



STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ECONOMY

Hansard Verbatim Report

No. 43 — May 6, 2019



Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

Twenty-Eighth Legislature

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ECONOMY

Ms. Colleen Young, Chair
Lloydminster

Ms. Vicki Mowat, Deputy Chair
Saskatoon Fairview

Mr. David Buckingham
Saskatoon Westview

Mr. Terry Dennis
Canora-Pelly

Mr. Delbert Kirsch
Batoche

Mr. Warren Michelson
Moose Jaw North

Mr. Doug Steele
Cypress Hills

[The committee met at 19:01.]

The Chair: — All right. Welcome everyone to the Standing Committee on the Economy for May the 6th, 2019. I'd like to welcome and introduce the members of the committee that are here this evening: myself, Colleen Young, as the Chair. We have sitting in on the committee, David Buckingham; we have Hugh Nerlien, sitting in for Terry Dennis; Delbert Kirsch; Warren Michelson; heard Delbert's not here yet, but I know he's coming, so we'll put him in when he shows up; Doug Steele; and sitting in for Vicki Mowat, we have Yens Pedersen.

So now I'd like to table, before we begin the estimates, I'd like to table the following document: ECO 20-28, Ministry of Immigration and Career Training: Responses to questions raised at the April 3rd, 2019 meeting.

**General Revenue Fund
Environment
Vote 26**

Subvote (EN01)

The Chair: — So we'll now begin our consideration of the estimates and supplementary estimates — no. 2 for the Ministry of Environment, vote 26, central management and services, subvote (EN01). We can begin with just a portion of both the estimates first.

So Minister Duncan is here with his officials, and I would ask that officials please state their names before speaking at the mike each time. So, Minister, if you'd like to introduce who you have here this evening and begin with your opening remarks.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you very much, Madam Chair. And I know you just told me off-camera about two minutes ago. I just want to clarify we're going to do the main estimates beginning . . .

The Chair: — Correct. Yes.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you so much.

The Chair: — So you can do those introductions and those comments first, and then we can switch over.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Okay. Thank you very much. We're very pleased to be here this evening to discuss the estimates for the Ministry of the Environment. And I look forward to the questions and having a good discussion this evening.

From the Ministry of Environment, our key members of our executive team as well as other officials from across the ministry, they include to my right Lin Gallagher, the deputy minister; to my left is Veronica Gelowitz, the assistant deputy minister, corporate services and policy division. Seated behind us: Kevin Murphy, assistant deputy minister of resource management and compliance division; Wes Kotyk, assistant deputy minister, environmental protection division; David Brock, assistant deputy minister, climate change and adaptation division; Brant Kirychuk, executive director of fish and wildlife and lands branch; Scott Wasylenchuk, wildlife operations director, wildfire

management branch; and Cheryl Jansen, director of budget and reporting branch.

So this year's budget is focused on the right balance for Saskatchewan. The budget enables the ministry to continue to ensure the environment is protected, communities are safe, and economic growth is balanced with environmental health.

The Ministry of Environment's 2019-2020 budget is 170.777 million, an increase of 8.507 million or 5.2 per cent from the 2018-19 budget. The budget includes an increase of 2.25 million to help deliver the Sarcan beverage container collection and recycling program, bringing the province's total funding support to \$27 million. Sarcan employs more than 700 people at its 72 collection depots across the province. The funding contributes to economic activity, provides waste management and recycling benefits, and contributes to the well-being of persons with disabilities and others that work within the Sarcan recycling operations.

The budget will continue to focus on public safety and property protection by investing up to 2.85 million in wildfire mitigation programming, an increase of 2.55 million. The budget includes new funding of \$2 million for incentives associated with SaskPower's net metering program. The net metering program encourages residents, farms, and businesses to generate up to 100 kilowatts of power to offset their own power use, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and save money. This complements our Prairie Resilience climate change strategy by providing an incentive to increase the amount of renewable energy in the province and reduce emissions.

The Prairie Resilience strategy is designed to make Saskatchewan more resilient to the climatic, economic, and policy impacts of climate change. The strategy makes more than 40 commitments in five key areas: natural systems; physical infrastructure; economic sustainability; community preparedness; and measuring, monitoring, and reporting.

New regulations have come into force under the authority of an amended management and reduction of greenhouse gases Act. In addition, the methane action plan and associated regulations are now in effect. The new regulations will achieve a 40 per cent reduction in upstream oil and gas emissions, a 40 per cent reduction in electricity emissions, and a 10 per cent reduction in emissions intensity for large, industrial emitters. The climate resilience measurement framework was introduced and includes 25 indicators in five key areas to measure the province's resilience to a changing global climate.

There's 1.55 million planned for two species-at-risk projects, an increase of 880,000. The budget also provides funding of 846,000 to further support the role of ministry conservation officers, largely as a part of the protection and response team. This budget provides an increase in grant funding of 343,000 to the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund that reflects the sales of hunting and angling licences.

Additional new investments include \$300,000 to support Canada's national forest inventory; 250,000 to help municipalities complete environmental site assessments on their landfills; 200,000 to prepare a remedial action plan and obtain

estimates for remediation of one abandoned, non-uranium mine near Creighton; and 1.749 million to address operating pressures.

Included in new capital funding for 2019-2020 is 9.252 million to commence purchase and conversion of one CL-215T water bomber aircraft. The total cost is \$37 million over three years. This investment will enable the replacement of one obsolete CL-215P piston tanker; will increase the ministry's capacity to respond to wildfires in a timely manner; and will reduce costs for training, maintenance, inventory, and flight operations.

The ministry continues to modernize and move to more online services such as the online hunting, angling, and trapping licence, the HAL system. This has resulted in the need for fewer in-person, front-counter services, especially in offices that have limited hours of operation. Beginning this spring, Ministry of Environment offices in 19 communities will no longer offer front-counter or walk-in service to the public. Conservation officers will remain working at the offices serving these communities.

Additional operating savings of 2.2 million have been realized across the ministry as a result of efficiencies and reduced amortization expense.

Changes to *The Crown Resource Land Regulations*, 2019 include revised rates and fees and other provisions to ensure effective and efficient administration of Crown resource land. The rates had not been updated for over 12 years and did not reflect market values. It's important for government to charge rates that provide a fair return to the province for the private use of public lands and resources. We are, however, listening to stakeholder concerns and continue to assess the impact of these changes.

These are a few highlights from the 2019-2020 Ministry of Environment budget. The 2019-2020 budget will allow the ministry to continue managing the health of Saskatchewan's environment in a respectful and responsible manner that balances the growth of our province with sustainable development through objective, transparent, and informed decision making and stewardship.

Madam Chair, I thank you and the committee for your time this evening. We appreciate your interest and we look forward to answering your questions. Thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you, Minister Duncan. I'll now open the floor to questions from committee members and I'll recognize Mr. Pedersen.

Mr. Pedersen: — Thank you, Madam Chair. I guess I'd like to start with Prairie Resilience. There was just a recent report, *Climate Resilience in Saskatchewan*, kind of giving the ministry, I guess, a report card on how we're doing. And so I've got a number of questions in terms of that report there. So starting with . . .

Actually before I get into the meat of it, perhaps I'll ask you this. There was a suggestion by one of the government members last week that Saskatchewan sequesters more carbon than it emits. Is that the government's official line?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you for the question. I'm not sure.

I was away last week. Sorry, I didn't watch the House proceedings when I was gone and I haven't read the proceedings, but I'll try to get around to it. So I don't know the context in which that was said. We sequester approximately 12 million tonnes and emit approximately 78 million tonnes a year.

Mr. Pedersen: — That same member was trying to tell me that our grasslands alone sequester more carbon than the province emits, but I thought I would start with a bigger statement to see whether . . .

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — So there is significant amount of work being done to determine the significance of the sequestration by our grasslands, and we are participating in that work. That's not just happening in Saskatchewan though. That's happening at a national and an international level.

I think perhaps, and again I don't know the context, but I think there's always been some discussion when all of those numbers are known, particularly the agricultural sector, looking at what the agricultural sector emits for emissions and what agriculture as a whole, as a sector, sequesters. So that may be along the lines of what the member was referring to, but again I didn't see the comments, so I don't know the context.

Mr. Pedersen: — Well thank you for that. So getting into the details of the report there, first of all, under the first measure which is the total area of agricultural land under permanent cover, the target is to maintain the permanent cover at 19.93 million acres. And I guess my first question is, why was that particular number arrived at as a target?

Mr. Brock: — Thank you. David Brock, assistant deputy minister for climate change and adaptation. So this measure, as well as the target, was developed along with the Ministry of Agriculture and the working group that helped produce the entire document. My understanding is that part of the thinking around the maintenance of this is that the recovery times for any one of these areas are significantly long. And given the equal pressures for productivity on the landscape that just maintaining, particularly when you consider things such as native grasses and tame pasture, is in itself a significant effort. And I think that's seen through the chart that's indicated on page 8, in that first measure, is even the recovery that's taken place in the past number of years has required some significant effort.

[19:15]

Mr. Pedersen: — And I guess the reason I ask is, I mean there's definitely land in Saskatchewan that we could probably agree maybe shouldn't be under cultivation, where there would be a benefit from a greenhouse gases point of view anyways of having that under permanent cover. I'm wondering is, you know, why set a target if we're just targeting the status quo? Why not target for an actual better state with more acres under permanent cover?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you for the question, Mr. Pedersen. So I think that obviously is the . . . We're in the first, I think, year of the targets and the measures that we've set out. I think as the assistant deputy minister has indicated this is, working with other ministries, this is one that Agriculture put forward. I think obviously there's a number of factors that go into making a determination of when, for example, because we're not just

talking about Crown land, we're also talking about private land, and so those are decisions that private landowners will make, to make a determination for their farm practices whether land is better, more productive, if it is say returned to a grass state or whether it's still cultivated. And so that number will fluctuate based on a whole number of factors.

Agriculture does through their farm stewardship program have a number of beneficial management practices that can help farmers make those decisions when it comes to . . . Perhaps the decision that they may want to make is to take some of their cultivated acres out of production and seed it to grass. So I think that from a starting point, you know, we certainly were comfortable with adopting the recommendation that at a minimum, the target should be to maintain what we have for cover.

You know, it's not to say that in the future we might not look at making a change to that. But there's a number of factors that would get weighed before we'd ever make that decision, particularly when we're dealing with private landowners for a large part of this type of measure.

Mr. Pedersen: — Sure, and I can understand why you'd definitely want to undertake those considerations before you started legislating or regulating private landowners. But it seems fairly easy to set as a target the goal of actually increasing the amount of land that is under permanent cover, particularly when we're as a government, you know, the government's doing lots to herald the sequestration that happens in grassland.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — No, it's a fair point. I would also say, though, another part of the resilience plan, Prairie Resilience, is ensuring that we have continued economic growth in the province. And so again when dealing with largely private landowners in the agricultural sector, you know, we need to work with our partners to try to balance off not only ensuring what we can do to maintain where we're at currently, but again agriculture has programs and other third-party organizations have programs that help farmers that may be looking to take maybe marginal cultivated land out of crop production and into a different state. So we'll continue to work with our partners but, you know, we were comfortable for this production of this document to set as a goal to maintain what we currently have.

Mr. Pedersen: — So similarly on point no. 2, the target was basically set at what the current situation is, so I guess my question is why set a target that has already been achieved?

Mr. Brock: — Thank you for the question. I think taking into account the point you've made about both of the measures, a couple of matters to consider is, I wouldn't necessarily suggest that what the target is is what's already been achieved. The target is, is what we're trying to maintain. So that may be slightly different, but looking at, say to 2030, we certainly don't want to see losses in these areas.

And programs that, for example, the Ministry of Agriculture has around their beneficial management practices are trying to make or are making investments in farming practices that not only improve the levels of sequestration and lowering the carbon intensity of those practices but also, you know, maintaining what the government thinks is a reasonable balance right now between lands set aside, if you will, to help enable sequestration,

balancing that with resilience and economic productivity that the minister mentioned in his previous answer.

Mr. Pedersen: — So also on point no. 2, I mean I suspect a large amount of that organic matter that's sequestered in cultivated land would be as a result of zero-till practices. There's still a significant amount of cultivated land in Saskatchewan that isn't under zero-till. So although the number has, you know, as we see in the report, has very much levelled off, presumably there's some ground to be gained, if you'll forgive the pun, you know, in increasing the amount of land that's under zero-till. And presumably there could be some programs to try to encourage more producers or more acreage to be farmed with that method.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — So this is a good example of why we wanted to look at, you know, not just one measure but a multiple number of measures on different sectors, particularly on the agriculture sector. So I don't have the number off the top of my head, but I think zero-till, the latest that I heard is that we're likely over 90 per cent of cultivated land is seeded using zero-till practices.

So you know, I can't speak to the beneficial, the management practices that might help to encourage that number higher. There may be programs and that, that I can't speak to, but I think the major gains have been made over the last 20 to 25 years on zero-till where, you know, I think in 1980, it was virtually unheard of, so I think that that's why we included it as measures, other measures from agriculture like, I'll say, number 3, measure no. 3, the percentage of agricultural land area with 4R [right source at right rate, right time, right place] Nutrient Stewardship plans.

So we're currently at 0.4 per cent, and the goal is by 2025 to get up to 25 per cent of Saskatchewan's crop land under a 4R designation. So you know, in areas where like zero-till, it's been largely adopted by the industry. You know, there are areas that have not been largely adopted that working with agriculture and organizations like Fertilizer Canada, you know, we think that we can see some pretty significant gains in a short amount of time to change for the better the agricultural practices by our producers that are not only more beneficial for the environment but are actually more beneficial from an economic standpoint, and that's certainly what 4R is looking to achieve.

Mr. Pedersen: — Well you read my mind and moving on to point no. 3. So I'm curious how you came up with the status of the, or I guess, the trend of it being maintained where we've got, I guess, we've got six years according to the target to achieve 25 per cent of crop under the 4R designation and we're less than half a per cent of the way there. So I'm curious as to how that's maintaining. That barely seems like we've got started. That'd be hitting, you know, roughly 5, 4, or 5 per cent a year in terms of cropland to hit that target and we're a long way short of that.

Mr. Brock: — Yes, thanks for the question. Two things I think I would point to. One, this being the first year of reporting, so I think the maintain status reflects where we think we need to be. And that connects, I think, to the second point, is that the Ministry of Agriculture has signed on to this protocol with Fertilizer Canada. I believe that was announced last year. And so the program has seen a significant uptake, I think, from a government perspective in terms of this has been now adopted as

a clear set of targets, not only through Prairie Resilience, but also for the Ministry of Agriculture and for the government as a whole. And so this is consistent with what the ministry through their consultations with farmers and Fertilizer Canada thinks is achievable by 2025.

Mr. Pedersen: — So also on the fertilizer nutrient stewardship issue, nitrous oxide as a greenhouse gas is something like 300 times more potent than CO₂ is, as I recall. Is the 4R Nutrient Stewardship plan the only means or only proposal that the ministry has in dealing with nitrous oxide emissions?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — So I just want to be clear that the measurements that we're tracking within the *Prairie Resilience* document, and the 25 that we're publicly reporting on, you know, I want to be very clear that these are not the only initiatives either being led by the government or in partnership with stakeholders like Fertilizer Canada. So there may be other programs within agriculture that deal specifically with the topic that you're talking about.

[19:30]

You know, we couldn't measure everything and so, you know, we needed to be realistic in terms of the number of measurements and ensuring that there's data to support those measurements. So just because that issue may not be reflected specifically in one of these 25 doesn't mean that it's not being thought about or addressed by, in this case, Agriculture.

So you know, all that is to say we can't speak into a lot of detail in terms of what Agriculture might be doing on that specific issue. And the lack of a measurement within Prairie Resilience doesn't mean that there isn't a conversation on that. It's just that we couldn't have 200 things to measure. We had to make choices to put together a presentable, readable, trackable document for the people of Saskatchewan.

And then I'll have the deputy minister speak.

Ms. Gallagher: — I'd just mention we also sit on the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment, and so right now we're looking at, through the CCME [Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment] we're establishing emission criteria for methane. And so that work will also establish a standard for Canada that we will as a province, you know, you'll hear many other air emissions. We work collaboratively through the CCME and set national standards. So methane is a piece that we are working on right now.

Mr. Pedersen: — Is there a standard there for nitrous oxide?

Ms. Gallagher: — Yes, that's what we're working on as well. Yes, it's under development.

Mr. Pedersen: — So other than, like is the Ministry of Environment doing anything specific on nitrous oxide or is that, you're leaving that completely up to Agriculture?

Ms. Gallagher: — Yes we will — once the national standard is set — we will adopt it. That's very typical of how we operate around air emissions such as this one.

Mr. Pedersen: — I seem to recall, but correct me if I'm wrong, that the plan is to increase the number of measures beyond these 25 and actually be reporting on more than 25 measures. Am I right there?

Mr. Brock: — So perhaps in addressing that question, perhaps I can also amplify and add to what the minister said in response to your previous question.

I think it's important to draw a distinction between Prairie Resilience, which is the climate change strategy, and the resilience measures, which you may recall was at least initially page 11 in the climate change strategy, which were the TBDs [to be determined] in the strategy. These have now been determined.

But the reason why I point to the clarification is because sometimes this has been framed as a report on the climate change strategy or as a measure of progress even. I don't know that that's entirely accurate, though I certainly understand on the interpretation.

Perhaps instead, if I may, I think it's helpful to think about this as 25 measures that were selected to help provide kind of a proxy indicator of how resilient is the province to climate change and the itinerant effects of climate change. And this is what the minister and others had said from the outset, is that if we're saying we need to be more resilient to the effects of climate change — climatic, economic, policy, and otherwise — then we need to have some sort of measure of that. But this document represents only a measure of that in a proxy or indicator sense. It's not a measure of how we're doing on the 40-plus commitments that were made in the strategy. That's something else. So I'm trying to draw a distinction between the two.

In coming up with the 25 measures for this report, I mentioned at the outset that we worked with well over a dozen ministries from across government to devise measures that we thought were scientifically sound in terms of their selection, where the measures and the targets were at least in some ways consistent with current government policy, for example in the 4R one that we discussed recently. And then I think most importantly that provided kind of a comprehensive picture in terms of the province's resilience.

From a practical perspective, we needed to make sure that we actually had data for these things and that we were able to arrive at targets so there was a meaningful reporting process, as I think we have here in the first report. Going back to, I think it was your question, Minister Duncan's earlier comments here and elsewhere. We've always said that we're open to consideration of other measures. But we do think it's important that we use these to start to provide a baseline so that we're not talking just about a couple of years of indicators, but we're looking out perhaps over a decade to say, where are we now? Where do we think we need to get to? So it also provides a bit of a policy feedback loop. So if we're falling short on any of these, perhaps that's an indicator we need a policy or a program adjustment.

So I apologize if that's a longer answer to the question you were posing, but I think it's helpful to distinguish between Prairie Resilience as a climate change strategy and this document as a measure of the resilience of the province to climate change.

Mr. Pedersen: — No, thank you for that. So just to make sure that I'm clear though, basically what you're saying is for these 25 measures on the resilience, there's not necessarily any plan right now to increase those. You may, but there's no specific plan at this point to increase the number beyond 25. Is that fair?

Mr. Brock: — Yes, I think that's a fair characterization.

Mr. Pedersen: — So now getting to the, you know, Prairie Resilience, are we going to see a report similar to this that actually deals with what sort of progress we're actually making on climate change strategies in terms of reduction of greenhouse gas emissions on those measures?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — So you know, we are looking at a number of ways of how we can communicate to the public in terms of Prairie Resilience. But I would say first and foremost, as a ministry we do produce annual reports, which the Prairie Resilience plan . . . a number of the components would either already be captured within our annual report or perhaps could be captured in the future.

So I wouldn't say that today there is a date that whereby there is a document coming, like an update on Prairie Resilience. But you know, certainly we're looking for ways to be able to communicate the ongoing work of the Prairie Resilience plan and just reporting normally as we do through our annual reports and the various ways through the legislature that we report to the public.

Mr. Pedersen: — So no specific plan at this point to produce a report like this, like an actual scorecard with verifiable data?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — No. I would say no, not at this point.

Mr. Pedersen: — Measure no. 5 was dealing with protected areas in Saskatchewan, going back to the resilience report. So the plan or the target is to increase the protected hectares from 9 per cent right now to 12 per cent. Is there a plan of how that's going to happen?

Ms. Gallagher: — So you may have heard of Canada's Target 1. So we're working with Canada on a number of different initiatives about increasing protected areas. There's several different initiatives where we're looking at new ways of approaching, defining the protected areas, and looking at protected areas. There's the funding that's coming out through the Canada Nature Fund. So Saskatchewan has been involved in Canada with the discussions of that. We're already up to, I think — I'll check — 9.5 per cent now, and as we continue to look for new opportunities to contribute to the Canada 1 target, we will work with Canada as well as within our own province to do that work.

Mr. Pedersen: — So would you be considering lands covered by a conservation easement to, say, Nature Conservancy or Ducks Unlimited or one of those type of groups? Would that be considered protected land for this measure?

Ms. Gallagher: — Yes, and I think originally they were looking at the IUCN [International Union for Conservation of Nature] rankings, and they're very limited in what types of lands you can classify under the protected areas program. And so again, in order

to be able to be more responsive to Canada's Target 1, we've been working through . . . It's not through the CCME. It's actually through a group of ministers that work on biodiversity, of which Minister Duncan sits and the Minister of Environment, where we're looking at again new classifications to allow us to have some of those other types of lands to be classified as part of the Target 1.

Mr. Pedersen: — So if I can paraphrase, that sounds to me like what you're trying to do is not increase the amount. You're not really trying to change the land or the current protections that are there. You're trying to change whether it's classified as protected. Is that what I'm understanding?

Ms. Gallagher: — Well I think it's broader than that. So in addition to increasing, like, changing land that's already classified, it may be working through this to put a different management regime on, let's say, some grazing lands. If we were able to go in and assess the grazing lands for their biodiversity content, we could also look at what kind of management regime is on those lands. And by ensuring that sufficient protection is there, where some grazing lands wouldn't necessarily be considered as protected areas, through this new approach they could be considered under the Target 1.

So it's making sure there's the right management, we've assessed the land properly. So it wouldn't be creating new protected areas. It would be taking lands that are in productive use, like grazing lands, and ensuring that they are managed in a way to maintain biodiversity over time, so then they would meet the criteria. And so it's not just rejuggling the deck. It is actually making sure there's the correct management regime over those lands so that they'll be protected into the future.

Mr. Pedersen: — When you're talking about management are you talking about, I guess, are you talking about a change to the operator's or the owner's legal obligations, either through regulation or contract? Or are you saying that a voluntary management change could qualify potentially as making it protected?

Ms. Gallagher: — Again, so it could be management regimes, which could include a conservation easement but doesn't require a conservation easement. It could be specific plans around managing species at risk or unique biodiversity that's happening on the landscape. With biodiversity, we'd look at it both from the ecosystem, the species, and the genetics. But it would be mostly, you know, looking at whether it's a unique habitat or whether there's a species at risk on the land, so having a specific management plan for that.

But the key to this categorization that the federal government is working across Canada on, is that it is audited and it meets a certain level of criteria. So it's not specific to one type of management regime, but it does require that it's audited and it meets a number of criteria.

Mr. Pedersen: — So there was recently, I think it actually might have just been today, there was a United Nations report suggesting that we're at risk globally of losing a million species on the planet, and habitat, you know, would clearly fall into that. So you know, there's obviously laudable reasons to have 12 per cent of our land protected. I guess I'm wondering, like what's the

actual plan? You know, like are there dollars allocated in the budget here to encourage . . . Or like what's the actual plan to get those additional lands in a protected status?

[19:45]

Mr. Murphy: — Hello. Kevin Murphy, assistant deputy minister with our resource management and compliance division. Thanks for the question. We have a representative areas network program within the Ministry of Environment. It's actually been in place for some period of time. It started with the original Rio accord and is now updated through the Pathway 1 work that the deputy was speaking to. That's part of our fish, wildlife, and lands program. We have about three staff that are permanently dedicated to work on increasing our habitat protection and protected areas program and the budget associated with them.

There are facets of the work under climate resiliency, also the work that we're doing on endangered species, including South of the Divide and the woodland caribou, the boreal caribou program. For instance, there's about \$4 million allocated to the caribou program, some of which is allocated to studying habitat and looking at various levels of protection for that habitat.

So there's variety of programs. It's not all just in one budget. But we do have an ongoing consultation program to look at permanent designation ranging from regulation, such as ecological reserves, right down to the types of measures that the deputy was mentioning around voluntary program work or other effective area-based conservation measures.

Mr. Pedersen: — Is the ministry doing any work to target land that might be sensitive habitat for pollinators, native pollinators?

Mr. Murphy: — I would say that from the perspective of native pollinators, the work that we're doing on grasslands and, to an extent, the boreal fringe is probably the closest. Most of our work is done in terms of ecological representation rather than specific indicator species other than for endangered species, pollinators being recognized as a part of the assemblage on both grassland and boreal.

Mr. Pedersen: — So moving on to point 7 in the resilience report there, the target was up to 50 per cent of electricity generation coming from renewable energy sources. And we are currently at 25 per centish, 25ish per cent coming from renewables according to the status. I'm curious about the use of that "up to" because I mean right now presumably we've already met that because it says "up to 50 per cent." Are we shooting for 50 per cent or are we shooting for anything less than 50 per cent?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — I think the easiest way to explain this is that the overall goal for SaskPower, who's the lead on this file, was to achieve a 40 per cent reduction in their greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. And at the time that that goal was set — I think it was in 2015 — in order to achieve a 40 per cent reduction in their overall GHG [greenhouse gas] emissions, it was going to take up to 50 per cent renewables as a part of their overall generation portfolio to achieve that.

A couple of factors with the up to 50 per cent. Based on the operations of the fleet over the next number of years, you know, it's . . . Sometimes the coal units are running at 100 per cent

capacity; sometimes they're not. And so it's not a hard and fast, like you know, for this year we're going to have production from these coal-fired power plants, these natural gas plants. It fluctuates. And the other I think main part of this is that in order to get to the 40 per cent reduction in GHG emissions — this was again in 2015 — it took into account the old regulations for coal-fired electricity generation that would have allowed the Shand power unit to be used to the end of its life cycle, which was 2041.

And so we frankly would've needed more renewables to get to that 40 per cent reduction because we were going to be still conceivably operating the Shand unit to its end of life, which was 2041. The regulations have now changed under this federal government, which now state that a coal-fired power plant is end of life or the end of 2029, whichever comes first.

Anyways so basically all that to say is that Shand no longer can be run out to 2042. It has to be retired at 2029 or retrofitted with CCS [carbon capture and storage]. So if we're not running Shand . . . We won't be running Shand without CCS beyond 2029. So if we're not running Shand beyond 2029, we actually can hit that 40 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and do so with actually . . . The irony in all of this, and I think the unintended consequence for the federal government, is we can actually hit a 40 per cent reduction with less renewables than we would've needed if we had to compensate for having the Shand power plant being operated.

So long story short, all that to say is that, you know, I suspect that by 2030, on the renewables side, we will likely be somewhere between 40 and 50. We may not be as high as 50 per cent. That's why there was always that, again a number of reasons why there was always that kind of proviso of up to 50 per cent. But I would say we will be 40 per cent, if not higher, with generation capacity coming from renewables.

Mr. Pedersen: — So also on power — point 9 of the report there — again it's one of these, you know, the target is a 14-megawatt peak demand reduction and the target seems to have been achieved immediately. So again, you know, I'm kind of questioning, what's the point of having a target when we're already there?

Mr. Brock: — I think — and perhaps it requires a supplementary question to follow exactly what you're getting at — but I think the differential target here is in the energy savings, yes?

Mr. Pedersen: — Okay. Yes, there is a difference there in the energy savings for sure. There seemed to be a two-pronged target and measure there.

Mr. Brock: — Right. So my understanding is, again similar with a couple of the measures for agriculture, that this is consistent with SaskPower's balanced scorecard, so targets that they have consistent with their other operational and policy objectives, and that this relates to both the peak power demand as well as their demand-side management.

Mr. Pedersen: — Are you able to comment on that peak demand reduction? Like what's the point of reference there? Reduction from what, I guess, is what I'm curious . . .

Mr. Brock: — Again perhaps a question better put to SaskPower in terms of the accuracy or the level of detail in the answer, but my understanding is to try and balance more evenly the power load across the system by time and ensure that you're starting to kind of even out the ebbs and flows of the demands on the system.

Mr. Pedersen: — I might have to ask the minister that tomorrow.

Mr. Brock: — So in a similar comparative perspective, I think this is why, for example, the province of Ontario has cheaper power rates at what they call off-peak times because, you know, they don't want everyone running their dishwashers, washing machines, and air conditioning all at the same time because of the stress it places on their overall system and the risk that places to the grid as a whole.

Mr. Pedersen: — On points 11 and 12 which was dealing with . . . Well one is energy consumption, one is greenhouse gas emissions, but both on government-owned buildings. A couple questions there. One is, why the decision to exclude Crown buildings? I'm assuming that means Crown corporation buildings. Is that's what's excluded there?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you for the question. It's I think really just a matter of the fact that with executive government buildings, these are managed by Central Services, so it's one central agency that's managing all these buildings. When we get into the Crowns, obviously now we're dealing with multiple different agencies. In some cases they may own their buildings. In other cases they may be leasing space, so I think for simplicity's sake but also just because of the fact that we're dealing with one central services agency within government, you know, that's where we decided to go with this.

Mr. Pedersen: — So you know, and I know your previous comment was that just because, you know, these are just particular measures that were chosen, it doesn't necessarily mean that there isn't stuff going on. Are there measures, is there a target for the Crowns to reduce their energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions coming from their buildings?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — I'm just trying to go off memory in terms of just SaskPower, which I'm responsible for. I don't know if there's specifically, you know . . . I'm trying to think of their balanced scorecard or in one of their annual reports, you know. I'm not sure. I know there's work being done to be more efficient with all of the Crowns and that would include in their operational side and in their buildings. We'd have to canvass all the Crowns to see what exactly they're doing.

Mr. Brock: — Yes, sure. If I may add, I think there's two issues here and the minister alluded to both of them. One is the issue of control, and the other one is just alignment on reporting. So from a control perspective, Central Services has within their remit the management of buildings being used by executive government, and therefore not by the Crowns. So you know, this is something over which we have some levers and which we can control.

And then also from a data perspective, as each of the Crowns may be tracking these things separately, then I think there's some work we can do in future to start to align what all the Crowns are doing with what Central Services is already doing for executive

government. But it's my understanding that indeed all of the Crowns, at least individually, are tracking the energy demands on their buildings, their greenhouse gas emissions related to their specific buildings, and kind of an overall building performance as it relates to energy efficiency and demand.

Mr. Pedersen: — So I'm sure there's different measures on this, on how you build stuff. But for residential houses, there's a standard called passive house where, you know, almost requires next to nothing for additional heating, and does a very good job of retaining the energy that it has. Has the province done anything like that in terms of its own buildings to ensure that new buildings are built to a very high standard so that, you know, that there isn't a big reliance on external sources?

Mr. Brock: — Yes. So my understanding is that the government prescribes to a number of minimum North American standards, two of them that come to mind. We have some that meet the LEED [leadership in energy and environmental design] standard, and then we have some of them that meet the BOMA BEST [Building Owners and Managers Association building environmental standards] standard. And so now if you enter any number of government buildings, including the one that houses the Ministry of Environment, you'll see in the entranceway some indicators related to the building's energy efficiency and also its BOMA BEST certification. And forgive me for a moment. I don't have the number offhand but I know that the number of BOMA BEST certified buildings within the government's remit of 500 buildings or so has increased I think every year over the past number of years.

Mr. Pedersen: — Point 13, moving on to methane from oil and gas there, the target was to achieve, if I recall correctly, it was a 40 per cent reduction from 2015?

[20:00]

Mr. Brock: — I believe it's 2025.

Mr. Pedersen: — By 2025? Am I right on that being the target?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Yes, so the target that has been set for methane emission reduction is a 40 to 45 per cent reduction by 2025. And I think that that aligns with actually the federal target that the federal government had signed on with the United States and Mexico a couple years ago.

Mr. Pedersen: — So my question on that one is, why 2015? I mean methane we know is quite a bit more potent as a heat-trapping gas. And you know, we've been talking about methane as a point of concern and the fugitive emissions from oil and gas as a point of concern for at least a couple decades. So I'm curious why 2015 was chosen as the baseline.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — I believe it's because it mirrors the federal agreement that the federal government signed, committing to a 40 to 45 per cent reduction with the United States and Mexico. And I believe they used 2015. We'll work to confirm that but that's my recollection is that we just . . . I think especially if we're going to achieve equivalency with the federal government, the best way to do that is to mirror what their targets are. So we'll try to confirm that before we leave this evening, but I believe the 2015 originally was initiated through the tripartite agreement that

the federal government signed.

Mr. Pedersen: — Is there any appetite to actually go beyond what the federal equivalency would be on that, given that methane is a much more potent greenhouse gas?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — So I think that, you know, I don't want to speak for my colleague, the Minister of Energy and Resources. I think that a 40 to 45 per cent reduction — and we believe that it is achievable by 2025, I think — is a pretty significant goal to set. And certainly, you know, again working with industry, we believe that's achievable.

I think the other thing that we need to be mindful of is that particularly with the associated gasses from the oil industry that, you know, we're certainly wanting to utilize as much as we can those associated gasses, which is going to require an infrastructure investment by the companies and that are involved in that industry. So you know, we're trying to balance off getting it right when it comes to ensuring that we can achieve those emissions reductions in a way that works for Saskatchewan industry, knowing that Saskatchewan's oil industry is not the same as Alberta's oil industry. And so we will have our own challenges with even achieving that 40 to 45 per cent reduction but also knowing that there is going to be an investment.

We've just announced the first round of successful applicants through SaskPower with our power generation partner program where there are successful companies, oil companies that have committed to using those associated gases to create electricity to sell to SaskPower. That doesn't come without a cost for them.

And so, you know, back to your question of exceeding the 40 to 45 per cent. You know, I think we're confident we can achieve the 40 to 45 per cent. We can achieve what has been established by the federal government in a way that works better for Saskatchewan and also knowing, you know, the last couple of years have not been particularly kind for this particular industry. These emission reduction plans will, you know, they're not going to be done for free, particularly if we can actually see some benefit again by perhaps capturing some of those gasses and creating a by-product like electricity. So I will maybe defer to my colleague on whether or not we can go higher than 40 to 45 per cent.

Mr. Pedersen: — My understanding is that one of the barriers to dealing with that associated gas, the methane from oil and gas, was just some of the regulatory framework in terms of, you know, possibly even crossing roads, working with other producers, and then, you know, what they actually do with it, whether it's generating electricity and being able to sell it to SaskPower. Is there like a concerted plan between SaskPower and the Ministry of Energy, and Environment, you know, all those ministries. Is there a concerted plan to actually make that easier for oil and gas producers to deal with their methane?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you for the questions, Mr. Pedersen. So I think that there has been a considerable amount of work done to move some projects forward. There actually had been a previous program in place, the small power producers program and the flare gas program. And you know, I think it's fair to say that the response by the industry was underwhelming. I think on the flare gas side, I think prior to the new Power

Generation Partner Program, we only had two companies that successfully brought projects forward to SaskPower.

So in doing a lot of consultation with industry to find out why there hadn't been more uptake on the program and changing the program to the new Power Generation Partner Program, you know, we took a lot of feedback. SaskPower took a lot of feedback from companies. So you know, there were a number of changes that were made to the program. There was a standardization of the interconnection costs, study cost. There was work that was done just to streamline the application process.

And so between the first intake . . . So this is a two-year program. We just did the intake late last year, or made the announcement. We did the intake last year and in February announced the first self-generation customers that were approved, both on the renewable side, as well as the carbon neutral projects — those are the ones that used the flare gas to create electricity — and we put a cap on both the programs. We had more applicants in the first intake of the new program than we had cap space available. And so through that program that was launched just last year, we have 11 . . . sorry, 15. I believe there's about 11 companies but several have multiple projects, but 15 flare gas projects have been approved under the program.

And so we met the cap in terms of the amount of electricity that's being generated through the program. And I would certainly expect, based on the uptake of the first . . . the intake, that when we launch the 2019 intake later this year through SaskPower, we likely will have the same sort of interest from the energy sector. So I think it's partly looking at the program and just making improvements and obviously companies have responded.

The other thing, too, I would just quickly note. I think the importance of what we're doing in partnering with Energy and Resources on a made-in-Saskatchewan plan for methane is just the difference in the industry between Saskatchewan and Alberta. There is a much more integrated gathering system in Alberta for gathering that gas.

That's one of the challenges that we've had to date, is we don't have that same level of in-the-ground capacity and connection to getting that gas from . . . You know, I'm sure you're familiar with the nature of the oil industry. Whether it's in the Southwest or in the Southeast or other parts of the province, it's spread out a lot more than and greater distances between. There hasn't been that capital invested, I think for good reason. The economics just weren't there. So I think we have some bigger hurdles than maybe our neighbours to the west. All that being said, you know, we're confident that we can achieve that 40 to 45 per cent reduction.

Mr. Pedersen: — Out of curiosity, how do we compare to what Alberta is doing with their fugitive emissions from methane?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — We can't speak to that. That's managed by Energy and Resources so that would be just speculating on my part.

Mr. Pedersen: — Surely you're not above speculating? Sorry, you don't have to answer that. So moving on to measure 18 there and flooding, the target is to have 100 per cent of communities at

risk of flooding having completed flood plain mapping. I guess I have to admit I was fairly shocked to learn that that wasn't in place. So my first question is how many communities do have risk of flood plain or, you know, have some of their community on a flood plain?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — So I don't have an answer for you on that, Mr. Pedersen, tonight. I'll just say that Water Security Agency is leading the work around flood plain mapping, and hopefully even accessing some federal dollars to do some more of that work.

I would say the one . . . Our partners in this are municipalities, and so they're really keepers of the information. This has a lot to do with development within municipalities, so municipalities may have flood plain mapping already done. What we do know, and this is just anecdotal, some of the flood plain mapping that is in existence is outdated, and so we need to not only provide support for communities that do need flood plain mapping, but also support for communities that may have done it in the past but it might be 20 years old and needs to be refreshed.

So I can't give you a number of how many municipalities have done this work, and frankly I'm not even sure tomorrow at WSA [Water Security Agency] estimates, I'm not sure WSA would be able to provide that answer either. Again because we're trying to work in collaboration with municipalities and trying to get information from what may be on the books, so to speak, from those municipalities, but may not be in the hands of the ministry or in the hands of the Water Security Agency.

Mr. Pedersen: — So is somebody actually going to require that municipalities file something or inform someone within the government about this?

[20:15]

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — So I think this highlights one of the great things about Prairie Resilience is it's just not the Ministry of Environment. It's working hand in hand with a number of other stakeholders, including other government ministries.

So you know, I can't get into the specifics around new development planning, for example, for municipalities that are applying for Ministry of Government Relations sign-off. I think there are some requirements that new developments can't be within certain flood plain areas of their municipality or their community and would not be approved. But again I'm going off my recollection. That would be better for the Minister of Government Relations.

Now that doesn't speak to historic development that already has taken place: 50 years ago or 100 years ago something was built and now, you know, it's in a flood plain. I don't know exactly what happens with that. But what WSA is doing is working with our partners to identify those communities that are at risk. And so that's where the priority is right now. So I would say the priority isn't ensuring right now that all communities have that flood plain mapping. First and foremost, let's start with who's at risk and get up-to-date information for those communities. I think ultimately we want to ensure that communities have flood plain mapping information at their disposal, but first and foremost let's concentrate on who's at risk.

Mr. Pedersen: — I guess the reason for my surprise, and maybe even consternation, is I would have thought this was not much harder than looking at a topographic map for each municipality. And those topographic maps exist. So am I missing something?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Well here's a great teaser for tomorrow's estimates for WSA: it is more complicated than just looking at topographical information. But I would encourage you to come to estimates tomorrow and ask that question because I'm sure there's a very good answer for it.

Mr. Pedersen: — Well you know, if you just answer it tonight, then they wouldn't have to ask it tomorrow.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — You know, I think we'd probably be veering off of Environment estimates, and the WSA officials I'm sure would love to get into flood plain mapping.

Mr. Pedersen: — So moving into Prairie Resilience, I guess, maybe refresh my memory. Has the province committed to the Paris targets?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — So under the UN [United Nations] framework, these are national targets. So I don't believe that any province has signed on to the Paris targets themselves because the federal government signs on behalf of the nation.

Mr. Pedersen: — Has Saskatchewan committed to honouring its part of the national commitment, I guess, doing its share?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — So I think that's one of the issues with the entire debate that's going on in this country with respect to particularly the Paris targets is, we have never been . . . So the federal government obviously signed Paris and that set the national target, but provinces were never asked by the federal government to achieve a certain target. The federal government has focused on achieving a certain price on emissions but not a target.

So they've never come to us and have said, we want Saskatchewan to reduce, or we want Alberta, or we want Ontario, to hit X emissions as a part of the overall Canadian target. Frankly I'd be very interested in having that conversation, but that's never really been the conversation. It's never been about what's Saskatchewan's contribution on the emissions reductions. It's always been what's Saskatchewan's contribution on the price.

Mr. Pedersen: — Fair enough. So does that mean that in Prairie Resilience it simply states the Paris obligations that Canada signed on to is 30 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030. Is that something that Saskatchewan has set as a target for itself under this government, I guess?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you for the question, Mr. Pedersen. I think this really goes back to why the province of Saskatchewan signed on to the Vancouver Declaration because the Vancouver Declaration spoke more broadly at achieving Canada's national goals in terms of reductions, but also taking into account the variances and the differences between the different jurisdictions, the different provinces and territories, the different starting points that we all come from, knowing the fact that many generations ago Saskatchewan and Alberta, namely, went one direction when

it came to electricity generation whereas our neighbour in Manitoba went a different direction. And that has significant differences when it comes to what our starting point is for everybody.

So I would say we have always been interested in having a conversation with the federal government on what our contributions can be and the best way to achieve those contributions, knowing that a straight reduction number doesn't take into account, for example, going back to our previous discussion about sequestration and what Saskatchewan contributes in terms of sequestration through our agricultural sector in this province, that obviously might not be that noteworthy for another jurisdiction.

So again, we were supportive. Former Premier Wall signed the Vancouver Declaration to show our commitment to having this national discussion. But I think that that was a better approach rather than just asking for 30 per cent from everybody because again, going back to what we discussed earlier, SaskPower is actually going to overachieve. If it's all about 30 per cent, well SaskPower is going to do 40 per cent. And I certainly don't think that you would suggest that SaskPower should stop at 30 per cent. I don't want to put words in your mouth, but I have a feeling that you're fairly supportive of at least a 40 per cent reduction, maybe higher. That's fair.

But you know, we've been less focused on that 30 per cent because again that's the national government that signed that. We want to be a part of our contribution to that, but on both sides, on what we can do to achieve our emissions reductions but also on taking into account the benefits that Saskatchewan has for things like sequestration.

Mr. Pedersen: — So to paraphrase, that's a long way of saying no, Saskatchewan is not committed to the Paris Agreement target?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — No. We are supportive of a national plan and dialogue on how to achieve what the federal government has signed on to, but the federal government has never asked 30 per cent from everybody. They've always asked for a price, not an emission reduction.

Mr. Pedersen: — So under Prairie Resilience there was an commitment to develop and implement an offset system that creates additional value for actions that result in carbon sequestration or reduced emissions. Where is the ministry at on that?

Mr. Brock: — Thank you. With respect to all of the compliance options for the output-based performance standards for heavy industry, those need to be in place no later than 2021 because even though those regulated facilities have started accruing obligations starting this year, the true-up period, to use a regulatory phrase, is not until 2021. Specifically with respect to offsets, the province, through my office, will be coming forward in the coming weeks with a discussion paper on offsets.

You'll probably recognize that this is a complex area for emissions reductions and for recognizing actions in particularly non-regulated sectors. It's one that's made complex not only by the variety of interested parties in the province, but also by the

fact that nationally all provinces and territories, including Saskatchewan, have been working together to think about the federal government's interest in developing an offset system for their base pricing system that they're imposing on three other provinces, and that we have various provinces at different stages of offset development over the past decade. So Saskatchewan's taking into account both the operating environment within the province but also historic developments and planned developments across the country.

Mr. Pedersen: — So the plan is to have this in place by 2021?

Mr. Brock: — Right. The commitment is to have functional compliance obligations for the offset system, for the Technology Fund, and for the best performance credits by 2021 so that between now and 2021, as those regulated facilities are accruing those compliance obligations, they can make an individual business decision from kind of a results-based perspective to say whether the best approach for their particular facility is to either reduce emissions at the facility directly and therefore accrue no obligation; pay into a technology fund; purchase offsets on the available market; or earn, purchase, trade a best performance credit. And the reason why I'm using all those terms is because we're not entirely sure how any of these things are going to function yet, but those are certainly viable options.

Mr. Pedersen: — So you're talking about this specifically as it relates to heavy emitters but in Prairie Resilience it talks about coming from soils and forests. So would that system, is it going to apply to agriculture as well?

Mr. Brock: — Possibly. That's why we're starting with a discussion paper to ask questions not only about how this should function but where those interests lie. Certainly in the conversations I've had over the past couple of years, there have been expressions of interest from the agricultural sector in having protocols that could see recognition of efforts in the agricultural sector as well as in the forestry sector in a variety of number of areas in the province. We need to make sure that we're balancing the regulatory system as a whole and recognizing the supply and demand relationship, and also that we're getting verified, tangible, lasting emissions reductions in any of those non-regulated areas. But certainly agriculture is one of the areas under consideration.

[20:30]

Mr. Pedersen: — Also Prairie Resilience talks about continuing to improve the condition and resilience of provincially owned dams and water infrastructure. I guess it's always seemed to me as an idea that if one of the impacts of climate change is more droughts and also more rainfall and flooding, that a solution that might work for both of those is to have quite a series of dugouts, water retention structures, dams, you know, like a whole network of small ones across the province.

Is there any sort of plan or discussion of something like that to help the province adapt to climate change?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you for your question. Again I don't want to spoil the estimates for tomorrow afternoon with Water Security Agency so I won't get into the, I think, \$75 million that we've set aside this year for dam rehabilitation.

But I will say we can get into more discussion tomorrow, more detail, but certainly Water Security Agency, on the main infrastructure as well as, I think, some smaller but important pieces of infrastructure, Water Security Agency has a 25-year plan to ensure that their infrastructure that they're responsible for is maintained and operated in a safe and reliable way.

I can't speak to . . . Because I know you mentioned like dugouts and maybe smaller bodies, off the top of my head, I don't know if there are still incentive programs through Agriculture. I think at one time there were. I don't know if those are still available. But again because it might not be itemized in this list of 25 doesn't mean it's not happening. It's just, yes, we needed to identify measures that made the most sense and, you know, in a reasonable number that made sense for us to report on.

Mr. Pedersen: — In Prairie Resilience, and this is under the transportation column, there was a commitment there to evaluate government fleet vehicles for lower carbon technology opportunities. What's the government doing on electric vehicles?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — So I'll speak very briefly on just the work that I know that SaskPower is doing on this. They're, I think, always looking at new and emerging technologies and so I know that they've had a number of discussions with several companies that are involved in electric vehicles, in working with those companies to ensure that there is infrastructure necessary and required for electric vehicles. I believe SaskPower has even added a couple of electric vehicles into their fleet, and they've created electric vehicle charging guidelines that are geared towards encouraging the private sector to set up charging stations in the province.

I do know that just within the government, the executive government, and I'm just thinking of central vehicle agency, there are a number of hybrid vehicles that are available. I don't know how widespread that is. Again that's not Environment. That would be, I believe, Central Services that manages the fleet, but I know that in the last number of years they have been incorporating more hybrids into the fleet.

Mr. Pedersen: — I know this government is perhaps reluctant to regulate and would prefer to educate when it comes to action on climate change. I guess I'm wondering . . . Doesn't seem that the Ministry of Education is doing a whole lot on the public education front when it comes to educating people on transportation options, either slowing down or choice of vehicles or fuel efficiency measures, those sorts of things. Is there any plan to change that?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Well I would just say a couple of points. I believe it was the Calvert government that allowed the speed limit to go up to 110 kilometres on our major highways so, you know, I'll just maybe leave that one.

No, you know, I would take a little bit of exception with the premise that, you know, I think that your comment about, we're more apt to educate than regulate. You know, I think the heavy emitters in the province feel like they're being regulated by the ministry. The oil and gas companies and the new methane action plan, that's done through regulations. And in fact, even the management of SaskPower and their fleet and moving to a 40 per cent reduction, that's being done through regulations. So there's

a fair bit of regulations that are involved in our plan.

We're about a year away from having our first, our oldest, in the school system so I can't speak to what's taking place in the education system in terms of education of different options. So I'll maybe leave that one for the Deputy Premier.

Mr. Pedersen: — I guess I'm curious what . . . I mean perhaps I'm mistaken but it seems to me that the ministry isn't really doing anything to educate individual household residents or regulate them when it comes to emissions on transportation, and not doing much to educate them either. So is there a plan to change that when it comes to individual households?

Mr. Brock: — Okay. Thank you for the question. I guess I would point to the seven commitments that are in Prairie Resilience, all of which relate to transportation. And I won't read through all seven of them, but I will say that my understanding from the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure is that they see greater gains that can be made in thinking about emissions reductions and efficiency overall, both from a GHG perspective but also from a transportation and goods-management perspective, from looking at improvements to the infrastructure as a whole. And I understand, that was part of the design of the Regina bypass, for example, is that those GHG reductions were taken into consideration as one of the design factors. But in addition to that, looking at what gains can be made on a larger freight and fleet perspective, so those larger trucks that are on the road as opposed to personal vehicles.

And my understanding is that the Ministry of Highways and Infrastructure is looking at all seven of these commitments as an interrelated package, as opposed to just trying to check off making an action on any single one. Again expecting that there can be greater gains in looking at it from a systems perspective as opposed to any specific regulations on households, which I've not heard discussed as an option.

Mr. Pedersen: — I guess taken as an overall in terms of Prairie Resilience and greenhouse gas strategy, it seems like the overwhelming message on agriculture is that agriculture is doing enough and doesn't need to do anymore and doesn't need to be regulated. Is that a fair comment?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — So I do think that Prairie Resilience in part does recognize the good work that the agricultural sector has done in reducing their emissions. I think it was in the last 20 years where, based on the fact that, you know, zero-till was in its infancy and, you know, there was certainly a lot more summerfallow out there, that agriculture has gone from a net emitter to more in a position where sequestering, I think, in the neighbourhood of 12 million tonnes just on cropland. So I think it does take into account and recognizes the work that's already been done by agriculture.

And I think we've already talked tonight about some of the gains that can be made and that we are going to be tracking — so the 4R stewardship plans — the amount of acreage that will be under 4R stewardship plans over the next number of years. I think any producer would be interested in reducing their emissions because that's going to reduce a cost. So if they're able to, for example, through a 4R stewardship plan, do a better job of decreasing the overlap when they're laying down fertilizer, they're going to save

money doing that. They're going to save fuel. And it's going to be better for the environment.

So the other part to this is that because of the creation or the establishment in the next number of years of an offset market, there will be significant . . . I think on a broader scale, you know, we'll see in terms of the details of what it looks like to that individual producer, but there will be the opportunity through the offset credit system for an economic gain for producers that are able to reduce their emissions and demonstrate those emissions reductions.

So you know, I think that certainly would be my view is that would be a better approach than, you know, strictly on a regulatory side, which I'm not sure exactly what that would look like at this point for agriculture.

Mr. Pedersen: — So I'm curious as to how a credit system would work for agriculture. I mean, clearly for the parts of agriculture that are sequestering carbon and can get a credit that they could sell to a heavy emitter, that part clearly works. But what about the parts of agriculture that are actually emitting? You think of for instance, maybe a . . . And I don't know the science on this. This may not be a good example, but maybe an intensive livestock operation with the amount of methane produced. You know, they're not captured under the heavy emitters, but it would seem kind of odd if they got on one hand credits for sequestration on another part of their operation, but weren't being regulated or priced on the emissions side. So what's the plan, you know, with agricultural emitters?

[20:45]

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you for the question, Mr. Pedersen. You know, I think two parts to this. I think that, one, again Prairie Resilience, the plan for Prairie Resilience recognizes, I think, not only what has already been done by the agricultural sector, but, I think, also the ongoing benefit provided by the agricultural sector going forward. And I think that the fact that the federal government, while they will say that agriculture is exempt from the carbon tax . . . I certainly would quibble with that because there's certainly parts of the ag sector that are not exempt. But even the federal government's recognition of giving an exemption to, for example, farm fuel, I think, you know, I would take that. And I don't know the intent of why the federal government specifically did that, but I would certainly make the argument that it likely was the right thing to do because of the benefits already and the reductions already established by the agricultural sector in Saskatchewan and across the country, but also because of the value of agriculture. Obviously we are not just providing food for ourselves; we're providing food for people around the world and doing so in a more resilient way than many nations around the world.

With respect to the livestock sector, I have the numbers, and in all the papers that I have here, I can't find them. But I will say this, that certainly over the last number of decades, the livestock sector in this province have done a better job of producing more beef using less land, using less slaughter cattle. And you know, I'm not sure, with the example of intensive livestock operation, I'm just not sure what the trade-off would be. Because if, for example, if you start looking at, on a regulatory side, let's say capping it at a certain number of animals, I don't think that's

going to reduce the number of animals that we have in ILOs [intensive livestock operation]. It might increase the number of intensive livestock operations that we do have, which now we're transporting more because we're going to more locations.

So I think, and again I don't know if that's exactly the road that you're going down, but, that to me could be one unintended consequence of, on a strictly regulatory side, that at the end of the day, are we actually increasing emissions due to the regulations?

Mr. Pedersen: — Yes, I recognize that there's been lots of good work done in livestock. And while I have ideas there, this really isn't the forum to chat about those.

Moving on, I guess I would like to chat about the WHPA [*The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act*] lands there. Last year's estimates, I think the response was there hadn't really been any charges brought except the one noted. I'm wondering, has that changed in the past year? Have there been any charges under that legislation in the past year?

Mr. Murphy: — Kevin Murphy. There's only been one charge brought against an individual who developed a gravel pit. And that's been the only charge under WHPA, the Crown conservation easements.

Mr. Pedersen: — That was Mr. Boyd? That was Mr. Boyd?

A Member: — No.

Mr. Pedersen: — Okay. And last year the indication was that there had been several instances perhaps referred to the ministry, but that the ministry was able to work with the individuals, possibly through education or some sort of agreement. Have there been any new files opened, I guess, in the past year under that legislation with complaints referred to the ministry or individuals that the ministry identified as being a possible problem?

Mr. Murphy: — There have been no new instances that we're aware of, and the mechanism we typically use is to work through with Agriculture, with the lessee, as you were indicating around education and then remediation or mitigation.

Mr. Pedersen: — There is a notation that, I think this is from a few years back, but that there was 525,000, I think it was acres of land that was identified as having a lower ecological value that could be sold off. What's the status on that, on those lands? How much of that is still government owned and how much is left?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — So there's been a total of 152,000 acres that have been withdrawn since the inception of the strategy, and we have added 31,000 acres to include WHPA designation since the strategy began.

Mr. Pedersen: — When you say withdrawn, you mean they no longer have that designation?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Right. So we go through a process to determine the ecological value, whether it's low, moderate, or high. And lands that are high are not eligible. Lands that are moderate, I believe, are eligible with a conservation easement.

And lands that are low are available for sale without an easement.

Mr. Pedersen: — Of the 152,000, were those all sold?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Yes, I believe that's the number that has been sold. Yes.

Mr. Pedersen: — Is the plan to sell the other, I guess it's roughly 375,000 acres of that 525?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — So we don't have a plan to sell. The lessee — and these are typically through agriculture leases — they have the ability to essentially write a first refusal that they do, if they want to purchase the land. Then we go through a process to make a determination of whether or not (a) it is available for sale, and then whether or not it would be for sale with an easement or not. But if they don't want to end their lease and don't want to purchase the land, then nothing changes. So it's a program through Agriculture. We provide the support because of the WHPA legislation.

Mr. Pedersen: — Is there any plan . . . You mentioned that there was 31,000 acres, I think you said the number if I remember correctly, that have been added. And I might be wrong but I gather that one of the ways that land is rated higher is if it's, you know, in a larger contiguous block. Is there an ongoing plan to add more land to that designation, I guess, or that program?

Mr. Murphy: — Kevin Murphy. Thanks for the question. We continue to work with agencies such as Parks, Culture and Sport and Agriculture to evaluate lands' best utilization in the Crown portfolio, and whether it would be appropriate to bring it into the WHPA designation. There's no specific plan or targeted areas, but we work on a case-by-case basis with those organizations, looking at how the land's being utilized right now and what its best long-term purpose would be. Some of that is with regards to our representative areas program as well.

Mr. Pedersen: — Does the ministry have any ability to designate or protect privately owned land that's nearby WHPA land to form a bigger protected block?

Mr. Murphy: — So we work with partner organizations such as the Nature Conservancy, Wildlife Federation, Ducks Unlimited, etc. Those would all be voluntary circumstances where private landowners are willing to contribute a conservation easement or donate their lands. The province does not have an ability to designate land with a Crown conservation easement that's private, only lands that were formerly Crown being sold off.

Mr. Pedersen: — There was a line item for site remediation on contaminated sites. I forget exactly the wording there. I'm wondering does that apply to inactive or orphaned wells, oil and gas wells, or would those be covered under a different ministry?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Orphaned wells are Energy and Resources, so this is separate.

Mr. Pedersen: — Okay, so what type of sites would be covered under this line item?

Mr. Kotyk: — Wes Kotyk, assistant deputy minister, environmental protection division. I believe the line item you're

referring to is in regards to ministry-owned environmental liabilities. So it would be for those sites where the ministry has responsibility for the lands and we have done some work. So we have a number of wildfire management sites that had some fuel contamination, so the dollars would have been spent for that. As well as there's some abandoned northern mines that we are doing some ongoing work on some of those.

Mr. Pedersen: — So talking about the northern mines, that reminds me about that we've got this lawsuit against the federal government. Is it the Ministry of Environment that's kind of heading that up?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Energy and Resources. I think it's the Gunnar mine that you're referring to.

Mr. Pedersen: — Are there any new lawsuits involving the ministry in the past year?

[21:00]

Ms. Gallagher: — We don't have any new lawsuits. We are still working on the finalization of the North Battleford lawsuit. We've cleaned up many parts of it but there's still one piece for adults left that we hope to clean up this year.

Mr. Pedersen: — Also on the legal front there, we've got conservation officers that I guess they're now getting armed and they're working as police officers in many cases. But at one point, that wasn't the case. They had more of a kind of a conservation role. So has the hiring mandate, like have the qualifications changed for what it takes to be a conservation officer?

Ms. Gallagher: — So the conservation officers have always been peace officers and had policing powers. So when highway officers for example were brought on, there were many changes made because they didn't carry side arms for example. Our officers have carried side arms. But as part of the PRT [protection and response team], or our response to that work, we have increased the training significantly. So our staff would be trained on different kinds of pursuit that they may have had some preliminary training in, but they get considerably more. For example, if they're attending the scene of a domestic dispute, again we've increased the training.

So our officers across the board have been receiving more training, as well as we have increased the quality of their protection vests. They now have carbine weapons that we're at the point of starting to deploy to the officers, and all of those require additional training as well. They would also have the in-vehicle readers that were supplied through SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance], so that requires training to utilize that.

So yes, it's a much more robust amount of training, but of course not as significant because they were already carrying a side arm and had much of the training, just the different kinds of examples of experiences that they may be called out on. We wanted to ensure that they have very similar training to the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police]. And all of the members of the PRT can exchange information and have the same kind of response protocols so that everybody operates in a safe way.

Mr. Pedersen: — Yes, it seems like quite a shift in the role to more of like what you would think of as a municipal police officer than kind of what we used to think of as a conservation officer involved in, you know, actually having a fair bit of knowledge about conservation programs.

Ms. Gallagher: — So we still recruit our officers through the training that would be offered in Alberta through their conservation officer training course. We also have specialized training, when our officers come on, through WCLEA [Western Conservation Law Enforcement Academy] that they get additional training.

So the conservation officer component of their work is still the majority of their work. And that's changed over years as well, from being maybe a fishing and hunting type of response to, you know, they respond to issues around environmental protection. They work with Water Security. So they've been growing in their responsibilities and exposure to their work. We don't really . . . I wouldn't say their work changes completely. That's not all they do is policing, but they are out in the field so they may be called in to support an RCMP officer.

We are working now to monitor and see what impacts that has over the time of an officer. We've gone through one year now and so we're starting to get together our data and have some understanding of what impact that has to the time that they spend with PRT versus the time that they're spending on their maybe more traditional work.

But you have to remember they were always working collaboratively with the RCMP as well. And we get some cross purposes as well. For example we're training the RCMP. I think at Public Accounts we talked about that. They're being trained to identify vehicles that might be at risk for AIS [aquatic invasive species]. So we've always worked as a team. I think it's just stronger and more responsive to a greater variety of incidents that may occur on the landscape.

Mr. Pedersen: — So who would be the point of contact, you know, for a member of the public who's looking for some guidance in terms of what they can and can't do? Would it be conservation officers or would they be calling the ministry? I mean now that a bunch of the offices are . . . I guess they are not closed; they're closed to the public. But what's the public's point of contact or where do they turn for that type of expertise now?

Ms. Gallagher: — So a starting point could be that they could call their 1-800 number that the ministry offers, and with that call we have the ability to either answer basic questions or direct them to the appropriate part of the ministry where they can get the right information that they would need. So for example, if you were wondering about how you manage hazardous materials, you would be directed to Environmental Protection. If you're wondering where you can hunt white-tailed deer in a season, you may be sent to a conservation officer in the area. We also have on our website a lot of information if you're wanting to do shoreline alteration, what's the rules around that. So there's many different points of contact that you can make with our ministry. Our conservation officers are certainly part of our forward face, and you know, as our organization, we're very proud of the work that they do and the front-line work that they do.

Mr. Pedersen: — So speaking of shoreline alteration, who would be dealing with a shoreline alteration permit? Would that be conservation officers?

Ms. Gallagher: — Not necessarily. If you were to be engaging in some shoreline activity, you probably would be working through the Water Security Agency, and that organization would work with you on the permitting. Our officers are involved to some extent. If there is a need to do a field checkup, they may help. We work collaboratively with the Water Security Agency, as well as the Water Security Agency uses our conservation officers. We provide the enforcement action for them, so it's a very close relationship. But for shoreline alteration, that permit generally comes through the Water Security Agency.

Mr. Pedersen: — The offices that were closed to the public, do you have any sort of tracking in terms of how many inquiries those offices fielded from the public while they were open?

Ms. Gallagher: — So the offices that we closed, we do track the client services that they are responsible for. We had many different, you know, calculations that we look at. But in particular where we have in-office inquiries where folks come in, in some of the offices they might have been as low as, you know, 15 individuals would come in on an annual basis. So while there was some work for them, we have really noticed that the usage from our visitors has changed to more online, or they may be getting information through the officers themselves. And so when we looked at which offices to close down, those were ones that either were receiving very little person visits to the office, or that there was another location very close by that they could utilize the service from.

Mr. Pedersen: — I noticed that you were referring to a sheet. Is that something that can be tabled?

Ms. Gallagher: — I believe it could be. So it's just the data that we have from the offices that, some of the offices that were closed to point out the number of visitations that were in the annual year. I think we'll check back into that and we'll table it.

Mr. Pedersen: — Thank you. The ministry, I guess, charges fees. And I don't know if these are all on leases, but some of them would be on leases. And in the budget a lot of people have been finding that those lease rates are going up quite a bit. What consultation was done with those leaseholders before doing that?

Mr. Murphy: — So as a part of the changes to the regulations for the lands Act, starting last year we undertook a broad survey of lessees and stakeholders throughout Saskatchewan and asked a question as to whether or not it was felt that fair market value should be charged to those leases.

We undertook some work to determine what fair market value was being paid through particularly the oil and gas industry, in partnership with colleagues in Agriculture, and leveraged a study that had been done by the federal government on some of that. And then we did take some time to work with specific industry groups, but I would not say extensively, on lease rate changes. There was not a specific consultation on the amount that the lease rates would be changing, as they were part of a regulation change related to the budget.

Mr. Pedersen: — Are those lease rates set by regulation or does the ministry have a broad discretion just as part of its leasing powers?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — They're set by regulation.

Mr. Pedersen: — One of the more recent changes, and I'm not sure if this is a lease rate or if it's another fee, but the companies that operate peat mines, they found out that their fees were changing quite a bit as well. Are those fees set by regulation?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Yes, they're set by regulation as well.

Mr. Pedersen: — Which regulation is that?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — It's *The Crown Resource Land Regulations*.

Mr. Pedersen: — And so were there consultations with those companies before the changes were done?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — I think it's fair to say that the ministry has been engaged on discussions with the peat industry in the province. It's a growing industry in a relatively short amount of time, but not specific to the actual dollar amount. I think it would be fair to say that the industry would not have been surprised with an increase, but certainly they have expressed concern about the size of the increase. So we've had a number of discussions with the industry since the changes were announced and are taking their feedback into consideration going forward.

Mr. Pedersen: — What stage are you at in terms of reconsidering some of those fee increases?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — I think it would be fair to say that we're engaged with the industry on hearing their concerns and, I think, trying to get a very solid understanding on the industry. And you know, it's a very intensive industry in terms of what it does to the landscape. But it's, you know, a fairly new industry as well to the province, and so I can't make a commitment, and I won't make a commitment at this point, other than to say that we are engaged with them and looking at their feedback, and we'll be reviewing it.

Mr. Pedersen: — Did the ministry have an estimate as to how much additional revenue was going to be collected as a result of those fee increases?

[21:15]

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — So we would've had estimates going into the budget process on the proposed changes, but I would say that those estimates would've been based on basically a status quo. So there's various categories, particularly with peat. There's land that's classified as developed, undeveloped. There's also a royalty that is currently in existence which we were proposing to remove the royalty.

So I think, you know, one of the thoughts around looking at this change was, you know, whether or not we could make a change that would frankly incentivize more of a rolling reclamation. Because the rates were really so low that it really . . . There wasn't really an incentive to move land from basically not being

reclaimed in a timely manner. The difference between developed and undeveloped, what was classified developed and undeveloped, really the rates were pretty low. And so you know, I think we can come to a better spot where we will, in terms of looking at some options where, you know, I think we can . . . You know, it's my hope that we can address their concerns while also ensuring that land is being reclaimed at a way that is right for the landscape and for the environment.

Mr. Pedersen: — So how much additional revenue was budgeted to be collected from the fee increases, assuming the status quo as you said?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Just for clarification, Mr. Pederson, so are you looking specifically at peat or all the different categories? And keeping in mind . . . And are you looking for just this year's increase? Because some we're proposing to phase in. For example peat was, I believe, a four-year phase-in, where some of the dispositions were only a two-year phase-in, and others, I think oil and gas in particular was going to be done in year one. So the increases were in different timelines for the various different categories that we are including.

Mr. Pedersen: — You know, maybe what I'll do, rather than take up time tonight, is maybe I'll just do a written question and ask for the detail on that.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Sure.

Mr. Pedersen: — Is it the Ministry of the Environment or is it Energy that deals with regulating sour gas from oil and gas activities?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — It's Energy and Resources.

Mr. Pedersen: — So Environment has nothing to do with H₂S [hydrogen sulphide] emissions and leaks?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Not from oil and gas, but from other industries.

Mr. Pedersen: — So looking at the budget, there was a loss of 8.8 FTEs [full-time equivalent]. Can you explain what that's about?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Right. So that's a net number. We've added three to the climate change branch, so that number would be net of adding the three, but also the reduction because of the front counter staff. And why that doesn't equate to the number of counters essentially is because most of those were not full-time positions. So most of them were two- or three-day that they were open to the public. So when you add up all the full-time equivalents and the net, the increase in climate, that's where we get that number from.

Mr. Pedersen: — There was a \$307,000 increase on executive management, subvote (EN01). Can you provide some information about that?

Ms. Gallagher: — So for that . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . I heard him say that's my budget. So under executive management, we made some organizational changes. So we did not have an ADM [assistant deputy minister] of corporate

services, and so we created that position as we were expanding our policy and legislation work. So salary dollars were moved in for the ADM.

We also had some salary pressures due to increments that increased that amount. When the minister acquired SaskPower, there was an additional ministerial assistant in the minister's office, as well as we had an executive assistant position in the ministry in another location. And we created that position in the deputy's office so we would have a better line of sight with the minister's office. I think that accounts for that full amount.

Mr. Pedersen: — No nanny for the new baby?

Ms. Gallagher: — We have offered to hold the baby any time he wants though.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — I might take you up on that.

Mr. Pedersen: — There was an increase of 445,000 on goods and services also under the subvote (EN01). What's that about?

Ms. Gelowitz: — It's Veronica Gelowitz. So that's an increase for our facilities planning project. So we have a number of buildings across the province that we need to bring up to OHS [occupational health and safety] standards. And so this is for some work being done at our Meadow Lake compound and our Big River.

Mr. Pedersen: — Subvote (EN06), there's a 2.022 million increase in funding on climate change. Can you provide more information on that one?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — So that's the three additional people that were hired, plus also a reflection of the net metering, the \$2 million set aside for net metering that will now be coming from the Ministry of Environment rather than SaskPower. So it's the same dollar amount that we were projecting through SaskPower. It's just moving the payment of the program to the ministry.

Mr. Pedersen: — \$39,000 increase for cumulative impacts and science. What's that one about? Also subvote (EN06)?

Ms. Gallagher: — So those were changes to deal with salary pressures as we manage the FTEs in that branch.

Mr. Pedersen: — Okay. Fairly large increase on fish, wildlife, and lands program, subvote (EN07). \$887,000 increase there. What's that one about?

Ms. Gallagher: — So the Government of Saskatchewan, we've been working with the federal government around caribou, woodland caribou research. And so we submitted funding to the federal government to assist Saskatchewan in doing caribou research in both our SK1 and SK2 regional areas, and we have acquired funding through the federal government. And some of that is our matching dollars. We have some in-kind and some dollars through the province to do that research with.

Mr. Pedersen: — So how much of that would be federal dollars?

Ms. Gelowitz: — So for the caribou initiative, it's 1 million from the federal government each year and 130,000 from South of the

Divide. There were some operational efficiencies achieved within the branch that was able to offset some of that.

Mr. Pedersen: — Fish and Wildlife Development Fund, there's a \$343,000 increase there. What's that about?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — It's just a reflection of the 7 per cent of hunting and fishing licences that go to the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund.

Mr. Pedersen: — On subvote (EN08) there was a \$624,000 decrease in salaries. Can you explain that?

Ms. Gallagher: — So that was the regionalization and the counter service and some of those funds were offset. I believe we allocated some vacancy savings to cover some other areas in that area as well, for extra training and for purchasing extra equipment.

Mr. Pedersen: — And subvote (EN08), 1.08 million increase in funding, is part of that the carbines or was that in last year's?

Ms. Gallagher: — It's all protective equipment and training for those dollars.

Mr. Pedersen: — The whole million dollars?

Ms. Gallagher: — Yes. The carbines and we've also, I mentioned earlier, we've purchased new heavy protective equipment for the officers as well. With the carbine weapons comes an increased risk and so we had to increase the plating in their vests.

Mr. Pedersen: — Subvote (EN11), there was a \$249,000 increase under the environmental protection program. What's that one about?

Ms. Gallagher: — There were . . . Overall for that code, we had some savings that helped to offset some of the increased pressures that they have, which included . . . there was funding of 250,000 contributed to landfill closure funding as part of the work that we're doing through the solid waste management strategy to support municipalities in doing the planning work to enable them to access federal funding. We had 200,000 for a contract to prepare the correct plans around remediation for some of the contaminated sites that we talked about, as well as we had a decrease . . . We purchased the air quality monitoring laboratory under that code last year and so that fell off. So just resetting it, the total amount was what you've listed there.

Mr. Pedersen: — I'm just going to shift gears here a little bit. Endangered species, when was the last time the list of species at risk was updated for the province?

[21:30]

Ms. Gallagher: — So the last time the provincial list was updated was 2004, but now we work with the federal government directly on listing species under the federal legislation, the SARA [*Species at Risk Act*] legislation. So we have ongoing . . . So whenever you see a new species listed for Canada, it would be regionally designated if it occurs in Saskatchewan, and so we would be a part of the mechanism that creates that list and

acknowledges what their status is within the province.

Mr. Pedersen: — So basically, Saskatchewan adopts that federal recognition, I guess you would call it?

Ms. Gallagher: — I think we work as a team around determining what the status is, where we have, you know, our scientists and their scientists, they collaborate together in coming to agreement on what the status is, whether we're using federal data or provincial data. I wouldn't say we passively accept SARA, but we're a part of the work that goes in from the scientific basis for adopting that.

Mr. Pedersen: — So I believe there was some — I'm not sure if I'm saying this right — Aichi targets to do with species at risk, endangered species, and there were some targets set there. I'm wondering what's going to be done to achieve those targets by 2020.

Ms. Gallagher: — So it is Aichi that is the pronunciation, and that isn't about species; it's about ecosystems. I think I mentioned earlier that in regards to biodiversity, we look at both ecosystems integrity as well as species because ecosystems are integral to the overall plan and that would be — we talked about it earlier — around the Canada Target 1. So the national target is 17 per cent, and Saskatchewan has committed to, on our lands, reaching 12 per cent. And you know, we mentioned we're over 9 per cent already and looking for new opportunities and ways that we can have lands designated under that target.

Mr. Pedersen: — Isn't the plan to sell off the 100,000 acres kind of work at cross-purposes to that?

Ms. Gallagher: — You're talking about selling off WHPA lands?

Mr. Pedersen: — Yes.

Ms. Gallagher: — No, most of the WHPA lands, if they've received a low category of the ecosystem health or ecosystem integrity, they generally wouldn't be appropriate for anything under the Target 1.

Mr. Pedersen: — On invasive species, I know we talked the other day about the aquatic ones. I guess I'm curious when it comes to invasive plant species. Is that under Environment or is that Agriculture that deals with that specifically?

Ms. Gallagher: — So it would mainly be Agriculture who designates and sets up if there's any regulatory control over those. You know, our role is looking at, with lands that are under our jurisdiction, if we need to have any management plans to maintain the ecosystem health and manage . . . You know, leafy spurge might be a good example where we may work within the ministry, or we may work with Parks, Culture and Sport to be releasing leafy spurge beetles on areas that are important native habitat where the leafy spurge is taking over from native species.

So it varies depending on, you know, what the invasive is and where the location is. And I just would add, aquatic plants are under the *Fisheries Act*, so we do manage where there are aquatic invasive plants as well.

Mr. Pedersen: — Okay. On wildfire management, how are we doing here to date in terms of fires?

Ms. Gallagher: — We have a website, so we can know. Last time I checked was Friday and we were down to zero fires. But we were still under the provincial average for fires, but . . .

Mr. Pedersen: — So is that on the internet for anybody?

Ms. Gallagher: — Yes, we have a website that you can go onto at any time and it gives you reports on how many . . . It's not moving very quickly here, but it will give you reports on how many wildfires are active. You can go into an interactive map that shows you the larger fires and where they are. It just crashed on me here, but . . .

Mr. Pedersen: — That's fine.

Ms. Gallagher: — I think we're still . . . We've got no fires . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . But we don't have any fires. Yes, we're down to zero fires. I wouldn't have thought over the weekend the weather was such that we wouldn't have created . . . No new ones would have come up.

Mr. Pedersen: — On landfills, how many sites are currently decommissioned or closed?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — We currently have 409 operating solid waste management facilities and 481 are closed. So 409 operating and 481 that are no longer operating.

Mr. Pedersen: — How many are identified as, I guess, high-risk ones?

Mr. Kotyk: — Wes Kotyk here. Currently we are working on an inventory of those. So we don't have the actual number. We are doing our risk ranking and that's part of the work that we're doing currently.

Mr. Pedersen: — Just with the view to managing our clock here, how much time should we save for . . . Your statement on the supplementary estimates will be fairly brief, I'm assuming?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Very brief, yes.

Mr. Pedersen: — Okay. So if we maybe save 15 minutes for the supplementary estimates?

The groundwater contamination that happened at the Key Lake mine site, is that under Environment?

Mr. Kotyk: — We would be involved with monitoring that and putting requirements on the industry for getting that cleaned up.

Mr. Pedersen: — Can you provide a bit more information about the potential impact of that leak and the contamination?

Mr. Kotyk: — This is just a brief recollection. I don't have all the details in front of me. But this was an incident that was identified in the fall, and our officials are working with the mine site and with the operators to come up with a remedial action plan. It is confined to the immediate area, so it isn't considered a risk of spreading or getting out of the immediate controlled area.

Mr. Pedersen: — Do you have a sense as to how big of a . . . When you say immediate area, are we talking like, you know, a few hundred square metres? Are we talking like, you know, tens of acres?

Mr. Kotyk: — I don't have those specific details handy right now.

Mr. Pedersen: — In terms of tracking environmental residues, say from substances that are regulated under PMRA [Pest Management Regulatory Agency], does Environment have anything to do with that?

Mr. Kotyk: — PMRA? Can you clarify?

Mr. Pedersen: — Like agricultural chemicals and such as that.

Mr. Kotyk: — Okay, so the pesticides. So the Ministry of Environment is responsible for oversight of the spill response program. So if there are any releases in accordance with those regulations, spills or incidents that would cause contamination or public safety or health issues, the ministry receives the calls. It's actually through the 911 centre that's initiated through emergency management and fire safety. Those calls are forwarded to us, and then we would action any follow-up with the responsible parties on getting those cleaned up.

Mr. Pedersen: — What about non . . . what about residues from non-spills just from, say ordinary use. Like I know there was some concerns raised a few years ago about neonics in surface water just from ordinary use of those type of chemicals. Does Environment do any sort of monitoring of that?

Mr. Kotyk: — Environment Canada and Agriculture would have an interest in what pesticides are used and to what levels. Where our ministry gets involved is if there is ever an application or a release that results in a recorded concentration that exceeds any guidelines. So we would only get involved if the water quality . . . well we would work with Water Security Agency if there were water quality issues. But if there were exceedances of criteria on land, then we would look and deal with it as if it were a contaminated site.

Mr. Pedersen: — Were there any reported spills last year?

Mr. Kotyk: — Well in the province there were 745 new discharge cases that were reported. So that would've been from anything, from fuel, motor vehicle accidents, from industrial releases.

Mr. Pedersen: — And — sorry, just jumping around here a little bit — going back to fire management, there was talk, I think last year, of expanding the cameras and monitoring from towers. Has there been any additional cameras mounted on towers to watch for fires?

Mr. Wasylenchuk: — Scott Wasylenchuk. I'm the director of wildfire operations, wildfire management branch. We've maintained the same 42 cameras, the original cameras. We have been in talks with Parks Canada to use . . . They've got towers in P.A. [Prince Albert] National Park that they'd like to tie in with us as well. So we have been talking the possibilities of expanding it that way. And we're looking in the future state to expand that

wherever we see the opportunity, or if private industry, northern mine sites communities, that type of thing. So as we move forward, I think the potential is there.

Mr. Pedersen: — Has the ministry identified any . . . Like, are there holes in that coverage of the 40 towers that are there? Like, how are they spaced? I'm assuming that you didn't go out and just build a bunch of towers, that you were able to utilize a bunch of existing towers.

Mr. Wasylenchuk: — Back in the day when we had people in them, they went out and they put them on the highest points of land. They did seen-unseen area mapping. We put it where, in those days, where a lot of our highest values of the day were concerned, which was the commercial forest many years ago. Those locations are still valid as they speak, but you look for opportunities. And as your priorities change, as we have more people in the North, more communities, bigger communities, those priorities will change. And as it grows, we'll prioritize those.

Mr. Pedersen: — I think we can move on to supplementary estimates.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — No. 2
Environment
Vote 26**

Subvote (EN11)

The Chair: — All right. I will now adjourn consideration of the estimates and move on to consideration of the supplementary estimates — no. 2 from the Ministry of Environment. And I'll offer the opportunity for the minister to put his comments on the table.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Madam Chair. The Ministry of Environment is taking steps through *The Environmental Management and Protection Act* to address the long-standing issue of abandoned scrap tires in the community of Assiniboia. In response to public safety, fire, and environmental concerns identified through staff inspections, the ministry issued an environmental protection order to the site's owner on July 17th, 2017. The owners failed to comply to the order, and it was deemed necessary to step up and take measures to clean up the site. Assiniboia Rubber Recycling Inc. has claimed bankruptcy, and all attempts to have the parties responsible pay for the costs of the cleanup have been exhausted.

[21:45]

The ministry required additional appropriation of 3.3 million to proceed in a timely manner to address the fire and environmental risk. In March, funding was provided to Tire Stewardship of Saskatchewan, who have been appointed as project manager to oversee the cleanup of the site. It's anticipated that the site will be cleaned up by the end of 2019, which will be welcomed by members of the town of Assiniboia.

To avoid this type of situation from reoccurring, industrial waste works permits are now required for processing plants, and processors are required to provide financial assurance for

reclamation in the event that they go out of business. So with that, those are my comments. I'm pleased to take any questions on this issue.

The Chair: — Thank you, Minister. And I'll now open the floor to questions on Environment, vote 26, environmental protection (EN11). And I'll recognize Mr. Pedersen.

Mr. Pedersen: — Thank you. Did the ministry pursue personal liability against the shareholders and directors of the company that went bankrupt?

Mr. Kotyk: — We consulted with folks at the Ministry of Justice. And it was advised that there was little benefit in going that route, so we didn't pursue that avenue.

Mr. Pedersen: — Could you clarify what is meant by little benefit?

Mr. Kotyk: — Well based on the understanding from our counsel at Justice and his understanding of the parties that were involved, there wasn't money to be pursued.

Mr. Pedersen: — Did the ministry take the steps to at least get a judgment?

Mr. Kotyk: — The steps that we took were the ones that we could do within our legislative authority. So we did issue an order to the company requiring them to carry out the work. They failed to do so, so as a result that gave the ministry the ability to take over responsibility and we could then address the tires as we see fit. We pursued that, as opposed to dragging it out.

The other issue, the other advice, or the other reason for not pursuing that was because of the time frame. We could be years before we might even have anything if we tried pursuing, and the advice was that it wasn't worthwhile.

Mr. Pedersen: — So it's been a long time since I looked at the EMPA [*The Environmental Management and Protection Act*] but as I recall there was the ability both of the ministry to step in and do the actual cleanup — which is what this funding is for, right? — but there was also the ability to hold the shareholders and directors and officers and all those people personally responsible. I don't recall whether you had to sue them or whether you could do it by as simple as just issuing an order, but that you didn't have to wait on doing the cleanup to get a judgment or an order in place against the persons involved. Is that not still the case?

Mr. Kotyk: — Because of the fact that they did declare bankruptcy and they had no assets, it was advised that it wasn't worth proceeding down that avenue.

Mr. Pedersen: — So there was an investigation done of whether the shareholders and directors and officers had personal assets?

Mr. Kotyk: — We would have to look into it further. I know we had the conversation with Justice just to determine how the decision was made or why that advice was made. We would have to explore that a little bit further.

Mr. Pedersen: — Okay. Will you let me know, and when?

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Yes, we'll endeavour to provide the committee and Mr. Pedersen with the information.

Mr. Pedersen: — So my understanding of the way the program worked with the scrap tires, I guess it would have under the old Scrap Tire Corporation, was they weren't supposed to be getting money unless they had a plan to deal with the tires. Like basically the whole underlying assumption was they had a plan to deal with the tires. And so they were getting paid a fee under that program to deal with those tires as they came in, you know, and so you're not supposed to have problems like this. So I guess I'm wondering what happened with Assiniboia?

Mr. Kotyk: — The challenge was that the money was paid upfront when the tires were delivered to the processor. So there was little recourse that the Scrap Tire Corporation could do to recover and get the money back, once the payment had been made to the processor.

The rules have changed now. So the new corporation, Tire Stewardship of Saskatchewan, that's operating it, they do have a requirement. I believe it's a 50/50 where part of the money is given upfront so that there's money for the processor to process, but they don't get the rest of the fees until the tires have been proven to be processed.

Mr. Pedersen: — So is the ministry auditing that at all or doing checks to make sure that, you know, the processors are actually dealing with the tires?

Mr. Kotyk: — So there's two ways that that happens. The Tire Stewardship of Saskatchewan is required to provide annual reports and financial statements to show that they're operating in accordance with their product stewardship program. And as well for the processors, as the minister indicated, they are now required to have a permit with us. So we will do compliance inspections to ensure that they're not stockpiling more tires than they're allowed to at the site, and that they are adequately processing them and managing them properly.

Mr. Pedersen: — And when did that process begin, that compliance . . . sorry, I forget what you called it now.

Mr. Kotyk: — So that would've happened about the same time as the program switched over to Tire Stewardship of Saskatchewan, about two years ago.

Mr. Pedersen: — And every operator would have, like there'd be an annual check then?

Mr. Kotyk: — The inspection frequency varies, similar to other industries, but from the start they are getting inspected at least annually.

Mr. Pedersen: — And are all the tire operators in compliance?

Mr. Kotyk: — Right now we have one large processor and one smaller processor. And yes, as far as we know, they're currently in compliance based on last, our most recent inspections.

Mr. Pedersen: — What progress has been made in terms of the actual cleanup on Assiniboia. Is it done now or where's that at?

Mr. Kotyk: — They've mobilized equipment to the site, so they will be working away at it this summer. The agreement we have with them is to complete the work by the end of 2019.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — So just for a little further information, the processor has mobilized equipment to shred on site rather than haul the tires to their facility. They'll shred them there and then haul the shred away.

Mr. Pedersen: — I think that's all the questions I've got.

The Chair: — All right. Seeing that there are no further questions this evening, we'll adjourn our consideration of the estimates and supplementary estimates — no. 2 for the Ministry of Environment. I'll offer the opportunity, Minister, for you to make any closing remarks you may have.

Hon. Mr. Duncan: — Thank you, Madam Chair. Just very quickly I want to thank Mr. Pedersen for his questions. I want to thank the attention of the members of the committee and yourself, Madam Chair, and the staff. And I want to thank the officials from the Ministry of Environment that are here, but obviously they're representing a lot of ministry staff that aren't here this evening and do a great job each and every day. So I just want to publicly thank Ms. Gallagher and her executive team and all the staff at the Ministry of Environment for the great work that they do.

The Chair: — Mr. Pedersen, if you have any closing remarks you'd like to make.

Mr. Pedersen: — Well I'd just like to again thank the ministry officials. I echo the minister's comments. I don't get to work with you on a daily basis, as does the minister, but I appreciate the professionalism of the ministry staff and of the minister as well.

The Chair: — Thank you. And now I would ask a member to move a motion of adjournment for this evening. Mr. Buckingham so moved. All agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. This committee now stands adjourned to the call of the Chair. Thank you, everyone.

[The committee adjourned at 21:56.]