

2:02 p.m.

Tuesday, October 30, 1990

[Chairman: Mr. Ady]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'd like to call the meeting to order and to welcome the Hon. LeRoy Fjordbotten, the Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife, to appear before the committee today. I appreciate him taking the time to be here, and we'd like to recognize the fact that he has some of his department officials in the gallery. We welcome them here with us as well.

We would like to make available to members – if they have recommendations they'd like to read into the record at this time. If not, we'd like to have the minister make some opening remarks if he chooses and outline that as near as the Chair can tell, this minister does not have any projects that drew money from the fund in the year ended 1989-90. They are all projects that have been completed, those being the grazing reserves development and the Alberta reforestation nursery and also another one, Maintaining Our Forests. It would be appropriate to have questions on those projects, and with that we'll turn the time to the minister for opening comments.

MR. FJORBOTTEN: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to review my department's involvement with the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund. Many of the programs that have been undertaken in support of this fund continue to play a major role in the diversification, really, of Alberta's economy. The sustained development of our renewable resources has certainly always been a very high priority and still the priority of our department. One of the purposes of the fund when it was established in 1976 – and that purpose is still valid today – was to develop our renewable resources. My comments today will cover the Pine Ridge forestry operation, some reforestation initiatives, and the provincial grazing reserves program. I'll be pleased to answer any questions that you might have today, and the questions I'm not able to answer, I'm happy to get the answers and will provide them to the committee.

Mr. Chairman, I wish to express my appreciation for the support at the last sitting of the Committee of Supply for the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, during which funding for the retrofit of the Pine Ridge nursery was approved. Tree production at Pine Ridge is an important component of our seedling supply strategy, and we expect the retrofitted and expanded facilities near Smoky Lake will eventually grow over 30 million trees, which represents about one-third of our annual requirement. Currently the balance comes from private-sector growers, and we're working with Alberta growers to help accelerate their capacity. I'm happy to report that the Pine Ridge retrofit project is well under way and proceeding on schedule. Design and development work is 80 percent completed, and construction has commenced on site at the present time.

As you'll recall from the discussions last spring, Mr. Chairman, funding for this project will total \$8.1 million over three fiscal years. Important benefits are increased growing space, and that will show direct results in the enhancements. There is upgrading of the current greenhouse structures that will increase existing greenhouse capacity by 2 million, upgrading of the present shade frames, increased greenhouse growing space, doubled seedling cold storage capacity and developing the bare root production field space, and growing a larger percentage of our stock in larger transplants.

It's really important – and I emphasize it's important – that the committee supported the Pine Ridge upgrading. This is the year that I've been working with the forest industry to bring in free-to-grow reforestation standards, and the upgrading is an important vote of support for our reforestation standards. These new reforestation standards are tough and are going to be very expensive for the industry. Essentially they mean that a quota holder or an FMA holder will not be released from the reforestation requirements until their trees are well established and growing well. The added costs are an investment in sustainable development, and the forest industry acknowledges that need as an essential part of doing business.

As you stated, Mr. Chairman, the Maintaining Our Forests program was an eight-year program, and that concluded in 1986-87 with the planting of 45,000 hectares, or 111,000 acres, with tree seedlings and the establishment of tree improvement programs with the industry. There's been no heritage fund involvement since that time. Since the expiry of that program, the development of the reforested areas has been further enhanced by tending or removal of competition on some nearly 50,000 acres. Support for that activity, for maintaining that, has come from the Canada/Alberta forest resource development program and more recently from the public lands development program. Just so members are aware, the latter program utilizes revenues that Alberta receives from the softwood lumber tax. Many of the areas reforested under that program still suffer from heavy vegetation competition, so it'll be necessary to continue to stand-tend that for some time.

Mr. Chairman, there's quite a bit on the grazing reserve program that I think members may have questions about, and I'm happy to try to answer them, as well as on the landowner habitat program. But I wanted to make some broader comments about Pine Ridge because I think it's an excellent program.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

I recognize our first question from the Member for Ponoka-Rimbey.

MR. JONSON: Yes, Mr. Chairman. I have a particular interest in the grazing reserve program, having a couple on the western end of the constituency. We have in previous sessions talked about the cost to the Treasury of these particular reserves now that they're actually in place. I'd like to ask the minister just what progress has been made with respect to balancing the books, so to speak, with respect to these reserves and their operation.

MR. FJORBOTTEN: Well, as members are aware, there was a significant deficit in that program, and I committed to bringing it up to a break-even, where it wasn't costing the Treasury. I wasn't totally successful this last year; we're about \$80,000 short of breaking even. Some of that was because of the inflationary costs that weren't taken fully into account, the things that we have to buy and the inflation cost of that. But we're getting up now that I'm hopeful I'll be able to get to a break-even and maybe even a little profit out of that. It's not profit motivated, but I don't think it should be a drain on the Treasury, and I wasn't as successful as I thought I could be.

MR. JONSON: A supplementary question, Mr. Chairman. I'm glad to know that the direction is one of diminishing the deficit, but I would like to ask the minister if I'm correct in assuming that in terms of reducing the deficit, we're talking about

balancing the books as far as the year-to-year costs of operation are concerned. There's still not any return being realized here or planned for with respect to the initial investment on the cost of the land and so forth. Is that correct?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Right. I don't really believe there'll be a return in that sense, because they're all operated on the basis of a multiple-use concept. They're not only used for grazing, but they're used for a wide variety of other things as well. A benefit comes from that to all Albertans, whether or not they actually graze cattle there, so I personally don't believe we'll get into where it will recapture a lot of the cost, but of course it should recapture some.

MR. JONSON: Mr. Chairman, in terms of my last supplementary, looking down the road with the budget situation of the province and the various demands for provincial funding, I would hope there's no plan to add to this grazing reserve program. However, I wonder, in the minister's capacity in charge of this program, if there is any representation being made for any additions to this program.

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Yes, there is. There are many requests that come in, and I'd be happy to try and provide that number. But there are a lot more applications for livestock than the program will allow. There are areas that have said they would like to have a grazing reserve program as well, but I have no plans whatsoever to expand it. It's unfortunate that some of them aren't able to get in. I did have the numbers, but I can't recall what the numbers actually are now. There is a waiting list.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.  
The Member for Clover Bar.

2:12

MR. GESELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good afternoon to the minister. I wanted to talk a little bit about Pine Ridge nursery. First, a comment, perhaps, if you would permit me. There's a considerable interest in reforestation in my constituency, and I've taken the opportunity to actually load up a bus with my constituents and take them out to Pine Ridge. They found that extremely helpful. Their comments back to me that I want to pass on to the minister are that they feel this is just a superb facility and that it meets a definite need in Alberta in reforestation. I can say to the minister that they were extremely impressed with what we're doing at Pine Ridge.

My questions relate to Pine Ridge as well, Mr. Chairman. With the reforestation standards that the minister has indicated will be tougher, what impact will these standards have on Pine Ridge? I know we're going through the expansion and it's in the works. But looking ahead, are these standards going to place additional demands on Pine Ridge that maybe aren't planned for, or are we all right in that way?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: There's no doubt that the reforestation standards we're now in the process of implementing, once I get all the approvals through and get sanctioned to do it all, will put pressure on the industry in total, and there will be some pressure on Pine Ridge. Some 103 million seedlings are what we're going to need by the mid-90s. We're looking at how do we meet that demand. Now, Pine Ridge, for example, will contribute about 31 million of those seedlings, then the forest management agreement holders themselves will produce another 12 million at their own cost, and there will be contracting of about 60

million seedlings. In addition to that, we may have a regional container facility, but the decision hasn't been made yet on that one.

The pressure could come on Pine Ridge to deliver more, because even this year we're a little short of the number of seedlings I'd like to see us have. We're going to have to contract more, and the pressure could come on, but I don't really believe Pine Ridge should be growing more there. In fact, the plan was 55-45, 55 percent of the seedlings coming from the private sector and 45 from government, or roughly a 50-50 split. I frankly believe we can have the private-sector growers, and through our starter program we're getting a number of new growers started in a small way, and they can grow and develop and expand. I really believe we can count on the private-sector growers, rather than government's actual expansion, to meet a lot of those needs. So even though, yes, there will be some pressure on Pine Ridge, I think the private sector is capable of handling it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.  
Supplementary?

MR. GESELL: I think the minister in his response has actually answered some of the supplementaries I had, so I'll pass on.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.  
The Member for Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: I had a couple of questions, Mr. Minister, fairly easy. I was quite pleased to hear you say that you're going to increase or try to at least keep it at 50-50 private/public enterprise. As you know, that has been something I've pushed for for some time, and I'm glad to see you're doing so.

I wanted to ask a couple of questions on the successfulness of your seedling program. I know your seedlings more than take care of what you've cut down, but then with the survival rate of the seedling program, are you coming closer to replacing everything we've cut? In other words, I've seen statistics to show that what we've put out more than compensates for what we've cut down in the last 10 years, but what I'm more concerned with is what the survival rate is. What's your count? What's your survival rate on the seedlings?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Chairman, it's a good question. There is a backlog, but we've got to be careful when we talk about percentages, about how successful our reforestation is, because it's this: first of all, you have seedlings that have a lot of competition and maybe didn't meet a certain standard. It doesn't mean that what hasn't met the standard hasn't been reforested at all, but it's not quite meeting the standard. We have some backlog to do, but I have to say that once we get these free-to-grow standards fully in place, what's going to happen is that with the stand-tending that will be mandatory by the industry before they can get a check-off at certain dates over a longer period of time, that is going to be taken care of. But we have to do some of the backlog in areas that weren't properly done. There was some of that. There are some that aren't quite meeting the standards.

Maybe the easiest way is a little bit of show and tell. For example, when you have a forest fire go through and it burns an area off, a lot of that area is left to regenerate naturally. When you go out there to look at those seedlings, you have to scrape the grass away to find them. There is a healthy seedling, but it's five years old - five years. A lot of that area was left to

naturally, by nature, regenerate, and what we've got is that right there. So it's stated that it doesn't meet the standard. But it was naturally done, and of course it didn't meet the standard. I brought you this to show you that this is a three-year seedling that we're planting compared to this five-year seedling that was done there. I wouldn't mind if you all had a look at this picture. Now remember, this is a five-year seedling, and this is out of some of the money that was spent by the heritage fund in the Maintaining Our Forests program. See this man standing here and the tree above him? That's a five-year tree funded by the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund, as against nature's way of five years over here.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Minister, *Hansard* can't see that, so if you could just sort of describe your five-year seedling and your three-year.

MR. FJORBOTTEN: The little tree here that's five years, that's natural, is about three inches long. The three-year seedling here is about a foot high; it's in a container. The picture that I just showed showed a five-year tree over six feet high, nearly seven feet tall. So when we talk about the backlog, let's remember what we're talking about. We're talking about something that was naturally done, that doesn't meet our standard of today, what we're doing today and what the free-to-grow standards will put into place.

Now, we're going to have to go back and do some of these areas; they're just not proper. I'm going to ask for a few more dollars to do that. I don't know if I can win that argument, but I'm going to attempt to.

MR. TAYLOR: A supplemental along that line. In other words, then, you can't make a percentage. Forecasting just overall, would you say 80 percent of your seedlings are surviving, or 70 percent?

MR. FJORBOTTEN: I'm looking for direction from my staff. I think he's saying 85; is that right? [interjection] Ninety.

MR. TAYLOR: Ninety; well, that's pretty good.

Well, then, I go on from that. Now, that's in the coniferous area. There were some Finnish people here the other day, I guess a couple of weeks ago, and they were telling me something that I thought was interesting, and I thought I'd carry it on to you. It's that in the hardwoods regeneration, the aspen, you have the opposite problem of seedlings. If you do not kill some of the root things coming up, you get such a thatch coming back that it's no good; it's just like a bunch of mulberry bushes, or whatever you want to call it. What system do we use, then, to try . . . The poplar forest didn't come up that great. If you clear-cut a poplar forest, apparently it comes back like alder or a bush, and nothing will grow. That's right. How do you handle that?

MR. FJORBOTTEN: It's an important component. When you harvest aspen, it grows back very quickly. In fact, in some areas of the province you can get up to seven feet of growth a year. But what happens is that - you're right - it comes back very thick. So there's going to have to be thinning done, or else you're going to end up with a bunch of little twigs growing rather than some proper-size trees. Also in those areas we have to do some stand-tending as well, because we don't want a monoculture back in those areas. We want the kind of forest back there that was there before. There are some interspersed

coniferous in there, so all of those things have to be taken into account.

2:22

So there will have to be stand-tending. I will say that I would hope the heritage fund - it was going to be part of my opening comment pitch that we need a little more research money. I think there needs to be us spending a little more money on aspen research because aspen really hasn't been utilized to any magnitude until now. Also, we need to force the companies to do more in research and get the universities doing more in that area. We can learn a lot about it. We know we can regenerate aspen. We know we can do it and we can be effective at doing it, but I believe it's a learning process: we learn more and learn how to do it better. But we need to tend each of those stands as well.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Final supplementary, followed by the Member for Edmonton-Centre.

MR. MOORE: Four questions.

MR. TAYLOR: I am a little concerned that part of the research for thinning . . .

MR. MOORE: Four. Are you making up for this morning? Mr. Chairman, on a point of order.

MR. TAYLOR: I get another round, Mr. Chairman.

One of the things that bothers me a bit, Mr. Minister, is that some of the little I've read on being able to thin out hardwood or the aspen forest involves chemicals. Could you tell the committee whether or not we are using chemicals to hold back competition for our new trees, either competition from the weeds or competition from maybe other aspen?

MR. FJORBOTTEN: Well, it's a very sensitive issue. If you mention herbicides, everybody gets bent out of shape. But let's realize something: right now we don't use chemicals to keep down the vegetation. We do some research projects, and we work it through the Department of the Environment. There are a couple of chemicals that are biocides; they really aren't herbicides. I believe there is merit in looking at whether or not they can be environmentally safely used - the cost of doing some of the work is expensive - and the effectiveness of it. Now, what we're talking about with using some of these isn't killing everything on the ground; it's trying to give this seedling a chance to get going. So the industry is looking at it; my department's looking at it. It's not a plan. We don't have any plan, or there's no sinister movement under way to do this. The free-to-grow standards are brought in on the basis of no herbicides. Herbicides could be far more effective in specific uses, maybe, but it's one area that's going to take a lot more debate and a lot more discussion before we do it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: We'll give the Member for Edmonton-Centre a moment to collect his thoughts. We'll recognize the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

MR. PAYNE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wonder if I might ask a question or two as a follow-up to the very worthwhile questions posed by the Member for Clover Bar. It would have to do with the area of the Pine Ridge Forest Nursery and some of the broader issues associated with that facility. I recognize

that earlier today the minister spoke to the question of private-sector and public-sector participation in the tree seedling supply industry. I have to ask the question that's been posed by one or two constituents, and that is: can the minister explain why the forest industry doesn't pay for their own seedlings? Why should that be deserving of government subsidy?

MR. FJORBOTTEN: Mr. Chairman, historically, through all the FMAs and everything, the government did provide the seedlings. Now, the responsibility of the industry: if an area is harvested, it goes through the entire process; it has to be computerized and everything is logged on what wood is there and where it went and all those things. But they pick the seed from the best trees, and it's the industry's responsibility to do that. Then they send it to Pine Ridge. What Pine Ridge does is clean the seed, and then it goes into growth containers and goes back into areas that are at the same elevation – if not the same area, the same elevation, at least, and the same general area the seed stock came from because they're healthier and more adaptable. The overall cost to the industry is very significant, because they not only have to collect the cones but have to plant that seedling, tend it, thin it, and do all those things. Those costs are about 85 percent of the cost of regeneration; 15 percent of the cost is the seedling. Now, they do provide some of the seedlings at their own cost, but we provide the bulk of the seedlings to them. That was historically the way, it is the way in the new forest management agreements, and it's also one way of making absolutely sure we have a quality tree put back where that tree came out of.

MR. PAYNE: Mr. Chairman, that's very helpful information, information I'm certainly prepared to share with those constituents who have raised that question.

Shifting gears slightly but staying within the same general area, I wonder if the minister could bring the committee up to date as to the status of the proposed public regional container tree nursery facility? Where does that sit?

MR. FJORBOTTEN: Well, I think we really need a container facility somewhere in northwestern Alberta for about 26 million seedlings. But I've had some studies done to find out: are we doing the right thing; is it the right approach? There's a suggestion made that the private sector is quite capable of providing seedlings, and I want to give that a good shot to see if that's possible before I start building another government facility. In the operations of some 15 small ones in the private sector, now that we've got started and they're expanded and growing, there may be merit in not having to do that actual container facility ourselves, the cost of it, and letting the private sector do it. There's been no final decision. There are some 22 communities that have come in and made their pitch about locating there. We've gone out with Public Works and assessed those communities to find out if the infrastructure is there and what the costs are and the water and everything else. If we were going to do it, we're narrowing the list down to a shorter list of where we would consider. But, frankly, I need a little more time to assess whether or not the private sector can do it. It's my view that if they can do it, that's the way it should be done.

MR. PAYNE: Mr. Chairman, as a final supplementary and given the latitude that's been extended in previous meetings to the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, I would like to ask the minister: is there any area where the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund might further participate in Alberta's reforestation

activities, such as our much-heralded involvement in the Maintaining Our Forests program of several years ago? I trust the chairman deems that question in order.

MR. FJORBOTTEN: Well, Mr. Chairman, yes, there is. I think what we really need is some dollars put into research and a research component on the forestry side. Now, that would supplement what we're already doing. Through the support we've had from the Heritage Savings Trust Fund, we've learned a great deal about our reforestation potential for the province. Our reforestation carried under the Maintaining Our Forests program allowed us to take advantage of some cost-shared programs also in forestry that we wouldn't have had any other way. So it was an excellent vehicle.

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We're currently getting close to a final agreement on a federal/provincial agreement, and I hope we can carry out further research on reforestation problem sites such as the Naylor Hills, a prime example that was out there. It was too wet an area and we weren't able to get it regenerated, and we need to test methods of establishing trees on site. So I think there's a special challenge there in the whole area of research, and working with the Forest Service research program and Forestry Canada and the heritage fund could play a very, very useful role in that area, in my view.

MR. PAYNE: Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Member for Edmonton-Centre.

REV. ROBERTS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I've been preoccupied over lunch with another matter, and I just have three questions which I hope the minister could respond to. I hope people haven't gone over them already.

I was very impressed and had some questions at the Pine Ridge nursery on the whole area of genetic research and development of seedlings; "tree improvement," I guess, is the best way. I guess I really want some update in terms of what's going on there, particularly in the area of disease management in the forests and among the trees.

From personal experience, I had a terrible time this summer having to cut down two mountain ash trees in my backyard because of fire blight that's sort of going through the neighbourhood. It's a dreadful thing to have to cut down a tree because of disease. I'm just wondering about the degree to which disease or other issues around better genetic management and research into our forests – how that is proceeding and what account is being made of that kind of effort.

MR. FJORBOTTEN: Mr. Chairman, I'd have to get a report. I'm happy to do that, and provide what we've done. But basically that's nature's way. It's historical that once trees get a certain age, they usually get weaker and disease hits them; that's usually the problem. But when you talk about genetics and what we're doing in actual diseases, I think that's a very good question. I'm happy to provide that to the committee, and hopefully you'll take that under consideration when you're deciding whether or not you want to look at a research component from the heritage fund into this. That may be one component of it. I know a little bit about it, but I don't know enough to be able to give you an answer that I think would be helpful.

REV. ROBERTS: Fair enough.

I guess my other area of interest . . . I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman; I must beg your indulgence. I'm not quite sure; it must be under Maintaining Our Forests, but it's the whole program around management of forest fires. When we were in Kananaskis, we were told of some terrific new technology, early detection, which is able to detect lightning strikes and the rest in our forests, and greater control of forest fires. I hadn't heard anything this past summer, whether we were up or down in terms of the number of fires in the province and whether this new technology is aiding in better detection and control of destruction of our forests because of fires.

MR. FJORBOTTEN: Well, Mr. Chairman, there isn't anything out of the heritage fund on that particular thing, but I'll give you the quick answer anyway. We have the best fire detection system anywhere in North America. If lightning strikes in the Northwest Territories, we can tell you where right to the second. We can identify, and when storms move through, it's gone very well. We had a terrible year this year in forest fires, frankly. There's a special warrant going through now to add a little more money, because I'm up to just about \$53 million in costs for fighting forest fires this last year. It's more expensive because what we've been trying to do is to protect the forest rather than just letting it burn. The early detections helped a lot. Our water bombers that we do have help a lot. Some of them are getting a little older and need to be replaced. But the overall thing with forest fires is that it's very expensive. The technology we have is excellent; the training we have in our staff, in our heli-tack and early response, has been very effective. But believe me, it's cost a lot money to try and do it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

REV. ROBERTS: I couldn't have a supplementary on that one. Anyway, the last area I'm concerned about is, again, recent reports by the Lubicon Band of logging on their lands, and I'm wondering whether it's to do with the reforestation or the maintaining of our forests. If the minister could outline more clearly how this encroachment on native reserve lands, particularly for the Lubicons, is causing them such distress in a way that there could be some further repercussions of disruption of their lands.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, I really believe your . . .

REV. ROBERTS: I mean, is this not a forum for public debate and concerns that people have in our . . . [interjections] It says right here: Alberta forestry, reforestation.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, I'm not sure that that's the issue before the committee today.

REV. ROBERTS: I just want to know the degree to which the minister is having to deal with these dollars for maintaining forests, reforestation generally, how that is encroaching, how he's having to deal with native groups in the province, particularly the Lubicons.

MR. FJORBOTTEN: I can find a slim thread there, Mr. Chairman, to give an answer.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Very slim.

MR. FJORBOTTEN: I think one area where we may be able to be of help to the native bands is that we have no responsibility on Indian reserves at all. We don't do any logging there - that's theirs - and reforestation, whatever they do, is the federal government, period. I don't believe the federal government does a great job in their reforestation. It's been proven out in certain areas. Now, we are happy. We've shown leadership in Alberta among all other provinces. No one even comes close in trying to resolve native land claims and do that. An area we may want to have discussion with them on is reforestation on the Indian reserves and trying to help them with that. Now, that in my view would be a good program, because a lot of the wood that's coming for a lot of the mills will come from Indian reserves. I found the thread, Mr. Chairman.

REV. ROBERTS: Just answer my question.

MR. FJORBOTTEN: I think that technology and everything else when working with native bands and trying to help them do that - because they have wood to sell and many of them are planning to sell wood to different mills, we can help them in that area. I think they have responsibility to get those dollars from the federal government as much as they can. I don't know where the fence is there as far as provincial responsibility, but the natives of this province are part of Alberta, and if we can help them in improving their forests, I'm all in favour of doing it.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

MR. TAYLOR: Mr. Chairman, back again to reforestation and chemicals and the whole idea of trying to restore what God has put there. I gather in many of the more progressive administrations now there is a realization that reforestation is not enough and taking clear-cuts quite often leaves us out of - I don't know what you want to call it - the ancient forest or the original forest, an arboreal reserve. So that we don't lose touch with what was originally there, I gather Finland is trying - what? - about one square mile out of every nine or something. Are we working towards some policy of keeping, say, the original one-tenth or one-ninth or one-fifteenth in each township or every dozen square miles as almost a laboratory, leaving it alone just to give us a match or a comparison with our reforestation efforts? Because it's not enough just to say one generation; it may be three or four. Things like even the mushrooms on the forest floor might give a different flora or fauna, a different type of animal life. In other words, it's much more complex than we originally thought. It's not just planting trees. As we've already found with the hardwood trees, they come back too thick. Some experts are saying now that we should preserve one out of every nine or 10 square miles. Are we going that way?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. TAYLOR: I hear distant rumblings there. Should we give him a Rolaid to settle his stomach?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Less preamble would be appropriate.

MR. FJORBOTTEN: Mr. Chairman, there are two parts to that question. The first part is that I don't like percentages like that, because in some areas it should be 100 percent and in some areas it's zero. To answer your question, yes, we are, and that's part of our forest management planning process. We want to

make sure we're not only protecting it for the trees' sake, but there are wildlife concerns and other things, natural areas and the diversity that's out there, that we want to protect, and we are doing that. That's part of the process.

When you talk about those areas and talk about clear-cut, I learned something yesterday from one of my staff members in the department who said that they had an awful time trying to explain clear-cut to people. The first thing she told me: what she is doing now is when someone raises that, she says, "Please tell me what you understand clear-cut to be." When someone explains that, she says, "Well, that isn't anything like we do in Alberta." Many of them have driven out to British Columbia, saw slopes that were logged. We don't allow that here. The size of the cuts they don't allow here. "What do you actually mean by that?" So, yes, we want to protect the natural diversity - we are and will even more so under the public involvement process and the public planning process - to maintain old-growth forest for caribou, to take our wildlife concerns into account when we do it. But I don't agree with one out of nine or whatever, because in some areas, frankly, it should be 100 percent, and is; in other areas it should be zero.

2:42

MR. TAYLOR: A supplementary then. What's bothering me about the minister's answer is that I think it's quite important to preserve, in perpetuity almost, any ancient thing. We're doing it with grasslands. I know you don't think that much of a swamp; I read the other day about your putting a road through Lily Lake. I'm talking about in our local paper I read where a minister wants to put a road through the middle of the lake.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm not sure that's pertinent to the issue today.

MR. TAYLOR: [Inaudible] ancient forest preserve, an ancient forest preserve within, I'd say, at least every township. And to wave me off and say, "Well, we're going to put a little bit up there by Wood Buffalo National Park," and then bald the rest of the country is not the answer. I think there should be a policy of ancient forest preserves in every so many square miles. You're saying that you're not going to do it that way. You haven't even mentioned the words "ancient forest."

MR. FJORBOTTEN: Mr. Chairman, maybe I could ask the hon. member a question. What does he mean by "ancient"?

MR. TAYLOR: One that's untouched.

MR. FJORBOTTEN: Untouched by whom?

MR. TAYLOR: Untouched by man.

MR. FJORBOTTEN: For how long?

MR. TAYLOR: Forever.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. members, I guess . . . [interjections] Hon. member, you've got to articulate just a little more clearly the intent of your question.

MR. TAYLOR: It's like native grassland, grassland that's not been touched. You leave it go and go and go forever. It might be prairie fires; it may be deer, whatever it is. That's all I'm

saying: certain sections of forest that are never touched, never logged, never anything done to them.

MR. FJORBOTTEN: The answer to that question is that if the hon. member has specific areas that he thinks we should be protecting, I'm happy to look at them. You've got to remember that most of this province has been fire burned a number of times, and when you start talking about ancient, we're not talking about the redwoods here. I believe in protecting old-growth forest, and we are. But if there are specific areas that you or anyone think should be protected, they should bring them forward. We're happy to look at them.

MR. TAYLOR: One more supplementary. The old growth that you're talking about, like down in the Porcupine Hills, that's something separate entirely; that's a special thing. No, I'm talking about something that was always a touchstone that you come back to in each area, an ancient area. We use it a lot in other sciences.

Let's go on a bit though. The other supplemental. There was a federal Bill, C-29, put in last year talking about creating a federal forestry department. Have we had time to see how that impinges on Alberta, the provinces? Are any grants or moneys available, or any co-operation?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, could you just explain to the Chair how that relates to the projects that the . . .

MR. TAYLOR: I think it would relate because if the federal government is funding certain types of research, this just means that our dollar will go farther. That was just what I basically wondered. In other words, can we access some federal funds because of the new federal Act that will allow the funds that are presently set aside for forestry research to go farther?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, the Chair just has a difficult time with that question. It's hypothetical, it's way out, and it doesn't relate, really, to those specific projects that we have spent money on or the accountability of the minister for what he has done with the money. I just really have a difficult time with that final supplementary, hon. member.

MR. TAYLOR: Let's word it another way. Has he accessed any federal funds in the past year under the new Bill C-29? That would be simple. After all, we're asking how the minister spent our money. If he has spent our money on things that he could have got done for nothing from the federal government, then I'm interested in learning. I'm just interested in learning whether or not he accessed any federal funds for research.

MR. FJORBOTTEN: No.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

The Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

MR. MITCHELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to ask the minister first about the Millar Western pulp mill investment and whether he has some indication of . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Just a minute, hon. member. That's not a project that relates to this minister. We've had that minister before this committee, and you've had ample opportunity to put questions to that minister.

MR. MITCHELL: This is a project that came directly under this minister's department, the division of forestry development.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Millar Western was funded through the Department of Economic Development and Trade, and that minister has been before this committee. Questions were put to that minister by the hon. member himself relative to that project.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Chairman, a point of order.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The Chair is not going to allow a question relative to the funding of that project to this minister.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Chairman, this minister's department would have pursued Millar Western through its forestry development division. His department supervises Millar Western's forestry management agreement. This department deals daily with Millar Western. This department would know whether Millar Western is making money or not and could pay this debenture. That's what I want to ask. I don't see how that can be unrelated.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, it is not the responsibility of this minister to determine whether Millar Western ever makes a dollar. That's not his mandate. We had the minister before us who had that responsibility, and I would expect that if we reviewed *Hansard*, that very question was put to that minister by the hon. member himself. So, hon. member, can you come up with a question that's more relevant to the projects funded to his department from the Heritage Savings Trust Fund? If not, then please acknowledge, and I'll pass on to the next questioner.

MR. MITCHELL: Not to worry. I will come up with three other questions. Thank you.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let's focus them directly, then, to the minister on his responsibilities from the Heritage Savings Trust Fund.

MR. MITCHELL: Has the minister studies, projections, documents that we could see which clearly indicate that there will be a sufficient supply of seedlings to match the demand that will be created once this range of pulp mill and other forestry projects come to fruition?

MR. FJORBOTTEN: Mr. Chairman, I've answered that question on the seedling numbers already and today in this committee. But in answer to the question: we have done enough internal work that, yes, we can.

MR. MITCHELL: But that wasn't my question. My question, Mr. Chairman, was: could we see the studies?

MR. CHAIRMAN: That was your question.

MR. MITCHELL: My question was: could we see the studies?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Your question to the minister was: did he have studies and has he done them? He said yes, he has. That to me constitutes a question and an answer. Now, supplementary.

MR. MITCHELL: Could he please give us the studies?

MR. FJORBOTTEN: Mr. Chairman, the work that I had done is internal, done by the Forest Service. I provided not only the numbers of seedlings that are going to be required; I provided where those numbers are going to come from. And I answered the question, saying, "Yes, we do have the seedlings."

MR. CHAIRMAN: Final supplementary.

MR. MITCHELL: My final supplementary concerns grazing reserves. Mr. Chairman, my concern would be that we have asked the heritage trust fund to invest a good deal of money in grazing reserves when we might have been able to get that money, instead of from the heritage trust fund, from revenue that currently accrues to holders of grazing leases through no particular . . .

MR. PAYNE: Point of order.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Point of order. Yes, Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

MR. PAYNE: On a point of order, Mr. Chairman, I might refer you and the other members of the committee to page 124 of last year's *Hansard* with respect to the deliberations of this committee, where in response to a similar question posed by this member, your response, Mr. Chairman, included these words:

I really believe you need to deal with grazing leases at the time of estimates. That's really the place for that to be dealt with. Grazing reserves are the issue of the day.

I think that was timely advice in 1989, Mr. Chairman, and I would submit that it's even more timely advice today to this member.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Chairman, you can't do this job yourself?

MR. CHAIRMAN: The chairman always appreciates whatever timely assistance can come from members of the committee. The Chair is in the hands of the committee.

MR. TAYLOR: Point of order.

MR. CHAIRMAN: On that point of order, hon. member?

MR. TAYLOR: On that point of order. I think the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek is more up to date than he usually is when he was quoting something from two years ago. But the most recent report put out by our committee says, under Minister of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife, page 11, that one of the things we questioned the minister on that we were interested in was the "cost/benefit factors of the grazing reserve program." So if it's in our books that it was such a wonderful thing that we did last year, why can't we continue that wonderful thing to this year?

2:52

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Chairman, I don't see how we can properly evaluate where heritage trust fund money is being used, specifically when it's being used on grazing reserves, if we can't ask about trade-off programs that would allow us to not have to use heritage trust fund money for grazing reserves. I mean, there's money that is being made, windfall profits, by grazing leaseholders that should probably more properly come to Albertans. I want to know, one, how much that money is, and two, why it is that we're not using that money for developing

grazing reserves instead of using heritage trust fund money. I don't think that's out of order at all. I'm surprised that Calgary-Fish Creek would be like this. He must be having a bad day.

MR. CHAIRMAN: To the minister. Is the minister prepared to give some response to this very fringelike question on the part of the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark?

MR. FJORBOTTEN: Mr. Chairman, the grazing reserves program is one that has been very exciting, very much appreciated and respected, that the heritage fund put dollars into. It's to establish grazing reserves in areas of the province where there was not grazing capacity for livestock and to enhance that. It took brush clearing and a number of things to do that, and it created opportunities for Albertans.

Not only that, but it's very hard to do a cost/benefit analysis of the program. I've been targeting to try and get to a break-even position on the program. I stated earlier today that I haven't quite made it yet; I'm about \$80,000 short of a break-even point because the inflation factor wasn't fully taken into account. But when we talk about the cost/benefit analysis, the grazing reserves are not only for grazing; they're managed on a multiple-use concept. The reserves offer opportunities for trail riding, snowmobile rallies, cross-country skiing, hunting dog trials, Boy Scout camps, winter survival camps, and numerous 4-H activities in addition to just the grazing on those reserves. So not only did the heritage fund establish those reserves and do a lot of good things; it has established opportunities for all Albertans, whether rural or urban, to benefit.

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

MR. MOORE: Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I was waiting patiently to get in with my questions all afternoon, and by the time it came around, Mr. Taylor and Mr. Roberts have asked most of my questions. I appreciate them getting in and getting the answers, and I appreciated the replies of the minister as he covered the three projects under his jurisdiction related to the heritage trust fund. I note that those three projects are all completed projects. We've had some very good questions asked about them, and we appreciate the answers from the minister.

However, I note that questions like mine from most members of this group have apparently all been answered, and I see the quality of the questions isn't related to the subject, so I move that we adjourn. If any member wants to do a little more homework, I'm sure the minister's office door is open and they can get answers. So I move that we adjourn. [interjections]

SOME HON. MEMBERS: There are people on the list.  
[interjections]

MR. CHAIRMAN: I'm sorry. I don't have any other than the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark, who put up his hand after I'd acknowledged the Member for Lacombe. I did not see a hand come up from Calgary-Mountain View. I'm sorry.  
[interjections]

MR. TAYLOR: I'm on the list.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I did not have the Member for Westlock-Sturgeon back on. [interjection] You'd have to put your hand up.

MR. TAYLOR: You gave me the traditional shake of your head. To me, when you say no, that means yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: No, hon. member, that's not true in this case. With respect, that's not the case. Hon. member, neither I nor the legislative secretary saw you put your hand up to be acknowledged. The only hand that came up was that of Edmonton-Meadowlark, after I had acknowledged the Member for Lacombe. That's the extent of the list that the chairman has.

Now, we have a circumstance on our hands that we have a motion before us to adjourn.

MR. MITCHELL: No, no; I'm on the list. And he wasn't talking about adjourning before you recognized my hand; he was talking about how well Mr. Taylor had asked the questions. This is a cynical procedural move. I want to ask some questions.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, we have a motion for adjournment, which is not debatable.

MR. TAYLOR: Point of order.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Yes?

MR. TAYLOR: I think if there's some reason that the Member for Lacombe can't stay in the meeting . . . I'm sure all of us will understand if he has to leave now.

MR. CHAIRMAN: That's irrelevant and really not . . . [interjection] Hon. member, order. Let's come with a more focused attention to the point of order. If you have something to contribute to the point of order, the Chair will hear it.

MR. TAYLOR: I don't think, Mr. Chairman, you can entertain a motion for adjournment in a two-hour meeting or an examination of the heritage trust fund committee from a government member.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I beg your pardon? I cannot accept . . .

MR. TAYLOR: I think it's your [inaudible] as chairman to bend over, to make sure that as many people who wish to ask the question do get a chance to ask the question.

MR. MITCHELL: And what rule says . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order. The Chair could recite for the clarification of the members here how much attention has been involved in this session of the Heritage Savings Trust Fund hearings today if we would like to do that. So the Chair has given ample opportunity, ample leeway to members as they have come in to get on the speakers' list and has recognized them, and I don't believe it's fair and just to criticize the way the Chair has operated this meeting today.

MR. TAYLOR: Well, we were not criticizing till the last decision, Mr. Chairman. The last decision was . . .

MR. GESELL: Point of order.

MR. CHAIRMAN: On that point of order, the Member for Clover Bar.

MR. GESELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to get back to the point of order. If members would refer to section 62, which clearly indicates that this committee is guided by the same rules, the Standing Orders, as the House. Then, further, Section 18(1) lists the motions that are debatable, but to quote 18(2): "All other motions, including adjournment motions, shall be decided without debate or amendment." Could we call the question, please?

MR. MITCHELL: Point of order.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Point of order.

MR. MITCHELL: Mr. Chairman, where is there any rule that says I have to be recognized before or after Lacombe is recognized? Where does it ever say that?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, what we really have is a circumstance where the Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark was the last questioner. The Member for Lacombe was the questioner recognized immediately following, whom the Chair did recognize. Then your hand went in the air, but the Member for Lacombe was recognized, and as part of his recognition he put forward a motion for adjournment. The Chair has no problem with staying here however long; that's not my problem. My problem is to enforce the rules of the committee in the House, and as I understand it, clearly, unless someone can give me some House rules or *Beauchesne* or something else, the Chair has no alternative but to call the question on the motion for adjournment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. TAYLOR: Point of order. I think the chairman has put

his case very, very well, and unless we have a point, then you can go ahead with the motion. However, the chairman well knows as a member that many times the Speaker, when he's closing off debate, suddenly realizes that he didn't notice someone was ready to speak or that there is someone else to speak. He has always left it open. He's always opened it back up and has declined to take the motion from whoever it was moving adjournment.

3:02

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, the Chair had recognized the Member for Lacombe; that's where the Chair finds the difficulty. I'm not at all sure that the Chair has the latitude to ignore that motion. If you can give me some citation, I'll certainly acknowledge it. But without that, I see no alternative but to accept that motion. [interjections] No, I need a citation, hon. member. I can't accept . . .

MR. TAYLOR: If somebody's on the agenda, they have to . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. member, I have to have a citation. I can't handle something off the top of the head of the hon. Member for Westlock-Sturgeon. Does the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills have a citation?

MRS. BLACK: Point of order, Mr. Chairman. The question has been called.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those in favour of adjournment? Those opposed? The meeting stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 10 with the Minister of Agriculture and the associate minister.

[The committee adjourned at 3:03 p.m.]

