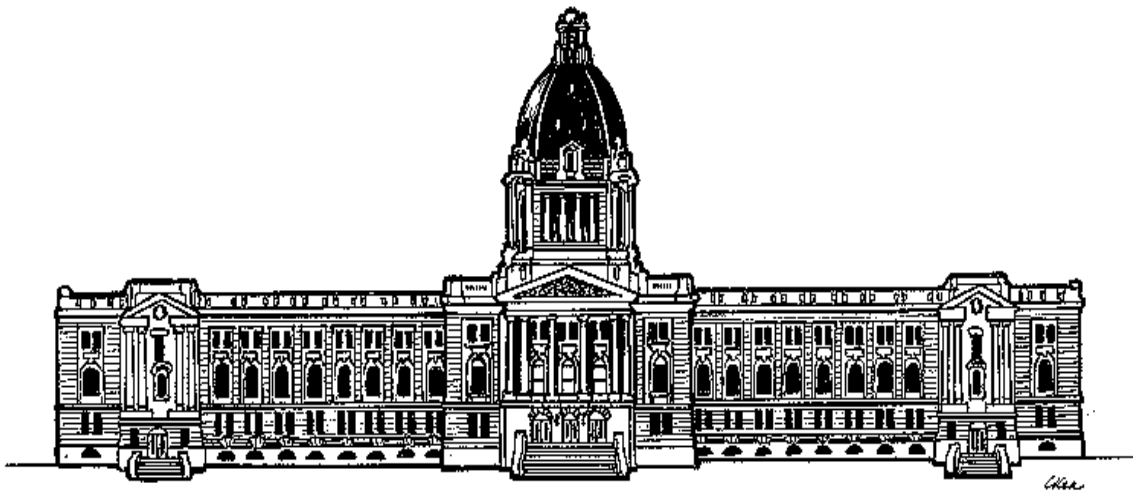




STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ECONOMY

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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ECONOMY
2006**

Mr. Warren McCall, Chair
Regina Elphinstone-Centre

Mr. Randy Weekes, Deputy Chair
Biggar

Ms. Doreen Hamilton
Regina Wascana Plains

Hon. Deb Higgins
Moose Jaw Wakamow

Mr. Delbert Kirsch
Batoche

Mr. Eldon Lautermilch
Prince Albert Northcote

Mr. Lyle Stewart
Thunder Creek

[The committee met at 15:00.]

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you very much. I'd like to bring this committee meeting . . . With resignation of the former Economy Committee Chair, Mr. Yates, we need to nominate and elect a new member, and I would like to open it up for nominations.

Ms. Hamilton: — I would like to place the name of Warren McCall in nominations for Chair.

The Deputy Chair: — Any other nominations? Seeing none, we have a motion then that is present. The motion reads:

That Warren McCall be elected to preside as Chair of the Standing Committee on the Economy.

Do we have to ask for question on that? Any questions? I put the question to a vote. All in favour? Against? It is passed. Mr. McCall is the Chair. Just before I relinquish the Chair to Mr. McCall, I'd just like to introduce Lyle Stewart who is the new voting member with the Saskatchewan Party.

Bill No. 22 — The Forestry Professions Act

Clause 1

The Chair: — I guess we'll come back to order. First of all I'd like to thank Deputy Chair Weekes for presiding and I'll try and live up to his good example.

We're here today for the consideration of Bill No. 22, an Act respecting the forestry professions. I guess we'll turn it over to Minister Nilson to make a brief statement if he has any and then to introduce his officials, and then we'll open the floor to your questions on the Bill.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you very much. I will start by introducing the officials that I have with me. I have Alan Parkinson who's the associate deputy minister, Bob Wynes who's the executive director of the forest service branch, and Earl Bourlon who's the forest standards analyst. And I'm very pleased to be here as the Minister of Environment presenting The Forestry Professions Act.

This particular legislation is professional legislation, so its main goal is to protect the interests of the people of Saskatchewan by ensuring that registered forestry professionals meet standards of competence, they're ethical, and they're publicly accountable.

We have a huge resource in this province which is our forest, and we've often heard it described as being as big as the new unified country of Germany. And there are many, many aspects of that forest which require professional advice. And we're very pleased to be at a position in the history of our province that we have a sufficient number of foresters who want to be a professional organization. We have an industry that wants to have professional foresters as part of their crew that are taking care of everything, and we think that the community of Saskatchewan and the people of Saskatchewan are ready to have legislation which regulates this profession.

So that's my introduction, and I look forward to your questions.

The Chair: — Thank you very much, Mr. Nilson. We'll open the floor to questions. Mr. Kirsch.

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you and thank you to the minister and his associates. I've got some questions here. With this Act, Saskatchewan will join seven other provinces that currently have such legislation. The previous minister indicated that this would mean that there would be joint recognition between the provinces. Can this minister assure us that this has been agreed to by the other provinces as of this current time?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes.

Mr. Kirsch: — This Act will create the Association of Saskatchewan Forestry Professionals. Will we see any regulations that set out maximum or minimum penalties for the disciplining of members who exhibit incompetence?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Basically this will be like other professional legislation, where it sets out some of these things in the Act and then there will be further bylaws that the profession itself will develop which will deal with those particular issues. But if there are specific things, we can try and answer those.

Mr. Kirsch: — On the second page where it lists those the Bill pertains to, I don't see anything . . . it's got the soil and the trees and I don't see anything on water. Is there any connection? Page 2 in italics.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Your question is around what this legislation . . . Basically foresters are people who deal with the forest and that's obviously the trees, but in our legislation in Saskatchewan around our forest management agreements, that does include the ancillary issues of water and wildlife and other kinds of aspects.

I think part of what it means to be a professional forester is to be aware of all of those issues and work with the other professionals, whether they're ecologists or whether they're biologists or people who . . . hydrologists, I guess, in the water area . . . to work with all those other professionals. But I think the professional forester is basically a person who works in relation to forests, forested land, and forested resources.

Mr. Kirsch: — The reason I was asking because it does mention the forest land, the soil, but there's no mention of the people in the environment that are working on the water, so they won't be underneath this umbrella group.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — If you're a hydrologist or a, you know, water engineer, you wouldn't be caught into this group unless you also had a designation as a forester.

Mr. Kirsch: — There are approximately 150 professionals in Saskatchewan that will be eligible to join this association. Does the minister have any idea how many of these will be obtaining memberships?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — My sense would be and I think the

officials' sense is that most of them would be obtaining this designation. We know that the companies that are involved in the forest business appreciate having professional foresters on their staffs who do the various kinds of work that's necessary. From the foresters who work within the provincial government, I'm certain that all of those people would be part of this organization as professional foresters because it will provide assistance to them as they do their job.

Mr. Kirsch: — Now I'm wondering if one of the professionals is under discipline so he just steps out of the membership. Will someone be able to operate without a membership? Will they be able to operate in the forest, or will it be compulsory that they'll have to be part of it?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think this professional legislation is the right to title, so it's a protection of the title as a forester. There may be some opportunity for people to act as foresters without these particular titles. But practically I think in any of the larger forestry operations or the ones where the provincial government is involved, we'd be looking to see that they have professional forestry advice.

Mr. Kirsch: — What would happen if a professional working outside of the association would happen to exhibit some form of incompetence? Would he then be open to discipline from the association?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — No.

Mr. Kirsch: — Will the association be involved in any sort of monitoring practice regarding practices of the forestry industry?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I think we can answer that. We hope so. I mean basically these will be the professionals who are involved in the forestry industry across the province. Some of them will be obviously involved and will work for the Saskatchewan Forest Centre or for the provincial government or for some of the larger forest companies.

But we would also be, I think, relying on these people as citizens of the province to be advisors and participants in various kinds of policy discussions that we would have. That's been true with other professions in our province. And we anticipate that part of being a professional forester is also to be part of our community.

Mr. Kirsch: — The association that exists in British Columbia has played an important role by advising government on how best to sustain forestry practice in that province. Will this association go on to assume such an advisory role to the provincial government, or will the advice be done in-house?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — My sense would be that this association will operate like the other forestry associations in other provinces, and especially in BC [British Columbia] where they have a well-developed forestry profession, and so that we'll be looking forward to good advice from this group.

Mr. Kirsch: — What sort of guidelines will be put in place for the government appointment of one member to the council of the association? Will the appointment be open to any sort of peer review or other forms of public scrutiny?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Normally the government appointment to a professional body is a lay member, in other words, a non-forester in this particular case who would have a role of providing some advice about the profession from the outside. And that process is done by order in council through the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

Mr. Kirsch: — Does the association have any agreements in place already with educational institutions for further knowledge and training for the forestry industry?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — At this stage, there is no association in Saskatchewan. I suspect that some of the foresters in Saskatchewan, especially ones that have come from other places, may be related to British Columbia's forestry association or other places. But that's one of the goals that we will have in the province is that our foresters here will develop those professional relationships and educational relationships with the forestry schools across Canada and the States and hopefully the world.

Mr. Kirsch: — Will educational institutions be involved in any selections to the board of the associations?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — At this stage I don't think that will be the case, given that we don't necessarily have a specific training program for foresters in Saskatchewan; we have for many of the forestry technician kind of jobs, but not for professional foresters.

Mr. Kirsch: — Will the association's budget requirements be met with funds from memberships, penalties, and/or any investments they choose to make, or will the provincial government be contributing any funds?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think this profession will operate like other professions where it'll be based on the fees that they collect. And if there are provincial government employees who are members, often those fees, depending on the employment contract, are paid through that way. But there's no intention to have direct government funding in the association at this stage.

Mr. Kirsch: — I notice that one of the clauses is owning of property. Why will the association be needing property?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — This is the standard clause in all professional laws. Or if it is not there, we've been adding it. One of the issues becomes if they decide to buy a building for their office, and this allows them to, instead of leasing or renting a property, they could buy a building. And we know some of our other professions do have their own buildings that they've purchased.

Mr. Kirsch: — On this council "... manage and regulate the affairs and business of the association." How many members will sit on that council?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the term, as I understand it, is that there'll be up to five members. And part of the reason, obviously, for keeping the numbers quite low is that if you don't have a huge number of professionals, some of your expenses can get higher if you have, say, 10 or 15 people. So I think at this stage, it's up to five members.

Mr. Kirsch: — That will be up to the association themselves whether they want to increase that?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well if it's in the legislation, they'd have to come to us, and we'd have to change it. But yes, it's up to them. I mean there's . . . You have to balance the public interest. You want to have sufficient number of people to do the work against the cost to the profession or the individual members in the profession. And when you're starting out with new professional legislation, people are quite careful which is appropriate.

Mr. Kirsch: — Will there be an increase in the number of foresters in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well if you're asking my opinion, I think the answer is yes. We, in the province, have seen a steady increase in the management of our forests and of the industry. We know that there are some difficult times right now but anybody who knows the forestry industry knows that it's a very cyclical industry but the management of the forestry is a long-term project and often they're thinking in 50, 100, 150, 200-year terms. And on that basis alone I think we in Saskatchewan will be wanting to make sure that our forest is managed as carefully as possible and we will continue to support, as a province, the professional management of our forest.

Mr. Kirsch: — Due to the situation at Weyerhaeuser, is there going to be professional foresters or are we going to, are we going to run out of numbers? Are there going to be enough to form an association?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I think the forests aren't going anywhere. I mean, I think that the management of the forests and the continuation of that will continue. Weyerhaeuser may not be the company that employs people but we will continue to work with it. And as I said before, the cycles in the forestry industry do mean that the numbers may go up and down, which is also why I'm sure this group is willing to be prudent on what kind of expenses they set up as they start their organization.

Mr. Kirsch: — Now I understand that there are seven provinces that have similar legislation. Could you tell me which provinces those are?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes I can. British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Kirsch: — Now I understand that most of them, correct me if I'm wrong here or . . . How many of them are a lot different from ours? I understand that a lot of them are not similar to ours. They have one but it's a very simple basic one. Ours is much more complex.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I think the question that you're asking is around how many . . . or how many parts of the forest profession are included in their legislation. Some of them I think are very or quite narrow. We're trying to be a little more inclusive in Saskatchewan so that we can have a, I guess a management of the whole forestry profession in a way that is complementary and will work in our community.

Mr. Kirsch: — I was told that there is pulp from Saskatchewan going into Alberta. Do you know if that's a fact?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Pulp from? Do you mean . . . I mean, I suppose there . . .

Mr. Kirsch: — Wood chips to be made into pulp that's leaving the province.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well there may be at some point or some stage, where it can't all be used in Saskatchewan that it may go into Alberta. But this is . . . I mean, now when there's some concern about the pulp mill operating, I think there are some requests to have some of the chips go just over into Alberta along the, sort of, Meadow Lake road, that way. Is that what you're asking about?

Mr. Kirsch: — Yes. I've heard there's pulp. And also, are there logs going from Saskatchewan forests to Alberta?

Mr. Parkinson: — Due to the circumstances with the Meadow Lake pulp mill and the Prince Albert pulp mill, the chip flow between some of the Saskatchewan saw mills and the pulp mills has become disrupted. So the province has been approached by NorSask, working out of Meadow Lake, that a proposal has come forward to ship some surplus wood chips from NorSask into Al-Pac in Alberta. And those two companies, NorSask and Al-Pac, are proposing a memorandum of understanding between the two companies where Al-Pac would accept softwood chips from NorSask in the short-run, and in exchange that Al-Pac seeks some solid wood, hardwood volumes off of NorSask's, or I guess Mistik's forest management agreement at some point in the future.

But at the present time those two entities are just negotiating back and forth and there's been nothing agreed upon, at least to my knowledge.

Mr. Kirsch: — So there are no sawlogs crossing into Alberta from Saskatchewan.

Mr. Parkinson: — Not that I'm aware of, no.

The Chair: — Thank you very much, Mr. Kirsch. I recognize Mr. Hart.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just have a couple of questions regarding this piece of legislation. First, was this legislation and this Act requested by the practitioners that we have in this province, or was it at the initiative of your government to bring this forward? How did this originate?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Professional legislation like this isn't brought forward unless the practitioners ask for it. And so this comes from the practitioners.

Mr. Hart: — This Act sets up basically two categories of foresters, the professional forester and the professional forest technologist, within a training component in each one of those two groupings.

I wonder if you could just give the committee a bit of some information as to what type of training and work experience an

individual would need to qualify as a professional forester and then also do the same for the technologist category. And then perhaps you could explain the length of time that an individual would have to serve as a person in training in each one of those categories. If you could provide us with that information.

Mr. Bourlon: — Yes I'd be pleased to. Some of the details of what you ask will be set in the bylaws with the association. But there is a formal education requirement that's required for both levels of professionals. And there will be a period in which they will have to, I guess article is the term. And again those will be determined by the association and will be in keeping with the other provincial jurisdictions, the other provinces, in that they want to maintain as much similarity as they can between the requirements of the different associations.

Mr. Hart: — So what you're saying then is all those sorts of things would need to be determined yet by the association once it's up and running. Is that what you're telling us?

Mr. Bourlon: — That's correct. The association will be established with this legislation. So there will be some work that the association once it's formed will have to undertake. There's been some initial discussions I think amongst potential members of the association in all the work that is required, and plans are in place to initiate that.

Mr. Hart: — So when the people working, the professionals working in this area, when they brought this request forward, you didn't ask them as to okay how . . . you know, what qualifications will a professional forester have. You must have had some outline or are you leaving that entirely to the professionals once the association is set up?

Mr. Bourlon: — There are some basic parameters in the legislation itself. But the discussions with the, especially the Saskatchewan section of the Canadian institute of foresters that were instrumental in helping us develop this legislation. So they do have links to all of the other professional associations across the country. And for instance professional foresters will have to have to have a university degree in forestry and the technologists in keeping with their programs will have to have a diploma or a certificate out of a post-secondary education.

Mr. Hart: — That is specified in this Bill, those minimum requirements, or is this something that is being recommended by the people that brought this forward?

Mr. Bourlon: — It's been recommended by the people that brought this forward and it speaks to each classification of membership in the legislation itself, which speaks to the individual requirements in a general sense.

Mr. Hart: — What's the practice in our neighbouring provinces that have legislation which enables an association of professional foresters? I see Alberta and British Columbia have legislation in this area. What have those associations laid down as requirements that individuals must meet before they earn the designation as a professional forester?

Mr. Bourlon: — There's an educational requirement as well as a work experience requirement as well, a minimum time that they have spent practising forestry before they're eligible to

apply for a membership.

Mr. Hart: — Okay. You mentioned earlier that a professional forester would have to have a university degree in forestry, and I believe you also said that currently we don't have that type of training available in Saskatchewan. Is that correct?

Mr. Bourlon: — That's correct.

Mr. Hart: — But I'm assuming perhaps British Columbia would have . . . some of the universities in British Columbia would have university courses where individuals would receive the formal training.

Mr. Bourlon: — Yes that's correct.

Mr. Hart: — Now what as far as . . . I guess I have a little experience in the area of professional associations, and I know generally when you come out of university you enter as, in the case of a professional forester, it would be a forester in training. And you would article for a while and then you would move on to receive your designation. What is sort of the average length of time that other associations require their foresters in training to work before they receive a professional designation?

Mr. Bourlon: — I think, if my recollection serves me correct, I think it could be in the neighbourhood of 5 to 10 years for some of them to be grandfathered in that didn't necessarily pass an examination but practised the forestry.

In the case of a new graduate, probably my recollection in discussions with the CIF [Canadian Institute of Forestry] was that it would be for a period of two to three years. And then there will be some examinations that would be required to ensure that they fulfill those requirements.

Mr. Hart: — Well I guess my concern at the end of day is that once this association is set up and they've set their bylaws and that sort of thing, that the individual who is designated as . . . receives one of the designations — you know, professional forester or professional forest technologist — that that designation will be meaningful and that it's comparable to the other provinces that have legislation. That we are not allowing this group of individuals . . . And I don't have no reason to believe that there is any intent to, you know, have a sort of watered-down version. And I just, you know, just wanted to make sure that we're mindful of that, that a Saskatchewan professional forester has the . . . have the same standing as professional foresters in the other provinces. And I'm sure, you know, I'm sure these individuals in this field have every intent to do that. But I just wanted to raise that concern.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes I think the simple answer is that in Saskatchewan and with our professional legislation we want to have among the best foresters in the country. And as they develop their bylaws and their rules — I'm sure they'll be looking at British Columbia for sure and Alberta — and making sure that the skills are transferable, that there's similar training, similar certification, and that we'll become the eighth jurisdiction in the country and we'll be able to have transferable credits.

I think though the way the forestry runs is not dissimilar, for

example, for a chartered accountant, where depending on sort of their ability to pass exams they would end up becoming a chartered accountant maybe three years after they finished their university course. It sounds like that's the similar kind of practice here where the experience on the job, plus writing the exams, will give you the designation. And then part of your job as a professional is then to be training the next group of professionals.

And we have some unique characteristics of our forest and so I'm sure over time we'll also be able to contribute on a national scene, foresters who have special skills and knowledge about the boreal forest.

The Chair: — Thanks very much, Mr. Hart. I believe Mr. Allchurch you've some questions.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister and welcome to your delegates. Welcome to a couple of guys that I know very well, Bob and Earl.

In regards to this legislation coming down, a professional forester means a person who is registered with the association as a professional forester. Do we have an example of what we would call a professional forester now in the province?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the answer is yes and some of them have designations from other provinces but maybe Alan, you could describe who and what they're doing.

Mr. Parkinson: — There are foresters that have worked in other provinces in professional designations there. I think some of our staff, our executive director of our fire program — fire management forest protection — has accreditation from Ontario as does our executive director of our forest services programs is also registered in Ontario. Insofar as industry goes I believe there are some. I have worked with some in the past here that were registered in British Columbia so they are existing here in the province.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you. So that we have some in Saskatchewan now. So the purpose of this legislation is to bring into fact that most of the other provinces in Canada have this and Saskatchewan wants to follow in line, is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I mean professional legislation always is there to protect the interests of the people of the province and make sure that you have the best qualified people providing the management of the forests. And so I think that's the basic goal.

Our forest industry in Saskatchewan has changed a lot in the last 20-25 years and clearly the need has been identified both among the people working there and I think by the government that we should have this professional designation in the province that will allow us to relate to Alberta and BC for example, in how the forests are managed. It will also make it easier for companies to bring in people from other provinces because they know they'll have a professional organization when they come here.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. In regards to the statement under (m)(i) it says

the planning, classification, inventory, mapping, measurement, certification, appraisal and evaluation of forests and forested land;

Don't we have that in place as we speak right now? And I guess I'm relating this to the fact that the three FMA [forestry management agreement] holders like Weyerhaeuser LMN [Leader Mining International], and Mistik, do they not have forestry people in their business right now that do this work already?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes.

Mr. Allchurch: — Okay so then people in those FMA holder companies would be classified as having professional foresters. If that is the case, then what is the purpose of bringing more forestry or professional foresters into play?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I mean, go back to the answer I gave before. It's about making sure that the interests of the people of Saskatchewan are protected and that the profession as a whole has an ability to make sure that the people who are managing the forestry — either from a business side if it's Weyerhaeuser or one of the other companies, or from a government side — meet some ethical standards, professional standards, and that there's a method of enforcing that. We think that that's important. That's why we've brought this legislation forward.

Mr. Allchurch: — Okay. So in that regards then, Mr. Minister, professional foresters that, let's say, work in the government under your jurisdiction or whatever, they could overrule some of the decisions made by the forestry professionals that are already under the three FMA holder companies?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well it's no different than the Provincial Auditor working together with the chartered accountants around accounting rules or the medical professionals working around the ethical issues in medicine. The same kinds of issues are there in forestry.

And because many times the decisions made in forestry are long term and — especially in Saskatchewan where trees grow a little slower than, say, BC or some other places — they're 100-year decisions. And if they're made incorrectly or without appropriate sort of supervision from professionals, it can have a long-term effect on the province and therefore on the people of the province.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you. Under objects (d), it says:

to foster the professional practice of forestry by members in a manner that is in the public interest of the people of Saskatchewan.

Well I've been hammering on this for some time and many meetings regarding one FMA holder, and that is Weyerhaeuser, and regarding that the interest of the people of Saskatchewan are not always adhered to. And that comes basically in regards to the cutting and preparing areas. And I've gone down this road over and over and over again. And it's not the fact that cutting and preparing areas should be disallowed. It's the manner in which the forest is taken because we all know . . . Forest is like a wheat field. If the wheat field's ripe, it's ready;

you've got to harvest it. And our forestry's no different. It's the manner and make of how this is done.

And I've harped at this issue over and over again, and it's still being practised in a manner of . . . and we would disagree from time to time in regards to clear-cut versus select cut. And I've often said, you can go to a very select cut like they used to do, and the forestry will still be there, and it's not going to do the harm to the land around the lakes, rivers, and streams.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I'll start and then I'll turn it over to the expert on this area. I think one of the things around the management of the forests — the boreal forests, which is different than, say, some of the European forests or even some of the British Columbia forests — relates to the fact that the regeneration of the boreal forest takes place through, often through fire where . . . and the fires go right through everything and clean up a lot. And so some of the management of our forests is to mimic that type of activity. And I will turn it over to the expert here who can give a broader definition of that.

Mr. Wynes: — Thank you. This issue is a very complex one. It's very difficult to answer in the time that we have here. We've had lengthy discussions about it. I think what has to be recognized is that there's two major issues on the table. One of them is the ecological side of it. And the other one is aesthetics — what people like to look at and what they don't like to look at. And I think that is the source of most of the real issues at this. And it's not that one is right and the other one is wrong. Both are very valid. Aesthetic values are just as important in a lot of people's eyes, the people of Saskatchewan, as ecological ones.

What we're challenged with is trying to find that balance, thinking about the long term. And some of the decisions we would make to satisfy the aesthetic ones compromise the long-term sustainability of the forest, the long-term ecology, the biodiversity that you would expect to see there. So as Minister Nilson mentioned, one of the principles that we start with is looking at the patterns that all of the biodiversity, the forest, the ecosystem has evolved with out there. The big driver on the landscape — I always wish I had my map with me — but the big driver on the landscape historically has been forest fires.

On the average I would estimate, since the last glaciation covered Saskatchewan, our forests have burned on the average about a hundred times — any individual stand on the average probably about a hundred times. That is the pattern and the process that the biodiversity of the ecology of the forest has evolved with out there. The closer we can come to emulating those patterns, the better chance we will have of maintaining the economic and social and ecological values of the forest.

And we need to be careful. While the aesthetic values are very important and we need to consider them — and I certainly agree it needs to be one of the things that's considered, not just blindly following ecological patterns — we do need to be careful that we're not compromising the long-term sustainability of our forest in favour of some short-term aesthetic values. I don't know if that . . .

Mr. Allchurch: — I think, Mr. Wynes . . . like, we've had this discussion many, many times. My issue with that and your

comments is we have to emulate a fire, and I agree with that, and I think most people in the forest industry would also agree. But why are we only agreeing to that in one FMA holder? Why isn't it province-wide? And that's been asked at Big River many, many times. We never had an answer.

Mr. Wynes: — Actually I have answered that question in Big River. Interestingly we . . . Strictly from an ecological standpoint that is where we should go. We've had a lot of feedback from people in Big River and many letter-writing campaigns, and one of the requests has been go slow, make sure that we study and ensure that we're doing the right thing before we go provincial with this. And we've heeded that advice that we've got from people.

There is monitoring programs that are set up. We are listening; we're paying attention to that. And one thing I did not mention that I should is that we recognize that logging does not exactly mimic fire. There's lots of differences between fire and logging. We need to be careful about how we do it. So yes, it is appropriate for a bit of a go-slow approach in terms of starting on one FMA, looking at the results, trying to get people more comfortable with it, because from the ecological standpoint and I believe long-term aesthetic standpoint it is the right way to go.

The other thing, the longer that we wait — just along the lines maybe to support what you're saying — the longer that we wait in doing that, the fewer options that we have because the forest is getting older around these lakes.

We've interrupted natural patterns by putting out forest fires to protect aesthetics, personal property, a whole bunch of reasons — economic values. The longer that we protect them from fires and don't replace it with another disturbance which this . . . The boreal system is a very disturbance-driven system. The longer we wait, the fewer options we have in terms of how we manage those areas.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Wynes. In regards to emulating the fire, if you look at land that's burnt just west of Prince Albert, there's a perfect example of a fire that took a lot of . . . Well some of it was good timber. Some of it was poor timber. But if you look at that, all they burnt off, there was some of the limbs and then needles. The trees are still standing.

The practice that's been held in the FMA for Weyerhaeuser is the fact that when you're cutting the 90-metre riparian areas around the lakes, rivers and streams — and I've been there and seen it — it's in a clear-cut fashion. Well that doesn't emulate a fire. And having plots of trees here and there in a 90-metre riparian area does not emulate a fire either. And a good example is just go west of Prince Albert. So if you want to emulate a fire, then leave the small trees there and take out the resource that's valuable to take out.

And no one's ever said that they shouldn't be taking it out. It's the manner in which it's allowed to be taken out. It's taken out in the summertime when the most damage is done to the environment, and also they take everything out.

Mr. Wynes: — One of the . . . You've touched on a very important point — residual trees. It's a subject that's kind of near and dear to my heart. From an ecological standpoint,

there's no question that we need to be leaving some level of residual trees, but it is difficult to come to that balance about how much is the right amount.

What you've mentioned as far as clear-cutting in those areas, that's not quite correct. It may appear that way, but we have enforcement people out there checking. The way those riparian standards are set up on the big lakes, they actually leave 10 metres undisturbed just because of the potential equipment damage to a lakeshore. So there is 10 metres maintained.

And then in the next 30 metres back from the lake, 25 per cent of the trees must be maintained in that area. And they need to be representative in terms of species and the size of the tree, so it's not clear-cut. And that recognizes that we do need to be leaving a portion of trees behind. Granted, they're being left live as opposed to dead. That's an issue. That's some of the monitoring that we need to do in the long term . . . is evaluating the right levels of residual trees — how much is enough to be leaving behind? And it's certainly an issue that we need to address, not just in repairing areas but on all the harvested land.

Mr. Allchurch: — Well thank you. In regards to your comments of going slow, what do you figure the timeline is for going slow, to come out with a solution that the practice that you're trying to emulate right now is the right one and that it will be allowed for the rest of the FMA holders in the province to start doing? Because at the rate that the timber's being cut on some of the lakes, and especially Cowen and Delaronde Lake right now, if your practice is going slow, there'll be no timber left around the lakes. And still we'd be no farther ahead as far as a province getting other projects and the other FMA holders to do the same thing.

Mr. Wynes: — If I understand your point correctly, I think I have to disagree with you. The rate that we're harvesting around those lakes is much slower than the amount of trees . . . what we should be doing from an ecological standpoint. The rate is probably slower. We're certainly not logging those very quickly. We're down to one or two blocks on individual lakes in any given year, for the most part. I can't say that on every lake, but the rate is relatively slow compared to essentially the growth of the forest.

Mr. Allchurch: — Well I think the rate has slowed down considerably to what it was in the year 2000 or the early 2000s. The reason for that though is the amount of public pressure that's been put on yourself and government especially at those meetings in Big River and around and abroad in regarding to the cutting of riparian areas. That's why it's slowed down. If it slowed down to a couple blocks, it may not be slow enough.

I've said for many, many years that the forest needs to be taken. Why can't you do a project where you take out the forest in a select basis, very select basis, just to show the people of Big River and area that you're listening to them and that you're taking the resource out in a timely fashion, but you're also taking it out in the wintertime, not the summertime when there's no damage done to the environment?

Mr. Wynes: — As far as the selective logging aspect goes, I would suggest looking once again at fires. Fires, generally in the boreal forest, do not burn selectively. And we've had

experience in this province where selective harvesting has actually degraded ecosites especially on the east side of the province. And it's one of those things that we really don't want to duplicate elsewhere.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think that this conversation has shown the fact that having people who have professional knowledge of how the forest works will be of benefit to everybody, and we can then end up having a very good debate. This particular legislation doesn't deal with that directly, but it does deal with the ethical issues that you've raised around how do we do the planning and who's there to do the consultation and explanation to the public.

And I think that's a very good example of the value of this particular legislation . . . is we'll get more people who have more knowledge of how the forests work, how to harvest them, how to make sure that they're there 100 years from now and 200 years from now. So thank you for these very interesting questions.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, and you're right. But I just mentioned that because it's in this Act. And in my area, as you know, that's the most common question . . . is regarding the cutting of riparian areas as far as forestry in my area. And another question is regarding, why is it only one FMA holder that's allowed to do it?

And my final question regarding this is, how soon do you think that the possibility of other FMA holders in the province of Saskatchewan other than Weyerhaeuser will be allowed to cut riparian areas if it goes that far? When might that happen?

Mr. Wynes: — I don't know the answer to that.

Mr. Allchurch: — Okay. No further questions then.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Allchurch. Mr. Weekes.

Mr. Weekes: — I'd like to thank the officials for today's answers. As you notice there's a lot of interest and concern about the management of forests, and we certainly would like to come back and discuss this issue on another day.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Weekes. I as well would like to thank the minister and his officials. At this time I will entertain a motion to adjourn. Thank you, Mr. Stewart. The committee stands adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 15:48.]

