

2:32 p.m.

Tuesday, October 23, 1990

[Chairman: Mr. Ady]

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll call our meeting to order and welcome the Hon. Steve West, Minister of Recreation and Parks, along with his department officials to appear before the heritage fund committee. We appreciate the slide presentation that we've just viewed and the increased understanding we have of some of the things that have taken place during the past year in this department that have been funded from the savings trust fund. Today we will be considering five investments that the department draws funds for from the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, those being the Kananaskis Country recreation projects, the municipal recreation/tourism areas, Fish Creek Provincial Park, Capital City Recreation Park, and the urban parks program. We'd now like to turn the time to the minister if he has a few very brief remarks, and then we would like to go to the question period.

Just prior to doing that, do any members have any recommendations that they would like to read into the record? Just prior to them doing that, may I remind you that we had originally set the deadline for recommendations to be November 7. However, it turns out that the last member will appear before the committee on November 1. It would avoid the necessity of calling a special meeting just to have recommendations read if members of the committee could have their recommendations ready by November 1, the final date. Perhaps I could just leave that lie for the time being, and we could take a minute and discuss it perhaps tomorrow at the beginning of the meeting for just a few minutes.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek I believe has a recommendation he'd like to read into the record.

MR. PAYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to propose the following recommendation. The committee recommends

that the underlying principles and structure of the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund be comprehensively reviewed by a task force comprising government and opposition MLAs and academic and investment community leaders with relevant expertise and experience and that their review procedures provide for widespread public discussion.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay; thank you.

Any others? If not, Mr. Minister, do you have any further comments, or are you prepared to move to the question period? You introduced your department officials previously, but that would not be recorded in *Hansard*, so perhaps I could ask you to do that again.

DR. WEST: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to present these expenditures to the committee today. With me from the department I have from the municipal recreation/tourism area program Fred Wilton and from the urban parks program Barry Manchak. I appreciate the fine job they did in presenting the first part to the committee, going through much of the detail which I will not go through at the present time for a second hit at it.

I would just say that the objectives of the Heritage Savings Trust Fund and its usage in the province over the years have been to strengthen and diversify Alberta's economy, to provide opportunities to improve the quality of life for Albertans, and to save for the future. If you put that in context with the programs we're going to discuss here today, I think they exemplify the

purpose of this fund. Certainly under the stressful, highly technical world that we live in, one where we are looking to conserve our environment and at an outlet for future generations to enjoy, the municipal recreation/tourism area program through the 41 constituencies in rural Alberta has certainly been excellent.

The urban parks program is just an embryo. As we go forward, it is going to prove itself in this world, with the high density of urban populations and the stress that we have, and get people exposed to good conservation and environmental programs. I think the city dwellers are going to see the strengths of our urban parks program more in the future than they have in the past.

I leave it there. I look forward to your questions and hope that I can answer them to the best of my ability.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

We'd like to recognize the Member for Calgary-Mountain View as our first questioner. He'll be followed by the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, followed by the Member for West Yellowhead.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome to the minister and his staff this afternoon.

One of the things I've been getting across my desk in the last year or so has been documents from the federal parks service regarding a very extensive public consultation process regarding the long-range future of Banff National Park, Jasper National Park, and now I see most recently Waterton national park. For my first set of questions this afternoon I'd like to kind of look at Kananaskis Country. That's where almost a quarter of a billion dollars of heritage trust fund moneys have been invested. Given that the kind of process the federal government has undertaken has involved public hearings and asking the public at many levels over a fairly extensive period of time, why are we not doing that in Kananaskis Country, which is sort of the premier of all the provincial parks in the province? I'd like to ask the minister if he could give us some idea whether the Alberta government has considered doing that and rejected it, whether they're looking at it, or whether there will be some kind of consultation process undertaken by his department to ask the opinions of Albertans on what they want to see done with Kananaskis Country over the next 10, 20, or 30 years.

DR. WEST: Of course, as you're aware, there are no funds to flow through this year to Kananaskis Country, and therefore they don't have budgetary considerations for this meeting today.

You ask a point in principle as to the direction in Kananaskis Country as based against the federal government's initiatives in their parks. Let me say that in the beginning there was an integrated resource management plan put in place for Kananaskis Country, which had exhaustive public input. At the present time we have the Kananaskis Citizens' Advisory Committee, which meets on a regular basis and discusses all the issues relevant to Kananaskis Country to the present day. We also have an interdepartmental committee which on a regular basis reviews public input on that and input from a government perspective from the main departments involved in Kananaskis Country.

To answer you directly, to bring out more exhaustive public opinions on Kananaskis Country I think would be altruistically a good idea, but in view of the fact we are doing that on an ongoing basis, the budgetary concerns for duplicating a process that you already have in place might be questioned.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Mr. Chairman, you might hear the Minister of Tourism talking about the possibility of another two or three major golf courses going into Kananaskis. I don't know whether it's just a flag or a kite that he's flying or whether it's something that's being seriously considered. I note that, oh, a couple of months ago there was some cross-country skiing centre constructed in Kananaskis Country. Again it seems to have been a surprise to anybody who's sort of not with the small group that seems to be in charge of the planning and the construction and the approval of things in Kananaskis Country. So you get this perception by the public: they keep being surprised by these events and these ideas; they sort of get sprung. In the absence of any sort of broad understanding of where the government is taking Kananaskis Country, people overreact sometimes or react strongly, and there's also a sense of powerlessness about being able to have any kind of say in these decisions.

2:42

You know, you talk about an advisory committee and an interdepartmental committee. These are all fairly inward looking and not very broad in their involvement. Would the minister and the department begin a process of more broadly consulting with the public, publishing their ideas of different directions and options for Kananaskis Country, and getting the public in a formal way to come forward and make their suggestions in reaction to these different strategies that the government might bring forward? Would that be something that your department could do over the next year or two?

MR. CHAIRMAN: If the Chair could just make a comment, hon. member, you're really on the fringe of what should be allowed as a question here in view of the fact that the projects you brought up were not funded from the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund nor did you intimate that they were even projected to be funded from it, and the Chair has a little trouble with that unless you're looking for some answer on the impact they may have on the park itself, the area that's been designated and funded here. Could you just clarify that? I'm really having a little trouble with the direction of your questions.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Well, I'm just saying, Mr. Chairman, that we've got a quarter of a billion dollars of the heritage trust fund invested in the park, and then all these decisions seem to get sprung on the public. So I'd like to get some idea from the minister of some process for the future so that the public won't be surprised with decisions but will be a part of the planning process and be consulted about the direction.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Let's move this question to the minister based on his understanding of what might be funded from the Heritage Savings Trust Fund in the areas that you describe. However, if it's general development in that area, it would seem to me the question should probably be put during estimates or at some other time in the Legislature. We really are obliged to keep our questions relative to the Heritage Savings Trust Fund and the impact on it of projects funded by the Heritage Savings Trust Fund. Perhaps I'll let the minister answer the question on that very narrow area of the projected impact on the fund, if he chooses.

DR. WEST: None of the questions posed impact on the fund whatsoever. The final part is: all usages in Kananaskis Country that have been identified by the member were identified in the

original Kananaskis policy and resource management studies, in which there was massive public input.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Okay. Final supplementary.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Well, we don't know, Mr. Chairman, whether the original plan is still appropriate or of any kind of review mechanism that involves the public to see whether that's still appropriate or whether that's the direction the public would like to see the government go. As the minister well knows, I've had some concern over the fact that the organizational structure of the department is such that the head of Kananaskis Country still doesn't report to the deputy minister but reports directly to the minister, which sort of leaves the total control of Kananaskis Country being directed out of the minister's office.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, you really are getting into an area that more properly should be addressed to the hon. minister in estimates when that comes before the Legislature. I can't quite see where organization of his department fits in here as a funding issue. I wish you'd focus your question a little . . .

MR. HAWKESWORTH: We're talking about the management of a quarter of a billion dollar asset that appears in the annual report of the Heritage Savings Trust Fund. I'm asking about the management of a quarter of a billion dollars of deemed assets in the trust fund. That's what I'm asking about. It's public money; the trust fund is supposed to be public money, and I want to find out: does the public get involved in any way? Is it just some private little operation run out of the minister's office, or is there some process that he's contemplating for the future management of this that allows the public to get more involved? I don't see how that could be considered out of order.

DR. WEST: We have the Kananaskis Citizens' Advisory Committee in place, ongoing, has been since Kananaskis has been developed. It's functioning and reporting to the minister from input from the public and from various issues that come forward on Kananaskis. We also have the Kananaskis policy that's in place and the administration that reports to the Legislature, not only here but through the budgetary process in estimates brought forth from the General Revenue Fund. So that's a matter of fact and a matter of record.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Are you planning any public hearings to involve the public?

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry, hon. member, you've had your three questions.

Calgary-Fish Creek, followed by West Yellowhead, followed by Ponoka-Rimbey.

MR. PAYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Although this is probably not the right forum to do it, I would like to seize the opportunity to thank the minister for the additional access he has provided this year to Fish Creek park from the north side of the park, specifically the Lake Bonavista community. That pedestrian and bike path is now under construction, and it has been extremely well received by the several thousand families that reside in Lake Bonavista. I would like to mention that to the minister.

Mr. Chairman, it's not entirely out of context, however, because I do wish to frame my Fish Creek park question with a

reference to access, and that has to do with access from the south side, that part of the city now referred to as the suburb of McKenzie. But before I phrase the question, Mr. Chairman, I need to go back 10 years to an agreement signed by the government of Alberta with, I believe, Daon Development Corporation at the time the province was assembling the land to build Fish Creek park. In that March 21, 1980, agreement there was a provision – and I'm quoting from the agreement – that the government would

provide pedestrian walkways and bicycle paths interconnecting from The [then-called] Homesteads [and now McKenzie district] to the Bow River and a bridge over the Bow River for pedestrian and bicycle traffic to the existing Fish Creek Provincial Park west of the Bow River.

That was in an agreement 10 years ago.

I'd like to now come to 1990, focusing, if I could, on the question of much needed access from the McKenzie community into the park and ask the minister: can he inform the committee as to what progress the department or the government indeed has made with respect to this 10-year-old agreement?

DR. WEST: At this point in time we have reviewed the agreement with those recommendations in mind. However, as we go through the budgetary process and look at the funds that must be approved and brought forward consistent with our fiscal plan, we find that direction now will be measured each year as we go forth before the General Revenue Fund and ask for our budget acceptance. So at the present time I'm saying we're aware of it as a department and we will look at the user groups involved and the impact that it has on the Fish Creek park resource and come forth in a manner in the future that represents the agreement we have.

MR. PAYNE: Mr. Chairman, I'm not legally trained, and I'm certainly not very experienced at drafting or, indeed, even reading and understanding legal agreements. It's unfortunate the agreement perhaps didn't have the caveat on it "subject to our ability to cover the cost," because there is no such reference that I can see in the agreement.

My first supplementary, Mr. Chairman, has to do with that same March 21, 1980, agreement, subsequently amended June 1, 1985, wherein the government committed to commence design by October 31, 1990 – that's just a few days hence – "of an 18 hole golf course and associated recreational uses" and a similar obligation or contractual commitment to begin construction by October 31, 1991. I guess I have the same question to address to the minister. Could he bring the committee up to date with respect to those contractual obligations associated with Fish Creek park?

2:52

DR. WEST: The previous owner of the Daon Development you're talking about was given the rights to mine sand and gravel prior to the development of the area by the province. The original agreement allowed for gravel extraction up until 1984-85, but an amending agreement has extended this until 1990 and requires the province to commence development of the lands in 1991 and beyond. So the agreement is valid to date and has not been breached in any way and comes up for perusal in 1991.

MR. PAYNE: My second supp, Mr. Chairman, has to do with the capital projects division statement of amounts expended on page 36 of the 1989 annual report. There is a reference to an amount of \$1.1 million being recovered. It implies that it's a

recovery. I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman; that amount is given under the heading "Recovery of amounts expended in previous years" for Fish Creek Provincial Park land. I wonder if the minister could enlighten me and possibly other members of the committee as to what the reasoning behind that recovery is and perhaps the mechanism for it. To put it more simply: where did the \$1.13 million come from and why?

DR. WEST: I'm looking at my staff, and at the present time we'll have to get back to you with the answer on that, because I will have to do some research on that myself.

MR. PAYNE: That's just fine, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

The Member for West Yellowhead, followed by the Member for Ponoka-Rimbey.

MR. DOYLE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The film on the MRT grants was certainly informative, and I certainly realized how important those MRT grants were to rural Alberta. It was pleasing also to see that Jasper National Park was open to some funding and got that funding, because they're always striving. Because they're a national park, they find it difficult to get provincial funding for many projects, and they feel that they're somehow left out because there's such a lobby from outside of the park that they shouldn't be getting provincial funding.

But, Mr. Chairman, the rural parks have received I believe \$11 million thus far. The urban parks systems have received \$176 million. I would just like to ask the minister if he sees in the future that more money will have to be put into these municipal recreation grants, probably in the next year or two, to bring some of those rural municipalities up to the same favour as the urban municipalities.

DR. WEST: Well, it's not a very good comparison at all for several reasons. You would have to go into the fact that we have 61 provincial parks in this province spread throughout the vast areas of the province that would encompass many of the rural constituencies also. We also have provincial recreation areas, some 85-plus of those throughout the province, that encompass many camping sites and recreational facilities throughout rural Alberta. Environment, the forestry service, and transportation also have a tremendous amount of campsites and recreational areas, of course, next to irrigation facilities and what have you. So to compare just the 41 constituencies with the MRTA program is a little inconsistent. Of course, if you put the MRA program with it, it comes to \$19 million, and of course a very generous operating fund of \$25,000 a year for 20 years certainly is much greater than the operating fund going to the urban parks program. We have a 20 percent operating fund going to the MRTAs and 3 percent and 5 percent going to the urban parks. So comparing these two I think would be a bit erroneous, understanding of course that throughout the province we have other major recreational and development programs in the rural centres that aren't within the urban centres.

MR. DOYLE: Thank you, Mr. Minister. Back to Fish Creek. There's some \$44 million allotted to Fish Creek. According to the financial statement there's \$16,859,000 spent thus far. Several volunteer organizations have contacted me – at least one very forcefully – that would like to take over the area of an old house there, on a recent tour of that park, and some stables that they'd like to maintain. Is it possible that your department

would look at letting a volunteer organization take over those particular facilities just inside the main gate of Fish Creek park?

DR. WEST: What the member is talking about is the Burns Ranch site that is within the Fish Creek Provincial Park. There is an organization, friends of the Fish Creek Provincial Park, that has made representation to look at the Burns Ranch house and certain elements of the ranch site that are left. At the present time we are in communication with them to look at accommodating the one group and yet maintaining the heritage of that site at the present time. The department of culture has looked at the Burns Ranch house as a historical resource for the province of Alberta. In view of that, that would be inconsistent with perhaps some of the things brought forth by the group called the friends of the Fish Creek Provincial Park, but we are going to work with them and see if we can accommodate their wishes under a new agreement.

MR. DOYLE: Thank you. I think there'd be savings there with a volunteer organization.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to go back briefly to a question on Kananaskis. I'd like to know if the minister's office is planning a public hearing to address the questions in Kananaskis in regards to the quarter of a billion dollar expenditure.

DR. WEST: I'm not clear on your question: is the minister . . .

MR. DOYLE: Is the minister or his department going to look at having public hearings to see that that quarter of a billion dollars spent on Kananaskis was in fact properly spent and going to be properly recovered, especially in regards to a bad debt from the golf course?

DR. WEST: In all due respect to the committee and its protocol for operations, I believe that . . . Is that a recommendation? All I can say is that I can't answer that because it's in the form of a recommendation. Has that been brought before the committee, and is it coming forth?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We have not had the . . .

MR. DOYLE: No, the recommendation hasn't come forth yet.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for Ponoka-Rimbey, followed by Clover Bar, followed by Lacombe.

MR. JONSON: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I have a question from another angle with respect to what has already been raised today. Let's look at the current expansion of the urban parks program. Is there a standard process that Wetaskiwin or Strathcona county have to go through to get approval for park development, and if so, what is it?

DR. WEST: Yes, there is. Our department has certain individuals that meet with the committees at each of the cities' levels, that first go over their master plan and help them develop what direction they're taking. Then, of course, those submissions are brought back to the department and applications are made for the funds existing in the various budget years. So the process is one of detailed consultation with the various municipal bodies that have been appointed by the city councils in concert with our department and budgeting process.

MR. JONSON: Perhaps a supplementary, Mr. Chairman. These are somewhat smaller centres than the two major cities, but I know, by way of comparison, that the tourism action plans are developed through a very detailed process, perhaps much too detailed in some ways, and part of that requirement involves public meetings. Is there that requirement in the development of these park projects? Is there a mandated requirement that they have public meetings and consultations?

3:02

MR. MANCHAK: The process that we encourage all of the cities to use, or our consultants who work with them, is to involve the public through the concept planning stage, which is the very early part of the planning, and into the master planning stage of their park development. So every step of the way we're encouraging them to involve the public through hearings, public workshops, this sort of thing. It is not directly mandated in the program though.

DR. WEST: If I may supplement that, this is an autonomous program. If you look at the municipalities, we do sit and help them plan, but it's their responsibility to go to public meetings and that. There is another elected body that is responsible for these funds, and it's the transfer from one government to the next. Of course, their project team and that sort of thing is appointed by that elected body, and they have a responsibility to their electorate to ensure that the process is followed with public consultation.

MR. JONSON: For my final supplementary, Mr. Chairman, I wonder if I could just ask for something I should have written down, just a repeat of the information. What were the figures anticipated to be spent for Fort McMurray and St. Albert?

MR. MANCHAK: Fort McMurray is eligible for \$10,500,000, and St. Albert \$11,100,000.

MR. JONSON: Okay. So this is all running on a per capita basis?

MR. MANCHAK: That's correct.

MR. JONSON: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for Clover Bar, followed by Lacombe.

MR. GESELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wanted to direct a question to the minister with respect to the scheduling or the time delay that is required in order to bring some of these projects on stream. I'm specifically talking about the urban parks program, but I want to relate that to the MRTA program as well. Now, I believe when some of the commitments were made for funding, some of the additional funding that came for the city of Edmonton, for instance - I believe that announcement was made last year, maybe even prior to that, yet there have been no funds expended to date; I think that's what the minister indicated. As a matter of fact, that occurred in a number of different areas, where the expenditure has been small. Could I get an appreciation of over what time span we're actually talking about that this urban parks expenditure might take place?

DR. WEST: We're looking at a 10-year program. The member is quite correct in that some of the ones that had indicated they would take sums of money for their master plan design and implementation did not get that plan in place and up and running, and therefore they did not draw down on the sums of money that had been identified that they would need. The first year of the phase the moneys had been set out to try and address the demand from the nine new cities and the two major cities of Calgary and Edmonton for the development of master plans only rather than major constructions. As you have very well indicated, some had thought their process would be in place, and did not accomplish. The city of Edmonton did not draw down their \$150,000 that they had indicated they would need.

MR. GESELL: If I might go further in my supplementary. If the time frame is 10 years, and if I understand the program correctly, there's funding that comes for capital expenditures and planning and construction but also there is then a percentage of the capital construction that comes by way of an operating funding somewhere along the line – if we reach that 10-year time frame and the additional allocation of, say, \$15 million for the city of Edmonton hasn't been used, what occurs at that point?

DR. WEST: Well, if they haven't used it, it would be carried forward as an unused portion of the heritage fund. Of course, if this committee is still in force, they will have a study of that. But to get some things straight. You had indicated operating funds: that comes out of the General Revenue Fund and does not come out of these allocated sums. You have identified a very good point. In phase 2, with this number of cities involved – 11 – we are going to have to do an administrative process that addresses the needs and demands over the 10-year period consistent with what we use and draw out from the heritage fund. It means that some will have to hold and go forward with their projects on a base time rather than everybody coming forward at once. You can well understand that if we bring forth \$3 million in one year, \$82 million worth of projects can't immediately go into force. So it will take a good deal of understanding from the cities and the project teams consistent with the budgeting coming down from the heritage fund each year over the next 10. We will see it in an escalating phase to the maximum amount of construction, tapering off probably in the last five years. That would be our wish in this program, but again, each year it must go through the budgeting process consistent with our fiscal responsibility in this province.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just prior to the member asking his final supplementary, I need to draw to the attention of the government officials in attendance that if they're going to answer questions, it's necessary to move to the table, because we can't pick you up for *Hansard*. If you can, find a place close to the microphone. Also, the members of the committee who may be back from the table, when it comes time for you to be recognized or speak, please move up to microphones. We're operating under a bit of a disadvantage in this room to pick up for *Hansard*, so we're just going to have to accommodate the best we can. It is important that you be recorded. There are additional microphones we could perhaps supply.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Can't we move them down? It seems eminently practical to have them where the people are.

MR. PAYNE: I think we all sat at the wrong place, because the mikes were here first.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Chair recognizes the Member for Clover Bar with his final supplementary.

MR. GESELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to switch to the MRTA program, which will be expiring fairly quickly. My constituency has had the opportunity to access those programs, and they have been exceedingly beneficial. But I'm wondering if the needs out there for recreation and tourism have been met in the rural areas generally or whether the minister feels there's a possibility for an extension of that type of program into the future. Obviously, we could do a recommendation, but I want to seek an opinion from the minister about how he feels on this particular program: whether it should cease or whether it should carry on to some degree.

DR. WEST: Well, I trust that that will come forth also from all people represented throughout the province through such committees as this and recommendations. But this program has been very successful. To date it has met its target in developing local initiatives, tourist facilities, sustained regional economic development, and a future for Albertans to develop. I believe that with 10,000 campsites, for example, developed through the municipal programs – that's 25 percent of the 40,000 campsites in this province – it has indeed been a major development in this province. If you consider that in the Department of Recreation and Parks the provincial park campsites are a little over 10,000 themselves, this program has developed throughout Alberta as many campsites as the provincial government has developed in the last 40 years. So if you say, "Has it met its initial demand?", yes. I have no wisdom as to the future and the demands of the growing province of Alberta and its resources as tourism comes forward, but to date, with the utilization that's required out there for visiting people and campers: yes, it has met and fulfilled the original intent.

3:12

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for Lacombe, followed by the Member for Wainwright.

MR. MOORE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On the urban parks program – I understand it's a 10-year program and it's based on a per capita situation – one thing I'd like to know is: when we provide that funding to an urban municipality, do we see the total financial plan, or are we just given the per capita and then they plug it into their plan? Do we know the whole plan and where that money's going at the time we give it to them, or do they just receive a per capita grant and they proceed from that point?

DR. WEST: Well, phase 2 of the program is based on phase 1, and it's done on a per capita estimate, and of course that's how we came up with the sums of money. To answer your question point-blank, no, all of them did not have a master plan in place, so it is based on a total sum of dollars to be applied against a project that is planned and brought into the future. That's the answer to your question.

MR. MOORE: Naturally, I'm wondering, in the complete picture – we've seen in the past, Mr. Chairman, where the government provides the seed money up front, and what ends

up, it's gone. Down the road the municipality is left with a debt if they're to complete something that they haven't the capacity to do. Hence they then come back to the government and say, "Give us more money to finish what you've started." Is there any danger of that?

DR. WEST: No, they must present a plan for what their project is and move from point A to B. But if they want to expand that plan with municipal dollars, they are responsible to another elected and taxing authority. If an urban parks program in phase 2 is \$3.9 million, they will take that towards the project. If they expand that program after that, they take that out of their own municipal dollars. All municipal bodies have that flexibility and autonomy, and I'm not ever going to stand here and judge that. No program of ours shall limit a municipality from their own directions.

MR. MOORE: Mr. Chairman, on my final supplementary I'll shift to Kananaskis Country for a moment. We get demands for further funding from the heritage fund from the people for Kananaskis Country; for example, the Powderface Trail. Every time we've talked to those officials, they talk about the Powderface Trail: they need more money to complete it. Is there any consideration given now that the infrastructure's in place - we've built Kananaskis Country and it's operating well - that general revenue takes over and those demands go, in the case of Powderface Trail, to Transportation and be considered exclusively there? Why are they still coming to us with those demands?

DR. WEST: Well, as minister responsible for Kananaskis Country, I haven't seen any of those demands in the last 12 months. The operation and maintenance of Kananaskis Country is going on out of the General Revenue Fund and is consistent, let me say, with our fiscal plan. They have not drawn any excess money for Kananaskis Country in the last fiscal year. I must say that they are functioning in their upgrading, maintenance, and operations of Kananaskis within their budgets allocated and not asking for money from the heritage fund now.

MR. MOORE: Okay.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for Wainwright, followed by Three Hills.

MR. FISCHER: Thank you. I wanted to go back to the MRT grants; I guess basically those grants. It comes, I suppose, with looking ahead a little bit more. A lot of golf courses have come into being because of those. I think an awful lot of small communities wouldn't have them without some kind of support. But as we look around the province, it seems that there's an awful rate of construction now, both private and community and so on. Have we got something in place to evaluate when enough is enough of all that? Will we some day think that we have enough or that we'll have to wait until the population expands? I just wonder if we have some kind of an evaluation process that would be able to handle that.

DR. WEST: I think as we've gone on throughout the last number of years with the MRA program and MRTA, we have balanced regional development the best we can, leaving the responsibility for picking and choosing where the recreational and development programs will go to the municipalities or local groups that are impacted. The question you bring forth is excellent, and that is why this phase of the MRTA is coming to

an end this year. As I was saying, with that in mind, consideration will have to be given, I would think, to what's going on throughout the province with private-sector involvement in the development of golf courses and private campgrounds and recreational facilities consistent with the amount of dollars the province has and what we've already done. You must always measure when enough is enough. If we have accomplished a target that we set out, then I believe we should allow a period of time for society to use that target, to develop it, and to take some self-initiative in expansion of that on their own.

We answered a question previously that was brought forward: do I believe that this program has reached its target? I do, but I also have concerns that if you go too far, the very thing you're alluding to may take place: we establish and drive developments that may not be consistent with the flow of what's going on in travel and commerce throughout the province of Alberta.

So with that, I would await with eagerness your recommendations and thoughts as to what the committee thinks for the future.

MR. FISCHER: I thank you for that. In skiing, especially, we see a certain amount of interference, you might say; possibly not with that particular one but with government involvement in general. There are private folks out there doing their very best to get into business, and it's very difficult to try and compete against these kinds of public funds. I guess my question would be almost identical to what I'd asked you before. Do we have something in the process where we evaluate that too, or is it up to the communities? It's really a difficult one, because if you don't have some facility, you put it in place, and then a little bit later on along comes the private developer. How do we handle that?

DR. WEST: Our department continuously looks at Recreation and Parks facilities throughout the province and balances the need against the programs that we do have. I might say that at the present time the infrastructure throughout the province of Alberta, through municipal recreation/tourism areas or otherwise, is on balance consistent and better than probably many jurisdictions in Canada. For a population of 2.44 million people, I would say that on a per capita basis we have as many facilities and recreational outlets as any; you could go throughout North America or even throughout the world. So in view of that, our department looks at that and, of course, would take those comments through me to the various meetings that we go to.

You're asking me directly: do I think that we should review this on an ongoing basis? I say yes, we are, and we certainly would look to public input in the future to see what demands we can put on it.

MR. FISCHER: Please don't get me wrong, that I'm trying to discourage your program in any kind of way, because I really believe that it's vital to our small communities as far as tourist attractions. Many of these little places may not survive without that kind of thing.

The other question, just to show you I'm a little more supportive. Kananaskis Country: they have a nice golf course there. The Member for West Yellowhead mentioned that it was costly or expensive or whatever.

MR. DOYLE: It doesn't pay its bills.

MR. FISCHER: They do put through roughly 77,000 rounds a year there, and there's demand for a lot more. There's also a

proposed site location. Is there any possible chance in the near future that it would be expanded?

3:22

DR. WEST: The golf course itself, of course, is under private operators at the present time, and they return to the province certain sums of money under contract every year. I'm pleased to say that there is a cash flow to the province on that investment every year.

MR. MITCHELL: How much?

DR. WEST: Last year directly \$88,000 came in, and of course during the accounting procedures they did put a tremendous amount of money back into the Kananaskis Village Resort Association common areas for the public to use, which also came out of their contract and, of course, is identified by the estimates as being a plus to the \$88,000.

Second of all, a proposal has been brought forward, consistent with the policy that was originally developed for Kananaskis Country, for the addition of another golf course. The Kananaskis Citizens' Advisory Committee has looked at that proposal. Of course, it will go through the various studies and environmental impact assessments and those things that have been identified in Kananaskis Country but is consistent with Kananaskis Country policy as originally stated. Yes, we could use another golf course in that area because, as you identified, we were turning away in July probably five out of six phone calls from Albertans that would like to access this golf course and golf. Therefore, another resource in that area would be, as I say, needed to allow more Albertans to access that resource.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

The Member for Three Hills, followed by the Member for Lloydminster.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate some of the observations of the minister today and also say that his staff, I believe, are a very helpful group. There are a lot of small communities in this province that don't have the expertise to develop their own plans or they need sort of a top-up of those plans, so that's appreciated.

I'm also a little bit disturbed about what I'm hearing this afternoon. As I watch the heritage fund deplete in terms of its ability to return money to general revenue – I guess we've got a lot of competing interests. It is obviously important to protect the investments that we've already made. In other words, for the facilities that have been put in place by heritage fund investment all over the province, I gather basically the upkeep or whatever is necessary then comes out of the administrative budget that's allocated on a yearly basis. The word "need" has come up in almost every other sentence that's been used here. I would like the minister to provide the committee with his definition of need as he will be looking at heritage fund investment and potential investment for the future. He's just talked about another golf course potentially and the need for another golf course. I'm very interested in the minister's definition of need.

DR. WEST: The need for another golf course is based – it's totally a private-sector investment. When you define need, you define it against the ability of a total citizenry to provide for the various services, I guess, that they need on a priority basis. You

cannot provide for mankind what he can provide for himself, and no government should be involved in that. So the need base, when we come to recreation and other, I guess, services in that light, has to be done consistent with fulfilling the priorities of government and their responsibility first. Therefore, if it's hospitals or education or the economy providing jobs, getting on with the future development of this province, then that need as it relates to secondary services must take a different light. There is no need for a golf course if you're unemployed because, under my definition, you wouldn't be using it anyways. Seeing that in many areas in this province 88 percent of the tourists are Albertans, then of course you're serving Albertans, and in light of what I just said, first their priorities must be met in employment. Certainly there are areas in the province that bring in many tourists from outside and they become an industry, but there are many areas in this province which have access to the MRTAs and others that are mainly serving just Albertans.

I hope that answers your questions, but in future deliberations that need must be based against what liquid resources the citizens of Alberta have and what their priorities are.

MRS. OSTERMAN: Just to be clear in terms of what the minister is saying – I don't want to misunderstand his comments. When you were discussing various things that would enhance investments already made in areas that exist and you were saying that certain needs have been identified, you would then be promoting or facilitating the potential addition of those needs but looking to the private sector to make the investment on a basis that in fact the need is there and the public is there in terms of usage and ability to pay for it.

DR. WEST: That is absolutely correct. If the flavour of the conversation was not in that light, then there's been a misinterpretation here today. Because when somebody talked about the need for a golf course in Kananaskis, there is no further need for government to build it, but the private sector. I hope that's consistent with the conversation that's gone on here today because it's consistent with the policy that we have in Recreation and Parks, and that is to look at privatization in the future wherever we can.

MRS. OSTERMAN: I appreciate those comments. To be very frank, I wasn't clear, and that's why I have asked the question. Again, as a committee and in terms of interviewing various ministers that come forward, I think it is important that we keep the big picture in mind as well. Albeit there have been some wonderful things done around Alberta, but "wonderful" does not necessarily look after what I believe are some basic needs in the province if we have a problem in terms of our ability to pay for things in the future.

Then my last question to the minister. Presently there is a commitment out of general revenue that arises as a result of expenditures from the heritage fund. Does the minister see those expenditures going into the future? I don't think he has elaborated today on the programs that are coming that will be expended, the 10-year program in urban parks: whether or not that is going to put pressure on his annual budget and whether there has been a decision made relating to operating costs.

DR. WEST: Yes, it will put pressure on the budget of Recreation and Parks in the future. Yes, there was a decision made to look at the operating fund of urban parks 2. We moved it from 5 percent of the capital down to 3 percent on the equation of

the operating funds. No doubt we can't project a guaranteed operating fund on such projects into the future for long periods of time, so yes, we made a change in that. We cut the operating fund projection from 20 years down to a five-year renewable, so now it's 3 percent and look at it in five years. If our cash flow in the province and priorities as a base cannot afford the 3 percent, I would trust that the individuals at that time, whoever they be, make the appropriate decisions.

We have set in place on MRTAs 25-year, \$20,000 per hundred. I believe that's a very generous operating fund into the future. It was put there to protect the Heritage Savings Trust Fund and its development, but it comes out of the General Revenue Fund. Therefore, it may not be consistent with our priorities in the future, and we will have to review all operating funds coming from the General Revenue Fund even with the type of commitments that we've made in some of the agreements. But I think Albertans will understand that and are willing to look at all of the moneys that are spent in this province and to spend them responsibly in the future. Your question is a very, very good question.

3:32

MRS. OSTERMAN: Just the observation, then, that I believe I understand the minister's comments. I appreciate them, and that gives me some level of comfort about us potentially driving municipalities to accept funds from us to do things that they can't afford to handle in the future if we are also short of money and can't continue to assist them.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for Lloydminster, followed by the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MR. CHERRY: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. To the minister. You said earlier to the Member for Wainwright - maybe I didn't hear you correctly - that out of six phone calls for the golf course, five had to be turned down. I guess my question would be: what are the stats on the number of persons using the golf course per year? Have you any stats on that?

DR. WEST: Well, I believe it's around 70,000 to 80,000 a year that golf on the Kananaskis golf course.

MR. CHERRY: So the revenue from that goes back into general?

DR. WEST: No, it's a private contract operated by Kananaskis golf company.

MR. CHERRY: Oh, I see. Okay. I guess my other question is on the MRTAs. The sites that are in use today, are they being properly maintained and operated, or what is the percentage that might have fallen down over the period of time since they've started? In other words, are all of them properly maintained and up to date?

DR. WEST: The majority, but I haven't personally visited all the sites. So I must first of all, before I answer that question, say that I haven't seen all the sites. The MRTAs that I have seen are being maintained fairly well. There are some older sites throughout the province, the MRAs and that, which came forward that have maintenance problems and need upgrading, that have high utilization and are getting worn out, to tell you the truth. Therefore, some of those will require maintenance and upgrading.

Maybe you could answer that.

MR. WILTON: Sure. The majority of the projects in that situation, as Dr. West has mentioned, are the older ones, 1983-85. As part of our ongoing operating grant a consultant is assigned to each project, and his responsibility is to visually audit every year the status of that site and to work with the groups if there is an operational problem. A number of projects are deteriorating because of use, and we assist them in upgrading through a redesign service that's offered by the consultants that work for the department. For the older projects it's the same type of service that we provide for the new ones. In a lot of cases the older ones have been campgrounds and have generated their own revenues, so financially they're in a position to be involved with the upgrading themselves, and there are other funding sources that they've tapped into to do that also. But I think the real impetus has been providing the operating grant, because it has stimulated them to not rely entirely on volunteerism. We don't want to downplay that element of the volunteers and their labour, et cetera, because that's very important. We see our operating grant, even a capital grant, as just being something to augment that, to maintain it, but they do appreciate the help. From my experience the majority of them are operating properly, and we're certainly working with the ones that aren't to bring them up to the proper standards.

MR. CHERRY: Just a supplementary on that. You say that visually they're looked at on a yearly basis. But if they're not, then is the funding cut off? How does it work, for example, in an area that people have kind of abandoned? You know, the money is still going out there; say, the 20 thousand bucks or something like that. Is there some way that you go out there and rattle them up and get them moving again, or how does it work?

MR. WILTON: We have never had a project that has been abandoned as such. You must remember that this is a municipal grant and the grant funds, the capital funds and operational funds, are targeted at the municipality. The municipalities have the ultimate responsibility to maintain the site. Where there's a service club or something like that operating a site, we encourage dissolution agreements and those sorts of things, so if a group did abandon it, it would revert back to the municipality itself. But we've never had to use that leverage of withholding grant funds, because we find people are so enthusiastic about the program and what it's allowed them to do with the recreation resources and the tourist attraction part of it that they're quite happy to maintain them. The assistance we provide in operating and consulting covers a broad spectrum which is really beneficial to them and provides all kinds of services.

MR. CHERRY: Well, that's it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

The Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, followed by Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm interested in the economics of the Kananaskis golf course, among other things. The minister has said that the government or the heritage trust fund receives about \$88,000 a year from the Kananaskis golf course management company, which would be as a rent, I suppose, for the beautiful, professional clubhouse,

pro shop, restaurant, and locker room, for a 36-hole golf course with an immense investment. Eighty-eight thousand dollars isn't a particularly great return on that. I wonder if you could indicate to the committee how much profit the golf course management company makes after they've paid that \$88,000, as small an amount as it is.

DR. WEST: This is a private contract with private operators. Maybe you could take that up with their auditors and their financial report, if they make that public.

Second of all, the \$88,000 was last year, and it's based on a formula based on the amount of use of concessions and what have you. If you topped up the \$88,000 with the investment into the Trent Jones centre that's there, the common area that was built and that's used by all Albertans for the various components – there's what we call our Kananaskis Village Resort Association which utilizes the common ground and operates and maintains it, and that's under contract with this government. If you took that on, it's quite extensively more than \$88,000. You asked a direct question, of course: the money that flowed through last year. I am frank with you and that's what it was. It varies every year, but because of the way the convention and common area was built there, certain sums are allocated towards it. When they took on the building – I think it's over a million dollars in that area. So if you took that and flowed it back through, that's being deducted off their income to the government because that belongs to the government. It would be – and it would vary on a given year – over \$200,000.

As to the private-sector people, you yourself know that that is not privy information to everyone.

MR. MITCHELL: No. What I know is that if a government invests literally tens of millions of dollars in a financial operation, it's not unreasonable that we should know how much money they're making when we're only making \$88,000.

Following that question, I'm intrigued to pursue the economics of this private-sector golf course that you're talking about, which will be the next step. It seems to me – and perhaps you could confirm this with a yes or a no or some indication – that this golf course management company must make a huge amount of money if it is in any way, shape, or form conceivable that you could contemplate a private-sector golf course in the same valley. I mean, for the private-sector to put up tens of millions of dollars to build another golf course commensurate with the investment in the Kananaskis golf course – to build a pro shop, to build a restaurant, blah, blah, blah, and so on – and then have to pay considerably more than \$88,000 a year for all that facility, somewhere there must be a huge profit going to the Kananaskis golf course management group right now, not to us, to them, to argue that there would be economics for any private-sector group to do this all by themselves. Is that not the case?

DR. WEST: Well, it depends on the cost of their golf course, and I don't get into the cost. Throughout Alberta golf courses vary from being worth three-quarters of a million dollars to Kananaskis, which was a little over 10 – not tens of millions; a little over 10.

To answer your question, you put out a red herring in the sense that you've covered a spectrum from a million dollar golf course to 10 million. The cost to operate them varies consistent with that investment. Therefore, your question is totally irrelevant to what's going on.

3-42

MR. MITCHELL: Of course, it'd be really easy to kill that red herring if you just told us how much money they were making.

My third question concerns the development of the Fort McMurray park. I saw this beautiful picture – and it was beautiful – of somebody sitting on the banks of that river. I wonder whether the government or this department has factored in the future impact of pulp mill development on that river and what that will mean for the investment you're going to be making into parks on that river downstream, which may never be particularly appealing. I mean, are we planning them or aren't we?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, you really haven't . . .

MR. MITCHELL: Okay, I can ask another question. I'll withdraw that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's not relevant, and you really have got to refocus.

MR. MITCHELL: Well, I think it's relevant. We're investing money, and we have to know what the return is on that money, do we not?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, do you want to ask another question?

MR. MITCHELL: Yeah. I'd actually like to get an answer to one of my . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Chair will allow you to ask a well-focused question.

MR. MITCHELL: All right. Thank you. Fifteen million dollars into the Capital City Park program – welcome. The minister, of course, has read that there's about \$48 million worth of projects left to finish that park to the west end of Edmonton. I wonder whether the minister, however, could indicate what the schedule of allocation of that \$15 million is over there. Is it just \$1.5 million a year? How's that going to go?

DR. WEST: No. The schedule is a difficult one, and it's an administrative procedure we have with the various project teams as they come forward. You can't outline that, depending on where the master plans are for each city. So it will profile itself over the next 15 years, as I say, consistent with what we can allow to flow through from the heritage fund and its moneys. So I can't answer your question directly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before I get to my questions, I'm just wondering if the minister is yet in a position, if he's received a note from his staff or whatever, to answer the question previously raised by the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek in terms of the \$1.1 million item in the annual report of the trust fund.

DR. WEST: No.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: So do I take it, Mr. Chairman, that as members of the committee we'll get an answer in writing from the minister sometime after this meeting today? That's my understanding from his answer.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The minister will make his response to the Chair if he sees fit to make one, and I'll circulate it.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I appreciate the minister's earlier comments in response to the question about further golf course development in Kananaskis. As he knows, and it's been pointed out, the existing 36-hole course in Kananaskis was built with a capital investment of close to \$10 million from the Heritage Savings Trust Fund. Just so I'm clear on his previous answers: in looking at this new golf course, is it the intention of the Alberta government that it be built at standards compatible to the existing course and that it will be entirely, totally financed by private-sector investment? Or will it be a repetition of the arrangement for the course that's there now, where the infrastructure was built by public dollars and the management and operation are with the private sector? Is it the intention of the government that it will be totally financed in terms of the capital investment by a private-sector company?

DR. WEST: Those details were not even to that stage. The proposal was one brought forward and is going through the very detailed process of interdepartmental tests that have to be met in Fish and Wildlife, Environment, and Transportation. Therefore, those details specifically are kept to the private-sector individual. Their proposal was for a site within Kananaskis, and before you get to those details, it's down the road considerably. So I trust you understand that.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: In a previous reply the minister indicated that as part of the review process an environmental impact assessment was being considered. I would like to ask the minister if it would be one of the conditions of further development in Kananaskis Country that an environmental impact assessment would be a requirement and it would be independent. That is, there would be an independent board of review and there would be some form of public hearings in order to allow a full debate or full review of the information. Is that what the minister had in mind when he made reference to environmental impact assessment?

DR. WEST: No. I said there would be an environmental review because, consistent with Kananaskis Country policy, that area has been identified through an environmental review process, and, of course, the natural resources conservation board legislation that's coming forth plus our environmental legislation that's coming forth: I think you'll have ample time to have input into that so you can see that projects in the province will come forth on a consistent basis to various environmental studies. I think that's the whole basis for the legislation and the NRCB, and the province is looking forward to that. Various projects throughout the province will have the test of that legislation put to them.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Final supplementary.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I've not yet heard at any time today the minister indicate that there would be a requirement for public hearings as part of the overall

review process for any new developments that might take place in Kananaskis. So let me use the last question this afternoon in this series of supplementaries to give the minister an opportunity to say quite explicitly that it his intention and promise or commitment that in terms of any new developments in Kananaskis Country he will require as part of that process hearings in which the public will be able to come forward and make comment on the information as part of the proposal for that development.

DR. WEST: In all projects throughout this province the best direction for public consultation is always sought, and we will seek those directions as we would in any other area of this province consistent with Kananaskis Country policy.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. The Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, followed by Ponoka-Rimbey.

MR. PAYNE: Mr. Chairman, I think the best way I can background my question to Dr. West today is to summarize two recent constituent conversations. The first constituent was new to our province and was very complimentary of our public-sector parks and the way they had vastly improved accessibility to our park areas and facilities for our citizenry at large. Several weeks later I was approached by another constituent who had . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Excuse me, could we have order in the committee, please. The speaker can't be heard.

MR. PAYNE: I was approached a few weeks later by another constituent who was of a different view. He was a private-sector campground operator, and he questioned the philosophical basis for a very generous subsidy program that, in fact, put a public-sector or heavily subsidized campground on one side of the street in an enhanced competitive position compared to the private-sector operator who was operating strictly on his own resources and those he could attract from investors.

3:52

With those two conversations in mind, I wonder if the minister could comment to the committee on how he strikes a balance between those two perspectives as he addresses those programs that are currently funded by the heritage fund and those that might be considered for future investment.

DR. WEST: That exactly sums up the concerns I have out in Alberta today. As I said, we have close to 10,000 campsites in the MRTA program and the municipal programs we have funded, but the private sector also has around 10,500, and we must always look at the balance between competition for the sake of competition and competition for the sake of service where the private sector cannot provide the services. Our policies in the future should be balanced against that very issue of whether we're competing with the private sector or whether we should turn the services over to the private sector if they can make a living at it and do it more efficiently. That has to do in all areas of the government, not just in the programs developed under the Heritage Savings Trust Fund. But we must be consistent to allow the very essence of what the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark alluded to: that we must allow the private sector to go into business, but also the opportunity to do the sole investment. Kananaskis Country in its establishment is a unique beginning in this province to target that \$10 billion tourist industry that we want by the year 2000.

Sometimes it takes guts and determination by governments to kick off certain industries and then allow the private sector to take over. I really think the heritage fund has done that in a meaningful way, not only through its urban parks program, its MRTA, Kananaskis Country, Fish Creek, or Capital City park which you support in a meaningful way. It will help bring more industry by the private sector involved in the service industry and tourist industry in the future. By no means should we look back at all the negatives, but look forward to the positives. I trust this committee will do so in the future.

MR. PAYNE: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to pull out a second pea from the same philosophical pod and ask the minister how he strikes a balance between the constituent on the one hand who feels that in times of economic restraint and fiscal difficulty we should attempt to make publicly funded facilities as cost recoverable as possible, whereas, on the other hand, we often hear constituents in some parts of Calgary allege that Kananaskis is becoming increasingly inaccessible to them because of the year-by-year escalation in various user fees. Is the minister prepared to comment on how he is prepared to strike a balance between those two competing perspectives?

DR. WEST: Only to say that we are now looking across Canada at all the services provided to the traveling public and we will bring our fee schedules and government services into line, and also looking at the private-sector initiatives in the province of Alberta and bringing our fee schedules into line so that we're not unduly competing with them.

Kananaskis Country is certainly a unique resource, and there are certain individuals who may say that their access is limited. If I look at the costs in Kananaskis and the access to various levels of campgrounds and services, I do not believe there's any limitation to people going to Kananaskis who pick and choose the certain services they can afford. Certain people cannot afford certain golf courses out in the private sector whether it be Edmonton or Vermilion. I'm sure there are limitations to certain individuals golfing at Kananaskis golf course as there would be at any golf course in the centre of the city of Calgary. But still there are places in Kananaskis Country where people can access services under the same level of costs of all provincial parks and all recreation areas. I trust that that will continually be maintained as we go forward in the future. But certainly there are prohibitions to people's resources and the costs not just in government services but in all services produced out here in the private sector. So to those people who are saying that, I say study what's going on in general society, not just one specific government resource.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Final supplementary.

MR. PAYNE: Well, Mr. Chairman, those have been two very helpful responses to philosophical questions, and I hope they

haven't been too unduly philosophical today.

DR. WEST: They're real; they're not philosophical.

MR. PAYNE: Well, the minister quite properly whispers that they are real, not necessarily philosophical, but that was sufficient to deflect the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek from his third question.

Oh, yes. More of an observation than a question, and that is: as the minister works his way through the investment formula that embodies the philosophical principles he's enunciated today, I would hope he will take into account one important variable, and that is that the citizens of Alberta who are accessing these facilities, these parks that have been built by heritage funds and other tax dollars, are in fact part owners. They in fact have already invested, at least to the extent that they have been income tax paying citizens or to the extent that they have, through their MLAs, expressed support for certain heritage fund investment decisions, which distinguishes, I suppose, those facilities from those that are purely private-sector facilities.

DR. WEST: That, again, is more philosophical than ever, and I must address the member by saying that that is true: Albertans, through the Heritage Savings Trust Fund and their taxes, have built some of the best infrastructure in North America. But building the capital and maintaining it are two different issues, and now Albertans must be addressed to using those services and paying for their upkeep and maintenance. That will take a user fee the same as is addressed in the private sector. So I trust the taxpayer wants these operations maintained in the same respect that the private sector would, and that's going to take increased or consistent user fees regardless of who made the investment.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

We'll conclude our meeting; the time is spent. Our appreciation again to the minister and to his department officials who accompanied him. We appreciated the forthright answers and the information that has come to us on the expenditures of his department from the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund.

One announcement prior to a motion for adjournment. Our next meeting will be tomorrow morning at 10 when the Hon. Fred Stewart, Minister of Technology, Research and Telecommunications, will appear before the committee in the Chamber – not here. Please note that the Chamber will be ready again to accommodate our meetings.

I'd recognize the Member for Lacombe.

MR. MOORE: I move we adjourn.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. The meeting stands adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 3:58 p.m.]

