

## Public Accounts Committee – Written Responses Follow-Up to November 5, 2024 Meeting

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### Q1. PA-181/182 (MLA Schmidt)

Of the 1,007 human-wildlife conflicts recorded in 23-24, how many of those were bears?

Response:

850 conflicts

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### Q2. PA-182/183 (MLA Schmidt)

Can the department table those protocols [leading staff into what needs to be done long before a bear needs to be euthanized]?

Response:

The [Grizzly Bear Response Guide](#) outlines protocols for managing problem grizzly bears in Alberta and includes preventative actions, investigation and classification, and response actions.

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### Q3. PA-184 (MLA Ellingson)

Clearly, in Alberta we do have bench strength in AI, ML, and drones. Can you tell me whether or not any of those technologies or companies that you adapted into your systems were sole-source Alberta companies?

Response:

There were no sole-source contracts (Alberta-based or otherwise) for technology procurements.

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### Q4. PA-187 (MLA Schmidt)

What population estimates were made for the grizzly bear recovery plan and in which bear management units were those population estimates made in 23-24?

Response:

Grizzly bear population estimates were made for all seven bear management areas and are reported in the [Alberta Grizzly Bear Recovery Plan](#). No population estimates were done in 2023-24.

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### Q5. PA-188 (MLA Schmidt)

The department is using the amount of predation to drive hunting. Are those stats and figures on predation events – I don't know what they're called – available to the public somehow?

#### Response:

Information on the number of claims processed through the Wildlife Predator Compensation Program is published in the Alberta Conservation Association's annual report that is [available on its website](#). Eligible predators include both bear species, cougars, wolves, and eagles.

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### Q6. PA-188 (MLA Schmidt)

So what was the most recent population statistic for wolverines in '23-24?

#### Response:

Environment and Protected Areas is currently assessing available information to determine an updated population status of wolverines in Alberta. There are no population statistics for wolverines in 2023-24.

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### Q7. PA-190 (MLA Ellingson)

The expenses allocated to the rangeland lease program: how much is allocated to monitoring the state of the environment in lease lands?

#### Response:

Rangeland environmental health is part of rangeland management, integrated into the work of the department's agrologists. In 2023-24, \$7.9 million was spent on rangeland operations.

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### Q8. PA-190 (MLA Ellingson)

When will the department return to reporting on percentage of grazing lands that are of good standing?

#### Response:

Forestry and Parks' 2024-27 Business Plan included the development of a rangeland sustainability performance measure on the percentage of grazing leases in good standing. It will be reported on for the 2025/26 fiscal year.

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### Q9. PA-190 (MLA Ellingson)

In the pursuit of red tape reduction to ease access and reduce regulatory oversight, how will the ministry ensure the environmental sustainability of rangeland ecosystems?

#### Response:

To support sustainable management of the rangelands, the department recently introduced the [Rangeland Grazing Framework](#), as well as [Operating Standards for Crown Land Grazing Dispositions](#) that set out the regulatory requirements of a disposition holder to remain compliant and the [Stewardship for Rangeland Sustainability](#) document that outlines the stewardship principles of rangeland management to maintain and enhance the health of Alberta's crown rangelands.

Grazing leases in Alberta are managed under a regulatory assurance framework. The minimum standards for disposition management are set by legislation (*Public Lands Act* and the Public Lands Administration Regulation) and the terms and conditions are set out in the disposition document. Additionally, the percentage of grazing leases in good standard will be reported on annually, beginning in the 2025/26 fiscal year.

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### Q10. PA-190 (MLA Ellingson)

How many hectares of provincial land were, through distribution, converted to productive agricultural land in the reporting year?

#### Response:

2110.02 hectares were converted to productive agricultural land in 2023-24.

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### Q11. PA-190 (MLA Ellingson)

How do we assess the economic value of forest ecology against the economic value of productive agricultural land in making those decisions and dispositions?

#### Response:

Where there is merchantable timber or areas under a Forest Management Agreement (FMA), the department assesses the compensation values for timber damage assessments which are posted on the department's website: <https://www.alberta.ca/timber-damage-assessment>.

Agrologists assess the available forage of the land which is used along with grazing rates to determine the economic value of a grazing lease. Grazing lease rates are posted on the department's website: <https://www.alberta.ca/public-land-grazing-rent-and-assignment-fee>.

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The department will weigh the financial benefits along with the social and environmental considerations of each proposed land use.

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### Q12. PA-190 (MLA Renaud)

On page 29, the department talks about 87 conservation officers that are highly trained and does go into some detail about the training. Could the department tell us what training is done by these officers to understand disability?

#### Response:

Conservation officers are provided training in Mental Health Resiliency and Mental Health for First Responders. As part of Control Tactics Training (annual re-certification training), officers train on how to assist multiple behaviour types and work through people-based scenarios in a safe training environment.

Conservation Officers are also trained through the Canadian Police Knowledge Network on recognition of emotionally disturbed persons to recognize and respond appropriately to multiple types of mental health challenges, and crisis intervention and de-escalation.

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### Q13. PA-190 (MLA Renaud)

Could you tell me what percentage or how many kilometers of trail are accessible and if you have any mechanism or any standards to measure that?

#### Response:

Alberta has an interconnected system of parks and recreational trails that support nature appreciation, hiking, mountain biking, cross-country skiing, and other uses. While some trails are designated for specific uses, others are considered multi-use trails that support a variety of recreational opportunities – from curated experience to rustic adventures on designated trails. There are 26 designated trails totalling 43.5 kilometers that meet accessibility standards, including for wheelchair access. The department considers ways to increase the accessibility of provincial park assets, including trails, when completing project planning and design work, and adheres to internal accessibility construction guidelines and the [2024 Alberta Accessibility Design Guide](#) (which offers guidance for parameters of trail design including trailheads, entrances and exits, trail surfaces and slopes, ramps, edge protection and signage), while ensuring compliance with provincial and federal codes.

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### Q14. PA-190 (MLA Renaud)

The ministry notes that there are 24 partner organizations that received \$3.95 million to look at the management of trail systems. If you could tell the committee: how many of those organizations that received grants in the year that we're talking about have experience or expertise with accessibility?

#### Response:

All recipients must demonstrate the appropriate experience, capacity and competency to deliver the project. Criteria for grant allocation for rustic development, recreational areas and trail does not include accessibility; however, accessibility is often considered in recreation projects.

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### Q15. PA-190 (Schmidt)

Can the ministry or can the department provide results of gravel pit inspections and enforcement actions?

#### Response:

The department completed 487 inspections in 2023-24. These inspections identify the status of the disposition, level of operation (if entered), and whether any compliance issues are relevant for additional investigation. Fifteen new compliance files were opened in 2023-24 and six files were closed.

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### Q16. PA-190 (Schmidt)

Can the ministry provide specific details on its most current estimate for financial liabilities for un-reclaimed sand and gravel pits?

#### Response:

As of March 31, 2024 there were no financial liabilities for unreclaimed sand and gravel pits recorded.

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### Q17. PA-190 (Schmidt)

Can the ministry provide an update on how much in reclamation security was collected in 23-24 for gravel pits?

#### Response:

The department collected \$237,135 security on 13 gravel pits approved in 2023-24.

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### Q18. PA-190 (Schmidt)

What work did the department do to collect outstanding royalties from gravel pits on oil sands sites? How much money was collected in 23-24 from those sites?

#### Response:

The question of how much is outstanding has not been determined due an active appeal on this issue therefore it was not possible to collect money in 2023-24.

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### Q19. PA-190 (MLA Renaud)

Under key objective 3.1 at the bottom of the first paragraph, there's a blank. If the ministry could fill that in?

#### Response:

The last line of the first paragraph under Key Objective 3.1 should read: "The strategy is expected to be released in 2025."

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### Q20. PA-190 (MLA Rowswell)

Can the ministry outline how service standards were improved while also reducing red tape in 23-24?

#### Response:

Service standards were improved through redesigning business processes and streamlining application requirements. Ministry performance on meeting established services standards decisions under the *Public Lands Act* will be reported in future annual reports.

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### Q21. PA-190 (MLA Rowswell)

Can the ministry expand on the effects of the modernization digital system in 23-24 including the new Alberta reservation platform?

#### Response:

In collaboration with Technology and Innovation, the old and outdated Reserve.AlbertaParks.ca camping reservation platform was replaced with a new, Cloud-based reservation platform: Shop.AlbertaParks.ca.

The commercial-off-the-shelf program was procured through a competitive process. The successful vendor, Aspira, has a strong record in North America and offers a proven reservation system that is in place across several park jurisdictions.

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The new platform is reducing wait times, providing campers with more payment options, and improving browsing and booking features. Since the platform's launch this year, a number of improvements have been made in response to user feedback, including the addition of a search function for pull-through campsites, the development of a park directory, introduction of late arrival notifications within the system, the ability to book two camping accommodation units on one campsite, and an increase in Call Centre availability hours.

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