



Overview

The success of the Minister for the Day program is grounded in the unique combination of two events. First, there is a value-added in-class activity. Teachers responded enthusiastically that this program provided an important opportunity to “think outside the box” and to integrate various curricula. Second, the day spent in Edmonton with finalists and the Minister of Environment provides students and teachers a deeper experience to take back to their communities. This central day provides an opportunity for the Minister to raise the profile of the department through coverage of the event and dialogue with the students. Everyone gained a better sense of the importance of the work done at Alberta Environment and are more aware of the issues around them.

Program Background:

Minister for the Day 2006 was the sixth installment of the program. Targeted at grade 5 students and teachers from across Alberta, the program encourages classes to explore wetland stewardship issues in Alberta and to look at other key area of Alberta’s Environment in more depth. AENV provided each class with teaching and learning materials and a class set of student entry booklets. Teachers were free to deliver the content in whatever manner they chose.

Minister for the Day is a flagship program for Environment Week. It provides high-quality educational value while involving a larger number of teachers/students (and indirectly their family and friends) from a broad cross-section of the province. The Minister has the opportunity to showcase his and Alberta’s leadership in Environmental Management and be part of a “good news” event.

Classroom Participants:

- **53** classes applied to participate.
- **43** classes representing schools across the province took part in the in-class program.
- **13** from Northern Region, **12** from Central and **18** from South.
- **828** students took part in the in-class portion.

Winning Entries:

- **26** staff members volunteered to mark class sets of entries
- **10** provincial finalists were chosen
- **2** from Northern Region (Edmonton and Sunset House), **1** from Central (Edson), **7** from South (Calgary – 5, Canmore and Airdrie)
- Winners and their teachers were brought to Edmonton for a full day event.
- Winners toured the legislature, met with Minister Boutilier, toured the Minister’s office, took part in a Media event, tested the water in the North Saskatchewan River for Alberta Water Quality Awareness (AWQA) Day, learned about endangered species and wetlands and were treated to a pizza dinner before heading home.

Feedback from Teachers and Students

In-class program:

- **33** of 43 classes responded to feedback survey
- **18** of 33 classes invested *more than* 5 hours
- **88%** of teachers surveyed *tended to agree* that The Minister for the Day 2006 program was a valuable educational experience for students.
- **85%** of teachers surveyed felt the student booklet enhanced wetlands learning while encouraging the students to apply their knowledge.

Testimonials

This project allowed students to research and share information at their own level of expertise. – Teacher Participant

It provides excellent guidelines for the students to think outside the box. They are able to use their knowledge to think about their own views as to how to improve environmental issues. – Teacher Participant

It is a perfect fit to the wetlands ecosystems unit in science. I used it as an introduction to the unit and the timing that the information came was perfect. – Teacher Participant

Students became more independent thinkers and really became aware that they can make wise choices now to save our wetlands. – Teacher Participant

We continue to refer back to the challenge. I have adopted the minister's "And then some" message. Just today, I was reminding students that an "A" grade is for those students who answer the question, and then some.... – Teacher Participant

"The Day":

- **100%** of teachers surveyed felt this program provided a valuable education experience for students.
- **100%** of teachers surveyed felt this program increased their motivation to involve their students in environmental education activities in the future.
- **100%** of teachers surveyed would be interested in participating in this program in the future and encourage other teachers to participate.
- **100%** of teachers surveyed strongly agreed that the MFTD 2005 program provided them with information and experiences they could share with the other students in their class or students in future classes.

Testimonials

I learned how to prepare questions that received good answers and I learned about how important wetlands and our environment is to us. – Student Participant

I will share everything, especially about the Legislature building and the history and traditions that go on in it. Also I will share that it is very, very busy being a minister! – Student Participant

I will recycle as much as I possibly can, I will use less vehicles, I'll try to convince my community to make more programs including the environment, and I'll love the environment EVEN MORE than I already did! – Student Participant

This program helps students see the complexities of the issues. It is an inspirational experience to participate with others from the province, looking at the bigger picture. – Teacher Participant

The experience was so awesome – no video or resource could match this event. – Teacher Participant

I believe filling out the booklet made the kids go to a higher level of thinking which is very beneficial. They are more aware of the impact every individual has on the environment. – Teacher Participant

So well organized – you've left us with many fond memories of an exceptional fun filled and educational day. – Teacher Participant

A rich learning experience for the students. – Teacher Participant

The day in Edmonton was fantastic. It went well beyond my expectations. My "ministers" were keen to share their experiences with the class. I hope to see you again next year! The Minister was awesome with the students. By pizza time, the kids were really connecting with each other. – Teacher Participant