



STANDING COMMITTEE ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS AND JUSTICE

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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL
AFFAIRS AND JUSTICE**

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Mr. Doyle Vermette, Deputy Chair
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Martensville-Warman

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Mr. Eric Olauson
Saskatoon University

Mr. Doug Steele
Cypress Hills

Mr. Warren Steinley
Regina Walsh Acres

[The committee met at 18:29.]

The Chair: — I want to welcome everybody to tonight's committee sitting. Greg Brkich, the Chair; Doyle Vermette is the Deputy Chair. Also as members we have Nancy Heppner, Lisa Lambert, Eric Olauson, Doug Steele, and Warren Steinley. We have a substitute for Doyle Vermette of Warren McCall.

This evening the committee will be considering the estimates for the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport and Bill No. 52, *The Meewasin Valley Authority Amendment Act, 2017*.

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

Subvote (PC01)

The Chair: — We will begin with vote 27, Parks, Culture and Sport, central management and services, subvote (PC01). I will ask Minister Cheveldayoff, who is here with his officials. He can introduce his officials and make any opening remarks that he has. Thank you, Minister Cheveldayoff.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — All right, well thank you, Mr. Chair, and good evening, colleagues. A pleasure to be with you this evening and appear before the committee. I'm pleased to be here to answer your questions regarding the estimates of my ministry.

First of all I would like to make some introductions and make some brief remarks, welcome the critic, Mr. McCall. And the officials I have with me here today from the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport are Twyla MacDougall, who is the acting deputy minister; Jennifer Johnson, who is the acting assistant deputy minister; Scott Brown, assistant deputy minister; Gerry Folk, executive director of the cultural planning and development branch; Darin Banadyga, executive director of sport, recreation, and stewardship; Bob McEachern, executive director of parks services; Lynette Halvorsen, director of financial services; Leanne Thera, executive director, strategic and corporate services; Byron Davis, director of the facilities branch. Thank you, officials, for joining us here today.

Mr. Chairman, as you know, the theme of this year's budget is meeting the challenge. On March 22nd the Finance minister stood in the House and detailed the ways in which our government will do just that. The fiscal challenge facing our province is clear. While we see signals of economic recovery, it is slower than we had hoped. The budget will meet the challenge by taking a number of difficult but necessary measures as we work to return to balance over the next three years.

As the Finance minister mentioned, it has been more than two years since the dramatic drop in oil prices began. The prolonged downturn for oil and a weakening of other resource prices, notably potash, has impacted not only resource revenue but income and consumption taxes as well, the result of the oil and gas and mining industries' reduced activity.

At the same time our challenge is heightened because a growing

population is putting pressure on the many needed government services and programs. Our government has a strong track record of managing the province's finances and we remain committed to working through this period of challenge.

The Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport will continue to operate programs in support of provincial parks, heritage, and the Royal Saskatchewan Museum. The ministry will also continue to fund and support our partners and stakeholders in promoting the value of arts, culture, sport, and recreation. We will continue to transform government's delivery of programs and core services to be more cost-effective and sustainable. Saskatchewan will meet the challenge that it is facing. Our government will continue to invest in what's important and valued by Saskatchewan people while controlling costs in order to work towards a balanced budget.

We know that programs supported by the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport are important and valued by Saskatchewan people, and we know this because of record visitation levels. Visitation at the Royal Saskatchewan Museum is on the rise. Total visitation during the summer of 2016 increased 30 per cent compared to the same period in 2015. When compared to the average over the last 10 years, visitation was up 27 per cent throughout the summer months. The increase in visitation is credited in large part to the launch of new exhibits and programs, popular science-based and family-friendly events, and the important research performed by RSM [Royal Saskatchewan Museum] scientists.

Making science accessible and understandable is a goal of the RSM, and recently scientists have received national and international attention for a variety of scientific discoveries. Notably, Cory Sheffield, RSM curator of invertebrate zoology, was part of a team that discovered a new species of bumblebee — the first such discovery in North America in the past 90 years. Further, Ryan McKellar, RSM curator of invertebrate palaeontology, was part of an international team that described the remarkable preservation of 99-million-year-old bird wings found in a piece of amber.

Just recently, Mr. Chairman, the Royal Saskatchewan Museum launched a new temporary exhibit entitled *We Are All Treaty People*. This exhibit shows the Chief Paskwa Pictograph, a two-panel graphite drawing that depicts the only known historical indigenous perspective of Treaty 4. The Chief Paskwa Pictograph appears to portray European and Aboriginal people engaged in treaty negotiations with a record of treaty promises and payments made between 1874 and 1883. The *We Are All Treaty People* exhibit also features a reproduction of the original handwritten version of Treaty 4. This temporary exhibit will eventually be replaced by a larger permanent exhibit of the Chief Paskwa Pictograph. The Chief Paskwa Pictograph is significant to all Saskatchewan people in gaining a further understanding of our province's history.

As well, we are gearing up for the summer season at the T.rex Discovery museum in Eastend. I see the member in the House and I'm sure that he's excited to see that as well. The centre opens May 20th and is a great attraction for the entire family. The work that is being done by the RSM and the T.rex Discovery Centre on both the tourism and research sides are

great examples of attractions that are important and valued by Saskatchewan people keeping this province as a great place to work, live, and play. I'm sure as another busy summer season approaches we will have great attendance at both facilities.

Speaking of attendance, Mr. Chairman, Saskatchewan's provincial parks and recreation sites also hit a new attendance record of nearly 4 million visits in 2016. This is an increase of more than 100,000 visits over the 2015 record. Visitation to provincial parks has grown 32 per cent since 2007. Saskatchewan provincial parks continue to become more popular each year and it's not hard to see why. Our parks are the perfect place for families and friends to come together, and their beauty and their diversity showcase much of what makes Saskatchewan's quality of life so enviable.

Government continues to provide essential funding for important infrastructure renewal projects and facility improvements in parks. We will once again be investing \$5.05 million for capital improvements throughout our provincial parks. For 2017-18 parks capital and capital maintenance expenditures will total approximately \$6.65 million.

Mr. Chairman, it is important to note that the government is ensuring provincial park facilities and infrastructure systems meet the growing needs of our park visitors. To help demonstrate that, here is a recap: during the four-year capital program enhancement from 2012-13 to 2015-16, a total of \$53 million was invested in capital improvements and capital maintenance in parks. Furthermore, total investments in parks for the past 10 years is now more than \$98 million. The ministry's capital program balances the needs for park facility growth initiatives to meet changing visitor needs with a requirement to upgrade and renew existing park infrastructure systems.

Mr. Chairman, in an effort to meet the challenge for this year's budget, the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport has introduced small increases to provincial park camping, entry, and reservation transaction fees. This change helps reduce the reliance on government to subsidize park operations. Keeping pace with rising costs, these small increases in fees help provide high-quality amenities and services to the steady increasing number of visitors. Please note, a Saskatchewan camping holiday remains affordable. In fact a three-night, non-electric camping trip for a family of four is less expensive in Saskatchewan than anywhere else in the country.

This year just as government is being challenged to manage with less, we are also asking regional parks to manage with less. As such, the regional parks capital grants program is being reduced by \$500,000 from approximately 1.02 million to \$523,000 this year. The government has a strong record of supporting Saskatchewan's regional parks and their valuable contribution to tourism and the local economy. In the past 10 years government has provided a total of \$8.3 million in grant funding to regional parks. As you know this government has a strong record of supporting municipalities. Since 2007-2008 municipal revenue sharing has more than doubled, giving communities additional capacity to address local priorities such as their urban parks.

Last year, you will know, funding was eliminated for five urban

parks, those being the Battlefords River Valley, Chinook Parkway in Swift Current, Penohan Park in Prince Albert, Tatagwa Park in Weyburn, Wakamow Valley Authority in Moose Jaw. This year we have reduced funding to the Meewasin Valley Authority. Since 2016-17 the Meewasin Valley Authority was allocated approximately \$1.6 million annually from the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport and Advanced Education. This year it will receive 1.1 million. We are providing \$500,000 from our ministry specifically to support activities on Crown lands. Meeting the Challenge is the theme of this year's budget, Mr. Chairman, and reductions such as these are indeed difficult but necessary.

Although with some modest reductions, the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport will continue to keep the arts, culture, sport, and recreation sectors and stakeholders strong and viable by investing in the Saskatchewan Arts Board and Creative Saskatchewan. In 2017-18 the government of Saskatchewan will be investing \$13.9 million in Saskatchewan's creative artists and arts organizations through the annual allocation to the Saskatchewan Arts Board and Creative Saskatchewan. This represents a reduction of approximately 5 per cent from 2016-17. This funding is part of the government's commitment to all of Saskatchewan to be fiscally responsible and continue to make our province a great place to live, work, and play

Mr. Chairman, the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport will be allocating \$6.1 million to the Saskatchewan Arts Board to keep our arts community strong and investing in the arts, artists, and arts organizations. In fact on March 23rd it was my pleasure to attend the opening of the new Saskatchewan Arts Board office in Saskatoon. The Saskatchewan Arts Board supports Saskatchewan artists so they can engage with the larger art world. And now working out of their second office, the Arts Board is better able to provide services to artists and organizations from Saskatoon and areas to the north. As well with part of the permanent collection housed there, more great Saskatchewan artwork can go out and be seen and appreciated by the public, especially work of the province's indigenous artists.

The Government of Saskatchewan and the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport will also be investing approximately \$7.3 million in Creative Saskatchewan. This investment will help grow a creative economy and expand the commercialization of creative products. Creative Saskatchewan is dedicated to the growth and commercial viability of Saskatchewan's creative industries, including visual arts and craft, publishing, music and sound recording, live performing arts, screen-based media, and digital media. Creative Saskatchewan facilitates the expansion of a business environment advantageous to the growth of the creative industries in Saskatchewan. They also aim to grow new employment, investment, production opportunities in Saskatchewan.

In keeping a promise to meet the challenge that our government is facing, however, the Culture on the Go program was eliminated, which will provide for savings of \$800,000. Saskatchewan's touring artists will still be able to access funding through existing programs in Creative Saskatchewan and support from the Organization of Saskatchewan Arts Councils for touring happening in Saskatchewan.

I'm pleased that we were able to maintain funding at 2016-17 levels for a number of our heritage institutions such as the Western Development Museum, Wanuskewin Heritage Park, and Saskatchewan's outstanding Science Centre. That said, government recognizes the value of heritage places in our communities and to our quality of life.

The Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport is contributing to the fiscal restraint by reducing ministry expenditures in the heritage area. In 2017-18 the Main Street program will be suspended. This includes matching grants and other service supports to participating communities. It is important to note that the program has not been cancelled. The agreements with communities will remain in place and the ministry will continue to support current participating communities with technical support as resources allow.

As well the Saskatchewan Heritage Foundation will see its operating grant from the General Revenue Fund to support local heritage conservation reduced, coming with a cost savings of \$204,000. The ministry's heritage conservation branch continues to support heritage property owners and community organizations throughout the province with expert advice on how to protect and conserve our heritage.

Aligning with the theme of meeting our challenge, the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport will be making a reduction in sport funding. In 2017-2018 the community rink affordability grant will remain suspended due to expenditure restraint. Our government still supports local communities through the municipal revenue-sharing program. In 2017-18 the Government of Saskatchewan will distribute nearly \$257.8 million to municipalities in municipal revenue sharing. This commitment represents a \$131 million increase, 103 per cent over 2007-2008. This level of commitment aligns with the Government of Saskatchewan's promise to develop a long-term revenue-sharing plan with the municipal sector that is linked to the performance of the province's economy.

The Saskatchewan Lotteries Trust Fund community granting program assists in the development of sports, culture, and recreation programs by providing funds to the non-profit community organizations operated by volunteers. There are opportunities through this mechanism to support programs that operate in local rinks and throughout the community. Once again decisions are made at the community level to allocate funds.

I am proud to say that our ministry is in the planning stages for a great event which will enhance the work our ministry is doing in the sport and recreation sectors. In partnership with the Saskatchewan Parks and Recreation Association, the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport will be helping to host a national gathering to support the framework for recreation in Canada. The forum will be held in May of 2018 and will bring together all levels of government and the recreation sector to continue momentum in the implementation of the framework. The framework will aggregate work being done across the sport, physical activity, recreation, parks, environmental, health sectors to improve the well-being of all Canadians.

Recreation and society have changed significantly over the last 50 years. New challenges such as the technology and economic

inequalities are having an impact on participation rates. The task will be to turn these challenges into opportunities. The framework provides an opportunity to embrace traditional approaches while creating new ones to ensure recreation's continued relevance in Canada's ongoing journey and well-being.

To mark Canada's 150th anniversary this year, our ministry has several celebrations planned. Provincial parks will feature many activities and events, offering free entry to all Saskatchewan provincial parks on Canada Day, July 1st, and Canada's Parks Day on July 15th. In addition to these free entry days, there will be special events throughout the provincial park system including a province-wide geocaching program, a scavenger hunt to picture yourself in a provincial park. More details on these programs will be announced later this spring, but I can assure you that there will be lots to see and do to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Canada in Saskatchewan's provincial parks this summer.

Of course, popular programs such as learn to camp, learn to fish, water safety programs, the Saskatchewan Express summer tour, and the day trip itineraries will be back again this summer.

We will be continuing with the option of fall camping and this will be available in campgrounds at Blackstrap, Buffalo Pound, Cypress Hills, Duck Mountain, Moose Mountain, and Rowan's Ravine.

Our ministry will provide host Saskatchewan day at the 2017 cultural festival as part of the Canada Summer Games in Winnipeg this year. Not only is this the 150th birthday of our country, but it is the 50th anniversary of the Canada Games. Each province has the opportunity to take over the festival site located at The Forks and showcase their outstanding performers. Our date is August the 6th. We hope you will be able to join us for this wonderful celebration of what is Saskatchewan.

As well, to commemorate this anniversary, the Royal Saskatchewan Museum is the lead on two Canada 150 bioblitz projects, a flagship event to be held at Wascana Centre in Regina and a scientific-intense event to be held in Cypress Hills. The BioBlitz Canada 150 event in Regina will bring together the public and scientists to explore the richness of Canada's biodiversity and to engage our passion to know, celebrate, and conserve our natural resource heritage.

The scientific data gathered through bioblitz events will help to inform choices on issues such as climate change and the loss of biodiversity, helping to shape conservation decisions, and ensure wild species and spaces remain for generations to come. The RSM programming and research staff have the relationships and expertise to lead both the flagship and science-intense BioBlitz 150 events and make them a success. We are proud to be hosting one of the only five flagship events held across Canada.

As the Minister of Finance stated when this budget was prepared, it is the government's plan to return to balance by controlling and reducing spending while continuing to invest in programs, services, and infrastructure for the benefit of all Saskatchewan people. The provincial budget and my ministry's

budget sets the course of returning to balance for the approximately 1.15 million people who call this province home. This budget meets the challenges by making some difficult yet necessary changes, but still investing in programs and services that are important and valued by the citizens of Saskatchewan.

With that, Mr. Chair, I thank you for the opportunity to provide an overview of my ministry and I would now be happy to answer any questions that committee members may have.

The Chair: — Questions. Mr. McCall.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, officials, and welcome to the consideration of these Parks, Culture and Sport estimates for budget 2017-18. I guess if you could, Mr. Minister, right off the bat, if you could tell us a little bit more about your senior leadership team. You've got a couple of folks at the table there with you in acting positions. If you could talk about when those positions will be shored up and where the folks occupying those positions come from.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question and happy to answer it. As you'll see, there's a strong female contingent to our leadership in the ministry, and I'm pleased to see that and I'm very pleased with the very strong and talented individuals that I work with on a daily basis.

The ADM [assistant deputy minister] position is up for competition right now. We anticipate having some final decisions made in the next few weeks. The acting position that the ADM is in, she was the ADM of Parks prior to moving . . . [inaudible] . . . So we certainly see opportunities, and when you're very confident with your senior leadership team and there's opportunities for advancement or acting positions, I certainly like to take advantage of those opportunities.

The same is in the position of assistant ADM for Jennifer Johnson. She has had an opportunity to work in an acting capacity as well after being in the ministry for quite some time now in the area of communications. So I see it as a win-win operation, something that those that have demonstrated that they've worked very well and are capable of taking on more responsibility are able to do so and compete on an equal footing as we move to permanently fill those positions.

Mr. McCall: — So just for the record what . . . In terms of having them on a permanent basis, when do you anticipate that being accomplished?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Roughly I'm saying that I'll say four to six weeks, in that time period.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you for that. And certainly welcome, officials, and thank you for the work that you do serving the people of Saskatchewan all the year through, not just in estimates meetings with committee members. But thank you for that, and through yourselves, certainly, thank you to the men and women that do the work in Parks, Culture and Sport all the year through.

I guess that's as good a place to start as any, Mr. Minister. One of the directions in the budget was to achieve 3.5 per cent savings on total compensation. How is that being carried out in

Parks, Culture and Sport?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. The member is right; reducing total compensation costs is one of the requirements needed to address the provincial budget's fiscal challenges outlined in the budget. Wages are just one of the components that make up total compensation. Other examples include benefits, pensions, flexible benefits, and more.

There is an expectation that 3.5 per cent total compensation reduction target be achieved across the entire public sector. Employers and unions have been asked to work together to find a solution to achieve total compensation cost savings. Compensation for out-of-scope employees will also be impacted. The collective bargaining process will determine how this goal is to be achieved.

The next steps are the responsibility of the various employers, and as a ministry we are not directly involved in the process. The Public Service Commission is the employer's representative for executive government and is leading the process. We will continue to keep our employees updated with information as available and appropriate within the context of the collective bargaining process. Once final decisions are concluded, then ministry budgets will be adjusted and the bottom-line adjustments in the budget, the \$250 million, will be allocated to ministries, agencies, etc.

So that encapsulates where we're at in the situation with the 3.5 per cent.

Mr. McCall: — I'm just glad that we've got the minister for public service here tonight as well to perhaps better inform some of these answers. We'll see how that lends itself to the discussion.

But so in terms of the FTE [full-time equivalent] complement that goes with the ministry, you've got 116.9 FTEs. Is that correct?

[19:00]

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — There it is, the magic chart. Here we are. Actually, I'm not sure which numbers that you're using, but the total FTEs for the ministry are 354.7 as of 2016-17, and then as of this year, the 2017-2018, it's 355.7, so an increase of one FTE.

Mr. McCall: — Pardon me. I guess I've got page 99 of vote 27, Parks, Culture and Sport, from the 2017-18 estimates, FTE staff complement with ministry being the first number, 116.9; and then second, funded out of the Commercial Revolving Fund, as the minister rightly points out, 238.8, adding up to 355.7.

What is the breakdown between in-scope and out-of-scope members in that complement?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — All right. With the complement again, as I mentioned earlier, of 355.7 FTEs, the out-of-scope component is 68 and the in-scope is 287.7 for again a total of 355.7.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks very much for that, Mr. Minister. What amount of payroll attaches to each of those respective figures? How many dollars spent on the 68? How many dollars spent on the 287.7?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much. The out-of-scope again is 68 FTEs, which is a total salary complement of \$6.6 million, and in-scope is 287.7 FTEs and is \$19,227,000.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks very much for that, Mr. Minister. In terms of the collective bargaining agreements that attach to the in-scope employees, how many collective bargaining agreements are involved? And what is the status of those collective bargaining agreements?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much. We have just the one bargaining unit, SGEU [Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union], and it was . . . The contract was up September 30th of last year.

Mr. McCall: — So the expectation is that there'll be a 3.5 per cent reduction in wages and benefits. That's a direction from the government to that particular bargaining table. Is that an accurate characterization of where we're at?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Yes. Negotiations will be undertaken with the goal of achieving 3.5 per cent reduction, as it will be with all ministries. So it will in effect work towards the goal of a reduction of \$250 million that the Finance minister indicated during the budget.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks for that. What is the dollar figure attached to the 3.5 per cent as it relates to Parks, Culture and Sport? Again, what's been assigned to the in-scope side? What's been assigned to the out-of-scope side?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. When the 3.5 per cent reduction is achieved or instituted, the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport will save approximately \$904,000.

Mr. McCall: — So negotiations are ongoing. Is there any expectation when those will be concluded for those that are in-scope?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much. It would certainly be presumptive of me to indicate when I thought the negotiations would be completed. Negotiations are ongoing and will continue to be, but I don't have a specific time frame to offer the member.

Mr. McCall: — Fair enough. In terms of the breakdown for the . . . Again if the minister could reiterate the 900-odd-thousand-dollar figure. How much was that again?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Breakdown between in-scope . . .

Mr. McCall: — How much is being expected to be saved for Parks, Culture and Sport? The minister had mentioned a figure, \$900,000 and . . . well more than \$900,000 but . . .

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — The total amount is \$904,000 with

the 3.5 per cent reduction when it's instituted.

Mr. McCall: — So how's that broken down between in-scope, out-of-scope? Is that on the dollar figure attached to payroll in the relative proportions or is it on the FTEs? How is that distributed in-scope, out-of-scope?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. It's arrived at not just through payroll, but it's looked at the overall compensation component and then the 3.5 per cent is calculated in that manner. So for out-of-scope employees, it would be \$231,000 and for in-scope, \$673,000.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much for that, Mr. Minister. What's the expectation on the 3.5 per cent reduction in overall compensation for out-of-scope employees with Parks, Culture and Sport? Is there a timeline that attaches to the decision making?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. The goal at the present time is to have the in-scope negotiations complete and then the out-of-scope negotiations take place at that time.

Mr. McCall: — But to be concluded by mid-year or by year-end of the fiscal? Or what's the expectation?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — All I can tell the member is that it is a top priority of this government to ensure that those negotiations are earnestly undertaken and the government will certainly be approaching it in that manner and wanting to have them completed as soon as possible, respecting the collective bargaining process.

Mr. McCall: — So why leave the out-of-scope folks till after in-scope arrangements have been concluded?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much. That's what's been done historically, and overall the most important factor for this government when it comes to this is fairness. We want to ensure that it is fair for all of those involved, both in-scope and out-of-scope.

Mr. McCall: — How does fairness apply in this circumstance, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Well we want to ensure that the collective bargaining process takes place for those that are in scope, and we want to ensure that the same requirements will be made for the out-of-scope individuals as well. So without being able to predict exactly what's going to happen in scope and having the variables of the collective bargaining process take place, that's the process that should be undertaken. And I feel that it's a fair process, and I anticipate that's what will happen in the very near future.

Mr. McCall: — Is there an expectation on the part of executive government that . . . If you don't get the proportion assigned of the \$904,000 out of the in-scope employees, that that will be made up on the out-of-scope side of the ledger? Is that \$904,000 expectation a fixed amount and is that how it gets sorted out?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — The expectation is that both targets will be met.

Mr. McCall: — Both targets inasmuch as the \$904,000 overall savings and the proportions that you've described for committee here tonight. Are those the expectations?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Yes, the numbers that I have provided with you are the targets and the expectation is that those targets will be met.

Mr. McCall: — Then why is that not straight assigned to out-of-scope? There's no collective bargaining process to be conducted there. Why isn't that a relatively straightforward decision if this is in fact the direction of executive government and a centerpiece of this budget?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — The targets have been enunciated by the Finance minister through the budgetary process, but how we achieve them will be something that's negotiated, keeping in mind the collective bargaining process. So it'll be done in a fair and equitable manner, but the targets are firm targets and they have to be met, as enunciated by the Finance minister on budget day and every opportunity that he's had since then.

Mr. McCall: — Again please help me understand, Mr. Minister, how are the negotiations conducted with the out-of-scope complement in terms of reaching these reductions and overall compensation?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. So the 3.5 per cent can be achieved in multiple ways, and we don't want to predetermine what indeed that will look like without giving the normal negotiations a chance to take place. So those will be taking place and as I mentioned earlier, it is a priority of the Government of Saskatchewan to ensure that these negotiations begin very quickly and that they are done in a fair manner.

Mr. McCall: — Again, if this is the direction of government and, you know, if the minister could describe for me the manner in which negotiations are carried out with what are order in council appointments, where it's a decision of cabinet versus a negotiated process, which is the case for the folks covered by the collective agreement, often the in-scope complement. But again, what's the negotiation process to be undertaken with the out-of-scope complement?

[19:15]

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question, and certainly it's my understanding that historically, even going back to previous administrations, that the out-of-scope has always followed the in-scope salary levels. So in something like this, where their negotiations have to take place, where the government is being open to those negotiations, certainly, and committed to follow the collective bargaining process, we feel it's important for the in-scope to take place and then the out-of-scope to follow along as well.

Mr. McCall: — I guess one of the unique features of this year is that there's a set direction and the minister has very kindly provided the dollar figure attached to that as regards to Parks,

Culture and Sport, which is \$904,000. And as the minister says, our understanding of it in the official opposition is that that gets made up one way or the other. So is the minister . . . To ask the question a different way: if that isn't made up in terms of the collective bargaining process, does that get made up then in terms of reduction on the out-of-scope side of the equation? Does it have to add up to \$904,000 one way or the other?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks for the question. And I'm trying to come up with a different way to answer it but I can't. You know, I have to go back to what I said earlier, that the goal is 904,000, that the goal for the out-of-scope is 231,000; the goal for the in-scope is 673,000. The goal across government is a 3.5 per cent reduction in salary in total compensation and that is the goal. And that is what the government bargaining team will be looking at and going forward into collective bargaining. And that's all that I'm prepared to say at this time.

Mr. McCall: — Well thanks for that, Mr. Minister. In terms of the division between, and just for my own ongoing education, the difference between folks that are on the ministry side of the FTE complement and those that are on the revolving fund side of the complement. Could you describe the difference between those individuals for the committee and for, like I say, my own sort of illumination?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — All right. The employees that are attributed to the Commercial Revolving Fund, the 238.8 FTEs, are parks employees. Because they're paid through the Commercial Revolving Fund, they're delineated that way. The ministry has 116.9 and those would be paid in a separate manner. But the benefits and the payments and everything would be exactly the same.

Mr. McCall: — Okay. So is there any . . . There's no recognition made in terms of how they're compensated for, that they bring in revenues via the fees that are paid at the different parks and recreational sites throughout the province.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. The employees again aren't treated any differently. You know, it's purely an accounting measure. All of the operating costs of the parks are attributed to the Commercial Revolving Fund, so we want to operate it like any other business and attribute all of those costs and have an accurate accounting, so that's why it's done that way.

Mr. McCall: — Okay. Thanks for that, Mr. Minister, and certainly there's a lot of interest in the good men and women that do the work for the ministry, how the year to come will be impacting their pay packets. And they are of course the people we task with doing these very important jobs, set out in places like budgets and committee and on.

So I guess if we could move through the subvotes in the estimate, Mr. Minister, and with the proviso that my colleague, the member from Saskatoon Centre, will be coming in to ask some specific questions around urban parks. And then that will nicely set you up for your Meewasin Valley Authority conversation and on from there.

But I guess if we could . . . Just first off with the Parks subvote (PC12), going through the allocations, first off, provincial park

programs, an increase of \$194,000. Is that strictly a function of utilization, more people going to the parks and paying the increased fees, the schedule of which was announced earlier in the year? Or what's happening there, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Just to clarify, the member's asking about the \$194,000 specifically in that area? Okay. The increase, the \$194,000, the increase of \$119,000 to cover the cost of transfer of one FTE from the Ministry of Environment to the parks landscape protection unit and an increase of \$75,000 for a transfer of one FTE from the resource stewardship division to the parks division. So just a lateral move there, but for accounting purposes an increase of \$194,000 in our budget.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks very much for that, Mr. Minister. And again, programming, that's the entire gamut. That's everything from folks at the gate to the bioblitzing? Can the minister describe what's happening in that expenditure?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — All right, just to clarify, it includes salaries and operating expenses for head office, central park planning, management that is funded through the GRF [General Revenue Fund], and then also there would be funding through the Commercial Revolving Fund as the member can see is indicated there at the bottom of that part of the chart.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks for that, Mr. Minister. One thing . . . I guess this is as good a place as any to ask you, and certainly your acting DM [deputy minister] has a lot of depth in this area, but in terms of . . . This being Canada 150, and the minister will have knowledge of this through different responsibilities he's held in government over the years, but one of the questions I have is, the Churchill River being a heritage river . . . And certainly there's a tremendous amount of interaction with the Lac La Ronge Provincial Park with that particular waterway, but it was declared a heritage river some years back, I believe in the '80s. And there have been different efforts made over the years around better land use for in and around the Devil Lake, Barker Lake portion of that beautiful piece of creation. And certainly it's, such is the beauty of that part of the world that it featured as one of the centrepieces in the Tourism Saskatchewan promotional materials last summer.

One of the things that has always gone with parks is that ethic of conservation, of good land use, good stewardship. And in this tremendous part of the world it's, the facilities and the infrastructure have been, I think, vastly outstripped by the usage. And you know, the facilities that are available at the Devil Lake put-in or, you know, pick your standard provincial park, aren't there in Barker Lake. But there are a lot of different things that are encouraging people to go to that part of the world, avail themselves of the whitewater paddling opportunities there that are, you know, some of the best in the world.

And the problem is the sort of degradation that goes in hand with this around simple things like, you know, bathroom facilities or campsites being stripped of firewood. Is there anything under way on the part of the ministry to look at better stewardship and better work in conjunction with the local First Nation, which is the Lac La Ronge Indian Band and the Grandmother's Bay community as well as the folks in Missinipe and throughout that part of the world? Is there

anything on the part of the ministry to make sure that that part of the world is properly cared for?

[19:30]

This is probably as good a time as any as well to say that my thinking on this has been helped along by the able work of Saskatchewan legislative intern program participant Anna Tsui, who I believe is currently working with the member from Walsh Acres. But she'd done some good research for myself on this very score, so all credit to Anna.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Well thanks very much for the question. And you know, I was just going to say, somewhat in jest, but that this question appears to be well researched. Maybe not like all the questions we see in question period.

But no I'm just . . . To be more serious, this is an area of the province that is of course a great priority, and it's a very beautiful area of the province. I had the opportunity to go fishing on the Churchill River when I was Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations at the invitation of one of the bands, and it was just an incredible day and an incredible way to spend and to see, as we as members of the legislature see sometimes, we see things that . . . We have opportunities to see things and parts of our province that not everybody gets the opportunity to do, so I have very fond recollection of my time there.

As the member will know that Parks, Culture and Sport has dual mandates, and certainly through parks, we're conservation and recreation, so we look at those two areas very seriously. More specifically on the conservation side, we have the land protection branch that specifically looks at the preservation of those areas. And I am told that we are actively in discussions with the Lac La Ronge Band and other stakeholders in the area, and the various areas that the member mentioned earlier is the subject of a lot of the work that's being done at the present time. So it is indeed a priority. Work is under way, and the information that the member has is well received.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much for that. Is there any sort of timeline that attaches to the work that has been ongoing for quite some time, I believe?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. These park management plans are undertaken with extensive consultation with stakeholders in the area. Our goal would be to have a sign-off in the next year, but we don't overly push that. You know, we are upfront with the goal that we have in mind and communicate that, but really we leave it to the stakeholders to advise on how much or how fast they would like to come to an agreement. But again our goal is within the next year.

Mr. McCall: — Okay. And just to get it for the records, I'm presuming that that involves the community of Grandmother's Bay as well as the community of Missinipe. Is that accurate?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — I'll just take a minute to try to confirm exactly what some of the stakeholders are. Thanks very much. I'm told that there's a full community engagement, but just in the wanting to assure complete accuracy, I'll undertake

to provide that information in a written form to the member as soon as possible.

Mr. McCall: — As ever, thanks very much, Mr. Minister. I guess one other question I'd have at this stage . . . You know, you'd think all I do is think about whitewater paddling or something. You wouldn't be too far wrong. But in terms of, say, the wilderness park that is the Clearwater River wilderness park, what's the difference between a full-blown provincial park and a wilderness park?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much. As soon as you asked the question all my officials said, it's in the Act. It's in the Act. So we went and found it specifically in the Act because it is certainly an important question in a priority area.

Provincial parks “. . . are designated as natural environment parks and are to be used primarily for the pursuit of outdoor recreational activities that are consistent with the protection of natural landscapes.”

Provincial . . . just make sure I've got that correct there. Provincial parks described as wilderness parks “. . . are to be used primarily for the preservation of natural landscapes in . . . [their] natural state and the pursuit of outdoor recreation activities that are consistent with that use.”

So that goes back to my earlier answer, when the conservation and recreation and certainly the provincial parks lend themselves more towards the recreational activities, and the wilderness parks are more consistent with the natural state of the landscape and the preservation, which I think makes a lot of sense. And I'm glad that people are here to provide me with that information because I don't have the Act memorized. But certainly it's very early on in the Act and that is a primary designation.

Mr. McCall: — I'd start to worry about you, Mr. Minister, if you had the Act memorized by now. But anyway . . .

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — I just wish I had these officials when I was in university to come up with the answers. You know, maybe my marks would be a little bit better than they were. I don't know.

Mr. McCall: — I resemble that comment. But moving along, Mr. Minister, in terms of the different sort of . . . I guess if you could for the committee, tell us what's happening at Chitek Lake recreational site.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. Another very timely question. Our ministry is proceeding with a public request for proposals to secure a private sector lessee to operate the Chitek Lake and Shell Lake recreation sites for 2017-18. Request for proposal was issued in March of this year with a goal of entering into a lease for these sites beginning in the spring of 2017.

The request for proposal is now closed. Three bids were submitted, and a detailed assessment is now under way to decide on the successful application. And it's anticipated that the decision will be made and our goal is to have an agreement in place by the 19th of May, it says here. So give or take along

the long weekend, but certainly our goal is to have it done before the long weekend.

Mr. McCall: — Okay. What's the general policy with the ministry in terms of deciding to go to a tender to seek a private vendor? Is there some kind of overarching plan on the part of the ministry where the status quo is upheld with a public option? And how do you decide where you're going to go with the . . . you're going to seek a private partner?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. And certainly there are currently 35 recreation sites that have facilities like campgrounds, day use areas, filleting huts, boat launches, etc. that are managed by third parties. Chitek Lake and Shell Lake recreation sites were deemed to have a strong potential for enhancement by third party management.

Going back to 2013-14, a program review of recreation sites was undertaken at that time and the result was an internal assessment that about 55 of the sites were functioning very well as intended and about 74 of these sites had a greater potential for third party management or ownership. These decisions we don't take lightly when we make a decision to engage with the community on this. We ensure that we undertake extensive consultations and are very aware of what the wants and needs of the community are before we go out to a tender. So extensive consultation was undertaken in Shell Lake and Chitek Lake, and we were confident that we would get multiple bids. That was successful and now it's unfolding as it should.

So there's no real overarching plan. We're just looking at what's the most efficient way, what's the most beneficial way to do it. And it looks like, you know, we've got about 55 sites that will remain the way they are and 74 that we will look at and see if that's indeed what the local stakeholders want to have happen.

Mr. McCall: — It's my understanding that there's a fairly significant amount of infrastructure work that was done at the Chitek Lake recreational site. Is that the case? And could the minister or officials describe what's taken place there over the last five years?

[19:45]

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks again for the question. And certainly Chitek Lake, as many other sites around the province, have received extensive upgrades. And in, you know, specifically on Chitek Lake there are mainly electrical upgrades. That was done for the safety of visitors and the expansion of the area as well. So that would have been undertaken either way, and certainly as always, safety is of utmost importance in our parks. And this was done as part of the overall aggressive capital upgrades, but it was done for electrical, and electrical work was done for safety reasons.

As I get to be a little older it's a little harder to see all the details but, you know, I have the exact dollar amounts there. But I think pertinent to the member's question was the overall goals, and that's certainly what's taken place there.

Mr. McCall: — Now of course I want to know what the dollar

figures were, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — All right. So the electrical upgrade program was in the neighbourhood of \$191,000. The electrical expansion was \$132,000, and there were also some upgrades to the service centre in the neighbourhood of \$40,000 as well. So the park was very well served as far as upgrades go.

Mr. McCall: — So how does that figure into the . . . And that was done after the review of 2013-14. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Yes, correct. That was in the 2015-16 capital program year, I believe.

Mr. McCall: — Okay. So how do those upgrades figure into what is slated for putting out to tender to get a private operator, and how does it figure into what is retained as a public operation?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question, and I hope I'm answering the member's question fully. But again I just want to reiterate that the upgrades were done for a safety reason and they would have been done in, you know . . . a scan is done of all assets in the province and the need determines what work gets done first. So certainly this was undertaken with safety as the primary factor in mind. The lessee is now, you know, responsible to upkeep that. Certainly in making the decision to lease the property to the private sector, it takes into account what the economic return will be to the Crown and to the ministry. And in this case it made for a very attractive return back to the ministry.

So it was money well spent in the upgrade, and it'll be money well spent on behalf of taxpayers as they realize the benefits through the lease.

Mr. McCall: — So again using this as a point of departure for sort of broader questions about the sector, what sort of backlog is there? And you know, I'd agree with the minister's observations around safety. That's obviously a huge responsibility on the part of the government. What sort of backlog is there on the preventative maintenance side of the work that Parks Saskatchewan does? What's out there in terms of electrical, water, you name it?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. And indeed a number of years ago there was a backlog as far as preventative maintenance and different maintenance activities that were required. So that was part of the impetus behind the capital upgrades that were undertaken between 2012-13 and 2015-16. And that was why the four-year, \$53 million capital upgrade program was undertaken. It's part of the \$98 million that was spent over the last 10 years. So specifically in this year, the preventative maintenance budget has not been touched, and I am told that there is no specific backlog at this time because of work that has been undertaken over the years.

Also important to mention that we have an asset management system in place that seems to be working very well for the ministry, where all assets are documented and assessed, and certainly the ones that are in immediate need of refurbishment are taken care of. So we're comfortable that we have a way to

prioritize assets within the ministry, and the management system helps us to do that. I am very pleased to say that there is no specific backlog at this time.

Mr. McCall: — Well thank you for that, Mr. Minister and officials. In terms of the, again the different sites that were identified out of the 2013-14 review, if you could just say again . . . the 55 were identified in one manner, 74 in another. If you could just clarify that for me.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Sure. In 2013 a program review of the recreation sites was performed of all the sites. The result was an internal assessment that 55 sites were functioning as intended, but that 74 of these sites had greater potential for third party management and ownership. So you know, that's to say that they were all functioning. They were all functioning well. Fifty-five were meeting our standards; 74 showed potential that it may be worth our while to engage with third party management or ownership.

But again that's not saying necessarily that that's what's going to happen to those 74, because we undertake extensive consultations and make sure that what we're proposing to do is right for the community. And in this case I believe I've seen some correspondence from Chitek Lake and Shell Lake recreation site owners, and they certainly agree I believe with the decision that's been made.

Mr. McCall: — So in terms of the 74, how many of them have gone out to tender and third party been secured?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Again the program review was just very recently undertaken, just in the last couple of years, and of the 74, these are the first two that are being undertaken in this regard. So more to come, but we'll hopefully learn from these two and it will help us make our decisions going forward.

Mr. McCall: — So for the 72 remaining, I'm presuming that's not a public list. Is that list part of the public record?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — The member is correct that that list is not public. It's a program review with the purpose of instructing the minister and the deputy, and even as far as cabinet if necessary. So they are not public documents.

Mr. McCall: — So in terms of the remaining 72, is there an intention to see how it's gone with Chitek Lake and Shell Lake for the year to come, and then review and announce in the budget going forward if there are any sort of further steps down this road? How does that process unfold?

[20:00]

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks for the question. And so again, just to reiterate — and I think the member summed it up well also — you know, we're looking to roll this out over a period of time, but we very much are seeing these first two as an education process for us as well to make sure. We want to make sure that these are done correct and with the most benefit to the Crown. And certainly we'll look to roll out others in the future, but there is no presumption and no specific timetable for that going forward.

Mr. McCall: — One last question on this score. The minister had referenced extensive community consultations. Could the minister or officials describe what constitutes extensive community consultations?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. We're trying to get all of the items that have taken place. Certainly there was meetings with the First Nation, the village, and also there was a bidders' conference where information that anybody who wanted to bid would have been made aware of as well. So every effort was made to contact those impacted. We feel that we were successful in that. And again, as I mentioned earlier, we had three bids so we were pleased to receive competing bids. And I can tell the member, I know I've received some personal correspondence as well, as minister, that was very favourable as well.

Mr. McCall: — Just one last question on this: so the criteria for the winning bid, is it strictly a matter of low bid or is there other criteria that is considered?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. It's certainly clearly articulated in the RFP [request for proposal] and, you know, to answer the main question of the member, it is not the low bid that is necessarily accepted. There will be points for business experience, financial wherewithal. But we can get certainly a copy of the RFP for the member if you'd like to see the exact criteria, but I think that answers your question. It's not necessarily the lowest bid.

Mr. McCall: — No, that's fine. Thanks for that, Mr. Minister. Certainly we've got, you know, precious few minutes and lots of questions to ask. So I know my colleagues have got some questions that will come up under the discussion of *The Meewasin Valley Authority Act*. But just if the minister could describe the impact of the cut to regional parks and how that will work its way through the system.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much. That's one that I'm quite familiar with, and I had the opportunity to examine what the parks budget was over the last, say, 15 years. And you know, up until 2007 the regional parks budget was very modest. And after 2007 it was increased to \$1 million and, you know, certainly it was reduced this year. They will receive over \$500,000 in 2017-18 but, you know, a substantial reduction in funds, especially after the big increase that took place in 2007.

But I had an opportunity both this spring and last fall to talk to the Regional Parks Association and to go to their annual meeting. And, you know, they just said to me that they appreciate every dollar that they receive. They were able to spend the million dollars when that was their budget, you know, in a wise and judicious manner, and this year they're able to certainly spend the 500-and-some thousand dollars that they will be receiving. But their overall message was that they certainly appreciate every dollar they get. They're a very enthusiastic bunch. As I'm sure the member knows, their boards are constituted with volunteers for the most part, and they make a dollar go a long way. So it was by no means an easy decision to reduce the funding, certainly.

Regional parks, they're able to fund their own operations through entrance fees, cottage lease levies, fundraising, and

local donations as well. And as we've heard in some member statements by members that represent certain areas, there have been some very, very creative parks and very proud operations. So they're doing a great job with the money they have.

Their message to me, that the funding they received will be manageable. Of course they hope that the government could see our way to restoring funding, and we certainly hope to be able to do that at some point in the future as well.

Mr. McCall: — Thanks for that, Mr. Minister. Moving on to subvote (PC18), resource stewardship, under the support for provincial heritage and culture, there's a \$1.39 million cut. Could the minister tell the committee about what's happening there?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. There's a reduction of \$1.39 million in this area, and it is due, as I indicated in my opening remarks, a large part of that is the \$800,000 decrease to the elimination of the Culture on the Go program, a \$550,000 decrease for the heritage grants and a suspension of the Main Street program, and a \$40,000 decrease for reduced discretionary transfers.

Now again, you know, a very difficult decision. The Culture on the Go program is one that's very popular, and it enables arts and culture groups to travel around the province and to replicate the work that they've done and to appear in front of different audiences. So the discussions that we've had with the Saskatchewan Arts Board and Creative Saskatchewan was to ensure, in spite of the \$800,000 reduction, that they make it a priority to consider any type of arts on the go function within their normal budgetary allocation.

So I think there was agreement there when I met with the Chairs that this indeed is a very popular program, but one that could be cut in light of the other budgets that those two entities have and the ability to prioritize these within their normal budget settings. So again, 1.39 million in this area, but still certainly a priority for Culture on the Go.

Mr. McCall: — In terms of the provincial heritage Act, and again, this is a time where we're all wrestling with the calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Minister, in your opening remarks, you'd referenced the *We Are All Treaty People* exhibit at the Royal Saskatchewan Museum, which is an excellent piece of work.

In terms of the provincial heritage of this province, there are other jurisdictions who've gone different ways when it comes to the question of the repatriation of cultural artifacts, particularly as regards to our indigenous communities in Saskatchewan. And I guess I appreciate budgets are tight, but this is one part of the budget where it need not necessarily be big dollars involved. But in terms of that cultural repatriation of objects that in many cases were often held in trust, where communities have come a long ways and are looking to gain access to those artifacts back or to indeed bring those artifacts back into their communities.

And I know that certainly the minister has got a fair level of knowledge on this score, again from different responsibilities that he's held throughout executive government. So is there an opportunity here to take a look at the provincial heritage Act

and to look at the different provisions therein around cultural repatriation, particularly as regards the indigenous community? Again, this coming in a time of the need to respond to those calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

[20:15]

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. And it certainly is a priority area for the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport. And much success happened with the repatriation of the Treaty 4 medal, as I'm sure the member is quite aware, the excitement that was garnered in the First Nations community and right across the province that that medal was coming home to Saskatchewan.

I'm told in that case and any other future cases what would happen is that the Saskatchewan Heritage Foundation, the Saskatchewan Museums Association, and heritage conservation area would work together on determining a specific artifact that was needed to be repatriated.

So from time to time these groups meet and develop priorities and look at the cultural repatriation that the minister was referring to. So I'm told that these groups work very well together and have had good success, and that will be the model that will be used going forward as well. I can also tell the member that much work is being done right now. I'm sure he's familiar with the request from the Regina Indian Industrial School cemetery. And I've received a substantial amount of correspondence from individuals and groups and had an opportunity to meet with some of the groups and will be looking forward to making an announcement on that in the very near future as well.

Mr. McCall: — Is there any thought around the sharing of different of the ceremonial objects that are in the collections of entities, such as the Royal Saskatchewan Museum, to look to best practices in other jurisdictions such as, say, Alberta, and again in that spirit of treaty and that mutual benefit?

There are communities that have come back a fair ways from some pretty tough places, and that that cultural and spiritual revival is quite advanced in a lot of different communities. And as that only grows stronger, they'll be looking for those ceremonial objects that were maybe held in trust, perhaps by the church, and from there found their way into different parts of the provincial collection.

Is there any specific thought as to how the province might be a helpful partner in facilitating the return, the repatriation of those cultural, not just artifacts, but ceremonial objects? Artifacts, you know, puts them on that shelf in the museum, but in many ways these are as vital and as compelling objects today as they were when they found their way out of those communities. Is there any thought from the minister on that score?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much. I'm told from an overall perspective we may not have as many artifacts as, say, British Columbia for example. First Nations on the prairies were more nomadic and that led to lessening the number of specific artifacts. But that being said, the RSM has a large collection that they hold in trust, as the member indicated earlier, that they hold in trust for First Nations and other entities

so . . . And that is part of the exhibit that's under way today and certainly is something that is held dear by the RSM. The challenge is . . . There is knowledge of what's missing. Locating those particular cultural items can be a challenge. Certainly many are held in private collections. And the Chief Paskwa medal that I referred to earlier, that was obtained from a private collection and now is available for the public to see.

So certainly we feel that we have a large collection. We have a responsibility to work towards increasing that collection, to look at the private collections that we are made aware of from time to time and aggressively pursue increasing that collection. So there's work to do, ongoing work but very rewarding work as well, that we are seeing.

And from a larger perspective and just taking a step back, I wanted to tell the member that it is quite normal for *The Heritage Property Act* to be opened up in its legislative format and additions to be made. So if a member or any of his colleagues have ideas or how it can be strengthened, we'd certainly be welcoming that information and those thoughts from members opposite so when it does come up again, those can be incorporated in that manner.

Mr. McCall: — Well I'll just say thank you very much for that undertaking, Mr. Minister, and we'll certainly look for ways that we can take you up on it in a positive, productive way. So again, thank you very much for that, Mr. Minister.

Again, time fleeting right along, right away.

Community engagement (PC19), obviously there is some significant reductions to be considered there. I guess one thing I would say, just to get on record, I'm glad that in the considerations around transformative change, however that might be construed, that there wasn't a move to roll Creative Saskatchewan into the Arts Board or vice versa. They're two discrete, distinct entities with very different mandates and doing very important work, and so on the part of the official opposition, we're glad to see that that distinction has remained.

I guess one question that keeps coming up — and will for, I'm sure, some time to come — is the question of the way that Creative Saskatchewan relates to the film industry, or what was the film industry in this province. And questions around . . . I guess the first I'd have under that heading, Mr. Minister, is there was a review conducted of the Canada-Saskatchewan Sound Stage that, to my knowledge, has yet to be made public. If it has been made public, if the minister could refer me to where I might sink my teeth into that.

But this is a review that was concluded, I believe, certainly had been concluded by the time of last estimates in June of 2016 but had yet to be released. So I guess as regards to the review, is that . . . and again this was, you know, critical infrastructure for what was a thriving film and television industry in this province. What is the status of that review? Has it been made public? What sort of decisions flow from that review for that piece of infrastructure? And then I've got some further questions as regards to the industry more broadly.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. And the member opposite began by talking a little bit

about the film industry in Saskatchewan, and indeed we have a very active and thriving film industry in Saskatchewan. Creative Saskatchewan has provided over a thousand grants to creative producers in all the industries since its inception. Creative Saskatchewan supports industries with over \$18 million committed to creative producers of all sectors since inception.

I've had an opportunity to get to know the film industry and some of the major players in the province. I know the member has familiarity with the industry here as well. And I can tell you that it's a very competitive process when it comes to looking for grants from Creative Saskatchewan, that the industry is well aware of the opportunities that Creative Saskatchewan provides. And certainly there's a very hearty, active participation as far as proposals coming forward to Creative Saskatchewan.

The member specifically asked about the review of the sound stage. And I have had a look at that information, and I'm told that it's on the website currently. So it is there for the member to look at, and certainly what we've tasked now that the review is done, we've tasked Creative Saskatchewan to come up with a plan for it and we've asked them to do so by this summer. So I look forward to receiving an overall plan from Creative Saskatchewan outlining how the sound stage can best be used to enhance the industry here in the province.

I think that covers both areas of the questions that the member asked. You talked about (PC19), the community engagement, and the overall decrease. Of course the bulk of the decrease there was the suspension of the community rink affordability grant to the tune of \$1.7 million. Again this is a very popular grant, \$2,500 to each ice surface in the province. And it again was something that was very well received, but when information came forward that it would be suspended, communities in their communication to me was, when possible, please consider restoring it. So that's something that we'll be looking at. We know the money was well spent, but again in light of economic circumstances, we weren't able to continue with it.

I think that answers all of the member's questions.

[20:30]

Mr. McCall: — It does, and I guess certainly that's something we've heard as well, Mr. Minister, in terms of the popularity of that program and the great use to which those dollars were put. And I guess we'll be looking for movement on that in next year's budget, if not mid-term. But anyway, it's certainly a valuable program.

But one piece of communication we've had provided to us was from the folks at the Saskatchewan Archaeological Society. And this falls under the cut to the Saskatchewan Heritage Foundation which, you know, \$204,000 taking it from 504,000 to 300. You know, it's not huge dollars, but for folks like the Saskatchewan Archaeological Society, it results in the entirety of their provincial funding being cut. Where do the people like the Saskatchewan Archaeological Society rank in the year to come in terms of redress of the elimination in total in the case of the Saskatchewan Archaeological Society's total provincial funding?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. The reduction in the Saskatchewan Heritage Foundation funding is the topic of discussion. And the member talked about the Saskatchewan Archaeological Society, and I'm told that the Heritage Foundation did not fund the society itself.

There was a grant that operated for a period of time for the archaeology and paleontology areas, but it was a board decision back in 2015-16 to eliminate that grant at that time. It wasn't overly subscribed. I believe there was 11 applications in its last iteration and of the 11, two were rejected. And the total funding was \$26,940. Again, at that time, 2015-16, the Heritage Foundation board saw it necessary to redistribute that funding into other heritage areas and eliminate the grant at that time.

Mr. McCall: — So in terms of the way that the Heritage Foundation dollars are disbursed, does that carry forward as a decision to be made by the SHF [Saskatchewan Heritage Foundation] board, or is that moved into the ministry now and is a decision of the ministry?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks for the question. All decisions, past and future, are made by the board. There have been some admin dollars put forward specifically for that purpose, but largely and almost exclusively, the decisions are made by the board themselves.

Mr. McCall: — You've reached the agreed-upon close of the time we've got for estimates for Parks, Culture and Sport. I guess I'd just leave it off, you know, in the spirit of opposition always complaining about everything, I'd just say, you know, why you couldn't, Mr. Minister, arrange to have the Memorial Cup in Regina this year, you know. I'll just, you know . . .

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Easiest question of the night, and I think I was almost pre-empted by one of our members that it's my hope that the Regina Pats are in the Memorial Cup two years in a row, this year and next year.

I did want to summarize though just very briefly that, you know, a lot of the decisions here that had to be made . . . It's not a decision of keeping good programs and getting rid of bad programs. It was a decision between some good programs and some very good programs, and some good programs that were suspended and will certainly be under consideration in the future. But I think we're very well served. I think the public is very well served by the taxpayers' dollars that go into this ministry, and I thank the member for his questions this evening.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Minister and officials and committee members.

The Chair: — Thank you. Now we'll adjourn consideration of the estimates for the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport.

Before we continue on to Bill No. 52, if it's all right, we will have a five-minute recess, if it's all right with members.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

[20:45]

The Chair: — The committee is now back, called to order.

Before we continue on, we have a substitution. Mr. David Forbes substituting for Doyle Vermette.

Bill No. 52 — *The Meewasin Valley Authority Amendment Act, 2017*

Clause 1

The Chair: — The next item before this committee is Bill No. 52, *The Meewasin Valley Authority Amendment Act, 2017*. We will now begin consideration of clause 1, short title.

Minister Cheveldayoff, if you have any . . . You can introduce any new officials and then you can proceed and make any opening comments you may have.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. I would like to introduce to you Twyla MacDougall, who is my acting deputy minister for Parks, Culture and Sport; Jennifer Johnson, acting assistant deputy minister, parks division; Bob McEachern, executive director, parks division; Lisa Dale-Burnett, park planner, parks division; and Grant McLellan, my chief of staff.

Also I heard some interesting news that Leanne Thera, the executive director of strategic and corporate services, and Lynette Halvorsen, the director of financial services enjoyed themselves so much in the first half that they voluntarily stayed for the second half. So they must not be hockey fans or they must be, you know, very, very dedicated to their job, and I'm sure the latter is the case.

Mr. Chair, I'm pleased to be here today to discuss Bill 52, *The Meewasin Valley Authority Amendment Act, 2017*. I welcome all members and the critic as well, the opposition member.

With a \$1.2 billion reduction in revenues this year, the provincial government was forced to review the role of government in a number of service areas. Our priority has been a reinvigorated commitment to core services. Through this process, our government has been reviewing our role in many spending areas.

Until 2016-17, seven urban parks were jointly funded by government, the cities, and in some cases universities and rural municipalities. Funding for all but the Meewasin Valley Authority and the Wascana Centre Authority was cut last year. Meewasin's budget was untouched in 2016-17 as it was undergoing a review. Meyers Norris Penny, MNP, was retained to conduct a governance and operational assessment of the Meewasin Valley Authority. The results of this review process helped to inform the current budget.

MNP reported back to government in late 2016. Their report included a jurisdictional scan of similar parks across Canada which found that Meewasin Valley Authority's funding and governance structure are different from other urban parks of similar size and mandate from across Canada. Most of these parks are municipally owned and operated. Meyers Norris Penny found there is a rationale to transfer primary funding responsibility for the Meewasin Valley Authority to the city of Saskatoon.

The government's municipal revenue sharing program distributes funding to municipalities who in turn make decisions about local funding priorities. Since 2007-2008, the Government of Saskatchewan has more than doubled the grants to municipalities through municipal revenue sharing, tying grant increases to the provincial sales tax over the last number of years. Since '07-08, the city of Saskatoon has seen an increase of 161 per cent in municipal revenue sharing grants with total grants increasing from \$17 million in 2007 to \$46 million today. When you include infrastructure capital grants, Saskatoon has received a total of \$500 million since 2007.

Government is now asking communities to take financial responsibility for their urban parks. Part of last year's budget changes involve amending *The Wakamow Valley Authority Act*, and today we are talking about a similar change to *The Meewasin Valley Authority Act*.

We are amending *The Meewasin Valley Authority Act* to eliminate references to amounts paid by government and the University of Saskatchewan. This eliminated statutory funding includes \$740,169 from the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport, and \$574,000 from the University of Saskatchewan, which is provided as a flow-through funding from the Ministry of Advanced Education. The amendment does not affect the \$556,700 which is required of the city of Saskatoon through the Act.

We believe municipalities are in the best position to make decisions about, and take responsibility for, their parks and conservation areas. But we do not take this decision lightly. Although the Meewasin Valley Authority will receive less than last year, the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport will provide \$500,000 to support conservation activities on provincial Crown land in Meewasin. Overall funding from the ministry will drop from \$909,000 to \$500,000 for a savings to government of \$409,000 over the last year.

Although the subsection that deals with statutory funding from the University of Saskatchewan has been removed from the Act, the Ministry of Advanced Education will provide 647,200 in targeting funding to the University of Saskatchewan for Meewasin this year, reflecting a 5 per cent reduction from the amount in 2016-2017. Because provincial and University of Saskatchewan statutory funding requirements were removed, it was also decided that the clause mandating one-third of all funding directed to infrastructure expansion be removed to ensure that the Meewasin Valley Authority was afforded greater flexibility to direct grant funds as they see fit.

Overall, this bill provides greater flexibility for the province to provide funding as the fiscal environment allows, while offering the Meewasin Valley Authority greater autonomy to direct funds to their priority areas. We have been in contact with the Meewasin CEO [chief executive officer], the board Chair, the mayor of Saskatoon, and the president of the university since the discussion of the budget to discuss a path forward. And this discussion will continue over the following months to determine the best model of governance going forward. We will also work to establish appropriate mechanisms to make sure the public interest is maintained, particularly with respect to provincial Crown land.

With that, Mr. Chair, I thank you. I thank all committee members and I am happy to answer any questions that any committee member may have. Thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you, Minister. Mr. Forbes.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you. Just off the bat, what will be the . . . in this budget year, the general revenue coming into the budget for the province? How much money is the province going to take in this year, are you planning?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — The entire revenue?

Mr. Forbes: — Yes.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — All right. You always have to keep these budget documents close by. \$14.165 billion is the total revenue as outlined in the budget document.

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you. And do you remember when you hit the 14 billion plateau? I mean you brought up the funding, the resource revenue, so I feel we need to have a good discussion about this part.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — I'm not quite sure I understand the member's question. When we hit the plateau?

Mr. Forbes: — Yes. When did you first, a few years ago, hit \$14 billion in revenue?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — We have extensive documentation pertaining to the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport. Certainly we can find the exact numbers in Finance, information that the member wants. But the member will be aware that in the last three years certainly, revenues have been down substantially from what they were prior to that, mostly to do with oil resource revenue and other resource revenues that haven't been as high as they have in the past.

So from a general indication, that's certainly what's happened over the last three years. But we can indeed get the exact numbers if that's what the member wants at this time.

Mr. Forbes: — Sure. I would appreciate that. I think the folks at home are watching this because you have referenced that this is largely driven by numbers. I am surprised that you don't have these numbers on it.

But the last question I'll have on this area is, do you remember how much money the NDP [New Democratic Party] government had for revenue in its last budget in 2007?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Again I don't have, certainly, Finance documents at my disposal right now going back to that time period. But I do remember that I was elected in 2003 and each successive year the government at the time had record revenues. And money increased year over year from my recollection, right up until the last three years where we've seen a shortfall.

So certainly there was less money then than there would be now, but of course expenses would be much greater as our province is growing and expenses in areas like health care and

education and social services have increased substantially as well.

Mr. Forbes: — Your people can correct me if I'm wrong, but I think our revenues floated around \$8 billion in that year and that you hit \$14 billion in I think 2009. Now it could be wrong. I don't have those numbers in front of me. I see that you're being . . . you know, somebody's doing some homework right now.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Yes, I have some information in that regard, and it would be in '07-08, probably in the neighbourhood of \$8 billion. I have the '06-07 numbers here in front of me which were just shy of \$8 billion.

In reference to the earlier question, I believe that the numbers plateaued per se in '14-15 as far as the revenue goes. And of course as I indicated earlier, that's in recognition of record expenditures in health care, education, social services, and virtually every other ministry and area that has been funded as well.

Mr. Forbes: — Well a lot of people have a lot of questions about the inability of this government to manage its money. You can blame it on the price of oil and that type of thing, but it's been this inability to plan that's left us in the situation where we're looking at cutting funding to our urban parks and conservation areas.

But that, you know, we are where we are here, and I have a lot of questions. But the minister did bring it up and did start to . . . and has really framed it around the tough times that we're in. And I do appreciate that we are in tough times. But it's not just because of the price of oil. It's because of some of the choices that this government has made that has found us in this place where we are tonight, talking about Meewasin and the instability now that's been introduced into the authority because of this kind of action and into the other communities that . . . as you had said, you had cut funding last year and now you've turned to Meewasin to cut its funding. So I do have several questions tonight.

[21:00]

I'm just curious. What is your vision for Meewasin as the minister responsible for the urban parks? Now are you only . . . Because you've cut funding to the other six parks — you still have Wakamow — do you have anything to do with the urban parks in Swift Current, the Battlefords, Prince Albert, Weyburn? I believe those are the other ones.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much. And certainly I appreciate the member's comments, but I take great exception to his preamble as, you know, we can certainly debate the economic choices of this government over the last number of years, and I will do so with great pride as we look at record expenditures in health care and education and social services, record tax decreases for the people of Saskatchewan, record numbers of people off the tax rolls in our province. I truly believe that Saskatchewan residents in the last decade have been well served financially by this government. And certainly we can get into each and every area and debate those if the member wishes.

Specifically, the numbers that I used in my preamble were the revenue-sharing numbers that I think are pertinent to this debate, as the city of Saskatoon has increased the funding that they receive through revenue sharing from \$17 million to \$46 million. So certainly those numbers are millions of dollars that are at the discretion of the city of Saskatoon and other cities across the province, and certainly each and every community as well.

So you know, in essence what we've said is that we are going to deliver on the revenue-sharing program that municipalities have been asking for, for a number of years prior to our government coming into place. And with that comes some additional responsibility for municipalities and urban municipalities to take on funding in areas. And urban parks is an area that has been articulated over the last number of years where we see an increased responsibility for cities in our province and a decreased responsibility for the provincial government. But overall, you can talk to any mayor or any councillor that I've talked to and they feel they are very, very well served by the revenue-sharing program that certainly is in place.

The member went on to talk about agreements that we had with other communities, Swift Current, for example, and the other communities. Those agreements expired last year and haven't been renewed . . . September of this past year and they haven't been renewed. But certainly we have the Act with the Wakamow Valley, and I am told that there is some want from Wakamow to keep that involvement with the province. We have members of the Legislative Assembly that sit on the board of Wakamow, and I'm told that it's the want of the majority of the board to continue to have that happen. So Wakamow would be similar to the Meewasin Valley Authority, as we have a member of the legislature from Saskatoon Westview that sits on the board currently as well.

Mr. Forbes: — So, Mr. Minister, part of why I feel I had to create the setting is you folks in government with this budget that's creating such a hardship for people. I am very interested that you feel very proud of the accomplishments. And I don't know if you think Bill 52 is an accomplishment, a proud moment, or not.

But here just even the lack of . . . facts that you're not aware of, you have a regular song sheet where you've spent that revenue sharing. Sure, they're happy with that. But you folks have spent that so many times over. And the deep irony with this bill is, here you are telling them, on one hand you're saying you can do what you want with this revenue sharing, but in this case you must put \$500,000 and some towards Meewasin Valley Authority. I mean, don't you think that's a little ironic? That on one hand you're saying, do what you want with revenue sharing because it's tied to the sales tax and this is the way it was set up, but now you're starting to put in parameters of how that's going to be used. And this is one example.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — I'm not sure if I completely follow the member. Certainly we are giving the Meewasin Valley Authority \$500,000 now in addition to what the city of Saskatoon receives through revenue sharing, which has gone from 17 million to 46 million. I believe it's 161 per cent increase from . . . I'm just using that from memory. And you know, yes indeed. And they've received over \$394 million in

revenue sharing since '07-08.

So you know, I was Finance critic in this legislature when I first became a member. I remember going back and forth with Mr. Van Mulligen and asking the NDP government at that time to institute a revenue-sharing plan. He agreed one needed to be put in place, but that government never got around to doing it. And it's something with great pride that this government instituted not long after the 2007 election.

So I think the numbers speak for themselves that revenue sharing is very, very generous. But at the end of the day, the decisions are up to the mayor of the city of Saskatoon and the city councillors to spend that money in the way that they feel is most appropriate. And in talking to them, I feel that some of that money will be spent on the Meewasin Valley Authority because I know it is a high priority for all of them.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay, Mr. Minister, this is . . . I think I am hearing some convoluted logic. You're saying at the end of that that they have the option to spend it any way they want. Is that correct? The revenue-sharing money.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — In large part, yes. There's very few strings attached to the revenue-sharing money, and that's up to the city of Saskatoon to spend it in the way they see fit.

Mr. Forbes: — What are the small strings? What is the small part that they're not required . . . that you are obligating them to spend it on?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — I just had it confirmed from the officials that indeed there is no strings attached to the revenue-sharing funding. You know, the statutory portion that the city puts in has been part of the Act prior, but really has nothing to do with the revenue-sharing funding that they have in place.

Mr. Forbes: — So why did you bring it up?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — It is indeed an indication of the resources that the city of Saskatoon, and all municipalities that receive from this government through revenue sharing, it is an area that they can use to fund whatever they feel appropriate and what is their priority. And my feeling in talking to them, the Meewasin Valley Authority ranks right up there and will be money that will be used to fund it into the future. So you know, it has to compete with other priorities that the city of Saskatoon has, granted, but I believe that it'll compete quite well.

Mr. Forbes: — So you're vacating the field, believing both the statutory responsibility of the province and the university, so the city, and the city seems to be fine with paying its . . . Being a participating party, it has responsibilities. But the other two participating parties have now, because of this legislation, have left the field, so somebody has to pick it up. And you're telling me that you're looking at the revenue sharing to do that, even though there are no strings attached and you acknowledge that, but somehow you're making a choice for them.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — No, not at all. I'm not making any choice for them whatsoever. I am explaining that there was a tremendous increase in revenue sharing from the day this

government came to office till today. And that is without dispute. Along with an increase of that magnitude in revenue sharing comes an increase in responsibility and a feeling on this government that we should pull back from some areas that are better served by municipal structures.

And that's what the Meyers Norris Penny report suggested as well, that it's better served by the municipality to use their resources. And you know, certainly the purpose of revenue sharing is to allow the municipalities to make those decisions. And that's what I believe Saskatoon has been doing over the last number of years, and that's how they've spent the \$394 million that has come their way from this government.

Mr. Forbes: — And likewise when you took power, the revenue was 8 billion. It went up to 14 billion, and you're crying hard times. That's 6 billion more dollars. And you're making the case that you cannot fulfill your responsibilities to these urban parks because you're broke, even though you're making 6 billion more dollars than you were in 2007-08.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — The logic doesn't follow whatsoever. The percentage increase in the funding that has been received by municipalities through revenue sharing far exceeds the growth in the provincial budget or any other documentation or any other comparison whatsoever. That is the highest increase that I have seen. A 161 per cent increase in revenue sharing to the city of Saskatoon. I don't believe that's debatable. Every number that I've seen supports that. And certainly in my conversations with civic officials, they value and they treasure that revenue sharing as well.

Mr. Forbes: — So I mean, I just find this amazing that you're dismissing \$6 billion as something that is nothing. I mean you had record revenues . . . And you laugh about it. This is amazing. And then people across the province in our urban communities, you're hiding behind. And you know, people do think the revenue sharing is a good idea. But, Minister, you must admit that 14 billion is a lot more than 8 billion, is it not?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — I'm trying to figure out the argument that the member is trying to make here. If he wants me to substantiate the expenditure, I said that at the beginning that I'd be happy to do that — the increases, the record increases in health care, Education, Social Services, and every other ministry that has taken place. We can look at the expenditures in the last 10 years and those that have taken place beforehand. We can look at the tax reductions. We can look at, certainly, the number of people that have been taken off the tax rolls by this government.

You know, the Premier and others have said in this Assembly and across this province, where did the money go? I'll tell you where the money went, and there's a long, long list of educational and health care-related and social services-related expenditures. And you know, I need only look in my constituency to see the new schools that are going up, the new schools that have been created across the city that the member and I share as our home city. Expenditures that have been very large, of course. But it's well spent, and well spent on the quality of life for Saskatchewan residents.

And that's why, I believe, our province has been growing and

more people have been moving here, and we've been very, very well served financially by this government in the last 10 years. And I think it has very little to do with exactly what we are talking about here today, but that's the member's prerogative.

[21:15]

Mr. Forbes: — So how much money will you be saving by eliminating the funding to the urban parks in Saskatchewan this year? What's the total savings?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — This year the funding has gone from \$909,000 to \$500,000, so it's a reduction of \$409,000. I believe it's a reduction of about 17 per cent in the total budget for the Meewasin Valley Authority from what they received from the provincial government.

Mr. Forbes: — What I meant to ask was all the urban parks, including the savings from last year and this year.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — A rough calculation, and certainly we can get the member the exact number, but it's about a \$900,000 reduction in total between the reductions last year and the \$409,000 from this year.

Mr. Forbes: — Well you know, when I think of what the percentage must mean of 6 billion, this is . . . And I know there are tough choices but, you know, we've been through this, whether it was the corporate tax cut of some \$30 million that will grow into 60-some million or the cut to the wealthiest. I mean, this is a priority that your government has set, and that's fair enough because you do have the government of the day.

But I want to get back to this question about, what is your vision for Meewasin? You are representing the Government of Saskatchewan. That is a participating partner. That remains as part of the legislation, so you must have a vision for this park.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. You know, I've had an opportunity to live in Saskatoon most of my life. I'm well aware of the value that the Meewasin Valley Authority brings to the city of Saskatoon and, you know, I've benefited from it. And you know, I see it as a priority for the city of Saskatoon to operate as an urban park. I feel that there is some responsibility for the provincial government, especially with the Crown lands that are encompassed by the park, hence the \$500,000 here. I know in the meetings that I've had with the University of Saskatchewan that they see it as a priority for them as well. So I think the way it operates now with the partnership seems to work well.

I'm willing to work together with the other partners to see how we can do the best we can for Meewasin going forward with the budgetary allotments that are in place. And I think I have the agreement of the other partners as well based on previous meetings that I've had that, you know, they're willing to make it work as well.

It's a common understanding, I think, across the province now that there have had to be some restraints. There had to be some reductions. Many areas have seen reductions in funding. This is one of them, but I believe it's workable.

My vision would be that the Meewasin Valley Authority continues on, that the city of Saskatoon plays an ever-increasing role in its operation in light of the additional funding that they have from revenue sharing, that . . . Again it's not my decision to make, but I could see them taking a larger responsibility in its operation, which I think is part and parcel for receiving additional revenue-sharing dollars that they are receiving. But overall, I see the Meewasin Valley Authority being able to function and being able to contribute the value that they've contributed in the past to the city of Saskatoon.

Mr. Forbes: — I'm curious. We've had a lot of discussion over the last several months about definitions. What's your definition of an urban park?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. I'm told that there's no legislated definition of that term, but certainly the member asked for my opinion. And you know, my opinion would be that it's based largely in an urban setting, that it provides value to the urban setting that it is housed in, that it is a benefit, and certainly that it is funded in that way.

I know that, you know, the Meewasin Valley Authority, for example, its area of focus is conservation and development and education, and certainly that's the focus that this particular park has. It's largely located in the city of Saskatoon. It has an area that is outside of the city of Saskatoon. Some of that area that's outside the city is land that is owned by the province of Saskatchewan, referred to as Crown land.

And that's the partnership that exists today, and that's why the \$500,000 of funding is going their way. How that exactly is going to be worked out and spent is part of the work that I'm going to be doing with the partners going forward in the coming year.

Mr. Forbes: — Does the Meewasin Valley Authority refer to themselves as an urban park?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. You know, certainly I've seen Meewasin refer to themselves as a conservation authority, you know, just to mention the areas of focus that they have as conservation, development, and education. I would think that they see themselves as somewhat more than an urban park because they transcend the boundaries of Saskatoon as an urban setting.

But if the member wants a specific definition from them on what they see themselves, you know, I'm certain that they would be able to provide. I don't want to put any words in their mouth. They do a tremendous amount of good value for the urban setting that they're housed in, but they provide value for the entire area as well. And that's why I indicated that the \$500,000 that's going to be received from the provincial government will be largely used for conservation of the Crown lands associated with it.

Mr. Forbes: — Yes, I've not heard themselves refer to themselves as urban parks. You are correct about conservation agency because that's part of their mandate. And you're correct in terms of, from what I can read, from their background information that they have three mandate areas. And you're

correct — conservation, education, and development.

But just to be clear, you refer to them as an urban park. Is that right?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — The Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport refer to all parks as urban parks, those that were funded prior to this year and the park in Saskatoon and the park in Regina as well. That was the terminology that was used. We can get into the specifics of what's urban and what's not.

I can't say what the Meewasin Valley Authority refers to themselves as. I can tell you what I have seen them refer to themselves as, but again if you want that exact definition, you could ask Meewasin Valley Authority. And I'm sure if you ask each one of those parks, they would have a little bit of a different definition for you as far as what they do and what they entertain. But from the funding level perspective of the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport, they were referred to as urban parks.

Mr. Forbes: — So now you're familiar with the ASUPCA [Association of Saskatchewan Urban Parks and Conservation Agencies]. Can you tell me what that is?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Since we're into the definitions here, we've got a good concise one. The Association of Saskatchewan Urban Parks and Conservation Agencies, ASUPCA:

Meewasin is a member of ASUPCA, a non-profit organization dedicated to sharing expertise and pride in conservation, development and education for the purpose of supporting the work of each member organization . . . [including]: Battlefords River Valley, Battlefords; Chinook Parkway, Swift Current; Pehonan Parkway, Prince Albert; Tatagwa Parkway, Weyburn; Wakamow Valley [Authority], Moose Jaw; Wascana Centre, Regina; and the Meewasin Valley Authority, Saskatoon.

ASUPCA.

Mr. Forbes: — Further into that, you would read what the criteria or what would be the defining characteristics of each one of those parks as you will refer to them. Do you want to take a look further down in there and see if you can find what some of the defining characteristics are that make them different than, say, the park in my neighbourhood, which is an urban park, but doesn't quite . . . You know, it's in an urban setting but it has swings, but something else it doesn't have.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — These parks have three things in common: an urban water body, an independent board, and a master plan.

Mr. Forbes: — Exactly, and so this is what's really . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Pardon me?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Well yes, exactly. So, okay.

Mr. Forbes: — Yes, so when you refer to an urban park, then what ASUPCA and Meewasin and those folks all think about an urban park or a conservation agency is that it has a river

running through it, a water body.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — A water body; not necessarily a river, but a water body.

Mr. Forbes: — Well, are any of those not rivers? Which one isn't a river? It's a flowing water.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — I'm just reading to you the definition. You've asked for the definition, so I'm reading the definition. It's a water body . . .

Mr. Forbes: — I know. I'm just . . . you're telling me which was . . .

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — We can debate whether Wascana has a river running through it or not. I've heard both sides of some of that, but I'm really not going to get into that debate. I'm going to let the . . . Those that are much more knowledgeable about that area than either of us can debate that, I think.

Mr. Forbes: — So let me put it this way: who's responsible for that body of water?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Which one are you speaking of?

Mr. Forbes: — All of them. Who would be responsible for that waterway?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — I know that responsibility lies with Agriculture in some areas, with Environment in some areas, with Parks, Culture and Sport in some areas. We can certainly get into, you know, exactly where the responsibility lies for each park, but I'll leave it up to the member if he wants to pursue that line of questioning or not.

Mr. Forbes: — I mean, there's usually a pretty straightforward answer to who's responsible about water bodies in this country. Is that a difficult question? I need to understand why then.

[21:30]

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — *The Environmental Management and Protection Act* of 2010 deals with the provision of responsibility. And it goes on to explain definitions of what a bank is, what the bed is, and what the boundary is. And it goes into specific definitions of responsibilities for each. Most of it is encapsulated under jurisdiction of the Water Security Agency, but there are some responsibilities for Environment and Agriculture as well.

Mr. Forbes: — Could that be put together as a Crown responsibility? Would that be fair to say?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Sure. Yes, that can be, certainly be provided in that way.

Mr. Forbes: — Yes, yes. I think that's usually thought of that way. So here you have some responsibility. You have a responsibility for all these . . . in all of these parks, but you've walked away from most of them and you've left yourself with two, with Wakamow and Meewasin. And we'll see what

happens with Wascana here. It's a bit of a different story that's happening with it and we're not debating it tonight.

But I am just curious about how you've had this vision of an urban park. And you've referred to it as their park, the city park, and yet clearly the province has a role to play in it because, for example, with the water. And you've put into the discussion the fact that you recognize that there's Crown land involved in Meewasin. What percentage of the land that Meewasin authority looks after is in fact Crown land?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — All right. The University of Saskatchewan holds 11.27 per cent of the Meewasin Valley Authority landholdings. Private landholders hold 17.25 per cent. The city of Saskatoon has 23.05. The province and various provincial agencies, 45.61 per cent — 24 of that 45 per cent is the South Saskatchewan riverbed and shores comprising Meewasin's land base. So 24 per cent of 45, 21 per cent would be outside of the riverbank that is owned by the province as well, hence the \$500,000 that Meewasin is receiving for conservation and recognition of the ownership of Crown land within.

Mr. Forbes: — Do you feel that's sufficient? Is that a good . . . Is that what they're going to see into the future?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — I think it's sufficient this year in the budget circumstances that we were faced with. I think it's a realistic number. As I indicated earlier, I believe it's a decrease of about 17 per cent in overall funding for Meewasin and, you know, I feel that . . . Is it ideal in a utopian world? Maybe not, but for today in light of the financial factors that the government has, I think it's more than reasonable.

Mr. Forbes: — What is the commitment now that we're seeing the statutory funding section gone? What is the commitment into the future years?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Well the commitment right now is to work with the funding that we've received at the budget that was just passed a number of weeks ago. Certainly, you know, we have that responsibility to work with the dollars that are put forward and, you know, there's no magic in predicting what's coming in the future. We will look with the appropriations that we have as a ministry going forward and what the revenues are like, and the budgets will be determined accordingly.

But more importantly though, I think right now, is that there's a commitment from the University of Saskatchewan, from the city of Saskatoon, and from the Ministry of Parks, Culture and Sport to work together in a forward manner for the betterment of the Meewasin Valley Authority. And so I am quite comfortable with those undertakings and that commitment, and I look forward to putting the taxpayers' dollars that go into the Meewasin Valley Authority to good use over the next year.

Mr. Forbes: — Now you've referenced a report. Is that a public document?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much. Yes, I've referred to the Meyers Norris Penny report that has served as a basis for governments and others to make decisions. That is a public document. It is available on the public website in the

documents section, so the member can access that, certainly.

Mr. Forbes: — Well, or could you . . . If one of your staff members has a clean copy, could they table it with the . . . or get one brought down to table with the committee so the committee members could all receive it, maybe not necessarily tonight but in the next few days?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Absolutely. We'll get copies made for all committee members.

Mr. Forbes: — Can you talk a little bit about the recommendations from that report? You've alluded to some. What were some of the other . . . I'm curious, did they address to the issue around the fact that, the significance of how much Crown land is inside the authority area and how the government should proceed with looking after their responsibilities?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. And I indeed have read the entire report and can recollect that they certainly outline each and every portion of the ownership of the land and the responsibilities as well. I have before me a summary of the recommendations, and it says:

With the possible exception of provincial Crown lands within Meewasin, responsibility for primary funding should be with the city of Saskatoon.

Meewasin should pursue a board renewal process that aligns with any changes made to the funding model.

Capital and operating budgets should be linked to enable realistic planning for growth.

Meewasin should continue to develop a formal infrastructure assessment process and work towards regular assessments and benchmarking.

Parks, Culture and Sport should develop a strategic communication plan to discuss the future of Meewasin funding, including discussions with the mayor and the city manager of Saskatoon and owners of the provincial Crown land with Meewasin.

So of course the report goes into depth, into a lot greater area than just the funding, so many of those are directed towards certain responsibilities. But it does outline that, "with the possible exception of the provincial Crown lands within Meewasin, responsibility for primary funding should be with the city of Saskatoon."

So you know, we did indeed read that to mean that there is a responsibility for the province of Saskatchewan, and indeed that's what the \$500,000 will be directed towards.

Mr. Forbes: — Did it talk in the report at all about how the government or the Crown should be stewards of their own land?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — In fact the document does go into some detail specifically to that question:

The Ministry could explore providing a funding on an agreement basis with the Meewasin Valley Authority to

continue to provide conservation and resource management activities on Crown land within the current conservation zone located outside the City of Saskatoon's boundaries. It is unclear from information made available during the review what the actual direct cost is for completing these services, and it is fair to assume that these services will be quantified, negotiated, and agreed . . . [upon] between the Province and the MVA.

So that's exactly, you know . . . What the work is before us right now is to understand, is \$500,000 the right number? How can that best be contracted? How can Meewasin provide those services? And for them to demonstrate to us how they are using that money to indeed succeed in these goals.

Mr. Forbes: — Do you have that . . . And you have the same situation happening in Wakamow, don't you? You have Crown lands in Wakamow?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — We continue to work with Wakamow. The agreement is in place and negotiations continue. So we have received word from Wakamow that they want that agreement to continue and the partnership to move forward as it is in place.

Mr. Forbes: — And do you have Crown lands in, as you refer to them, urban parks in Prince Albert and the Battlefords?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — I am told that there's various portions of Crown land in each of those parks. Certainly it's the rivers, the riverbed, lake bodies of water, roads, highways, agriculture. So different entities that own different portions. There may even be something from SaskPower in some of them. So each of them does have a portion of Crown land.

Mr. Forbes: — SaskPower. I find that very interesting.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — You know, Queen Elizabeth power plant is right near Meewasin in Saskatoon.

Mr. Forbes: — Yes, but it's good you don't have a contract with the city of Saskatoon over that, right?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Pardon me?

Mr. Forbes: — You don't have a contract with the city of Saskatoon over that, do you?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — No, not to my knowledge, but you can ask them. I don't think so.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. So do you take a lot of pride in the lands that you have within these cities, particularly Saskatoon?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Do we take pride in the land? Well you know, as a former Environment minister, we certainly do take pride in all Crown land. You know, we've worked very hard to determine the ecological value of that land and what, specifically, funding should be targeted towards in that respect. And you know, this area for example is . . . without question has high ecological value, and of course we take pride in it.

[21:45]

Mr. Forbes: — That's good to hear. Now you've referenced the fact that you were the former minister of Environment. Of course the protected areas and all that, that's within that ministry. Do you have that same sort of expertise within the parks people here that are aware of the ecological value of Crown lands?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Yes, we do have the landscape protection branch which certainly has expertise in certain areas, works very closely with the Ministry of Environment in the areas of forestry, for example. So we do have some of that expertise here, and we'd be happy to answer any questions in that regard or to try to get that information for you from Environment if necessary.

Mr. Forbes: — How big is that unit or that group?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — I'm told that there are four FTEs that report to the landscape protection branch.

Mr. Forbes: — Are they filled now?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Three of the four are currently filled at the present time.

Mr. Forbes: — And they have expertise in ecological values and that type of thing, because I know that sometimes the difference between, say, a regional park . . . You alluded to regional parks, which has a certain expertise that is needed for that. And then there are wilderness parks. That has a certain expertise needed for that in the kind of things we're talking about, conservation areas, that I hope that they do have the expertise, the training. What kind of training would they have?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — I'm just getting a brief overview of the qualifications of the individuals in this particular area. In the landscape protection branch we have experts in forestry. We have experts in ground land ecology, in fire management. In the past we've had a doctor of biological management. So certainly expertise in this area, general to be for sure, and very, very specific as well. And then lacking anything that we don't have, we certainly have that close relationship with Environment and are able to access the expertise that is needed.

Mr. Forbes: — Do they interact very often with Meewasin Valley Authority?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much. I've been told that certainly they have worked in the past, certainly grassland ecology and other areas such as that. But you know, more importantly though, if there is indeed a request from Meewasin, lines of communication are opened and we'd be more than happy to provide that expertise or to engage with them whenever asked. So happy to do that.

Mr. Forbes: — Did they, these folks, did they bring any concern about the fact that with the change in statutory funding and the change to the legislation, that this in fact . . . and Moriyama in fact actually talked about this in the *StarPhoenix* last fall, saying that this would be a world-class, I think he used the . . . world-class embarrassment that any kind of changes . . . that because the fact that Meewasin is really viewed throughout Canada, if not North America and further, as a world-class

conservation agency, and the partnership it has with the city, the province, and the university is something that is truly to be valued, and any step backward would be a problem for conservation and ecology.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Certainly there's been no indication of what the member speaks of whatsoever. He uses the word "embarrassment." That's not a word that I would use associated with Meewasin, either prior to this budget decision or after it. I believe it was a world-class authority and it continues to be. And I'm very proud of it, and I would not use the word embarrassment in any way, shape, or form. So I think I've answered the question that certainly we have the expertise available, and would work with them for the improvement of the Meewasin Valley Authority.

Mr. Forbes: — I'll just read it. This is Saturday, November 5th, 2016, and to be accurate, "Architect warns MVA funding cut big mistake." And this is architect Raymond Moriyama, and he says the Toronto . . . This is Phil Tank, and I quote:

The Toronto architect whose 1978 report helped form the basis of the Meewasin Valley Authority . . . has written to the agency's funding partners to urge the status quo be maintained.

Raymond Moriyama's 1978 Meewasin Valley Project report helped prompt the provincial government to create the MVA in . . . [1978] Moriyama warns of 'worldwide shame' if the province pulls its funding.

So you received that letter. Your staff would've got that letter, I assume. Did you receive that letter?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Yes, absolutely. I'll answer your question that I did receive the letter, and you know, Mr. Raymond Moriyama had a great vision for not only Meewasin Valley Authority but Saskatoon as a city going forward. And it was, you know, very timely back in 1978, and you know, much has changed and much has evolved. And we continue to look to his advisement, and it carries a great deal of weight.

And I believe that your quote there said, if the province pulled all their funding. And we're in a situation today where that did not happen, that the Meewasin Valley Authority has \$500,000 of funding from the provincial government today.

Mr. Forbes: — Well I appreciate that you recognize that then, and that you recognize if you do pull your funding it would be world-class shame.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — I'm sorry. I said 500,000 from the provincial; I meant 500,000 from Parks, Culture and Sport. They still have the flow-through funding from the Ministry of Advanced Education and the city of Saskatoon of course as well.

Mr. Forbes: — Well I don't think he's referring to the city. I'll just take a look.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — My point was that he . . .

Mr. Forbes: — If the province pulls its funding, that's what . . .

He didn't refer to the city.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Did the province pull the funding?

Mr. Forbes: — Yes, so I agree . . .

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — No.

Mr. Forbes: — I agree with what you're saying, but then you went on to add, "and the city." He didn't say the city. He was referring to the province, to be accurate. And so I'm glad that you're recognizing that if the province walks away, that this is something the world is looking at, could be looking at, and it would be a real shame if that were to happen. So I think that's fair that you recognize that, and I appreciate that.

But I am curious so . . . but it just seems to be this is a money-driven thing. I want to ask some specific questions. It seems that you recognize the province needs to be a partner because of its Crown responsibilities there, and the report did talk about, from what you've said, some different approaches to how that stewardship may happen. But you're still interested in this. You are very clear that the city should use its funding that it's got from the resource revenue sharing, even though there's been other pressures put on this particular city of Saskatoon.

I'm curious. You know, the legislation goes on, and you're still on the appeal board and that's section 29.1. And I suppose that makes sense because that is, you're very . . . You didn't see a need to repeal or take yourself off the appeal board obviously, because there is a major responsibility of what happens within the authority. You see that you still have an interest, I assume. Is that why you're still on the appeal board?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much for the question. And certainly the way we tried to incorporate changes was to be as minimalist as possible, to make the very minimal amount of changes that we needed to within the Act, and to allow for the collaboration that needs to take place.

You know, I've had various discussions with the mayor of the city of Saskatoon, with the president of the University, with the CEO of Meewasin, and have undertaken to collaborate with them. And certainly that's what's happened in Wakamow as well where that collaboration continues to take place.

And you know, I think you said earlier that, you know, it seems to be money driven. Well I think it's more than money driven. I think there's a willingness here to work together to, you know, even look to the federal government to see if they have an interest at all in getting involved in such a partnership. So I think that's, you know, something that we can be proud of and that we have a commitment to work together. And that's what we'll try to do over the coming year.

Mr. Forbes: — And in the other section, section 80, the audit, and just some minor changes there it looks like. But still, that each participating party will receive a copy of the report, even though . . . I mean, it seems like you're laying out some parameters of what the partnership will be, the agreement. You want a copy of the audit. You want to be on the appeal board, but you don't want to have any statutory . . . Only the city shall have a statutory funding responsibility. Is that . . . How would

you feel about going into some sort of negotiations like that?

[22:00]

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Again I'll answer the question the same way I answered the previous question. A minimal amount of changes were made. Certainly there were some funding decisions, but one of those funding decisions was to continue to provide funding from the province for this.

So I guess if I was on the other side of the table, I would feel hopeful that the funding's still in place and there's a commitment to work together, and I would ensure that that's what happens.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. In the explanatory notes, now the explanatory notes are not page numbered but if you look at the end of section 20, "Existing Provision, Finance" and go on to the next page, because 20 continues on. Right towards the bottom of that page just above section 21, "Existing Provision," there is a line that says: "Explanation: Provincial and University funding to this Authority will no longer be provided." Is that accurate?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — I'm told that that is accurate as it relates to that particular section because that section particularly outlines what the statutory funding is.

Mr. Forbes: — So I suppose that is what it is, and it really means that it's going to be year-by-year funding. And we're going to have two different partners from the government — Advanced Ed and Culture, Parks — seeing what they'll be bringing to the table each year. Is that a good thing?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Yes, the member's correct. It will be part of the budget deliberations now on a yearly basis going forward. You know, whether that's a good thing or not I guess is, you know, open to interpretation. But you know, being part of the democratic process and the budget-making process, I feel it is a good thing. I feel that it gives the ministry the ability to, you know, to prioritize and to adapt to the fiscal environment that the government finds themselves in and establish those priorities. And that's indeed what we did this year. And we felt that Meewasin was a priority as such that it would receive \$500,000 funding from Parks, Culture and Sport.

Mr. Forbes: — And so that was what, a 17 per cent cut, wasn't it?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Overall, yes.

Mr. Forbes: — So far and beyond the 3.5 per cent that people are taking in wage cuts and other things. So 17 is still a pretty significant cut, isn't it?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Oh yes, it's significant. You know, there was certainly areas where budgets were cut by 5 per cent, some larger, some less. And you know, there's the Ministry of Social Services who had an increase in their budget, largest budget ever for Ministry of Social Services. So again, it's part of the budgetary process. It's part of looking at what the priorities are, and it's part of operating in a responsible manner in the fiscal environment that you're in.

Mr. Forbes: — So in terms of real dollars though, it was, as you said, \$400,000?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — \$409,000, yes.

Mr. Forbes: — Now you received a petition. I know you did. I received a copy of that petition from people from Saskatoon who signed a petition to save Meewasin, and of course it was signed by people throughout the province. And in fact there were signatures from throughout Canada.

Were there . . . So there was a huge outcry to keep funding, keep Meewasin whole. Did you receive equal or more support for the cuts?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — I only received one petition. It was from the Friends of Meewasin. They were a very respectful group, a very cordial group. They came to the legislature. They gave me the petition. It was not in the proper order to be tabled in the legislature. I explained that to them. But I was happy to acknowledge receipt of it. And certainly they asked if they could take a picture with me in presenting the petition, and I certainly agreed to that.

So again I know people feel very strongly that it's a real priority for individuals that signed that petition, and that's why we feel very fortunate in this economic circumstance to be able to provide the \$500,000 that we're being able to.

But again I was very impressed and very pleased with the Friends of Meewasin and how they conducted themselves. It was a very classy way of doing things, other than some of the less than classy things that we've seen lately.

Mr. Forbes: — How many people signed that petition?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — I want to say about 2,000 I think. That's my recollection from the discussions that I've had with them, but I would have to check that out for sure to know. But I know that they had a day where they invited people from across Saskatchewan and Saskatoon to indicate, you know, what a priority Meewasin Valley Authority is.

And you know, I have to agree with a lot of them that it is certainly a priority, and that's why we have funded it. And we see a role going forward in a collaboration mode for the Government of Saskatchewan to work with the various areas

But you know, I can't predetermine what future budgets will look like. I can't predetermine what decisions will have to be made in the future, but I can make the commitment that we will collaborate best we can. And I believe it's about more than just the money. It's about helping those organizations move forward. And you know, I know the member and I will disagree on this, but I feel that there is an added role and responsibility for the city of Saskatoon and they have the wherewithal through the funding that they received from this government over the last 10 years to make it more of a priority.

Mr. Forbes: — Do you think this is one of the reasons you lost the Meewasin by-election?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — I don't feel it's appropriate . . . I

don't know. The Chair can make the comment. I don't think it's appropriate at this time to comment on the Meewasin by-election.

The Chair: — No, we'll stick to the bill.

Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Chair, and I appreciate this. But if I could, it came up many times on the doorstep that people were very unhappy about this potential that was coming down. You know, the bill hadn't been in place yet but there was a lot of speculation. You know, I was in the meeting at SUMA [Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association] when this came up. And so I'll leave it at that, but fair enough.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — I think it's best we leave it, because I could talk about the number of seats that we have on our side and the number of seats that you have. But that's probably something that's best left for question period or, you know, in other forums other than . . . I think we've got more important matters to deal with the MVA [Meewasin Valley Authority] here tonight.

Mr. Forbes: — I am sure you think it is best to leave it, because you don't want to talk about the recent polls that you folks are . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . No? Well come on, you guys know it over there. Or haven't you seen them? You know what people are talking about, this budget and the cuts. You know it. And you know if you knocked on any doors in Meewasin, people talked about the cuts to Meewasin and what this really meant to the people. So I think that you're working . . . This bill is pure ideology and that you haven't really thought it through. It's short-sighted.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — I have every confidence in the financing that the Meewasin Valley Authority has received from this government. I have every confidence in this budget and this three-year plan that has been put forward by this government, that at the end of three years we will be in a much better place than any other province, specifically like Alberta. We'll be in a place where we'll be responsible to groups like the Meewasin Valley Authority. More importantly though, we'll be responsible to every taxpayer in the province and our children and our children's children going forward, because we'll be in a position that will be the envy of the country. That's what I believe.

Mr. Forbes: — Now you've alluded to a three-year plan. What does a three-year plan hold for Meewasin Valley Authority? Can they count on the \$500,000 for the next two years? What does your plan call for?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — The member will know that the budget is done on a yearly basis, and certainly that is the process that we're using going forward. The Finance minister has made specific commitments over the next three years to get back to a balanced budget situation. I think that's a very responsible thing to do. Has it been easy? No. Have difficult decisions been made? Yes. Have difficult decisions been made for the Meewasin Valley Authority? Yes. But I believe in the long run that this province will have the wherewithal to operate in a manner that is such that we can see funding going forward for the important priorities that we need.

We don't want to be in a position where the deficit balloons out of control like it seems to be happening in other levels of government. We want to be operating in a responsible way. We'll continue to do that, and that will give us the wherewithal on an annual basis to make those important decisions as the cabinet of the day sees fit and the caucus of the day of the governing party.

Mr. Forbes: — So speaking of borrowing, why was the Act changed when it comes to borrowing?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thanks very much for the question. I'm told that the clause 64 that refers to the borrowing powers of authority, largely it's just modernizing the language according to current drafting standards. For example, striking out the word "sums" and substituting "amounts," and striking out the word "sum" and substituting "the amount." So it's just a modernization of the language in that regard.

Mr. Forbes: — Is that the extent of the changes in regard to borrowing?

[22:15]

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Under the category of modernizing language according to current drafting standards, there is a paragraph that says:

The bonds, debentures and other securities mentioned in subsection (1) may be issued in any amounts that will realize the net amounts required for the purposes of the authority, and a recital or declaration in the special resolution of the authority authorizing the issue of securities to the effect that the amount of the securities so authorized is necessary to realize the net amount required for the purposes of the authority is conclusive evidence of that fact.

So that is . . . My understanding is that's just modernizing language according to current drafting standards. If the member wants us to undertake legal to provide reassurance of that, we'd certainly be willing to do that.

Mr. Forbes: — I'm just going by the Act and I look at new section 67, "Maximum amount authority may borrow," which seems to be a substantive change, not a modernization. So I'll give you a minute to take a look at that.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — No, I saw that one as well and it says modernizing language according to current drafting standards as well.

Mr. Forbes: — Well I'm confused. You looked at the old Act and looked at the new Act? Whoever . . . There's some differences, is there not?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Right, there is a change in clause 67, but again that's . . . The old definition referred to the statutory funding and the new one refers to the Lieutenant Governor in Council because the statutory funding is no longer in place. So yes, indeed there is a change there.

Mr. Forbes: — I would consider that substantive, because prior

to this, the authority did not have to go and seek an order in council for borrowing money. Now it is required to do that. Am I reading that correctly?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — The specific terminology is that it ". . . must not, at any one time, exceed the amount specified by the Lieutenant Governor in Council." So that would be a restriction based on the funding that is received from the Lieutenant Governor in Council that it can't be any larger than that. So that seems to make sense to me.

Mr. Forbes: — Could you repeat yourself? I missed the intent of what you were saying there.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — ". . . applicable to all those loans, must not, at any one time, exceed the amount specified by the Lieutenant Governor in Council." So any loans that were undertaken cannot exceed the amount of money received from the lieutenant, from the Crown in council.

Mr. Forbes: — Now I just want to be clear because we are in committee here. You're adding the word "received," and the word in the legislation is "specified."

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — I quoted earlier from the exact document, and then I summed it up and used that specific change in the wording. The correct wording is as it is here ". . . applicable to all those loans, must not, at any one time, exceed the amount specified by the Lieutenant Governor in Council." Yes.

Mr. Forbes: — So then that must mean that the Lieutenant Governor in Council has approved a number and then it's specified. For example, this year the Lieutenant Governor is probably going to . . . It's \$500,000, so their loans can't . . . Are you saying they can't exceed \$500,000 even if they came and said, we actually want to borrow \$750,000? That's the interpretation you're giving to this?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — That indeed is my logical interpretation of this as I am reading it. I can certainly confirm that with our legal adviser, but as I understand it, in my interpretation, it would be that that would be the limit of borrowing that could be undertaken.

Mr. Forbes: — Okay. So the change from the old 67 which talks about a number, ". . . the aggregate of the sums payable at that time under subsection 56(2) . . ." which if I look back, 56(2) is the amount I believe that the parties have contributed, and that would be something in the order of a million-plus. And then you multiply it by five, so you're talking about . . . They could borrow up to \$5 million. Is that how I would read the old Act?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — My officials advise me that this particular section was provided by the Ministry of Justice and the authors and the experts in that area would be housed in that ministry and are not with us here today. So we can handle it in a couple of ways. If the member would like me to respond in writing with the legal definition of exactly those two sections, we'd be happy to do that.

Mr. Forbes: — I would. It's a pretty serious matter and I, of

course, I'm not an expert in this. I'm just doing a quick look, and I think to the benefit of everybody involved, it's best to have the experts interpret this.

If I could just add the caveat, though, that I do think there's some concerns here in the fact that in the old Act, the authority for borrowing and decisions were made by that authority, of which the province has four representatives, that had a cap five times about, I would guess, about 5 million or 5 or \$6 million. This gives all authority to the province. It appears to me that all borrowing essentially has to be approved by the province. And I think that's overstepping the boundaries. But if you want to make a comment to that, I do have that concern. And I'll leave it at that.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — All I can say to that is that this is the first that I've heard of that concern being brought to my attention. Neither the Meewasin Valley Authority or the city of Saskatoon or the university has brought that concern to my attention. But we will undertake, of course, to provide you with the full legal parameters around that clause and the purpose of it.

Mr. Forbes: — And if you could cc the participating partners — the Meewasin Valley Authority and the city. This is why we do this. This is why we have two hours. And we all want the best for all the parties involved.

At any rate, I do have more questions and we've just got a few more minutes left. And that is, as you are aware, the MVA did a 20-year-plan, I believe, a while ago, a long-term plan at any rate, and one of the things they're looking at, of course, and as you've alluded to, the city is expanding. And we see some incredibly wonderful things like Wanuskewin thinking about expanding there, the Northeast Swale, a lot of exciting things that are happening in terms of conservation in the Saskatoon region.

Did the MNP report talk about expanding the land base of the MVA?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — What the document advises is a recommendation that the:

... [Meewasin Valley Authority] capital and operating budgets should be linked to ensure the MVA is planning for growth in a realistic and achievable manner that is aligned to the strategic goals of the organization, its available resources, and the objectives of its funding partners.

So it doesn't go into great detail, but it just says that those decisions should be made in a responsible manner according to their budget. And I'm sure that that's, you know, advice that the MVA would heed.

[22:30]

Mr. Forbes: — Now I know of two specific instances. One is the Peggy McKercher land. I think it's about 10 hectares. And then there's a bigger consideration; I think it's 100-plus. Do you and does your ministry view any kind of interest in acquisition of lands that make sense in terms of conservation?

You know, one of the things I know that environmentalists often talk about is making sure we have contiguous land spots, not just blocks of land. The Northeast Swale is a very good example of a very special land area, and that Saskatoon's going to have to make some significant decisions.

What is the ministry . . . What's their view in terms of this? Other cities . . . I think of Calgary. I think of Vancouver, Toronto, of course the Greenbelt in the GTA [Greater Toronto Area] area. All of those areas have really recognized there's a real role for conservation in urban areas. And I think especially in Ontario, they have stepped up. They have in BC [British Columbia] as well. What are your thoughts in that area?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — I think the study really encapsulates what the most prudent way of thinking is, you know, to ensure that the MVA is planning for growth in a realistic and achievable manner that is aligned with the strategic goals of the organization. So I wouldn't want to speak for them on what they feel their strategic goals are.

You know, certainly there's concepts that as Minister of Parks that we agree with. You know, the contiguous acquisition of lands and things like that, you know, certainly from a parks perspective we would agree with. But I believe, you know, in light of the budgetary situation, that this is a very important way of approaching it and, you know, that the MVA is planning for growth in a realistic and achievable manner that is aligned with the strategic goals of the organization. So I think that pretty well sums it up. And I would certainly agree with that statement.

Mr. Forbes: — And this I think will be my last question. I'm looking at the 2015-16 annual report entitled *Conserving the Heritage Resources of our Meewasin Valley*, and page 6 talks about securing lands of interest, aims to create a ribbon of green throughout the city with the river as its spine, which I think is a wonderful thing.

And it goes on to talk about the strategic plan. It is a 10-year plan, not a 20-year one as I said, and it talked about . . . The plan is titled *A World-Class Corridor: Naturally Beautiful, Uniquely Ours. A vision for the Meewasin Valley 2014-2024*. And it talks about, you know, acquiring land that makes this a really special, unique place in this province, and I think there's nothing wrong with being unique and special. And I think that Saskatchewan citizens look to the province for leadership within the three — the university, and the province, and the city — to operate and provide leadership.

So my question and the last question is that, are you sure, are you determined that Bill 52 will in fact support your discussions with the partners, and that you will come back shortly with some sort of agreement that does support the 10-year plan that in fact the authority will be stronger and more effective than ever?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — What I have undertaken to the other partners is to collaborate with them, to be open to their ideas and understanding, to take their thoughts and recommendations back to the Legislative Assembly and to the caucus and to cabinet. And I am very confident in being able to do that.

Bill 52 is a reflection of what has happened to funding in this year's budget and I believe leaves the door open to the future envisioned for the Meewasin Valley Authority, and I'm comfortable with that. Yes I am.

Mr. Forbes: — Well, Mr. Chair, I would want to thank the officials and the minister for answering the questions. It's been a robust discussion. Thank you very much. And that's all I have. Thank you.

The Chair: — We will, seeing no other questions, we will start with clause 1, short title. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried.

[Clause 1 agreed to.]

[Clauses 2 to 31 inclusive agreed to.]

The Chair: — Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, enacts as follows: *The Meewasin Valley Authority Amendment Act, 2017*.

I would ask a member to report Bill No. 52, *The Meewasin Valley Authority Amendment Act, 2017* without amendment. Ms. Heppner. So moved. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. Seeing that we have completed our business this evening, Mr. Minister, do you have a final comment?

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'd just like to thank the member for his questions, and I'd like to thank the officials for providing information and assisting me in helping to answer questions as best we could. There's a couple of undertakings we'll pursue and provide the information to the member as soon as possible. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Forbes: — Again, thank you . . . I'm good.

Hon. Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Okay.

Mr. Forbes: — I've got the mike. I'll just say again, thank you so much to the Chair and to the minister and the officials for their answers, and I appreciate the forthcoming information. Thank you very much.

The Chair: — I'd like to thank the committee members for their work tonight. Seeing that our work is now completed, I will ask that a member move adjournment. Mr. Steele. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. This meeting is adjourned to the call of the Chair.

[The committee adjourned at 22:42.]