



STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ECONOMY

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ECONOMY

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Moosomin

Mr. Trent Wotherspoon, Deputy Chair
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Mr. Fred Bradshaw
Carrot River Valley

Ms. Jennifer Campeau
Saskatoon Fairview

Mr. Larry Doke
Cut Knife-Turtleford

Mr. Bill Hutchinson
Regina South

Ms. Victoria Jurgens
Prince Albert Northcote

[The committee met at 19:00.]

The Chair: — Being now 7 p.m., I will call this Standing Committee on the Economy to order. We have with us tonight committee members Larry Doke, Victoria Jurgens, Fred Bradshaw, and joining us tonight is Cathy Sproule and also we're joined by Buckley Belanger.

Pursuant to rule 148(1), the estimates and supplementary estimates for the following ministries and agencies were deemed referred to the committee on March 27, 2013 and March 19, 2014, respectively: vote 1, Agriculture; vote 23 and 174, Economy; vote 26, Environment; vote 16, Highways and Infrastructure; vote 17, Highways and Infrastructure Capital; vote 84, Innovation Saskatchewan; vote 35, Saskatchewan Research Council; vote 86, SaskBuilds Corporation; and vote 87, Water Security Agency.

**General Revenue Fund
Environment
Vote 26**

Subvote (EN01)

The Chair: — Tonight the committee will be considering the estimates for the Ministry of the Environment. We will now begin our consideration of vote 26, Environment, subvote (EN01) central management and services. I welcome the minister and his officials and invite the minister to introduce his officials and make his opening remarks.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and good evening to committee members. It's indeed a pleasure to be here to discuss the estimates for the Ministry of Environment. To begin with, I have some follow-up answers to the committee that we had on March 11th on the economy, and specifically questions regarding *The Wildfire Act* and all that. So I'd like to table that now, Mr. Chair.

Good evening to all members of the committee. Here with me from the Ministry of the Environment are Cam Swan, deputy minister; Lori Uhersky, assistant deputy minister of environmental support — if you could just wave your hand as I say your name — Kevin Murphy, the assistant deputy minister of resource management and compliance; Erika Ritchie, assistant deputy minister of environmental protection and audit; Laurel Welsh, executive director, finance and administration; Steve Roberts, executive director, wildfire management; Bob Wynes, executive director, forest services; Lyle Saigeon, executive director of fish and wildlife; Jennifer McKillop, executive director, landscape stewardship; Wes Kotyk, executive director, environmental protection; Chuck Bosgoed, manager, technical resources; Ed Dean, acting director, climate change; Thon Phommavong, executive director, RBR [results-based regulation] and code management; and Sharla Hordenchuk, director, environmental assessment.

Mr. Chair, the province's 2014-15 provincial budget is about steady growth. Measures included in this budget will enable Saskatchewan to meet the challenges of a growing province by controlling government spending and making important investments in both infrastructure and people. The Ministry of

Environment's 2014-15 budget demonstrates a continued commitment to the Saskatchewan growth plan while protecting the environment and promoting the sustainable use of our natural resources.

The budget represents an investment of \$162 million to protect the province's air, land, and natural resources to achieve a high environmental standard and to support sustainable development in the use of these resources.

The budget includes funding for the ministry to continue to implement results-based regulation and continue its work in environmental protection and resource management to ensure that our environment is healthy and our resources are protected for future generations. Saskatchewan has adopted a results-based model for environmental regulation, RBR, to continue to ensure protection of the environment while promoting new and innovative tools in environmental management to support the government's growth plan. RBR is about balancing environmental protection with the well-being of people and the facilitation of a competitive business environment.

The key components in making this shift are organizational and cultural realignment to focus on clients and service delivery and a transformation of the ministry's information management systems to enable this shift. In 2014-15 the ministry plans to continue this transition by investing in the IT [information technology] systems critical to support the transition.

The budget includes \$4 million in capital funding to continue to implement the RBR framework designed to enhance customer service, greater efficiencies, and improve transparency and accountability.

Some of these projects that will be funded in the 2014-15 budget include implementing an information management system to support the ministry's responsibilities for managing Crown resource lands. Integrating the Saskatchewan environmental management system, SEEMS [Saskatchewan Environment Environmental Management System], with the ministry's new enterprise model, as the Water Security Agency and environmental protection branch continue to rely on SEEMS to store and report on water quality and other scientific information. Developing a forestry scaling information system, which is an interactive web-based system that both industry and government can use to centralize the collection, calculation, and reporting of wood measurement information. Enhancing application processing and permissions management, APPM, customer relations management, CRM, and permits to replace legacy permit systems. Continuing to integrate to GIS [geographic information system] information with business transaction for Crown lands and forestry, and integrating emission data and reporting requirements into the ministry's enterprise data model.

The ministry plans to complete all its IM/IT [information management/information technology] transformation work by the end of 2015-16. In 2014-15 wildlife management budget includes capital funding of \$175,000 for enhancements to the wildfire integrated information network or WIIN. WIIN is the comprehensive information system recently developed for the

wildfire management program. The system manages all of the wildfire operation information from the initial report of a wildfire through the management, investigation, and closure of the incident. It enhances safety measures, accountability, improves the efficiency of information management, and enables real-time, knowledge-based decision making. The additional modules will focus on inclusion of more comprehensive aerial suppression information capture and will add components for the financial tracking and reporting linkages to the existing operational components.

In the 2013-14 budget, the Ministry of Environment was allocated \$1.544 million in capital funding for the automation of the wildfire management detection tower network, which will be fully operational for this fire season. The 42-tower network has been upgraded to infrared camera technology with centralized oversight which will provide improved safety, improved detection reliability and efficiency. Prompt detection of wildfires allows for rapid response and control. This reduces government costs and provides better protection for the public, stakeholders, and resources from wildfires.

The 2014-15 budget includes \$2.815 million for the ministry's climate change program to contribute towards the development and delivery of a provincial climate change plan and to administer ongoing projects under the go green program such as the high-level wind and storage projects. As a result of the government's investment in this high-level wind turbine project, Cowessess First Nation and the Saskatchewan Research Council have paved the way for other wind storage projects and created a revenue stream for the Cowessess community through the sale of electricity to SaskPower's grid.

As one of the first of its kind in North America, data from the wind battery system is being monitored continuously to evaluate the performance and economic value of the wind storage system. Energy storage is a key component in the emerging smart grid, and it will affect the adoption of renewable energies and increase the reliability of a complex electrical grid.

More than 80 invited delegates attended a one-day symposium in February organized by the Ministry of Environment to learn about the results of innovative environmental technologies demonstrated in Saskatchewan and to participate in an exchange of ideas. The symposium featured projects supported by the government's Go Green Fund such as the Meadow Lake Tribal Council Resource Development Inc.'s tribal wood-biomass-based heating systems for northern communities. The tribal council completed construction of a wood biomass pelleting facility and conducted demonstrations at four sites to explore the environmental and economic viability of wood-pellet-based heating systems in remote communities where natural gas is not available.

In addition to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, this wood pellet production project helped to create long-term stability for the tribal council and an opportunity to diversify their forest sector holdings. As a result of the government's investment, the tribal council has expanded the market for wood pellets and biomass heating systems in Saskatchewan's North and has set the stage for a large-scale electricity generation project in Meadow Lake, using wood biomass.

The ministry will continue to lead and support the government's efforts to mitigate and adapt the impacts of climate change in 2014-15. The ministry's 2014-15 budget includes 23.724 million in funding for Sarcan to support the operation of the beverage container collection and recycling program, which aligns with the current four-year agreement and is an increase of \$972,000 from the 2013-14 funding level.

There is also \$500,000 in the budget to support province-wide implementation of the multi-material recycling program or MMRP. The ministry will continue to provide capital infrastructure grants to support municipal recycling programs across the province and to help remove the barriers for municipalities who may find it financially challenging to meet the basic requirements of operating a recycling program in their community. Once it is fully operational, the MMRP has the potential to reduce the amount of household waste going to landfills by approximately 40 per cent.

The 2014-15 budget includes \$250,000 to continue the monitoring of the boreal caribou populations and habitat in the province to maintain caribou populations while enabling sustainable economic development and growth in the North. This is the second year of funding for the boreal caribou program, and it is part of a five-year plan.

The ministry's budget includes \$200,000 to leverage federal funds and support implementation of recovery measures scheduled to occur over the next three years as part of the South of the Divide action plan. This is the second year of funding under the four-year plan. The South of the Divide initiative is a collaborative, multi-species action plan for recovery of species at risk in southwestern Saskatchewan which was initially launched by the province and federal government to move away from costly recovery action plans for the individual species.

The ministry's 2014-15 budget also includes \$1.25 million to complete site assessment work at five abandoned northern mine sites. This is continuation of the work started in 2013-14 to meet the public sector accounting board standard for account contaminated site liability. It also addresses the recommendation of the Provincial Auditor's report.

The ministry will complete the transfer of responsibility for the administration and the operation of the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund to an independent agency in 2014-15. As a result there will be a greater emphasis on habitat acquisition and stewardship, fish enhancement, conservation education, and active promotion of hunting and angling under the new structure, which will be well received by various stakeholder groups. The ministry's \$162 million budget supports priorities for the provision of public service excellence in environmental protection and sustainable resource management to enhance economic and social benefits while supporting the government's plan for growth and addressing the commitment to reduce government's overall footprint.

With that, Mr. Chair, that's chapter 1. I have 19 more chapters to read, and I'll — no, just kidding. As you can tell, it's quite an elaborate overview. But the Ministry of Environment, certainly what I've come to realize over my time as minister is, it's all-encompassing, it affects so many different parts of our province and our well-being. And with that, I look forward to a

good and lively discussion this evening, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. The document from the ministry has been distributed to members and I would like to table this document, ECO 9/27, Ministry of Environment responses to questions raised at the March 11th, 2014 meeting of the committee re Bill 107, *The Wildfire Act* — dated March 31st, 2014. Thank you, Mr. Minister. The floor is now open for questions from committee members. I recognize Mr. Belanger.

[19:15]

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Just thanks, you know, for the opening comments. And my questions are going to be around the Patterson Lake area which is north of La Loche. And La Loche, of course, is the host community, if I can put it in that context, of the Clearwater River which is, of course, a nationally recognized freshwater river that has been made famous through the many people that have canoed the river. And it's really a beautiful river and then a very nice ecosystem. It's all part of the land out in that area.

So the questions I have around will be the whole notion of protecting the land in terms of its traditional value versus the activity happening there now because there's a lot of activity happening in Patterson Lake. And it's always a good question to pose to the Minister of the Environment because there is always a challenging task of managing and balancing your environmental needs versus your economic desires.

So around the Patterson Lake area in particular where there's a lot of activity, my first question I have is, what is the government doing to protect specific vegetation, aquatic animals, and water consumption on some of the traditional lands around the Patterson Lake area?

Because there's a lot of activity, exploration activity, and while the people in the region welcome that particular aspect of wanting to see more development and employment opportunity, they worry about the environmental challenges attached to that. Because I understand now from the economic perspective that it takes less than two weeks to get an exploration permit. So there's companies out there all over the place, and we're hearing stories of how the environmental integrity of the ecosystem is being dramatically altered.

So again going back to my earlier point, what is the plan for that particular area or any other area when you have that kind of activity? And I don't want to use the word disruption to the ecosystem because it's kind of a negative connotation to it because you obviously want to see the economic opportunity realized in all of our areas. But in that context, how would we balance the disruption versus the integrity of the ecosystem there?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. Certainly we are doing many, many things in the North. We want to, as the member indicated, we want to preserve the pristine nature of northern Saskatchewan, but we also want to take advantage of economic opportunities for jobs and for quality of life in northern Saskatchewan as well. And it is a fine line. It is something that we work to balance very closely.

And you know, I want to begin answering the question with the boreal water strategy, and I know the member has heard me speak about this in the legislature before. But we're in the second year of a five-year strategy where we're looking at the pristine nature of our boreal lakes and establishing a baseline of what the content of those lakes are, what the mineral content is, and then going forward we can see if there's any changes or disturbances to those pristine bodies of water. So we feel that it's an important study for the long term.

The Patterson Lake area is part of the area that is encompassed by the boreal water strategy, and we continue to look forward to that information and to monitor it very closely and to work with companies in the North as well. It's very well known that this study is being undertaken, and we're receiving a lot of help from the private sector along the way as well.

But as I said, that's just the beginning to the answer. There's many other areas that we can talk about. And I'm going to ask official Chuck here to elaborate on some of those as well.

Mr. Bosgoed: — Thank you. I just maybe want to give a little more specifics on what the minister had mentioned as far as the boreal water management strategy. It's a five-year study. We're looking at a whole host of media in the North — air, land, and water. We're looking at aquatic ecosystem health. We're looking at soil, terrestrial. We're doing all sorts of different projects. We're collaborating with lots of different institutions and industry and . . . [inaudible] . . . and First Nations in the North as well to do a lot of different things.

And it's one for the water quality, and we've got air quality and soil quality, but I want to specifically hone in on the work that we're doing for traditional knowledge. We've got an education outreach program. We're working with five northern schools and communities. We've teamed up with some of the schools and environmental society and the BEAHR, the Building Environmental Aboriginal Human Resources program, to teach local students in the community how to collect water samples, surface water quality samples, water samples out of a tap to . . . and understand what those, take those results and what those results mean as well and try to expand throughout the North on some of that monitoring as well.

One specific program that we have, I mean the eastern Athabasca regional monitoring program, it looks at the . . . So that would be the northern part of the boreal region. We're looking at hunting and looking at the fish and the birds. We're looking at berries as well.

We just had a report from that particular group come out. It was a wrap-up of the 2012 monitoring that they had done and the 2013 a little bit as well. So that report just came off in January of 2014 and it's online. You can go online and you can get this report. It's an open and transparent process that we're working with the mining companies in the North, Areva and Cameco. We've come up with this report. It was published, just published by CanNorth and it talks about the, you know, monitoring. What does the water quality and what does simple things like berries, what does that show us in the North that's being harvested by the . . . and things like that. And so the results are favourable. We're not finding anything is a problem, anything alarming in the fish, in the birds, in the wildlife, in the

berries in the North.

Mr. Belanger: — Okay. And one of the things I think is important to note is that we have some folks from La Loche that are listening to this particular part of the program and they see a lot of activity around Patterson Lake. So we're getting some of the folks asking me to ask some of the questions. And from some of the initial comments that we've shared . . . And that's why this issue is really, really important, not only to my particular constituency but to the province as a whole. Where's the line between economic opportunity and environmental protection?

Now what I tell the folks back home is that — and correct me if I'm wrong; perhaps the deputy minister would know this for sure — but I don't think that the Environment minister could be persuaded by an economic argument above and beyond his role as an environmental steward, so to speak, on behalf of the government. So if some other minister says, you will do this and forget the environmental implications, I don't think they can do that to you in cabinet. I think you probably have a bit more autonomy than most of the other ministers when it comes to environmental integrity and protection of the environment because often that was told to me when I served as the Environment minister.

So what's really important is that in the Patterson Lake area north of La Loche, there's a lot of activity, a lot of activity, and people want to know what's going on. They want to know, okay, who's doing the drilling? What's happening to the results? What's the long-term plan? And of course one of the most significant ones is, what's happening to the traditional territory there?

So in terms of the environmental integrity that we speak about, I want to say at the outset, our argument here is that, what are we doing to protect the environment now, particularly around the Patterson Lake area? Now we'll have our economic pros and cons discussion later but this is the environmental venue in which we can ask these questions. So in terms of the First Nations duty to consult and accommodate on the impacts of this particular activity, we're hearing stories of drilling rigs on lakes. We're hearing stories of, you know, garbage being disposed of in a negative way. We're hearing stories of cutlines all over the place. So I guess my question is, while we have the program that you spoke of and the monitoring going on, just exactly how much are we doing to mitigate the environmental challenge that this economic opportunity has, in particular around the Lloyd Lake area, Patterson Lake area north of La Loche?

[19:30]

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. Certainly the member indicates that people are watching in La Loche, and I welcome that and pleased to know that individuals out there are taking a direct interest in some of the questions and some of the answers that we're discussing today.

Certainly environmental protection, the member indicates or muses about my responsibility and if any minister would supersede me in any way in regards to the environment. I want

to make it very clear for committee members that environmental stewardship is my number one responsibility. In that responsibility I think it's important to weigh that with economic concerns and I think and I truly believe that both can be done at the same time. We can have a growing economy, a vibrant economy that creates jobs for northern citizens and for citizens around the province, but we can do so in an environmentally sustainable way. And certainly that's the way I see my job and that's the way I conduct myself in committee meetings like this and in cabinet meetings as well.

When the member talks about traditional territory, certainly we honour the duty to consult. We take that very seriously. We look at the consultation policy framework and we use that to assess certain developments and we want to work with proponents as well. We ask proponents in the mining sector or any type of economic development sector to consult with First Nations wherever possible. Not only do we discuss that; we issued a proponent handbook. I think that was back in December of 2013 where we came up with a handbook to give to proponents and instructions on how to consult with First Nations and Métis regarding traditional territory.

We undertake things on a case-by-case basis as far as activity up there, but very . . . We certainly want to encourage those and if there is those listening out there tonight that know about specific actions that aren't in keeping with environmental stewardship, we want to hear about them. The member talks about cutlines and garbage dumping and things like that. Well nobody wants to see that. But indeed if it is taking place, I would like to hear about it. So if individuals out there would want to write directly to me or through their MLAs [Member of the Legislative Assembly], I would certainly take that very serious and look at looking into it the best we can.

Staff continue to focus on the Patterson Lake area. It is an area of prime importance for the Ministry of Environment. We have received some letters in the past of concerns, and those are taken very serious. Again, a land use plan is under way. Staff continue to discuss with individuals and stakeholders, but final commitments have not been made in this regard. So again, it's a vital part of our province. It's an important part. Discussions are under way. More work needs to be done, but we continue to monitor it very closely.

Mr. Belanger: — Okay. And that being said, we're certainly going to hold you to account on the responsibility that you've just articulated in terms of the environmental stewardship. Now the reason why this particular issue is . . . I'll be back at the other committee hearings that talk more about the detail and the problems and of course the evidence that we might pick up. Because this is the environmental venue, so this is the reason why I want to focus on that.

And it's really, really important north of La Loche. There is a number of reasons why it's important, okay? And it's very, very simple is you have an opportunity and then you have the Clearwater River itself which, as I mentioned at the outset, is a beautiful river. You've got all this activity happening around and it's a huge balancing act that one has to look at. And that's why there's a lot of interest in how your department is going to ensure that there is a framework for environmental integrity in terms of following up and following through and ensuring that

there isn't a scorched earth policy in extracting the resources that may exist in some of the region.

There's activity on Patterson Lake, where we see oil rigs on lakes that are disrupting the aquatic life. Now we know that there's a disruption. But how are we mitigating that, and how are we monitoring that? Well that obviously is under your purview as the Minister for the Environment. Then there's activity around Forrest Lake, around Beet Lake, around Lloyd Lake. And of course all these lakes connect to the Clearwater River system itself.

You know, this is where people are asking questions about the duty to consult. How were the permits issued? How can we ensure environmental integrity when it takes permits only two weeks to be approved? How could we talk about duty to consult when it only takes two weeks for some of these permits to be approved? Now the next question is, how do we ensure environmental integrity is maintained as a result of all the activity on the land when it only takes two weeks for the permits to be approved?

So my argument is, what process, what advice, what commitment can you give to the people of that area, understanding that there's some economic opportunity — we're not saying there isn't — but on their traditional lands where they used these lands for many, many years? And not so much just on the traditional lands perspective but the beauty and the value and the vastness of the natural ecosystem that the Clearwater River provides that whole region because it's a really, really sensitive area.

So my point again being is, how do you take all this into account? What kind of assurance can you give the people of that area that you as the Environment minister can ensure that there's proper evaluations, there's proper processes, and that there are safeguards in place? Because so far, as I've mentioned, people are being . . . They're getting confused.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. The vast majority of the work that's happening in this area right now is exploration type of work. So it's companies that are exploring the area, looking for the viability of certain processes. We have guidance documents in place that companies will have to follow, and there are a specific number of rules and set guidelines. And if, you know, a company is offside on those guidelines, then the Ministry of Environment would certainly investigate and deal with them in an appropriate manner.

If a development takes place, then there's the whole environmental assessment process that would kick in, and that has a public engagement component to it as well where individuals from the public would be able to make written or verbal briefs to the ministry. And that is a very good check and balance. You know, it's operated in different areas of the province.

You know, I had a chance to very recently review some of those environmental assessments, and I can tell that people take them very serious and they don't hesitate to express their opinion. They bring a lot of knowledge to the file as well. So public engagement through the environmental assessment process is

something that we look at very favourably. And then there is continuous consultation that takes place. Again that's indeed if there is a development deemed taking place.

As far as the timelines that the member indicates, and he uses the example of two weeks, that would be a very, very minimum turnaround time for something that does not have any challenges or is seen as something that is quite straightforward. But certainly ministry officials indicate that other permits take much longer than that, depending on what type of external assessment and due diligence is needed. So there's quite a variance in the time that a permit needs to take place, but two weeks would be very, very much a minimum.

Mr. Belanger: — Okay. Thank you very much. The final question and point I would make is that obviously people are watching, and I'm going to ask the people that are watching to also be the ears and eyes and pay attention to what's happening in that area, and a lot of the traditional people do. But they want to ensure that, you know, once they bring these concerns forward that they're being addressed.

There's issues such as not just your average garbage that you dispose of. Like how do they dispose of garbage around exploration camps? How about chemical waste? Are there any chemical wastes? How are those handled in some of these exploration activities? Cutlines, is there any kind of mitigating factor in terms of how they would deal with cutlines or just naturally you have their own growth and they don't bother with any kind of plant? You know, once you do a cutline, it's there forever kind of thing? And the other issue is, of course, surrounding just the disturbance in the area.

There is, I can say, Mr. Minister, that there's a lot of people paying a lot of attention around this area. And I'll be back at other committee hearings, but there's a lot of people paying a lot of attention to what's going on. They're paying a lot of attention for two primary reasons. It's a great opportunity for the area. We understand that from the economic perspective. But they also require very strong, decisive leadership on environmental protection. They think it's so vitally important that that be undertaken.

And some people even muse about the fact that, that many times you could be overruled by an economic argument. I'm saying, you know, from what I understand is the Environment minister cannot be subjected to any kind of overarching economic argument if there is an environmental issue being sabotaged, so to speak.

So there's, I can say with the utmost honesty today, there's a lot of people watching what happens around Patterson Lake, Mr. Minister. And I say that to you because we're looking for the leadership and guidance in ensuring one thing, is that the environmental integrity is not eroded in any way, shape, or form, that if companies want to extract resources, do exploration for resources and have some good, solid opportunities in that area discovered and a project initiated, then we can't have activity where the environmental is thrown under the bus or environmental regulations and processes are thrown under the bus because you're losing such a great opportunity attached to that land when it comes to things like the Clearwater River system.

So there's all kind of nuances attached to this, the duty to consult when these permits were issued. Where's the environmental intergradation? Where's the involvement by the people? What happens to the traditional people that have cabins in that area? What happens to the traditional land claim? What happens to the garbage sites at some of the exploration camps? Is there any chemicals being stored or being placed on the lands? Like there's all these questions.

So I'll end my half hour graciously afforded to me by my colleague here by just simply telling you as a minister that there are a lot of people paying attention to this — a lot. And we're being closely connected with them. And it'll be tons of questions on this one. So my only advice tonight is to please pay attention to that area and please give us the opportunity, give us some straightforward answers on what we're doing to mitigate the environmental challenges attached to the exploration activity in and around Patterson Lake, north of La Loche. That's all I have for this evening.

[19:45]

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much for the summation of your questions. And I can tell you that it gives me great comfort to know that individuals are watching and watching very closely because we need to partner with responsible individuals throughout the province, and if they see or hear of things that the Minister of the Environment or the Ministry of Environment should be aware of, I'd like to know those as soon as possible. From time to time I do receive pictures and notes of things that are happening in the province that maybe shouldn't be happening, and those are very helpful because it allows me to address the issue as quickly as possible.

When we get into the whole argument of economic development versus environmental sustainability, I guess what I take great comfort in in our province is that we're not desperate for economic development. We have a well-rounded economy. We're very, very vibrant in so many different areas. Diversification is something that we've worked hard on and previous governments have worked hard on, so we don't need to cut any corners. We don't need to turn a blind eye to anything that's happening in our province.

Indeed, when I talk to companies that are wanting to do work in Saskatchewan, my first plea is for them to come to our province but I always follow it up by, we will not cut any corners. We will take it very serious. We will not lessen any standards whatsoever because that's the way we do business in Saskatchewan. It's always been that way. It'll continue to be that way. And I think it's very important to be upfront with those that want to do business in our province. It's worked very well so . . . Again thank you to the member for those questions, and we look forward to ongoing discussions about a very important part of our province. Thank you.

The Chair: — I recognize Ms. Sproule.

Ms. Sproule: — Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. And I want to thank my colleague for those important questions for the people in that area and in his riding. And I think tonight I want to start off with just a couple of specific questions I've also been asked by individuals, and we'll get those started right away.

The first one is in relation to the process of official community plans, OCPs. And this is a question that's been brought to my attention by the Lumsden Valley Community Association. And particularly I'm interested in the ministry's involvement in statements of provincial interest. I don't know if you're familiar with those; they're part of the official community planning process. This is the Lumsden Valley Community Association, very concerned about the failure to address the statements of provincial interest in the official plan that was approved, and I believe that would be by Municipal Affairs. But my question right off the top is, is your ministry or any of the officials here involved with reviewing statements of provincial interests in relation to official community plans?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. Ministry officials inform me that we are involved in official community plans from time to time regarding statement of provincial interest. It would be led by Government Relations usually and we would be asked for involvement or comment on certain specific issues: subdivisions, rezoning, things like that. Officials are not familiar with the Lumsden situation at this time, but under my ministry of course I've got Environment but also the Water Security Agency. The Water Security Agency may in fact have some direct involvement in this particular issue. I'm not sure of it off the top of my head, but that's sort of a specific answer as I can give you at this time.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Specifically the concerns from this group are the failure of the official community plan to address some of the conservation issues that they've identified. And just a quote from their statement that they sent, they said, "There is only one short reference . . ." This is a quote:

There is only one short reference to the Statements in the RM's OCP [and that's] "to support and complement the statements of provincial interest." [And that's all it says.] There is no further discussion of how the policies of the OCP address each of the 14 statements, which is part of the process, and this silence regarding compliance is not accompanied by any demonstration of the practical reason for being so.

Proper application of the SPI would render large sections of the RM's OCP invalid in our opinion, and this is particularly the case with regard to sections dealing with conservation. The statement of greatest relevance for conservation — Biodiversity and Natural Systems — states that "... planning documents shall . . . (1) consider the ecological value, integrity, and management of wetlands, riparian areas, significant natural landscapes and regional features and provincially designated lands; and (2) minimize, mitigate, or avoid development impacts to safeguard the ecological integrity of wetlands, riparian areas, significant natural landscapes, and regional features and provincially designated lands."

And that's the end of the quote for now.

It's quite a long report that this group provided. They're very concerned that these values and the integrity and the management of those areas are not being dealt with in the official community plan. So perhaps we can follow up with this

at a later time and find out what your ministry's view is on whether or not this official plan meets the requirements of these statements of provincial interest.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Yes, absolutely, and I'll make Water Security Agency officials aware as well.

Ms. Sproule: — Thanks, Mr. Minister. So we'll follow up on that one.

The second specific issue that was brought to my attention comes from a fellow who's a member of the Saskatchewan Institute of Agrologists. And I'm sure some of your officials would be familiar with this. We have, Mr. Swan has recently written a letter to him in February regarding some concerns about qualified persons under the . . . and decisions being made by the qualified person's advisory committee.

Specifically the concern is that agrologists have not been given sufficient consideration, I guess, when the decision is being made as to who these qualified persons are going to be. I know Mr. Cameron has provided a number of letters over quite some time and is of the view that professional agrologists were left out of the discussions originally. They were included with reluctance in 2010. There was letters that for example he, in January of this year, he indicated that there was a letter of some of his concerns in March of 2012 and no response was ever given to him, and he was surprised that professional agrologists are not being involved in the tier two.

So I'm just wondering if you or your officials are able to provide any further comment on that to the committee?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. Officials indicate that they are well aware of Mr. Cameron's concerns, and that correspondence has gone back and forth and it continues to this date.

The concerns specifically regarding tier two are concerns that we continue to work with him on. But agrologists have been involved with the qualified persons advisory committee and certainly their members of the committee. And the Ministry of Environment of course puts great weight into what the qualified persons advisory committee deems necessary for each chapter or for each area going forward.

So hopefully, you know, working through the Saskatchewan Institute of Agrologists — again the SIA [Saskatchewan Institute of Agrologists] is part of that qualified persons committee — that a resolution can be found. But again, thank you to the member for raising the question. It is something that isn't resolved yet, but I understand that there is still information being shared back and forth at this time.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. At this point I would like to just revisit last year's estimates and ask for some follow-up on some of the comments that were made at that time. It's hard to believe it was on May 1st of 2013, so less than 11 months ago. And so just a few things that you had indicated then.

First thing I guess, maybe just an update on the status of the Aquistore project. And I know you were . . . on page 272 of the

committee you had stated that you were just in the process of getting information on the Aquistore project and you were hoping to be able to provide a full report. But is there any sort of update you can provide us at this time on where Aquistore is at and whether it'll be delivered on time and on budget and those types of things?

[20:00]

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question regarding the Aquistore project. The Aquistore project is located at SaskPower's Boundary dam 3. The carbon capture and storage project will demonstrate the feasibility and safety of long-term storage of carbon dioxide in deep saline geological formations.

The provincial contribution to Aquistore has attracted international funding partners to share information and expertise that confirms Saskatchewan indeed is a world leader in the monitoring and benefits of CCS [carbon capture and storage]. Very recently, February 19th of 2014, SaskPower announced a delay in the Boundary dam CCS project. We're not familiar at this time with the exact length of the delay.

But specifically to the project as it relates to Environment, \$5 million has been allocated towards the project. And go green funding contributions to date are 4.9 million: 2.1 in 2008-09, 1.65 in 2010-11, 750,000 in '11-12, and \$400,000 in '12-13. There is a final go green payment outstanding of \$100,000, but that's regarding testing, and that will not take place until the project resumes and is completed. So the vast majority of the money has been expended, but there is still the \$100,000 that will be there for testing and we'll continue to work with SaskPower on a project that draws a lot of interest from around the world.

Ms. Sproule: — Thanks, Mr. Minister. One of the things we talked about last year was an order in council, 214/2009, and there were a number of milestones identified in that order in council for accountability for these expenditures that you just mentioned.

And I just was wondering if you could bring an update on whether or not those milestones have been reviewed and approved. There's a quote from last year's committee where I quoted from the order in council, and it said that the Ministry of the Environment would have representation on a committee called the project advisory committee and they were to monitor progress and provide stewardship to the project, which included evaluation of the technical program on an ongoing basis and an involvement in identifying program gaps and providing direction for further work.

So could you give us an update on what work the project advisory committee has done in the past year? I think Mr. Waters, Dr. Geoff Waters, was on the committee.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. There were four main milestones that were determined for funding from the Ministry of Environment. And my understanding is that three have been fully completed. There's the fourth one outstanding. I can get into some of the detail here regarding the first three.

Regarding the first three, surface and subsurface property rights were secured for the project with an environmental statement completed. In January 2012 environmental approvals were authorized by both the provincial and federal regulating authorities. Baseline 3-D seismic survey was acquired in March 2012. It's completed. A permanent seismic array was installed and a seismic survey completed in March 2012, completed. Evaluation injection well was drilled and completed in September 2012, completed. An observation well was drilled and completed in December 2012, completed. A cement bore log for the wells was completed in order to demonstrate well bore integrity for the Minister of Economy review and permitting. The project received official confirmation in March 2013 that both wells were approved, completed. Both wells are complete and ready for injection testing. So that's a summary of the three initial milestones.

The fourth milestone is the final injection of the CO₂ which will begin once the Boundary dam carbon capture facility is fully commissioned. So again in order for that to take place, the project would have to be completed and that testing would be one of the final tests that take place.

Ms. Sproule: — All right. Thank you very much. Further on in the comments on page 274 of last year's committee for estimates for Environment, we talked a little bit about the funding of \$4.5 million for I guess the climate change category of your estimates. And my question to you was, "So is it the ministry's intention then from this point forward to maintain funding at that around \$4.5 million?" And your response then was:

Certainly that is what we're looking at . . . Of course in the process of budget making, there's always a little bit of give and take in certain areas, but at the present time we're looking to maintain that \$4.5 million, save for other pressures that may happen in budgetary circumstances.

And then you went on to say on the next column that "... 4.5 million is what we feel we can spend on an ongoing basis."

If I look at this year's budget, it's actually quite a bit less than that, so I'm wondering if the minister can explain. Is that still his view that 4.5 is what you would like to spend on an ongoing basis, and why that number is significantly lower in this year's estimates.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. Indeed, a year ago when we had a discussion regarding climate change and the monies needed to operate that part of the ministry, the budget allocation was 4.5 million. This year it has been reduced and I think that's consistent with, you know, everything that I said a year ago. Certainly what we were looking at as far as the budget goes, we had plans to spend in that range.

This year there is a reduction. It is \$2.8 million. But again, we feel that that is a full complement needed to fund the area for this year. Many of the things that we're doing right now are not specifically involved with spending dollars beyond the \$2.8 million.

We continue to work very closely with the federal government.

When I first became Minister of Environment we worked very close with the federal government regarding regulations for coal-fired electricity generation. And in that time Minister Peter Kent made those decisions, made those regulations public here in Saskatchewan, and I think partly in recognition of the work that's been done.

Largely what I see as our role going forward in the next year is to work very closely with the federal government and try to get Saskatchewan's point of view across as the federal government comes up with a national climate change policy. I think it's very well known that in Saskatchewan we can't just go out on our own and implement things without being in lockstep with what the federal government is doing. So we're trying to ensure that we do that in a way that will provide benefits for Saskatchewan environment and the Saskatchewan economy as well.

What we are seeing right now is the benefits of the Go Green Fund. The Go Green Fund, as members will know, is the expenditure of between 60 and \$70 million in the 2008 to 2011 years, putting forward seed money for many projects in Saskatchewan that can be developed to help us reduce our greenhouse gases. And we've been very successful in seeing those projects come to fruition.

As I indicated in my opening remarks, we had a symposium in February where many, many companies from across the province were able to talk about the projects they've undertaken and what benefits they would be for the environment in our province as well as the economy in our province. So we look forward to seeing those projects continue. What we've seen on the climate change front in our province is a stabilization of greenhouse gases. Certainly when you even look at them on a per capita basis using the very latest numbers, the 2011-12 numbers that we have, they've actually gone down in the province by 1.8 tonnes per person in the province, Mr. Chair.

So climate change, it's a big topic. You know, as recently as over the weekend and earlier today, the international committee on climate change has provided additional information for the ministry to look at and to work towards. So as our economy continues to grow and our population continues to grow, our greenhouse gases have stabilized. And we look forward to an aggressive year going forward ensuring that we monitor our greenhouse gas emissions and continue to work on projects like the Boundary dam 3 carbon capture project and others to ensure that we're doing our part to contribute to the climate change file.

[20:15]

Ms. Sproule: — Thanks, Mr. Minister. I was just wanting really to know about whether or not you still thought four and a half million was sufficient. I do have a number of questions on climate change that I will ask after, later on, but just particularly interested in some of your comments from last year.

One of the other things you said last year on page 276, and we've kind of had this discussion already. I know you like to tell everyone that emissions have actually gone down, but they haven't really gone down at all. They've in fact gone and up. And you tend to use the average on population as your justification for that statement. But everyone is quite aware that

in fact emissions are still going up.

One of the things you said on page 276 last year was that you hoped to see a substantial reduction, and that's in greenhouse gases, in the regulated and non-regulated areas. And also your government has stated often that there's a goal to have a deduction — I'm going to find it — by 2020. I want to make sure I have the right numbers here. Yes, your goal is to have a 20 per cent reduction by 2020. Is that still your government's goal?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. That is indeed still the goal, is a 20 per cent reduction, and the member and I can continue to talk about absolute numbers. And I'm very careful to say, when I say that greenhouse gas emissions have gone down, they're gone down on a per capita basis. The reality is we have a very strong, growing economy and we have more people living here than ever before. As a result, our absolute greenhouse gas numbers have gone up by a little bit, I think a reasonable amount in light of the growth that has taken place in the economy of the province and the population of the province.

But can we do better? You know, that's my goal. Can we work with both the regulated and non-regulated sectors? You know, governments continue to do our part. It's taking obviously a long time for the federal government to come out with their regulations, and when I talk to the federal government they talk about their discussions with the United States.

You know, our province is trying to do our part. Being a world leader in one area, I think that's where a province of 1.1 to 1.2 million people can really do their part, and I think through SaskPower and the investments being made that we are doing our part. But we continue to have those goals in place, to work with different emitters to try to encourage them to reduce their emissions. Is there more work to do? Absolutely. Is there more to learn? Absolutely there's more to learn, and that's why we look forward to continuing information that we gain from, you know, what we saw today in the international media and other information going forward.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you. Basically the statement was made in 2008 with a goal to reach that 20 per cent by 2020. So when you do the math, that's 12 years. We're now halfway through that time period, six years, and there's actually been an increase over these six years. So in terms of the reduction, if we're going to look at the next six years, have you sort of set out the numbers? Like is it going to be 20 per cent in the last year? Or is your goal to have a reduction of, if we say six years and 20 per cent, is it 3 per cent per year from here on in? How do you intend to achieve that reduction?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. And as I'm looking at a graph that talks about the last 11 or 12 years here in the province, you know, in 2000 we had emissions of 65.1 million tonnes. In 2007 that increased to 72.3 million tonnes. Now from 2007 to 2011, here's 72.3 in 2007, 72.7 in 2011. So you know, indeed what we have seen happening in the last number of years is an increase in our economy, a vast increase in our population, and a somewhat levelling of our greenhouse gas emissions.

When you look at the graph, it was increasing substantially from 2000 to 2007. From 2007 forward we have seen that amount flatten out. And now we have to . . . You know, our job going forward is to see those overall emissions decrease. And so certainly the member is right. You know, the clock has been ticking from 2008 to 2020. We're five or six years into that, and we still have got a long way to go.

But we're not the only jurisdiction that's struggling with this. Certainly other jurisdictions across the country are looking at the same type of concerns. There's similar goals that have been put in place by other provinces, by the federal government for example, and they continue to struggle and to learn.

You know, on a simple math equation, it looks like a 3 per cent reduction for each of the next seven years. Will that be easy to do? Not at all, and especially with an economy that's growing like ours is growing. And I don't want to do anything to stifle that growth. I think we all welcome the population move to our province, the increased economic activity. But at the same time, we have to meet the social challenge of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and our contribution to climate change.

So that's what we're trying to do. We're trying to offer support where we can, to be engaged with other provinces and the federal government. We have individuals from the ministry that meet on a very regular basis to talk about this subject and, you know, the goal will be pragmatic outcomes. That's what we're working towards, and that's what we hope to see.

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Minister, with respect, I feel that you have not answered the question. You've skirted around it. And I appreciate the difficulties in terms of meeting this goal that your government has stated, but I appreciate the fact that you're talking about it. I appreciate the fact that it's difficult, and I appreciate the fact that, you know, at least things have levelled off in the last few years, which is a significant change in the direction that we were headed.

But your government has stated that you will reduce by 20 per cent by 2020, and you have not given me any indication of how you intend to achieve that. Could you please provide an indication of how you intend to achieve a 20 per cent reduction in the next six years?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. And certainly it would be a combination of many, many factors. When we look at greater public awareness regarding climate change resulting in behavioural changes such as improvements to home energy use through various incentive programs, we have I think a heightened awareness among Saskatchewan residents. I see SaskPower, SaskEnergy, and others encouraging conservation and encouraging an awareness of greenhouse gas emissions. And certainly through education I think we're doing a great deal in our province.

You know, specifically from government and government's investment, we've invested \$5.3 billion in low-carbon investments in our province. You know, we look at . . . and that includes \$1.3 billion for the clean coal project. That includes \$1.8 billion for natural gas-fired electricity power plants in our province, and various other projects going forward. So \$5.3 billion, I think the government is doing its part.

I think we're working well with regulated and non-regulated sectors. We're working well with the public. We're doing all we can to heighten the awareness and to try to reach those goals. Are we struggling to reach those goals? Yes, we are. Are other jurisdictions struggling just as much as we are? And again, we continue to have a population that grows, an economy that grows. But we have a goal in place, and we're doing all we can to meet that goal, not working as an island, but working with other provinces and the federal government as well.

Ms. Sproule: — Thanks, Mr. Chair. I will move on because I have more questions about this later. But I just want to finish off my comments on things that you indicated last year.

And the next one I want to talk a little bit about was the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund. There were some significant changes being proposed last year in relation to that fund. And one of the questions I asked on page 280 of the committee report from last year was about 200,000 acres that were owned by the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund. And the questions I was asking then were who . . . Are the lands, are they going to continue to be titled to the Crown? And who's going to manage the land? At that point you had indicated that no decisions had been made but that there would be some action being taken place in short order. So I would appreciate an update on the status of those 200,000 acres.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question and very pleased to provide an update for the member. The expectation on the specific 200,000 acres that she mentions, the expectation is that it will continue to be owned by the Crown. Recommendations for the use of the land will come specifically from the third party. The fund trustees, if you like, will make recommendations on how to best use that land. But the final decision does rest with the Minister of Environment — the Ministry of Environment and finally the Minister of Environment. So that will be the decision-making process. But we look forward to the involvement of fund trustees and their good ideas going forward on how to make best use of that land.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you. We also see that the final seven employees are not going forward in this year's estimates. So what's happened to those seven? We had 15 last year and were down to seven, and now they're gone completely. What's the plan for those employees?

[20:30]

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. And the 6.9 FTEs [full-time equivalent] in question will be transferred to the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund along with the hatchery, and will continue to operate as employees of the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund. So indeed there's no loss of employment, just the transfer of the actual working relationship of those 6.9 FTEs.

Ms. Sproule: — And how are their salaries accounted for? Is it any government dollars that go into that or is that all through revenues that the fund generates?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks for the question. They're currently paid out of the fund entirely and will continue to be paid out of the fund entirely.

Ms. Sproule: — We had a lot of discussion last year about the fire towers and the cameras and the . . . I think a number of staff were cut as a result of having the cameras installed in the fire towers. I'm just wondering if you could provide the committee with an update on the progress, or if we want to call it that, in the installation of the cameras. You mention it a little bit in your opening remarks. But again I'm just curious about what's happened to the staff in that respect and how many staff have been laid off and how many of the towers have cameras installed, when you expect it to be fully functional as far as the cameras go.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. Indeed the fire towers that we talked about last year, the tower automation is complete. The central detection centre has been established and staff are trained for full implementation in the 2014 wildfire season. So we're pleased with how that has worked out. We're very pleased with the operation of the towers and the technology that's shown.

I had an opportunity to go to Prince Albert to the fire centre to see a demonstration of the technology first-hand and I'm very pleased with the technology. And I know members from the Prince Albert area, some were able to join me as well. And we believe that we're well served with the new program.

As far as FTEs go, there were 28 seasonal staff that were impacted. Five undertook reassignments. Fourteen retired with severance. Three resigned with dollar severance, and 6 took a leave with the rehire option still intact. So that accounts for the full 28 seasonal staff.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you. When I look at the fire management, forest protection budget over the last eight, six years maybe, since 2009 is when it was its own line in the budget. It was 102 million. It's now down to 54 million, so basically half of what it used to be, and that's over a five-year period. And this year we see a further cut of \$6 million on wildfire management. Where are those cuts taking place and why?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. The 2014-15 wildfire management budget does identify a \$6.29 million reduction in capital funding. In the previous fiscal year, the program invested \$1.54 million in the automated detection system, and now that's been completed. So that was one-time funding that has been invested and has been completed, and we will continue to reap the benefits of that investment.

Last year there was also \$4.75 million invested into the conversion of the fourth CL-215T water bomber. That conversion is complete, and there's no conversions or purchases for the aerial fleet identified in 2014-15 at this time. So again that necessitates a decrease in the capital budget of 4.75. When combined with the 1.54, you get the 6.29 going forward.

Our government is currently looking at options for the long-term sustainability of the wildfire aerial fleet. We are well served at the present time but again, we will have to look at options going forward as well.

Core funding for the wildfire program remains stable for the

fiscal year. But of course you just never know what type of fire season you're going to have and there is always a concern in that regard. But we feel that we are fully funded at this time, save for the capital expenditures that aren't needed that were needed last year.

Ms. Sproule: — This is more of a financial kind of question. But when you talk about the water bombers, for example, would those be considered capital assets? And in terms of your vote 26 statement, there is the appropriation for capital asset acquisitions. I'm just wondering if someone could explain to me what those capital asset acquisitions are and why, I guess, there is . . . I don't know if that's a decrease or an increase of around \$6 million between last year and this year on the estimates. Capital asset acquisitions.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. And indeed the capital asset acquisitions of the areas that I just spoke about, the water bomber and the towers, that would be considered capital. And what we see here is a decrease of capital of \$6.52 million. So with the brackets around it, it shows a decrease there. So 161 minus the 6, and then the addition of the 9 takes it to 164.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'm still trying to figure out these statements. So I'm not sure it's entirely clear, but I'm getting closer. Thank you.

Just one more question in relation to some of our discussions last year. And I'm just wondering how HAL [hunting, trapping, and angling licence system] is doing. For the purpose of Hansard, that's the hunting, trapping, and angling licence system, H-A-L. We'll recall that last year there were a number of problems and glitches, so I'm just wondering how the system is working.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Well it's perfect today, but it starts in earnest tomorrow so I don't want to speak too soon. But again, you know, the hunting, the HAL system, the automated system — and I've seen this in most instances in government when you introduce an electronic system and when you have many thousands of files — you do see some bumps along the way and some hiccups at the beginning. And we experienced some of that last year, but I was very, very pleased with the expedient manner that those were dealt with and that we continue to see improvements.

We have just thousands and thousands of people that have taken advantage of the online system. I've heard very many positive responses to it. Of course those that weren't able to register right away or had a hiccup, they had a concern. But you know, we encourage people that have the HAL number now and are able to get their licence to do so that way.

So we see things moving in a very, very positive direction and we hope that that continues. The busy season, as I indicated earlier, will start in earnest in April here. And we hope that those improvements that have been made along the way will make it easier and easier, more convenient for Saskatchewan residents to obtain their licence.

As far as the call centres go, our goal was to have calls answered by Canadians where possible, and we're into that type

of situation where now an initial call will be answered in a call centre in Canada. But again if it gets overloaded, it will divert over to the Tennessee backup.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you. I know that there were some difficulties with the delivery of the licences at some of the local retailers. Do you know how many local retailers chose not to go ahead with HAL and just stopped selling fishing licences altogether?

[20:45]

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. What we saw was a decrease in the number of outlets. The absolute peak that we had was about 350 and then with the automation system coming in place that number did decrease by about 124, I believe. So in that neighbourhood of 220, but what we're seeing now is many of them indicated to us last year that they'd take a wait-and-see approach. They put the operation in their establishment as a convenience for individuals and now knowing that people can just go online and do it, retailers have to decide whether it's worthwhile for them or not.

But the positive indication that we're seeing very recently is that more and more are deciding to come back and to re-establish themselves as vendors. And that's certainly our goal, to make it as easy as possible for those who were vendors in the past to come back and be vendors again or those that, new businesses that are establishing that want to set up a vending operation, that we continue to assist them in doing that. We don't have a cap on the number of vendors but we do know, with the convenience now of going online and being able to do it, that that convenience that was supplied by some vendors isn't necessarily needed anymore, and the market will dictate what's needed. But what I'm very, very pleased about is that more and more that were sitting on the fence, if you like, are deciding to come back and establish themselves.

You know, at the end of the day, I think what we all want is to make it the most convenient and efficient way possible for those to purchase their licence, and whether it's through a vendor or through a park office or a ministry office or online, we want to do that. So I am satisfied that that is happening and I'm hopeful that we continue to see improvements throughout this year.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you. I'd like to move on now to something we've heard about in the news recently, and that's the establishment of a southern mineral hydrometallurgy facility in the RM of Corman Park near Langham. And this is something commonly referred to as Fortune Minerals. So we do have a few questions about that. I see your officials changing places here, so I'll give them a couple of minutes to get seated.

A couple of specific concerns that have been raised by the SADAQ [Saskatchewan Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization], so that's the Saskatchewan association . . . It's the asbestos education office. I'm not sure I have the acronym correct, but it's SADAQ, S-A-D-A-O. And the first question, if I could ask, is we've been told that Fortune Minerals will be dumping about 3160 tonnes of actinolite into the disposal pits outside their Langham processing site.

We know that under *The Occupational Health and Safety Regulations*, any mixture . . . It is stated that any mixture containing minerals crocidolite, amosite, chrysotile, anthophyllite, tremolite, and actinolite are defined as asbestos. So according to this definition, Fortune Minerals will be processing a form of asbestos to obtain the minerals that they want. So that's under the OH & S [occupational health and safety] regulations. And this asbestos, as defined under OH & S, will be dumped into the open pits as a by-product. So it will be put into open pits.

If we acknowledge this as asbestos under the OH & S regulations, we should also acknowledge it under the environmental regulations. And the Ministry of Environment asbestos waste disposal policy states that you have to bury asbestos waste immediately. Fortune Minerals intends to leave their pits open for two to three years. So how is it that that company is making the assumption that they're allowed to do that?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. And you know, this is a very, very important decision that came across my desk and the Ministry of Environment's desk to look at the science behind the environmental assessment that had taken place. As members of the committee will know, we had a long and open public presentation process where members of the public could write information and proposals to the Ministry of Environment, and certainly we saw people take advantage of that. Almost 250 different submissions were taken in, and I had an opportunity to look at each and every one of those submissions and to see the concerns, and some in support of what was happening there.

So I very much feel that the Ministry of Environment did their due diligence. They gave people the opportunity to put their views on record. Those were taken very serious and looked into as far as the science of it goes, but I feel that the Ministry of Environment's role here is very much science-based to ensure the protection of the environment from its scientific point of view. As we know, the permitting and other things that, zoning applications and things like that will be dealt with by the local municipalities. But from the Ministry of Environment, we made sure that the science behind it was sound.

Now the member asks some very specific scientific questions, actinolite and other chemicals. I'll ask the official to speak specifically about the chemicals mentioned, if you would, please.

Ms. Hordenchuk: — Sharla Hordenchuk with environmental assessment. Regarding the actinolite in question, the environmental approval under *The Environmental Assessment Act* listed conditions so that dust suppression measures would be required to mitigate any release of actinolite should it exist.

Actinolite is a naturally occurring product that is found in the ore concentrate. Now majority of the waste will remain at the Nico mine site in the Northwest Territories where the ore concentrate is coming from.

Recent testing has been confirmed by an independent lab that the actinolite will actually no longer be present as originally thought, and that it will not exist in the waste stream or be

located in the process residue facility at the Fortune Minerals site.

Ms. Sproule: — I understand that's not what was represented by the CEO [chief executive officer] of Fortune Minerals last week at the public meeting. So why is he saying something different?

Ms. Hordenchuk: — The results of their sampling were just recently shared.

Ms. Sproule: — What day was that?

Ms. Hordenchuk: — I will have to get back to you on the date.

Ms. Sproule: — The next question is still in relation to actinolite and non-fibrous . . . or fibrous actinolite and non-fibrous actinolite. It's common knowledge that they can both exist in the same deposit. Now you've just mentioned that the results show that none of those fibres or non-fibrous actinolite would be delivered to the Langham processing site, and if it was there you would use dust suppression. But is it not your policy that it has to be buried if it is there?

Ms. Hordenchuk: — The storage of the process waste is in a series of four containment centres. Those are all secured through impermeable membranes, both underneath. As well as when the process residue waste pile is at its capacity it would then be covered so that migration cannot occur downward or outward and the dust suppression is just added insurance that there would be no migration into the environment.

Ms. Sproule: — I understand this open pit could be open for up to three years before it's actually sealed off.

Ms. Hordenchuk: — While the residue facility is in use, that's where the requirement for the 31 per cent moisture requirement is set as a condition in the minister's approval for the development.

Ms. Sproule: — I think I would like to just put on the record that that seems to be a contradiction of your policies that it be buried and covered. So I'm just going to leave it at that. I'm just advised that the Fortune Minerals said at the meeting last week that there would be 1 per cent of actinolite despite the lab tests. So that also seems to be in contradiction to what you're reporting tonight. So I think I'll just leave that on the record for now because I'm hearing different stories here.

But moving on, I have a news release from December of 2009 where, Mr. Minister, at that time you were the Enterprise Saskatchewan minister and I understand that Fortune Minerals was given a five-year corporate income tax incentive for processing facilities. And I also understand this is the only company that's ever received that tax incentive. Can you confirm that?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks for the question. No, I can't confirm that. Certainly I was Minister of the Economy at the time that provisions came in place to incentivize companies to come to our province. We're very pleased that companies choose to do that. But as far as what's happened since that time, it would be a question better posed to the current Minister of the

Economy.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much. There's also discussion, and I don't know if you can comment on this, about Fortune Minerals receiving some rebates on power rates, that they don't pay the full rates of SaskPower. Can you tell the committee what kind of rebates or discounts they're getting for their SaskPower bill?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Again my role here is as Minister of Environment; it's specifically on the science behind the operations. I think we've answered the science-related questions. The member may feel that the answer wasn't consistent, but I think I follow the logic, and I certainly feel that the answer was consistent in that regard. But as far as any other questions regarding the economic operation of Fortune Minerals, that is not an area that I'm responsible for, nor do I have answers to those specific questions.

[21:00]

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. One other question that I'd like to ask is the siting of this metal processing plant, the location that you approved, is over an important drinking water aquifer, the Dalmeny aquifer. We know that there will be a large amount of arsenic, tens of thousands of tonnes that will be contained in the solid waste residue, will remain on the site forever. We know that there's 10 pits. They're going to be 14 feet deep. They will contain 2.8 million tonnes of waste at the end of the operations, and they will be separated from the aquifer by a polyethylene liner and by compacted till, and then they'll be covered and seeded over.

The aquifer itself is about 35 feet below the bottom of the pits, but I know concerns have been raised about fractures and the upper portions of the compacted till in the area. I know the concern isn't that it will reach, the arsenic will reach the aquifer during the lifetime of the plant itself. It will likely take longer than that to migrate to the water supply, and the estimates right now are 100 or 200 years. So we know the arsenic will remain forever. However it's unlikely that the ministry would continue monitoring it past the first 100 years. And so I guess the question that I'd like to ask is, why was the siting of that plant approved when it sits over such an important water aquifer?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. I'll take the first part myself here. As far as the location goes, the Ministry of Environment does not determine the location of the particular plant that wants to be undertaken. Certainly what the Ministry of Environment does is look at the due diligence of the science behind the operation. So the location is, first of all, determined by the proponent. And there are certain permitting and zoning processes that will have to take place and that will be in the realm of the decision of the municipality of Corman Park.

As far as the other specific technical and science-based questions, I'll ask the official to answer.

Ms. Hordenchuk: — Just regarding the project overtop of the aquifer, that's quite common for industrial projects to be located over aquifers in and around the province. So the techniques that are being proposed by Fortune are not unique.

The technology being used is very common regarding the type of disposal that's being submitted down to the geological formation. So based on the technical review conducted by technical and science engineering experts across the Government of Saskatchewan, it was determined that it was unlikely for adverse environmental effects to occur.

Ms. Sproule: — Could the ministry have asked the proponent to move it to a place where it wasn't over a waste aquifer?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. And again to emphasize, that is not the role of the Ministry of Environment to determine the site-specific location. That is something that the proponents brought forward. That's something that the municipality will have to deal with. Our role is to determine that there are no foreseeable adverse environmental effects that would take place because of the operation of this particular facility. That's what we focus on and that's what the determination has been made upon.

Ms. Sproule: — I appreciate it's not the role of the ministry to select a location. However, my question is, could the ministry in its review of the environmental proposal request that it be moved to somewhere other than over an aquifer? Does the ministry have that authority?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. But again it is not our role to determine location. However, if we went through the environmental assessment and they were unsuccessful, that proponent then could go and try to find another location if there was a reason for them to do so. But again that is not our role and, you know, final location determination is yet to be determined as the decision rests with the municipality.

Ms. Sproule: — I guess one of the concerns — and we know that a number of people are very concerned about the location, the proposed location — I've had calls from people who are very upset because they just bought a house in Dalmeny and they would've never moved there because of this proposal. And we know that the last community meeting on March 19th, there was over 200 people that attended. One question that has been raised is, why did you give your approval without requiring public hearings?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. The ministry did provide for a public consultation period. The minimum amount of that period is 30 days, and it can be extended to 60 days maximum. And we chose to extend that public consultation period to 60 days. In that period of time we received I think approximately 250 submissions, and each of them were dealt with by the ministry and focused on accordingly. So the public did have a consultation period and had an opportunity to make their views known.

Ms. Sproule: — So you're saying you chose not to have public hearings. Was that a conscious decision on the part of the ministry?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. The Act stipulates that the public consultation must take place. We felt that having it in this manner would enable a wide variety of comments and as many people as possible to

make their views known.

Again that period was for a 30-day period. We felt that it was necessary to extend that to 60 days. And obviously it was taken advantage of, well received, in the fact that 250 people chose to make a submission. So I think the public had an opportunity there to make their views known. I, as I said earlier, had an opportunity to review each of those submissions and much work went into them. And they gave the Ministry of Environment many things to look at and many things to analyze and, you know, there was much information that was put forward. But from a scientific basis the Ministry of Environment has ruled that indeed Fortune Minerals can go to the next step.

Ms. Sproule: — So you chose not to have a public hearing. I understand that none of the recommendations in those 250 submissions were accepted by the ministry. Can you confirm that?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — What I can tell the member is that out of the 247 comments received, 45 per cent expressed concerns regarding water use, 14 per cent regarding transportation and storage, 15 per cent regarding airborne emissions, 12 per cent regarding various other precipitation events — monitoring, things like that. So certainly each and every one was looked at, was analyzed on a scientific basis, and dealt with before the decision was made. So each and every one was taken very seriously and looked at by the scientists at the Ministry of Environment.

Ms. Sproule: — There's apparently a trust that's being established by Fortune Minerals to ensure remediation monitoring, compliance, all those things after they leave. I understand they're leaving in about 20 years. That's the lifespan of the facility. And do you know how much they are going to be required to put up for trust monies for cleanup and maintenance?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. The member's correct that there is indeed a trust that is necessary or a financial insurance, if you like. The level of that financial insurance is equal to the decommissioning costs of the facility, so it includes the decommissioning of the facility itself as well as the tailings. And that cost has not been determined at this time because those financial numbers aren't known. But again it will be done through a formula that equates the financial assurance to be equal to the level of the cost of decommissioning the facility.

[21:15]

Ms. Sproule: — Would that include — the decommissioning — would that include the monitoring of the site into perpetuity, the leaching, you know, the permeability of the containers and all that?

Mr. Chair, for the record, SADAQ. I have the proper acronym now. It's the Saskatchewan Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization. So that's for the record.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Again thank you very much for the questions. The costs will include the post-closure monitoring,

and that will go on until such time that the Ministry of Environment determines that it is no longer necessary. So it will continue on into the future for as long as it is necessary. The amount of money that is put into the financial assurance package as well will be recalculated every five years. So there will be a determination as the project gets up and running of what the financial assurance will be. But then again in five years, that number will be reassessed to determine if there are any additional costs as well.

Ms. Sproule: — And when you say post-closure monitoring for as long as necessary, we know the arsenic will be there in perpetuity. So is it even feasible that it couldn't stop being monitored? Would you not monitor into perpetuity?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks for the question. That would be a scientific determination going forward. Certainly it's quite possible that it can continue on for a very long period of time, but there also are situations where tailings such as this would have stabilized and would be in a stabilized scenario. So again that would be a scientific determination that would be made by scientists within the Ministry of Environment. But it is indeed possible that it could go either way.

Ms. Sproule: — Apparently the scientists from Fortune Minerals admitted at the meeting last week that the liner would not last, and they were going to rely on the clay substructure to hold in the chemicals. Is that something that would suggest it would require monitoring into perpetuity? And I guess the problem is, if the arsenic starts to leach, you can't stop it once it gets to the groundwater.

Ms. Hordenchuk: — So in the environmental impact statement, Fortune has committed to constructing a double-lined structure which would also be housed overtop of a monitoring system to alert them if there's any impact to the liner. Underneath of that system is the nature clay liner which is very impermeable for that part of the province. So they've also indicated in their EIS [environmental impact statement] that if there was to be any damage to the lined structure that a repair would take place immediately as part of their emergency response system and that that activity of repair would be remedied quickly and would happen faster than any leachate migrating.

Ms. Sproule: — What if that damage occurred after they're gone? Would they still repair it immediately?

Ms. Hordenchuk: — Regarding the post-decommissioning plan, that would be a requirement that the checks and balances exist so that if there's any infractions to the liner or any potential migration that there would be the notification system still in place and that the remediation would take place immediately.

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Chair, I'm finding that this is difficult because I can't understand how, when a company 100 years from now, they may not even exist any more. So how could they at that point respond immediately to any kind of damage, particularly when they've admitted themselves that the liner may not last and likely won't last? So I think there's some very, very important concerns that the people are raising about this particular project. I'm disappointed that the ministry isn't taking

those concerns more seriously, and I think at this point there wouldn't be any point in asking any further questions on this topic.

I know that there's other economic opportunities that aren't being followed up because of the presence of this plant. For example Omega-3 Fish Inc. have indicated they're not going to go ahead with their project. So I think there's a number of concerns on a number of levels, economic and environmental, that simply haven't in my humble opinion been satisfactorily addressed.

I'm going to leave it at that for now and move on because time is passing way too quickly. I would like to ask for perhaps a five-minute break for all the officials and all of us here in the committee just to stretch and perhaps use the washroom. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — If I could just respond to the member's comment before we break. I would strenuously disagree with her assessment of what's taken place here this evening. I think each and every question has been answered fully. Those that are of a procedural nature, a political nature, or overall of Ministry of Environment, I have answered myself. Those of a scientific manner, each question was answered fully and given the seriousness that it certainly deserves by ministry officials. I've said all along that this was a science-based decision, and I'm comfortable with the decision of the scientists within the Ministry of Environment. We will continue to monitor and work very closely and answer all and every question that is posed to us. Thank you.

The Chair: — When we began committee hearings, we had posed the question of taking a short break. So if there's agreement from the committee, we'll take a five-minute break. There's agreement. The committee will resume at 9:30. Thank you.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

[21:30]

The Chair: — I'll now call the committee meeting back to order, and we'll resume discussions on Ministry of the Environment. Ms. Sproule.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Just going to move into another area now, and that is the area of biodiversity and representative area networks.

And I know that there was a plan, a biodiversity action plan that started I think in 2004 and wrapped up in 2009 as far as I know. And I know at that time . . . I'm looking at estimates from 2008 which is a long time ago, but it said they're bringing forward recommendations for the future. So I'm just wondering where the ministry is at right now in terms of the biodiversity action plan and the representative area networks, and is there any programming or ministry time being put into this project, and how's the representative area networks coming along? What percentage are we at?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — No problem. Thanks very much for the question. As the member indicates, the Biodiversity

Action Plan was a plan that took place between 2004 and 2009. In October of 2012, the Saskatchewan conservation and sustainability action plan was put in place. Now we're waiting for the federal government to ratify our plan and they follow . . . and I hesitate to use this word because it's Japanese. We may hear something in question period tomorrow. I say it only in jest. But the Aichi targets that were set out in Japan are something that the federal government follows and then will comment on our conservation and sustainability action plan. So plans are in place, work is being done, and we look forward to being in line with the federal government as they follow the Aichi targets that were established in Japan.

On the second question of representative area networks, we're very pleased with the work that has been done in this regard. We're at 9 per cent of our 12 per cent commitment and members will know that the Pink Lake ecological reserve was designated on June 25th of 2013 and it's approximately 366 000 hectares or 904,000 acres. It's the largest one in the province by far and we're very, very pleased to add that to our representative network.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Is there any plan for the final 3 per cent and when you hope to achieve that?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. And indeed I indicated that we're at 9 per cent and our target is 12 per cent, so my first indication is to say, well that's 75 per cent; that's good enough. The member's shaking her head like my teachers used to shake their head at me when I said is that good enough. So it's not good enough. We've got 3 per cent to go and certainly we're undertaking the further consultations.

There is quite a consultative process that takes place involving First Nations and others as we identify land that would possibly fall into the representative area networks and then determine what the most suitable land is. But we are determined to reach that goal of 12 per cent and we're continuing to undertake those consultations to identify what the remaining 3 per cent would most suitably be. So we don't have an end date or anything like that, but it's a work in progress.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you. I will follow up with you next year then on that one. I think this is correct. The community pastures that are currently in the Crown are considered part of the RANs, the representative area networks. If those are sold, will the government make arrangements to replace those lands as far as RANs go?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. The Ministry of Agriculture will continue as the community pastures move forward with the Crown conservation easements that are on the land, so they will continue to be part . . . they are part of the representative area networks today, and they will continue to be part of the representative area networks into the future. But for a more complete explanation I guess Ministry of Agriculture would be the one to consult, but that gives you a general overview.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you. That's what I was wondering is how that would be addressed and I think that's suitable.

I want to move on now to landfills. We had the opportunity to discuss them a little bit earlier today and I did mention earlier about the comments of the auditor back in December on landfills. There are just a few questions in relation to that in terms of . . . We know Saskatchewan's waste is increasing. We know there's about 700 landfills throughout the province. We know that some of the smaller landfills are being proposed to be closed and there would be regional landfill sites taking their place.

In the report on . . . I don't know if you want the page if you have it handy. It's page 210. The auditor indicated that there was one new regional landfill site potentially opening in 2013-14 which would result in the closure of 10 existing landfills. Has that regional landfill site been opened and where is it?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question, and certainly two areas in the province that have done a lot of work in this area are Nipawin and Kindersley. We're just trying to determine specifically what the auditor was referring to in that regard. Because they're both regional landfills that are being proposed, they're not in fruition yet. They're still in the formative phases. But I know I had discussions at SARM [Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities] and SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] with officials from both communities, and they are certainly looking at the establishment of regional landfills going forward.

It's something that the ministry has been encouraging communities to look at. I know that in northwestern Saskatchewan there's a very successful regional landfill and the areas that we look at are coming up across the province, that people are looking at the viability of regional sites. So again we are working earnestly with the different areas. Nipawin and Kindersley seem to be the furthest advanced, but we will get you the information specifically on what the auditor was referring to in her remarks.

[21:45]

Ms. Sproule: — All right. One of the things they indicated as a concern was that they're not, many of the landfills are not being inspected as frequently as it says your plan expects them to and, in one instance, the length of time between inspections was almost six years.

Now I noted, they indicate as of last June you had five staff responsible for regulating landfills. If there aren't enough inspections taking place, is it a matter of staffing? And will you be adding additional staff to deal with that out of this year's budget?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. The member has indicated, and it is certainly the case, that there's 700 landfills in the province. That's a number that would require a tremendous amount of work as far as oversight goes. But the auditor did say that the Ministry of Environment has to do better in this area. It's not a concern that developed overnight. It's been a concern of hers for many, many years. And we agree that it has to play a higher role and have a higher profile, so we created a new branch within the Ministry of

Environment with staff dedicated to landfills. It's the five FTEs that the member mentions, but they're solely dedicated and they have an entire branch that looks after nothing but landfills.

So it's a new creation. The targeted assessment period is every three years, so we hope to cycle through and have analysis of each and every landfill every three years. But it will be on a risk-based approach, so we'll look at the different risk analysis for each one of the landfills and then govern accordingly. But again, when the Auditor speaks, we listen, and it is indeed a goal that we have going forward to do a better job of assessing landfills and monitoring them and ensuring compliance.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you. It wasn't clear to me that that branch had not been in place a long time. It looked like it had been there for a while. But if it's just been established, then I guess we'll have to keep an eye on it. A number of other areas where concerns were indicated was obviously the monitoring, and that more monitoring was needed especially for the high-risk ones as you talk about risk-based approach, that there would be . . . Groundwater monitoring is something that she highlighted as a concern as well as follow-ups, and then approvals for closed landfills, and also closure reports that have not been done on any tentative landfills files that they sampled. There was no evidence of a closure report.

So obviously this is highly administrative and bureaucratic work and requires dedicated staff to do that kind of work. And I didn't realize that the five staff are new and targeted as a new branch. So the ministers have the view then that those five people are sufficient to cover off all the requirements in these recommendations?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Based on the plan that is in place, administrative oversight management tells me that this will be an undertaking that they can achieve. And I'll continue to monitor their progress and ensure that it does happen.

Ms. Sproule: — As will we. Thank you. I think part of this landfill advancement, I guess if we want to talk about it, is the arrival or the finalization of the code that's overdue perhaps. I know we've been waiting for a long time for it. Do you have any idea when the code for the landfills will be completed?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — We're just in the final stages of the code. It has been a tremendously large exercise with many, many moving parts. But again, we're very dedicated towards the extensive consultation that is necessary. And many are telling us you've consulted enough already; get going with it. But we're wanting to make sure that indeed we put forward the very best code possible and taking into account everyone's suggestions and advice. So it's moving very close to fruition.

I am making it a top priority, as I have been for the last number of months and extending into my time as Minister of Environment. But I'm seeing the light, the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel. And I certainly hope that we can get it in place sooner rather later because something that I've come to learn is the importance of the code going forward, and just the importance of modernizing and streamlining the regulations in place. So I'm hoping that we have that very soon.

Ms. Sproule: — When you say you're hoping to have it soon,

is it the entire code, or just this section on landfills?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. As members I'm sure know, the code is a large document with many, many chapters. In fact we've been dealing with 19 different chapters. And as we continue our consultations on each of the chapters, some are more contentious than others and, you know, decisions will have to be made going forward. You know, does the whole code go forward? Do specific chapters that are able to go, go first, and others wait for additional consultation? That's part of the determination that we're making at the present time. So again with 19 full chapters in various stages, we are nearing the end of the consultation period. And it will be ready to go with a number of those chapters very soon, but I can't give you a specific date.

Ms. Sproule: — I'm looking at some of the press releases that came out. And we know that in, for example on January 11th, 2012, a former minister in your chair said, "The code is a critical element of the results-based approach." And then they wrote in their news release, "The intent is to have the first edition of the code ... [approached] and the legislation proclaimed in 2012." And that didn't happen. And then you yourself said in the state of the environment report for 2013, "The new Saskatchewan Environmental Code, [is] to be implemented in the spring of 2013." But that hasn't happened. And I guess the question is, why has it taken so long to get to where you are now?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Well it's due to the extensive and intensive consultations that are taking place. And quite frankly, there's not the level of agreement among stakeholders that I would like before things go forward. So rather than try to meet deadlines and artificial deadlines — some of them, you know, that are suggested by me — I have just said we will try to address every concern possible.

And I think we're getting to the point now that we can move forward. So I'm hoping that it happens, but I'm loath to do it sooner rather than later without taking all opinions and consultations necessary. So if I apologize for anything it's for over-consultation but I think, at the end of the day, we'll have a very good document.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you. Could you indicate what those 19 chapters are and which ones are complete and which ones are the contentious ones?

[22:00]

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. Of the 19 chapters we have five that are forestry related, one that's standard across all of the environmental areas, and 13 chapters regarding EMPA [*The Environmental Management and Protection Act*] and EMPA 2010, the environmental management plan 2010. So we can give the direct ... Do we have it here?

All right. I think we have the list here. Under the title of environmentally impacted sites, we have the discharge and recovery reporting chapter, the site assessment chapter, the corrective action plan chapter, transfer of responsibility for an

environmentally impacted site chapter, and substance characterization chapter.

Under water management and protection, we have the water main chapter, the sewage main chapter, the hydrostatic testing chapter.

Under the natural resource management and environmental protection, we have the forestry chapters: forest regeneration assessment chapter, forest data submission chapter, forest operating plan chapter, forest products scaling chapter, and forest management planning chapter.

I realize I'm going faster than the member can probably keep up unless she knows shorthand, but we'll give you a complete list of the chapters, and of course it'll be in *Hansard*.

Landfill chapter, transfer station chapter, and liquid domestic waste disposal chapter. So those are the 19 chapters.

I had mentioned that, you know, they're in varying degrees of consultation that are still taking place, and some have a little more consultation that needs to take place than others. But you know, at this time I'm treating each chapter individually and fairly, and I'm not making any distinctions between any of the chapters. So I'm just fully answering the member's question when I say some have a little more work to do than others.

Ms. Sproule: — I'm just looking at a release from May 14th, 2012 where it said that the public review was completed and that the comments have been compiled and would be considered. And that was two years ago now, so obviously it's a big project. And it looked like at the time that the minister was of the view that the consultation was complete. I appreciate you didn't want to sort of give a mark to each one of these chapters in terms of completion, but could you indicate where the most ... I would think the liquid waste is one of the more difficult ones, but what are the ones that you're really struggling with right now?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Again I'm not going to get into the specifics of each chapter. Members will know that there's varying opinions on most of these chapters, and some are more forceful than others on specific topics. But we'll continue to work on each and every one of them, and hopefully we'll have a package coming forward in the very near future.

And members will know that you go out for your initial consultation. The information comes back. You write it up, and then you go out and reconsult with all of the members that gave you the initial consultation. And if one or two or five or all have one area that they would like to see tweaked or changed, you know, you have a decision to make. Do you move forward and ignore those, or do you take each and every one of those comments very serious no matter how long it takes to get it right? And we're doing the latter. We're taking each and every one of those comments and making sure that they are addressed so we don't have to deal with it after it's introduced. So that's just a little bit of the mechanics, the sausage making if you like, behind the scenes. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Sproule: — The organic sausages, right? I will have more questions I think on the results-based regulatory model and just

going back to some documents released by the ministry. But I think in the interests of time, there's a couple other areas I want to make sure I touch upon before I let it go.

First of all we see, I'm just looking at again a spreadsheet of the various estimates since, well actually going back to 2008. But the ministry's budget peaked at about 200 million in 2009, and since then it's lower than it was in 2007. It's down to 164 million. We see that staff has been cut by 170 over these years, from a peak of about 1,040 to the current figures of 870 staff, and that's a 16 per cent cut in staff.

We see a lot of work going into these codes, and we know that the minister's indicated that monitoring and certainly the protection aspect of his ministry's work is important. So I just wouldn't mind a comment from the minister about how you're managing with a 16 per cent cut when obviously your responsibilities are increasing and the demands on your staff would be increasing accordingly.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. And certainly the member's numbers are accurate. We as a ministry and we as a government have been asked to do more with less, to get each and every FTE to contribute as much as possible. And you know, we're assisted along the way certainly with technology. In many aspects technology has helped the ministry be more efficient. But efficiency is something that, a mantra that we certainly look at within the ministry and try to identify areas of efficiency going forward each and every year.

You know, as a government we've been mandated through workforce adjustment to look at doing more with less as far as FTEs go as our economy and our province continues to increase. So we feel that we're able to meet those goals and those standards. One area or philosophy that we've adopted, and you'll hear us refer to it, and the member herself has referred to the risk-based approaches that we talk about. And certainly that enables us to deploy resources where they are most needed, and we find that we're able to do that very successfully even though we have less FTEs today than we did a number of years ago.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I just want to move back I think for a few minutes on the climate change concerns and the approach by this ministry. As he mentioned earlier, there was a report put out today actually by the Intergovernmental Panel On Climate Change, and it's a disturbing report at every level. And I've had an opportunity to look at some of the summary comments that were in that report and even in the press release itself. And one of the statements right in the very first paragraph says that the world in many cases is ill-prepared for risks from a changing climate.

The report indicates that the effects on crops is going to be notable in the very near future and the decrease in production is already happening. The effect on rural economies will be huge. And we did actually do a freedom of information request on what the Ministry of Environment has studied, and Agriculture — the two ministries — on the effects of climate change on Saskatchewan's crops. We have not found anything. So we're wondering, has the Ministry of the Environment done any modelling or reports or investigations into what the effect of

climate change will be on Saskatchewan's economy, particularly in the crop production?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. The ministry is developing a provincial adaptation strategy to climate change, and it's in collaboration with other ministries and agencies. We're just in the process right now of establishing goals, objectives, and initial priorities that foster adaptation planning within the areas of jurisdiction. This involves not only the Ministry of Environment, but we're consulting with the Ministry of Economy, Highways, Infrastructure, Government Relations, the Sask Research Council, the Saskatchewan Water Security Agency, SaskPower, and the Ministry of Agriculture as well. So we're wanting to put an adaptation strategy in place.

Collaborations though are also under way with provincial and federal agencies such as Natural Resources Canada and the governments of Alberta and Manitoba to develop a Prairies Regional Adaptation Collaborative for the Prairie provinces. So indeed work is beginning in earnest. PRAC, the Prairies Regional Adaptation Collaborative, will build partnerships with industry, municipalities, businesses, and other stakeholders to study increased resiliency to extreme weather events and long-term climate impacts, so not only to look at climate change per se but to look at extreme weather impacts as well.

So much work is being done within the province and within the interprovincial type of scenario, and we'll be consulting with industry and municipalities as well. Do we have any studies to show at the present time? No. But in answering the question, is the ministry developing a provincial adaptation strategy, the answer is yes.

[22:15]

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. I'm pleased to hear that those consultations are happening and the collaboration with other regions. Obviously weather doesn't stop at the boundary of our province and nor does climate change.

I had some interesting discussions while you were consulting with your officials about this report. Some of the committee members seem to think that it's an ill-advised report and that it's actually not true, although we have 1,700 expert reviewers and 70 countries and 300 coordinating lead authors as well as a number of other authors that are writing the report, which has overwhelming agreement that this is a serious problem. In fact even on the radio today some reporters called this report an alarmist kind of report.

But I guess I'm interested in the position of the minister. Is it your position that drawing on the scientific research that's in the IPCC [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change] report would amount to alarmism?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Well I had an opportunity this morning. I saw the report for the first time this morning. And as the member indicated, she read the summary and the press release. And I didn't get much beyond that today. But I did also review a media scan, you know, seeing what the different media outlets are saying about this specific study.

And certainly there is some contention around this study. There are some individuals . . . And again I'm just repeating what I heard in the media, so I'll have to do more research and make my own opinions. But there was concern that some scientists and some people that had a contribution to make to this report feel that they were not allowed to make that full contribution. So I take that for what it's worth. You know, those individuals will have an opportunity maybe to do their own report or to do further studies. But I am in no way an expert in this regard, but I do take each and every study at its face value and try to learn more and try to see where we can use that study to adapt our position to a greater extent here in Saskatchewan.

So I think this is one study. Is it the be-all and end-all of all studies? Certainly not. Is there contention that surrounds it? Absolutely. But again we'll be analyzing it and looking for any information that can help us as we move forward with a Saskatchewan-based approach.

Ms. Sproule: — They indicate in some of their comments that one of the challenges is for . . . I mean the science is pretty irrefutable, but the ability of policy-makers and politicians to actually take that and turn it into significant political change is the real challenge.

And one of the statements on page 19 of the summary for policy-makers, which is who we are, is that "Continued emissions of greenhouse gases will cause further warming and changes in all components of the climate system. Limiting climate change will require substantial and sustained reductions of greenhouse gas emissions."

Would you agree with that statement?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Well I agree that certainly substantial changes have to be made going forward if we're going to meet our targets, if we're going to reach our goals. And that's why I'm so pleased to see the work that's being done by a province such as ours in Boundary dam 3 and the clean coal technology and the carbon capture that's being undertaken.

I think we certainly want to do our part, but we have an opportunity here to not only change our emissions in the province but to be part of a global solution. And I'm just very pleased to see the work that's being done, and the discussions I've had with the CEO of SaskPower have been very, very positive.

So I think we're doing our part on various fronts. One is we're being very innovative and world leaders in a particular area, but also we're looking at our role across the country and within North America and the world. So I'm pleased where we're at. There's big goals going forward that we're going to have to try to reach, but I'm very pleased with the work that has been done to date in the province.

Ms. Sproule: — I just want to go back to some news releases from your government back in 2009. That's five years ago. The headline is, "Saskatchewan takes real action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions." And this is the introduction of *The Management and Reduction of Greenhouse Gases Act*. The key features of that Act are the establishment of the Saskatchewan Technology Fund and also the establishment of the Climate

Change Foundation. And also the Go Green Fund was a key part of the announcement at that time.

Further on in that year, there was another announcement where the climate change legislation was reintroduced with the same kind of goals, two key elements, the creation of the Saskatchewan Technology Fund and a Climate Change Foundation, and then the Environmental Code.

Fast forward five years later, Mr. Minister, and we still don't have the Saskatchewan Technology Fund, we still don't have the Climate Change Foundation, and we still don't have a code.

These are five years that have gone by where . . . We have *Canada's Emissions Trends* released in October last year. In 2005 our provincial emissions were in the range of 71 megatonnes. We are now looking at 74 — this is 2011 — so it's gone up. And their projection based on what's on the ground right now is that by 2020 we will likely remain at 74 megatonnes here in Saskatchewan alone, for a change of 2, an increase of 2 over a 15-year period to 2020.

There's only two other provinces that have increases. Manitoba is going up by 1, and Alberta is going up by 63 megatonnes. And we know that's directly a result of the oil sands development or the tar sands development.

So the story your government told in 2009, fast forward to today, you have a statement in your public accounts for climate change that says that your objective is to provide leadership, deliver initiatives in support of government-wide approaches to improve emission reductions. You've referred to carbon capture and sequestration that's only one-seventieth of the emissions that are being produced in this province right now. I'm very, very interested, Mr. Minister, in what you intend to do with the other 69 of the 70 portions of the greenhouse gas emissions that are being produced by this government and this province at this point in time if you seriously want to meet your objective to improve emission, in fact even get a reduction in emissions. So I would like to hear your detailed strategic plan for reducing emissions.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. And I think we've gone over this earlier in our time period. By public awareness, by increasing awareness in the public, the government certainly is undertaking that responsibility very well, working with regulated and non-regulated emitters in the province, and also using innovation. I talked about the \$5 billion that government is spending on clean initiatives in our province, and I'll put that record up against anybody's.

If the member wants to talk about a year-by-year analysis, I will go to the year 2000 and I will say that we had 65.1 million tonnes of GHGs [greenhouse gas]. In the year 2007, we had 72.3. So in those seven years of a previous administration, we've gone up over 7 million tonnes. When we use that year 2007, with a much less population and an economy nowhere near where it is today, we had 72.3. In the latest information that we have, which is the year 2011, 72.7. So point four million tonnes of GHGs increase even though our population and our economy has grown.

So what we have seen in that period is a stabilization of the GHGs. What we need to do going forward is to reduce that amount. But before you can make a reduction, you have to stop the increase that was taking place from 2000 to 2007 and have a cap that seems to have taken place over the last four years.

Now I don't know what the numbers going forward are going to say. I know that there has been a real initiative on the part of this ministry and this government to do all we can to work with industry to ensure that they take a responsible approach to GHG concerns. I've talked extensively to the chamber of commerce about this and to other groups as well. And I know that industry takes this very, very serious.

So I make no apologies for our record. We're leading the world in one front. We're taking a responsible approach on many others. And the numbers show that the period of time that this party has been in government, that we've seen a cap on those GHGs.

So going forward, we're going to continue to do all we can to ensure that our economy continues to grow, but we do so in an environmentally sustainable way as well. So going forward I think we have a pretty good plan in place, and we'll continue to work with industry and with the residents of the province to ensure that we do all we can to protect our environment.

Ms. Sproule: — Mr. Minister, on the specific question of your go-forward plan, I think all that I heard was that you were going to try and increase public awareness. Certainly I think public awareness is important, but it's not a plan. And in fact, when we hear members of this very committee indicating a disdain for the notion of climate change and that it doesn't exactly, and that it doesn't exist, I think we have a long ways to go when it comes to public awareness.

But I think the people of Saskatchewan . . . And I certainly do want to put on the record that we are thankful for the stabilization in the emission rate. Certainly that's a huge step forward, and I don't want to minimize the efforts that have been made on that front. I think that's incredibly important, and certainly we see other jurisdictions doing that as well.

But public awareness won't cut it, Mr. Minister. And I think the goal, and what we need to see from our leadership and our public policy-makers, is an actual plan going forward from now to see that target being met in 2020. And so I appreciate public awareness. We're thankful for the stabilization. But what is the go-forward plan? We need one other step . . . [inaudible].

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much. To be fair, I indicated many other areas. You concentrated on one area that I said was public awareness. I also mentioned the \$5.3 billion that has been expended over the years from 2008 to 2014. And I'm just going to very quickly . . . That's the Go Green Fund. That's reforestation. That's the ethanol rebate program, renewable biodiesel, green energy procurement in government, many SaskPower areas of priority, the clean coal option study, SaskPower hydro. I mentioned earlier Boundary dam 3. The clean coal project, natural gas-fired electricity power plants, biomass generation, wind power and renewable energy sources, heat recovery projects. We will put our record, the \$5.3 billion, up against any jurisdiction in this country.

I can get into different areas as well. We talk about . . . Ministry of Environment is working to development performance agreements with other policy instruments to address submissions in oil and gas transportation and agriculture sectors. When we started on this topic earlier, I talked about the work that we did with the federal government regarding regulations on the coal-fired energy emissions that have happened in the country. Those regulations, we've certainly worked very closely with the federal government to put those in place. We're close to formalizing an agreement with the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, CAPP, for the reduction of flaring and venting emissions from upstream oil and gas. We're working with the federal government for performance standards for the oil-gas sector . . .

And again I can go on and on and on and on, on different areas that we're working in. So whether it's the regulated sector, the non-regulated sector, whether it's investments in innovation, whether it's public awareness — all of those facets this government is working very closely on. And that's why we've had some success in seeing our GHGs moderate. And going forward, there's going to have to be more work to be done, but I feel very comfortable saying we're on top of it.

[22:30]

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, and I understand we have about six minutes left in committee because of the break. So I just want to say that if it took 5.3 billion to achieve the stabilization that you've achieved, how much is it going to cost to get the 20 per cent reduction by 2020? What additional funds are necessary? Because that . . . It took \$5.3 billion and all the programs you listed to achieve stabilization. That's a good thing. But we know we need to see a reduction, so what kind of additional funds will this government commit beyond that 5.3 billion to actually start seeing a reduction to the goals that your government has stated?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Well I think the member would like me to pull billions of dollars out of the air and certainly that's not going to happen. Those that choose to do things like that, it comes back to bite them for sure, so we're not going to do that. But again, you know, I can get into some of these projects.

We're just seeing the benefits of some of these projects right now, and going into the future, I think these indeed are investments. This \$5.3 billion is not just money that's well spent. It's an investment in the future and it will continue to allow us to use innovation going forward.

When I talk about the Go Green Fund, yes that was money that was spent from 2008 to 2011, but we're only now seeing the benefits of those projects going forward. And whether it's biomass or whether it's wind energy with Cowessess and the Sask Research Council or, you know, there's 60 projects there. I think I could talk about the 57 other ones. We're just seeing the benefits of those now. And I think, you know these are my personal thoughts but if we're going to meet these targets it's going to be through innovation. It's not going to be through governments throwing millions and billions of dollars towards this initiative. It's through innovation. It's through a technology fund. It's through being able to work together with the private

sector. So I see our government doing that on all fronts.

Yes, there's more work to do and we have goals in place that we're going to do all we can to meet. But again, we're not going to do it as an island saying, you know, Saskatchewan is going to do it on its own. We're going to work with the federal government and I know the federal government wants to work with other nations as well.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I know that I only have another half hour after today to follow up on some of these questions and concerns. In the few minutes that remain I would like to hear some comments on your proposed establishment of the Saskatchewan Technology Fund and the Climate Change Foundation. I think last year the deputy minister indicated that they would be in place in 2015. Is that still your target?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. The 2015 date that was referenced is still our intended target. July 1st, 2015 is when the federal coal-fired regulations come into play, and that certainly will have an impact here in Saskatchewan. And so we're shooting for that date.

You know, we're also . . . There are many moving parts in this area. We're looking at the oil and gas regulations, and I've spoken to the federal minister about these very regulations. We've been asked for our contribution from Saskatchewan to those regulations, and we're waiting for the federal government to come forward with those regulations. Those will have a large impact as well, but we still are looking at the 2015 date at this time.

Ms. Sproule: — All right, Mr. Minister. I think that would be the extent of the time we have tonight. So I just would like to thank the committee and the minister and all the officials for hanging out with us on a Monday night and for all the good work that you do. So thanks very much.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. If I may, thank you to the member. All the questions were very well thought out, very well researched, and I very much enjoyed our exchange. I thank her and all members for their commitment and passion to the environment here in the province. And hopefully we've done our part to examine what's happening in our province and look forward to a very environmentally sustainable future in our province. Thank you.

The Chair: — And thank you to the minister, his officials, committee members for your involvement in committee tonight. And being past the hour of agreed-upon adjournment, this committee stands adjourned to the call of the Chair.

[The committee adjourned at 22:36.]