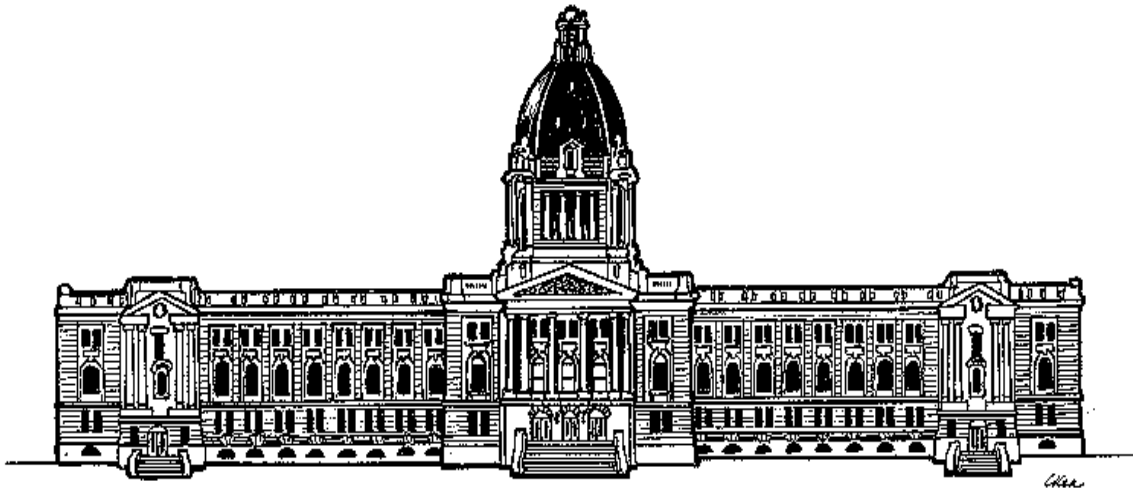




STANDING COMMITTEE ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS AND JUSTICE

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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL
AFFAIRS AND JUSTICE
2008**

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Batoche

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Moose Jaw Wakamow

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Mr. Trent Wotherspoon
Regina Rosemont

[The committee met at 14:00.]

**General Revenue Fund
Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport
Vote 27**

Subvote (TC01)

The Chair: — Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice. And we're meeting here with . . . consider estimates for the Ministry of Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport. And I'd ask the minister to introduce her officials and if she has an opening statement.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. First I would like to introduce some of my officials, and I think I will start on the back wall. First off we have Carlos Germann, director, heritage resources branch. We have Miguel Morrissette, policy analyst, strategic policy, planning, and partnerships; Elizabeth Verrall, senior policy analyst, strategic policy, planning, and partnerships. We have Lenora Toth, acting director, Saskatchewan Archives; Christal Lintoth, manager of human resources and administration for Saskatchewan Archives. And we have Jody Wise from SCN [Saskatchewan Communications Network].

And beside me of course I have our deputy minister, Van Isman; beside him, Syd Barber, executive director of parks; Susan Hetu, acting executive director of culture and heritage. We have Melinda Gorrill in behind us here, and Melinda is director of corporate services; Nevin Danielson, acting executive director of strategic policy, planning, and partnerships.

We have Ken Lozinsky at the back wall, and Ken is the assistant executive director of parks. And we have Twyla MacDougall, acting president, CEO [chief executive officer] of Saskatchewan Communications Network. Thank you.

First of all this afternoon I'd like to begin by outlining some of the priorities for Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport. Combining tourism and parks with culture and sport in a new ministry reflects our priorities and focuses strategically on tourism enhancement, quality of life, and economic growth.

I'll speak on tourism first off as we go forward here. Saskatchewan's tourism industry plays a vital role in both economic development and promoting pride in our province. We are taking an integrated approach to developing our tourism industry through bringing together key components such as parks, sport, culture, and heritage. An extra \$8 million has been allocated to tourism initiatives, doubling overall tourism spending to \$16 million this year. This funding will cover a range of tourism-related initiatives that include increased support of 3.5 million in new dollars to Tourism Saskatchewan specifically.

The remaining funding will be allocated to strategic tourism initiatives such as improved signage for tourism attraction on Saskatchewan's highways; greater support for event hosting; \$1 million capital investment pool for initiatives in ecological,

paleontological, museum, and heritage facilities; and 1.8 million to profile Saskatchewan at the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Games.

The ministry will work closely with Tourism Saskatchewan and relevant ministries and tourism stakeholders at the regional and local level. Further details on these expenditures will be announced later in this fiscal year.

Another major priority is our commitment to improve and increase funding to Saskatchewan's parks. Our provincial, regional, and urban parks are a source of pride to Saskatchewan residents and some of the prime recreation sites in our province. We are increasing funding to parks by \$5 million, bringing their total allocation to just over 25 million. Initiatives to improve our parks will significantly enhance them as valuable tourism destinations.

In order to relieve the pressures of growth and build capacity in our provincial parks, we are committed to several improvements to parks programs and infrastructure. New initiatives to meet visitor demand and enhance camping opportunities include adding 1,000 electrified campsites over the next four years, starting with electrifying 274 campsites this year in a combination of three parks: Makwa Lake, Pike Lake, and Emma Lake Recreation Site.

We have eliminated the campfire fee. We are improving park programming, maintenance, and infrastructure. We are modernizing and expanding the campground reservation service, reserve-a-site. We are increasing customer service maintenance and security in provincial parks. We are enhancing conservation and interpretation of natural and cultural resources in our parks.

Provincial funding for regional parks will increase from 75,000 to \$600,000 per year. We are also providing over 4 million to urban parks this year. And we will be consulting with First Nations and key stakeholders to formally preserve more Saskatchewan wilderness for nature conservation and wilderness recreation purposes.

We are making these investments because provincial, urban, and regional parks are indeed sources of pride for our residents and are a significant tourist draw to the province.

I'll speak on the capital commission. We also want to ensure that Regina, the provincial capital, continues to remain a source of pride and vibrancy for the people of Saskatchewan and the visitors to the province. Seven hundred thousand dollars is being allocated to commence the establishment of a new capital commission. The capital commission would work to preserve and promote the history and culture of the province through its capital.

Consultations have already been initiated with the city of Regina, University of Regina, and Wascana Centre Authority, who will all play an integral role in the development of the capital commission. Broader consultations will be held prior to final creation of the capital commission. Some of its activities will include enhancing existing tourism and heritage assets and identifying and soliciting the development of new tourism and

heritage assets.

Saskatchewan's natural advantages and cultural heritage draw tourists from around the world. We will continue to conserve heritage resources of environmental, recreational, and cultural significance. We will promote a vibrant and sustainable creative and cultural community that is recognized and valued throughout the province and beyond. To maintain arts and culture support, we are providing 4.2 million in funding to ensure a vibrant and sustainable arts and cultural sector in the province. Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport will consult with the arts, culture, and creative industries to build a synergy with the private sector to inform in the development of a plan for the new allocation.

Active families. We will also be encouraging healthy, active families through sport and recreation. The new active families benefit will be providing a \$150 per year per child refundable tax credit. It is anticipated that up to 120,000 children will benefit from this program. The ministry will be consulting with global organizations involved in culture, sport, and recreation to develop the guidelines for defining eligible cultural, recreational, and sporting activities. It is expected that these guidelines and a listing of the eligible activities will be completed by the fall of 2008. This new program will take effect beginning in 2009 tax year.

The Community Initiatives Fund. Vibrant communities are destinations that attract businesses and retain a skilled and creative workforce. The Community Initiatives Fund ensures Saskatchewan families and communities benefit from casino profits. The fund this year is approximately \$9 million, \$800,000 higher than last year. The ministry will work with the volunteer board that manages the fund to review and consult with communities on future programming.

In conclusion these are some of the priorities for this ministry in this year. Tourism growth, parks enhancement, conservation of our vital natural areas and cultural resources are all initiatives that will enhance our quality of life and make Saskatchewan a more attractive place to live, work, play, and do business.

That concludes my opening remarks, Mr. Chair. My officials and I invite any questions that the committee members may have. Thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you. I guess we're ready for questions if the . . . Ms. Higgins.

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. And, Madam Minister, thank you and your officials for appearing before the committee today.

I would like to start out with just some general questions first, and then I know the members here have a number of more detailed issues that they'd like to address and have discussion on.

I guess first and foremost I would like to ask, how many employees have been terminated out of your department since November '07, when the new government was sworn in?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Okay. We have one deputy minister who

was terminated from the previous department and two executive directors.

Ms. Higgins: — So basically the three out-of-scope employees. So how many of these positions have been filled?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Well I mean, we have our deputy minister obviously beside us; that position has been filled. The two executive director positions are currently being filled by an acting. Mr. Danielson of course is in an acting position currently. And the other one, Susan Hetu is filling in, in an acting position for the other executive director position.

Ms. Higgins: — So your plans to fill these positions on a permanent basis, I would assume, are your long-term plans?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Yes.

Ms. Higgins: — So when you're looking at replacements and filling these positions on a permanent basis, will you be doing that internally or following some type of a process of advertising the position?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — The position of the executive director for culture and heritage, that position was posted in the newspaper and for competition. That position posting has now closed.

The other executive director position is going to be filled with an acting . . . or an assistant deputy minister, sorry. And that position was posted and that posting has now also closed.

Ms. Higgins: — The second executive director position is to be filled from an existing . . . What position? Sorry.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — No, no. It's a new position. It is not going to be replaced as an executive director position. It's going to be filled with an assistant deputy minister position. Yes. And that has also been posted, and that posting is closed.

Ms. Higgins: — Okay. So then these postings would run through the traditional process through the Public Service Commission?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Yes, that's correct.

Ms. Higgins: — So of the three positions that were terminated after the transition took place, are there outstanding severance packages that haven't been agreed to or settled yet? Or have they all been settled?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — My understanding is that the severance negotiations are still ongoing, and so hence we are unable to provide details.

Ms. Higgins: — Well I guess my main concern was if they had been settled or not or they're still ongoing or in negotiations with the department. Or have they gone beyond that?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — The negotiation with respect to severance is being handled by Executive Council.

Ms. Higgins: — So if these severance packages are being negotiated through Executive Council, then when the severance

packages are signed and eventually these three people will come to that point, I would assume, I would hope, where will the money be taken from? Will it come out of your budget, your department budget, or how will it be paid?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — I have to make a correction. The deputy minister has come out of the negotiations, with respect to severance, will be coming out of Executive Council, has been done at Executive Council.

Ms. Higgins: — So it's completed?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — No.

Ms. Higgins: — Oh it's not. But it's just where it will be designated.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — That's right.

Ms. Higgins: — Okay.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — The two executive director positions, or the severance negotiation is taking place through the public service.

Now answering your second question with respect to the deputy minister, that severance monies that will likely be owed will be coming out of our ministry. The two executive directors' negotiations with . . .

A Member: — Also out of the ministry.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Also out of the ministry. The two executive director severance packages or monies will also be coming out of the ministry.

Ms. Higgins: — So then all three will be charged back to the ministry?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Yes.

Ms. Higgins: — So in your budgeting, have you kept a contingency fund to cover this, or are you expecting to withdraw from various areas? Or where are you going to access the money, or where is the money that's been set aside for this shown in the budget document?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — We set aside for '07-08 budget because that's when the terminations occurred, and we have estimates in reserve from '07-08 budget to fulfill our obligations of any negotiated settlement.

Ms. Higgins: — So you've in effect paid out the severance packages out of last year's budget in theory and set them aside in a pool to be paid out when eventually the severances are agreed upon and paid?

So what kind of dollars have you set aside in a contingency from last year's budget to pay severance packages for these three former employees?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Because of the confidentiality of the negotiations, I can't discuss that amount that has been set aside from the '07-08 budget because that where the terminations

occurred. They occurred in '07, so that amount has been, contingency fund has been set aside from that budget.

Ms. Higgins: — So then how much other money from the '07-08 unexpended dollars would have been held over in some type of fund for some future purpose that is not accounted for in the budget?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — The contingency fund that's been set aside, the only one, the information I've received is the only one is in relation to the severance packages for these three positions, other than the normal course of business.

Ms. Higgins: — So what would be in the normal course of business, otherwise, to set aside dollars out of last year's budget to be used into the future? Because by the government's own accounting standards and practices that it has followed . . . and this has to do with chartered accountants and the reams of regulations that are out there. And the process that the Government of Saskatchewan has always followed is that unused dollars, unless there is a special exemption of some kind — and they're pretty rare to my understanding — quite often will only deal with long-term highways projects where the work wasn't finished. So the department will be allowed or the ministry will be allowed to carry the funding over to the next year because the project needs to be completed.

So I'm not sure what you mean when you say what type of contingencies would be carried over because my understanding is that borders on those opportunities not existing and not being allowed to exist by the legislation with which the government operates under.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — I understand your question . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes, you can. Thank you.

Mr. Isman: — The other allocations that had been set aside were for expenses that were incurred through the normal course of business. By way of example, purchasing of office supplies or something of that nature or an invoice may not have been received and in fact the payment flowing through. So that's a fairly standardized type of accrual accounting type of a process. Those aren't contingencies; that's actually an allocation in terms of the normal business cycle and payment cycle.

Ms. Higgins: — Okay. Thank you very much for that explanation. Question then — when will this money be accounted for that is set aside as a contingency fund to pay out severance packages for employees terminated in the '06-07 budget year . . . '07-08 sorry, it's '07-08. So how does this fund eventually become accounted for?

Ms. Gorrill: — Melinda Gorrill. Can you just repeat your question just one more time for me, so I can just make sure I answer it exactly correct for you.

Ms. Higgins: — Well the initial question was to ask how many employees had been terminated. And the understanding from the answers that were given is that there is still negotiations ongoing as to the severance packages that are owed to these folks. So my question was, where does the money come from and being told the department, well then where is it accounted for in this whole process? And when will it be accounted for?

Ms. Gorrill: — Okay. What we have to do in the '07-08 fiscal year is, we have set up accruals for each of the three terminations in our '07-08 fiscal year. We've made estimates based on our best information from the Public Service Commission and from Executive Council as to what is being negotiated and what might potentially be the severance that's provided. So those will be accounted for as part of our '07-08 expenditures, based on our estimates. When the severances are finally determined, whenever that may be, they will be paid out, and there will be an accounting entry to . . . we'll pay them out and then the accounting entry will go against the '07-08 accrual that was set up.

If we've set up too much money, there will be a refund back to the General Revenue Fund for the difference. If we haven't set up enough, any amount that's owing over and above what we set up in '07-08 will be a charge against '08-09 fiscal year.

Ms. Higgins: — So then my understanding as to the way the Government of Saskatchewan actually operates on expenditures that will move from one year or bridge from one budget year into the next, is that it's not really acceptable and hasn't been something that's been used commonly. Now maybe I'm mistaken on this. So is there some type of a special order in council? Is there some type of a recognition from the Department of Finance as to how this will operate? And I guess the big question is, is will there be some type of notation from the Provincial Auditor as to the approval and how this has been handled?

Ms. Gorrill: — Okay I'm just trying to think of the best way to explain this. We are following the procedures as provided by the Provincial Comptroller's office for how we account for severance packages. We are to use our best judgment. They are expenditures of the '07-08 fiscal year because the decision to do those terminations occurred in that fiscal year. That makes it an expenditure of that fiscal year even though the amounts haven't been determined. So we are really not carrying over any money. All we can do, and the best we can do to charge it to the appropriate fiscal year, is to come up with our best estimate as to what those severances will be. And does that answer your question?

Ms. Higgins: — So then in actual fact the books aren't closed until these transactions are completed? Is that what it means?

Ms. Gorrill: — Books for '07-08 will be closed, and what will be accounted for in '07-08 is our estimates of these severances packages. And then when they do get paid in '08-09, when they do get paid out of '08-09 there will be an accounting entry of some kind, because we won't be exactly right. So there'll either be an accounting entry that we will have to pay the balance . . . If we haven't estimated enough, we will have to pay whatever we didn't set up. Whatever we're short, we will have to pay out of '08-09.

If it's the other way around, there will be too much set up in '07-08, so we will have overexpended, and there will be then an entry that will actually put money back into the General Revenue Fund because we expended too much in '07-08, more than what the actual . . . I'm maybe not doing a very good job of explaining it.

Ms. Higgins: — I understand. I understand. Maybe that's the worst thing; I understand your . . . No, you're doing fine.

So I guess I still have some questions as to, so okay, in the '08-09 budget, when we see the final accounting of this budget year, there will be an item in there that will maybe speak to severance packages — I'm not sure how it will be listed — but it shouldn't actually be in that year because it was actually expended the year before. So this number will never be known.

Ms. Gorrill: — No. No. What you will see in the '07-08 public accounts, you will see when the '07-'08 public accounts come out, you will see amounts set up for severance there once those are made public. You will see what we charged to severance. And those will be our estimates. And then in '08-09, if in fact we were short, there will be additional amounts showing up in '08-09 public accounts for any balance accruing.

Ms. Higgins: — So will there be any accounting of the amount of severance paid out of your department or your ministry before we see public accounts, which will be a year or more from now?

Ms. Gorrill: — The public accounts are actually be published, I believe, the end of June for '07-08. So you will see in June what our estimates were.

Ms. Higgins: — So are you going to make me wait until June, or can you just tell me what the global amount is? I mean we're talking about two months from now.

Ms. Gorrill: — I guess what I would suggest is that what I would like to do is maybe we could go back and get some advice from our legal counsel on if it's okay for us to pass that over, and from the PSC [Public Service Commission], at this point in time.

I just don't want to provide any information that might somehow interfere with the negotiations of the severance because our estimates might suggest something that isn't known to the individuals who are negotiating the severance at this point in time . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Yes. It could prejudice the government's position in the negotiations; that's all.

It's just because they're not completed. I don't feel comfortable giving the information that I've used as estimates, at this point, while those negotiations are going on. And I can certainly go back, or we can certainly go back and ask, and if it's deemed appropriate that we can, we can provide those to you in writing.

Ms. Higgins: — No. I would appreciate that, and I can't see how releasing an amount of a contingency fund that has already been approved and set aside out of the '07-08 budget may prejudice a case when the people involved are well aware that the government is sitting on a surplus of \$1.3-plus billion, with more money coming in. So it's not like if you have 1 million or 2 million or a million five set aside in a contingency fund just in case, that that is going to be some marker for them in their cases. I think many of the people that have been terminated, the ones that I am aware of, have been working for the Government of Saskatchewan for many years and are well aware of what they feel that they are entitled to. So I don't think releasing how

much money you have set aside to cover off your costs is going to prejudice any case that's out there but . . .

Anyway we'll move on from this because we could spent quite a bit of time. Now some of my other colleagues may have . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Sure.

Ms. Gorrill: — For clarification. So you're just looking for a global amount for the three?

Ms. Higgins: — I don't expect you to break down . . . I mean, I know there's also privacy issues, and I don't expect you to say well we've set aside a half a million for the deputy minister, and we've set aside this much for this one, and 300,000 for that one, plus whatever benefits are attached to that or whatever the discussions are over. I don't expect that.

I'm just curious as to what the amount is that has been set aside in the pool. You know, my colleagues may have other questions on that, but I wanted to move along.

As I'm sure you're well aware, there's been a fair bit of discussion over the labour legislation that is currently tabled in the House and some of the issues and questions that surround it. Is there anything within your department — Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport — that would ever be considered essential and would fall under any of this legislation?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — The positions that have been identified and highlighted with the Public Service Commission are the water purification systems people within the ministry. And that would be probably 45 people. Forty-five people within our ministry would be under that. Nothing has been absolutely determined at this point in time. These are positions that have been highlighted.

Ms. Higgins: — So where would these water purification people work within the department? What do they do besides purifying water, testing?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thirty-four parks, within the 34 parks . . .

Ms. Higgins: — Within the parks.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Yes and we operate 68 water purification systems within the parks. So we're talking about potable water here.

Ms. Higgins: — So you would expect that they would fall under the essential services legislation.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — They have been highlighted as possibilities.

Ms. Higgins: — Highlighted by whom?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — By our ministry. They have been identified with respect to that legislation and have been identified as possibilities to be considered under that legislation, but as you know the legislation hasn't passed, so that's where it sits right now.

Ms. Higgins: — Well I'm just curious as to kind of the scope of discussions and what type of services that you feel would fall

into this. What about the zoo in Saskatoon as a arm's-length, third party from the Government of Saskatchewan, and also the barns and buildings at the university?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — The information I've been provided is that these are arm's-length organizations, and as such it's not up to the government to identify what positions would be necessary and would be possibly covered under this legislation.

Ms. Higgins: — Okay thank you. The only other question I have for right now before . . . I know my colleagues are anxious to answer some questions. In your FTE [full-time equivalent] complement listed in the budget on page 167, you're estimating 367.9 FTEs for the '08-09, and you've re-based 348 at the, I guess, amalgamation or of the new department — reiteration, I guess. And you are looking at the number, an additional 19.9, so an additional 20 FTEs added to the department or the ministry. Where do you see these . . . where these positions slated to go, and how quickly will they be brought on stream?

Mr. Isman: — First of all thank you for asking the question that we actually had a briefing note prepared to respond to. Of the 19.9, let's start with the point nine. That is a position that has been transferred over from the Ministry of Environment to our ministry of an administrative capacity that relates to the substantial portion from the park service that migrated from the old Department of Environment to the new ministry.

Of the new 19 positions that are truly new to the ministry, these are all going to be based in the provincial parks. These are largely seasonal positions. And six of those FTEs — so it's not necessarily six jobs, but six full-time equivalents — will be because of the extension of the park season, so it'll be on either end of what has been the traditional park season.

The other 13 FTEs, which of course is going to probably translate into about 50 summer jobs, will be in enhanced servicing of the provincial parks and will relate to cleaning of washrooms, enhanced security, enhanced improvements in some few that will go into the programming area as well, but largely in terms of maintenance and security.

Ms. Higgins: — So then are any of the 19.9 positions full-time positions? Other than, you talked about one administrative that had come over from Environment, so none of them are full-time. They are all just augmenting part-time positions and, I mean, being this is the traditional way of accounting for manpower or people power, is FTEs?

Mr. Isman: — The point nine will actually, that little point nine portion will actually translate into what is largely a full-time position; it will be a 90 per cent position. The other 19 positions will be seasonal employees.

Ms. Higgins: — Seasonal okay. Okay thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I have many more questions, but I have a couple of colleagues that would like to get their questions in before we get back to the specifics. So I'll ask that Mr. Furber . . .

The Chair: — All right, the Chair recognizes Mr. Furber next.

Mr. Furber: — I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the minister and her officials, all of her officials, for being here

with us today to answer questions. If I could just return to the potentiality of Bill 5 for one second, could the ministry define what functions in the ministry might be determined part of public safety or a public safety concern?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — I'm sorry, Mr. Furber and Mr. Chair, I realize that you have a cold. I'm having extreme difficulty hearing you.

Mr. Furber: — What part of the ministry might be determined to be a public safety concern or, under Bill 5, be a part of public safety?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — As we identified earlier, it's the people — the 45 positions — that are involved in the water purification systems within our parks.

Mr. Furber: — Okay thank you. In the Estimates book, there is a bit of a discrepancy between your opening remarks in terms of the building communities fund and what is in the estimates. Could the minister explain the discrepancy between the numbers in the Estimates book on page 135 where it says \$40 million for '07-08 versus 37,391 for '08-09, when in her opening remarks she said there would be an increase.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — The one thing . . . I didn't identify the building communities fund; it was only the Community Initiatives Fund that I spoke of in my opening remarks. So is there still a discrepancy that you see here? Oh, oh okay, thank you.

Mr. Furber: — Could I ask the question then, the building communities fund is reduced. Why is that, year over year?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — The question is with the building communities fund being reduced, and why is that being reduced, okay?

Mr. Furber: — Yes.

Mr. Isman: — The overall fund — as you are aware, I'm sure — was a \$100 million program over three years. And a number of the projects that were undertaken to support through that program over that time period, some of the monies were committed to and flowed out of one particular year, or some were committed in one year and did not fully flow out of one year but would flow into the next. So basically what we're talking about here is a mixture of the funding that in fact has not flowed, but there had been some commitment towards that. Do you need a more specific breakdown?

Mr. Furber: — No, that's fine. Thanks. What is the minimum project cost threshold to qualify for the building communities fund?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — The threshold for the program is a \$1 million project.

Mr. Furber: — Has that changed since last year?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — My understanding is, is that it hasn't changed from last year. We are undertaking a review of the program and the remaining funds to hopefully and possibly

reduce the threshold so that some of the smaller community initiatives can be undertaken and use this program — the funding through this program — to improve their communities. But obviously a \$1 million threshold is too much for some communities throughout the province.

Mr. Furber: — Who is doing the review?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Our ministry is doing the review.

Mr. Furber: — Okay. The remaining money in the fund, what is that total?

Mr. Isman: — The last intake for the building communities program applications are due April 30 of this year. That's the third year for the three-year program. We've been working with communities all through this process, so we have a fairly good feel for what applications we will be receiving up until that point in time. It's been a process that we've been working with communities as they've been building their applications.

At the present time, we are projecting that there's probably in the area of about \$10 million of these monies of the overall \$100 million pool that may not be committed. Accordingly what the ministry wants to do is to re-evaluate if there is another way those monies can be utilized for the same purposes in terms of perhaps being able to support some projects that are the lower threshold level.

Mr. Furber: — So you're in the third year of three years. There's 20 days left in the program and \$10 million unexpended. Do we anticipate the number of applications coming in that will fit under the million dollar threshold? Do we anticipate that that will amount to monies over the \$10 million that are remaining?

Mr. Isman: — First of all, I need to clarify from my previous remarks. We're anticipating that there will be approximately \$10 million left after we deal with the applications that come in up to April 30. There is substantially more than \$10 million at the current time. And accordingly . . . I'm sorry. Am I confusing you? I don't mean to. Accordingly it's that remaining \$10 million that will be left over from the pool of monies that we want to take a look and say, is there another way that we can utilize these monies to achieve the ends that the program was originally targeted to?

Mr. Furber: — If we're in the third year of a three-year program and there's only just now a review to change some rules, does the ministry expect to spend more money on the building communities fund in the future over and above the \$100 million?

Mr. Isman: — At the current time I don't think that that has been contemplated.

Mr. Furber: — So the entirety of the applications that come in, if the review takes place . . . and you said you'd hopefully have it lowered . . . If the applications exceed the monies that are left, will there be additional monies expended?

Mr. Isman: — I think what we're going to . . . I shouldn't say I think. What we would be doing is be looking at — not

dissimilar to what had been done with the original building communities program — we're looking at a population-based type of distribution allocation system. So while there are certainly many excellent projects out there that could be supported, we would have a reasonable way in terms of making those allocations to various communities to assist them with some of the type of infrastructure items that they are looking at in this area.

Mr. Furber: — Okay I still didn't hear if there would be new money provided or once the old money's gone if that's going to be it.

Mr. Isman: — This is the end of this particular program in this allocation. Nothing else has been contemplated beyond this at this point in time.

Mr. Furber: — Have any projects been cancelled since November 7, 2007?

Mr. Isman: — No.

Mr. Furber: — If the ministry doesn't expect to expend any more money other than the approximately \$10 million that's remaining, what's the criteria going to be for new application to the program after April 30?

Mr. Isman: — Those are criteria that have yet to be established. Now if we were going to establish such criteria, it would be in consultation with some of our partner organizations. So by way of example, we've had dialogue that was initiated by the Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association where they've said, you know you have a program here that could be more effective for some smaller communities where maybe they don't have a million dollar project, but perhaps they have a need for a roof replacement on a skating rink or a curling rink or a new ice plant or something of that nature.

And so what we would be doing is going into consultation with some of those stakeholder organizations — Sask Sport, SaskCulture, Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association — to make sure that we're going to develop criteria that truly are addressing the needs of what those communities are telling us.

Mr. Furber: — Thank you. Will northern communities be subject to the project cost thresholds up until the 30th, I guess?

Mr. Isman: — I'm sorry, sir. I didn't hear your question.

Mr. Furber: — Will northern communities be subject to the project cost thresholds for this program?

Mr. Isman: — I'm going to ask Mr. Nevin Danielson, who's the acting executive director of our strategic policy planning and partnerships division, to respond to your question.

Mr. Danielson: — Hi. Nevin Danielson. The northern funding for this program was a separate allocation made in the first year of the program. So in '06-07 we made an allocation to the northern sport and recreation . . . sorry, I'm probably getting the acronym wrong, but it's the recreation community up there that

is allocating money on its completely separate set of criteria.

Mr. Furber: — And it hasn't changed?

Mr. Danielson: — No, it hasn't.

Mr. Furber: — Good. Have there been any changes to the process by which artists can access funds through the Saskatchewan Arts Board?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — The jurying process with the Saskatchewan Arts Board has not changed.

Mr. Furber: — I understand there's \$4.2 million in new funding for provincial arts and cultural organizations. What is the money intended for?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — What is the money intended for?

Mr. Furber: — Yes.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Okay. Thank you. My ministry is involved in and will be involved in consultations with the Saskatchewan Arts Board and other key stakeholders to develop a strategy, comprehensive strategy for arts and cultural development. There's three areas of which we are going to be addressing: responding to key issues identified by the sector in recent policy investigations; supporting the vision and mandate of our ministry; and creating synergies between tourism, arts, culture, and sport.

I think our budget identifies the amount of monies that are going directly to the Arts Board as a result of the provincial cultural organizations moving over from SaskCulture to the Saskatchewan Arts Board.

The monies designated for the Saskatchewan Arts Board were to facilitate that move, that change that has now, or is in the process of taking place. And our understanding is that in addition to those organizations moving over to the Saskatchewan Arts Board that there's going to be a requirement for some administrative support to handle the increased capacity.

Mr. Furber: — Does the minister then now have power in her office over the funding choices that would have formerly been made by the Arts Board?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — The distribution and the allocation of the remaining monies over and above what has been set aside for the Arts Board, the criteria that will be used for the remaining monies will be developed by the ministry in consultation with the Saskatchewan Arts Board, Saskatchewan culture, Sask. music, those types of organizations. And the criteria for distribution and allocation will be determined by the ministry.

Mr. Furber: — Thank you for the answer. Can the minister detail how much money that is?

Mr. Isman: — Of the \$4.2 million that you originally made reference to, \$750,000 is going directly to the Saskatchewan Arts Board to support the five provincial cultural organizations. In addition to that, outside of the 4.2 million there's another

\$300,000 that will also be going to the Arts Board that was previously referred to as the Cultural Industries Development Fund, and that's to be used by the Arts Board to help support those five provincial cultural organizations.

So the 750,00 from the 4.2 million leaves 3.45 million. Of that amount, we anticipate that there will be a small allocation that we will be supporting the Saskatchewan Arts Board to help them with covering some administrative costs with dealing with the five provincial cultural organizations. It's beyond that that we'll . . . that those monies that we will be doing the consultations, as Minister Tell has indicated, in terms of developing the criteria as to how those monies will be distributed.

Mr. Furber: — I guess the question then is, does the minister not have confidence in the Arts Board to continue to make decisions that they've been making for 60 years now with the funding and the adjudication process that they've got there? It's the oldest and one of the most respected arm's-length agencies in North America, and it's been unilaterally changed since the budget.

Mr. Isman: — We're working very closely with the Saskatchewan Arts Board, and actually we've had dialogue with them on a few occasions now, various officials within the ministry as well as the minister herself. And we will be looking to not replicate what they're doing — and it's not a vote of non-confidence in the Arts Board. We're looking to broaden some things and look at some new types of initiatives that we can use to enhance some of the things that they've done in the past and they will continue to do. As you will no doubt be aware, there was a core allocation increase to the Arts Board this year as well the continued allocation of a significant amount of money beyond what their traditional core of just over \$6 million was.

Mr. Furber: — Well maybe you could explain to me then, what are the new initiatives?

Mr. Isman: — As indicated we're going to be going through a consultation process, and we have some different types of ideas in terms of how we can move forward within the cultural and arts communities, and do some things to augment activities within the province. But we do not want to replicate what the Arts Board is doing, and we'll work closely with that organization to make sure that, that we don't.

Mr. Furber: — All I'm asking for is for an articulation of the new ideas. I mean you've blown up a board and the processes that they've followed since 1948 in order to develop your own process. You must have some idea of what that process is?

Ms. Hetu: — One of our considerations is that there has been a tendency for arts, culture, heritage organizations to work in silos. So one of the things that we would like to do in the ministry is to strengthen those relationships and build stronger relationships across those sectors. We think that there are mutual benefits, and that's what the research suggests as well, when there's closer relationships among those different players. When there are closer relationships, there can be a real synergy that gets created including increased financial success for the cultural organizations, increased community vitality,

communities being more livable places — those kind of things.

Mr. Furber: — Well I guess the question that needs to be asked then is, who does the ministry believe that the Arts Board has ignored to this point? Who has been ignored to this point?

Ms. Hetu: — We're working closely with the Arts Board to build on the good work that's already occurred. And I don't think it would be fair for us to single out any particular organization.

Mr. Furber: — Well you don't have to single out any particular organization, but you've suggested that there are gaps in some of the decisions that they've made regarding synergies. I guess where are the gaps?

Ms. Hetu: — Again that's part of our consultation and planning that we're doing with the Saskatchewan Arts Board.

Mr. Furber: — You mentioned research that had been done that suggests that it was a good idea to make the decision to pull \$3.45 million from the Arts Board. What's the research?

Ms. Hetu: — Actually I didn't say that there was research that would suggest pulling the \$3.45 million from the Arts Board. What I said is that there was scholarly works to support the idea that there could be a number of benefits generated from those various sectors working closely together and having a stronger relationship.

Mr. Furber: — I guess I'd appreciate the benefit of that research as well.

Ms. Hetu: — We can provide you with an article.

Mr. Furber: — Thank you. Can the minister then talk about the process for determining where the funding will go? What sort of process will be used to determine where the remaining 3.45 goes?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — The answer to the question remains the same, that we will be developing criteria with working with the Saskatchewan Arts Board, SaskCulture, other provincial cultural organizations, in order to determine that criteria. Our ministry will be doing the consultations, and the criteria will be determined within the ministry.

Mr. Furber: — Thanks for the answer. How can the ministry then determine that decisions will be based entirely on the merit of the application and not on a political priority?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — The entire reason why the monies were allocated the way they were in this budget has to do with the fact that there are areas that aren't necessarily addressed by the Saskatchewan Arts Board. The Saskatchewan Arts Board and its mandate, of course are very important in a 60-year history that we treasure and value. And within the mandate, the Saskatchewan Arts Board does an excellent job, and we're very, very proud to continue our support of them.

There are . . . without being specific because I can't be specific in the fact that there are rural communities, there are other initiatives that aren't covered by the Arts Board. There're gaps

and it's no fault of anybody. It's not a fault of the Arts Board, nor is it a fault of this government or the previous government. There's not one organization that's going to cover off everything for anyone or any group. And I trust that the criteria that will be developed will be based on merit and the needs of a community, the needs of Saskatchewan with respect to arts culture within the province of Saskatchewan.

And I have every faith and belief in the ministry to develop that criteria, bona fide criteria, so that we're best serving the needs of the industries, creative industries in our province and the needs of Saskatchewan residents. That's the assurance that I have, and I believe in the ability of our ministry to do that.

Mr. Furber: — Thanks for the answer.

The Chair: — All right. If there are no further questions, the next questioner, shall we say, is Mr. Nilson.

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you very much. Greetings to everyone. I will have some questions later, but I just have one or two on the Arts Board.

Was there any consideration in the budget process this year of leaving the increased allocation with the Arts Board, and then seeking some new funds that would allow for this, the other task that you identified today? And the reason I ask that is, that with the resources that are available and basically what appears to be a strong interest in the arts and in all of the different community groups, it would seem to me that this would also be a time to expand the resources that are available, and that would have been able to . . . my understanding is you would have been able maybe to do that with less concern because of how you've reallocated this money. So I guess that's my question.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — I know that you have been through a budgeting process before, many times, and, I mean, we valued and put forward recommendations on what we wanted with respect to the arts and cultural communities. And you know, I mean, the allocation that was provided to the Saskatchewan Arts Board with your government, we wanted to ensure that that was maintained. We also felt that there was a . . . not necessarily a better way to do it because we believe that the Arts Board plays a valuable role in that adjudication and providing funds to, you know, very much needed industries.

We kept within that framework, within the framework with the 4.2 and we are hopeful, I mean nothing, nothing ever stops. We have another budget year next year, and we're hopeful that we can build upon there, build upon what has been allocated to date. And as our cultural industries build and move forward and become more successful with the increased funding, that perhaps there'll be some, some way in which to build on that again next year. This has been in no way are we saying that, that the funding, the allocation provided to our arts and cultural communities is stopped. This is this budget year, and we are waiting with and we'll assist in any way we can to ensure their continued vibrancy within our community.

So in answer to your question directly, that we used the \$4.2 million allocation to set aside within the ministry to perhaps build in some of those areas that we wouldn't necessarily have access to and, you know, as I said we're going to continue to

build on this year after year.

Mr. Nilson: — Given the news this morning that we heard about the oil revenues and substantially more obviously than the Finance department anticipated, can you give us some assurances that this will be evaluated at the first quarter and second quarter to basically build the capacity for the Arts Board as well as do what I hear are good things in the other part?

It seems to me this is what the public expects, that you would actually look at that kind of an allocation. So do you have plans to present some supplement . . . And I know you can't answer it directly while we're still in the House, but is there a plan to look at expanding the roles that we see here in a positive way?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — As you spoke of, it's difficult to make any firm commitment at this juncture, and I appreciate your understanding in that as I know you've been there before.

We are going to be constantly reviewing the allocations, the building capacity of the monies that have been set aside for the Arts Board for the five provincial cultural organizations, and the money that we have that will be kept within the ministry to again build that capacity that hasn't been sorely lacking but has certainly needed some money to be injected into it to continue that vibrancy and to build on that. And all I can commit to at this point in time is that we are continually reviewing, and we will continue to do that.

The Chair: — Questions back to Mr. Furber.

Mr. Furber: — I'd like to switch gears again if I might and ask if there are any details of the active family tax benefit program.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — As I spoke to in my introductory comments, and I will reiterate, that there will be \$150 per child, and this program will be effective January 1, 2009.

I think the important part, an added important part of all this with respect to detail is that the consultation that will take place between Sask Culture, Sask Sport, Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation in determining the criteria for eligible activities that will assist us in running this particular program, and that's where we are at currently. And we will be developing criteria so that all families understand what it is that is desired, what is the desired effect of a program such as this. And the criteria will obviously spell that out.

So the criteria for application has not yet been determined.

Mr. Furber: — Okay. It appears as though some criteria have been. I believe I've read somewhere that this was for children age 6 to 14. So that's a criteria that's been established. I have three nieces under the age of six that are in gymnastics and ballet. I guess, why was the, seemingly the arbitrary age of six chosen?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — This was an election platform document, and this originated out of our election platform. I was not instrumental in providing that information to our current government, or my government. And this is what is moving forward is the criteria 6 to 14.

Mr. Furber: — Well you weren't part of the election platform document. You've been the minister responsible for going on five months now. Will it be your recommendation then that this number gets changed?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — As I said earlier, we're undertaking consultations. If there is something that needs to be amended at some point in time with respect to the age — or any other criteria — we of course are open to that. Programs initiated . . . are we attempting perfection here? No, we're not. We're attempting to increase the opportunities for families and children to participate in recreational and cultural activities and provide them a taxable benefit in doing so in a sustainable way.

Every program needs to be . . . a review must be undertaken at, you know, regular intervals in order to ensure that the people that we are serving or that what this benefit is intended for is actually doing what we intended for it to do. So I will say that all programs within my ministry — and in particular this one — will be part of that ongoing regular review program or review process. And if changes are needed or that we believe, and we will make that recommendation to cabinet. We're certainly not afraid to do that.

Mr. Furber: — I'm glad to hear the minister's open for change. I think you'll find as you move forward in your career that you will rarely attain perfection in program design. However I would plead at this point for the minister to make this change. When speaking with my constituents in Prince Albert Northcote, many of them will not qualify for a tax refund. Is there going to be a mind to change the program for people that will not qualify because of a means test for a tax refund?

Mr. Isman: — There has been no means test proposed on this. And I should point out that this is a fully refundable tax credit, which means that even if you paid no taxes when you filed the tax return, you would receive it back if you filed the expense claim for it. So it's not a tax credit of a non-refundable nature.

Mr. Furber: — Thanks for clarifying that. I appreciate that. Has a specific amount been budgeted for this benefit in this year?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Eighteen million dollars has been set aside or has been budgeted for in the year of 2010-2011 budget year, even though this will be effective January 1, 2009. But the flow through will occur in the 2010-2011.

Mr. Furber: — When deciding on the program design, what process will you use to decide on the design?

Ms. Hetu: — The program will be administered, as we were saying before, through the tax system and the Canada Revenue Agency. There will be a new schedule or a new form for Saskatchewan families to complete when they do their income tax. They will be asked to keep their receipts.

In terms of program design, we are recommending that it be activity based — sport, culture, recreation activities — as opposed to designating specific organizations that can provide tax receipts.

I've got your cold.

Mr. Furber: — Sorry, maybe I wasn't clear. I guess it's contagious somehow across the floor. I just want to know the process for deciding on it.

Ms. Hetu: — Deciding on the program design?

Mr. Furber: — Yes.

Ms. Hetu: — Well there is the federal program which provided us with a lot of information. There's also a similar program in Nova Scotia, for instance, which provided us with some valuable insight. And so we have, you know, looked at the best of those programs as well as their weaknesses and have landed on a Saskatchewan-based program that we will look at eligible activities as opposed to eligible organizations.

Things that our colleagues in other provinces, including the federal government, have elected to do is that activities need to be supervised. They're not activities that occur on a motorized vehicle, for instance — so ballet, that kind of stuff. Yes.

The Chair: — Our next question or next one up is Mr. Wotherspoon.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — Thank you, Minister, and thank you, officials. I guess I just want to just weigh in and pass some encouragement. You did clarify a little bit here with us today that this is a fully refundable tax credit, and that does have some broader application or benefits there.

I guess I do still share some concern with some colleagues that that still has a fully refundable tax credit, that sometimes actual cost or upfront fees can be — as nominal as they may be even though it might be coming back at some point — it might be an absolute barrier for many sport, culture, arts opportunities.

I guess I offer encouragement or would like to see the ministry continue to move in directions to make sure that those barriers are reduced, that community sport, culture, arts are available, and that keeping in mind the socio-economics and the challenges, the diverse population that we have. I know certainly through my past work, with many young individuals coming from some struggling circumstances, wouldn't be able to then go to their family and access the dollars that would pay the upfront fee even though it's going to come back. You know, the planning just might not be there. The ability might not be there or the resources.

So I really do believe that reducing all barriers, as many as we can anyway, and accessibilities is only in our best interest, and I believe it has positive outcomes back into health and education and the whole bit. I'm maybe just looking to see where the minister is at on this encouragement.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — We will continue. I will give you my assurances to continue to work with other organizations to try and help with removing the barriers that would allow people to access these types of programs. I understand exactly what you're talking about, and not everybody has the money to fork out initially. But my understanding is — and of course living and working in the inner city of Regina in particular — that

there are other organizations that do assist in providing access to some of these programs, in particular, I mean, sport and fitness, for people that may not have the ability to be able to access the funds to pay for it.

So this in no way covers off every known aspect of our society and people being able to access some of these programs — in no way does — and it wasn't intended to. It was to provide an added benefit to families so that they are, you know, encouraging their children, to get them involved in arts and culture.

But your point is well taken, and I appreciate the comments that you made, and we will continue evaluating and reviewing. Our job as the government is of course to try and remove barriers as much as we possibly can so that everyone can access these programs, not necessarily just through a program such as this but in other community-based programs.

Mr. Wotherspoon: — No. Very good. And there are some programs out there, some specific ones that by this very nature . . . I think I highlighted one with a member statement today, being the Outdoor Hockey League or Sport Venture Library. My past experience comes out of a high level of involvement within the inner city as well, and I do still state that there is many really strong organizations. And I don't know if I should use the word many. There's still many needs that need to be addressed there, and I guess I'd like to hear your commitment on that too. Thank you very much, and I'll pass off to the next speaker.

The Chair: — Our next will be Mr. Nilson.

Mr. Nilson: — Yes. I just want to ask a couple of questions about the Capital City Commission. What I see here is \$700,000. Is this new money for this year?

Mr. Isman: — Yes, it is.

Mr. Nilson: — Okay. What are you going to use the money for this year? Is it starting right away or will it be starting in October or January? How is it planned that this money will be used?

Mr. Isman: — The notional allocation in terms of the breakdown as we're seeing it at the present time — and I say notional because we believe this to be a reasonable allocation — approximately \$100,000 is monies that we look to spend on actually doing consultation and really developing the substance of what the capital commission will be.

Through the consultations that we've had before that Minister Tell had alluded to with the city of Regina, the University of Regina, and Wascana Centre Authority, we are anticipating that this is going to be an evolution of Wascana Centre Authority in one aspect or another. Six hundred thousand dollars is going to be flowing to assist Wascana Centre Authority with much of the work that they have been doing — as you're well aware; you have a previous affiliation there — and in terms of addressing some funding shortfalls that that organization has experienced in the past.

Mr. Nilson: — So that \$600,000 that you talk about are not

always just one-time expenses? So is it anticipated that we will see this number increase next year and the year after?

Mr. Isman: — Actually, Mr. Nilson, what we have projected here is by the time the capital commission is fully operational. This is based on taking a look at what's happened in British Columbia, Quebec, and New Brunswick. We're anticipating that the capital commission may end up with a total budget in the area of two and a half million dollars, but that's through a process that would have to be created and determined. But that's years out, and so that's more so in terms of getting fully up to speed.

Mr. Nilson: — And that amount of two and a half million dollars, which I think is probably the best guess that we can make at this time, would that be on top of the traditional allocations around the expenses for the Wascana Centre Authority?

Mr. Isman: — Yes.

Mr. Nilson: — Okay. So the answer to that is yes?

Mr. Isman: — Yes.

Mr. Nilson: — So that's good news for everybody, so appreciate that. This will then involve public consultations like Wascana Centre Authority and the capital area, I guess, have done over, well I guess it's almost 100 years now, really. And we call them different things in different decades, but there's always been some people doing the planning. But those plans always go to the people. So I assume that's the process that we're looking at here as well.

Mr. Isman: — Yes. Obviously there's initial consultations that will take place. And to specify a format or timing on that, it's premature.

Mr. Nilson: — Exactly when would some of these more public aspects start taking place? Is that in this year or probably next year?

Mr. Isman: — Certainly within the current fiscal year.

Mr. Nilson: — Thank you.

The Chair: — I recognize Deb Higgins. Ms. Higgins.

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. There's so many portions in this ministry. It's hard to decide where we want to go. And we're trying to kind of chew around the edges here.

I was trying to figure out, looking at the allocations for the various other groups that are attached, whether it's the cultural operations support, the Arts Board, SaskFilm, cultural industries development, and the Conexus Arts Centre, and also when you look down at the allocations for the heritage operations support — the Royal Saskatchewan Museum, the Western Development Museums, Wanuskewin, Science Centre, Heritage Foundation, and the Archives Board — there doesn't seem to be any standard kind of increase that's given. There seems to be some that have a little bit more. Some that I would

say would be barely squeaking by — status quo — maintaining what they have.

Can you explain some of the rationale and thought process that went into these significant operations in the province of Saskatchewan and how you decided on the funding that went to each? Was it to specific projects or basically looking at status quo increases, or was there just a 1 per cent, 1.8, 2 per cent, whatever that was done across the board?

Mr. Isman: — Thank you for the question. In most instances it was a 1 per cent for a number of the organizations — rounded 1 per cent. By way of example, for SaskFilm it was approximately a 1 per cent piece that has gone up. For some of the organizations, by way of example the Royal Saskatchewan Museum that is in essence, that is actually part of the ministry itself, and so it was . . . We tried to stick to that 1 per cent for most arm's-length organizations. For organizations that were per se part of the ministry, we looked at those processes separate and apart.

So you'll see actually in estimates our cultural operations support — that's the internal usage of resources within the ministry — that actually slipped down a notch, whereas when you're looking at the Arts Board, SaskFilm, Conexus Arts Centre, those are all items that went up by those 1 per cent types of figures.

Ms. Higgins: — Well 1 per cent in this year would, I would assume, be considered a decrease in most of these areas when you're looking at, I think, the kind of average is about 3.6 status quo, was some of the calculations that I heard for budgeting, and not necessarily within the Government of Saskatchewan but in municipalities and in other organizations. Kind of ballpark figure they were using was 3.6 for status quo. So would this be considered a reduction in most of these areas when you went 1 per cent?

Mr. Isman: — There was certainly no intent to reduce the purchasing power of any of these arm's-length agencies. In fact this was a direction that was consistent, I think, throughout government. That was the direction we received from the Ministry of Finance in developing our budget.

Ms. Higgins: — So then in your estimation as the deputy minister, are you expecting to see repercussions down the road for, whether it be the museum or the Western Development Museum, Science Centre? And I know in particular when I see the Archives Board, I know that there's a huge backlog in archives and I also, I guess have a greater . . . The longer you're around government and you realize the value of papers and the history of the province. I know the Archives does have a backlog, and it's been a difficult process, and it's going to take a fairly large investment I would think to get to a point where documents and the history of the province is more appropriately stored and sorted and kept and filed.

So when I look at these, some of the other and not particular to the Archives Board, but are you expecting down the year to see the Science Centre having some difficulty maintaining the services that it provides to the public or the Western Development Museums with a 1 per cent increase in budget?

Mr. Isman: — Thank you for flagging that. Actually in terms of dialogue that we've had with agencies . . . one of them that you had suggested was the Saskatchewan Science Centre who actually were pleased with the allocation that they've received. They realize it to be largely status quo, but we're having some dialogue with them, and they've brought forward some expansion ideas, and we're certainly having discussions with them in that regard. There's been a number of other discussions that we've had with similar organizations.

I would like to point out though that there is an anomaly to the 1 per cent rule per se, and it's one that you actually had flagged as of significance, and that was the Archives Board. We actually have allocated a significant increase from 3.372 million to 3.988 million. Now that's project related, and we within the ministry are certainly aware of what you had made reference to in terms of a backlog. This relates to looking at possibilities in allowing the Archives Board some wherewithal to actually start to look at doing some things a little differently, and that's why we set that as being a priority and those incremental resources were allocated to the Archives Board.

We do have officials from the Archives Board here today if you had any specific questions that you wanted to . . .

Ms. Higgins: — Just a bit of curiosity then if it's something specific that the 600,000 was targeted towards. A project, a special project, for the year or just an ongoing project, or building for the future, or what exactly is it targeted for, or is it just a general increase?

Mr. Isman: — Of the amount that . . . The incremental amount \$381,000 was in incremental funding to support the core operations of the Archives Board, and \$235,000 was set aside to allow the Archives Board to begin phase one of its digital archives initiative, and this will allow the Archives Board to draw on some of the best practices from other jurisdictions and the implementation of assistance for maintenance of electronic files and systems.

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much. This morning I was listening, in the media they were talking about Wanuskewin, and there being some changes made or the board is considering some changes to the expansion. Does that make any difference to funding? Is it a shortfall of funding? Is it a major issue or just something that the board is dealing with?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — With respect to Wanuskewin . . . and I know that you understand this that Wanuskewin is an independent board operated by a board of directors, etc. And when the initial plans went forward, our understanding is, bearing in mind that I think the original plan happened in 2006, that the board and the organization did not have adequate funding to proceed to the level upon which they undertook and contracted builders and construction people to come in and do the project. There was not enough funding available.

We have provided to Wanuskewin 1.89 million which is the 25 per cent under the Building Canada program. And the maximum of course is the 25 per cent. The total cost of the project in our understanding is 7.6 million. So 25 per cent of that is exactly, or approximately, 1.89 million. We have continued to provide the operating funds necessary to

Wanuskewin. I think it's 579,000. I might be wrong. Is that right?

Mr. Isman: — Yes.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Okay. And we have as a result . . . I mean the monies have been flowed through to Wanuskewin for the operating monies. We also brought in an individual, an expert in Aboriginal museum to work with the Wanuskewin board to hopefully figure out where they're at right now and what they need to do on a going-forward basis.

Our understanding is, from the press conference held yesterday by the Wanuskewin Chair, that they are going to maintain or they are going to continue being open as Wanuskewin on a limited basis with the trails and that type of thing continuing to operate, and try to come up with — and we anticipate that they will come up with — a plan on how they're going to move forward with respect to . . . are they going to meet the monies or the entire project, the value of the entire project? How are they going to get there? What are they going to do with programming and what type of programming are they going to continue to offer? And we haven't yet received that plan on going forward. And we are fully anticipating that we will see that plan.

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much. Just a comment. You said that \$1.8 billion has flowed through from the Building Canada Fund. Is that . . .

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Building communities fund.

Ms. Higgins: — Building communities fund. Okay.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Building communities fund. I'm sorry if I made that mistake.

Ms. Higgins: — It's my understanding that the Building Canada Fund has not been signed yet.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Yes. This has nothing to do with the . . .

Ms. Higgins: — So this is the building communities. This is from your . . .

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Yes.

Ms. Higgins: — Okay. Thank you very . . .

Hon. Ms. Tell: — My mistake. I'm sorry.

Ms. Higgins: — No. No. Thank you very much for the clarification.

So when we look at heritage operations support — and it really, I believe, is at the 1 per cent for an increase — do you find in the province . . . And I guess being from Moose Jaw I have to say that I think people are much more aware of heritage and place a higher value and importance on it than what they ever did previously. And I'm truly thankful that Moose Jaw actually took this route, you know, 10, 15 years ago or more. It's proved successful for our community.

But I know in Saskatchewan's booming economy — and we are seeing huge investments, and we are seeing the face of cities changing quite rapidly — is this something that the heritage operations, do they look at overall development in the province of Saskatchewan, or is it on kind of a request basis to look at a facility? I'm not quite sure how they operate, so I wouldn't mind a bit of a background on that.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — I'm going to ask Carlos Germann to speak specifically to your question.

Mr. Germann: — I'm Carlos Germann. I'm the director of the heritage resources branch. The question is, how does the heritage operations branch operate? What does it do?

We have a number of programs. Most of our programs are based in administering the legislation, The Heritage Property Act. We have archaeology programs, built heritage programs, and we are still involved with a federal initiative called the historic places initiative. This involves a federal contribution to the Government of Saskatchewan on an annual basis. And it's getting to your question about how heritage is facilitated in rural Saskatchewan or elsewhere. That program has been very, very helpful in allowing us to build the capacity of municipal governments and local organizations to manage local heritage, which we haven't had that opportunity in previous years. So it's been very successful in that regard.

And we are embarking on a fairly major program to continue that sort of work, which will involve in-community presentations, workshops, and working especially with municipal governments and municipal officials to give them the training and the expertise that is needed so that they can get started in addressing the local heritage needs of their respective communities.

Ms. Higgins: — So then do you provide support after the initial, kind of, contact and training and discussions that would happen? Would there be a continual dialogue or guidance that would come from heritage operations?

Mr. Germann: — What we are providing right now is assistance through various guidebooks and standards of operating, and understanding how to identify heritage property, how to ensure that it is properly recognized and designated under the proper procedures for The Heritage Property Act, and then all the additional management and maintenance that would be required to ensure the survival and the viable use of these properties in the local communities for indefinite periods of time of course.

So there is ongoing support to the degree that we can provide it. And there is certainly a demand out there for that. We just had a very successful forum for municipal heritage officials to basically come together and share common issues or challenges that these communities are facing, and addressing heritage needs. And it's working out. There's networks being created and certainly more attention paid to the needs, to address heritage concerns in communities. So it's quite successful.

Ms. Higgins: — Good. Thank you very much. Darcy.

The Chair: — Mr. Furber.

Mr. Furber: — Switching gears again, I'm hopeful that we can ask some questions regarding signage. In your budget pamphlet it says that \$8 million is to increase . . . or to double funding for tourism and support, marketing, capital investments, improved highway signage, and to attract events. What portion of that funding is to improve highway signage?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — With respect to the highway signage, there's been \$300,000 allocated to the creative aspect of highway signage — the development of highway signage — what is it we want to portray to the people using our highways and how to denote the specific park or whatever the case may be in dealing with tourism.

This is really an initiative that's between Tourism Saskatchewan and the Ministry of Highways. And they have been working very closely together to try and determine, you know, where the signs need to be and, I mean, obviously the cost associated to that. But the \$300,000 is for the creative aspect, out of our budget.

Mr. Furber: — How much of a role will the ministry play in making recommendations to Highways alongside Tourism Saskatchewan?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — With the development or the beginnings of a Tourism ministry and with having Tourism Saskatchewan, it is a true partnership as to some of the initiatives that we have in common. And these partnerships, in particular with this one, with Highways and Tourism Saskatchewan, we will be working right along with them. And hopefully, I mean, our mandate is to complement what Tourism Saskatchewan is doing.

Mr. Furber: — Is the minister aware of recommendations made by regional tourism boards regarding signage?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — The regional tourism boards have members on the Tourism Saskatchewan board, and as such they're able to voice what their needs and concerns are to Tourism Saskatchewan board. And funds are available to Tourism Saskatchewan through the normal budget process that they can allocate what the needs are. What the specific requests are, the needs are of the regional tourism, no I don't know what they are. They would have gone to Tourism Saskatchewan.

Mr. Furber: — In terms of the actual funding of new signage or a recommended course of action coming out of Tourism Saskatchewan and these regional boards, where would the funding for the signage, the actual signage come from? Highways?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — It would likely be a partnership type of situation. However you know as it stands today, the bulk of it, if not the whole thing would be coming out of Ministry of Highways. If we look at the outskirt signage of Regina for instance, the cost of that signage and who paid for it, it was a partnership arrangement. So that's what we're striving for.

Mr. Furber: — Not sure what the partnership will look like yet?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — As my deputy minister so eloquently put it in my ear, it was to be determined. The look of that we are just not

sure of right now.

Mr. Furber: — Any idea on a timeline for that?

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Sometime in this budget year. Yes, I mean we're starting on this right away, and those meetings are occurring as we speak.

Mr. Furber: — Okay just a bit of a question. I had been contacted by some folks at the Cypress Hills Winery, and they asked about signage specific to their winery, and that they've had some issues dealing with Highways moving forward to get signage on a couple of different highways that affect or that run past their winery. They've offered to pay for the sign, but they can't get agreement from Highways. I'm hopeful . . . I guess I'm asking at this point if the minister will look into that specifically, and I can provide contact information and all that sort of stuff to follow up.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — I mean with respect to the winery, I mean that's a private industry initiative. I have to say at this point in time that those deliberations, those negotiations have to take place between the winery and the Ministry of Highways, and it really doesn't have . . . I mean there could be an aspect of it for tourism but not likely. It really doesn't speak to my ministry specifically. So unless you can provide me some information that I would think would be involved in a tourism aspect, at this point in time I'd have to say no.

Mr. Furber: — Okay. Just because I sprung this on you and I didn't expect you to know the background of it, but there are literally thousands of people that visit there for tourism reasons. So I'm hopeful that you will do some follow-up. I'd appreciate that.

I guess with the follow-up, British Columbia already has a model dealing specifically with wineries, and I'm wondering if the minister would comment at all on whether or not she'd look into the BC [British Columbia] model and maybe perhaps apply it to Saskatchewan.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Well my understanding is, is that with global warming some of our areas that traditionally haven't produced wine are now producing wine, so perhaps this is something that's going to get a little bigger than what we may have anticipated 10 years ago. We will certainly . . . You provide us some information on this, on the winery. And I really do not know anything about this specific winery that you're talking about.

And I would say if there's any opportunities to explore tourism opportunities in this province, we'd certainly take advantage of it, and we'll certainly do what we can to build on that. And this is product development, and that's something that we believe is sorely needed in the province.

Mr. Furber: — I'll provide you with some contact information, and there's some information in the *Prairies North* magazine regarding the winery specifically. It's also Saskatchewan's first commercial winery.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — I didn't know anything about it so thank you.

Mr. Furber: — I guess just quickly if we could, could you talk about the 3.5 million that's directed to Tourism Saskatchewan and what the priorities for that money might be.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — My information that the money's flowing through to Tourism Saskatchewan, and again I have to state that this is, for lack of a better term, an arm's-length board. The request from Tourism Saskatchewan will be . . . and the monies allocated in this budget are for marketing activities within Saskatchewan and outside of Saskatchewan. It's another building capacity issue within Tourism Saskatchewan. So that's my understanding.

Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Chair, just something that I failed to do right at the beginning. I just wanted to thank the minister and her officials for the questions that were delivered from supplementary estimates. We had a number of questions. So I just wanted to thank her very much for those.

The Chair: — Question, Mr. Furber? Real quick.

Mr. Furber: — Yes. I understand that we're past our time now, and I just want to thank the minister and her officials for answering all our questions today. Two hours can be a bit onerous at times, but thanks much for being here.

Hon. Ms. Tell: — Thank you, and the two hours just flew by. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: — Being past 4 o'clock, we will now adjourn. I'll thank you all very much, and we can report that we played well together today.

[The committee adjourned at 16:01.]