



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 27th Legislature
Third Session

Standing Committee
on
Community Services

Department of Tourism, Parks and Recreation
Consideration of Main Estimates

Tuesday, February 23, 2010
6:34 p.m.

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Standing Committee on Community Services

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 Hehr, Kent, Calgary-Buffalo (AL), Deputy Chair

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Tuesday, February 23, 2010

[Mr. Doerksen in the chair]

Department of Tourism, Parks and Recreation
Consideration of Main Estimates

The Chair: Gentlemen, if I could have your attention, I'd like to welcome you to this meeting this evening. I'm pleased to welcome all of you, including the people who may be joining the meeting online or through the audio connection. The committee this evening has under consideration the estimates of the Department of Tourism, Parks and Recreation for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2011.

At this point I'm going to suggest that we go around the table for introductions. We'll begin with the minister. I'd ask you to introduce your staff at the table, and then we'll go around the table. Minister Ady, please.

Mrs. Ady: Thank you. I'm pleased to be here today. I am the Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation. Joining me is my deputy minister, Bill Werry, and as well my senior financial officer, Cam Steenveld, and my director of communications, Anne Douglas.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you.
Mr. Chase, please.

Mr. Chase: Yes. Harry Chase, Calgary-Varsity.

Mrs. Sarich: Good evening and welcome. Janice Sarich, MLA for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Hehr: Kent Hehr, MLA, Calgary-Buffalo.

The Chair: And deputy chair.
I'm Arno Doerksen, the chair of this committee.

Mr. Rodney: Dave Rodney, MLA, Calgary-Lougheed. Welcome.

Mr. Johnson: Jeff Johnson, Athabasca-Redwater.

Mr. Johnston: Art Johnston, Calgary-Hays.

Mr. Benito: Carl Benito, Edmonton-Mill Woods.

The Chair: Thank you, everyone. I'll just go through a number of process details that I think are important for us to be aware of. First of all, pursuant to Standing Order 56(2.3) Diana McQueen will be substituting for Mr. Jeff Johnson from 8:30 to 9:30 this evening.

Also, Standing Order 59.01(4) prescribes the sequence as follows for this evening's meeting: the minister may make opening comments not to exceed 10 minutes, and for the hour that follows the Official Opposition and the minister may speak. For the next 20 minutes the members of the third party, Wildrose Alliance, if any, and the minister may speak, and any member may speak after that.

With the concurrence of the committee the chair will recognize the members of the fourth party, the NDP, if any, following the members of the third party, and for the next 20 minutes the members of the fourth party and the minister may speak. I'll also note that I'll call for a five-minute break following the Official Opposition's time, which will be at approximately 7:45 p.m. Committee members, ministers, and other members who are not committee members may participate this evening. Department officials and members' staff may be present but may not address the committee.

Members may speak more than once; however, speaking time is limited to 10 minutes at one time. The minister and a member may combine their time for a total of 20 minutes. Members are asked to advise the chair at the beginning of their speech if they plan to combine their time with the minister's time.

Three hours have been scheduled to consider the estimates of the Department of Tourism, Parks and Recreation. If the debate is exhausted prior to the three hours, the department's estimates are deemed to have been considered for the time allotted in the schedule, and we will adjourn. Otherwise, we will adjourn at 9:30 p.m.

Points of order will be dealt with as they arise, and the clock will continue to run.

With regard to votes, the vote on the estimates is deferred until Committee of Supply on March 18, 2010.

With regard to amendments, an amendment to the estimates cannot seek to increase the amount of the estimate being considered, change the destination of a grant, or change the destination or purpose of a subsidy. An amendment may be proposed to reduce an estimate, but the amendment cannot propose to reduce the estimate by its full amount. The vote on amendments will also be deferred until Committee of Supply on March 18, 2010.

Written amendments must be reviewed by Parliamentary Counsel no later than 6 p.m. on the day they are moved, and 17 copies of the amendments must be provided at the meeting for committee members and staff. I'll ask the members to adhere to that provision.

A written response by the office of the Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation to questions deferred during the course of this meeting can be tabled in the Assembly by the minister or through the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly for the benefit of all MLAs. A copy to the committee clerk would also be appreciated in that case.

At this point I would invite the minister of the Department of Tourism, Parks and Recreation to begin remarks. Please, Minister.

Mrs. Ady: Well, thank you, Chair. The only thing I didn't note was a break for us to get scores and updates on the hockey game. Oh, 3-nothing at this point in time. We're just looking for those updates periodically. Now that we've got that important piece of business out of the way . . .

The Chair: We could interject if those are provided to me.

6:40

Mrs. Ady: Okay. Thank you. There's important, and then there is important.

I also wanted to be able to introduce for you today some other individuals that I have in the room. I have assistant deputy minister of parks Jay Nagendran and assistant deputy minister of tourism Bob Scott and executive director of sports and recreation Lloyd Bentz and manager of budgets and forecasts Bobby Kuruvilla. They're behind me and will be here ably assisting me if, I guess, I dig a hole.

I want to begin by talking about what the mission is of Tourism, Parks and Recreation. The first is to create conditions for a vibrant and a successful tourism industry, to manage and conserve provincial parks for the benefit of all Albertans and future generations, and to promote active, healthy lifestyles through sports and recreation. The ministry's total budget program expense for 2010-11 is \$176 million. This is a \$25 million, or 12.4 per cent, reduction from the 2009-2010 forecast. This reduction reflects the conclusion of two programs, the \$6.6 million that is no longer needed for the Olympic and Paralympic activities, and \$9 million which was the final instalment of our three-year, \$69 million commitment to renew our 1988 Olympic legacy facilities.

Now, I want you to know that a lot of serious thought and

discussion has gone into the decisions around the reduction in these budgets, and we're reviewing our programs in a continual way to try and be more effective. We're working closely with our stakeholders to try to minimize the impacts of the reduction on all Albertans.

We will be funding from the tourism levy for tourism-related activities in parks and for major sports events which attract national and international attention and media. As you know, the 4 per cent tourism levy is collected on temporary accommodations and reinvested in tourism marketing and development to keep Alberta's industry competitive. This year there is \$75 million for tourism, an increase of more than \$3 million, but the tourism funding is based on revenue collected through the tourism levy in 2008-2009. So you have to always remember that it's two years behind, and I know we've all been aware that perhaps tourism has descended in this year and what that might mean in the future.

Eighty per cent, \$59 million, will be used by Travel Alberta for domestic and international marketing activities. With the economic downturn, attracting visitors, especially international visitors, has been challenging, but Alberta has been successful at attracting domestic visitors, especially Albertans. Hopefully you've all heard of the Travel Alberta Stay campaign, which encourages Albertans to explore our own backyard. This campaign will continue in 2010-11. Travel Alberta will also focus efforts on attracting visitors from British Columbia. That work has started already on the Alberta train with our Olympic activities. Tourism marketing is a collaborative venture, and Travel Alberta is currently sharing their strategy with tourism operators around the province.

The remaining 20 per cent of the tourism levy funding, \$16 million, is committed to tourism development and research. A tourism development strategy has been developed, and we'll begin implementing it this year. This strategy will guide the department's tourism activities and expand the range of experiences that we offer travellers. We will also attract investment to help expand the industry and improve research to help us get a better handle on the return of our tourism investment. We believe we are providing Albertans with good value, and we want solid evidence to back up that work.

On the international front we will continue to lobby the federal government for more open skies air service agreements and to allow the markets to determine the air service to and from Alberta and to allow more visitors to come here rather than having to go through gateways like Vancouver and Toronto. Open skies are critical to land-locked Alberta, and the department has had strong support for this initiative from Alberta Transportation and from the Premier.

Tourism benefits from the predictable funding from the tourism levy. Other programs, like the provincial park system, don't have that same funding mechanism, and tough decisions had to be made this year. For 2010-11 we've allocated just over \$65 million for provincial parks. An additional \$1.4 million from the tourism levy will be used to cover tourism-related expenses in the parks. However, there is still a \$4.9 million reduction in the park budget. We will increase user fees for facility rentals, raise annual cottage leases and fees for interpretive programs although it is important to note that the fee increases are limited to cost recovery. We will also shorten the camping season at some lower use sites and look at closing small low-use sites if better recreation opportunities are offered nearby. We are also approaching the private sector to consider operating sites to avoid closure.

To avoid permanent job losses, about 35 seasonal park staff positions will remain vacant this year. However, since we've added around a hundred full-time and seasonal positions in 2007-08, staffing levels will still be higher than in previous years. While difficult decisions have to be made, our goal is to still ensure that our

27,000 square kilometres of provincial park and recreation areas can be enjoyed by Albertans for generations to come. To that end, we will continue implementing the plan for parks, and we have made significant progress on that plan since last April.

We've expanded the volunteer opportunities and established an educational video conferencing program for Alberta students. We've also launched an online campground reservation system, and we will double the number of campgrounds on that system this year. Campers will be able to select from 5,800 campsites across the province.

Other elements of the plan for parks, like the inclusion strategy to remove barriers to participation in parks, will continue through 2010 and '11. To ensure that visitors have safe and enjoyable experiences in the park, \$20.7 million will be invested to upgrade parks infrastructure and equipment this year. The ministry will also continue to leverage funding from private partners and the federal government to get the most out of our dollars, with more than \$250 million in capital investment over the past six years alone.

About 73 per cent of our park infrastructure is estimated to be in good or fair condition. We're working towards establishing a performance measure to evaluate the condition of park facilities so that we can clearly see the progress made as investments are made.

Over the coming year we're also committing to supporting the implementation of the land-use framework. Strategies related to the land-use framework are highlighted under the parks in the business plan, but the entire ministry is working together to support the process. Establishing a provincial recreation management strategy for public lands is one of the critical components supporting the land-use framework, and Premier Stelmach has highlighted that in my mandate letter. Work on this strategy is under way, and we will continue it in the coming year.

Another strategy focuses on active living, recreation, and sport, and it will be brought forward in 2010-11. In the budget we are allocating nearly \$26 million for sport and recreation programs, including \$23 million for Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation. We've had to reduce funding by nearly \$2 million to meet our budget targets, but again we are working closely with stakeholders, including provincial sport associations, to ensure that we minimize the impact of the reduction on Albertans. The foundation is basing reductions on a percentage of each organization's total budget, and they plan to exempt organizations that provide sport and recreation services to disabled Albertans from reductions.

Our goal is to continue on providing programs and services to maximize the number of Albertans and to encourage them to lead healthy, active lives. Through a collaboration with the federal government, municipalities, private groups, and SRD about 200 kilometres of recreation trail will be developed or upgraded in 2010 and '11. As the province's trail system is expanded, we will continue to work with stakeholders to make trail use safer and easier.

For those Albertans focused on sport rather than recreation, our network of seven regional sport development centres will help up-and-coming athletes hone their skills. The recent Alberta Winter Games, World Cup competitions, and, of course, the Olympic Games highlight the importance of investment in sport programs and facilities, and that importance does not end with the closing of the Vancouver games.

We'll begin to implement a joint Winter Olympic/Paralympic legacy utilization strategy with B.C. this year and to help ensure that we maximize the use of our world-class training and competition facilities and build on the legacy of both Winter Olympics.

In closing, I believe that my ministry has taken steps to balance prudent spending with the need to provide programs that serve

Albertans and to ensure that Alberta continues to be a great place to live, work, and visit.

Thank you, and I'm open to questions.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Just for the record, I'll note the arrival of the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere, Mr. Rob Anderson, who did arrive prior to the minister's opening comments but just after the circular introduction that we did. Welcome.

At this point the Official Opposition has the next hour. Mr. Chase, are you taking the hour?

Mr. Chase: Thanks. I'll explain my methodology. It's basically a repeat of last year's, where I attempt in 10-minute shots to machine-gun as many questions into the record as I possibly can with the expectation that written answers will be provided as I do not expect to receive answers to the number of questions I'll be promoting.

The Chair: Fire away.

Mrs. Ady: In other words, I get to pick the question I want to answer right now.

6:50

Mr. Chase: Yeah. I'll begin with just some overall comments, and that would start with condolences. My understanding of the formulaic comparison for this ministry, which is one of the few ministries that actually makes money, is that for every dollar invested in Tourism, Parks and Recreation there is a 10-fold return. If that logic is true, then with the \$30 million cut to Tourism, Parks and Recreation that could very well translate to a \$300 million loss in provincial revenue, which I find very sad, particularly during this time of recession.

I am concerned about the direction of spending. There is an inordinate amount of money being spent on promotion, which I would view almost as false advertising for a product which has been reduced. When I say false advertising, I'm not talking about British beaches. I'm talking about the state of the deteriorating infrastructure of a number of the wilderness parks, and I'll get into that in greater detail.

I realize the convenience of the electronic booking, but I also see it to a degree as cutting more people out than it allows in because of the extra expense. I know there is a \$10 extra fee that gets received, and during this recession time and the idea of the stay-cation I think we should be making access to parks easier rather than more expensive.

A concern I expressed previously is that if we start driving people out of our supervised parks, then we're into the random camping, and that becomes the potential for the off-roading. I know the tourism department worked extremely well last year with Sustainable Resources on the weekends and achieved some very good results, but those were sort of the equivalent of the surge that's going on in Afghanistan right now. The maintenance of order through the conservation officers, through SRD has to be ongoing. This budget is showing reductions where I would like to see increases and increases in promotion where, as I say, the product has been reduced.

In terms of increases \$5.6 million, or 8.2 per cent, from the 2009-10 forecast to tourism. Parks – and this is my passion area – a decrease of \$13.5 million, or 17 per cent, from the 2009-10 forecast. That's from estimates, page 392. Then another, even more dramatic reduction: recreation and sport, a decrease of \$26 million, or 41 per cent, from the 2009-10 forecast. Both parks and recreation and sport

are proactive activities. They promote not only physical health, but they promote mental health. There will be consequences of these cutbacks. Again, I'll get into the specifics of the parks infrastructure a little bit later. Here comes the rapid fire.

Tourism: as I noted, an increase of \$5.6 million. Program support for tourism, however, is being reduced by \$149,000 from the 2009-10 forecast estimates, line item 2.0.1, page 392. Here come the questions. What accounts for that particular decrease? Will certain programs be ending? Which programs will experience decreases? What accounts for the rise in programs to support spending in 2009-10, \$749,000 forecasted compared to the 2008-09 actual, \$516,000? There seem to be increases and decreases, and it's kind of hard to follow the plays without the program.

Tourism information services is being reduced by \$466,000 from the 2009-10 forecast. That's from estimates line item 2.0.2, page 392. A concern that I have previously expressed is the number of information booths throughout the province that have been closed, Highwood House being an example, where we had up to three conservation officers operating out of Highwood House providing information to tourists. That whole informational aspect of things has been greatly reduced. Conservation officers used to, for example, talk to people about good fishing spots, places to go hiking. Now they're covering such large expanses of territory that that personal touch aspect has been, if not totally lost, greatly reduced.

Going back to the tourism information services, the reduction of \$466,000, why is the funding being reduced after an increase of \$1.25 million last year? Was that additional funding unnecessary? We're getting mixed messages. I understand it's a recession, but again I look at Tourism, Parks and Recreation as an investment. Where will savings be found in this line item? Will information centres be closed? Will hours be reduced?

Now, in your introduction, Minister, you mentioned the possibility of shutting down some parks early. It really concerns me that barely 4 per cent of Alberta's land usage is set aside for provincial parks. If we're reducing access further, that's a large concern because we have such a little amount utilized for recreational purposes. Will these reductions be spread throughout the province, or will tourism centres in specific regions be targeted? My concern is always the off-the-pavement sites down the gravel roads, actually getting back into the wilderness, the pristine areas. They're the hardest to reach and require the greatest amount of supervision. How will decisions about service reductions be made? Based on what criteria?

Tourism product development is being increased by \$589,000 to over \$4 million. As I say, it's great that people come to our cities. It's great that they go to our convention centres. It's great that they take in our special activities like the Stampede and so on. But a tremendous number of in-home tourists and European tourists like to get into that backcountry. What are we doing to sort of facilitate that? What kinds of development products are being funded by this increase? What are the ministry's priorities in terms of developing whatever this new product or promotion is? How will the ministry evaluate the success of its tourism development initiatives for this year?

A previously empty line exists for park visitor services, which is estimated to receive \$1.4 million in 2010-11, estimates line 2.0.4, page 392. What accounts for this increase? Hopefully, we'll see some reopening of closed information centres. What is the ministry's rationale for funding these services from the tourism budget as opposed to the parks budget? I guess it probably doesn't matter a whole lot but just the shifting of monies. Is this funding targeted for visitor services at particular parks? Which ones? How are these sites chosen?

I have nothing against refurbishing interpretive centres. I do not regret any of the money spent, for example, on the Nordic Centre. It's probably over the last number of years close to \$100 million with water and sewage, that kind of thing. A great facility. It's not an either/or. I just want to see comparable expenditures in the wilderness parks, which, basically, have seen little reinvestment since the 1990s or going back to the '80s, when K Country was initiated. A wonderful set of parks. But over the years things have deteriorated.

A previously empty line exists for major athletic events tourism services, which has been provided with an estimated \$973,000 in funding for 2010-11. What accounts for this increase? What kinds of services will be supported by this funding? How will the money be disbursed? You mentioned the Winter Games as one of the expenditures. Has the ministry selected major athletic events that will receive this funding? If so, could we get a sense of what they are? I would not be opposed to funding, for example, the Shouldice football fields.

7:00

Mrs. Ady: Well, as usual, you always give me a challenge when you get your machine gun out.

I just have to report that the latest score is Canada 4, Germany 1 after two. So that's going very well.

You've kind of gone on a bit of a wander, and I'll try and keep up. Whatever we don't get answered, we will for sure send to you in writing. I appreciate that the member also values this portfolio because I agree with you that this is the quality-of-life stuff that really matters here in Alberta. I don't know that I've ever heard that 10 to 1 number, in all honesty, but having been in this portfolio a while, I'd like it to be 100 to 1. That's how I view things.

I'll start with the idea that, you know, we are in a recession. We were given the task of ensuring that we protected the most vulnerable, and of course education and health had to come first. So all of us have had to pull the belt in a bit. I'll just start that way, as a global comment. As I look at the whole of my department, we have taken some reductions, but I fundamentally do not believe that these reductions, with the work that we've been able to do administratively and in other ways, are going to have, you know, negative outcomes. I think we're still going to be able to really manage what we've been doing, maybe not as well but we're definitely going to be working very hard to ensure that Albertans don't see a reduction of services.

You were asking a lot of questions about the information centres in the parks, and I will tell you that part of what we're using the tourism development funds for is to support those centres because we also think of them as part of the tourism world. So we're using some monies to help ensure that those centres stay robust. Now, sometimes we might limit their hours a bit, especially in those pieces of the season where we don't have huge demand, but we are using tourism levy funding to do that.

When it comes to developing more product, we are also using the tourism development money this year to double the number of campsites on the campground reservation system. We had 25; we're going to 50. I know that you were saying: is that fair because it might restrict. I think, first, it's important to note that there was always a \$10 campground reservation fee. It's just now going online, and it goes to the operators. It does not come to the department still. That always existed.

From my feedback and all the surveying that we have done, people actually do appreciate the campground reservation system because there was just always this free-for-all feeling, and a lot of people wouldn't go to the campgrounds because they didn't think

there would be a spot for them. One of the things that it's done is that it's actually shown them where availability was. So we actually think that we increased the number of people being able to find the midweek spots. Sometimes they would not go out on weekends because they thought it'd be all gone, and they're now seeing where those places are. So we've actually had very, very good feedback from it, and we are doubling that system. We're using tourism development funds to do it because we think it actually is building our tourism industry.

As well, our visitors that come from afar – you're right – do like to move around. It was interesting to me, on the weekend that we had the announcement of the campground reservation system, how many of those reservations were coming from outside the country. So the tourists that come here are also well aware of our parks and what we have to offer and are very supportive. We get very good feedback about how they feel about being able to also have a rational way to ensure they have a spot.

Some of those campground operators at first were reluctant, to tell you the truth, but what they have found is that they're booked more often, more evenly. They aren't finding a reduction in money because they get the \$10 fee. Also, we've always let people change and move for nothing, but I will tell you that this year we're going to be implementing a \$3 fee for that because we are finding it administratively taxing to have them move spots constantly.

That being said, it has brought some real rationality to how to get your camping spot. We have seen the elimination of the phantom tent that we used to see pop up all over the place and the fighting as somebody put up a chair in the middle of the spot and "Let's all fight about it." So I would say to you that I think the campground reservation system has been a success, and I'm happy to see tourism development money go to kind of further that effort. I don't think that it's reducing access. I think it's actually increasing access. Our findings are proving that out, and I'll be happy to share some of those numbers with the hon. member later.

As far as where we're closing campgrounds, again, we are not going to the most popular campground sites. We are trying very hard to find very low-use sites. I think I've got a note on it. I'm just going to give you the numbers: 250 campgrounds will be unchanged – unchanged; only 13 closures out of 255 campgrounds; seven will be converted to day use; 15 out of the 255 will have a reduced season. So we don't think it's going to be onerous.

Now, obviously, somebody that's gone to a campsite all their life and now sees it closed is going to be upset. I've always said, you know, as somebody running a Stay campaign, counterintuitive is to put a chain over a campground, right? I'm encouraging Albertans to stay in the province and to move around.

We have gone to private operators and showed them our list, and we're saying: "Look. Is there any interest in your group in keeping these campgrounds open for us?" I could create just an honour system, but somebody still, you know, has to haul the garbage out and has to ensure that there's not destruction in those campgrounds, so they do need some service no matter how remote they are.

Most of the campgrounds that I'm looking at are way out there. Like, I always think of the Peace Country, you know, or out there quite a ways, and first and foremost, they have many opportunities, much more, say, than we do around the big cities and where there are huge populations. That's where we're looking at, and we're being very specific to make sure they have other opportunities close. We're hoping to minimize this. We're hoping to use other methods.

As far as the information centres we're also, as I said, using the tourism levy for that because we think that that is promotional. We get a lot of really good, I think, learning in the parks when you have those centres. It's one thing to go into a park; it's another thing to

have somebody there to help guide you to understand better what you're doing there. I've always said, too, that if you want good stewards of the land, you have to teach the next generation to love that land. I find that those centres are really great at teaching the next generation to love the land, so I really don't want to see it minimized. That's why we again backfilled with a tourism levy on that one. I think that we're going to see we'll be okay.

I'm trying to kind of think of what else your questions were. As far as the recreation and sports piece goes, I would agree with you, but I think it's important to note that we are looking at just the administrative pieces of those organizations. We have a lot of them housed over in Percy Page. They're administrative in nature, and we're saying that everybody has got to pull their belt in a little administratively. We've done that as a department, and we're asking you to. For example, those in Percy Page stay in those buildings for a dollar a year. These are just the administrative pieces. So we're saying: "Where can you guys find efficiencies? Can you work together as organizations? Maybe you don't all need one of everything. Maybe you can join together and find some ways to create some savings so that we do not see this finding its way down to cutting programs for kids."

You're absolutely right: the activity piece is huge. Later this year you're going to see us come with a new rec policy in this area because we are very concerned as a department and think it needs special emphasis. We've been working hard over the last year to bring some new pieces, not just in the sports area but in the true recreation area, in activity levels in kids. So I'm actually very encouraged by where we're heading in that direction and hope that you'll see it as well.

How much time have I got left? Can I go on?

The Chair: One minute.

Mrs. Ady: One more minute.

I'm also looking at some policy on rec development. You're right: we need to be refreshing and creating new opportunities. That's why we've got a recreation policy coming out as well on what we're going to develop, and it's being done by the tourism levy again, the 20 per cent within the department. We're looking at new opportunities every day, getting the investment guys together with those that are willing to build and also looking at the private sector to see what they're interested in building to help us in this area.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Chase, please.

Mr. Chase: Thank you very much. Just an overarching comment. We've got \$17 billion in the sustainability fund. I see Tourism, Parks and Recreation as an absolute essential healthy investment. When people say, "Is this a spending day, or is this a savings day?" when it comes to Tourism, Parks and Recreation, I say, "It's an investment day."

With regard to privatization, private operators can be successful if there is sufficient infrastructure support funding. You mentioned the tourism levy. My experience when I was running the wilderness campground at Cataract Creek was that less than \$2 of the registration fee was poured back into the maintenance of the campgrounds, and those are generic fees. So the money generated at Cataract Creek didn't necessarily go back to Cataract Creek. It went into a pool, so you couldn't count on that money being reinvested in that particular park.

7:10

Again, the private operators theme. I worked for an extremely

accountable outfit called High Country Camping. Because of the service they've provided, they've been very successful in rebidding. They've got all of Peter Lougheed, for example, and connected with them is Bow Valley and so on. Now, in Peter Lougheed and Bow Valley, which I consider to be kind of pavement parks, you have some fantastic interpretive situations. You have young people—I've taken my grandsons to see little nature talks, and they've participated in it and just had an absolute ball. You lose that, though, when you get into the wilderness parks.

It's hard for private operators to come anywhere close to achieving even a limited-operation information service. I scrambled to build sort of a put-a-tarp-over-the-top-of-it facility, put up tourist information, tried to provide, my wife and myself, information about local areas for hiking and concerns and so on. The private operators just provide that sort of touristy information part. Their big thing is maintaining to the best they can and collecting the fees as opposed to delivering informational programming. That's a caution.

Also, I said that High Country Camping, you know, if you're going for the gold, was a gold operator, but the outfit that ran campgrounds further to the south, like Livingstone Falls, the operator didn't even empty out the cash box, so you had honest people doing their best trying to shoehorn money that wasn't even being collected. Of course, the toilet paper wasn't being restocked and all these things. So you've got to really watch, when these competitions come up, that you're not looking at the lowest bidder, that you're looking at the quality of the maintenance.

The ministry is estimating a reduction in tourism strategy funding of \$1.1 million from the 2009-10 forecast and \$2.4 million from the 2009-10 budget estimates, line 2.0.6, page 392. How will Alberta's tourism strategy be impacted by this reduction? What accounts for the variance between the 2009-10 budget and the forecasted difference of minus \$1.3 million? Was the full \$3.5 million not needed? How will the estimated funding for 2010-11 be spent? What specific initiatives are supported by this funding?

Strategy 1.1 of the business plan commits to the implementation of a tourism development strategy that will "attract investment to Alberta's tourism industry and increase the range of products and experiences." That's from page 272. Are the funds budgeted in line 2.0.6 dedicated to executing this strategy? If so, will the reduction in funding for this line delay the implementation of this strategy? I'm very aware that we're in a recessionary time, and recession and depression go hand in hand. Getting people out and about and enjoying nature is, as I say, mental health and physical health, and I'm concerned that the cutbacks will prevent this from happening to a degree.

If this isn't a concern, what are the differences between the tourism strategy funding in 2.0.6 and the tourism development strategy listed in the business plan? Like, how has the promotion changed? Are the ministry's tourism strategies intended for public release? I would think so because that's the whole point of encouraging public participation.

Funding for tourism business development research and investment is increased by \$2.2 million from the 2009-10 forecast estimates, line 2.0.7. What accounts for this increase? Again, I'm worried that we're promoting the repairs as opposed to the product that we're promoting, the actual experience. What proportion of the total funding in this line, \$4.1 million, goes to each of the three listed components: business development, research, and investment? Will the increase in funding be directed to each of the components of this line equally, or is there an increase concentrated in one area? What kind of research will be funded by this money? What will the return be on the research funding? If it goes, for example, into customer satisfaction, inventories, and then there is action taken about, you know, "Do this; don't do that," then I think it's money well spent.

Will the research funded by this line be conducted by the department, or will outside contractors be used? What investments will be supported by this funding? Is any of this funding spent on investments outside Alberta? If so, how much?

Strategy 1.6 of the business plan commits to advocating to the federal government for an expansion of open skies agreements as you mentioned in your introduction. Can the minister provide an update on the execution of this strategy? Obviously, attracting people to our airports and encouraging far-flung tourism will support our economy as well, and hopefully these will be return visitors. What kinds of partners is this ministry working with in terms of making the case for more open skies agreements? Has the ministry made any headway with the federal government on this issue?

Strategy 1.11 of the business plan commits to implementing an e-marketing strategy through Travel Alberta that will serve the growing number of clients making travel plans via the web. I appreciate, as I say, the convenience of the web. What is lost is almost the gypsy opportunity of, you know, pulling in here, and you used to be able to, as you say, compete for a campsite. Now things are so programmed that the guy on the bicycle is cut out of it. The person in the tent is paying quite a premium to have the privilege of setting up on a gravel driveway.

Travel Alberta is estimated to receive approximately \$59 million from the tourism budget in 2010-11, which is comparable to the 2009 budget and forecast of \$57 million. What was the source of the \$338,000 in investment income earned by Travel Alberta in 2009-10, estimates page 404? What other revenue did Travel Alberta earn in 2009-10, forecasted at \$895,000, estimates page 404?

Regional marketing expenses are estimated to receive a \$2 million increase from the previous year's forecast while international marketing is estimated to receive a decrease of \$1.6 million. I understand the stay-cation aspects. What accounts for the increase in regional marketing versus the decrease in international marketing? How were these decisions made? Are these funding changes a result of reduced expectations for international travel due to the global recession? How will the additional \$2 million be used to increase Alberta's presence in regional tourism markets? How will Travel Alberta evaluate its regional marketing initiatives? How will Travel Alberta ensure that the reductions in international marketing funding do not compromise Alberta's ability to attract international visitors as the economy recovers? Given that Canada has recently been given approved destination status by China, how is the funding provided for international marketing going to be used to promote Alberta to the sizable new market? What other countries are being targeted by these international marketing dollars?

Consumer and media relations funding is estimated to increase by \$2.2 million from the previous year's forecast of \$3.3 million in the 2010-11 estimates, page 404. What accounts for this large threefold increase? Is the consumer relations funding provided in this budget line used primarily for customer service or for consultation? Hopefully, it's service. Is Travel Alberta experiencing a volume of consumer and media requests that is dramatically above what was unexpected when the 2009-10 budget was written?

Parks, my favourite area. Total park expenses are estimated to be reduced by \$13.5 million from the 2009-10 forecast of \$65 million.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chase.

For the record, I note the arrival of Mr. Guy Boutilier during Mr. Chase's most recent iteration.

Minister, you have about 10 minutes to respond, please.

7:20

Mrs. Ady: Okay. Just to update you, it's now 5-1. I just want to

make sure we get the important stuff done. It looks like, yeah, we're going to be in the game again.

Wow. You again asked so many questions that my mind just skips and jumps, and I can't keep up with you. For the line-to-line stuff that you're asking, we're going to have to come back with answers. So I'll try and kind of hit some of the higher messages for you.

First of all, you mentioned the open skies piece, and I just wanted to update the committee on the open skies. We met with British Columbia, and both Premiers were there, Premier Campbell and Premier Stelmach. Premier Wall also signed on to a letter that we sent to the federal government asking them to take a long look at the open skies concept. In my FPT meetings this year we had Minister Baird there, and he was talking about how many blue sky agreements he had come up with. My comment to him was that, you know, you can have 5,000 open skies agreements, but if they are not in markets that matter to us – I'm not really looking for tourists from Iceland right now – they're not that important to me. But if you're talking Asia, you're talking Korea and China. So what we asked in concert as ministers was that he would allow us to send him our five top choices, which we have done.

As far as how we are doing, I think we're still progressing very slowly in this area. I think it hit the airways today that the Emirates have come in and now have placed a report out there about what the economic returns would be if they were allowed to bring a direct flight into Calgary out of that region of the world. They are encountering what they think is a decade of resistance and do not feel like they are making progress. So we have committed to doing further work with the federal government in this area. I think this report will show that they believe there is a huge economic return not just in tourism for our region, but in other ways, in jobs and those types of things.

I always say that a direct route is everything to tourism. If I have to bounce you around the world a few times, you might choose to go somewhere else. So we're going to continue pushing the federal government on the blue skies arrangements. They are getting there. I will tell you that they did get Korea added this year, which is an important one, and for that I compliment them, but we've got a long way to go. With ADS now in China that is an opening of a market that we have not had in the past. It's big for us.

I noticed that you were looking at the Travel Alberta page, and we'll get you some direct answers on that. But I think it's also important for the hon. member to note that that is now a corporation and is being run like a corporation, not like a branch of government. They have a governance structure now in place, so they have been readjusting according to their priorities, and that's what you're seeing on their page: what do they think they need to be doing from a business perspective? There are very good measurable tools that they're going to be using and be accounting. They will be tabling in the House every year an annual report, so we'll get a better look at some of their outcomes.

My first sense of watching them over the last six months is that the world has changed in their world. I went to a tourism convention this year – and I know that you don't like the e-marketing piece – and the entire, entire program was about e-marketing as all the world is trying to catch up. Two and a half years ago, when I visited Travel Alberta for the first time, they had one guy back in the far corner, under the age of 30, who was doing all their e-marketing. When I go to Travel Alberta now, there is a whole division of e-marketing. So as much as I hate e-marketing personally, because I have to always call my son to book my tickets because he's faster and better at it than I am, it is a reality in this tourism world. So I think you're going to continue to see that world grow, and it's just going to be the way it is.

When we look at tourism right now – and we didn't get to that a lot, and I hope to get to the park piece for you as well – things are changing in that world as well. We were down by 8 per cent from our outside-country markets. We did not see the decrease that B.C. saw or that Toronto or Quebec saw because we are a destination market. People, I've always said, don't tend to drive through Montana to come see us like they flip over the border for them. So we didn't take quite the hit that they did, but we are having to re-evaluate those markets. We're having to re-evaluate where the investment goes and what we hope to get from those investments. So that's in the works right now, and it's changing, I think, fairly rapidly, in all honesty.

As far as China, I was so excited when I saw who won the pairs this year because we just partnered with the CTC a year ago, with that couple because they were the bronze medalists in Salt Lake. We ran a perfect family contest in China, and then they went across the country showing. I found the CTC this week in Whistler, and I said: get that footage out; let's go again. But the Chinese government has now decided that they're their property, so they won't let us show our film again, which is too bad. It's unfortunate.

As far as the support to parks, I want to remind the hon. member that \$250 million has been spent over the last five years in that upgrading. We've talked in the past about how necessary that was, how our parks had really declined. There has been this major infusion of cash into the parks, and that's why I think we've seen a rise in the satisfaction with, if you will, the condition of the parks. Seventy-three per cent are saying that they're in good or fair condition. But we are not going to stop, and that's why the \$19 million, that you see in here in capital, is still going in even during a time of recession. We're still investing. If you're going to ask me what I'm investing in on the capital sense, I will tell you that our first thing is always safety. If we have got water or waste-water conditions or problems, we're going there first. I mean, picnic tables are nice but, you know, you've just got to tend to the water thing.

As well, we are still trying to develop new campgrounds because we still think there is a shortage in the areas particularly, you know, where there's high usage. I basically said: surely we can do a few new loops in Kananaskis. I love Kananaskis, but if we have a demand on parks and if people get emotional, it's usually around that Kananaskis area. So we are continuing in that area, and I'm hoping to be able to announce this year some areas where we're going to see some more robustness.

You will see a re-investment. This budget is not going to decrease that. We don't want to go backwards; we want to continue forward in that area. I just want you to know that that is a thrust of the ministry, and we're going to continue. Again, I said it was on waste water.

It's been so interesting in the camping thing if you've been following the RV show this year. Before I would have talked to you about how everybody is upset because the spots aren't big enough and they can't pop out the 900 wings and they need electricity and they need water. Yet if you were to follow the RV show this year, it's almost like a complete reversal of that thinking. Now everybody wants an economic unit they can pull with the family car. They're looking for smaller, lighter, less environmental footprint than you would have seen in the past.

You know, I've tasked the department with thinking about maybe if we're about to ramp ourselves up into big old wide spots, maybe that world is taking off on us in a bit of a different direction again. Some of those areas or campgrounds that were smaller, that we thought were just too small and we needed to rehab, maybe we don't. Maybe we're going to see an actual change. So that one we'll be watching closely. I mean, I still want a trailer with 15 pop-

outs. I don't have one, but I'd really like one. That one, again, we'll be watching closely.

I did pick up this one note on the reservation system as well. Right now there's going to be 50 campgrounds where you can reserve online, 23 where you can reserve on the phone because there are still people that just resist that, you know, using a computer. They go: I can use a phone, but I can't use a computer. And then 147 first-come, first-served sites so that you can still in that great Alberta tradition go and fight for your camp spots. You don't need to necessarily book ahead. Again, we're going to be using that development levy to continue that work, so I think that's going to be helpful and useful.

I would go through some of the things you were asking on the operating expenses for tourism, but I think I'd rather do that in writing because a lot of those are kind of technical. But I will tell you that I'm impressed with the first year of the work of the board. They've really brought a business edge to this. They're saying: where is your business plan? I'm letting them do their work, but then they're saying: now show me where you delivered.

I've always said that you can sprinkle tourism levy money across the world like fairy dust and not necessarily be able to show what you did with it. We're really bringing a good edge back to that, so they have to account and show us what that return on investment looks like. They do have good formulas and ways of tracking that. I think it is important that if they spend money, they show us an account for what happens with it. Does it really bring a return on investment?

The Chair: Thank you, Minister Ady.

At this point we'll go back to Mr. Chase for his final.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. With regard to the electronic registration I totally understand the convenience of it from an operator's point of view. It was a pain of great proportions to hassle people to register. I mean, obviously, if I were an operator at this time, I would see the benefits. I'm always concerned, as I say, that the low-level camper, the person whose got the tent trailer that's missing several parts, kind of thing, will not be able to afford the registration.

7:30

I cannot leave this meeting without waving the flag for the Andy Russell I'tai Sah Kòp park. The majority of people who participated in the study were highly supportive of it. There was a little bit of resistance from the town of Pincher Creek. I'm not sure quite why there was resistance. The biggest resistance came from an organization called the Quad Squad. They refused to be a part of the committee looking into the possibility. Part of that conflict, I think, needs to be dealt with. Quads are a popular activity. They deserve to have designated trails. However, quads and horses, quads and people can't be on the same trails, so that multi-use concept falls apart. That doesn't mean to say that they don't deserve to have their playgrounds, but there has to be separation. People have to be able to ride bikes or horseback or hike, which is still the favourite activity for the majority of people, and also the idea of off-road camping, where people can walk in and not be seeing the countryside cut up by a series of new trails.

Funds for parks policy and planning are estimated at \$4.76 million for 2010-11, a reduction of \$660,000 from the previous year's forecast, estimates line item 3.0.2, page 392. What accounts for the decrease? How will these reductions affect the ministry's implementation of the Plan for Parks framework?

Another flag I'll just wave is that we need not only full-time conservation officers, which is my preference because they get to

know the lay of the land and they have a relationship with repeat campers and so on, but we also have to invest in the young people from a seasonal circumstance and then bring them on on a more permanent basis. Any cuts to that kind of staff is detrimental to the whole camping safety and information experience.

Strategy 2.3 of the business plan commits the ministry to developing legislation to align with the Plan for Parks, page 273. What are the timelines for the development of this new legislation? What kind of changes to the parks classification system is the minister considering? Has stakeholder consultation begun for new parks legislation? This has more to do with SRD than parks, but I'm concerned that the equivalent of the junior wardens program is not being funded. These were people who were in the parks and, again, got very little compensation for it, but they did it for the love. That was a major blow. When we're working cross-ministries in terms of promoting that outdoor experience, smack somebody in SRD for me, please.

Has stakeholder consultation begun for new parks legislation? Will this new legislation be delayed as a result of the reduced funding provided for parks policy and planning? Parks operations funding is being reduced to an estimated \$37 million from \$42 million forecast for the 2009-10 estimates, line 3.0.3, page 392. Given Alberta's growing population, why is operational funding for parks being reduced again? I say that it's a major investment. Will this decrease be targeted at specific parks or spread evenly across the provincial parks system? Parks infrastructure management is being reduced to \$5 million from \$8.6 million forecast in 2009-10 estimates, line 3.0.4, page 392. How will this decrease affect parks infrastructure?

You've mentioned that over the last years a number of million dollars have been invested. The reality is that part of the enjoyment of the experience is wood buildings, you know, cedar siding. Cedar lasts a lot longer than a lot of other woods, but it does have a lifespan, and that's what I was noticing, particularly in Cataract Creek. There is only so much replacement you can do on an observation tower before you've got nothing left to nail to.

With so many parks in need of infrastructure upgrades how will decreasing funding help keep the infrastructure up to date? Has the ministry conducted any audits or assessments of how much infrastructure funding is needed across the provincial parks system? What about the total for deferred maintenance? Will this decrease in this line be targeted to specific parks or be applied throughout the province? Can the minister identify particular infrastructure upgrades that will be delayed or cancelled due to this increase? What accounts for the variance between the 2009-10 budget of \$6.6 million and the forecast amount of \$8.6 million? Given that the 2009-10 budget amount was a reduction from the 2009 actual of \$10 million, is it possible that this line could come in over budget again?

The ministry's business plan makes no mention of increasing the amount of parks and protected lands even though surveys have shown that this is the first priority of Albertans. As I said, we've barely got 4 per cent. With the national parks add another 8 per cent, but, boy, we need those backcountry experiences. How interested is the minister in expanding the amount of parks and protected lands for Albertans? The municipalities are gobbling up potential parkland, too, and if they're going to preserve it as parkland, fine, but if it's more development, then we're losing out on the recreational potential.

Strategy 2.4 of the business plan mentions the implementation of a provincial recreation management strategy for public lands, page 273. What are the timelines for the development of this strategy? We're still waiting for the sustainable land-use policy, and hopefully Tourism, Parks and Recreation will have a large determinant of how this land is utilized in the seven water regions. What stage is the

minister at now in the development of this strategy? Will the strategy address motorized recreation in public lands such as the Castle-Crown wilderness, which, again, is the Andy Russell I'tai Sah Kòp area that so many people would like to see returned to protected status as it was in the 1930s under the national parks program?

The business plan notes that a separate performance measure is being developed to measure the condition of parks facilities, page 274. Can the minister provide any hints as to what this performance measure will look like? My personal experience is that paint can only cover up so many sins. When the wood is rotten, painting it over doesn't help a whole lot.

Recreation and sport. As noted on page 393 of the estimates, the total for recreation and sport for the 2010-11 budget is \$18 million less than the forecasted 2009-10. Recreation and sports facilities grants have been eliminated in 2010-11. Funding stood at \$9 million according to the 2009-10 forecast, estimates line 4.0.3, page 393. What kind of assessment or study of this granting program did the ministry undertake before deciding to eliminate this funding? Did the ministry consult with stakeholders such as sports and recreation groups to determine what impact eliminating this funding would have on them? How many applications did the ministry receive for these grants last year? How many applications had to be turned away due to insufficient funding?

Strategy 3.1 of the business plan commits the ministry to finalizing a recreation, active living, and sports policy, page 274. At what stage is this active living policy, and what are the ministry's timelines? How will this policy be different from the Alberta active living strategy?

Strategy 3.2 of the business plan commits the ministry to providing support for making recreation trails easier to use, operate, and manage. Again, my experience was the closing of trails because they were no longer safe. Whether it was erosion, whether it was that the fences were falling over and they weren't being replaced or the Texas gates filling up with dirt, allowing the cattle into the end of the campgrounds, the maintenance is absolutely essential. What kind of support does the ministry intend to provide to execute this strategy? What progress has the ministry made towards achieving this objective? Is the ministry committed to expanding the number of recreation trails as well as simply supporting those currently in existence? It's one thing to close a trail down because of a bear; it's another because it has been washed out.

The business plan includes physical inactivity as a strategic priority of the ministry, specifically inactivity in children and youth. Again, recreation investment. I think it's William Watson, the lodge in Peter Lougheed, that is one of the few accessible parks, and at some point I would like to think that there would be an accessible washroom, at least in the major highway parks. That doesn't exist right now.

What strategies, projects, or initiatives is the ministry considering to address the issue of child and youth obesity? What funding . . . [A bell sounded]

Hopefully, I'll get a chance later on.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Chase. That is a cluster of questions. Thank you. That completes your third session.

We'll call on the minister for another 10-minute session.

7:40

Mrs. Ady: I always feel like I'm in aerobics class with you, hon. member. I feel like I should have run.

Does anybody have the final score before we start this little session?

Mr. Anderson: It's 7-1 with three minutes left.

Mrs. Ady: Okay. So we're feeling pretty positive right now. Excellent. I see the earpieces over there. Now you're listening.

Well, thank you, hon. member. You certainly do cover a lot of areas. I also feel your passion for this particular ministry, and I'm always appreciative of the support. I always wish I could take you into budget discussions with me because, you know, I know I could use your help in there.

First and foremost, I want to talk about the campground fees. I do fundamentally believe that we're pretty affordable out there comparative to other things. We've tried really hard to leave the fees in an affordable category. We are going to be looking at some pilots this year, I will share with you, that would look at if in a certain campground there's one just really prime, deluxe spot, you know, and somebody wants to book that, would we look at a pilot at perhaps a higher fee for that one? There's always one that overlooks the water or that's very, very desirable. In order to help us try and maintain the campgrounds in the way that we would like to, we are looking at just a pilot in that area, but we're trying very hard to hold fees affordable.

I agree with you. We want people to feel like that's something they can take their families to. I do think it's a good use of the taxpayer dollar to keep those parks open and accessible, so I would agree with you on that.

As far as the Andy Russell goes, I know that there's been a lot of discussion about it. I think it's important to note that we have said that we've delayed decision in this area to allow the land-use framework to work. That is one of the first areas that it's going. One of the things that we said in Plan for Parks all along is that there had to be a consultation with the people that live in the area as well. It's one thing to have people that live far away think there should be parks; it's another to work with the folks that are there. So that was one of the principles of the Plan for Parks, and it's one that we're going to honour. As we look forward at the land-use framework, we're in lockstep with Sustainable Resources. I don't know if I can hit him. I don't know if that's allowed. Can I say that on the air? But if you need me to, I can probably handle that.

Anyway, I just want you to know that we do know that that's a unique place in the world. We understand that about it. But when you go to create a new park, you have to consider the community that exists around it and the different commitments that have already been made in the area, so it makes it a bit more complex than just saying: a park.

Am I interested in new parks? Always. I think that 4 per cent of the land base plus the federal parks puts us at about 11 per cent, almost 12 per cent in this province. Actually, when you compare us to the rest of the country, in some ways Alberta is a lot greener in parks than anywhere else. I think we've done some good work there, but I think that the land-use framework is going to highlight for us opportunities. In my early look at the work I think we will see some new opportunities.

When it comes to our parks plan and legislation, we have not backed off on that. We are working away. You're probably going to see the legislation come in the next session if all goes well. We're looking at, obviously, you know, how we can create and implement. I shared this with you last year. The idea of parks is right now very complex in use.

One of the first things that we've been targeting this year was to go back, take a look at our parks, and try and create a system where the average Albertan could understand what he could actually do in the individual categories. There were 14 subcategories and 29, you know – so we're trying to get it down to four or five that will tell you what activities can happen. I agree with you: sometimes the

mixing of activities creates a problem. Quads and horses do not do particularly well together. But it's a big land base out there. No, I don't want to see it cut to pieces, but it's a big land base, and I think that there's opportunity out there for us to kind of make some rational decisions around that. That's, hopefully, what the Plan for Parks will help us implement.

I'm eager to see what that first land-use framework RAC brings out and what opportunities come out of it. What happens in the Andy Russell, though, I will tell you that we have proposed a new wildland provincial park in there with existing energy and forestry commitments already there, and you've got to take those into consideration.

As far as a trail designated system I'm sure I'm going to get asked questions by the hon. Member for Athabasca-Redwater eventually down the road, if he's still here with us tonight. He's been doing some pretty big work around that, and I think that we're getting very close on getting to take a look at that in this next year.

I will share with you that we were able – and it wasn't easy this year because the federal government came out with some of the build Canada money, and it happened just as we headed into the spring – to quickly organize a whole battery of groups and the provincial government, and we matched the federal government to the tune of \$10 million. About \$30 million this year went into trail development. The only reason I gave up my summer vacation was that I thought: when will you see \$30 million go into trails again? So we found the \$10 million, the feds put in \$10 million, and all the different trail organizations came with money.

We were able to do a lot of work this year. Almost 200 kilometres of trails got built because they were shovel ready. It was one of those projects you could get to. I'm really pleased with what we've been able to do in the trails area this year. I don't know that we'll ever see that kind of an advance in trails in one year ever again, but hopefully we'll be able to kind of share a little bit more with you later.

The off-road camping is such an interesting thing. I mean, there's this pioneer spirit out there that likes to go into the bush and camp. It's been almost a way of Alberta, and it works really, really well until you get into large population areas. You know what happens in the Ghost-Waiparous and those types of areas. So there's a piece of me that loves that kind of going back to our roots, where you can go out in the Peace Country and find a chunk of land and, you know, set up your tent and have that kind of an experience versus what happens on our May long weekend.

I just want you to know – you did raise the workforce, so I wanted to talk to you a little bit about that. We have not had to lay off any permanent staff. That's the one thing I can tell you in this budget; we have not laid off any permanent staff. But 35 seasonal positions will not be filled this year, so that's unfortunate. That's eight seasonal conservation officers, four seasonal interpreters, six seasonal administration staff, and 17 maintenance workers. That's kind of how the mix is on the seasonal staff.

The one thing that I will tell you is that when it comes to those May long weekend pieces that we brace for every year, we are still working with Sustainable Resource Development on that weekend as well as with our sheriffs. We're not going to back off on those things, but we are going to be working with less seasonal staff. Again, no permanent staff is going, so we're very pleased about that, and we think that's a good piece of that budget.

How much longer do I have?

The Chair: Another two minutes, Minister.

Mrs. Ady: Two minutes. Okay.

Again, no delay in the park legislation. We're steaming ahead on that.

One of the things we are out doing this year to kind of help mitigate the issue is that we are working closely with SRD. We're saying: look, if we are doubled up somewhere, let us handle that. We're trading a bit so that we can actually utilize the force between SRD and parks better to cover more ground. We think that's a smart way to go about it. Maybe it's something we always should have looked at, in all honesty, but when things get tough, you start to really look at good, creative solutions, and we think that that is one of them. The Bow corridor is one of them where we're saying: we'll take care of that if you'll go handle this for us. So you're going to see us spreading our forces a little thinner, but the two organizations are going to try to be a little bit more co-operative with each other in the future.

As far as deferred maintenance I actually think we've been really aggressive on the maintenance, and I don't really think we're backing away from it. I do know that you can paint. Well, I had four boys; I understand painting things. But we haven't backed away from that. I don't see that we are, and I do hope to be announcing some additional campgrounds this year. I don't know of a lot, but I can think of two in my mind that are really ones that I'm seeking.

I would agree with you: private operators do fine as long as we create enough infrastructure there for them to operate. Most of the private operators I'm talking to have felt pretty well served lately. They feel like we are addressing some of their major issues. Not all of them. We can't get to all of them at once, but we're working on it.

Again, as far as increasing parks, where there are good opportunities and communities agree and there's good co-operation, we'll look at it.

The Chair: Thank you, Minister.

For the record I would like to acknowledge the arrival of committee member Mr. Manmeet Bhullar prior to the minister's last set of answers.

What's the committee's wish? Do you want to take a break now or after?

Hon. Members: Yes.

The Chair: Okay. We'll take a five-minute break at this point and then ask you all to be back here at 8:55, please.

[The committee adjourned from 7:50 p.m. to 7:57 p.m.]

The Chair: Well, we're back in order. The next 20 minutes is available to Mr. Anderson either as a 10-minute opportunity to speak or in formal exchange with the minister.

Mr. Anderson: Do you want to just go back and forth?

Mrs. Ady: You mean I get to hear the question and answer it? Okay. I can try that, but I'm moving fast now, so I don't know. No guarantees.

Mr. Anderson: I have about one-twentieth the questions of the hon. member.

Mrs. Ady: Okay.

Mr. Anderson: But we also have about one-twentieth the research budget.

Mrs. Ady: Okay.

Mr. Anderson: Just joking.

An Hon. Member: You're not joking.

Mr. Anderson: No I'm not.

I've got to admit that I was tougher on Minister Blackett yesterday. I look at you, and I just can't give too many tough questions. I'm sorry, Minister. I'll do my best to find something distressing for you, but I don't think I'm going to have much luck. Well, you know, the minister does a great job in this department. I've always said that, and I agree with it.

I guess the first point I'd like to bring up is this Olympics advertising. I've been reading tons of good things about it in the newspapers. I mean, it seems to have been an overwhelming success with regard to people seeing it and noticing it and that sort of thing. Could you maybe just take not too long, maybe just a couple of minutes, and say some of the highlights of what was done and maybe some basic numbers on, you know, how many people have seen it, what kind of coverage it has received, et cetera, and how much the final number was that you spent on it?

Mrs. Ady: Yeah. That's a question I get asked a lot. For the purposes of what we're doing today, obviously I'm talking about the 2010-2011 budget estimates, and people just want me to kind of pull in the big number. That's over three years. I am kind of constrained to this year, so I'm happy to talk about that.

This much I'll say. We feel that we have had a phenomenal success at the Olympics. We set out to do a few things. One of them was to show up on a platform where the whole world is coming to Vancouver to look at the Olympics. I've always said that we're just trying to borrow a little of the glow as it comes over the mountains. In a sense what we have done is that if you have a big show for Coca-Cola, we've set up the Pepsi stand kind of in the middle of the Coca-Cola show, which has been very successful, in all honesty. It's gotten us, I think, the right kind of attention, the kind of attention that we were looking for in a few ways.

First and foremost, the train which everybody talks about, the luxury train. Let me just say that the Rocky Mountaineer is a partner with British Columbia and Alberta. One of the fallacies in this whole arrangement is that everybody feels that we're competing with B.C. In all honesty, when B.C. does well in tourism, Alberta does well in tourism and vice versa. Sometimes we have this concept that we're competing with them. One of the things I've learned in the big, bad world is that people barely know that there is a country of Canada, let alone provinces, let alone cities, so when I watch people kind of squirrel down into that competition sometimes, I take half a step back and recognize that that, in fact, isn't a really true principle.

The Rocky Mountaineer goes between B.C. and Alberta all through the spring and summer. It's a fabulous trip. It's a fabulous operator. It's usually full of Europeans, in all honesty, who spend big dollars in this province and big dollars in the Vancouver area as well. When that partnership approached us and said, "Would you like to utilize the train?" we thought it was a great concept. It's one of those things that has just picked up legs. I was sharing with some that tomorrow somebody from the *Wall Street Journal* is on it. *Good Morning America* wants to be on the train. The *Today Show* wants the train.

It's like one of the stories at the Olympics, I've always said. It's not quite Eddie the Eagle, but it's close. In some ways it has become that. Is it getting us the right kind of attention from a

tourism perspective? Yes. But it is also – and this is the thing that the train is reminding me about. This country is trying to come out of recession, and if you can feel it anywhere, you can feel it on the train because we also offered it as a platform for business-to-business opportunities beyond tourism, beyond what I do. As I have ridden the train, I'm amazed at the energy on the train. I'm even amazed at the number of businesses and CEOs that are on there working together now, and there's almost this energy of: we're moving forward. You can feel it, it's tangible, and I'm actually quite encouraged by that.

Mr. Anderson: That's good to hear.

How much was spent on this initiative in total?

Mrs. Ady: This year in my 2010-11 estimates we have \$6.6 million in the budget. To be frank, though, if you were to go to past years when we would have sat in this room – we secured I think almost two and a half years ago the rights to the train and to the Plaza where we have Alberta House, and you can go back to those budget years and look at those as well. As well, the year before we had the secretariat hired who had been putting this whole operation together. So you would have to go out over three years in order to pick up the entire provincial portion. But for this year that we're debating today, it's \$6.6 million.

Mr. Anderson: Six point six. If you had to spread it over the three years, could you give me a ballpark? Is it like \$10 million?

Mrs. Ady: For '09-10 it was \$6.6 million; yeah, I'm trying to get it in the right years. So it's \$8 million.

Mr. Anderson: Eight million dollars for the total initiative. [interjection]

Mrs. Ady: He's saying \$8.5 million, to be exact.

Mr. Anderson: That's fine. Okay.

Just for the record – and I'm not necessarily arguing that this wasn't necessary – were there 10 ministers that went to Vancouver?

Mrs. Ady: In fact, I always hesitate to give the number because every day something new develops for me. For example, on Thursday now a company out of Europe has suddenly pulled all their CEOs in. They want to now come and invest in the province. That happened at the last minute, so I'm back asking some ministers.

This was my methodology. If I needed you on the train because there was business to be done on behalf of the province, then I invited you to come. So ministers tended to pop in for a day – the train is an all-day experience; you've got to get up at 5 – and ride the train, and then they were flying out the next night. When some would say 10, 12 ministers, understand that we have three venues at the Olympics going over 14 days, and they're often coming in for one day or two days, so spread that out and think about it in those terms.

Mr. Anderson: Okay. There was no money spent on Olympic tickets? They could go, but they had to pay for their own?

Mrs. Ady: My principle, and I'll also be very clear about this, was: if I was asking you to do something, like if you were coming to help with what I was doing, I provided whatever you needed: a room, transportation. If you were hosting people, I would provide opportunities. But if you're coming out to the Olympics and you

want to enjoy them – I mean, there are members that actually drove out themselves and purchased tickets and came; I even put them to work when they were on their own dime – then you got your chequebook out and paid for those tickets. Sometimes a minister would come out, and I would work him for a day, and then he'd say, "You know what? I want to do an Olympic event." They would purchase those tickets.

Mr. Anderson: So there has not been any government money spent on, say, the U.S.-Canada game, and there won't be any spent on tomorrow's game against Russia or the gold medal game.

8:05

Mrs. Ady: Well, I think it's important to remember, too, that we also have a box in that hockey arena, but we sell – we've been doing cost recovery. There are 12 seats in the box that we have sold each time, so the box goes from zero to a neutral position, and then I will send mostly it's been volunteers, in all honesty, to the box to host the box. They're the ones that kind of take care of everybody. For most of the hockey games to date – I don't know because I've never been in the box – we've had 70 volunteers in to help us at the Olympics. One lady said: "Okay. I've done four hockey games. I'm done." So if I need a minister in there, I'll send him in there, but that net does not cost the taxpayer any money.

Mr. Anderson: Cost recovery. Okay.

The Chair: I'd like to remind the member that we are discussing the '10-11 budget estimates here.

Mr. Anderson: There's money in this year's estimates, though, for . . . No? There's absolutely none?

Mrs. Ady: No. Well, the money that we have in the estimates that we're debating – sorry; he's writing a note – is \$473,000.

Mr. Anderson: So it is still relevant.

Mrs. Ady: Yeah. We're still in active pursuit of it. Probably those monies got spent in other years is what he's indicating. Sorry. You can go to Public Accounts if you want to get that piece of the story.

Mr. Anderson: No. There's \$473,000 in this year's estimates, so it is relevant.

Now, this is a good-news story I'm trying to put out here, hon. member. Tracking return on investment for this \$473,000 this year and maybe previous years as well, 10 to 1 was the number that was given by the hon. Member for Calgary-Varsity. I don't buy that. I would travel anyway regardless of how much I spent, and I spend my money, a lot of it, especially in the summer, in our parks, et cetera. Is there any independent way of measuring just how far our tourism dollars that we invest in this ministry go? I mean, is there any undertaking to do that where you can see different initiatives that you've done, and then there's a spike, that sort of thing?

Mrs. Ady: Yeah. And that's a great question because I get asked that. On the Olympics themselves they do have ways of measuring. They do. They're telling me that in unpaid press alone that we have received, it will be \$70 million over the two weeks. So that is unpaid press telling our story in the markets that we most go to and depend on. That doesn't count any of the other deals that get made or any of the other spend that happens. That's just that particular measurement. So, yes, they do have ways of measuring.

You know, the guy from Lake Louise is quite funny. I ran into him the other day, and he said to me: "I can't afford to get off the train. I have bought a ticket on every day." Except he is taking out his Canadian citizenship, so he had to come home and get sworn in. He said: "I cannot afford to be off the train. I'm making too much money, too many deals on this train at this moment." So some are saying, you know, that as far as the marketing piece goes, for those partners on it it's just enormous.

Mr. Anderson: What about overall, working outside of the Olympics, though. Like, what about the stay-cation and stuff like that. How do we track whether or not that's working?

Mrs. Ady: Well, based on management investment models – they have those – and return on investment model software, we expect to get a greater overall rate of return achievable through increased investment in the domestic markets first, as a result. That was one of the things that I was sharing with the hon. member earlier. We are now starting to track the return on investment specific to how much we spend on advertising. It's one of the things that the new board has brought in as a very strong concept: "Okay. You've come to me with a business plan. At the end of the year I'm going to ask you to show me what you produced in a real way." So we're feeling pretty confident. [interjection] Oh, he's saying that they've got conversion studies done on the Stay and other campaigns as well and on return on investment. I don't have those numbers for you right now, but you know what?

Mr. Anderson: I'd love them if you could.

Mrs. Ady: I wouldn't mind actually getting you a copy of those as well.

Mr. Anderson: Could you undertake to do that?

Mrs. Ady: Yes, we will.

Mr. Anderson: I'd appreciate that.

Well, I've only got a few more minutes left, so I wanted to give you my best idea for what I think we can do to increase revenues and interest in tourism, okay?

Mrs. Ady: Okay.

Mr. Anderson: Now, this is just an idea. Wouldn't it be something, like kind of a fun idea that might return an investment to the province, if we every year came up with a top 10 featured Alberta sites or something like that? Almost like a passport. You wouldn't have to have a specific name. Anyway, top 10 sites. Then Albertans who went to those top 10 sites – and they could be different every year, museums or day hikes or whatever, because there's so much to advertise, right? If you did all 10 of them, then you could get entered into a grand prize for some kind of Travel Alberta shopping spree or something like that for – I don't know – \$25,000 or \$50,000. Even though it's a pretty small amount, you would think that something like that might be helpful. I don't know. It's a bit of a marketing gimmick, but have you guys given any thought to that?

Mrs. Ady: Well, that's an interesting one, Rob. That's interesting. Here's my first – and I hate it when someone comes up with a good idea and everybody points out the problems. Any time I show a video clip of the great sites of Alberta, the minute I pick 10, for the 20 I didn't pick, I just get killed. Everybody writes me a letter: why

not mine? The danger is, of course, that you might encounter some of that. But that's never a reason not to try. I'm a fundamental believer in that. I like the idea. I think it's a great idea.

They used to have a little stamp passport, and you could move around the province and get different stamps, you know, if you visited those areas. One of the things that has been a thrill to me as a tourism and parks minister – every year I go on a park tour. I have been amazed at what this province has that I did not know about. If you were going to talk to people in Jasper and various places in this province, last year they were very severely down and very worried about their season. Albertans saved their season; they really did. If you were to talk to the operators in Jasper, they'll tell you that they anticipated a huge hit, and it didn't happen because Albertans came.

I like the idea. I don't even know if we'd have to give them a prize. I just think the idea of being able to see it and experience it in and of itself is great.

Mr. Anderson: Oh, for sure. You know, you'd be surprised. I've been involved in a couple of businesses. It's amazing how just even a little prize relative to how much we spend marketing – \$25,000, \$50,000 on a shopping spree. You'd be surprised how many people would actually break out the list and go get their stamps. I think we'd be very surprised because a lot of people would. It might allow us to feature some underutilized or underappreciated things every year, and every year it would change. So, yeah, sure, someone might be mad one year.

Mrs. Ady: I think it's a great idea.

Mr. Anderson: Anyway. I put it there. You can totally claim it as your own, and I won't say anything.

Mrs. Ady: Yeah, I will.

Mr. Anderson: The other budgetary question. How long do I have, Chair?

The Chair: You have five minutes.

Mr. Anderson: Five minutes. Okay.

Your office budget for 2009-10 was \$535,000. Your budget for the office is \$535,000 for 2010-11 as well. I see some of the other cuts that are going on, and I completely understand the need to be frugal right now, but why didn't you feel the need to decrease your office budget while you were decreasing quite significantly tours and strategies and other things in other areas?

Mrs. Ady: Well, I mean, I would say to you that potentially you're right. My own office, I don't know . . . [interjection] Yeah. He's saying that we looked at it but there's no room. I guess we could have eliminated my EA. I'll talk to him. Where is he? Okay, Daryn, you're on the block next year.

We did, though, I will share with you, reduce ourselves administratively in the department. We've been actually working on that for the last two years. We did that in-year savings piece and then this year as well. Considering the amount of work we're trying to lift right now, we're doing it with way fewer people, obviously, with the hiring freeze.

Mr. Anderson: Okay.

Mrs. Ady: We have been contracting in the department, but I suppose maybe that means I should be looking at my own belt. We

think that we actually add a lot of value. There are, you know, 83 members who are constantly needing our support and help in that office, and we want to make sure that – because that’s kind of the front point of sales for us, in a way. You have a problem in a park and you need us, I mean, yeah, I can call Bill, but it’s us that champion for you. So the office is pretty busy in that regard.

Mr. Anderson: Yeah. No question about it. It just might be something . . .

Mrs. Ady: . . . to look at. Yeah.

Mr. Anderson: When everyone is going through pain, it might be good to at least . . .

Mrs. Ady: Equally. Show some leadership.

Mr. Anderson: Even if it’s just \$10,000 or \$20,000.

Mrs. Ady: I will tell you, though, that this year on the park tour to show leadership, I actually drove out. Last year I got a camper and drove around the province. This year we just got up every morning and drove to the location just to kind of show the rest of the guys that I could reduce as well. We cut, I think, the park tour budget in half. It was one way that we were trying to show some leadership.

Mr. Anderson: Oh, good. Good stuff.

Last question, if time permits. The amortization of capital assets I noticed increased significantly from \$12 million in the budget for 2009-10 to \$17.8 million in 2010-11. Just out of curiosity, that seems like such a huge number to me in proportion to the amount. I’m just wondering: what were some of the assets that started depreciating?

Mrs. Ady: It’s because of new equipment that we brought on, and it had to be amortized. The Canmore centre came on as well. We actually built a new visitor experience in Canmore, so that also had to be accounted for on the books. And it was the additional equipment for the central reservation system. That’s what was being amortized.

8:15

Mr. Anderson: All right. A very good question.
Time left?

The Chair: One minute.

Mr. Rodney: You don’t have to use it.

Mr. Anderson: Oh, I have to use it.

The assistance to the Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation: can you just really quickly tell me exactly what that \$23 million this year is being spent on?

Mrs. Ady: Well, it funds a lot of things. One of the things is our interprovincial games. I just came from the Alberta Winter Games right before the Olympic Games, and I’m about to go to the Arctic Winter Games right after the Olympic Games. You know, because we were in Airdrie this summer, we did the 55-plus games. One of the things that they spend their budget on is supporting games. We think those are important. The province needs something to rally to, for their athletes to attend. We think it’s a great active piece for the seniors. So that’s one.

Mr. Anderson: Could I ask real quick – I have 30 seconds left – because I forgot this? The big problem for those games was raising money. It was so costly. It was touch and go, and in Airdrie that’s saying something because we can raise money like crazy there. So maybe just increase the fees slightly. It is a heck of a deal. It should stay a good deal, but there comes a point when it’s tough for the communities to deal with. Anyway, we’ve talked about it, so you know.

Mrs. Ady: Yes.

The Chair: Thank you, Rob and Minister.

At this point we’ll go to Mrs. Sarich, please, for either 10 minutes and then a 10-minute response or 20 minutes shared with the minister, at your discretion.

Mrs. Sarich: Most likely 20 minutes shared, back and forth.

Mrs. Ady: Yeah. However you want to do it.

Mrs. Sarich: Thank you very much, Madam Minister. I really would like to frame my questions in the context of, first, visiting a couple of the foundational documents, one of them in particular being the business plan for 2010-13. It’s really interesting how all the business plans, before you dive down into the actual department numbers, really frame quite nicely, actually, how everything strategically lines up.

To begin with, linking to the government of Alberta’s strategic business plan, there are a number of key areas that really put this discussion in context, and I’d like to just highlight a couple of them, in particular the significant opportunities and challenges on page 269 – collaboration and partnerships, impacts of the economy, population and demographic changes, aging infrastructure, Winter Olympic/Paralympic legacy utilization strategy, physical inactivity – and then note how your strategic priorities fit and embrace those strategic directions by the government in the context of: what are the challenges today that need to be raised, inspected, and how you had to make some difficult choices, one being, as has been previously noted, the reductions? I’d like to kind of focus on what some of the impacts would be and get you to talk about that so that our communities across the province have a deeper understanding from your perspective and your department’s perspective of what that would mean on the ground level and that, so a little bit more strategic insight into that.

If you don’t mind, I’d like to start in the actual statement itself. Looking at the areas of your department, line 4.0.3 specifically – this is on page 393 – if you wouldn’t mind walking us through some of the insights that you could put forward as to those reductions and talk about the impact and what those groups could expect and some of your expectations and perspectives. I think that would help a lot.

Mrs. Ady: Well, thanks. First and foremost, I’ll say – I kind of covered this before, but maybe we could dig a little deeper into it – that when it comes to the sports and rec piece, we’ve been very careful to not touch the games. We are still going to have all the games that we’ve always had in this province. I know some groups want me to add games, but at this point in time I don’t think that would be wise. I was just at the Winter Games, and if you could have been in that room with those kids from all across the province and felt the energy come off them, you’d understand the importance of games and what they mean to kids in the sports world. It’s an opportunity for them to continue to develop.

One of the things that we said at those games: we know that standing in this gymnasium is the future. You know, all those that

are standing on Olympic platforms began there. They were at the Summer Games; they were at the Winter Games. As I talked to the Olympians – and we have a lot in our world. We're very fortunate in Alberta. I always say that 50 per cent of all those in the Winter Games right now live, work, and train in the province. We get a lot of exposure and opportunity. I think the benefit of having them in our communities is that they're great spokesmen and great examples. So we have not touched the games. We're still going to continue to fund those, and we're not reducing that at all.

Now, the last member said: why don't you raise the fees? I kind of tried that. It didn't work. I agree with him that, particularly in our seniors area, those are very, very good buys for them to come to games and be fed and have that experience. You know, there's always this feeling that during a recession you shouldn't create higher fees for people – they're already struggling – so we didn't do that.

When it comes to what I think will happen, we're still supporting the six sport centres. Kids can go anywhere in the province now. They don't have to come to the major centres if they're high-performance athletes or trying to be high-performance athletes. We're pushing those out across the province. A kid in Lethbridge can live in Lethbridge and still have the kinds of supports around his sport that will allow him to develop. We're really proud of that program. We have not touched it.

What we've really done in this particular budget is that we've said: "Okay, sports organizations. It's a recession. We're all going to have to pull our belts in. We want you to administratively pull your belts in this year." That's really what we've done, and we've done it based on a percentage of the organization. So if you were to look at hockey, hockey is huge. This percentage to them is very small. But if I were to take you to a less popular sport – we've tried to do it on a percentage basis because it's really not level, when you think about it. Many of the organizations would say to me, "I need more funding because my sport is bigger than you say it is," but it's all based on a formula.

One of the things we're doing in the rec policy that we're looking at is that we're going to go back and review all the funding that goes to these organizations to see if we have the right mix and we're still doing the right things. It began about 25 years ago. We reviewed it five years ago, but I do still hear some noise and some chatter about not liking the formula. So in my rec policy I'm going to go take a look at that as well.

I will tell you that in this area my main concern is not the sports piece as much as it is the recreation piece. If you were to look at my business plan – and we've got an anomaly, actually, in there this year, where we saw activity increase by 7 per cent. I don't really know, in all honesty, where that's coming from right now. We don't know whether it is a real trend or if it's just an anomaly as a trend. As we meet as FPTs across the country, mostly we've been noticing the descent of activity in kids. We've been trying, of course, to set new targets, and they always want to do this, and I always say: let's get it leveled off at least so that it's not continuing its descent.

My concern stays huge when it comes to activity levels in kids. I've been watching the mainstream media now start to pick up on this in a big way. I noticed that President Obama's wife has decided to make it a major thrust of the work that she's going to do. We're starting to gather all the minds around this issue, particularly in our world, both Health and Education and us. What often happens is that we go: oh, well, if we could just get the schools to do this. This is a trend, and trends are difficult to fight or to combat.

8:25

Mrs. Sarich: Right. I guess, just on that point, I do recall that last year I asked you to what extent you had cross-ministerial dialogue

and support in doing that. Have you made any real progress or action steps that would be quite noticeable, and if so, what would that be?

Mrs. Ady: Well, I think the number one thing that we've done is that we've finally got the rec policy in a document form that we're about to bring forward policywise and take it out for discussion in the larger community. This is one of those things that no one person can do. You're going to need all stakeholders pitching in. We finally have a bit of a framework that we're ready to go out and consult with. I think it'll be completed – it's ready to go in March, actually. My hope is that once we get out and get that consultation under way, then we can come with what I call some real measurables and things that we think we can actually do. We've got 10 other departments involved; I forgot about that. We pulled everybody in. We said: everybody, get to the table.

Mrs. Sarich: Fantastic. Albertans are really looking forward to those engagement pieces, and I know that the government is really trying very hard to reach out as much as possible to engage all Albertans in those types of dialogues so that they, too, could have a vested interest in shaping the new future.

I'd like to spend a little bit of time on the Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation. In particular, it was noted already that the budget had decreased, obviously, but I think it's important for you to highlight what could be expected on those reductions and the level of impact. If you could just provide some insight.

Mrs. Ady: Well, again, we're going to have to work closely with our stakeholders in this area. It's going to be roughly around a 9 per cent reduction for some of these administrative groups that administer a sport. First and foremost, the first impact that will be felt is: how are they going to do with less than they had last year? We were fortunate that we were able to work with the other departments because, obviously, all departments were looking for reduction, even Infrastructure.

One of the first, I think, successes that we had was that they did not go up to market value on the space that these organizations exist in. Again, as I said before, for one dollar a year they have space at Percy Page, so they can exist there without paying market value for the space. I was really glad about that because we felt that they should not have the double hit, and that would have been a double hit to them. We were able to avoid that, but administratively they're going to feel it.

I've always used the example of: some of these organizations are large, and some of them are small, some of them are more sophisticated than others, but could the less sophisticated ones maybe double up on staff that they use? I could use an example, but I'm never supposed to use an example. I could say, you know: even a communication director. Could it cover three sports instead of one sport? What could they do if it was about not impacting the front line of their sport but just the administrative piece? We're really hopeful that we can keep it contained there, and we really are hopeful to reinfuse monies back here after the review in different ways in the future. We're really hoping because these guys are the backbones of our sports organizations, and we really do value what they do.

Mrs. Sarich: Okay. Thank you for that.

Lastly, perhaps you can just explain: what is WinSport? The question that has been asked quite a bit, actually, is: will it still be supported by your particular area?

Mrs. Ady: What you're seeing on the WinSport piece is flow-through funding in the sense that they have been building the new sports excellence centre on the old CODA site, so the last of the \$69 million that was given to them is now flowing through. WinSport is what used to be called CODA. Obviously, they have a legacy from the '88 games that they operate on. They had some trouble this year; you saw them in the paper. They had to go back to court because it was situated in such a way that they needed the money because their investments were down, but they couldn't touch their capital or their principal.

They're a separate organization that came out of the legacy of the games, but we have been supportive in the renewal of their facilities. I think some hundred million has been spent over the last several years in renewing the Olympic facilities. I'd love, if somebody else asks the question, to talk to you about what we're thinking when it comes to the use of those facilities in the future.

Mrs. Sarich: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. That's all I would have, to allow other members.

The Chair: Thank you.

At this point we'll go to Mr. Rodney, please, for 20 minutes in an exchange or 10 and 10, at your wish.

Mr. Rodney: If it's the pleasure of the minister, we'll just go back and forth like we're having a real conversation.

Mrs. Ady: Sure.

Mr. Rodney: I've been looking forward to this for some time. I know that some folks in Alberta and perhaps those listening on *Hansard* have expressed some concern about the fact that it's \$176.1 million in 2010-11 for budgeted program expense for TPR. It's a \$25 million, or 12.4 per cent, reduction from the 2009-10 forecast. But having seen what you and your department officials and folks on the ground are doing, I'm very convinced that they're doing more with less. I'd just like to zero in on a few areas.

First of all, page 404 of the report deals with the Travel Alberta corporation. Minister, you're very well aware that so much work went into it before I was lucky to have the chance to push the tourism levy over the goal line. From my experience it's been an incredible success, but you see it with different eyes. Can you comment on the past, present, and future of the Travel Alberta corporation? This is quite a change. It would be expected there would be growing pains. When we look at the columns across page 404, are you comfortable with those numbers? Do we need more? Can you get away with what's there? Can you just comment on page 404 and what numbers you see and what numbers maybe you'd like to see?

Mrs. Ady: Well, first, thank you for the question. I will say to you that I am feeling very confident that Travel Alberta is in good hands. It has seen a lot of change, though. You know, the other day I was at a convention, and I said: "Well, we've changed the board structure. We've changed the CEO. We've changed the offices. We've changed everything but the minister." I gave my big swan-song speech, and then they didn't end up moving me during the move. So I'm going to be going back to say, "I'm back" because they were all thinking I was leaving.

There has been a lot of change but, I think, positive change. I'll put it this way. I think Travel Alberta was doing a good job, but it needed a real push because it was getting an escalation in the funding that it was receiving. It now had designated funding out of

the tourism levy, and it needed a bit more of a business-edge parameter put around it so that, again, we could show return on investment and show some really convincing arguments as to why we should leave it this way. You know, four years down the road, five years down the road, would there be a look at changing it?

When I meet with tourism ministers from across the country now, I will tell you that the model we have chosen has been termed or dubbed the standard in the country, and other provinces are looking at it. TIAC, which is a national organization, is saying that the Alberta model is the model that all provinces should probably examine. We were able to take a corporation idea that British Columbia began and tweak it and change it a bit. Now, since that time British Columbia has collapsed their model, and I have a feeling that when we see them re-emerge, it will look a lot more similar to our model.

Why do we think the model works? I think that the model works because the board itself is governance. It is not about industry stakeholders, who sometimes get very committed into the piece of the world that they're interested in but do not have the big picture in mind. So although we have some very gifted people on the board from a business perspective and a few that even come from the industry, they're governance, and they're making those numbers, you know, more of what I call business. They've hired a new CEO that's very much that way. He presented for the first time at the Travel Alberta conference. Many individuals have come up to me and talked about the confidence that they're feeling in what we've set in motion and also that governments perhaps aren't the best at business, in all honesty, and this is a business.

I've always said that people think, because they went on vacation, they're an expert in tourism. But tourism is a business, and it doesn't just accidentally happen. When I look at the people who work in this industry, they work very hard, and they want to know that what we do at this level will make a difference for them, you know, that when they put their product out there and work their hearts out every day, we're in fact promoting them in a way that will matter. That's the purpose of Travel Alberta. It is to promote. But that is not just a happenstance thing. I think we needed a change, and I'm glad to see what we've got going now.

8:35

Mr. Rodney: Thanks, Minister. I know that every one of my colleagues on the Strategic Tourism Marketing Council will be listening intently through *Hansard*. This is not to say that although there's a tiny, tiny line for STMC, their role is still important in the big scheme of things, I presume.

Mrs. Ady: Well, in the legislation the Strategic Tourism Marketing Council used to advise the CEO of Travel Alberta. Now it advises the board. So the board is built as a business governance. Again, they're not tourism operators. They're not every day trying to fill beds. They're not every day trying to, you know, do that type of work. They're running a business.

What we did is that we created the STMC to be representative of the regions in this province because they're diverse. Lots of different types of tourism go on in this province and also with different pieces of expertise in the tourism world itself. So they get together. They take a look at the same material that the board is seeing, the business plan, all of those, and they give their advice.

It's very interesting. As I listen to the board chair and co-chair, one is a bankruptcy trustee, and one is coming from banking himself. They're very impressed with the level of the advice that they get from the STMC. They very much take it into account. I watch them ask the CEO to account for those things. So we think it rounds out

the whole piece because now you've got that tourism world again advising the business world. It's a good partnership. I know that you sit on it, so you get to see it from that level, but we think it's working very well.

Mr. Rodney: If I may, Minister, I'd like to switch gears to something near and dear to your heart and mine and to so many Albertans. You've referred to it really briefly. I know I've worked with the previous health minister and this one on active Albertans, but when it comes to the active living campaign, I know you and your crew have done so much. It's been a priority, and it will continue to be a priority. I'm just wondering if you can update us a little bit more on the status and the resources specifically – because I know, Mr. Chair, that we need to deal with numbers here – dedicated to active living here in the province and specifically in your own ministry.

Mrs. Ady: Well, we do have a certain level of it that's going on. All along we've been doing a fair bit of research in this area, that I think is good, but I've said that it's time for us to stop doing research and start actually creating a difference. So to those organizations that have hung in there with us and done a lot of this work, good on them, but I want to see some action in this area. That's why we've got the new strategy. That's why you're going to see us bringing it out in March.

I will tell you, though, that the strategy was developed with stakeholders, and they're pretty excited about it. I've learned from the different pieces of my portfolio as I go around and visit. First of all, the recreation guys are the funnest guys to go to a convention with. I don't know why, but those guys are fun. They always have costumes on. I don't know why those guys always have costumes on. But they're excited about this initiative and concerned. The thing that you'll notice about the rec-sport guys is that they're very concerned about what is happening to children right now. The obesity levels are high.

I actually had a constituent call me the other day because they were revamping busing routes in my constituency. The argument that the father used was: "This is just not right. My wife is going to have to get up every day and take the kids to school. That means we're going to drive in our car, and you want us to lower, you know, our emissions footprint." He was going through the whole thing, and I said: "You are talking to the wrong person. I want you walking to school. I don't want your kids on a bus." I love the Gary Mar line. He used to say that we should bus all children in the province and drop them all a mile from school. I'm big on that.

So his argument was that they shouldn't have to walk, and I said that you just called the wrong person because we are seeing a dramatic trend in children, and the outcomes to their health are going to be dire if we don't get this figured out. A trend is a trend because lots of people are doing it. Some of it is technology driven. Some of it is, you know, convenience driven. Whatever it is that's creating it, the health concerns for children need to be addressed.

Although we value sport, and they're included in this report, we're going to be putting an emphasis on this activity piece. We think it is probably one of the number one concerns. Everyone says it's water that we're going to fight about. I think that, you know, when I look at health outcomes in the future and whether we want to afford a health care system, if we don't get in front of this curve, we've got serious problems.

Mr. Rodney: Thanks. Minister, I don't know if your notetakers are ready for this or not, but I do want to get this on record. It has to do with a different category, and that, of course, is the plan for parks.

I still remember that day when it was kicked off between your constituency and mine. I was lucky to emcee, and you did a great job there. In your business plan it's a priority. I know I have some constituents, especially the Friends of Fish Creek Provincial Park, who are, really, not concerned; they're just very interested about the status of when you expect what we might call full implementation. So I guess that's the first question: what's the status on full implementation of the plan for parks?

Actually, why don't we just deal with that one. I have a few others, so I hope we can sneak in just a couple more questions. I wanted to refer to page 273, what your role is in terms of cost sharing. When it comes to the land-use framework, I think it's great that you've been working with other ministries. I'm just wondering what the breakdown is with, for instance, sustainable resources and maybe some performance measures that go along with that.

I know that's a number of things, but can you just comment on implementation, cost sharing and the land-use framework, and performance measures?

Mrs. Ady: Well, first of all, on the plan for parks, I've mentioned it earlier. We're getting ready. The legislation is well under way, but we're not waiting for the legislation. We're actually looking at different pieces of it and working on it at the same time because I'm not prepared to wait for the legislation even though I think that's important. We're implementing.

The first thing is that we're out in the RAC with the land-use framework. The first one has been announced; the second one is almost – I think it's already out, isn't it? They're both out there in play right now.

One of the things that we're trying to do in the implementation of the plan for parks is to look for what I call the low-hanging fruit opportunities. I'm glad to see that Diana McQueen is here because we've been working quite a bit in her area. We've used them as a bit of a test model on how you can go into an area and get everyone to sit down at a table and start to co-operate about what we do when we want to create new product for parks and new ideas. I've always been quite excited about that model because she gets the Pembina Institute to sit down with the hunters – now, that's not always easy to do – and agree on how we can take a piece of land and co-operate on the land.

It hasn't always been easy, and there have been a few moments where it kind of breaks down a little bit. I think the thing that's keeping it moving comes from the plan for parks; that is, you get the stakeholders in the room. We don't have – bless their hearts – the parks department off deciding it for everyone so that by the time it comes back out, in their best efforts, thinking they've created this wonderful thing, nobody recognizes it, nobody identifies with it, and everybody is mad.

You and I both know Fish Creek park. We share that one. I keep my eyes on that lake, you know, like nobody's business. I was actually very pleased because the Friends of Fish Creek Provincial Park this year stepped up really well on those new pathway pieces, and we were able to do a bunch of repair in the Fish Creek park under the plan for parks. We had a lot of bikes in there that were really destroying one side of it, and we've put all kinds of barriers up. No, those kids aren't getting those bikes through there; I can tell you that right now. We fixed a few of the issues in there and added new trail in there, and I think we've done some really great things there.

So the plan for parks is not stagnant. Even though we are working on the legislation, we're working in the different areas.

On the RACs, the land-use framework: those are at play. We're lockstep with SRD. SRD has funded three staff to assist us with the

work, and that's going to continue. With the land-use framework, they've given us three. But we've said all along that if parks aren't with them, then it's a miss. It's just a miss. So no RACs are going out there without us. I go to all the meetings, and I always raise, you know, the issues that parks have. But, again, where the fear starts is when we get out there and we don't include the stakeholders who actually live there. That seems to be the number one mistake that you can make, and you're going to have a bad result and a bad outcome, in my opinion.

Mr. Rodney: Thanks, Minister. I heard answers to all of the questions, but I wonder if you might be able to refer to – I should have asked not what are the performance measures for the plan for parks and the land-use framework, but are there performance measures at this point? I don't want to be presumptive.

Mrs. Ady: Oh. That is a good question.

Mr. Rodney: And if we need to get that in writing . . .

Mrs. Ady: I might have to get back to you on that one because I don't know if I can answer that question.

Mr. Rodney: Okay. Not a problem.

Mrs. Ady: Okay. We'll get it to you in writing.

Mr. Rodney: But I do have another question.

Mrs. Ady: Is it about a score?

Mr. Rodney: We'll need that tomorrow night, as a matter of fact.

It's a question that you might be surprised that a representative from southwest Calgary might be asking. It has to do with the Alberta Summer Games. They're coming to Brooks in July, as I understand it. I just wondered what sort of support can Brooks and area – I mean, it's the Alberta Summer Games; I'm not just asking because our chair happens to represent that riding – expect for the Alberta Summer Games, monetary and/or otherwise?

8:45

Mrs. Ady: Monetary, I'll get a number for you here really quickly. We always do support the games, but we also ask that the community itself – and we heard from the hon. member before – support the games financially through fundraising. I know that my department – Lloyd is here.

Oh, they get \$450,000 for the Alberta Summer Games.

I think the best support they get is that we send Lloyd in. He works with the community. The community will go out and do a certain amount of fundraising. But it seems to me that in every games that I've watched – I've been in around three years now – they always have these glorious dreams of what can happen. What Lloyd is really good at is bringing them back to what I call reality: this is what you can actually afford to do.

I haven't attended a games in a community yet, and I've been to several, that didn't go off very well, that I didn't see an enormous amount of volunteers step forward. It's kind of like the community really takes it on.

I tell this story because I did attend the Summer Games once when they were in Grande Prairie, and I brought one of my sons. We stayed with some people who I really didn't know, and the next morning I got up, and she says: I really apologize because the police brought your son home last night. And I go: wh-what? Apparently

he and the boy that lived in the house had decided to get on the roof of the school that the girls were being billeted in. So they were brought home. I have reiterated with my sons that I said to stay in school, not on the school. So I just want to go on the record.

What the community does is open up their schools. We have mattresses that we fill the schools with. The kids billet into those schools. They come in busloads. They come in their colours. They come with their energy. That community is just electric for the time that the games go on. But we couldn't do it if communities like Brooks didn't step up and want the games and bring the volunteer force to it that they do. It really is a volunteer-driven thing. Even though there are dollars involved, we wouldn't be able to hold the games if it wasn't for the communities that support them.

Mr. Rodney: Thanks, Minister. I understand I have two minutes left. I didn't think I'd have time for this question. It's really important to a number of people that I know all across the province, not just in Calgary-Lougheed, and it has to do with page 273 and goal 2.2. You've referred to the online central telephone access for campground reservations. I know it has worked to a great degree, but I suppose that if I was allowed only one question in the time that's left: is there going to be an increase in cost for expansion? Any other comment you might want to give in terms of that? A lot of people say: how come everything isn't online? It's just not doable. What's the future, and do you have the money to do what you want to do in these estimates?

Mrs. Ady: Well, remember, I've said before that we're using tourism development money to do that this year in parks. We're doubling. We had 25 come on last year, and we're bringing on another 25. I'm really glad we didn't try to bring on 50 last year because it was tricky enough.

This particular reservation system is a bit different than some. Some would say to me: well, Cindy, you shouldn't let people pick their individual spots. The beauty of this system is that you can actually go online and physically see the campground, look at it, tour it online, decide if you like it, put it in your basket. I think you can put up to three for 30 minutes. So it's got some flexibility. But we always said that we would bring it in in phases.

The opportunities for us from a tourism perspective in the future are enormous because we have this online piece. We're saying that if we're going to have 50 campgrounds online this year, in the future could we also not have online everything that's going to be happening around that campground? What fairs are going on? What community pieces are going on? Because a lot of people go: okay; now what's there to do?

For us, when I look out in those tourism worlds, they're saying: "I want more tourism. Why don't you bring me more tourists?" A lot of time it's lack of knowledge. They'll get somewhere, but they don't know that 50 miles away the Rosebud Theatre is sitting there and that they could go to a great play, you know, or whatever it is that's offered in the area. With the opportunities for this system, they're not just sitting and going to book a campground. For me, the future of it is that not only am I going to book a campground; I'm going to know where the grocery store is, I'm going to know where entertainment is, I'm going to know where the good things, like he said, the 10 places I want to go are.

The number of web pages visited on the online campground reservation system was 432,102 from May to September 2009. That in and of itself speaks of the success. For those who said, "You shouldn't do it," everyone I've ever talked to said, "What took you so long?" It wasn't, "Good job." It was, "What took so long?"

Mr. Rodney: That's my final question. Thank you so much, Chair and Minister.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Rodney, and thank you, Minister, particularly the last discussion that you were having with regard to using the online system. I think that could work very well.

At this point we'll go to Mr. Boutilier for an exchange with the minister or a 10-minute session, whatever you prefer.

Mr. Boutilier: Sure. Thank you to Minister Ady. Actually, I've been comparing your budget in Tourism, Parks and Recreation with the budget of Culture and Community Spirit. Of course, we dealt with Culture and Community Spirit last night, and I was left, somewhat, with the impression: who is the minister of sport for the province of Alberta?

Mrs. Ady: Well, I will go on the record as being the minister of sport. That's why I have all these sports guys behind me. I think that there is a bit of overlap sometimes because the minister of culture also participates when it comes to the building of rec facilities and perhaps on what I would call some of the professional sports hosting stuff. But, generally speaking, we are the minister of sport.

Mr. Boutilier: Yeah. I just don't want to take much of your time. I'll certainly recall that in a question during question period. I'll remind who the minister of sport is versus the Minister of Culture and Community Spirit. There seems to be some confusion there by one individual.

Also, in looking at the budget, my question, first and foremost, is this. When you received your mandate letter relative to Tourism, Parks and Recreation, your mandate letter, I'm assuming, was given to you by the Premier. I guess my question is that it appears to be a blueprint for every minister, that this is the road map that I am following. A question I asked last week to the Minister of Energy was: who gave the mandate letter? Who wrote the mandate letter? My question to you is: are you aware of who was consulted? In terms of when you received your mandate letter, what Albertans were consulted?

Mrs. Ady: You know, I don't know that I can answer that question, hon. member. I don't know that I know that answer. I will tell you, though, that we were given some priority areas that the Premier had obviously received feedback on that Albertans wanted taken care of. So he, of course, listed those for me. As well, though, you know, the mandate, those are things that we pay special attention to, no question. But there are other things.

Mr. Boutilier: Is that the three that are listed in your budget?

Mrs. Ady: Yeah.

Mr. Boutilier: So those three core business goals.

Mrs. Ady: But we also are looking at others as well. I mean, we don't just limit ourselves to that, but for sure we pay particular attention. When the Premier of the province of Alberta asks you to pay attention, you will pay attention.

Mr. Boutilier: Even equally important is that when Albertans tell you to pay attention, we pay attention as well because they are ultimately our boss.

Mrs. Ady: Exactly.

Mr. Boutilier: The people of Alberta are your boss.

Mrs. Ady: But I will say that the Premier moves around the province. Everywhere I've ever gone with him on tours, Albertans talk to him a lot, and he is reflecting some of their viewpoints.

Mr. Boutilier: Thank you. One question that I did have as I went through your expenses of programs. I note that for the out-years of 2011-12 and 2012-13 the budgeted amount, for instance, on tourism is \$70.9 million, but it's dropping by about \$10 million in the out-years '11-12. Then, equally, in the area of parks, actual of \$117 million, dropping to \$67 million and then even further to \$65 million. My question is this. Obviously that's, you know, concerning, but we are in a recession. Yet when I look at ministry support, it actually is not going down. It actually is going up. The number I am referencing is the \$7.5 million this year. It's forecast to be \$7.3 million, but in the out-year '12-13 it's going to \$7.391 million. I'm trying to understand that if we're spending millions of dollars less in a certain area, how we would justify ministry support services going in the direct opposite. That, actually, is my only question.

8:55

Mrs. Ady: Okay. Well, thank you for that question. I am very aware that the tourism levy is always done two years out – right? – and so is the board. What they have done, which I think is very prudent on their part, is that in these years where the levy is rising for them, because that was during the boom and now we're going to head into recession two years later, they're actually trying to ensure that they are banking money, if you will, in these years of rising levy in order to anticipate the dip so that they will not have to cut in critical areas their promotion when that does come. I think that is very prudent. It gives them the opportunity to look forward because they can see what the levy is going to be, and they can estimate that. So, yes, we are having to cut, and they know it's coming, but they're preparing for that now, and they will be preparing for the next two.

As far as the rise in my ministry budget, it is a forecast of the salary increases of 2.5 per cent. That is what you're seeing in my ministry budget.

Mr. Boutilier: Okay. Mr. Chair, a final question for the minister. If you could for me recognize one area as the minister that you are concerned with in the out-years in terms of meeting your goals and your core principles that are listed in your mandate, what particular area would that be? If there is one area of all the areas, you know, where you want to ensure as the minister that you achieve those goals, objectives, what area do you think is the most vulnerable in terms of reduced funding?

Mrs. Ady: The most vulnerable in reduced funding. Obviously, I always look at the level of support that we can put into parks because for me that's a very big interface with the public. Not that we get to spend all year in parks, but the two or three months we have when that sun shines, man, we want in them. So if there's an area that I would immediately try to create a difference in, it would be in the park area, to ensure that we have enough boots on the ground to manage. Obviously, the population is rising in this province, so that's putting more pressure. And, you know, every spring when the thaw comes, we have the same issues. So that's probably one that I would be focusing on.

Then for me personally, as I've said before, this rec policy is a very big piece. I know that it's not scaling up yet to the mandate

piece, but I think that's one that's coming, so I will be paying particular attention to that. But my big concern would probably be in parks.

Mr. Boutilier: Okay.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. That's my question.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Boutilier. Thank you, Minister.

At this point we'll go to Mr. Benito for up to 20 minutes of exchange.

Mr. Benito: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Good evening, Minister. I'd like to take this opportunity, first, to congratulate your ministry and yourself because of the good news that I'm reading in different magazines and newspapers. I don't know how your ministry was able to pull off having a very good location for Alberta House. I congratulate you for that. In fact, because of the good information and feedback that I'm receiving, I intend to attend the closing of the Olympics, but on my own expense of course. I know the policy and the philosophy that you have given to us as members of the government caucus, that if you want to go there, you have to pay your own dues. That's my opening statement.

The question that I would like to start with is based on core business 1 of your ministry: tourism. The international beauty pageant is gaining popularity all over the world. In fact, the fact that I'm originally from the Philippines – yes, that's correct. I'm an MLA for Edmonton-Mill Woods, but at the same time it happens that I'm originally from the Philippines.

The international beauty pageant is very popular in Asian countries. I'm just wondering if you can make a comment. Is this within the radar of your ministry, or any plans? Probably you could, you know, elaborate on that with reference to tourism.

Mrs. Ady: Yeah. That's a great question. One of the number one things I get asked as the tourism minister is that a lot of people have ideas of things that could get us good exposure. There's no end to the good ideas, actually, that are out there for ways to get exposure. The question is: how do you strategically pick them, and how, once you've strategically chosen, do you ensure that it actually works?

When we look at hosting – I think of this as a hosting piece – which organizations do we choose? Wakeboarding might come to me and say: you know, if we have a wakeboarding contest here, we could get all kinds of exposure, television this, television that. We actually use some pretty good tools to measure those kinds of things. We can tell how many millions of viewers will watch certain things. We can tell if they are in markets that traditionally travel here. We can tell if they actually arrive and what kind of money they spend.

The first thing that I learned as the tourism minister was that I am not the expert in that. One of the things that's been quite wonderful for me to watch is how much people are starting to say: "You know what? Within your Travel Alberta organization you have some very talented people." I think that because of the way we've set the corporation up and those types of things, right now a lot of the talent in the country, because of the recession also, is starting to move to us, which I think is increasing our talent, in all honesty.

If you were to say that a beauty pageant is a good idea and I was to say to you, "You know, we're looking at the countries that you're interested in as new markets," what would be the best way for us to show them our country in a way that would make them say not only "Someday I would like to go there" but actually pick up a phone and start to investigate or go online and start to investigate? That's the trick in tourism.

When you talk about the location of Alberta House, I'll never

forget it because I got a phone call. I was on the campaign trail. I'd been the associate minister of tourism, and Klaus Roth, who works in Travel Alberta, called me. He said, "Cindy, I just got a tip on an ideal location for Alberta House during the Olympics, but we have 24 hours to say whether we're going to do it or not, and they've approached me about this train concept." I remember that I was on the campaign trail. He says: "But I have to have the authority to go forward. Will you give it to me?" As you know, during an election you're still minister. I remember on the campaign trail saying: "I think you're right. Go for it." Now, was I the one that found the location? No. But we had the kind of talent in Travel Alberta that knew enough that they could pick up the phone and call me at that moment and say that we should do it.

So when you say to me "a beauty pageant," I would go to those same experts. I would not say: do it. I would go to them and say: "Go and look at this idea of a beauty pageant. See if it's in markets that we're interested in, and see if you really think it has the lift that you want. Maybe it does; maybe it doesn't."

One of the things that I just spent the last week doing: the minister of sport from B.C. and myself have been visiting with all the international sports organizations about future World Cup opportunities. Why? Because when we throw a World Cup in this country, 50 million people in Europe watch it – 50 million – I mean, numbers that you just can't even begin to understand. Those are the kinds of people that travel here and spend money here.

That's the kind of intelligence that you have to have within your organization. I think we're fortunate in Travel Alberta because we have it. So if a beauty pageant is the right idea and they get a look at it, they'd probably look at it and would probably do it if they felt that it was feasible and they could get a tangible result for it.

Mr. Benito: Thank you very much, Minister, for that answer. At least I can say something now to those people trying to approach me with: why don't you ask the minister about this idea?

I'd like to go to Travel Alberta, the incorporation of this Travel Alberta. Are they allowed to incur debt or deficit?

Mrs. Ady: No. They operate on their budget. In fact, like I shared with you already, they're already basically saving over the next two years. Their levy is based on occupying, you know, temporary accommodation. Because it's two years in advance that they get their levy, they see the whole. So right now they're saving so that they don't incur any debt and don't have to pull back on programs. But they do not and cannot incur debt.

9:05

Mr. Benito: My last question. Minister, I always equate sports to youth development. Can you make a comment about the youth participation in physical activity? I know you mentioned some points about that, but can you elaborate more on that?

Mrs. Ady: I actually appreciate that question because it's one that I've been doing a lot of thinking around. Sport and youth development are important, and the connection is important. But I have come to understand that even though we have been fortunate in this province and we've been able to go out and, I think, have built some awfully good recreation facilities in this province of late – there have been some good projects, there's been some good repair done with the federal stimulus money and the money that we've been able to put into it. I've come to realize, you know, that if we were going to talk to us, what did we do in our day? Did we have to have somebody say: on your mark, get set, go? Did we have to have a facility

to be active? I don't know. I mean, we can all look backwards. I don't remember spending a lot of time in sport facilities. I remember spending a lot of time out playing kickball; I remember jumping rope. I remember doing all of those things.

My concern of late has been that we are actually – if you're looking at the studies and the work that's being done out there, there's something called No Child Left Inside and all of those, where we're not necessarily allowing our children to play as freely as we used to. We are structuring a lot of that. I think and I'm hoping that in the rec facility we're going to start to see some correction of that.

Also, when we look at sport facilities, I've come to the realization that you cannot build indoor ice for every child in this province to play hockey. That's too expensive; it's too onerous. It's not going to get done. So I'm really one who's looking at other options like, you know, facilities that are outside. Kids skated on ice forever outside. All of a sudden it has to be inside? No, it doesn't. There are ways we can do this a whole lot cheaper. I love the soccer dome idea although a few domes kind of went down under the snow last year.

You know, if I was to go to other countries where there isn't that kind of money, how do they keep their kids active? What kind of sports are they playing to keep those kids active? You go into countries and watch kids get a whole wad of tape and make a ball, and they're playing soccer, and they're having a great old time. They don't have referees and rules, and they don't even know they don't have rules, and they don't even know they don't have referees. They don't have someone saying: on your mark, get set, go. They're just playing.

I really think we need to start to retool some of that thinking as well because that piece is important, and it's attached. But the idea that all children will be able to be in organized sport and have, you know, ice facilities and pads and skates: I just don't believe that that's true. We need to be making sure and ensuring that it's not just those kids that participate but that it's the kids who maybe all they can afford is a pair of shoes and that's it and can't afford expensive indoor facilities. How do we get them involved? What does that look like, that allows them to be active?

Member, when you go out to the Olympics – I know you're going on your own expenses, but I've been saying to all MLAs, and Manmeet knows this – we really would appreciate you showing up at Alberta House. We'll put you to work even though you're on your own dime. We're not above shamelessly getting all the help that we can. We've got a great thing going there, but we're happy to have you at Alberta House, putting in maybe a volunteer shift. Manmeet can tell you all about it.

Mr. Benito: If I may be permitted, Mr. Chair, my colleague on my left gave me a question here: how much are you supporting the east Calgary greenway?

Mrs. Ady: Well, I know that that was one done by the city and the federal government. I don't think that at this point in time there is any provincial support in that, but I love the concept because it is truly the first pathway on the east side of Calgary that will allow them to link. They have been very, very, I think, poorly done by when it comes to the rest of the city and pathway. I compliment this member because he did not blink on that one and was able to get both the city and the federal government. I don't believe there's any provincial money in there at this point in time, but it is within the city.

Mr. Benito: Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Benito and Minister.

At this point, Mr. Chase, you have up to 10 minutes.

Mr. Chase: Thank you. Given the hour and the day, I'm slowing down somewhat, but I do want to cover some different areas. First off, I think that any money that is spent for children's recreation, whether it's the Summer or Winter Games, is a terrific investment. I coached wrestling for 25 years at the junior high level, and the season was set up to culminate with the Winter Games. That type of cross-ministry connection with Education and Tourism, Parks and Recreation is absolutely essential.

I have poked at, parodied, expressed concerns over what I've seen as Olympic excesses. I've talked about the frequent flyers of Olympic excess, and I've also talked about the luxuriating-the-longest competition, so I've been poking at things a little bit. Also, in my background I have political caricatures and cartoons. I was an art major as well, so I've got a sports and an arts thing. I must admit that when it was Alberta Day at the games and our poor Premier was going back and forth trying to fly out, that was a climatic fog as opposed to the political fog we frequently find ourselves in. I had to get that little notification in there.

However, I'm very serious from my Public Accounts participation, and I would very much appreciate a detailed costing. For example, one of the other sort of little shots I took was gravy trains, planes, and automobiles. I would love to have a very detailed accounting of, for example, the number of flights, the number of passengers, the maintenance, and this kind of thing. It's a cross-ministry expense. I have no problem whatsoever with the artists and the athletes. I think that Alberta House is terrific. That was a major coup in terms of getting that location, and that's where people are going to get the taste of Alberta as opposed to riding back and forth looking out the window at B.C. scenery.

But I'm hoping that the recouping of the \$500-a-ticket back and forth from Whistler will pay for the expenditures. Some expenditures – for example, the guesstimation that Alberta got up to I think I heard a figure of \$70 million worth of free press out of the event – are a conceptual idea that I hope will produce material investment, that kind of thing, but I would like to know the details. For example, you mentioned that the hockey box was a cost recovery, so whatever money was put out, we'll get it back.

Something that I believe in very strongly – and this is something that was brought up on *Cross Country Checkup* this past Sunday with Rex Murphy. A number of callers expressed the lack of appreciation for our past athletes, that they were having to pay for things on their own dime. If any of those expenses were to recognize some of the terrific athletes that have come out of Alberta or trained in Alberta, I would have no trouble with those expenditures. Likewise, I know Corb Lund was out at the games as an artist. There were a number of terrific singers and artists performing there. This was great, but I would like to know, for example, who got their tickets beyond the athletes and the artists to ride on that train, who paid for the \$500 a shot, who was treated by the taxpayer, that kind of thing, to be on that train, an accounting of whatever Olympic tickets. My understanding, I think, was that the government didn't pay for any Olympic tickets.

The Chair: I'd remind the member that we're focusing on the '10-11 budget estimates, please.

Mr. Chase: Yes. I think it was \$483,000. I don't know exactly to what extent that paid for tickets. In other words, here's the debit column; here's the credit column. How did we do? What kind of

deals were struck on that train? How does it reflect back on our economy?

9:15

The last little bit I talked about: random camping and people potentially being driven to random camping because of the costs incurred in the regular campgrounds. I also wanted to toss in an advertisement for Dr. Brian Horejsi about the importance of roadless parks, and I wanted to clarify the difference between the random and the roadless, giving people sort of a hiking opportunity as opposed to a motorized or cycled or equestrian-style park.

With regard to, again, children and obesity I'd like to know what efforts, if any, are being made to co-ordinate with other ministries – Education, Children and Youth Services, Health and Wellness – to advance this goal of overcoming physical inactivity.

I wish you well. I hope that our Olympics investment, as I say, can be broken down. I know it's hard to capture it because some of these deals may turn up next year and the following year, but a cost-benefit analysis would be much appreciated.

Thank you.

Mrs. Ady: Well, thank you. Obviously, I'm contained by the year that we're debating here. It does stretch over a three-year investment period, so that makes it a bit trickier for me. I just will tell you this about the train. When we moved into recession after we had the opportunity for the train, we decided that we would go into a cost-recovery piece as much as possible.

First of all, let me just say that when industry steps on that train, they're paying, and they're paying more than \$400. Let me just go there. They're paying for the opportunity to be on the train and also for business-to-business meetings to happen. I would like to just share with you, if I have a moment, a few of the things that I think have been really great about the train. It has garnered a bunch of attention. We probably had a car of press every day, and they've been telling our story all over the world. Again, I talked about the \$70 million in unpaid press that we've received, but what we haven't talked about at all is – and I'll talk strictly from my perspective as the tourism minister. On the train one day, the first day, the CTC invited a whole car full of what I call not people that go on fam tours. What's a fam tour? That's when we bring tour operators over here and we show them what we have so that when they go home, they'll sell our product – right? – sell people tours.

What we had on the train were the travel industry influencers. They're not people, and I've said this, that would take my phone call or open my letter as the tourism minister. They don't operate on that level. In fact, one of them told me that he hadn't been on a fam tour in two decades. He doesn't go on fam tours. But he influences the business travel in not just the country but, you know, the globe. We had a whole car full of those. We had six hours of access to them. Travel Alberta gave them each an iPod, and on that iPod they had burned scenes of Alberta. These guys can all afford iPods; let's be clear. They were running through the iPod and playing with the iPod. Well, that's kind of great. They'll take it home. Again, those kinds of opportunities for contact from a business perspective we don't earn any other way. They were at the games. The train intrigued them. They got on the train because the train itself was intriguing.

That was just the kind of things that were happening for me, and that has continued through all of the games.

Other ministers have been on those trains dealing with industry leaders from across the world. Some of them will tell you: "You know, I could have gone to Europe to meet with them or I could have gone to Asia to meet with them, but they're at the games, so

we're on the train for six hours." That's why they're saying that it's a brilliant marketing opportunity, but it's also a brilliant business opportunity.

How do we measure all of those things? That's a good question. That is a very good question. We're excited about the things that are happening. I'll tell you, too, that the one thing that I brought away from the train that I'll always carry with me is this idea of – it was almost like: we're done with the recession, and the people on that train are about the future now. I could just feel it in the train, in the discussions that were going on, in the people that networked, in the people that were saying, "You know, I could do this for you; could you do that for me?" type of thing. I actually came off that train feeling very positive, like, you know, the recession is turning, and business is kind of moving again. The opportunities for the province of Alberta were great.

As far as an accounting to things, I don't think we've been excessive. I think we've been playing on a very big world platform with what I consider to be very good platform assets. How did we use them? Could we have used them better? You know, you'll always do that kind of an analysis, but I think we really actually hit one out of the park this time. I wish I could take all the credit for it. I was willing to help them take the risk, but I also think that we have generated and that we have delivered. Some day, obviously, in Public Accounts we'll go over it, and I think you'll have those kinds of opportunities. Just know that we worked as much as possible on cost recovery, and we did not see it as an excessive experience.

The people that have been on the ground: we had 70 volunteers that took time off work and came out and have just worked their hearts out there. I have had colleagues come. I know my colleagues can work hard, but after about four days they were grey, and I'd have to send them home to go to bed. It's hard, hard work, but the benefits have been huge for this province.

It was wonderful to see the Vancouver press kind of all of a sudden notice us. We got a lot of compliments from them. I think they also recognized that we weren't just there having a party.

That being said, the Alberta Plaza with the artists on it have been just wonderful. The exposure that our artists have gotten and also just the culture that Calgary and Edmonton and the entire province have been able to bring to the games to show what this province is about I think has been great, too, because it has broadened people's understanding of the province. Alberta Day was wonderful. I did feel bad for the Premier as well because he tried. But when Paul Brandt got on that stage, I just watched the whole place explode. It just reminded me of how much fun home is.

Anyway, I think we've done as good a job as we can on that. I do think that in the fullness of time you will see more of it.

As well, when it comes to the athletes, we spent a lot of time and attention on these athletes. We had Alex and Maelle; all have come to Alberta House. It's kind of become the place to go. We've been able to celebrate with them. What wonderful down-to-earth kids they are, too.

We were able to run the program, for example, of the kids that have been coming out through ATCO. ATCO provided the trip; we provided the Olympic experience. I've been in the House many days with these kids. They've just been having the time of their lives. It's just a wonderful opportunity for kids all across the province to be able to come and experience the Olympics.

Many of the programs, I think, have worked really, really well, and we're really pleased with the efforts so far.

Mr. Chase: If I may, one of the up-and-coming Alberta artists that went down to the Smithsonian, and I was pleased to see him represent Alberta, also went out to Vancouver: Tim Hus. Just an

incredible storyteller. I wanted to have his name on the record because he's a wonderful young man.

The Chair: Okay. Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak this evening?

Seeing none, the estimates of the Department of Tourism, Parks and Recreation are deemed to have been considered for the time allotted in the schedule. I would like to thank all of the members of the committee and support staff to the minister and support staff to

our committee for helping us have a very successful meeting this evening.

I would like to remind committee members that we are scheduled to meet next on Monday, March 8, to consider the estimates of the Department of Municipal Affairs.

With that, I will adjourn the meeting. Thank you all very much.

[The committee adjourned at 9:24 p.m.]

