

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA**Title: **Tuesday, May 3, 1988 8:00 p.m.**

Date: 88/05/03

[The Committee of Supply met at 8 p.m.]

head: **COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY**

[Mr. Gogo in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Would the Committee of Supply please come to order.

**Department of Recreation and Parks**

MR. CHAIRMAN: The department called by government tonight is the Department of Recreation and Parks, page 283 of the government estimates book. Authority of the ministry is on page 283, and the legislative authority for the program begins at 286. Are you ready for the question?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All those interested in making comments, suggestions, or amendments to the votes, please indicate.

Hon. minister, it's customary to make opening comments to the Committee of Supply. Hon. Mr. Weiss.

MR. WEISS: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

MR. TAYLOR: Hi, neighbour.

MR. WEISS: To my neighbour.

Mr. Chairman, I'm certainly pleased to have the opportunity to present to you and to members of the Assembly some highlights about the department's budget for the 1988-89 fiscal year.

Before I begin, I should say and indicate to all hon. members that in the city of champions the Edmonton Oilers are now leading 1-nothing, and I'm sure that will continue throughout the rest of the series.

Before I begin my remarks tonight with regards to the estimates, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to say something about the staff of Alberta Recreation and Parks. It has been my privilege to work with them for the past two years now, and during that time I've found the highest level of dedication and commitment on all occasions. They've gone what I call that extra mile in the name of service. My personal thanks for the co-operation and assistance they've provided to me, and if I may have the indulgence of the Assembly to revert to introduction of guests, I would do so at this time.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. minister has requested we revert to Introduction of Special Guests. Would the committee agree?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Opposed? Carried. Hon. minister.

head: **INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS**

MR. WEISS: Well, thank you to all hon. members and yourself, Mr. Chairman, for your indulgence.

In *the* members' gallery is Dr. Barry Mitchelson, the deputy minister; Julian Nowicki, assistant deputy minister of the recreation development division; John Wiens, the manager of financial planning and management branch; Cam Steenveld, the budget co-ordinator; Helen Earle, the expenditure control officer; Fred Wilton, municipal recreation/tourism areas division; and Rod Burkard, the director of finance and administration for Kananaskis Country. I would ask that they stand and receive what I would term a cordial welcome of the Assembly. And thanks for being here.

There's not an intent on my part, Mr. Chairman, to overlook one individual, but it's an individual within my office, and that's my executive assistant Mrs. Carole Shields, who also is here this evening. Carole, I'd ask that you rise and be recognized as well.

In thanking the people whom I've worked with and had the privilege of sharing, one might say, within our office as well are Judy Davies, Corrina Winiarski, and Janice McKay, who are not here but who try and provide the best of service to all members at all times.

head: **COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY****Department of Recreation and Parks***(continued)*

MR. WEISS: The purpose of my presentation tonight would be to try and provide you with an overview of the budget and to demonstrate how our department is doing primarily in two areas: first, Mr. Chairman, how we are meeting what I believe are government priorities and second, how we're meeting the challenge of fiscal management while at the same time maximizing the use of Albertans' tax dollars. Now, last year I believe we met the challenges of restraint head-on. We did this while at the same time making every effort to maintain the highest level of service that was possible to the people of Alberta. Now, this year we've given similar commitments. This year the overall reduction of the budget is some \$12.1 million. It still brings us just under \$100 million, of some \$99,425,671. This encompasses a total reduction this year, as well, of some 5.5 man-years.

As we highlight this year's budget, I'd like to focus on the initiatives taken in four program areas specifically: first, the Kananaskis Country; second, the parks division; third, the Olympic Secretariat and the role they played particularly in the Olympics; and fourth, the recreation development division. As I begin to look at those initiatives undertaken by the recreation division of our department, I'd ask all hon. members to stop and remember and reflect a little bit about the importance of sport and recreation and its profound and positive contribution that it makes to Alberta citizens and community development for all Albertans.

Under vote 1.1, the municipal recreation/tourism areas program. Most of us refer to it as the MRTA program. This year the program will impact over 30 communities throughout our province. This will provide Alberta communities with a total of almost \$2 million of government contribution and many, many more millions of dollars in contributions both by goods and services and volunteer labours by the respective communities. Now, introduced in 1986, the program has been most successful in providing assistance to municipalities in the development, upgrading, and operation of outdoor recreation facilities as a means of creating new recreation and tourism opportunities for Albertans.

I specifically relate to the tourism opportunities. This program is not only beneficial from a diversification and tourism perspective, but it also supports the government's rebuilding and recovery objectives. You see, beyond creating new tourism opportunities, this program, through a partnership of government and community support, is providing job opportunities and enhanced business opportunities right within the communities in which they have been established. I am pleased, Mr. Chairman, to announce to all hon. members of the Assembly that we will be releasing press announcements with regards to all those successful nominees and applications for the MRT areas; they will be out by Friday of this week at the latest.

There is a second grant program I'd like to bring to your attention, Mr. Chairman, and that is the community recreation/cultural grant program. Most of the members, of course, refer to it as the CRC program. The CRC program provides a per capita grant to municipalities throughout the province. This program is of interest to all members of the Assembly because like the MRTA program it impacts at the local level within municipalities in their constituencies. I know the CRC program has raised some concern by individuals, but particularly it provides assistance to the municipalities for recreation and cultural facilities and programs. Now, the commitment that was made to Albertans in the '85-86 fiscal year was to spend some \$240 million; that has been kept. At the offset the program was to run for only five years, and in 1987-88 the program was extended for an additional two years, with the annual per capita grant being reduced. The result is that the same amount of money will be distributed to the municipalities throughout the province. The only difference is that it will be distributed over a longer period of time.

Also in response to the needs of our community clients, we've modified funding guidelines to provide a more flexible utilization of grant moneys. I believe that should address the concern of most hon. members.

Under vote 1.3, the general support to the provincial sport and recreation associations, the volunteers and volunteer associations are truly the backbone of sport and recreation development in our province. Countless hours and thousands of Albertans give their time to support the personal growth and development which occurs when people get involved in sport and recreation activities. I'm sure many, many families of the hon. members are affected by those particular involvements as well.

The department's Percy Page Centre here in Edmonton provides a permanent home for some 42 of these associations, while some 73 others receive nonresident administration support services through the centre. With the provision and availability of these administrative support services, provincial associations can reduce their overhead costs and thereby direct the majority of their operating funds to sport and recreation programs that are directed through and to the citizens of Alberta. The Percy Page Centre gives them an opportunity to focus further activities and provides them the ability to network and share the expertise they have in doing the work they do so well for the personal leisure development of the Albertans they serve.

I note under vote 1, Mr. Chairman, leisure life-style development, that during the past two years the department has significantly increased its focus on leisure life-style education, promotion, and awareness. Now, events throughout the world are beginning to tell us about the importance of fitness, nutrition, and effective use of leisure. The effective applications of these aspects of living can lead to a well-balanced life-style, a quality of life, a standard of wellness that has the potential of

benefiting all Albertans. The leisure life-style concept supports the wellness movement. We're excited about the work being done in this area and are optimistic about the potential that this work has in improving the quality of life for all Albertans, and it can start right here.

An area that I personally support and have been involved in in direction relates to vote 1.5, the international sports exchange. We've negotiated an extension of our sports exchange agreements. I believe and personally support that the sports exchange benefits our province. They foster goodwill among athletes from various nations. They enhance provincial, national, and international sport development, and they lay the groundwork for crosscultural understanding and appreciation. In 1987-1988, the Canada, the Western Canada, and the Arctic Winter Games provided valuable competitive opportunities for Alberta's amateur athletes. We continue to make efforts to improve our position as we compete on national and international stages. This provides our young athletes that opportunity.

The Arctic Winter Games provided us with an opportunity to interact with our neighbours in the Northwest Territories, the Yukon, and Alaska. It gave us a chance to develop and renew friendships which help us strengthen our position as truly the gateway to the north, and I'd remind all hon. members of that.

Then there was the XV Olympic Winter Games. What an experience, what a legacy, and what an opportunity. Those of us who were fortunate enough to have had the opportunity to experience the XV Olympic Winter Games will never forget them, Mr. Chairman. We will never forget the volunteers and the hospitality which Calgarians and people from all across Alberta provided to our guests from around the world. Who could ever forget the sights and sounds of a city as it came alive to welcome the world? And truly welcome the world it did. A legacy, a gift handed down from one to another: with the games the legacy begins. We've handed down to the people of Alberta and for generations to come a memory of an event which focused the world's attention for 16 glorious days on our province and the city of Calgary.

That's not all, Mr. Chairman. The legacy really begins with the facilities that are second to none from the Department of Recreation and Parks' view, the facilities that will provide ongoing training for elite athletes, the challenges for those just beginning, and enjoyment for enthusiasts, spectators, and participants alike. Not only that; the world-class facilities endowed by this legacy were built on time and came in under budget, and there are no shortfalls or deficits to pick up, which many hon. members had questioned before. I think it's truly a feat well worth recognizing and congratulating all those responsible. What an opportunity.

The games are a prime of example of how sport, recreation, special events, and cultural events can attract tourist dollars. Our opportunity to capitalize on the Olympic advantage is borne out by Statistics Canada information that has been released in early April. The information demonstrates the kind of impact a major sporting event like the Olympics can and did have on tourism. The statistics show that in February 1988 there was a significant increase in direct trips to Alberta from outside the country. Mr. Chairman, I'd like to remind all hon. members that there were some 44,925 persons that entered the province from the United States. Now, that's 187 percent more than a year earlier. Some 9,250 persons came from other countries, or 320 percent more than the previous year. Now, Canadian Press reports an agency travel expert as saying that those figures just mentioned probably underestimate the flood of visitors that

came into Alberta for the XV Winter Olympics. The expert says that many foreign visitors would have entered Canada from other provinces. We all know that. Truly interesting that those figures do not include persons traveling to Alberta from other provinces or those traveling within the province itself.

The point to be made here, Mr. Chairman, is very basically a simple one. Investments in games pay dividends, and those dividends are found in tourism dollars, and throughout the economy it's spread as well. I'm pleased with the work done by the department and particularly the Olympic Secretariat. We're pleased to have been able to have had an impact and contribute as a catalyst in a very small way. We are happy that through sport and recreation we have been able to support the tourism thrusts and priorities of this government.

However, support for diversification and tourism-enhancing economic development has not been limited to the Olympics and the work done by the recreation development division. Our parks division, and truly a separate division in itself, has played a major role in this as well. I'd like to point out to you and members of the Assembly some of the contributions that have been made by the parks division. In particular, note that in vote 3, the parks division, and 3.1 under the responsibility of the role, we have taken seriously the role in conservation, preservation, and protection, and I'm sure that'll be supported by the Minister of Environment as well. We work hard at balancing access, enjoyment, and use with our conservation/preservation role. At the same time, however, we see the advantage our parks have as major tourist destination areas and as host centres for overnight travelers, never overlooking the fact that parks belong and are for people, Mr. Chairman.

So all hon. members would be aware that in particular in our overall investment in vote 3.2 for a long time provincial parks and recreation areas have attracted tourists and tourists' dollars. Alberta Recreation and Parks operates some 58 provincial parks, 44 provincial recreation areas, 3 wilderness areas, and oversees management planning for Alberta's 10 new ecological reserves which were created this past year. We have a major initiative under way to develop and upgrade a number of our provincial parks, and I would be pleased to hear from all hon. members with regards to these areas.

Our focus is twofold: one, to improve sites which function as overnight destination areas, supporting and enhancing the tourism opportunities provincially, nationally, and in particular as well, internationally; and second, to develop and improve the international destination sites like the Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park and Cypress Hills Provincial Park. In Cypress Hills Provincial Park we're developing a major ski facility and area. Over a three-year period, we're investing close to \$3 million for a ski hill, ski lodge, and support facilities. In Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park, we've targeted an investment of some \$1.7 million over a four-year period. Investments in these two provincial parks will enhance the international attention these sites are already receiving.

Two parks in the Edmonton area are receiving considerable attention as well. Aspen Beach general upgrading this year alone is close to \$1 million. Department projections have indicated that some \$4.6 million will be spent on Aspen Beach over a six-year period and an additional \$4 million at Wabamun provincial park over the same period of time. These are just some examples, Mr. Chairman and the members of the Assembly, and are only a few of the many projects the department has targeted for upgrading and development, as well as the existing programs that are in effect, such as the Winston Churchill

park, Gregoire, Island Lake, Long Lake, and others. In the 1988-89 fiscal year, some \$8 million has been budgeted to upgrade and improve and develop our provincial park systems. These projects help to standardize the facilities and services and help us better meet the needs and quality and the expectations that Albertans and tourists have come to expect.

In the area of privatization, Mr. Chairman, it's very interesting because this year the department is again offering private-sector opportunities in provincial parks. The parks division has a long-range program to involve the private sector in the construction and management of our parks, and in '88-89 we project that some in excess of 30 percent of the division's budget will go directly to the private sector in the form of construction, operating, or service contracts: truly a figure that I believe we can be proud of. Campgrounds at Aspen Beach and Jarvis Bay provincial parks will be privatized this year. This move builds on success experienced at Carson-Pegasus and Crimson Lake provincial campgrounds, which were privatized during the fiscal years of '87-88.

The department will continue to maintain responsibility for its key role in resource conservation and protection, land management and facility planning, interpretive and educational programs, along with the security services. This move, Mr. Chairman, is consistent with the government's policy to encourage private-sector involvement and maintain levels and quality of services. I've had many members raise the concern about tourism and the overlap of the departments and the possibility of rolling or baling in the department of culture and others. I'd just like to emphasize that I think it would be the role and responsibility of the Department of Recreation and Parks to allow us to be able to develop the infrastructure and the resource and to have people like the Tourism department, which has the expertise and the management capabilities, then going out to promote and market it and allowing my colleague the minister of culture to do similarly within his own department, that we then can best concentrate on doing a job and doing it properly. I think we have a commodity that we can market and we can market successfully for all and benefit Albertans.

In addition to upgrading the parks, we brought provincial park and provincial recreation campground fees more closely in line with those charged by the private sector. We've worked very closely with them as well as other provincial park systems across Canada and will continue to, to be a little more consistent. Last year the department announced a two-phase increase in the camping fees at sites operated by the department. The second phase came into effect this year. Camping fees are now \$7 per night for basic service, to \$9 for semiserviced, and \$11 for the full-service facilities at the majority of campgrounds, with some parks, of course, in the Kananaskis Country varying as well. Alberta seniors, Mr. Chairman, will continue to have access to campgrounds at a reduced rate of one-half the daily fee.

Our initiative in the area of camping fees schedules does two things. It increases revenue to offset operations, which is important to all of us if we accept the responsibility and the stewardship of the resources, and secondly, with regard to the maintenance costs in offsetting some of these particular costs. It balances opportunities between private-sector and public-sector camping areas. This, of course, promotes economic diversification and tourism, as I've indicated before, while at the same time maintaining the vital stewardship role the department has in the protection, preservation, and conservation of our province's natural heritage and one which I'm so very proud of. It

should be noted, Mr. Chairman, that Alberta's campground fees are consistent with and in some cases lower than those charged in other provinces across Canada.

Mr. Chairman, I'd like to take this opportunity to clarify the department's role as it relates to seasonally staffed parks, a concern that has been raised to me by several hon. members. In 1988 there'll be seven parks converted from permanently staffed to seasonally staffed parks. Now, seasonally staffed parks are provincial parks which are open all year and have on-site staff during the peak season between the May and September periods. They have and will have and provide access and services at a level consistent with public users' demands. We moved in this direction of seasonally staffed parks in an effort to maximize manpower benefit consistent with the public demands for services as well as protecting and maintaining the resource.

Mr. Chairman, in an effort to better utilize our human resources, the parks division under vote 3.6 is currently undergoing a reorganization. The two former divisions, Operations and Maintenance division and Design and Implementation division, have been combined in one division simply now known as the parks division: much easier, much simpler, much more readily understood. We are confident that this move will result in more efficiencies while helping to maintain the service level provided to Albertans.

Last, Mr. Chairman, our crown jewel, the Kananaskis Country. The quality of service at Kananaskis Country continues to improve. This year there'll be a new service information centre at Highwood junction. This centre will help to better serve the growing influx of visitors with a 1988-89 visitation projection of some 4.2 million visitors. I'm sure the hon. Member for Highwood is most pleased with that particular change. Even as the visitors continue to be drawn to this beautiful area of the province, Kananaskis Country management has been able to reduce its budget and accept the challenge as well. I look forward to reviewing the program in detail with the Heritage Savings Trust Fund committee and welcome the opportunity to report to them some of the undertakings and commitments that we have been able to do with the funds that were allocated.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I'm proud of our record in the overall department. It is noteworthy that within our ministry model general revenue funds are working in conjunction with the enrichment funds we're receiving through Alberta lotteries. I am pleased with our ability to meet restraint while at the same time endeavouring to maintain the highest level of service possible. I am pleased with the development of the ministry model; that is, with the work done with and by the department along with our Crown agencies, the Alberta Sports Council, and the Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation, and as well the work, as I've indicated, serviced and performed by the Kananaskis Country management group.

I continue to be optimistic about our role in furthering the government's objectives in supporting the economy, promoting the efforts in the area of diversification and tourism that we spoke about, and offering a leadership role in the preventive health initiatives in regards to leisure education and promotion, an area which we'll be concentrating on working on in the forthcoming year. I remain confident that we'll continue to be effective in our stewardship role in the protection of natural resources and in the conservation and preservation of natural landscapes for generations to come.

Mr. Chairman, it is most difficult to talk about all areas in detail, but I'd like to thank you and all hon. members for providing me the opportunity to present these opening remarks to you

this evening. I'd welcome any questions or comments by all hon. members and will certainly try and respond accordingly. If we don't have the information tonight, I would undertake to provide it back to all hon. members in writing to their questions and concerns.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There are 17 members who wish to put comments, questions, or amendments before the committee.

Hon. Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche.

MR. PIQUETTE: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I must start off by thanking the minister for his presentation. I must preface my remarks tonight by saying that this week having to do estimates relating to Tourism, Recreation and Parks, and transportation in the same week seems to be an overload situation on my part, but I'll attempt to do my best again this evening to both offer suggestions and criticism to the Minister of Recreation and Parks so that we can endeavour to serve Alberta to a higher degree of standards and park development in the province.

It's definitely a very important part of our government services in terms of parks and recreation development, with increasing leisure time, with the quality of life, and the protection of the environment being very important concerns for Albertans. The further development of provincial parks and recreation activities within communities is a very important consideration for the people of Alberta, and they must not be taking a backseat to other ministries.

One of the things that I'd like to make in terms of a general comment is that over the past two years we've seen over a one-third reduction in the budget for Recreation and Parks, and I imagine that for the minister to try and juggle his government responsibilities must have been a very trying time. However, I would hope that the slashing stops this year, because I think there mustn't be very much more paring down that the minister is able to accomplish in the next year of his portfolio. There haven't been too many innovative or new parks proposal developments that the minister has been able to announce in his new term of office. Since the minister had been appointed there in the spring of 1986 -- I can recall no parks announced since he had been named minister, and I know your own personal endeavours were to create some new provincial parks, especially the Alberta North concept in terms of the Lakeland region of the province. That was one of your identifiable goals, and I'm sorry to see and I think northern Albertans are quite upset that there really had been no new park creation in northern Alberta since the last two years. I think it's even worse than that, because I think one of the things that I look at, the baseline statistics for the total area of Alberta, is that Alberta is not a leader in provincial parks designation in Canada. Here, taking statistics for example, all parks, federal and provincial, in Alberta, including designated wilderness, comes out to 9.1 percent of the total area of Alberta. However, the total provincial parks system is only 1.03 percent of the total area of the province of Alberta, and the total federal is 8.04 percent. So I challenge the minister to basically respond to that criticism.

There has been very little initiative to address that inequality or disparity in the total provincial area designated for protection, and the minister must, if he is going to be a promoter of provincial parks and their development, become much more aggressive with his caucus to start showing some leadership in setting aside natural areas and provincial parks and also creating areas which are properly protected from environmental damage and exploita-

tion, from mining and forestry, et cetera. Because really we supposedly have 62 provincial parks in the province of Alberta, but if you really look at the definition of a provincial park, we only have 27 parks which really can be considered real provincial parks in terms of definition.

Many ecosystems are on the verge of disappearing in Alberta and there appears to be very little commitment to doing anything about it. Eight proposals for Ecological Reserves have been waiting for the ministers to sign them but there is no commitment

I believe there's been some movement since, but I'm reading from the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society of a year ago.

We can support the policy's intent but this re-classification really brings home the idea that there has been almost no commitment in the past. The public might have thought we had 62 provincial parks, but in the final analysis we really only had 27 parks, that could really be called Provincial Parks. Most of the reclassified areas don't have a landbase worth protecting. Only two of the current Provincial Parks have land bases greater than 100 square [kilometres],

which is what David G. Dodge, the executive director of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, indicated in his report.

I think that's a really shameful situation for Alberta, because the minister must become -- especially with the projected forestry developments, which are occurring very quickly throughout northern Alberta, the northwestern and northeastern parts of Alberta. If the minister does not move more quickly to designate more provincial park systems, then we will be very sad for a future generation of our citizens of Alberta, who will have lost an opportunity to move now to make sure that we set aside this land base so that they are not all destroyed by the time the various pulp and paper mills and forestry developments take over the Lakeland region of this province, and the many beautiful, ecologically important areas of this province are going to be safeguarded for the future generations of our children.

So I believe the minister has a very important responsibility to the future generation of Albertans to start moving quickly along that way and to start lobbying his caucus much more effectively. I think the statistics speak for themselves, and I don't believe recreation areas are really any kind of protection. He may cite figures that we have a number of recreation areas in the province of Alberta, but they are not as good as a provincial park. A provincial park must have a land base which protects the environmental, ecological importance of that area so that there can be proper land and lake management programs that protect that environment for the future generations.

Moving to Community/Municipal Grants, CRC. Again this year we see an 18.6 percent reduction in that grant and next year we have also received indication from the minister there'll be a further cut in that very important community recreation grant system, which is there to basically develop a very high quality of recreational programs in our communities. That is being eroded very quickly, and the effects of this are becoming more and more apparent as this budget continues to be pared down.

The CRC grant was probably one of the most innovative grant systems emanating from his department. It was fair, it was equitable, it provided communities the potential of developing their recreation facilities and also to be able to continue the operation of these facilities, and now these communities, after providing that grant system for a number of years, are all of a sudden having to look at the fact that maybe they'll have to start raising local taxes in order to be able to maintain those facilities or actually to be eliminating a lot of the recreation activities and programs that have been so successfully developed the last num-

ber of years.

So this must not be allowed to continue, and I would call on the minister here that for the next year's budget he reverse his stand on the proposed cutback of CRC because it's gone too far already for the maintenance of a lot of our recreational programs in our communities. It especially strikes hard in the rural communities of Alberta. They really don't have the kind of tax base that the urban municipalities have, but even reading a letter from the mayor of Edmonton and talking with the urban municipality of Calgary, et cetera, they are also really having to scrounge around to try and replace through their own tax base the kinds of program development that were funded under the CRC grants.

Going to the privatization of provincial parks. Listening to the comments made by the minister, we've heard that approximately four have been projected to be cut back in the 1987-88 budget year.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order in the committee please.

MR. PIQUETTE: I would like to know a little bit more detail from the minister about why there hasn't been more of the privatization. Have there been difficulties? I know there has been a lot more tendering for privatizing these parks. I'm not in favour of it. However, the minister's direction is to continue the privatization of provincial parks, and I wonder if his intention is to completely eliminate provincial staff at all of the provincial parks in the next few years, or where is his goal here? I'm not sure if he has any established. Or really what is his policy orientation? Because four, even though we've been really broadcasting that doesn't seem to add up to very much.

I wonder here why the government is moving to privatization when, in fact they have been collecting by charging campers' fees in the 1987 budget which really should have been helping his department have access to more public funds, and at the same time cutting back in terms of services to our provincial parts, going to a projected manpower loss due to the seasonalization of provincial parks. It's going to be cutting back on the professionalism of that staff because you're going to be going a lot more part-time staff to operate their provincial parks. That does not in my mind, promote greater service and the quality of service that needs to be there for our tourists that we are supposed to be attracting to our provincial parks.

I'd like to ask the question of the minister how much money was collected last year, and whose pocket did it go into? Did it go into the Recreation and Parks budget and how was that money expended? Or did it go into the Provincial Treasurer's pocketbook to be spent on other projects throughout the province? I think it's a very important consideration. If we're going to be charging campers' fees, then they should be spent to either promote new provincial parks or at least to maintain the kind of services that are expected by the public when they are staying at these provincial parks. If we're going to be charging the public a fee and then cutting back on services, the public will for sure rebel against that kind of a system, and it won't be very long that the minister will be facing a number of criticisms of high campers' fees and few services provided at those provincial parks. So I think it's a very shortsighted viewpoint shown by the minister here that in one year we establish campers' fees, and on the other hand we cut back on services. It doesn't make any sense. I think any business that charges more tends to try and deliver more service for that dollar. That's not what's been happening here in this situation at all. So I'd like the minister's response on that.

Another area that I'd like the minister to respond to is relating to the Volunteer Leadership Development budget, which is being cut back again this year by 5.3 percent, but whether he could expand that program to a larger extent to include more volunteer groups that possibly can benefit under the Volunteer Leadership Development. From what I've been told by a few of the volunteer groups who have tried to get some help here, it seems to be fairly restrictive in the type of volunteer groups that can have access to it, and I'd like him to explain exactly who can benefit from this and whether this Volunteer Leadership Development can somehow have some funding available for on-site training of volunteers within their communities in terms of having a source of money where they can bring in to their volunteer groups experts or consultants who can help them with how they can develop their own group's activities so that rather than traveling to Edmonton or whatever, we have this within the local community itself provided by his department.

Another suggestion that did come through me because of the cutback of CRC grants is that now there are a lot of community projects that are being built and under way or proposed to be built in the next while that now have quite a serious shortfall of funding in order to be able to access capital funds. They've had now to turn to the banks in order to finance the fund shortfall that exists in terms of their project, and they are being very often charged prime plus 2 and 3 at banks. They find, as a volunteer organization or a society that represents the community, that the government if they are going to be continuing to be cutting back, should be seriously looking at setting up through the Treasury Branches low interest loans for the community organizations where recreation committees, for example, would be able to have low-interest loans available for funding of capital projects. At least their fund-raising then would not be all, or a good part of it, going towards paying off interest to the bank but in fact in terms of paying off the capital costs of that building. So I would ask the minister to look at that as a consideration for next year's budget so that community projects and facilities can continue to be built in Alberta and have a pool of money available at low interest rates through the Treasury Branch to facilitate that task.

I guess the other area, which is in vote 3, about the Parks Reconstruction aspect -- I criticized the minister for making no new park announcements. However, I see here Renovation Projects and Major Replacement suffering dramatic cutbacks of 40 percent and 28 percent this year. So we're even failing to maintain or continue at the same pace of major replacement or renovation projects that we were doing in the past. So on one hand we have no new money or no declaration of new provincial parks or setting aside of provincial land for future provincial parks, but we also have less money expended for the reconstruction of the existing parks. Again, very shortsighted in terms of budget cutbacks. However, I must compliment the minister that in my own constituency we did, through the provincial parks of Churchill and Long Lake, receive some major funds in the last two years for the reconstruction and upgrading of these parks. But I believe that in many other areas of the province there will be quite a long waiting list before these take place.

A comment here from the Member for Vegreville constituency. If he's looking at areas in the province that have no provincial parks, the entire constituency of Vegreville has no provincial parks.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Excuse me, hon. member. Could we have order in the committee, please.

MR. PIQUETTE: You know, and that's not to do with any opposition MLAs being in there. We've had a long-standing member from the Conservative side here and no provincial parks set aside in that constituency. He's suggesting a couple of areas; for example, Beaverhill Lake should be looked at being set aside as an ecological provincial park. It could be set up as a bird sanctuary for that area, and I would hope that the minister starts looking very closely now to this responsibility he has as minister.

I can also compliment the minister here. If I'm going to be criticizing, I'd also like to compliment him that I did make a tour last year of the Cypress Hills Provincial Park, and I would say that that is a magnificent new park being developed in southern Alberta. But going in terms, again, of provincial parks north and south, out of the 62 provincial parks, of which only 27 really could be defined as provincial parks, we have only, from what I can count, about 25 in the northern part of the province. When we take a look at the lakes and the potential which is up there in northern Alberta, the minister has a great job ahead of him to start immediately taking a look at northern Alberta for future new provincial park development. And as I indicated before, we're really in an emergency type of situation here because I can assure you that if he doesn't move fast the minister of forestry and wildlife will have most of the province taken up in terms of timber allocation and there won't be anything left to preserve. So he better get his magic wand working very quickly in his caucus and start addressing that need.

Now, in the vote 5 category, the Kananaskis Country Management I'm still amazed that after the Olympics we still have 15 percent of the total budget of the Department of Recreation and Parks still going to the Kananaskis Country Management.

MR. STEVENS: And what's wrong with that? It's a great place.

MR. PIQUETTE: It's a great place. I agree with you. But 15 percent of our total budget out of \$99 million is going to the Kananaskis Country Management: \$13,051,607.

MR. STEVENS: And thank God it does, with the revenues coming to this province . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. Order please.

MR. PIQUETTE: You know, isn't that supposed to be self-supporting by this time, Mr. Minister? I mean, are we going to be continuing to see here year after year, not only out of his department but the Alberta heritage trust fund, continued money being poured by the millions, by the buckets into Kananaskis Country, while the northern part of the province goes hungry. I mean, how do we explain that to the voters of northern Alberta? You have a minister that's supposed to be representing northern Alberta. Perhaps you should start voting on some of the suggestions he's made for northern Alberta, because I don't think he's been listened to much in the caucus so far. Because I do know his personal viewpoints relating to parks development but unfortunately I don't think he's been listened to in cabinet and caucus. It appears that the southern caucus has a lot more clout than anybody else.

MR. STEVENS: You even laughed when you said that.

MR. PIQUETTE: Well, I give you credit for the caucus in southern Alberta. You've done your job very well. But maybe it's about time that you start looking at northern Alberta, because I do know one thing: if there's anything you're going to start reversing, it's that feeling of unequal treatment for northern Alberta in terms of tourism. You can talk to anyone in northern Alberta, and they know they haven't had their fair share.

How do you explain Piquette being elected from Athabasca-Lac La Biche, if that was not a sense of frustration expressed by the voters in that part of the country? If you look at a lot of the northern seats, your majority last election went down quite considerably. So I think there's a political message there.

MR. STEVENS: What're you looking up there for? You run out of words?

MR. PIQUETTE: By the way, I'm in politics not to play cheap political games, but for the benefit of all Albertans, and this is a message you guys should be listening to out there instead of trying to take cheap shots at members of the opposition.

MR. STEVENS: Pinocchio.

MR. PIQUETTE: And what's the score? Before I go any further here.

AN HON. MEMBER: You just lost.

MR. PIQUETTE: Hey, Calgary caucus, don't feel so great about your Calgary Flames. We do have some champions over here in northern Alberta.

Okay. I want to terminate by again asking the minister to very seriously look at my suggestions and criticism and constructive criticism. I hope it is not all one-sided. It's a challenge the minister has under his mandate, and I hope he responds with flying colors in the next year of his term.

I wish him luck in terms of being able to set aside some money for an Alberta North concept. I've received over 15 letters from various tourism associations and northern Alberta towns and cities supporting my proposal that I made to the Alberta heritage trust fund committee of setting aside a \$75 million funding pool for the development of the Alberta North concept. I can show the minister letters supporting that concept, and I think he's got the political mandate now to do something about it. I hope that in the next few months, instead of hearing, perhaps, \$100 million for other expansions of public buildings, that we have a pool of money set aside for northern Alberta, because it's about time that we have that.

MR. STEVENS: Stretch Leo. Three more minutes. Stretch. Stretch it. Three more minutes.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: You're really touchy, Greg. Gee, Greg you're really touchy tonight. Did you have some correspondence? He touched a sore spot.

MR. PIQUETTE: Since we're trying to get a gentlemen's agreement here to . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. Order please. Now, what's going on? Let's come back to the Department of Recreation and Parks and not talk about any deal. Is the hon. member finished?

MR. PIQUETTE: Yes.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Member for Taber-Warner.

MR. WEISS: Mr. Chairman, I thought I had the floor.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Minister of Recreation and Parks.

MR. WEISS: Well thank you, Mr. Chairman. I couldn't help but want to have the opportunity -- I couldn't wait the whole year to respond. When I heard the hon. Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche particularly refer to "terminate," I thought maybe he was saying "exterminate," because that might be the best thing that could happen. I really appreciated his remarks, and I feel, as he being the Official Opposition critic, I must respond to some of his particular remarks.

I appreciated his referral about standards, the quality of life, further development of provincial parks. I recognize those concerns and share with him. When he talks about the overall reduction, I believe that he should, too, be a little bit of a realist. I think we've accepted some of that responsibility as a department within our overall budget to try and address that. That's why we're endeavouring to do so; we've accepted that \$12 million to, as I've indicated, some \$99 million-plus.

The overall Lakeland region and country north concept I find very interesting and very intriguing, and to all hon. members of this Assembly, I would ask you to go back and read *Hansard* where the hon. member referred to his idea, what he predicted, and what he said to the Heritage Savings Trust Fund. Mr. Chairman, I think that's fantastic that he has received 15 letters of support. I'd also like him to go back to 1985. I think he'll find that I, as the member then for Lac La Biche-McMurray, did make recommendations to the Heritage Savings Trust Fund committee, subsequently in latter years as well, as the minister responsible. So if there was an idea, it was plagiarized. It wasn't initiated by the hon. Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche. I would like to come back to that as well, a little later.

He indicated that we're not a leader as it relates to parks and parks statistics in relation to federal jurisdictions. Well, Mr. Chairman, if he's to read from one media source, I think he should be fair and take the time to read all the other media sources, because to read into *Hansard* one article and talk about what it says . . . Would the hon. member then refer to the *Edmonton Journal* of Saturday, April 30, 1988, so he could bring himself up to date with the actual facts? If he were to read, Mr. Chairman, he would find that "Alberta unveils own parks figures to rebut Ottawa's" which provides all the statistics and information to show that we are clearly leaders in Canada as it relates to overall provincial parks, geographically, the areas with regards to wilderness parks and others, the ecological reserves, and so forth. I'm not going to take the hon. member's time to go over it tonight nor the Assembly's, but I would encourage him to read it. The remarks that the hon. member referred to, to challenge the minister to respond -- well, I'm challenging him then to read the article and respond back as well.

I deal with facts, Mr. Chairman, as all hon. members would do so, and I'm certain that he would want to have the facts with him, because he talks about the definition of provincial parks. When he becomes, some day -- and God forbid that that should happen -- the Minister of Recreation and Parks, then he, too, should be able and have that prerogative to define what he believes is a definition of a provincial park. Until he does, Mr. Chairman, I will accept the responsibility for the definition of

parks as what they are and what they relate to for the province of Alberta to stack up against any other province.

I found it very interesting, Mr. Chairman and all hon. members of the Assembly, when he talked about no commitment. And once again he referred to an article -- oh, my goodness, how strong and beautiful it was -- that we are doing nothing in the area of ecological reserves. And I wish I could say it so clearly and eloquently as he has, but I also found that it was very disturbing to me that as I stood on the platform to accept an award -- as well as the hon. Minister for Tourism at the time, the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Leduc -- and a plaque for having created not only a unique number of ecological reserves but to establish the long-term goals and objectives of what I undertook as a responsibility and now have 10 in the system. Five years in the making, and we did it in one, to have them put through the whole policy procedure and adapt it fully recognized and supported by all recreation, parks, and wilderness groups and associations. We stand on that record and stand on it clearly and proudly, and our ecological reserve committee have done a fantastic job in those recommendations to the members of the Assembly.

The natural resource areas: if one were to take and consider the unique physical characteristics of the lakes, the rivers, the streams, and particularly in the north, Mr. Chairman, one would see that we have truly some of the finest facilities of all to offer in any province, not just in the north, but in the south as well.

The CRC grant reduction the hon. member referred to -- I thought it was very interesting that he would talk about it and say, "Ask for a reversal." It's interesting to note that in our introduction of our budget last year we were very clear in our definition and parameters. We allowed the municipalities, in working with them, to clearly understand and define their role in years to come, and that, Mr. Chairman, is the most important concept that they could have: to know where they are going, what they have to work with, and the tools that we provide them with. We've said to them: "Expand the program to five. The \$240 million is yours. Go from the five to the seven. You've got the same amount of dollars but a longer time frame to do it with."

Unfortunately the hon. member and others from that side maybe in particular think a grant is an ongoing grant that should never be revoked. It is a grant. Look up the word in the dictionary, what a grant refers to. So, in doing so, we've said to them, "Go out and plan your work and work your plan, but don't overcommit and don't overextend." We all do that within our own personal lives and our own personal financial undertakings and commitments. I would encourage the hon. member to do so.

In the area of privatization, and in his own words, he's referred to the tenders and not in favour about privatization. I find that very disturbing, because if we're going to go out and promote this province and build and develop it, it's going to take the foresight of people who are prepared to invest in this province and do so by the backbone and spirit that was shown in the pioneer days of the past. It's only through privatization that it will ever occur. I'm not saying that government can't do it, but government can't do it alone, and through that entrepreneurial spirit and overall assistance in working with them, we're maintaining the standards we talked about, maintaining the system, and maintaining the staff there to oversee and undertake and maintain this. But by giving the private opportunity, the opportunity to make some money -- and is that a crime, Mr. Chairman, that they should have an opportunity to make some money

and invest and put back into this province of ours in employment of others as well? Maybe the hon. member doesn't understand what it is to invest a dollar, risk a dollar, and maybe make a return on the dollar.

It's interesting when I hear the discussion about increased fees. I found it very encouraging to find that the private sector supported the initiatives taken by this department and members of the Assembly who supported it. I also didn't hear the hon. member critiquing it too extensively last year, to note that for the first time in many, many, many years we raised fees to be competitive, as I've indicated, with other provinces, still maintaining the lowest fees in the country.

MR. PIQUETTE: How's the money used now?

MR. WEISS: Now we hear about where's the money and how is it used. Isn't it interesting, Mr. Chairman -- and I will come back to that particular point. But the increase of fees has been done with no major reduction in services that will be continued to be provided in the areas of interpretation and others. We'll be involving the volunteer sector as well too. So there are two areas I want to talk about, and that's with regard to where the funds go and the volunteers.

Mr. Chairman, this government has a responsibility, and through our Provincial Treasurer, we're going to meet those objectives and goals that have been undertaken by this government -- the responsibility to see that the general revenue has ongoing funds to deliver goods, products, services, and commodities in the way of education, health services, and others so that we can do it. How do we do it? We contribute and carry our share of the load. The dollars go into general revenue as they do in all other departments. We don't create our own turf and say: "Well, this is our money; we'll go out here and do what we want. You do what you want." We do this for the benefit of all Albertans together, collectively and positively, and will continue to do so. But there is an exception, an exception we are proud we have been able to work out, and that's in the way of a revolving fund as it relates to providing free firewood for the benefit of all campers -- at some \$600,000-plus, I might add. So yes, the fees go to general revenue; the money for firewood goes to firewood. That is not unique and shouldn't be surprising to the hon. member, because if you run a budget you must know that you have some money coming in this side to pay what goes out on that side. So we go to the Provincial Treasurer and ask for \$99,425,671 to deliver our budget and we get that money to deliver our budget.

MR. PIQUETTE: How much did you get back, though, out of fees? How much did you collect in fees?

MR. WEISS: I've tried to explain to the hon. member where the fees go, but it's obviously of no use.

The volunteer leadership program is a very interesting one. I believe the hon. member is not aware of some of the services we provide, such as through our Blue Lake training centre. Fantastic! I'm sure the hon. member for Edson would compliment it, and if he had the opportunity to speak on it, would. We develop and train young volunteers from all walks of life in society to meet the challenges that are there before them, and they do it well. They exceed in all levels. We bring them from the various communities to this particular centre and give them the opportunity to learn and develop their skills.

But I'd also like to go back and, I say, challenge the hon.



member who says, "What are we doing in the area of trying to help those within the communities themselves?" Where, for goodness' sake, is the hon. member, Mr. Chairman, when our community recreation consultants are out in the field working daily, weekends, Saturdays, Sundays. Our sports and recreation consultants from all fields are there to work with the volunteer leaders, the recreation community leaders, in the communities, providing services at no charge to people in their communities. If he isn't aware of it, then he'd better find out.

I thought it was very interesting when they referred to the shortfall in the community recreation grant programs. Mr. Chairman, I think the responsibility goes both ways. We have responsibilities as citizens to try and see that community groups can best manage their funds and their finances and their resources. That's where these recreation consultants are working as well. I don't accept the fallacy -- and a fallacy it is to me -- that one should just turn around and say: "Here is the money. Build it and go to it." Because we would create a debt load that your children, sir, and your new children to be and my children would never ever have the opportunity to pay for. So what we're saying is: "Be a realist. Go out and try and do the best thing you can within your own resources sometimes."

[Mr. Musgreave in the Chair]

We as a government will try and assist and be a catalyst in working out through the CRC programs and others. That isn't an end all, it isn't last dollar financing, as we did in various other programs, and we've had to learn to say "Now we must cut back" and show them why and work with them. Thank goodness we're taking that step, but I'd like to suggest as well to the hon. member and to other members of this Assembly, who I'm sure are aware, that we provide other assistance through so many, many funding groups. The Wild Rose Foundation: \$5 million of financial assistance to various communities, all throughout the province of Alberta. The Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation, another \$5 million; another \$9.1 million to the Alberta Sport Council, over and above our budget, that's out there working for and with the citizens in providing grants to your local communities, to the little group, to the boxing club, to the golf club associations, and to others, the women's leagues, the group that's looking for assistance to help in the women's shelters and others -- funds that have been there to work and assist.

I have received many, many letters of thanks from these community groups for the work we've done and the assistance we've provided. We just can't build everything. There would be no pride in ownership, and certainly I would never accept the New Democrats' philosophy of just build it, spend it, and forget about it, because, hey, you can't do that without a day of reckoning.

It was interesting as well, Mr. Chairman, that the statement was made that there were no new park announcements. If the hon. member had listened closely, he would have known and heard me say that there will be some 30 new municipal recreation tourism areas, which are small municipal parks that he has so proudly indicated his support for and has mentioned the two specific ones in his area and the benefits of those particular projects in the Caslan and Kikino areas, of what they mean to the citizens of Alberta, to the 2.3 million citizens for whom 30-some new parks for approximately \$2 million will be created this year. I don't think any one of those municipalities would say, "Don't give me that park, and don't call it a park," because

it is a park. I think it's been very shortsighted of him not recognizing it, but I appreciate he was not so shortsighted to see in his own constituency and did give recognition for it and I thank the hon. member for bringing that out and raising it as well.

There are many, many parks in areas, particularly in the north, that we're upgrading. We'll continue to do so. We're having openings very shortly at Long Lake Provincial Park in the member's own constituency and in Sir Winston Churchill Provincial Park. Some \$856,000 has just gone into developing those parks. I don't have the opportunity or the time, Mr. Chairman, nor would I wish to take all hon. members' time, to specifically go through each park individually. I could go to Police Outpost Provincial Park over here and talk about the millions of dollars going to that park. I could go to the Winston Churchill and talk about the \$856,000. I could go to the Gregoire Lake Provincial Park and talk about the million dollars. That's not what we're here to learn about. I'm here to say and commit to this Assembly and to all hon. members that we'll take them on an acceptable, as is, fair, equitable basis and apply the ground rules to all, that no park shall receive funding only because the hon. member believes it should be done. It will be done as it is needed and as it's required. Parks wear out; trees wear out. We're maintaining those standards and will continue to do so.

It was interesting to hear the hon. member refer to no provincial park at Vegreville. Do you know, Mr. Chairman, that's a correct statement the hon. member has made? But maybe it's not conducive to have a provincial park of that magnitude or a federal park in that specific area. Did the hon. member forget to mention the \$100,000 municipal recreation/tourism areas fund that went to Vegreville last year and was used to encompass and develop their whole park with the inner core? Did he forget to talk about just a few miles down the road we have Elk Island provincial park? Did he forget to tell about the \$4 million park that on March 5 we had the privilege of opening at the Blackfoot grazing reserve, that the hon. Member for Vegreville was there?

You know, I find it very interesting that we can hear one side of the story, the other side. Now, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to tell the truth, because those are the areas that should not be forgotten about and should be indicated and outlined to all hon. members. The Blackfoot grazing area has one of the strongest potentially developed areas to meet all community groups, from trail riding to snowmobile riding to general purpose use. Fantastic! I would ask the hon. member a question: has he been there or had the opportunity to see? I don't see an encouragement of yes, so I have to accept it as a no, and if the no is no, I would suggest the hon. member take the time to see. He would know then that we are doing something in working and creating both new and improved areas.

The country north concept Mr. Chairman, that I'd like to close on in particular, is one I find very interesting. It's one I believe in very dearly. I had the privilege of introducing the concept in the community of Lac La Biche, where I believe it truly is the base and the site of an area over the whole Lakeland area that should be developed. Not a Kananaskis north, Mr. Chairman. A Kananaskis north would be a site specific to a golf course and a ski facility. I believe the unique physical characteristics of all the north should be developed, individually, collectively, and throughout the north region. It's an area that is not being developed at this time because of the overall economics and the realities of it. I accept that but I do not accept the defeatist attitude that it will not be. I'm going to once again encourage all members. We'll be appearing before the

Heritage Savings Trust Fund and others, and we will certainly hope and work to develop that project, as I truly believe it is a project worthy of consideration, as well as such things as Dinosaur park and others.

So I think there is a balance, but I would not want it to go on record or not want it to be noted that this member does not support a country north concept. As having had the privilege of the one introducing it and having received many hundreds of letters of support and having had the opportunity to speak at many, many conferences on recreation throughout the north and throughout the region to gather the overall support, I will continue to support it and appreciate the hon. members' individual support in this regard as well.

I would like to say, though, just before closing, Mr. Chairman, that I don't wave any magic wand. I don't try and wave any magic wand, because I am a realist. I'll apply that principle and I won't lower my principles, as I've said many times, to be a politician. I'll apply common, good practical sense and would love the opportunity of a small wager with the hon. member as it comes to the next election. I would welcome that opportunity.

It's interesting to note that the hon. member referred to 15 percent of the overall budget going to Kananaskis Country. I'm not going to take the time to go over it specifically. I have it here, and would welcome to sit down with him. We will be going over it shortly. All I would suggest to him is that if he were to see where it is going, what it is doing, and have the opportunity to understand it, I'm sure he would speak with a different attitude and a different perspective and would be supportive of what this department is doing.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and all hon. members.

MR. BOGLE: Mr. Chairman, there are four areas I'd like to cover with the minister in his department's estimates tonight. They are, first, the provincial recreation areas; second, provincial parks; third, municipal recreation/tourism areas program; and fourth, the community recreation/cultural grant program.

First of all, on the provincial recreation areas, I do have a specific question for the minister, and it relates to the necessary decision of last year to close some of the provincial recreation areas across the province. My question specifically to the minister is: what criteria did the department use in determining which of the recreation areas should be closed and which of the provincial recreation areas should remain open? I'd like to cite as a specific example: in the constituency of Taber-Warner there are two provincial recreation areas. The first is located on Highway 3 between the towns of Taber and Coaldale. It's called Chin Lakes. The second is located on Highway 36 and it's called Chin Coulee. That's right on the main Chin lake. The decision was made to close the provincial recreation area on Highway 3, not to close the recreation area on Highway 36. In terms of traffic counts, the recreation area on Highway 3, which is, by the way, the Crownsnest highway which runs from Medicine Hat through Bow Island, Taber, Coaldale, the city of Lethbridge, on to Fort Macleod, down through Pincher Station, Coleman, Blairmore, and then into British Columbia -- it's a very heavily used highway. It's often referred to as the southern Trans-Canada Highway. We closed a provincial recreation area shortly after moneys had been expended to upgrade the facility. I notice on Highway 23 the Carmangay recreation area remains open, and my question is: what criteria is used by the department? Because in terms of traffic volume usage, I cannot believe the recreation area on Highway 3 would not be busier than both the Carmangay recreation area on Highway 23 or, indeed,

the Chin Coulee recreation area on Highway 36. So that's the first area I want to cover.

Secondly, with regard to provincial parks, I'm pleased with the progress that's been made over the past year between the minister and the town of Taber in finding a solution to maintaining the Taber Provincial Park on a year-round basis. While I don't expect the minister to respond this evening, because there is a letter the minister has written that is currently before the Taber town council, I do feel confident a permanent solution is very close at hand, a solution that will be acceptable to the minister, to the government, to the town of Taber, and to the people of the district who so enjoy that provincial park.

I want to compliment the minister and his department for the way they've handled the information on the Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park upgrading, the fact that there's been close consultation with the Milk River Chamber of Commerce, with the town council, where there's been valuable input by people from the area. I think of Lawrence Halmrast from Warner and Alva Bair from Milk River, two pioneers in the area who know that area like the back of their hand and have given invaluable input at the request of the department in terms of planning. We recently had an open house where citizens were invited to come in and share their ideas on the four-year upgrade to the park, and it's very gratifying to see that kind of co-operation between the department and the community.

The third area I want to touch upon, the municipal recreation tourism areas program. We are fortunate in that there are two community parks funded through that program in the constituency at the present time. A Stafford Lake recreation park located on Stafford Lake between Coaldale and Taber and operated by the town of Coaldale is a beautiful facility which gives an opportunity for boating enthusiasts from not only our own communities but the city of Lethbridge and other areas for some water-based recreation. Water-based recreation is so scarce in southern Alberta, and therefore it's greatly appreciated. The second such area is Gold Springs Park, which is located north of the village of Coutts on a small oxbow along the Milk River. A lot of work has been done by the Gold Springs Park Society, a volunteer group who have worked tirelessly and with input from the county of Warner and support from the department in developing that recreation area.

I'm particularly pleased with the decision of the minister to allow the town of Taber to use its \$100,000 recreation grant toward its indoor pool. Now, the indoor pool will be located inside Centennial park. The town of Taber, in its wisdom and foresight established a park that abuts against the downtown core area back in 1967. It's a beautiful park. It contains the administration building and a recreation complex, and there's room in that park for their indoor pool. Because the town has already developed its outdoor recreation facilities within the town, the town qualified so that these dollars could be used for their indoor pool. Indeed, the \$100,000 isn't as important as the \$20,000 a year for 25 years in operating dollars. That half a million dollars that will be provided to the community is going to be so beneficial in terms of offsetting some of the deficits which most communities face with their pools and assuredly those that operate indoor pools.

The last area I want to touch upon is the community recreation/cultural grant program. On Friday, April 22 of this year, the MLAs for Lethbridge-West Cardston, Cypress-Redcliff and myself attended a meeting with the Southern Alberta Recreation Development Association in Lethbridge so we could talk about the community recreation/cultural grant

program. It's the first opportunity I've had since I became an MLA in 1975 to meet with the executive of the recreation association from southern Alberta. Of course, like many other MLAs, I've met in the past with recreation boards in communities like Taber or Barnwell or Coaldale or Milk River. But this is the first time there was a meeting that had representatives from town councils, from recreation boards, and some of the recreation directors themselves. The meeting was for southern Alberta MLAs, and the four members were able to attend. During the meeting a couple of factors were brought to our attention. One was a quote taken from an Alberta Recreation and Parks' policy statement of December 1985. It's a general policy foundation statement which I believe bears repeating and reading into the record.

Recreation is an important social service which results in such fundamental benefits as enhanced physical, mental and social well-being to people and to society.

The brief, which was given to members, went on to mention that the original MCR or the

Major Culture and Recreation Grant Program was a tremendous help in developing major facilities needed in our communities. Initially, the community recreation and cultural grant program had the same effect, with an added opportunity for increased operational assistance.

In other words, over the past years we've helped communities build recreation facilities ranging from skating rinks, curling rinks, swimming pools, other such facilities. More recently, we've helped them through the community recreation/cultural grant program with some operating dollars to operate those facilities.

With the recent adjustment and subsequent reduction to the CRC grant program . . . some communities are being forced to reduce operations and [therefore] limit services.

The thrust of the presentation given to MLAs was that when we announced back in 1985 a five-year program whereby we would provide \$20 per capita with a total provincial commitment of \$240 million over the five years, communities made their plans. Last year the minister clearly announced and enunciated in this Assembly the fact that that program would be extended from five years out to seven years, the end result being that the grants for the last fiscal year, '87-88, would be reduced from \$20 per capita down to \$16 per capita. That was done. This year's grants are reduced further to \$12 per capita.

During the meeting the members had with the recreation supporters, the question was asked: "Well, why did you wait until this year when your grant is, indeed, 60 percent of the grant of two years ago? Why did you wait until this year to call a meeting to share a concern with MLAs relative to the operating costs? Why didn't you raise the concern last year when the grants were reduced from \$20 to \$16?" The response given was that most members felt they could indeed live within that reduction, and they tried very hard to do so. But with the reductions this year to \$12, there is certainly fear setting in with some recreation boards that that's going to place such an undue burden on them in terms of their operating costs that they may not be able to . . . [interjection] I don't need any coaching from the hon. Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche; he had his crack. They may not be able to live within those means.

We made three specific requests of the recreation association. The first was that each of the communities and the recreation boards within their areas, or in the case of regional recreation, contact their specific MLA so they could make the MLA aware of the impact on their services. So the town of Magrath, for instance, would work with the MLA for the Cardston con-

stituency, the town of Redcliff would work with the Member for Cypress-Redcliff, the Lethbridge recreation department would work with the Member for Lethbridge-West, and so on, and let us know specifically the concerns and the impact, and not merely in philosophical terms but in solid terms: what's the negative impact you're facing, so we can see that.

The second request we made of the association was that they encourage other associations across the province, if they had not already done so in terms of meeting with their MLAs, to arrange similar meetings so the concern could be expressed. Because after all, that's a very legitimate role for us to play as MLAs.

The third request we gave, and we prefaced it with a question, was: "Surely you have been speaking with the minister and with the department about your concerns." They assured us that they have. There have been a couple of workshops where the issue has been raised, and we urged them to continue to do that, to continue to work with the minister directly and make information available to the department so the full impact of the reductions could be shared with all.

Now, I don't expect the minister to respond to the concerns I've given tonight, because we're only partway through the process. I did want to share, on behalf of my colleagues who were at that meeting, the fact that from our point of view collectively it was very good meeting. The members were there not with a shrill voice, as we sometimes hear in this Assembly from the Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche. They were there presenting to us in a very sensible way concerns they had. They weren't grandstanding. They were saying: "Members, here is something we'd like you to look at. We want to work with you, because we believe the future of recreation as we know it is in some peril and we want your assistance." So we assured them we would do that.

I'd like to conclude my remarks, just in a general wrap-up, by saying that from a provincial basis, looking at the services that are offered in this province -- whether it's in our provincial park system, in our provincial recreation area -- the support we give through our CRC grants and the other grants to municipalities, the Wild Rose Foundation, the Parks and Recreation Foundation, I can't think of another province that can come anywhere near us in terms of services, in terms of support that's given across the province. Now, that doesn't mean we can sit back on our laurels, nor will we. It means we've got to continue to monitor it to ensure that if, in fact, there is a shortfall, as is being suggested in the community recreation/culture grant area, we can address that; if there is a problem in that area, we'll be big enough to come back and say, "Yeah, you've got a point, and we're going to take another look at that."

But across the board, the services that are provided in Alberta are second to none of any province in Canada.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Westlock-Sturgeon.

MR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will be fairly short and probably fairly soft for fear of arousing the volcano that the hon. Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche did. I don't know if we could take two of those in one evening.

Mine are fairly short questions. When looking at this budget, Mr. Chairman, one of the problems is the fact that it's a bit obscured by the grants made by the lotteries from time to time. So sometimes when one might be inclined to feel sorry for the Minister of Recreation and Parks -- not because he's a

Tory but because sometimes it looks as if his budget has been cut - one must remember that the lotteries people occasionally come in and help him out.

But I can't help but remark, as the hon. Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche did earlier, that the Kananaskis Country management looks as if it might be a leech or a sucker at his throat for some time. It just doesn't seem practical that to still spend 1515 percent of his budget on managing a megapark is necessary if the economics and the use of the area is taking place the way it should. But maybe he'd be able to explain just why the costs are that high, and maybe, even more so, whether he expects the costs to continue that high. In other words, is this shaved down to what the operating budget will be for the next five or 10 years, or does he expect a further cut?

The other is just to register a mild -- well, not mild -- a bit of a beef. He refers to the park as Nakiska, or Mount Nakiska. I just have to admit being very prejudiced to Mount Allan. Dr. Allan was the very first geology professor I had after the last war, so I have a very soft spot for him. He reminded me a lot of Elmer Fudd. He was a very pink little man who could run up and down hills at a great clip that none of us in the class could keep up to. The mountain was named after him, so I am rather pleased to see that, I think, Mount Allan seems to be winning out over Nakiska in the long run. So in this corner, you have a rooter for Nakiska -- for Allan. I'm sorry.

MR. WRIGHT: It's a longer run at Nakiska.

AN HON. MEMBER: It's Nakiska on Mount Allan. Mount Allan will always be there.

MR. TAYLOR: Oh, good. Good. I'm glad to hear that. So that answers that one.

Now, the next one is to do with the Sturgeon Valley park at Gibbons, Mr. Chairman. When I was young and green and just elected as an MLA, I was told by the minister when I requested the \$100,000 or \$120,000 a year grant that I was late in applying. So I accepted that in '86. In '87 I applied, and the minister said they lost my application. Now it is '88, and I'm interested, Mr. Chairman, in just what it'll be this time. I wouldn't be surprised if he comes up and says it's for a dinosaur egg park at Lloydminster or something like that. But coming from Gibbons or in the Gibbons area, which, by the way, is very close to Redwater-Andrew . . . As a matter of fact, the people in Redwater-Andrew -- if the Tories want to go on what you call an intellectual weekend, they come over to my constituency and lodge themselves at Gibbons. The wilder elements, of course, go up to the Game Farm, which also borders on my constituency. I must admit that the game I see there is a lot wilder than I usually see in the House here. But possibly after being too late and losing the application, he could tell me what's happened in 1988.

One other question I have -- moving along fairly fast -- is the Cypress Hills logging. I am not quite sure whether the logging permits granted in the Cypress Hills are for clear-cut, and nothing looks worse than a clear-cut area in a park. Also, whether or not the timbering or logging permit implies more than the next year or two. In other words, is it a 10-year contract or something like that? I'm just a little concerned, being born and raised down there. It takes a long time to develop a tree, and I know you've all heard my story. When my old dog was about 13 years old, my father loaded it up on the truck to drive it all the way into Taber, where the hon. member's riding is, so it could

see a tree before it died. So naturally, when I hear that trees are being cut down on Cypress Hills, and knowing it takes longer to replace a tree down there than it does to grow a dinosaur, I do get a little worried.

Another plug for my constituency. Our town of Westlock is after either the Summer or the Winter Games. I want to push it as a very solid community. It's a community that's well able to put on either one, or both if you decide you'd like them back to back. It has a great deal of facilities there and probably one of the more aggressive groups of young men and women that are out there to leave the town's mark, that one would find. I want to put in my two bits there to say that you can't think of a much better area.

I also want to ask the minister whether he's changed his attitude a bit on the development of national parks, or whether their front bench has done that. I know he sits two or three seats away from the member representing Banff-Cochrane, and I don't know if I've ever heard the member say very much about that. But maybe I can embarrass him a little or throw a cat in his pigeon house -- because he was making a lot of noise -- and ask whether individually the minister believes there should be more commercial development of the national parks in order to take heat off the provincial, whether he is just the only person in the front bench that thinks so, or if the front bench thinks that. Because I'm a little concerned from what I can gather that there is a general policy by the Conservative government -- a poor one -- there may be a policy by this government to get out of developing recreational parks in our own province and try to push some more recreational development in national parks, whereas I think, when push comes to shove, your national parks have to be ecological and nature parks first and recreation second. I'm very worried that this government has shown a proclivity, or at least a leaning, towards the idea -- and would pressure the federal MPs -- to develop national parks as recreation areas rather than nature areas. I think I would like to see a more open declaration from this government to the federal MPs that they are to cease and desist the idea of developing the national parks.

Lastly, I put in my rather characteristic yearly request to the minister and ask him if he has thought any more about developing a Kananaskis north in the parkland area and within a similar driving distance from Edmonton. I would suggest, Mr. Chairman, that a park starting in one corner of Westlock-Sturgeon and running up to the constituency of Fort McMurray might be just right. The fact that it chops a little corner off Athabasca -- well, so what? It needs some colour anyhow. A Kananaskis park up into that area, particularly in the fishing and parkland country, would be very, very interesting indeed. Once we got that one, we could leapfrog all the way up to the Peace River and try something up there.

That Mr. Chairman, I know, is very uncharacteristic of me: I finished in nine and a half minutes. That's all the requests I have right now.

Thank you very much.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: The Member for Banff-Cochrane.

MR. STEVENS: Speak of the devil, Nick.

Mr. Chairman, in speaking to the estimates for my colleague tonight I want to mention, if I might -- perhaps for the first time in the Assembly -- an appreciation for the Minister of Recreation and Parks immediately before the current minister, and give

a special recognition to the Member for Whitecourt, who on behalf of this government represented the government so very well working with the Olympic Secretariat, working with Recreation and Parks on behalf of all of us, to ensure the success of the Olympics. I say that because there has not been much said about his commitment.

I say now, to this minister whose estimates are before us, and being a minister and a member for the constituency where there are three of the Olympic venues, that the Member for Fort McMurray and his department gave of themselves considerably in the carrying out of those Olympic Games. I say that in recognition of the fact that every member of this Assembly is proud of the Olympic Games. Every citizen of Alberta is proud of the Olympic Games and the result. But this particular minister was visible at all of the venues. His staff were the leading edge of the co-ordination, the direction in working together, whether it was Kananaskis Country, whether it was the Olympic Secretariat, whether it was the department whether it was working with Transportation and Utilities; Forestry, Lands and Wildlife; Culture and Multiculturalism; or any other department -- Public Works, Supply and Services -- this particular minister made sure that this province was front and centre in those Olympic experiences.

He mentioned a few moments ago in his remarks in response to the Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche, the considerable effort of the Alberta Sport Council and the Alberta Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation. I would like to ask the minister to clarify tonight what his department's position might be, and perhaps what the Kananaskis Country Citizens' Advisory Committee's position might be with respect to Highway 40 through Kananaskis, and what recommendations this minister will have to the Minister of Transportation and Utilities with regard to the opening of Highway 40 after the experiment this last year during the Olympic period. I would like to place on the record, as the Member for Banff-Cochrane, that it is a mistake to consider that that road should be open, notwithstanding the pressures for tourism development in our province, given that it is the highest road in North America, given the movement of the ungulates in the area, and given the need for a cycling area when the road is closed in the early spring.

I'd like to compliment the minister and his staff for the tremendously co-operative attitude between his department and the Department of Culture and Multiculturalism with regard to the community recreation/cultural grant program. All of these facilities and all of the programs are worked out carefully together, and I think that bodes well for the Minister of Tourism, the Minister of Culture and Multiculturalism, and the Minister of Recreation and Parks.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to bring to the members' attention my concern as a MLA in Banff-Cochrane for the Ghost reservoir area, and my hope that the department will in some way be able to adjust and make a change in the present situation that has taken place over the last three years. The constituency and this MLA support the idea of privatization and to encourage the private sector to work in the area of recreation development. In the case of the Ghost area, the denial of free public access has become a difficult problem. Persons wanting to use the reservoir, whether they're wind surfers, or canoers, or swimmers, continue to violate the highway regulations, continue to violate garbage and sanitary conditions or add to those problems, and continue to become quite a nuisance in the area. I think the only way to resolve it is for the department to in some way gain control of the area and to make it a public recreation area, which

will be at the cost of all taxpayers. But certainly the private sector is unable at this point to take the load of the demand for that reservoir access. So I'm hopeful the minister is able to announce his decisions about that reservoir area.

Mr. Chairman, I want to compliment the way in which the department works with the municipalities and with the various organizations and associations. Whether we go back to Edmonton and the Universiade or the Commonwealth Games, and now Calgary and the Olympic Games, there is no question that the department has been able to mobilize and work carefully together with citizens across this province, not only in sports, in recreation and passive recreation, but in providing the opportunity for people to feel proud of their communities and to work as volunteers.

[Mr. Gogo in the Chair]

When we look at the Olympics, and whether we look at the Canada Olympic Park and the speed skating oval, which are really federal projects working together in consort with the municipal district of Rocky View or with the city of Calgary and the University of Calgary; the Saddledome and the joint commitments of the federal/provincial/city governments; the Nordic Centre, which is a completely constructed and operated facility by the province in Kananaskis Country; or Nakiska at Mount Allan, again another completely provincial project -- all of these were successful. And I want to just bring to members' attention comments made by the members of the opposition about these projects as they were developed. I'll go back in time to May 16, 1984, and the Leader of the Official Opposition. His comments were very short. They were this:

We do not want a disaster in terms of taxpayers' money, as witnessed by the start with the Saddledome, which will make us look bad in the future.

What an idiotic statement for a leader of the New Democratic Party to have made in 1984. The Saddledome is one of the jewels of this province. It has proven its way, it has proven that the fast-tracking decisions were right, it was totally proven in the Olympics and those thousands of people who enjoyed that incredible experience. And here we have the NDP saying we will have "a disaster in terms of taxpayers' money . . . which will make us look bad in the future." I thank God for this province and its leadership and working with the city of Calgary and the federal government to ensure that that building was built on time and operating as one of our jewels of the Olympics. But that's what this number said on May 16, 1984.

Now, I'll go along, and he again says . . . [interjections]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please.

MR. STEVENS: The Leader of the Opposition the same day said:

Ken Read is one who is saying Mount Allan is not the proper place to have [a downhill event.]

Well, we know. And I know Ken Read very well. We know that Ken Read and his family preferred a different mountain, a mountain that could not have served the legacy of the future of skiing in this province, the legacy of recreational skiing. Instead, Mount Allan was developed . . .

MR. FOX: A point of order, Mr. Chairman.

MR. STEVENS: . . . and a white elephant label . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: Order please. A point of order, Vegreville.

MR. FOX: A point of order. I just wonder if the hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane might tell us which of the minister's votes he's dealing with now, so that we can all follow some of his logic, if he's not just trying to cover for the disappointment of that hockey team using that facility losing.

MR. CHAIRMAN: The hon. Minister of Culture and Multiculturalism.

MR. STEVENS: Mr. Chairman, I'm not sure if that was a point of order.

But it's interesting to know that here we've had a successful Olympics and Mount Allan. The white elephant label given to it by the New Democratic Party has been absolutely exonerated, not only by the conditions. No other hill in North America or in Europe this year could have conducted the Olympics, and here it was done. [interjections] I'll explain that if you'll be patient, opposition critic for Labour, who -- that's all he can speak about.

MR. STRONG: How much did it cost you to make the snow?

MR. STEVENS: I'll tell you what happens. Here the international experts have reported that Mount Allan was exemplary, the best ever facility for the Winter Olympics ever built in the world. But here we have "How much does it cost to make snow?" There isn't a ski hill in North America that doesn't have snowmaking equipment. They must have snowmaking equipment to have an extended season. To be competitive every ski hill must have snowmaking equipment. And he says, "How much did it cost?" Ask the 200,000 skiers who will be at that facility this coming winter what they think. I've challenged all the opposition individually, and I'll do it collectively: I'll meet you at the top of Mount Allan any day; we'll go down together, and we'll see what it's like between November and May. It's just incredible to think that they would make these kinds of comments and have to have the world see this.

And it's not just the New Democratic Party, Mr. Chairman. The Member for Calgary-Buffalo, who temporarily has left his seat on November 27, 1987, just a few weeks before visitors to this country came -- athletes, coaches, trainers -- said:

Now that it's clear that Nakiska is on its way to being an ignominious failure . . .

I hope he eats crow for the rest of his short term in the Legislature. How incredible that facility is at Mount Allan. I can't believe that they would say this way.

And then, Mr. Chairman, December 7, 1987, and I've got to mention this. Here is the New Democratic Party House leader asking the Deputy Premier if he would

. . . confirm that it's the Public Affairs Bureau's intention to establish . . . "the government's presence at the Olympics" by setting up a special office . . .

Mr. Chairman, I attended that special office in the Olympic Plaza. I know my colleague was there. I know most of the members of this Assembly and government were there, and thousands of people every night during those Olympics watched that medal ceremony put on in that plaza, one of the largest viewing spectacles in the history of the world. So I thank the minister and his team, the Olympic Secretariat, the Recreation and Parks department and all of the men and women who worked together to make this happen.

I just can't believe hearing the leader of the Liberals a few moments ago -- again, he has now made his point and of course he will be listening somewhere -- say that he's worried about the future of the national parks. He's suggesting that they should be somehow a preserve and not considered for managed development. Is he saying, with that comment, that it's all right, then, to do anything one wants to do in the provincial parks, the provincial recreation areas, but we'll hold somehow the national parks sacred? We won't worry about use; we won't worry about management. We'll just worry about preservation, because anything goes in the provincial areas. Well, that's a pretty shortsighted and typical Liberal view of the way the national parks should be developed. I'm very proud of the government's position with respect to management, multiple use, and trying to attract the private sector to help us build tourism to the most incredible diversification and job-creation possibilities we have in this province in the next 20 years.

Let me just share with the members this. They talk about north and south, because only the New Democratic Party wants to suggest that what we do in the south is different from what we do in the north. You have to be very realistic in this. People are coming to this province, first of all, for one reason. When we've asked them, they come -- and I know the minister is doing these surveys all the time -- for one reason: mountains. The mountains tend to be on the west side of the province; they're not over by Saskatchewan. They also come because there's a corridor called the Calgary-Bow corridor, and three out of four visitors to this province are choosing that corridor to come. Now, when we get them there, it's very important that we try to attract them elsewhere. That's why I'm very proud of the minister's approach in developing recreation areas and camping areas throughout this province and endeavouring to help, as funds allow, the Alberta North or northern adventures. I think this minister has made it very clear where he stands on that.

So, Mr. Chairman, if the minister could perhaps clarify the situation at the Ghost Reservoir and perhaps would clarify where he would stand on a recommendation to the Minister of Transportation and Utilities on the permanent closing of Highway 40 in the winter, I will thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Thank you. There are a number of comments I'd like to make on this department's estimates this evening. The first one, Mr. Chairman, to the minister, is if he could give us an update as to: what is the disposition of his department's policy statement? I think the minister will recall that the very first time I spoke as critic for this department almost two years ago, in my official capacity as a rookie member of the Legislature, I commended his department for initiating that particular process. But that's almost two years ago. I don't know what's happened to it.

I know there were some meetings across the province. There was some direction that it would be rewritten. My understanding is that it's now been reorganized, there are going to be six areas for strategies on community recreation, and that it'll be another year before those strategies are even implemented. Well, Mr. Chairman, that will make it three years from when I became familiar with the process, and nothing will have by that time even been implemented; we'll simply be at the document stage. It seems to me that for an imaginative process -- I sure hope it doesn't get bogged down in the long litany of bureaucratic mumbo jumbo and difficulty in being clear and

precise and we never see anything come from it. So I want to encourage the minister and the members of the department to proceed with that, but I don't want to see it carry on and on and on and on, forever and a day, as some source of income for consultants and a mandate for bureaucrats to work on for the next several years. Maybe the minister can give some assurance to the Legislature that that matter is being proceeded with, and he could perhaps give us some time lines by which the process will be completed.

There are some other areas I would like to raise with the minister. Mr. Chairman, I was quite intrigued to see that there was something like, I think, a 38 percent increase in the amounts of lottery funds that were made available to the Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation. But as I understand those lottery funds, they're earmarked to an area that the minister referred to in his opening comments, and that is in the whole area of leisure life-style. Well, I find this interesting. As I understand it, it will go to partially fund eight regional fitness centres. I think Red Deer College, Mount Royal College -- there are a number of them across the province in the area of nutrition and fitness counseling.

Well, in addition to giving them lottery funds, there has been a transfer of people from the staff of the department that have now been seconded to the Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation to implement these lottery funds. I'd like to understand if the ministry is responsible for this, or is it now this foundation that's responsible for it? And is it just another way of transferring responsibilities but still finding money to pay for it under somebody else's budget? If that's the case, I'd like to know, for example, what the mandate of the Blue Lake Centre is in this in relation to leisure life-style. What is its role? Because I understood that its responsibility was very key to all of this, yet I don't know where all these mandates and groups and organizations relate to each other.

As well, Mr. Chairman, is this the most important area where there's a gap for recreation in this province? You know, there's been a lot of talk here about the CRC program. As the minister knows, this has been a very popular program over the years. It started with the MCR program, project co-operation, some operating funds, and so on. Those were combined -- I think it was 1984 -- and when it was first announced, \$20 per capita for a five-year program. But last year that was reduced to \$16 per capita. Now, this year, I understand, it was reduced to \$12 per capita, and for the next two years it's down to \$10 per capita. So it's spread, as he mentioned, from five to seven years.

But this has put a lot of pressure on those communities that have been receiving these funds over the years, particularly the rural communities that were encouraged to build all these recreation facilities in their communities. And close together -- one community had one; and the community a few miles down the road had the same. And they found that after they built them, gosh, it took quite a bit of operating money to run them. So the maximum this year for operating dollars under the CRC program has been lifted, although as I understand there's still a 25 percent limit of money that has to be spent on culture.

Now, this is significant because it indicates that really the need out there is for operating dollars. Well, if that's the case -- as we see, applications are now coming to the Wild Rose Foundation and the Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation to make up the shortfall from these CRC grants. You know, when you see lottery money going into these two foundations -- and it's nice to see that some of this money is going to a good cause -- the needs that those foundations are coping with are not lei-

sure life-style but how to help all these organizations that are coming for small capital or small operating grants. So I don't know what the priorities are over there, but I'd sure like a few comments from the minister, because we've got a lot of problems out there, especially in the small communities.

But there are also some problems facing the larger communities under the CRC-approved program. At one time if one community group or one grant application was not completed, the municipality could send in those grant applications that were completed and they would be processed. But the rules have been changed so that now if any one application has not been completed, if not all the accounting has been done by some group or another, then the entire list of grants is held back. Now, if it's a small community, only a few applications coming through, it's not quite so onerous as it is for a city like the one I represent, where, for example -- I don't know -- some community association didn't get their accounting done by April 30, so that means everybody has to pay by not getting their application processed and the money forwarded. I'd ask the minister if he would announce tonight or indicate that those rules are being relaxed and that that problem is not going to be so onerous on the larger communities.

But still, I have to come back to this question. The minister said that we look at these grants as if they're going to go on forever. Well, Mr. Chairman, if the CRC program is not going to go on forever after the seven-year program is up, perhaps the minister could announce what it is that will replace it, because there are a lot of communities out there that are having a lot of difficulty operating these facilities that they were encouraged to build under the MCR and CRC programs. If we see these facilities falling apart, well then the question is: what was the purpose of all this funding in the first place? If it was only to build these facilities and there's no money to operate them and they fall apart, it's just in the long run a total waste of public money. So it's an important issue. Once we build all these capital projects, somebody's got to run them, and where are the programs and the funds and the dollars going to come in order to do that?

As well, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to know if the minister is doing anything to get these municipalities to work together. I realize that some of them are. I think the Entwistle-Wildwood area west of Highway 16 is one case in point where three communities got together. I think one had a curling rink, the other had an ice rink, and the third had maybe a swimming pool; I'm not clear on which was which in which community. But they realized that jointly they had something that the whole region could participate in, and there was a rationalization of those facilities. Well, what steps are being taken to encourage other communities across the province to pursue this in the same way so we don't have two or three or four curling rinks all within, say, 10 or 15 miles of each other in the smaller communities and rural areas, and then none of them are viable? So is there some way that the CRC program could be perhaps amended, or is there some sort of mandate for the regional recreation councils or the like to somehow get these municipalities together and working on a regional recreation plan?

I'd also make a plea, I guess, for the Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation. They need some kind of increase in their funding in order to deal with these requests that they're getting. I understand they had a million dollars in one of their last quarters to -- it was all they had to distribute even though they had requests for \$2 million and a recommendation from their staff for \$1.25 million. So there's obviously a need there.

As well, some group can apply to the Alberta Sport Council, the Wild Rose Foundation, the Recreation, Parks and Wildlife Foundation, as well as the department for funding. Is there any way of ensuring that there's no duplication or that one group is [not] getting funding from all these different sources? What mechanism is there in place to check who's giving money to which groups? How do we ensure there's not a duplication? How to we ensure that groups don't fall through the cracks, on the other hand, and get ignored? I know that the boards of those foundations are getting together to clarify mandates, but it seems to me that there's some significant co-ordination required.

Mr. Chairman, I'm also concerned -- the minister's heard me say this before, but the ultimate policy document is a budget. So what we're looking at tonight are the priorities of this government when it comes to recreation and parks. When we see reports -- for example, Our Parks -- Vision for the 21st Century, the report of the federal Minister of the Environment's Task Force on Park Establishment. One of the very first and highest priorities in this recommendation was almost a plea for the protection of natural areas of Canadian significance, that we should be pursuing a

Canadian system of protected areas, recognizing that national parks are not the only means for serving the national interest, and that many public and private agencies can contribute to the goal.

It goes on to encourage a number of means for pursuing that.

What I keep hearing from people is that we need to provide the funding now to set aside lands for parks, to protect them. I appreciate the minister's saying that eight small but important ecological areas have been identified and protected, and I commend him and his department for that. But when I come to this department -- and I recognize that I do have to go to the Public Works, Supply and Services vote, because they do this on behalf of the Recreation and Parks department. But when I look under Land Assembly, all I see is money for existing provincial parks in the order of \$400,000. That may be to buy some cottage leases back on an opportunity basis; I don't know. But that's the only place I could find any kind of land acquisition budget \$400,000, when we see an operating budget of close to \$100 million. It seems to me, Mr. Chairman, that if a budget is the ultimate policy document, there is precious little priority given for the acquisition of lands.

Now, I had the privilege last fall of being out in the area of the province just to the east of Edmonton and had a chance to visit Beaverhill Lake. It's a major staging area, an international staging area of world significance -- certainly of North American significance -- for birds. And I just mention this to the minister, Mr. Chairman. A bit of trivial pursuit: what's the fastest growing area of tourism expenditure in North America?

AN HON. MEMBER: Bird watching.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Bird watching. You get to roll again, and you get one of those little pieces of pie from the . . .

It's a significant area in this province, in my view, for tourism development, Mr. Chairman, and of an international calibre, I think, and with that could be drawing people to this province from all over North America.

MR. WRIGHT: It's known all over North America.

MR. HAWKESWORTH: Well, it's already known, but we need the facilities there so that when people come, there is a

place to go, there's some protection from the elements, protection for the birds, some way for cars and so on to access the area, and also to be set aside for that purpose. So I'd say to the minister: here's one idea, one suggestion, in the entire province; there are lots more of them around.

Where and how and when do we get the money to set aside those lands, acquire those lands? I know that the minister's been talking in the past about some sort of an endowment fund. He recognizes that. I think he made reference at one time that this would be part of the policy statement for the department. Well, this is why I say in my opening comments, Mr. Chairman, that it's so important that we not wait for the document that we get on with doing the job. Or if we have to wait for the document, let's facilitate it, encourage it and speed it up so we don't have to lose opportunities.

I would encourage the minister to do what he can to get an endowment fund set up. That might assist in getting some funds from the public which could then be earmarked or matched or somehow worked out from the provincial government. Look, we've got an endowment fund for the universities and colleges in the province where people -- if they donate to a university, it can be matched by the province and thereby double that contribution from the public. Why can't we have something similar for Recreation and Parks, particularly for the acquisition of land for new parks?

Again I'd just use this brief opportunity to briefly lobby this minister during this estimates debate to see whether he can support the Minister of Municipal Affairs, whom I asked the other night if he could find the means of perhaps helping the city of Calgary in acquiring lands on Nose Hill for a park, perhaps using lottery funds as a way of supporting the acquisition costs from the city of Calgary. I would just repeat: if the provincial government, as I'm sure they do, wants to see those lands acquired -- they indicated they did two years ago with the introduction of a Bill -- I would say that the best way to put the city on the spot is to say, "Here's some money to help you in the costs of an expropriation action." The city would then be in a position -- it would be impossible for them to hold back any longer. They would be forced to proceed, and the solution to this issue would be facilitated.

I'd like to also talk briefly about Cypress Hills Provincial Park. I see in this vote 3.4.1, \$1.5 million for Cypress Hills, Construction and Redevelopment; last year \$1.352 million. Is this to build the ski hill? Is this the ski development in Cypress Hills? Here we come to the question -- well, first of all, why is this not being done under Public Works, Supply and Services? Because I see that for other facilities -- Fish Creek Provincial Park, Blue Lake Centre, and so on -- we find expenditures under Recreation and Parks in vote 4, Planning and Implementation of Construction Programs, projects under Public Works, Supply and Services. I don't know; I'm just curious why this one appears where it does and not under that.

But more importantly, Mr. Chairman, what are the terms for leasing or selling this ski development to the private sector? The minister was quite big on privatization in his comments earlier this evening. Well, if you're going to give away a facility, where is the investment? The minister was talking about putting dollars at risk and taking risks, which the private sector is so good at. Well, what I've seen this department do is use public dollars to build the facilities and then lease them at a rate which doesn't in any way reflect the cost of development of those facilities by the public. And if that's his idea of privatization, no wonder we can't agree with it because it just is not privatiza-



tion; it's a public giveaway.

The whole area of forest management The minister is aware of my concerns raised earlier last year in which there is a proposal for clear-cutting parcels of land in the Cypress Hills Provincial Park in order to manage the fire danger and bug infestation. Well, I'd like to know whether this is a policy for all provincial parks across the province. If it's an issue and a problem in this particular park, is it a problem and an issue in, say, Kananaskis provincial park? If that's the case, will the same solution be adopted in Kananaskis as is being adopted in Cypress Hills Provincial Park? Or, as I suspect, Mr. Chairman, this maybe has less to do with forest management than it is to provide a source of wood for a local sawmill. That's my concern, and I would like the minister to tell us: what is the provincial policy for all provincial parks?

Mr. Chairman, there have been some glowing things said about Kananaskis Country management. I'd just again echo the comment made by the Member for Athabasca-Lac La Biche: 15 percent of the total budget is going into the operating costs of Kananaskis Country management. Well, it's certainly nice. It's a beautiful park. Is it something that we are going to pursue over the years at the expense of all these other areas that I mention, particularly in the whole area of not having enough money for land acquisition for parks across the other part of the province? I'm also concerned about the trend where I've noted the departure of high-quality professional staff from that management in the past year, particularly the Ribbon Creek Resort Association. It's the cause of a great deal of concern to me, given the amount of public dollars that have gone into those facilities, both in capital and operating. I wonder if the minister could share with the Assembly the new executive director at Ribbon Creek Resort Association. Perhaps the minister could share with the Assembly what special experience, accomplishments, or background would recommend that gentleman for the position to which he has been appointed.

Mr. Chairman, I guess I would be remiss if I didn't take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the minister but, more importantly, to the many thousands of volunteers in the city of Calgary who worked so hard and so well during the 1988 Olympic Winter Games to make it a success. I know for those who came from around the world, the thing that impressed them was that these were people that were volunteers. They weren't paid;

they were just willingly giving of their time to ensure that the games were a success, and I think the friendliness of Calgarians came to the fore. As a Calgarian I'm delighted to see that that happened, I know it's one of the things that I love about my city, and I was pleased to see that that came to the fore so very much during the Olympics. I must say, as the minister and others were aware, that I had my concerns about the cost of the games and the concern that the cost overruns we had seen in some of the early construction projects were not to be repeated. I'm pleased, as I said previously in the Legislature, that there is an endowment fund and there is money left over from the operations of the Olympic Games. Those are going to go into endowment funds to go towards the operating costs of those facilities, and for that I'm pleased.

But in my mind, Mr. Chairman, the real success of the games came from the involvement of the people. Again, I was concerned that that might not happen, but it did come about that Calgarians did fall in behind the games and worked very, very hard. I want to take this opportunity to say that I was proud of that accomplishment by all Calgarians.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

MR, YOUNG: I move that the committee rise, report progress, and beg leave to sit again,

[Motion carried.]

[Mr. Deputy Speaker in the Chair]

MR, MUSGREAVE: Mr, Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports progress thereon, and requests leave to sit again.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Having heard the report and the request for leave to sit again, do you agree?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Opposed, if any? Carried.

[At 10:20 p.m. the House adjourned to Wednesday at 2:30 p.m.]

