really what I'm looking for.

MRS. BLACK: Mr. Chairman, just further on that, I think it's important that members receive information ahead of the appearance of the minister. It is difficult to get into the questions if you don't have the report. An interim report or statistical information I understood was possibly coming this afternoon. The assistant is shaking her head no. I am in the same position as the Member for Calgary-Mountain View: I won't be in Edmonton tomorrow and was hoping to have this this afternoon for perusal over the next couple of days.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: For the information of the committee — and I just make this as a statement — the Chair does not have the power to deliver, but it is hoped that it would be available early tomorrow morning. I just mention it. I think the information should be known.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: I appreciate what you're saying, Mr. Chairman. I hope I've made that clear from this morning that I understand the office of the chairman has done his best. I understand that he's done his best to try and get this information to the committee. For factors perhaps beyond his control we don't have it.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark on the motion, please.

MR. MITCHELL: I would like to support the motion, Mr. Chairman. I believe that it's simply unacceptable that we don't have the information earlier and that it is a red flag. It should in fact be a red flag to us that when we don't get the information, what is the reason? We have a responsibility as a committee to ensure that we have that information and we have it in enough time to allow us to do our job properly. So my feeling is that having not received it this afternoon and, in addition, with the difficulties that will be experienced by out-of-town MLAs in reviewing it, even if it is received tomorrow morning, it's incumbent upon this committee to meet with the minister later.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Lacombe.

MR. MOORE: Well, you say the information is going to be available tomorrow morning. It's now 4:30. I think everybody has fax machines. We could have it by tomorrow morning, and the minister doesn't appear till the next day. I don't know what heavy studying we have to make on it if we can't get our concerns addressed in that 24-hour period, any more than it would be in four days. I'm quite knowledgeable of the volume of paper we get and how we can go through it and get our information out, and I don't think it would be too big a task for any one of these members to go over that information in 24 hours.

4:30

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for West Yellowhead.

MR. DOYLE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I speak in favour of the motion by the Member for Calgary-Mountain View. I have a hard time understanding why this document, in the first place, cannot be ready on time when they knew the hearings were coming. The minister knew; the department knew. As a former mayor and councillor we would never, ever have allowed something to go ahead without having time for the elected people to scrutinize it, and I think four days is reasonable. I certainly find it hard that the pressure should be put on us to expedite our schedules when we've given time for good consideration of the Alberta heritage trust fund. Now we've been deprived of the very important information we need, especially as it has to do with Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation. It's been a controversial item, and we want to know exactly where it sits. There's been a lot of the taxpayers' dollars spent, and the Auditor General, if I recall right, has suggested that perhaps there were some problems with how it was going to be printed or what was going to be in it. I'd like to see the final document, as to how it was audited, and if in fact they can't provide the total audit of the document, we should at least have the four days that's been requested by the Member for Calgary-Mountain View to examine the interim document.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The chairman has just been handed a note from the minister's office indicating that we will have the Alberta Mortgage and Housing Corporation information to you by 5 p.m. I only offer that as information.

Are there further speakers? The Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche.

MR. CARDINAL: I haven't any more comments; they've been answered already.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Are there further speakers on the motion? Does the member wish to close then, please?

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Well, I'm glad that we're getting the information, Mr. Chairman. My point is that this doesn't leave any time at all, and I still will have my motion stand. I'd like it to be voted on by the committee. For myself, I have a full schedule of meetings all day tomorrow, starting at quarter after 7 in the morning, so I don't even know at this late date how I'm going to review the information. I believe that in courtesy to the committee we should be given much more time than virtually 24 hours' notice. If the motion has had a desired effect, I guess one has to accept small victories.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: I did invite the member to close debate. Was there a question on . . .

MR. DOYLE: Mr. Chairman, my question is in regards to whether we should pick this up at the minister's office, or should we sit around here someplace? I have a bus to catch, and it would be a good piece of information to review on my two and a half hour trip.

The Official Opposition doesn't want to come to these confrontations; we want the information in advance. It's a very reasonable request.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The report will be here, and our committee secretary has offered, if you're not able to be here, to deliver it to your office. On that particular point, however, I would just — well, I'll leave it; sorry. I have a comment to make on that point later though.

Taking the vote, then, on the motion, all those in favour of the motion by Calgary-Mountain View, please so indicate. Thank you. Those opposed? The motion is lost.

MR. PAYNE: Mr. Chairman, just to be clear on one point. You said "here" three or four times. I wasn't sure what the address of "here" was. Where will "here" be at 5 o'clock?

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: It's our understanding that the deliverer from the minister's office will be delivering copies of the report here to the Table.

MR. PAYNE: This Table right here.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Yes. But there is the undertaking that if members of the committee are not here to receive it, then it will be brought to your office as quickly as possible. Is that acceptable?

Any further business, just so we're sure? Thank you.
The Member for Lacombe.

MR. MOORE: I move we adjourn.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Before taking the vote on the motion - I should have done this earlier; I'm sorry - I would remind hon. committee members that we will be adjourning, if the motion passes, until Thursday, October 31. In the morning we will be meeting with the Hon. Peter Elzinga, Economic Development and Trade, and in the afternoon with the Hon. Ray Speaker, Minister of Municipal Affairs.

The motion having been made, all those in favour, please indicate. Those opposed? Carried.

[The committee adjourned at 4:35 p.m.]