



STANDING COMMITTEE ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS AND JUSTICE

Hansard Verbatim Report

No. 3 – June 16, 2016



Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

Twenty-Eighth Legislature

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL
AFFAIRS AND JUSTICE**

Ms. Laura Ross, Chair
Regina Rochdale

Mr. Doyle Vermette, Deputy Chair
Cumberland

Ms. Lori Carr
Estevan

Ms. Lisa Lambert
Saskatoon Churchill-Wildwood

Mr. David Marit
Wood River

Mr. Warren Michelson
Moose Jaw North

Mr. Warren Steinley
Regina Walsh Acres

[The committee met at 14:30.]

The Chair: — Well good afternoon, everyone. The time is now 2:30, and we will be here for two and a half hours. This is the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Justice. And so welcome, everyone. We have myself, Laura Ross. I'm the Chair. And substituting in for Doyle Vermette is Warren McCall. We also have member Lori Carr, Lisa Lambert, Dave Marit, Warren Michelson, and Warren Steinley.

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

Subvote (PC01)

The Chair: — So today we will be considering the estimates for the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport. We will now begin our considerations for vote 27, Parks, Culture and Sport, central management and services subvote (PC01). Minister Docherty is here with his officials. Minister, please introduce your officials, make your opening comments. And I'm going to remind the officials, when they first come to answer questions, to introduce themselves.

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Great. Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to answer your questions regarding the estimates for my ministry. First I'd like to do some introductions and make some brief remarks.

The officials I have with me here today from the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport are Lin Gallagher, deputy minister and CEO [chief executive officer] of the Provincial Capital Commission; Twyla MacDougall, the assistant deputy minister of Parks; Scott Brown, assistant deputy minister of stewardship; Nancy Cherney, assistant deputy minister of the Provincial Capital Commission; Gerry Folk, executive director of cultural planning and development branch; Darin Banadyga, executive director of sport, recreation and stewardship; Bob McEachern, executive director, parks services; Leanne Thera, executive director, strategic and corporate services; Byron Davis, the director of facilities; Lynette Halvorsen, director of corporate services; and Amanda Plummer, my chief of staff. And thank you all for joining us here today.

Madam Chair, as you know, the theme of this year's budget is Keep Saskatchewan Strong. Our government made a commitment during the recent election campaign to keep Saskatchewan strong. We campaigned on that promise, and on April 4th we were elected on that promise.

The Finance minister stood in the House just a couple of weeks ago and reiterated our commitment to keep Saskatchewan strong. We will keep our economy strong. We will keep the province's finances strong. And we will keep Saskatchewan's position in Canada strong. Budget 2016-17 is a budget that has no tax increases, controls spending, invests in people, invests in infrastructure. I look forward to sharing with you today how my ministry will contribute to the goal of keeping our province strong. Our ministry will continue to preserve our cultural and historical resources. We'll also continue to contribute to a high quality of life for Saskatchewan residents through access to

sport and recreation activities and through our parks.

The ministry continues to collaborate with sector partners in the arts and culture areas to support and strengthen our province's creative industries. The Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport 2016-17 budget includes a \$25 million increase to provide the final payment to the city of Regina for the Regina stadium project. This will fulfill the province's \$80 million commitment to the city of Regina. That project is still on time and on budget, and the stadium will be fully open in 2017.

Two point one million dollars to the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association, which is fully offset by revenue from Saskatchewan Government Insurance and reflects the requirements of the snowmobile trail agreement. The increase will allow the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association to fulfill its mandated responsibilities as trail manager and will ensure the trail system is accessible, safe, and well maintained into the future.

Five hundred thousand dollars, which is the first of three instalments to Swift Current to support the operations and hosting of the Western Canada Summer Games to be held in August 2019. The agreement is a three-year, \$1.5 million total provincial commitment beginning this year.

Total budget for capital expenditures in parks is \$6.6 million for improvements and upgrades in provincial parks in 2016-17. Of course this follows several years of record infrastructure funding and the completion of investing an additional \$10 million over four years into the provincial park system. In 2015 government met its commitment of investing an additional \$10 million over four years into the provincial park system for a total investment of \$53 million in capital projects and maintenance over that four-year time frame. Projects undertaken during this commitment include the development of two new campgrounds, upgrading or replacement of service centres, extensive campsite electrical expansion and upgrading, water and waste water system upgrades, new and enhanced boat launches, and new campsite furnishings.

Total funding for the provincial park system since forming government is more than \$200 million. This funding includes capital expenditures and investment, operational funding, and parks programming. New programs are being offered in provincial parks such as the learn to camp program, learn to fish program, and the cultural access pass which provides newcomers free entry to day use areas within parks.

Madam Chair, we are very proud of our investments into provincial parks and believe they have contributed to the record visitation levels we have seen in recent years. Saskatchewan's provincial parks and recreation sites hit a new attendance record of nearly 3.9 million visits in 2015.

With increased attendance also comes increased operating costs. To help offset these costs and continue to offer service, our visitors have come to expect a small increase which occurred in the parks' fees.

Reviewing our programs and assessing whether client needs are being met occurs regularly. After reviewing the active families

benefit program, we realized it wasn't doing what we hoped it would. The active families benefit was originally intended to increase participation by children in all kinds of activities to help them be more active. However it didn't really do that. One issue with that tax credit was that those who would most benefit from the credit often lack the resources to pay initial fees or equipment costs for activities up front. There was a decrease in my ministry's budget this year of \$5.5 million due to the elimination of the active families benefit program. Better support for these families is available through programs at the community level such as those administered through the lotteries trust fund.

Some examples of current lottery-trust funded investments that reduce barriers to participation, this is from 2014-15 . . . The community grant programs, \$5.4 million, distributes grants to every community and First Nations band in Saskatchewan to support local sport, culture, and recreation programming. It includes \$587,000 to First Nations.

Creative Kids, which is \$700,000, and KidSport Saskatchewan, \$1.7 million, charitable giving programs designed to reduce financial barriers for children and youth to participate in sport and culture programs.

Districts for sport, culture, and recreation — \$1.7 million; in northern district, point eight million dollars — promote the coordinated delivery of sport, culture, and recreation at the regional and local level. The northern district for sport, culture, and recreation is funded at a higher level.

Dream Brokers program, which is \$985,000, supports Dream Broker positions working with inner-city schools to help children, youth, and their families facing social and financial barriers connect to sport, culture, and recreation programs.

FSIN [Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations] annual funding: \$167,000 to enhance coordination in service of sport, culture, and recreation opportunities by the FSIN and encourage linkages between FSIN and the lottery-funded system.

Northern Community & School Recreation Coordinator Program is \$1.3 million, and that supports 22 coordinator positions based in 25 northern schools to work with volunteers to offer community sport, culture, and recreation programs.

\$3.2 million to other programs targeted to benefit First Nations, Métis, and low-income people, for example: tribal council coordinators, \$466,000; First Nations games, \$160,000; Métis community sport, \$83,000; Wanuskewin, \$204,000; Aboriginal arts and culture leadership program, \$300,000; and the Aboriginal Friendship Centre is \$150,000.

There is also a small decrease of \$23,000 to the Community Initiatives Fund. The slight decrease is based on projected Casino Regina and Moose Jaw profits for 2016-17. Estimates of casino profits are softening due to a maturing gaming market, and therefore the percentage due to flow through to the fund is projected to decrease slightly.

Madam Chair, those are just some of the programs that seek to reduce the barriers to participation.

A decrease of \$540,000 due to elimination of funding to five urban parks — Wakamow, Chinook Parkway, Pehonan, Battlefords River Valley, and Tatagwa Parkway. In the past, these urban parks have been jointly funded by government, the cities, and rural municipalities. Since 2007-08 the Government of Saskatchewan has provided record grants, an increase of more than 100 per cent to municipalities through municipal revenue sharing.

Moose Jaw has increased from \$2,822,796 in 2007-08 to \$7.266 million and change in 2016-17, and that's an increase of 157 per cent. Swift Current has increased from 1.3 million and change in 2007-08 to 3.385 million in 2016-17 which is an increase of 158 per cent. Battleford has increased \$407,000 in 2007-08 to \$934,742 in '16-17 which is an increase of 129 per cent. North Battleford has increased from 1.158 million in 2007-08 to \$3.032 million in 2016-17, an increase of 162 per cent. Weyburn has increased from \$828,000 in '07-08 to \$2.289 million in '16-17, an increase of 176 per cent. Prince Albert has increased from \$2.999 million in '07-08 to \$7.671 million in '16-17, 156 per cent increase.

After multiple years of providing increased grants which are tied to the PST [provincial sales tax], the government is now asking those communities to take financial responsibility for their urban parks. The government's municipal revenue sharing program distributes funding to municipalities who in turn make decisions about local funding priorities. Madam Chair, those are some of the noteworthy changes in our 2016-17 budget.

Also noteworthy are some things that have not changed. I'm pleased to report we have maintained steady funding to most of our third parties including Creative Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Arts Board, Wanuskewin Heritage Park, the Saskatchewan Science Centre, the Western Development Museum, Wascana Centre Authority, Meewasin Valley Authority, the Saskatchewan Heritage Foundation, and the Provincial Archives of Saskatchewan.

We have maintained funding to Main Street Saskatchewan. Main Street Saskatchewan supports Saskatchewan's plan for growth by investing in and promoting the revitalization of historic downtowns and commercial areas. Five new communities were accepted this past year into the Main Street Saskatchewan program. The Humboldt Downtown Improvement District and North Lakes Economic Development Corporation, the town of Spiritwood have been accepted to the program's top accredited tier. The Carrot River Community Branding Committee, the Redvers Regional Agricultural and Commercial Endeavours Committee, and North Battleford Business Improvement District Corporation have been accepted at the affiliate level. The new communities join Swift Current, Melfort, Regina, Watrous, Kerrobert, Nipawin, Moose Jaw, Langenburg, and Shellbrook which entered the program in 2014, and Prince Albert, Maple Creek, Indian Head, and Wolseley which entered in 2011 during the program's pilot phase.

We have once again offered the community rink affordability grant to communities across the province over the past four years since its inception. The program has granted \$6.4 million, supporting the operations of indoor skating and curling rinks in 392 communities all over Saskatchewan. The grants help

support operations and minor capital upgrades.

We continue to provide stable funding to the Royal Saskatchewan Museum which continues to deliver excellent services and programming to the public. I'm not sure if you've heard, but the RSM [Royal Saskatchewan Museum] recently led a process to let the Saskatchewan public choose our provincial fossil. The winner was Scotty the T. Rex. Woo-hoo.

Also ongoing right now is *Snakes Alive*, a new temporary exhibit at the museum which features all nine species of snakes naturally found in Saskatchewan. The focus of this live exhibit is to entertain and inspire a deeper understanding of nature by featuring the intricate beauty of wildlife found right here in our own province.

[14:45]

We also continued to provide funding to Government House which is celebrating its 125th anniversary throughout the 2016 calendar year. *Our Stories: Artifacts Tell All!* is a new feature exhibit that shares the history of Government House over the last 125 years through the stories of various original artifacts. It features a number of unique artifacts along with multimedia and interactive programming elements. The exhibit is open to the public free of charge during regular hours and will remain on display until October 31st, 2016.

In closing, thank you for the opportunity to speak today. Madam Chair, this is a budget that controls spending. This is also a budget that invests in infrastructure and in people, this budget that includes no tax increases, and it is a budget that will keep Saskatchewan strong. My officials and I would now be happy to answer any questions that committee members may have. Thank you.

The Chair: — Well thank you very much, Minister. We appreciate your opening remarks and look forward to the proceedings. Are there any questions on these estimates? Mr. McCall.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Madam Chair. There certainly are some questions. First off though, welcome to the minister and officials for the consideration of these estimates with Parks, Culture and Sport. Just by way of explanation, if we could go through the different subvotes first and then come back around to a more thematic line of inquiry, just to give you a heads-up on that.

But I guess a good place to start would be with the parks, subvote (PC12). Provincial parks program, a slight reduction there. I guess it raises some questions in terms of the impact of the fire season last year and how that might be remediated in terms of different assets of the parks that were affected, as well as other questions. But if you could tell us a bit more about the first line item in terms of the provincial parks program.

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Thanks for the question. The fire season last year, it resulted in some significant damage to Lac La Ronge Provincial Park in particular. Two campsites suffered a fair amount of fire damage. Wadin Bay and Nemeiben campgrounds in particular, those two suffered a fair amount. But part of this is, if you look at it, I mean it's a boreal forest

and this is, fire is part of renewal. It doesn't necessarily help provincial parks when the campsites burn, but in terms of boreal forests and natural rejuvenation, it's certainly part of that natural process.

So in terms of getting ready for this particular park season, our park staff have worked, they've worked very hard. We've got to the point of 50 per cent of those campsites in those two particular campgrounds are operational. So it's a work-in-progress, as you can well imagine, but at this point we've got them up to 50 per cent.

You had a particular question in terms of . . . What was it again?

Mr. McCall: — Just in terms of the expenditure being marginally reduced from last year to this, are there funds that are set aside as contingency to address the threat of a great number of these parks being out there in the great boreal forest, as the minister has indicated? But how is that addressed? Does it require additional expenditure or reallocation of expenditure? How is that risk addressed by the ministry?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Yes, thanks for the question. I think you're pointing in particular to the parks capital that had dropped by a fair amount, \$7.49 million, and that's attributable to the . . . We've met our four-year commitment of investing \$10 million into parks capital, so that's the final piece that, in terms of our commitment of \$10 million, that was the final piece. So our commitment was done, so we've decreased . . . Yes, that's about a \$3.499 million decrease due to the completion of that four-year, \$10 million commitment, and also the decrease is a result of reducing our base parks capital budget 4.45 million.

Mr. McCall: — The minister's getting a little bit ahead of the question, and certainly we'll get into that particular line item. But again, in terms of if that is where in fact things like remediating damage due to wildfire, I guess I'm looking for greater insight into how you plan for the . . . What sort of contingent funds are incorporated into the figures we see here so that when something happens like the wildfire season and the impact on Nemeiben and Wadin Bay take place, where do those funds come from?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Thanks. We'll bring an expert up. We're bringing an expert.

Mr. McCall: — All right.

Mr. Davis: — Hello. Byron Davis, director of facilities branch. With regard to the capital program, and with regard specifically to the campgrounds that experienced fires, we are investing some capital money in re-electrifying and getting those water systems and that type of thing up and running again for this year. We do address that through funding under the capital program and have adjusted priorities somewhat to address those specific issues.

Mr. McCall: — So there's a reallocation within the line item.

Mr. Davis: — There was planned electrification for those campgrounds to upgrade electrical systems for instance, and we

are proceeding with those upgrades. In terms of the water system, you know, and getting those things up and running, there are some allocations but also the clearing of deadfall trees and that was done through the operations. So there's been, it's not solely under the capital program that this is being addressed, but under the capital portion we are dealing with the facilities-related issues.

Mr. McCall: — Year to year, how does that risk get managed? Do you have a contingent amount within the capital fund or operations or both? How do you address that?

Mr. Davis: — Well in terms of the capital program we do identify priorities in several different areas whether it be roadwork, electrification, boat launches, buildings, the different categories. So we obviously did refocus our, you know, efforts towards those items that needed to be replaced at those campgrounds within those categories in our budget submission. But they are, those particular campgrounds are identified for upgrading under our capital program submission.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you for that. I guess if you could, moving back to the provincial parks programs, if you could just sort of — and also bear in mind that you've got a brand new critic who's trying to gain a greater understanding of all the great things that Parks, Culture and Sport does — but if you could, in terms of the provincial parks programs, what does that represent? Is that primarily operations and wages for staff? How does that expenditure get made?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — I'll let our deputy minister have a go.

Ms. Gallagher: — Lin Gallagher, deputy minister, Parks, Culture and Sport. We have money that runs our provincial parks. As you see, under the line items they're divided into several different areas. So the provincial park programs would be some of the staff that operate out of the Regina office that wouldn't . . . and within the parks that aren't part of the Commercial Revolving Fund. So we operate our budget with both the vote that you're talking about as well as we have a commercial revolving fund.

The Commercial Revolving Fund is a combination of both . . . We have money that we're subsidized as well as our revenue from the park system to operate the parks. So there are two different funds. So out of the provincial park programs line that you're talking about, there would be some programming that goes on in that area.

One of the decreases that came out of that area is actually, we paid for geo-levy funding, so it's part of where we access some of the satellite remote imagery and that type of information. We were paying it directly out of parks. It was a decision of government to move that collectively to the Ministry of Environment. So you would see a reduction because that money was transferred to the Ministry of Environment, as well as that was offset a bit by there was some increase in that area for wages and different incremental changes.

And the other line item would be the parks capital, which we've talked about. And then the Commercial Revolving Fund is another line item. And I've mentioned how that is the combination . . . We try to keep the Commercial Revolving

Fund where we're earning about 60 per cent of the revenue in our parks, and that's how we balance our setting the fees within the parks.

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Yes, and in particular for next year's budget we're looking at maybe 61 per cent because we increased fees by a dollar in some instances, but basically instead of 60 we're looking at maybe 61 per cent.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you for that. I guess — and this telescopes out into other areas — I'm just looking for all the different line items that are either a slight reduction or flatlined. Of course there's an inflationary pressure from wages, just the cost of doing business that has to get made up somewhere else, so I'm presuming that . . . I guess if the minister could . . . How many collective bargaining agreements are involved in terms of the folks that do the good work through Parks, Culture and Sport and certainly with the different third parties? How does that get reckoned with when the budget is either flatlined or slightly reduced or substantially reduced?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Thanks for the question. The majority of the employees would fall under the auspices of SGEU [Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union], under their collective agreement, so one union. And in terms of the Commercial Revolving Fund, that would be reflected, you'd see a reflection there in regards to negotiated salary increases. So it would be reflected there and . . . Yes, so just the one.

Mr. McCall: — Under that one collective bargaining agreement, what's the wage increase anticipated for this year?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Thanks. We think it's 1.6 per cent, whatever was negotiated for everybody across government. So that would reflect the majority of . . . well the in-scope employees that are being reflected by SGEU. So 1.6, we believe.

[15:00]

Mr. McCall: — So looking at the FTE [full-time equivalent] counts, that has a slight increase of one position. I guess how does it go to increasing the targets for the Commercial Revolving Fund in terms of revenues accruing to the ministry? How do those inflationary pressures get addressed when the overall line of expenditure is remaining flat or being reduced? How do you make up the difference?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — I'll let the assistant deputy minister of Parks have a go.

Ms. MacDougall: — Hi. I am Twyla MacDougall and I just wanted to make a comment on that. What doesn't show in estimates is the revenue portion that we collect and that we are projecting will increase, based on the revenue fee increases and our visitation expectations. That additional revenue will go towards our increased operating costs. And if we don't meet those revenue projections, we would absorb and make changes within our operating budget.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you for that. The minister in his remarks at the outset talked about increased visitorship with the parks. I imagine that figures into the plans you've got for the

Commercial Revolving Fund. You'd also referenced fee increases. Could you enumerate those for the committee? Or if you want to give us the highlights and table the . . . If you've got so many fee increases that it's going to take such a long time, we're willing to take a paper submission but . . .

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — All right, thanks. Yes, it's just my big binder, but we'll be okay. So for instance in terms of camping nightly fees, a full-service site type went from \$35, which is the current rate, to \$36, which was 2.9 per cent increase. An electric site went from 27 to 28; a non-electric went from 17 to 18; an economy spot went from 15 to 16.

Group camping: a small group . . . sorry, group electric sites, small group electric sites went from \$108 to \$112; a medium group electric site went from \$162 to 168; a large group electric site went from 216 to 224. And then a group non-electric went from, in terms of a small site, went from 68 to 72; a medium went from 102 to 108; a large went from 136 to 144. A group economy site: a small group economy site went from 60 to 64; a medium went from 90 to 96; and a large went from 120 to 128.

And we take time to take a look at other jurisdictions as well to see how we stack up with other provinces, and took that into account to keep ourselves attractive. But that's basically . . . Those are the increases.

Mr. McCall: — What's the amount of revenue increase anticipated from the increase in fees?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — \$583,000.

Mr. McCall: — Are there other fee increases throughout the remainder of the budget, while we're at it, that the ministry could provide for the committee?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Seasonal camp rates went up, and our entry permit rate went up slightly as well, so our daily rate went from . . . It's currently \$7 and it went to 8. A three-day pass went from \$17 to \$19; a weekly pass went from 25 to 28; and the annual pass went from 50 to \$55.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you for the answer, Mr. Minister. In terms of, if you could just state for the record when those were announced.

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Yes, thanks for the question. January we made the announcement so our campers could prepare. And it went for a while, and April we had our reservation launch. So just to give people an opportunity to know what to anticipate.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks for getting that on the record. In terms of the parks capital projects and parks preventative maintenance, what, in terms of the analysis that the ministry does on an ongoing basis, what, you know, what constitutes adequate? What are the urgent projects and what's the dollar amount entailed there? And is there a gap between the expenditure allocated here today and what the need is as assessed by the ministry?

Mr. Davis: — Yes. Byron Davis. As the minister mentioned, we've had, you know, record investment in capital program over the past several years, most recently the four-year

enhanced program which put a total of about 53 million in capital maintenance and capital projects into the parks system.

We obviously want to renew and upgrade our existing park facilities as much as we are able to, and there's always a need. We are in the process . . . We've introduced a structured asset management system over the past couple of years to get a more precise handle on the infrastructure deficit and the capital needs throughout the system. And we're still in the process of, you know, finalizing just where that is at in terms of doing, you know, site inspections and analysis of park facilities and documenting them in the program.

But we do use a, you know, we analyze on terms of safety issues of course, basic infrastructure needs, you know, facilities to support the visitor services across the network, and we prioritize accordingly.

Mr. McCall: — What's the dollar amount that comes along with that analysis for this year, in terms of does this expenditure exceed that identified need or not?

Mr. Davis: — Well again we have the 5.05 million in the parks capital projects and 1.607 in the capital maintenance. So that consists of our capital program. Of course there's been a reduction from previous years so we can always use additional funds, but given the circumstances and the investments in the past few years, we've done very well in that regard. We hope to again increase that amount in the future as we refine where our needs are and the value of those.

Mr. McCall: — In terms of the structured assessment that you talked about, when will that methodology be completed and when will it be producing the numbers that folks can understand in terms of what the overall infrastructure deficit would be and what's the game plan going forward?

Mr. Davis: — Yes, we do have a plan to fully implement the asset management system. We have been focusing on buildings and equipment most recently and then going to expand it to the linear infrastructure which includes water and waste water facilities, those types of things that are a little harder to determine the condition and rating of. But we expect that in the current fiscal year we will have all major park buildings and equipment, have site assessments done and recorded so we will be able to determine the overall infrastructure deficit for those categories of assets.

Mr. McCall: — Is there a precise point in time that you anticipate that being determined?

Mr. Davis: — Through this fiscal year for certain. We are conducting site assessments through the summer and fall, or have planned for the summer and fall, and will be compiling that data so that we, again by the end of the fiscal year, we intend to have those categories of assets assessed and recorded.

Mr. McCall: — And I would presume, would it inform the budget submission for the ministry going into next fiscal?

Mr. Davis: — Yes, depending on the availability and the timing of the information. We have some information on that already that we use but we don't have the complete picture, so

we're getting there with our assessments.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you for that. In terms of moving along, regional parks, again flat in terms of the expenditure. I guess if the minister could give us a bit of a précis in terms of what's involved in that 1.023 million that is being expended and how inflationary pressures will be addressed in that particular line item.

Ms. MacDougall: — I'll address that question. That one line item is specifically for capital projects in the regional parks and it's a matching grant program that the Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association administers on our behalf. And it has been very successful and just maintaining this level of funding is deemed as a real positive to the regional parks. Our investment more than triples what they get back from the community. So for every \$1 we invest into capital, right now they're receiving over \$3 from the community.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you for that. Moving along to urban parks, going from 582 to 169, can the minister describe what's happening there again for the record?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Thank you. That is reflective of funding for five of the seven urban parks was cut. So we were . . . Government funding for the five urban parks was eliminated, for a cost savings of \$540,000 over the last fiscal year. Over the past, urban parks have been jointly funded by government, the cities, and in some cases universities and rural municipalities. And so since 2007-08, the Government of Saskatchewan has provided record grants, an increase of more than 100 per cent to municipalities through municipal revenue sharing. And after multiple years providing increased grants, and that's tied to PST, government is now asking those communities to take financial responsibility for their urban parks. The government's municipal revenue-sharing program distributes funding to municipalities who in turn make decisions about their local funding priorities. So that was the decision. That's what we've done.

Mr. McCall: — One of the things about the revenue-sharing formula was that there was a significant amount of work done out through the municipal sector in terms of identifying what assets were there and what the need was. I do not recall at any time the notion being sort of previewed that there's going to come a time when we're going to say that we've done such a great job on revenue sharing but you should take on these urban parks.

In terms of the revenue and the different sort of asset assessment that went on and the lead-up to the revenue-sharing formula being adopted and the point of PST being chosen as the mechanism to deliver those funds, again I have zero recollection of urban parks being presaged to some kind of, you know, enjoy them while you can because the time is going to come. In terms of the revenue sharing that was adopted, that went to the needs that were there that are abundant and many in terms of basic infrastructure. So I don't know that I quite get the argument that revenue sharing's been going so well that now you can take on the urban parks.

[15:15]

So I guess was . . . In terms of the minister's understanding of the file, were urban parks ever singled out as some kind of a, you know, this is not going to be funded for years to come but there'll be a day when we think revenue sharing's going to be adequate to funding the urban park? So can you help me understand that better, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Thanks. It was a difficult budget. These are difficult decisions to make and we thought in this particular case that the funding decisions in regards to urban parks are best made by the municipalities and cities themselves. So that's where we left it.

Mr. McCall: — I guess revenue sharing was based on an understanding again, in terms of what assets were available to each of the parties, what revenue streams were available to the parties and what the respective needs were for the parties. So in terms of off-loading this to those municipalities, it's in some ways going to the fundamental nature of those deals in terms of what was promised as an ongoing, reliable stream of revenue for those municipalities. It wasn't previewed as some kind of, there's going to come a day where you're going to have to be off-loading this into the mix.

So again I think this does damage to the revenue-sharing deal that has worked quite well for the municipalities and quite well for the province, the fundamental understanding of who had what for needs and who had what for possible revenues. This is off-loading those expenditures onto those municipalities. I guess I'd like to hear more from the minister in terms of what sort of consultation took place with the sector in terms of arriving at this decision.

Certainly the case of the regional parks, there was the reference made to the Saskatchewan Parks and Rec Association. There's of course an umbrella group for the urban parks that had some pretty hard words to say on budget day and thereafter in terms of the way that they were blindsided by this, this particular cut. So was there any consultation that took place or any sort of advance understanding that those people are out there doing that important work might have benefited from? Or is it in fact what happened where they found out on budget day and it was a blindside?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Thanks for the question. The five urban park representatives, they were told on budget day.

Mr. McCall: — So no advance notice and nothing to get them prepared other than, we're going to keep Saskatchewan strong. Urban parks play a vital role in . . . Certainly it's, you know, referenced in your annual reports and plans, the importance of parks to getting people out there and vital and enjoying their lives and improving their health. There was no advance notice or no sort of, you know, preparing the urban parks folks for what was a pretty significant blow on budget day.

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Well thanks again. I'm not sure that was a question, but at this point, I mean, the parks have been able to develop their resources with their funding to date and yes, they were told on budget day. There wasn't any advance notice, but it is a budget and again, it was a tough budget. And we made a decision, and they were told that day.

Mr. McCall: — In terms of the \$169,000 that remains in that expenditure, can the minister describe what that will be going for?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Yes, that 169,000 is outside the statutory funding. That 169,000 is supplementary funding to Meewasin Valley Authority, so 140,000 is their statutory funding; 169 is their supplementary funding; that takes you to the 909.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks for that. In terms of the governance of the urban parks . . . And we can get into Meewasin and Wascana soon enough when we get through the expenditures. But in terms of the five in question, what role does the ministry play in terms of the governance of those entities?

Mr. McEachern: — Thank you. Bob McEachern. The ministry meets a couple of times a year with the provincial association, ASUPCA [Association of Saskatchewan Urban Parks and Conservation Agencies], and, you know, that includes all seven urban parks. And generally speaking, other than some general discussion about things that would affect all of them, the province doesn't get very involved directly in their operations. There's four parks that do not have Acts or legislation and there's an agreement with them that outline the funding and some reporting requirements, but by and large the parks are left to the municipalities to manage themselves.

Mr. McCall: — And so that of course would leave the Wakamow Valley Authority which legislation is under consideration at present, Wascana Centre Authority, and Meewasin. As regards to the Wakamow Valley Authority, is there an appointee that is made by the provincial government to that board?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Thanks for the question. There is three provincial appointees on that board in Wakamow.

Mr. McCall: — Could the minister state for the record who those appointees are?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Sure thanks. So it's an eight-member board and the three provincial appointees are Don Butchko, Greg Lawrence, and Paul Spriggs. Don and Greg, their terms expire in 2018. Paul Spriggs's term expires in 2017. So they're staggered board appointments.

Mr. McCall: — Those individuals would of course be involved in the annual planning exercises of the authority, would they not?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Yes, sorry. We're not aware of what they would do on the board.

Mr. McCall: — But they're provincial government appointees to that board.

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Yes, they sit on the board but their fiduciary responsibility is to the board. It's not to government.

Mr. McCall: — But who appoints them to that board? Who recommends that they be appointed to that board? Who nominates them to be appointed to that board?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — As minister, I appoint them, but we, as a ministry, we don't influence their board work. But to answer your first question, it's appointed through order in council by the minister . . . well through cabinet, but the minister makes the recommendations.

Mr. McCall: — One of the appointees that you've referenced, he's the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Moose Jaw Wakamow, is he not?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — That is correct.

Mr. McCall: — Is there any sort of recognition of the potential conflict of interest that that might put him in, in terms of being privy to what's happening in the budget and, like you say, serving the fiduciary responsibility to the Moose Jaw . . . or to the Wakamow Valley Authority?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Yes, he would have to, the member would have to declare his conflict in advance. And also he's got a fiduciary responsibility, a legal responsibility to that board and to ensure that he's not in a conflict. So he'd have to declare any time he was in a conflict. Sorry, if he felt he was in conflict he would, he'd declare one. Yes, I'm wondering what . . . where we're going. But that's okay.

Mr. McCall: — Well where we're going is, if you've got an individual that presumably has advance knowledge of the provincial contribution being wiped out to the Wakamow Valley Authority and, as the minister has stated, has a fiduciary responsibility to that board, I guess, you know . . . Was there a conflict of interest declared? Or was there, what sort of actions were taken to ensure that that conflict was properly handled?

[15:30]

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Yes, it's hard for me to comment because I'm not aware of how he conducts himself on that board. I've never heard any issues in relation to his conduct so I don't know how he, or when he, or if he ever decided he was in conflict and recused himself. I've never heard anything.

Mr. McCall: — The minister has responsibility for oversight of that Act, which is why of course you're bringing it forward to be repealed. The minister is responsible for the provincial government appointees to that board. And again, they've got a fiduciary responsibility that becomes primarily about serving the interests of the Wakamow Valley Authority.

Does this all look fine to the minister or is there not some kind of at least recognition that this is a pretty awkward position that that individual is in?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Thank you. Thanks for the question. So I'll start with, government has always had members appointed to boards and commissions even prior to 2007 as you're aware. He wasn't in conflict because there was no board . . . there wasn't a board meeting that we're aware of. And he wouldn't be part of developing the budget. So as you know, budgets are embargoed. So he would have been, he would not have been privy to that piece. He was made known as per everybody else in this House.

Mr. McCall: — So again though, he would have, he would have been notified as everyone else in this House? There's no sort of advance knowledge that is accorded to the government caucus in terms of the contexts, contents of the budget, let alone budget finalization? Is that what the minister is saying for the committee?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — As the member . . . I mean it's within days, the government caucus would be . . . but we're not talking on any expanded amount of time here. We're talking, we're talking a few days.

Mr. McCall: — So in terms of Meewasin Valley Authority and the Wascana Centre, can the minister describe what the involvement is of the ministry and the provincial government in the governance of those two entities?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — All right. So Meewasin Valley Authority and Wascana, for the purposes of this conversation, they're both two out of the three urban parks in Saskatchewan that they've got their own legislation. And so Meewasin was created as a partnership entity — the province of Saskatchewan, the city of Saskatoon, University of Saskatchewan. Wascana would be city of Regina, University of Regina, province of Saskatchewan. And each partner contributes funding to a specified level and they appoint representatives to both boards.

The Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport has been working with Meewasin Valley Authority over the past two years to review provincial funding, and plans to meet to discuss the outcome of the funding review and future funding once the 2016-17 provincial budget has been presented. And we've been working with Wascana as well.

Mr. McCall: — So who are the appointees for the ministry via an order in council to the Wascana Centre Authority board?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — So I'll start with Meewasin. You want Meewasin and Wascana?

Mr. McCall: — Sure.

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Well it's up, you know . . . What would you like?

Mr. McCall: — Sure.

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Okay. So Meewasin has Roger Parent from the Legislative Assembly, Leanne Nyirfa, Carmen Campbell, and Tracy Arno. And I'll get you Wascana. Right now, we've got four out of five names . . . we'll get you the other name. But we've got Richard Murray, we've got Wayne Clifton, Russ Marchuk, and Al Nicholson, plus one.

Mr. McCall: — So just to clarify, was Mr. Marchuk appointed when he was a Member of the Legislative Assembly and that appointment is carrying through? Or was he appointed after his retirement from elected life?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Thanks for that. On your first comment, so he was appointed as a Member of the Legislative Assembly and it's continued on.

Mr. McCall: — And for the record, as regards Meewasin Valley Authority, the Roger Parent that you're referring to is the member for Meewasin. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Yes, that is correct. And I've got the fifth name for you. Rodney Sieffert is the fifth name for Wascana.

Mr. McCall: — So one of the things that was done in this budget was that you'd serve notice — and you've just referenced this now — serve notice on a review of the provincial government's involvement with the Wascana Centre Authority all together, and the Meewasin Valley Authority all together.

And again, you know, if you've got these decisions to make, at least they have the benefit of notice. They have the benefit of being able to make the case as to what those respective entities see as the provincial involvement in those bodies. That certainly was not afforded to the five other urban parks under question here today. Why not?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Yes, thanks. I'll reiterate. I mean, this is a tough budget and budgets are confidential until they are released, so in this particular case we had two urban parks that were under review for a pocket of time. And they are slightly different in terms of their responsibilities and how they reflect themselves in terms of the seat of government and other pieces. But again, I'll reiterate: these are tough decisions to make. And you know, it would be nice to give notice, but in this particular case, five urban parks found out that day. And we'll keep working in review with the other two parks.

Mr. McCall: — I guess I'll read you a quote from the day after the budget, Mr. Minister. This is from the Association of Saskatchewan Urban Parks and Conservation president, Nancy Styles. She stated on CBC [Canadian Broadcasting Corporation] Radio that . . . Well first she'd said that tears ran down her face after hearing the announcement and then said:

I spoke to the minister and told him it would've been nice to hear this before because . . . I know it's going to be very difficult for these parks to come up with this money and maybe the cities will help, maybe they won't.

And again, that's from CBC Radio the day after the budget. Is there anything that the minister wants to say to someone like the president of the association, Nancy Styles?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Yes, thanks for the question. After the budget release I had an opportunity to talk to Nancy and just, you know, said this is . . . I reflected exactly that. This is a tough budget and, you know, sorry you got told on budget day, but that's the way a budget works. But I did listen. I did hear her and again reflected, these are tough decisions to make and we made them.

Mr. McCall: — I guess the time frame that Ms. Styles was referring to, I think, would have involved the provincial election that we recently went through. I guess, you know, I can't find for the life of me a place where the government, Sask Party, talked about eliminating the funding for five urban parks, let alone putting Wascana Centre Authority and Meewasin Valley

Authority and their relationship to them under review. Did that take place anywhere in the campaign? Am I missing something here, Mr. Minister?

[15:45]

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Yes, thanks for the question. It wouldn't have been, it wouldn't have been part of an election platform. This was part of budget finalization that the ministry went through and we needed to, we needed to find some savings and that was the decision that came up. So you wouldn't have found it in an election platform because it was part of the budget finalization that this ministry went through.

Mr. McCall: — In terms of what I think Ms. Styles is referring to is that of course this would have been good to know at election time. There are certain other things that even in the minister's opening comments, and referring to having gotten the mandate on April 4th, that were part of that campaign, that it flowed forward in terms of public policy, measures directly related to Parks itself, Mr. Minister. Again that something would have been so absent from the campaign . . .

And I imagine what it's like for the five other or for the six others, but for myself as a Regina person, I know very deeply the value that people put on Wascana Centre. So if the provincial government or if a party that was looking to become provincial government had plans for the future of those urban parks, that certainly would have been interesting to see how that worked out in terms of the reception of the people in those centres and how they might have cast their vote or the interest they might have taken in those issues at election time, which again back to the minister's opening statement, took place on April 4th. So that mere weeks later, there are decisions being made to cut funding and to put the future of the provincial government's relationship to Wascana Centre Authority and the Meewasin Valley Authority on review. Does that, you know, do folks . . . is that a valid concern that people would have, that they weren't getting the straight goods from the party that has formed the government? Or does the minister think that that's fine and good and that we can maintain that sort of notion that, well there's the election and then there's the budget. Which is it, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Well we were in discussions with our . . . with both Meewasin and Wascana in relation to the review, which was ongoing well before the election. So those two parties, we've been in discussions with all of our partners and we continue to. So there was no decision made at that time. The decision that was made in this particular budget was status quo funding for those particular, for those two parks, and we're going to continue again to work with our partners and figure out the next steps.

Mr. McCall: — So again though, Mr. Minister, what's the difference between those two entities and the other five? One of which, there's a legislative involvement on the part of provincial government with the Wakamow Valley Authority. Again if you're going to go through something as wrenching as this, how is it that you can get that year's advance notice to marshal the cases and to do the work? How is it that it was fair for those two entities and, you know, I've got more to say about those two entities coming. But in terms of the other five, how

are they not afforded the same sort of courtesy?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Thanks. Well number one, much more significant funding for Wascana and Meewasin. And those two entities were under review, so there's fundamentally . . . vastly different.

Mr. McCall: — So if I could understand the parameters of the review that Meewasin Valley Authority and Wascana Centre Authority are under, is the minister contending that the kind of ongoing work that is undertaken with those two entities by the ministry and by the provincial government is the same before budget day as it is after budget day?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Thanks. I don't quite understand the question. Can you rephrase it?

Mr. McCall: — The minister said that those two entities are under review. That implies a certain continuity between activities undertaken before the budget and activities taken after the budget. I think there's a reasonable conclusion to be drawn from budget day and the way that Wascana Centre Authority and Meewasin Valley Authority were referenced by the minister at that time, that their ongoing relationship with the provincial government was under review. And given the sort of previously inconceivable notion that that review entails everything, up to and including a complete withdrawal of provincial support and involvement in those two entities, that's what I'm trying to understand here, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Yes. I don't quite understand the question. But before the election and post-budget, we didn't change their funding at all, either of those. So their funding remained completely stable and so I . . . The review is looking at the entities. As I said, we've got two other partners, so we look at things on an ongoing basis. That's what this is. It's an ongoing review. It's not triggered by, it's not triggered by this budget. It was triggered by discussions previous to the election, previous to the budget.

So we're in conversation. And we think it's healthy to have ongoing dialogue and conversation because there's vested interests. And if you look at a map of, for instance Wascana, it's like a number of different puzzle pieces. And does that make, does that make the most sense in regards to the partners? So we have discussions. We have conversations. The authority has done some great work so . . . And that park is a jewel. That park is a jewel for this, for this city, and this province. So we agree. They need to be protected.

Mr. McCall: — I guess, Mr. Minister, are you ruling out withdrawal of provincial funding for those two entities and provincial involvement in those two entities? Are you, are you ruling that out in terms of the review that's going to be intensified over the year to come?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Thanks. We recognize that both Wascana and Meewasin are different and that's why the review's undertaken. And as I've said, the budget has been maintained for '16-17. We don't know what will happen to the funding. If we knew, if we knew the end already, then we wouldn't be doing a review.

Mr. McCall: — So help me out here, Minister. The review's new from budget day. Is that not an accurate statement? The review that Wascana Centre Authority and Meewasin Valley Authority is new and separate and apart from the ongoing work that has gone on for decades in terms of the involvement of the provincial government with those two entities. Is that an accurate statement?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Thank you. No, it's not accurate. The review is part of our ongoing process.

Mr. McCall: — So in terms of every year that the . . . Am I understanding this correctly? Every year that the ministry looks at its relationship with the Wascana Centre Authority and the Meewasin Valley Authority, they've got under active consideration complete withdrawal of funding and involvement in those two entities. Am I understanding that correctly?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Thanks. There's a review every five years. That's the start of the piece. So every five years these programs are reviewed. We get into them at different points along that continuum. We will have discussions and complete a review before any decisions are made. And again we don't know what's going to happen to funding. If we knew that already, we wouldn't be doing this review.

Mr. McCall: — In terms of . . . again I'm doing my best to recall what the minister had to say on budget day. The upshot of what the message from the minister was, the five urban parks have had their funding cancelled and Wascana Centre Authority and Meewasin Valley Authority are under review.

So again is the minister saying that's not what happened on budget day, that this is just an ongoing thing? It's part of the master plan process? It's part of the five-year review? It's all of that? It's separate and apart from what he had to say on budget day?

[16:00]

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Yes, thanks. Thanks for the question. And with the understanding that you were talking about urban parks in terms of the post-budget release and you spoke about the review and knowing for a while that five urban parks had lost funding, I thought that it would be important for us to talk about Meewasin and Wascana who were again on ongoing review, but needed to at least reference where things were at with those two particular parks. And we knew we were going to get some calls from Meewasin Valley and from Wascana, and we did. And so we've had some conversations. And you would've seen Meewasin in the news in relation to asking for more, you know, asking for more money. But we chose to keep their funding stable for this year. And same with Wascana. But again we're having ongoing conversations and that's part of this ongoing move, but knowing full well that five urban parks losing their funding would have triggered an immediate conversation with Meewasin and Wascana — what about, you know, what about us? And then they saw that their particular funding was stable for this year.

Mr. McCall: — Meewasin Valley Authority recently announced the closure and layoff of staff attached to their interpretive centre. So just to, you know, put into context what

the minister is characterizing as stable funding, just to put into context what the minister recognizes the province has been involved with, up to and including having the member for Meewasin serving on that body, I guess, you know, the minister can . . . Please realize this isn't just for my benefit. There are a lot of people that value greatly all of these parks, but from this conversation obviously the decision stands, and we'll continue to work our way through the legislative requirements around Wakamow Valley Authority.

But as regards Meewasin and Wascana, I don't think people were mistaken in taking that as somehow serving notice that a review would be undertaken where the provincial government's involvement — full stop, period — was under review and that the options under consideration are, you know, ranging from complete withdrawal of provincial support and provincial involvement with those two entities to something else.

So again the minister has an opportunity here today to clarify and put some minds at ease in terms of what the future will hold for those two bodies. Can he do that for the committee and for the people that are watching with great interest as to what the future holds for the Wascana Centre Authority and Meewasin Valley Authority?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Thanks. We've been working with Meewasin, Wascana, again for several years as they bring pressures forward. So a review is deemed important to best determine an effective operating model in every year, every budget. So every year, every budget item is under review. So in terms of alleviating concern, their budgets are, both budgets are stable for this year.

Mr. McCall: — Can the minister state for the record what year provincial involvement began with the Meewasin Valley Authority? And can you do the same for the Wascana Centre Authority?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Could you clarify the start point? I'm just trying to understand.

Mr. McCall: — I believe . . .

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — [Inaudible] . . . I got appointed as minister?

Mr. McCall: — No. The provincial government and their involvement with these two entities, does the minister know what that date, when that dates back to, and can he state it for the record?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — I've got half the answer right now. We're just doing some calculations, but *The Meewasin Valley Authority Act* is 1979. And we'll just get you the exact date for Wascana. But they just had a 50th anniversary, so just . . .

Mr. McCall: — I guess in the interest of time, the minister makes the point, the involvement of the provincial government in these entities goes back decades. So that the characterization, every year's a new year, and maybe the provincial government's going to be involved and maybe not, doesn't really give the value that people hold those two entities with near its due.

So again for the minister: in terms of the review that is entailed in the year to come for those two bodies, what's on the table? How is that review going to be conducted? Where will people have an opportunity to stand up and say, I value these urban parks and I value the provincial government playing a role in them? Can the minister make that clear for the committee?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Well we're going to, as this particular budget came through, my and our commitment as ministry, their budgets, Meewasin and Wascana, are stable. So there's our commitment for right now, this budget — stable funding.

Mr. McCall: — Okay. I guess, you know, if the minister wants to . . . I just really don't know what to say. You come through an election where people come forward with their plans, and this was precisely nowhere. But now in terms of even stating what the review's going to look like, where the opportunity for public input is, I can't get a straight answer on that.

So does the minister want to take another crack at telling the public where they can stand up and say that Wascana Centre Authority is valuable to me, Meewasin Valley Authority is valuable to me? And at least in terms of the state of whatever is to come that was afforded to those two entities that wasn't provided to the five other urban parks, at least people will be able to make their intentions clear. Can the minister provide that information to the committee?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — All right. Well it could be the same answer. I mean we're going to meet with our partners and we're going to continue to review. The fact that we've said it, that we're going to review, it is public. I mean that has been said on the record. I've said that publicly. I've said that to the press. We already know we're embarking along that path of review so I think it . . . Yes, we're there. We're going to continue to work with our partners because that's what we've been doing for as long as they've been open.

Mr. McCall: — I guess, you know, I've given the minister an opportunity to rule out the off-loading, cutting option that was seized upon with five of the seven urban parks. And you know, there's an opportunity still to make that clear for folks as these other two parks are under review. Can the minister . . . just to ask you one last time. Can you rule out that this is going to be an exercise where the end point consists of off-loading and cutting loose the provincial involvement with these two entities?

[16:15]

The Chair: — I'm going to interrupt here. As Chair, I have the opportunity to speak up, and at this point I will. The member has asked this same question numerous times. The minister has answered to the best of his ability. I know you had expressed that there was some concern about time and how much you had to ask questions, so I'm going to encourage you to move forward and ask another question, a different, not the same.

Mr. McCall: — So when does this review report? When is the public made aware of the findings of the review? Because certainly they've been made privy to, for example, the master plan that was recently released for Wascana Centre Authority. As regards this particular review, when does the public get

to know?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Thanks for the question. We haven't finalized any time lines, but certainly with the announcement of a review, we're going to move this forward.

Mr. McCall: — Going to fast-track it?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — No, but there's no time line that I can announce today.

Mr. McCall: — So you've got a fast track but no time line. Am I understanding that correctly . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Will people find out before the next budget?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Yes, that's our intention.

Mr. McCall: — Is this being considered under the transformational change agenda subcommittee of cabinet, or is it part of the broader work that the ministry undertakes? Or is it both?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — This particular example, this is ongoing business as usual. This wouldn't be something we would consider as transformational.

Mr. McCall: — In terms of what the ministry is submitting to the transformational change subcommittee of cabinet chaired by the Finance minister and populated by the Deputy Premier and the Minister of Justice, has the ministry made a submission to that body yet?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — This is ongoing work in terms of submissions, and so we've been challenged to look at what ideas we can come up with, some larger, some smaller. We're just simply at this point we're asking what ideas can we come up with to better deliver services, other efficiencies. Should it be the role of government on that particular service? So all those questions are being asked. We're looking forward to those ideas coming forward, so we're asking our officials, our staff to look at the particular ministry and what ideas can they come up with. So it's ongoing. The submissions aren't all in because we're still working on them.

Mr. McCall: — Has the ministry made a submission yet for this?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — No, we have not made any submissions to the ministerial committee.

Mr. McCall: — In terms of the planning range for submissions that the ministry will be making, is there anything that the minister will rule out? Is this, everything's on the table, as we've been told? And does that everything include selling off parks? What's on the table, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Well we're prepared to look at all options. But I mean there's going to be some options that are going to drop off the table immediately, that we're not going to entertain. And until I start seeing some of the submissions, then we'll know. But it's really difficult. I don't want to speculate on what the submissions are going to be like because I'm looking forward to seeing what people can come up with.

Mr. McCall: — Moving on through the subvotes into (PC18), in terms of the operational support that is provided — and there is a slight decrease — can the minister describe the various functions of that particular line item as regards operational support throughout the ministry?

Mr. Brown: — I'm Scott Brown, ADM [assistant deputy minister] of stewardship. The operational support area for a budget on this line item includes basically the salaries and operating costs of several of our branches. So that would include our culture branch, heritage operations, and our sport, recreation, and stewardship branch. Within those, the numbers that you see and the changes that you've seen year over year are actually a result of some net internal pieces.

So the first one of those is a small increase for the out-of-scope wages, but at the same time we also had a decrease due to the transfer of our geo-levy funding to the Ministry of Environment that was transferred over. And essentially we had some internal movements around dollars that are reflected there. So that net number you see on operational support is the net of those changes.

Mr. McCall: — I thank Mr. Brown for that. Would it be under this . . . where would the archeological or the cultural heritage protection work of the ministry be housed? Is there a particular line item here that it is contained in, be it the operational support or the support for provincial heritage and culture? Where would that function be housed?

Mr. Brown: — I can actually speak to the heritage operations, the heritage branch. That would be where the archeological work would be. There's a regulatory function tied to the work, so the staff salaries that are included in that work would be in this line item.

Mr. McCall: — Could you describe the archeological component of that line item, and tell the committee a bit about what work it does and FTE complements, sort of, work to date over the last year, things like that.

Mr. Brown: — Sure. So our staff in that branch do work in a number of different areas. They work on the different archeological sites around the province. They would do research and investigations into those to determine the heritage value of those individual spots. They're also involved in reviews of Crown land sales that come through the system. So if you were in a spot where land was up for sale, there's an additional assessment often made by those archeologists as to whether there is sensitivities around that property. If there were sensitivities in place, that land would then be subject to another level of review before it could be sold. And if in fact there were things that need to be protected on that land, then easements would be put in place. Protections would be put in place to preserve the sites and the archeological treasures therein.

If we look generally, the development projects over the last year, they had 2,615 of those that they reviewed to determine the heritage resource impact or other regulatory requirements. As a result of those projects that were reviewed, they had 179 investigation permits that were issued. Those would both be for impact assessment and for scientific research purposes. Officials also field-inspected an additional 17 proposed land

development or Crown land dispositions and regularly responded to newly reported archeological discoveries.

So one of the good things about the branch and their availability, the expertise they bring to the table, is actually that sort of responding to public requests. So if somebody discovers something somewhere in the province, this is the branch that they would contact into. We would then, depending on the nature of the find, deploy archeologists or potentially in partnership involve the Royal Saskatchewan Museum and other people, depending on the nature of the find.

Mr. McCall: — In terms of the work carried out over the last year, and again 2016 . . . or pardon me, 2,615 projects, 179 investigations, I guess could you give us a bit of a characterization of how those break down in terms of work undertaken, different, sort of, causes for those different efforts being undertaken?

Mr. Brown: — I don't have that level of detail with me. I'll have to get back to you on that one.

Mr. McCall: — Okay. In terms of investigations then being conducted, could you provide the committee with a bit more information in terms of where those investigations might wind up, and again what might prompt an investigation?

Mr. Brown: — In a general sense, I guess, if you go through, potentially you would have excavations taking place in some part of the province that could really be anywhere. It could be in an urban environment. It could be in a rural area. Oftentimes you'll have situations where people have disturbed some dirt or maybe moved some things around. Sometimes it's people exploring out in the bush, right? They'll go through and come across something.

Depending on what is found in that case, the archeologists would get engaged. There would be some consultations around what the nature of the find is, and the expertise of staff then would determine whether this is something that's relatively common or if it's something particularly rare and unique to the province. In some cases I know, the Royal Saskatchewan Museum has then become involved as well, and the staff that are experts in that area would weigh in and consult, often with university officials as well. So you'll get different scientific people, will weigh in on these things who have particular expertise. In some cases, the consultations will actually go outside the province.

As we go through these things, it really depends on the nature of the find. But as they evaluate that effectiveness, in some cases there may then be an additional batch of research. There might be field staff that would go out that would do a full inspection of the site. There might be additional excavations required.

Depending on what the nature of it is, then you could see the excavations continue, or whatever the activity was that disturbed this in the first place. But in other cases, they may have to do a full stop to catalogue and assess what the different artifacts are that are found.

Mr. McCall: — In terms of the 179 investigations, how many

of those would have, I guess, intensified or involved that broader involvement of RSM folks or out-of-province expertise? Do you have any sort of sense of what that consists of?

[16:30]

Mr. Brown: — In a general sense, the bulk of the items would be of small significance, and I don't have a specific breakdown for you in terms. But to be really specific, it would be a rare find that would be considered to be significant. We often actually get into a spot where people will even bring forward items that they think are important to them; they have a personal treasure or they're unique to them. But for the folks that see this broad spectrum of material every day, they have different assessments. So some things, the condition of it isn't maybe good enough to be kept, or there isn't a significance of it in terms of whether it's unique to the province or unique to the world.

So as they do these different kinds of investigations, often it is found as a general rule of thumb, that they're not provincially significant in some way, that you would have to stop. A lot of those land assessments that I spoke about are actually on cultivated land, so if there were artifacts there to begin with, they've already been disturbed. And in fact, if you're looking at land that's been actively farmed, it would be disturbed every year as the crops go in, and those kinds of things. So in those cases, those are a low priority I guess in terms of whether there will be significant finds there or not because the soil's already been disturbed.

Typically what they're looking for, at least as I understand from my staff who have expertise in this area, it's those prime areas of undisturbed soil, undisturbed spots where you can really get a true historical record of what's happened. You see that in some of our parklands around the province as well; there's archaeological components to that. And the nice thing about that is, that is preserved, unaltered locations, so you can often get a more significant find overall.

Mr. McCall: — Over the course of the last year, were there any finds that would have been determined as rare or exceptional in terms of the work that you're outlining here?

Mr. Brown: — So I guess in the broader sense of those, we wouldn't in the ministry normally find out about those right off the bat. In some cases where there's something really amazing, you'll often see, particularly our folks at the Royal Saskatchewan Museum will do some social media or will issue news releases or something to profile what's been found.

But often the investigations will take place over several years, and not just archaeologists but paleontology, those kinds of things. There may be levels of excavation. You'll have field staff out there. It can take place over the course of several summers. Winters of course aren't really good for doing those kind of investigations.

But for the staff that are involved, this is their life's work. Once something is found, they take a great deal of care to sort of sort through that and find out what might be within the area.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks for that. I guess to more focus my question, has there been anything discovered over the last year that was considered rare or exceptional in the official's recollection or the minister's for that matter?

Mr. Brown: — Well one thing I can speak to specifically is First Nations artifacts in particular are a sensitive, sensitive item for our staff. And not only at the Royal Saskatchewan Museum, but our heritage conservation branch do a lot of work with First Nations communities around the province. Often as they wade into these things and have a look at what's there and begin their investigation, the first thing that happens is some consultation and engagement with elders that are in the area, particularly if there's human remains found or something like that. They would do a different level of investigation, a different level of escalation because we're trying to be as incredibly sensitive as we can to the people and the communities that might be involved in a find.

As we go through that throughout the province, there is always a level of engagement and seeking of advice from people because oftentimes our First Nations people will have knowledge of the area, knowledge of what's happened historically that the archeologist may not necessarily have as they head into that.

We've been doing a lot of work with First Nations around the province over the last year, over the last several years. There's an evolving field of policy there that government's trying to figure out where the right spot is as well, as we wade through in trying to find out where the lines are in terms of cultural sensitivities and where things are more important or less for the people involved in the community. So it's a bit of an undeveloped area. There is ongoing investigation and discussion with the communities involved to see where we need the land. But in the meantime, they do have some parameters they apply to the investigations to make sure that we're being sensitive and respectful of people and communities that are involved.

Mr. McCall: — Is it possible to characterize the number of occasions on which First Nations people have said, this is sensitive, this is something that's significant? At which point, again sort of extrapolating from your comments, there's a determination to be made on the part of the cultural heritage branch as to whether or not these things are found to be significant or not. Is that a commonplace occurrence or is there . . . are there a handful of occasions that meet that description over the last year?

Mr. Brown: — I would say in general terms the number would be very, very small. Like I said, the large amount of the work has been assessments on cultivated land. The bulk of that land would be seen to be low risk for having important artifacts on it, or important artifacts that are in still good condition, I guess. The number of occasions over the course of a year, I would think, would tend to be just a handful, from the conversations I have with my staff. It really depends on the nature of the find and it would vary significantly from year to year.

I know over time our folks have had plug-ins with individual communities, and once you've had that relationship established and there's some respect on both sides as to what the work is

and what we need to do, those relationships strengthen over time as the communities and our staff work together. So there would be a number of cases every year, and it really would vary depending on what the nature of the find is.

And this year, I guess specifically, we do not have anything that would be considered as a significant find in the broader scope of our staff's expertise and based on the communities that they've had engagement with.

Mr. McCall: — In terms of the engagement with the communities, if there's an exception taken to that determination, you know, what's the court of appeal? And I appreciate that this is an evolving field of public policy, but if there is strong disagreement, do they then go see the minister? And is that a common occurrence?

Mr. Brown: — So generally as a matter of course, if there was a disagreement on any particular case you would have the usual lines of communication that would be open to anybody who has issues with what the ministry is doing. So certainly the minister is a line of action for people that aren't happy or pleased with how the discussions are going, but in the broader scope of it, those would be exceptionally rare. It's not that the minister would not have heard of any, but as a general rule of thumb I wouldn't say that a lot of those escalate up.

Our staff spend a lot of time building, in particular with First Nations communities, building those relationships. Particularly with human remains there are some pieces that government has in place for that, that there's a large amount of respect paid as soon human remains are discovered out in the field. And elders and the community of First Nations we have across the province would be involved and would weigh in and provide advice to us on how to handle the remains and how to be respectful in all circumstances.

So beyond that, there are different functions that were contained within *The Heritage Property Act*, so we do have a review board available to deal with buildings and those kinds of things. But there's also advisory functions that are provided through the people at the Heritage Foundation that the minister can turn to if he needs advice. So there's a number of mechanisms.

And certainly within the ministry, myself and the deputy would be available if folks had issues with staff on the ground. As you usually would follow up that chain, you would go to the person's supervisor above them. And the director of the heritage conservation branch has a lot of good relationships across the province and would be one of those resources available for people to turn to if they're not happy with how individual archaeologists or staff are assessing or treating a certain circumstance.

Mr. McCall: — But am I understanding correctly that, as extremely rare as it might be, that on these kind of grounds that's not prompted a meeting with the minister in any circumstance?

Mr. Brown: — Thank you. As we go through this, and there's this back and forth all the time in terms of what's significant, and I alluded to this earlier in my comments, where the people that are involved in a find or that are consulted on the find may

have perspectives on it that escalate it in some way for them, and it may be important for them provincially. Our legislation and the rules that we have in place are really to protect things that are provincially significant, that are to be protected on behalf of the province of Saskatchewan.

You'll see this in museums around the province as well, where there will be things that are important and interesting at the local museum level, and they're kept there, but you wouldn't necessarily see one of those things at the provincial level or at a national level, that they have that assessment that comes in.

If I go back in a general sense, staff had 718 requests. If I look at the archeological resource records, there were 193 of those added to the archeological and resource records to the provincial archeological site inventory. They've updated 195 additional records with new information. They also processed 718 requests for inventory-related information. So those would be researchers that are coming in and trying to find out about things, and as part of their research, they want to get access to the things that are in the collections that we have in the province.

And then beyond that, there's another level that's involved, geographic information mapping, and you heard us allude to that in the operations side before. The staff are also trying to find new ways, even if the sites are disturbed or that there are changes that have to happen on a site, that they can catalogue it and then potentially make it available for the people of Saskatchewan in electronic means.

Certainly as you go around the province, people are quite far removed from some of these artifacts and wouldn't get access to them or see what's unique or special about them. So we've got an ongoing challenge to our staff to try to find new ways to get that out in front of the people of Saskatchewan. So they now actually have the ability to go out and map an individual site, mark where the artifacts are, and log and tag the different things that they find within there. It actually shows the topographical changes of the area and is almost like a full re-creation, but of course it's electronic. So those pieces are certainly there and again evolving for the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. McCall: — A number of years back, probably even a decade ago, the cultural heritage branch was involved in a circumstance out in the Qu'Appelle Valley where there was a lagoon to be sited for Fort Qu'Appelle. There were concerns raised about the sensitivity of the site that had been selected. It was a fairly significant conflict, and I believe resulted ultimately in the cultural heritage protection branch coming in and saying, you've got to re-site the lagoon or provide an easement, as you've referenced. Have you had anything happen on that sort of scale over the last year or anything that approached that?

[16:45]

Ms. Gallagher: — Thank you. That's interesting because I worked in the Ministry of Environment on that file and worked closely with Carlos Germann who is our executive director of our heritage and conservation branch. So you're right, and those kinds of situations don't come along very often. I think what I would offer is that our archaeological finds, they're being found

all the time in the course of land development. In the case you talked about in the Qu'Appelle, some bison bones were found. It had been the site of some human remains and so for that one, again it had been routine for the most part, but because it was a sensitive area . . .

And I know when you talk about how frequently this happens, we've had another one in that same Qu'Appelle area where First Nations have met with myself and the minister to talk about concerns. And so we always, as a matter of our regular process, try to be very conscientious of . . . It may not even meet the requirement under as Scott referred to that it's not a significant archaeological finding, but that there's a difference between what actually meets our regulatory requirements and what is also important to individuals. And so we tried to take that into consideration.

So a significant discovery of a bison kill was found on a highways project near Saskatoon, and we invited First Nations to attend and to tour that. We were trying to be very proactive with that initiative. The question may also relate to concerns. I mentioned the Pasqua First Nation. They have environmental monitors that they bring to us their findings and both environmental and heritage handling. So we will offer opportunities to meet with our officials. The minister certainly makes himself available.

Although again they may believe they're non-cultural, some of the findings, like bison bones are not necessarily a cultural finding. Bison were very prevalent across the plains and may have died for other reasons than, you know, let's say a significant kill site or site where they would be harvesting animals. But we do, wherever we can, take into consideration the spiritual significance as well as what would be the archaeological situation. So I hope that that answers your question.

Mr. McCall: — It does. It's getting closer, and maybe I should have been focusing my questions a little more, but certainly that gets closer to what I'm asking about. So in that circumstance, if there's a difference of opinion between the First Nations who have been engaged and the ministry and the regulatory responsibility, who adjudicates that?

Mr. Brown: — Again, the minister has ultimate authority over the Act, but typically we would try to make, as much as we can, decisions that are based on established practices that are in place, not only provincially, but nationally and internationally. Our staff are involved on an ongoing basis getting skill upgrades, engaging on best practices. They go to conferences and seminars and are involved in research projects. Sometimes that work takes them outside the province. I think some of them actually do it on their spare time. During their holidays, they take leave and go on that. So because of that body of work, archaeologists all over the planet run into situations where there's cultural sensitivities or there's concerns from a spiritual perspective and the people that are involved in the community.

So as we go through all of those, they're trying the best they can to establish best practices and do the best job that they can. But a lot of that involves ongoing relationships and engagement with the communities. And although you have best practices that are established and the scientific practices that are in use

around the country, it really gets down to the relationships with the people that you have in the community. And that's why my staff have found it's so important to engage with people and talk to them about what the importance is.

They also try then to educate about other finds, other things that come in and how the Act is applied in certain circumstances. But that all said, at the end of the day, where there are requirements for stop orders to be put in place and those kinds of things, that power rests with the minister under the Act. So there is always that level of escalation that's available to people, and again the minister would be challenged and have to weigh where things need to be and where the balance is. So for any elected official who's in the role of the minister, that's what they bring to the table, is to represent the needs and the wants of the community and help to interpret how that legislation's in place.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you for that. Does the minister have anything he'd like to add in terms of consideration of using stop orders, stop-work orders particularly as relates to the, in the circumstance with the folks at Pasqua?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Thanks for the question. The stop order, stop-work order would be a last resort. We want to engage with everybody, and I try to get as much possible information as I possibly can from everybody involved. And in the particular case of Pasqua, I certainly listened and was deeply interested in the perspectives of the First Nations in regards to just how potentially important they found the area as opposed to the artifacts, for instance. It was a sensitive cultural, spiritual area, is the best way I could describe. I don't want to put words in terms of what they were telling me, but the best I could say was it was more. It was a spiritual connection to the land as opposed to our archaeologists that would have been looking at particular artifacts.

And I wanted to . . . I was interested in again gaining the perspective. We want to have an inclusive process. That's our priority is to listen as much as we possibly can. It was different from a First Nations perspective, how they saw the particular land, and I was deeply interested in that. Yes, we've got to that point of conversation but at that point again, stop-work orders are again, absolute last resort. But I was again deeply interested in the First Nations perspective of what they found, or what they said was significant.

Mr. McCall: — So deep interest notwithstanding, the decision the ministry had at the end was — am I understanding this correctly — is stop-work order or not. And I guess judging by the minister's nodding head, that's the decision, and am I correct in assuming that these folks would have been in vain upon the minister to stop work at that site, and then the minister decided to not? Am I understanding that correctly?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Thanks. It wasn't the situation in this case in terms of a stop-work order. We wouldn't make . . . we wouldn't recommend a stop, a stop order until it was clear the potential heritage property's directly affected. And for these non-archaeological sites, we do want to support First Nation interests but we need to know what those are. And what are we protecting would be . . . was one of the actual questions and what overall history is associated with these places. And so it's

an opportunity for us to try to develop mutual understanding. I wanted to learn from First Nations in particular.

Mr. McCall: — I thank the minister for that. Moving along through the subvotes, \$25 million for the stadium. That's the end of the line for that particular program. Can the minister or officials provide us with a recap of the various means of provincial involvement in that project?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Okay. So in regards to the stadium, the ministry's final \$25 million payment was part of this budget. So we committed as a government, we committed \$80 million towards the construction and maintenance of the new stadium. This investment is consistent with an approximate 30 per cent provincial share in large sport infrastructure projects. The province's final payment of \$25 million was included, as I said, in this budget and our government continues to invest in projects that enhance economic growth and support quality of life, recreation, sport, and culture. And the stadium construction remains on time and on budget. So in terms of some timelines here — March 21st, 2013 — so the minister . . .

Mr. McCall: — I guess, not to be rude, Mr. Minister, but time is running on. I was just looking for the total amount. We've got that.

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Sorry, 80 million.

Mr. McCall: — Okay. In terms of Creative Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan Arts Board and what's to come there, under that heading, first of all there's a review that was conducted of the sound stage and opinions canvassed for the future of the sound stage. When is that report going to be made public?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Thanks. Don't have a timeline, but we started engaging with the film community including . . . So we've already met with SMPA [Saskatchewan Media Production Industry Association] in order to give them an opportunity to see some of the consultation results. So again it's ongoing.

Mr. McCall: — Has that report concluded though? Have you finished that report?

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — Yes, we've concluded the consultation and the final, I guess, the final draft has been . . . Yes, we've finished the consultation. The final draft is getting organized.

The Chair: — So thank you very much . . . [inaudible] . . . for the questions. If the minister would like to have some closing remarks.

[17:00]

Hon. Mr. Docherty: — All right. Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to thank the member from Regina Elphinstone for his comments and for his questions. I'd like to thank the committee for their attentiveness. And I would like to thank all of the officials that came with me and for all of their efforts in putting together, not only the budget, but everything else that they do on a day-to-day basis. I'd just like to thank them for all of their great work for the people of this province. And with that, Madam Chair, I'm good. Thank you.

The Chair: — Warren, did you have some closing comments?

Mr. McCall: — I don't know, Madam Chair. Do you trust me with the mike? Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a thanks to the minister and officials and by extension to all the great folks out in the ministry through all its different ways that it makes life better and richer here in Saskatchewan and certainly all the partners that the ministry works with. Please extend our thanks to them for the work they do. I'd thank the Chair and the committee members for joining us for this committee hearing.

The Chair: — I also would like to thank the minister and his officials for coming out this afternoon and sharing your information and your wisdom with us. So thank you very much. Also I appreciate and thank all the committee members for making the time to attend today. And thank you very much for your participation, Warren.

I'd now like to adjourn consideration of the estimates of this committee. Have a call for a motion to adjourn?

Mr. Michelson: — So moved.

The Chair: — Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. This committee stands adjourned until June 20th, 2016 at 7 p.m. Thank you very much.

[The committee adjourned at 17:02.]