

April 23/90

EVENING SITTING

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure

Rural Development

Ordinary Expenditure -- Vote 43

Item 1 (continued)

Mr. Koskie: -- Well thank you, Mr. Chairman. We, the last couple days, have got a nice start in the estimates of rural affairs. And what I want to continue where I left off just before, and you can maybe provide me with this information, Mr. Minister.

You indicated that it was somewhere in the neighbourhood of 8.7 million acres held by lands branch, and perhaps you could outline the range of uses that that land is leased out for. I'd like basically a breakdown of, you know, the land that you have, the government has, Crown land, and the various breakdown as to what uses it's put. I presume a lot of it is leased out as pasture land; I presume some is for agricultural purposes; perhaps some is into community pastures, I don't know.

But I was wondering if you could sort of break that down and give a sort of -- perhaps this information is somewhere but I haven't been able to find it in the reports -- of a breakdown of the land that's held by the department, and perhaps you could briefly outline the basic uses of the land under lands branch.

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- In land bank, as I've said earlier, there's about a million acres and that's one of the uses of it. Grazing and hay leases, there's about 3.5 million acres; PFRA (Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration) pastures is about a million acres; community pastures, about 3.2 million acres, so for a total of about approximately, in round figures, 8.7.

Mr. Koskie: -- Then the total land base that's held by the lands branch for agricultural purposes, is that the previous million acres formerly you referred to as land bank land? Is that correct from your statement here?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- It's basically all agricultural use, the 8.7, and that's rounded out, too, as I said earlier.

Mr. Koskie: -- All 8.7 is used for various purposes -- pasture and community pasture, PFRA . . .

An Hon. Member: -- How much land bank land?

Mr. Koskie: -- And a million acres in land bank land. When you add this all up, what I'm saying is, for agricultural purposes -- that is, when I say that I'm not talking about grazing and pastures and so on. The total amount that is put to agricultural purposes, that is, similar to the land

bank land, is there more than just the million acres that is held by lands branch of the land bank land, and if so, what additional amount for growing crops and for general agricultural purposes other than grazing leases and so on?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- About 200,000 acres of that would be under cultivation under agricultural lands other than land bank.

Mr. Koskie: -- Now we're getting somewhere. I wonder if you could then break down . . . you say you have about 12,000 lessees in respect to it, and I wonder if you could break it down into the classifications that you have given. You can provide this to me if you want. That is, the lease and grazing land and the community pastures; the PFRA; agricultural purposes -- as I call it -- the land bank and agriculture growing crops classification. Could you give a rough breakdown as to the number of lessees relative to each section or purpose or use?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- It's in your Estimates. We wouldn't have done the March of '90 yet, March is just over. We would . . . it's in your Estimates last year if you want to look on page 10 of the '88-89 Estimates, and I can read them off for you. You have it there for yourself. Annual report -- I'm sorry, I said Estimates -- the annual report . . .

An Hon. Member: -- What page?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Page 10.

An Hon. Member: -- Pardon?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Page 10.

Mr. Koskie: -- Yes, I see in cultivated acres the number of lessees is 3,595, right, and the grazing acres and the hay leases similarly for the 12,318. That's what I was looking for. I had it marked. I thought it might cross you up; you wouldn't know about your annual report.

The question that I want to address to you further, Mr. Minister, is in respect to the sale of lands branch land. I wonder whether you could outline the procedure that is followed by the department in respect to the sales of land held by the lands branch.

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- I have a copy of the policy. I could send it over. The only addition to this . . . it's not very . . . (inaudible) . . . is that, after it's been listed for sale and nobody buys it or nobody has a high enough tender for it according to what the lands branch people estimate its value to be, then we list it in the local lands branch office and anybody that is a farmer can come in and purchase that land, 25 per cent down. They've got 30 days to pick up the balance at the set price. So that option's always available there for them to do it.

Do you want me to send it across or . . .

An Hon. Member: -- Yes, please.

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- . . . just read it to you?

Mr. Koskie: -- Well thank you for that information, Mr. Minister. You indicate here that the policy is set out here with one minor change. In setting a value, would you indicate how the value is set by the lands branch department or division of your department.

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- The lands branch people use the land sales in the area as a comparative value, and that's how they set the price, by those comparative values.

Mr. Koskie: -- Sounds like land bank. Aren't you driving up the price relative to the competition of other prices? You must be driving them up because you're competing with the open market, Mr. Minister. Must have that obvious effect.

I want to turn to a much easier subject matter for you, Mr. Minister, and I wonder if you could give a progress report to the people of Saskatchewan in the rural municipalities and whether you could give an update in respect to the rat program that you announced, or the Premier undertook to announce -- war declared on rats. I wonder if you could be so good as to give a sort of an update as to how this program is coming, the one that you announced two years ago.

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Mr. Chairman, it was a year ago that we announced that we were going to bring in a program for eradication of rats in the province. Last year we had some problems, SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) had some problems with it, the pest control officers had some problems with the program as it was proposed. Went back to the drawing board this year . . . was just put on hold simply for financial reasons. It will continue with the program as it was in the past for another year until we have an opportunity to have better financial situations to deal with it.

Mr. Koskie: -- Well, Mr. Minister, are you saying that when the Premier walked down to the SARM meeting and declared war on the rats that you had no program put in place? Is that what you're saying, that you hadn't discussed with the RMs as to the nature of the rat program? Is that what you're saying? Big headlines here, there's going to be \$1.9 million a year, and there was going to be 130 full-time jobs, and there's going to be including 100 pest control officers to be hired later in the year, another 22 district field workers, and you're going to clean out the rats.

And I wonder when you declared war on the rats two years ago and the Premier made this announcement -- this was the highlight of the SARM convention -- "Saskatchewan government declares war on rats," I was wondering whether or not at that time did you have a policy put in place in respect to the program? As I understand it, it was an announcement again without any program. Could you enlighten the people of Saskatchewan whether indeed you had a program in mind, had you discussed it with the RMs, and what went wrong?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Mr. Chairman, we had a program put together; at that time we announced the dollars that were available for the program. We then took the program out to SARM and to the RMs and asked their views on it, should we go with it. They had a lot of problems and it was brought back and it was relooked at, had been looked at for all the . . . We took a whole new look at it, a whole new picture of how they would do it, but by this time this year, we felt we just didn't have the extra millions of dollars to put into a new rat program, that it could be well spent on other things.

Mr. Koskie: -- Mr. Minister, you do things backwards, do you, in your department? You make the announcement with a designed program, and then you take it out and it's unacceptable. I thought you would have gone to the RMs and the councils of RM and got their consultation in the design of the program before making announcement. Why wasn't that procedure followed?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Mr. Chairman, I think I said that we took a program out there for their review and for their input and how it would be designed. They didn't feel comfortable with the program we had. We said, all right, we'll just go back and take another whole look at it, and that's where it sat at. So that, Mr. Chairman, we did have a full program to put into place, but the RMs . . . as we announced it, we had dollars in the program, but the program had to have the approval of the RMs. You got to have a program to take out.

Many times here, Mr. Chairman, we get criticized for not having a program first to go out with, you just throw it out and then don't have one. This time we had the program. We took it out to those folks for their review. The advisory committee that sits . . . my advisory committee had an opportunity to work on it. So everybody's had an opportunity. They weren't satisfied with it; it went back to the drawing-board.

(1915)

Mr. Koskie: -- Well who designed the program for you that wasn't acceptable to anybody in rural Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- I didn't say it wasn't acceptable to anybody in rural Saskatchewan. I said that there was people that had problems with it. And it was designed internally.

Mr. Koskie: -- What were the natures of the problems that were raised that was sufficient that you had to discontinue the program and delay it for over a year and then announce that it's not going to go into effect? What were the big problems that you ran into?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Well, Mr, Chairman, the PCOs, the pest control officers, didn't feel comfortable the way it was being put together. They wanted to be able to do it themselves. The advisory committee wanted to do it differently. SARM had some ideas on it. We took a proposed program out there to them; they had some problems with it. We said, all right, if you have some problems with it, let's take a look how it can be redesigned.

When it come up in the budget this year it was just put on hold simply for financial reasons.

Mr. Koskie: -- Well did you fill any of those 130 full-time jobs or is this just another figment of the imagination? Were there any applications? Did you take a list of applications? Were you creating some positions for your Tory buddies out in rural Saskatchewan? Did you get that lined up? Because you know, you're announcing 130 new, innovative jobs out in rural Saskatchewan and I wonder whether you in fact got to the point of at least getting some applications. Could you indicate whether people were applying for the rat control program that never came to be?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, that comment is, I suppose, is if he wants to make it, is fine. But what we wanted to do is let the RMs hire their own pest control officers so there would be no political interference. Unless somebody thinks the RMs are political people. They are in their own sense, but they're a local type of politics, not certainly provincially or federally. We have about 50 pest control officers out there, that exist out there at present, and so what we're talking about was the additional number that haven't been hired.

Mr. Koskie: -- The rat control program was going to save millions of dollars in respect to property and loss of grain and so on throughout the province. Can you give an estimate of the magnitude of the saving, if you got rid of the rats? And as the Premier said, you know, great headlines, Saskatchewan combined with Alberta will become the largest rat-free area in the world. Mr. Minister, I wonder whether in fact, Mr. Minister, why this program was delayed in view of the fact that there was a massive amount of saving that was going to be the benefit of the farmers and in rural communities. Have you got any estimate of what your rat control program was going to save Saskatchewan people?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- I think it's fair to say that there's a substantive amount of damage always done by rats, both in the rural and in the towns, villages, and cities. The city of Saskatoon and Regina were going to have their own type of rat eradication program anyway, and I would assume they're going forward with that as well. But I just want to make it clear: number one is, the program that was in place stays, so we have about two-thirds of the RMs are now covered under the rat program, and we'll be looking at a way of starting to move it from the west side to the east side, just bring it across and fill in any vacancies that might be there.

One of the concerns raised that we may have to deal with was by the RMs feeling it should be compulsory to be in the rat program, and it's not compulsory now. We had planned to talk to the RMs and convince them that it would be good to come on in on their own, voluntarily, and be part of a bigger program. We believe we can accomplish that, but some RMs believe that we won't be able to do that. So that was an area that still hasn't been dealt with, and I'd like to deal with it at district conventions.

Mr. Koskie: -- Well why do you announce the programs and then start dealing with all the intricacies of acceptability of the program? You never intended to put the program into effect; that's the truth of the matter.

You needed something to make an announcement over at the SARM convention, and you had to give your Premier something to go down there and say, and he came out clearing out the rats and making Saskatchewan, combined with Alberta, will become the largest rat-free area in the world -- another first.

I ask you, Mr. Minister, is this the way your government operates? Is this the same way as with agricultural programs -- you announce a program and then supposedly you start talking to farmers in respect to how you exclude some of them. That's what you did with the agricultural assistance program. You decided what the program was going to be and then you came along and said, well I want to call in representatives to see how many of you should be excluded. And that was their input, and the same thing happened here.

So I'm really asking you: is this another game of public relations, this major announcement by the Premier that he was going to eliminate all the rats, and then suddenly there's no rat program -- is that the game that you're playing? Because if it was serious enough to go forward at that time, and if you didn't, you didn't give an assessment as to what damage would be saved by the eradication of rats. I don't suppose you even bothered taking a look at that.

But anyway, why design a program -- if indeed you did -- without the consultation first? What's the basis of that? Why wouldn't you have worked out some of the problems that you are raising now as a basic excuse for canning a program that you never intended to put into place? Why didn't you go to the RMs? You say you work with them closely; you consult with them. Well why didn't you work out the basis of this rat program before you announced it? That's the basic question.

And the truth of the matter is you needed an announcement. You had Mr. Agriculture make this announcement and then you never had a rat program. Isn't that the truth of the matter, Mr. Speaker? You bombed out again. So why the reverse process? Why the announcement and then start working out details?

And now you say well, I can't afford it. Well imagine. Here is a government, Mr. Chairman, that sets into place a total expenditure that they estimated of \$1.9 million for six years, and they're going to eliminate all the rats, and save the province millions of dollars. I think I read the figure of something like \$20 million. And do you realize that they make the big announcement and then suddenly they discover well, we can't afford it. Well boy, you must do great budgeting, Mr. Minister. Well of course we can see the results of that.

But can you feature anybody coming forward with an agricultural and rural Saskatchewan program announcing \$1.9 million annually, and then suddenly a year and a half later, suddenly say that we don't have the details of the program, and what is more, we can't afford it.

Now that is really budgeting, Mr. Minister. You're really on top of your department, and the Department of Finance is doing such a tremendous job.

Obviously we can understand why we have the problems that we have.

But the basic question is, was this just an announcement for the sake of an announcement, and if it wasn't, why didn't the details of the program worked out beforehand rather than the aftermath?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Mr. Chairman, I told the member from Quill Lakes that we had a program worked out; we had the dollars worked out; we had an estimate on the approximate savings of dollars to farmers, but that varies from year to year and the kind of crops.

We took it to . . . took the program then . . . after we'd worked out a basic program, we took it to the ones that would be involved with delivering of the program, from the pest control officer to SARM, to the RMs and to the towns, and to my advisory committee, of which part of SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) also sits on, to look at it and take a look and see if they felt that was the kind of program that would deliver what they wanted out there.

They had some problems with part of it. Part of it they agreed and part they didn't. And as I said, by the time it was all worked out and ready to go, financial restrictions prohibited it.

Mr. Koskie: -- Mr. Minister, I want to turn to another area that you've done a tremendous job, and certainly I think we'll be able to demonstrate to you that there's an awful lot of disappointment in the method in which you're handling . . . and I want to turn to the topic of ferries and ferry service.

You will find, Mr. Minister, that throughout the years since you people took office, that the budget in respect to ferry service across this province has been slashed, cut, and service has been downgraded. In '83-84, there was over . . . almost \$1.6 million for ferry services; '84-85 was 1.54; '85-86, 1.4; '87-88, it dropped to 1.1; '88-89, it dropped to less than 1.1; and this year there is an \$8 million . . . \$8,000 increase.

But Mr. Minister, what has been happening here in respect to the ferry service -- which is needed by the people of Saskatchewan -- is that what you have been doing is cutting back the hours of operation of most of the provincial ferries. And indeed they have been cut back, from 7 a.m. to 12 midnight, with a half hour for lunch and supper, to 7 a.m. to noon -- one hour off at noon now -- and 1 until 6 p.m., another hour off, and then from 7 until 10 p.m. That's the type of cut-backs that you have made, not only in expenditures but also in the services and the extension of . . . and the extent of services that you have been providing.

And if we take a look, that is an effective cut of three hours from what existed prior to the first week of April. And I say to you, the summer months are coming and people will be doing more access . . . need more access to the ferries. Seeding is coming and some farmers have land on both sides of the river. And I ask you, how did it occur to you that it was a good idea to start reducing back the amount of services?

I want to in particular at this time, and some of my colleagues will talk on some of the other areas in respect to the decrease in ferry service. There has been a massive cut in the staff; some of the ferry services have been privatized, and as a consequence the people of Saskatchewan are getting reduced services. We have the particular ferries that are of concern to people around Prince Albert. It's the Weldon ferry and the the Cecil and St. Laurent are three particular ferries that they're concerned with for ferry service.

And I want to indicate to you, Mr. Minister, that there's no doubt that you received, or at least the Premier received, a letter complaining about the massive cut or the significant cut in the ferry service. And I have here a letter to the Hon. Grant Devine, Agriculture minister of the province of Saskatchewan, and it's sent also to the MLA for Kinistino, and it's also sent to the Minister of Rural Development. And I tell you, Mr. Minister, that there are some very major concerns that the agricultural community have in respect to the cut in ferry service. And here they talk about specifically in respect to the Weldon ferry. And they say there are a minimum of 18 farmers involved, Mr. Minister, in our community that farm 55 quarters of land across the South Saskatchewan River, that are in the Rural Municipality of Kinistino. To go around would mean a large number of kilometres that would have to be travelled. And they say, to go around from our community to our farm land will result in an average of 140 kilometres extra per trip.

"On numerous occasions we'll find it impossible to work within the confines of the proposed hours," because farmers during seeding and harvest have no hours. They got to get their crop in; they got to have access whenever they require it.

(1930)

They also indicate that:

We would also like to point out that we have already suffered from cut-backs at this ferry, namely that of losing our previously free 24-hour service. While finding the new service inconvenient and expensive on occasions (that's the new service) when we find ourselves working extended hours, it cannot at this point be considered intolerable. We believe what you are now proposing is indeed intolerable.

And this is signed by a large number of farmers. There's some 10 or 12 farmers that are directly affected in respect to it. And it has to do with the Weldon ferry, regarding the proposed cut-backs. I have received contacts in respect to the St. Laurent, and also the Cecil ferry, that the same type of cut-backs are taking place at the great inconvenience to the farmers in that farm land on both sides of the river. So I guess my question is, Mr. Minister: how do you justify the cut-back in the services to the extent . . . And you have obviously received a copy of the letter here signed by a large number of farmers, and I'm wondering whether you're going to reverse what your policy of cut-back is and to reinstate sufficient service that will accommodate the . . . particularly the farmers in the areas affected by the Weldon, the St. Laurent, and the Cecil ferry

service.

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Mr. Chairman, we had cut . . . certainly had been some . . . trying to save a few dollars on some of the operations of ferries. I want to make one mention that we did . . . The maintenance is now being done by contract and by the local ferry operator who makes a decision what needs to be done there. And that's certainly saving us a considerable amount of dollars. And also there's been a new bridge put in, the Meridian bridge up at Lloydminster which took . . . don't need that ferry any longer. Also . . . because the bridge went in place for the ferry.

The other one, the one he mentioned, was in a pilot project. It's the Fenton ferry, which is a pilot project there. The closeness, proximity to the highway, to no. 23, or to no. 3, rather, going into Prince Albert, was one of the reasons they decided . . . that we looked at not needing it any longer.

And then it was raised with us that some of the heavy traffic across that bridge was rather narrow and it could create some fairly major problems for the implements going back and forth. So a local person there has been operating it on a pilot project to see how it works both for the patrons and cost-wise for the government and still have a really good service. This is -- what? -- the third year now, I believe, and it's . . . I believe it's working very well.

But that's the only one we've done that with. It was strictly a pilot project because we had planned not to operate it, and then because of demand we had put it back in that way. So therefore that's some of the areas where the dollars and cents would be down on the ferries.

I have here the '88 or '89-90 number of ferries that went across last year. And I won't go through them all, but I believe he mentioned some of the ones: like Weldon had 31,000 crossings. About 100 of them would be machinery and about 1,000 of them would be tractors; the rest would be cars and half-tons. If you go look at the one at . . . What other one did he . . . St. Laurent, there was 151 self-propelled units and 89 tractors; the rest would be either buses and/or cars and half-tons. So those would be some of the ideas.

The heavy use one is the one at Cumberland House and the one at Riverhurst. The one at Riverhurst has a large amount of traffic across it. It has not many self-propelled units -- that's tractors or machinery, tractors only 91 -- but it has a large number of cars, like 28,000 cars, 17,000 half-tons. So it is well used, so it is used a lot.

The other one that's used a lot is Clarkboro. It has something like 33,000 vehicles or pieces of implement across it on a yearly basis.

Mr. Koskie: -- Well, Mr. Minister, I . . . There's a list of a large number of farmers which are going to be affected, and this is in regarding proposed cut-backs in the Weldon ferry. That's the heading they give.

And they're indicating that, to go around from our community to our farm

land would result in an average of 140 kilometres extra per trip. And what they're asking is and they're saying is, that to reduce down the hours of service, for them it would be intolerable. And what I'm asking you is: are you going to disregard the concerns, the express concerns of the farmers, and are going to say that, well we've privatized some of these and the private operator now will set the hours because we can save a few bucks?

I would have thought that the ferry service was a public service, a convenience to the people of this province. What I'm asking you here: are you rejecting the proposition that is being put forward by a large number of farmers that are, in fact, affected by the Weldon ferry and the reduced service that you are providing? Is that what you are saying? Or can I report to the 10 or 12 or 15 farmers here that have met and signed the letter whether or not that you are prepared to take a look at this cut in service? Mr. Minister, are you prepared to re-examine it and to again extend the hours of crossings that the ferry service is in operation? Are you prepared to reconsider that?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Mr. Chairman, I have a letter here sent to me in regards to a request for . . . to some of the members in regard to the ferry crossing and to take a look at it. And with due respect, I'd like to read just a little bit of the letter, and then I'll answer the member's question.

It's sent to, it says, to the MLA for Kinistino, Joe Saxinger; to the member from Rosthern, Bill Neudorf; and the member from Cut Knife-Lloydminster, Michael Hopfner. And I'll just read one line:

We would like to have you review the loss of hours of operation at the ferry crossings at Weldon, St. Laurent, Paynton, and Cecil ferry.

Then it goes on to say some of the concerns they have.

Yesterday, I believe Saturday, the member from Rosthern went out and met with these people from both the ferry operators and the people in the area, including the RMs, and discussed with them the problems, and especially the seeding and the harvest time.

He came back . . . He got back to me this morning. We discussed with the department and I have told . . . We will be telling them tomorrow morning, be notified tomorrow morning that the hours will go back to the regular hours they were at those crossings, and that they . . . particularly during the seeding and harvest time, and that we would meet with them, review if they needed hours during the summer put back.

So I guess just to say that my colleagues have been out there. They met with and dealt with the concerns. They've come back to our department and realize that seeding could be a problem, that seeding and harvest could be a problem. So we're prepared to put the . . . to go back and put in place as it was previous, last year, for those times.

So I think, Mr. Chairman, it's fair to say that, yes, the hours will be replaced after meetings with both the member from Rosthern, the member from Kinistino . . . have come to me, and as I said, a letter from the RMs

concerned. We've addressed it and we will be putting it in place as it was last year.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Mr. Koskie: -- Well, Mr. Minister, you're quite a representative of rural Saskatchewan -- that a group of farmers have to organize meetings, get in contact with the Premier of Saskatchewan, get a hold of you, and suddenly you realize that the farmers are right, Mr. Minister. Well didn't you believe that the farmers might have needed it as much as after they petitioned and forced you into changing it back, the hours?

That's the problem, Mr. Minister. What you are trying to do . . . And as my colleague says, that decision was made tonight because you're on the hot seat. That's really what happened -- just walked over, he called them over and he said, look it, we're in trouble here and I can't stand any more trouble. Because the farmers are petitioning -- no less -- petitioning to get the services reinstated. So he called over the member from Rosthern and he said, do you think it would be all right if I announced a change in the regulations and at the same time give you a little bit of credit?

Well I'll tell you, you can't get credit for undoing something that should never have been undone. You know what that's called? Stupidity -- stupidity that a department would deprive agricultural community the right of crossing the river and then to have the audacity, after they do it, of sending out a couple of back-benchers, after the farmers are ready to scalp the minister, and then under pressure getting up in the House here and saying, well we have reneged now. And he just called the member from Rosthern over and he said, look, the heat is heavy; we can't take it any more; we've got to change it. That's what the minister did.

And can you imagine, can you imagine the sensitivity that he has in respect to the farmers? I'll tell you, Mr. Minister, you have slashed and cut the budget in respect to the ferry service operation; you have cut and slashed the staff. And what you have done, Mr. Minister, is also privatized the operation in many instances. And I'll tell you, the service has deteriorated and the inconvenience has been to the farmers and to the residents of Saskatchewan, because what you wanted to do is to set up a few of your friends running the ferry service.

Mr. Minister, in the area of Prince Albert -- and my colleague will refer to it -- farmers have organized a petition, organized a petition to strike out against this here injustice that you are going to impose on them in respect to the ferry crossing. That's what you were doing, in the pretence that you represent the farmers. And right in the height of seeding and in harvest, you would cut back the service.

Mr. Minister, this announcement that they cooked up this evening with the member from Rosthern, I wonder whether you have done a cost analysis as to what in fact it will cost. Have you had time since you made the decision to give us a cost analysis?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- As a matter of fact, we had done an analysis on exactly

what it would be to put it back on. I just want to make mention. You said the quality of service at our ferry crossings has deteriorated greatly, and you know, that's the employees that run them. People . . . Management don't run that. That's just ordinary people out there that run that.

And you know, I don't think that's fair to say that the quality of service that they give is poor. I think they give very fine quality service. I say that in all honesty, and I believe if you've ever went across one of those ferries you know the kind of service those people give. So I just want . . .

(1945)

The other thing you said, you said you come back and you . . . that because they . . . or they brought you . . . they didn't give you a petition . . . but I guess you say this one comment. I have one letter. I guess what it says, it says to me, anyway, first of all that we listen; and second, that we're open government. That we listen and if there is a problem we address it. That's listening and open government, in my view. And that's what we're supposed to do.

I mean, we're supposed to also be as close as we can with the money, but if there's a problem then we listen and we do what is necessary to be done. And the only letter, the only RM other letter, other than the one I just received in regards to those, and that was just sent by some individuals, was the one from the RM of Prince Albert. And what it says . . . just let me read you what it says. It's just a . . . It says that:

We hereby support the efforts of the ratepayers from the Steep Creek area of this RM to request the Department of Rural Development to maintain its service at the Weldon ferry at the same standard for 1989.

I mean, it wasn't a wildly worded letter. It just said come on, we want you to take another look at it and go back. That's exactly what we've done. And this is dated April 9, this is dated April 9.

The other thing I should just make mention while I'm on my feet, is that on CKBI tonight I was talking about exactly what I told the member here a few minutes ago, about the changes in going back to the service. So it was before he even brought it up that I had already told CKBI about it.

Mr. Koskie: -- You must have missed the question. I wonder whether you could indicate, in the change in policy restoring the service as you indicated -- part-time at least; you haven't made it clear -- whether you've done a cost analysis. What is the total cost to the department over and above what you had budgeted for ferry service?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Just for your information, it's \$9,200 per crossing per season.

Mr. Kowalsky: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, I want to ask the minister questions about some very specific ferries. You indicated that in general you were increasing the hours. Now with the case of the St. Laurent ferry, that

ferry handles a lot of tourist traffic and that tourist traffic is very important to the town of Batoche. And you indicated just a few minutes ago that there weren't that many farmers coming through there but there were a lot of cars and there were a lot of buses -- and we know that, we know that. It's not only important for the farmers in the area but it is also important for the people in the Batoche district for their small businesses.

Now you understand, if the ferry is closed over the noon hour, a tourist is not about to sit there and have a lunch prepared and have lunch at the ferry while he's waiting to cross, or to sit there at supper time. I want to ask you, are you going to open the ferries over the noon hour and over supper hour at St. Laurent?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- I just said we're going back to the 30-minute lunch break at dinner hour and the 30-minute lunch break at supper hour.

Mr. Kowalsky: -- Now I'm going to ask you, Mr. Minister, specifically about the ferry at . . . the Cecil ferry. You mentioned that you hardly got . . . you only got one letter. You know what has been happening is the farmers and the people in that district have been running around after their MLA in Shell-Torch and trying to get in touch with somebody at a political level to make that decision.

And in their frustration and not getting any response, they have decided to come up with a petition. I have a petition here that's got 200 names -- 200 names that the farmers in that district have been working on over the last two weeks, looking and frustrated, extremely frustrated, waiting for this to happen. The ice has gone out in the river some week and some ago. It should have . . . We could have had a ferry in by then.

The question that I have to ask you: does this apply specifically to the Cecil ferry? And also I want to know, does it apply to the Fenton ferry and the Weldon ferry? Will their hours also be extended? While you're answering that question, also whether those ferries' hours will be extended in the morning to 6 o'clock in the morning?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- No, they'll be the same as last year's, as I said earlier. There will be a 30-minute dinner break and a 30-minute supper break, and they'll go to midnight.

Mr. Anguish: -- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I'm wondering if you would tell us what the current hours are of the Paynton ferry.

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Paynton ferry is 7 till midnight with 30-minute breaks for dinner and supper.

Mr. Anguish: -- Has there been any proposal made to the rural municipality or the rural municipalities involved as to a cut-back in the hours of the Paynton ferry, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- We had talked to the RM of Edam, 469, Joe McMurphy, the administrator there. He wanted it to midnight. We'd talked to four oil

companies that use it: Paradise Oilfield Services, and we have their comments; Texaco oil service . . . Oh, Temore. I said Texaco. Temore Oil Services, I'm sorry. We talked to Gulf Canada; we talked to Gibson petroleum in regards to the service across there. So we have talked to the ones that would be using it in those kinds of hours, other than the farmers. And we've talked to the administrator of the RM of Edam.

Mr. Anguish: -- Well, Mr. Minister, I'm sure that you've had consultations, but what I was wondering is, what had you proposed to the rural municipality of Edam in terms of the hours? I think if I caught what you're saying correctly, that it's open, with the exception of a couple of breaks, from 7 a.m. till midnight, and what I'm asking you, Mr. Minister, is, what was proposed to the rural municipalities in terms of a cut-back in hours?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Yes we did. We talked to the RMs about a cut-back in the amount of hours. We talked to the oil companies, too. That's what you call consultation. What I have announced here today is that it will continue on as it was.

Mr. Anguish: -- Well what was the proposal for cut-back in hours, Mr. Minister? That's what I'm asking you.

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Well the cut-back in hours was to go to . . . instead of 30 minutes for a lunch break was to go to one hour for the lunch break at dinner and supper and was to shut it down at 10 o'clock at night instead of midnight. They have some problems with that. We've decided to leave it the hours they require.

Mr. Anguish: -- Well, Mr. Minister, then when the deputy minister on or about April 4, or it could have been April 3, telephoned the secretary of the RM, the administrator of the RM, what at that time was proposed to the rural municipality in terms of hours of operation for the ferry service at Paynton ferry?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- The deputy minister says that the last time he talked to the administrator there was that he said an hour for supper . . . or an hour for dinner, an hour for supper, and close at 10 o'clock, and they were going to talk to the oil companies. That's what we've done, and the decision has been reached that we'll stay as it was last year.

Mr. Anguish: -- What was the total amount of hours that was last proposed? I know that your deputy may have talked to the RM secretary, the administrator, some time prior to or following April 3 or 4, but on April 3 or 4 what was the total number of hours per day that you were proposing that the Paynton ferry would be open, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Thirteen hours, Mr. Chairman. I just want to make mention that I did forget my colleague, the member from Cut Knife-Lloydminster, who came to me about it right away when he first heard about it, and we have been discussing and he has been out meeting with the RMs as well. So we've had a pretty good consultation, and with some of the farmers out there.

Mr. Anguish: -- And what are the total number of hours that the Paynton ferry operates now across the river?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Last year it was 16 hours and that's what it will be this year.

Mr. Kowalsky: -- Well, Mr. Minister, I'm going to help you out so that you're not caught again, and so that you pass up this situation and you pass the good news out to the folks that cross the Cecil ferry and they realize that you didn't open them at the hours they asked for. I'm going to give you this advice, and I'm going to give you a copy of this petition which they've asked me to present to the Legislative Assembly.

The petition specifically asks, quote:

That the hours of operation of the Cecil ferry be extended to open at least at 6 a.m. every morning.

So that perhaps you can go home today and make another decision. And tomorrow at this time, and we're in these estimates in here, or on Wednesday . . . and going out at this and I ask you the question about whether you've extended the hours or not to meet the requests and the needs of the people there -- that you will have received all the information, right here in the legislature. And you won't have to make up stories about some MLA in the far reaches of Saskatchewan coming to you and telling you that at their request you've done it.

So this comes directly from the people in that district and they're asking for the hours to be open at 6 o'clock in the morning. Wonder if we could pass this over to the minister so that he can read it for himself. Two hundred names on the petition and we would be looking forward to a positive response on this . . . from this, from you on this, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- I'll thank the member from Prince Albert for sending over the list of names. As I've said, we've already looked after the situation except for the one hour that he's talking about -- from 6 to 7. So if . . .

An Hon. Member: -- Except that they want that.

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Just a moment now, let me finish -- if they want to, and that area feels very strongly about having an early hour, we could always take an hour off the evening and add it to the morning and still have the 16 hours of service. And that would be an option that we would look at. There's no additional cost, we're back to the same as last year so we would do that if that was the wish of the people of the area.

Mr. Anguish: -- Mr. Minister, can you tell us whether or not your department or your deputy minister have had any conversations with the RM of Edam about the possibility of privatizing the ferry at Paynton?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- I can assure you we've had none.

Mr. Anguish: -- Can you also assure us then that that ferry will continue to operate for the balance of this year at 16 hours per day as it did last year?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- That's what I said.

Mr. Anguish: -- Mr. Minister, can you tell me if your department has had any consultation with the RM, local area, about building a bridge across the point where the ferry is, or some similar position across the river?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Let me be very clear about this. I've been out there four times and met with all the RMs out there. We have discussed many, many times at the SARM conventions. It's a discussion item certainly that Edam, Paynton, would like to see -- the oil companies -- would like to see a bridge across there. They have been looking at an area out there where engineers are planned to take a look at the area to see if there's any place a bridge might be built in there. There's some of the problems with the banks, as you're well aware of, but we have not, in any way, said there would or would not be a bridge built there. But certainly I believe that it's one of the areas that we should look seriously at. And whenever we have financial capabilities of doing it, putting a bridge in there.

Mr. Anguish: -- Mr. Minister, what are the points of crossing the river where bridges have been discussed? What locations (are) across the river?

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Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- I'm not sure. I only know the ones that the RM counsellors and reeves took me out and showed me. And they showed me where the ferry was and then one down a little ways. I'm not an engineer. I don't know which ones they would look at.

Mr. Anguish: -- Mr. Minister, you're not just using this bridge ploy to gather votes for the next election for the people that live in that area, are you?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Mr. Chairman, a bridge is needed out there and I don't think anybody doubts that. We have already put one bridge in, the Meridian bridge at Lloydminster, and I believe there's another need for . . . particularly with the heavy oil upgrader going up in Lloydminster, the need will become greater, and as the need becomes greater you always look more seriously at a bridge.

Mr. Anguish: -- Mr. Minister, do you have any money allocated in your budget for the current fiscal year to do any studies or to assist with looking at design of bridge?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Mr. Chairman, we don't do that. Department of Highways does that. We don't have an engineering crew for major bridges.

Mr. Anguish: -- Mr. Minister, do you have any money in your budget at all to hold meetings, have consultation sessions through your department? Do

you have no budget allocation at all, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- We don't have money set aside particularly for consultation on, i.e., bridges, because we don't do the construction of bridges. Department of Highways do both the engineering design and the construction and the funding of it.

Mr. Anguish: -- Well, Mr. Minister, why are you leading these people to believe that they should have a bridge, and you go and look at locations for it to cross, and you don't even have money in your budget to consider putting a bridge across or doing a design or to look at any possible routes to cross there? If it's the Department of Highways responsibility, why would you be leading them to believe that it's your department that has something to do with putting a bridge across the river?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, I was invited to go as part of a ministerial delegation.

Second, I believe that's just what we call representing rural Saskatchewan. I should be out there, and I should go to my colleague then and say this is an area that I believe that we should take a serious look at, whatever. And if it's a bridge in this area, or if it's out in the irrigation area where we're talking about drainage ditches which I met just a while ago, in fact last Friday with the irrigation people about some problems, we don't have money in our budget for that either, but that's part of rural Saskatchewan. So certainly I meet with them and at any time that I can in any way assist or talk to my colleagues about a problem that may be there or something that should be done, I should do that.

Mr. Anguish: -- What exactly was the date, Mr. Minister, that you communicated your findings to the Minister of Highways after you were out and looked at the various crossings over the river?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Well I think it's fair to say what we do as cabinet ministers is between . . . is certainly internal and that isn't to be disclosed. All I can say is that we did discuss it.

Mr. Anguish: -- Well, Mr. Minister, you were just talking about this communication. There's no assurance that you've ever talked to the Minister of Highways about a bridge across the river. Mr. Minister, not even asking for a date, have you, in fact, communicated your findings about the possible location for a bridge crossing across the Saskatchewan River to replace the Paynton ferry? Have you had any communication with the Minister of Highways on that topic?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- I'm sure that to one . . . first of all is that we've talked to the Minister of Highways; we're colleagues, we talk lots in cabinet and outside of cabinet. What goes on in cabinet is confidential, as everybody in this Legislative Assembly knows.

I believe, as I've said, that there's an area that should be looked at seriously for a bridge. I will do what I can within cabinet and with my colleagues to take a serious look at that. If we've got the funding and

can be done, I think it would be appropriate to give it a lot of serious consideration.

Mr. Anguish: -- You've never even, in fact, spoke to the Minister of Highways about this proposed project, have you, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- I'll tell you, I've spoke to more than one minister of Highways about this proposed project. And I'll tell you, don't say that I didn't, because you wouldn't know. I'd be the one to know, and I spoke to more than one; I've spoke to two different, in fact, three different ministers of Highways, for your information.

Mr. Anguish: -- How much do these new ministers of Highways that you've spoken to, these various ministers of Highways, how much do they have this year in the budget for design or to look at the possible routes across the Saskatchewan River for a bridge to replace the Paynton ferry? They must have told you certainly they have money in their budget if they do have, Mr. Minister, if you communicated so directly with the minister about this project.

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- I don't want to get into a political debate, but I would think that over the years, the previous government promised that every time an election come around. I don't want to make a promise, I want to see the goods delivered.

Mr. Anguish: -- Mr. Minister, that's not what I asked you. If you communicated with all the Department of Highways ministers, present and previous, how much money does Highways have this year to look at bridge design, look at possible location across the river to replace the Paynton ferry? That's what I asked you.

I don't believe that you've even met with the Minister of Highways about this project. If you did, you'd know whether or not they had money in their budget to do this, instead of you going around the constituencies of Turtleford and Cut Knife-Lloydminster trying to get your colleague from Cut Knife-Lloydminster and your colleague from Turtleford elected.

Come clean with Saskatchewan people. You have no intention of building a bridge across there because there's no money to do it. There's no money for design. And here you are standing up in the legislature misleading the people by saying that you've met with the Minister of Highways. And we maintain you've not met with the Minister of Highways because you don't even know if there's money there for design or possible location across the river.

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- The member says, mislead. I don't know who's misleading who here. Let me make it very clear -- very, very clear -- that I have met with more than one minister of Highways in this government; that we talk on a continuous basis about more than that project; that we talk about other projects. And I'll make the third thing very clear: is that's an area that needs a bridge, and I believe it's needed one for a considerable length of time.

And I would say before we make a promise that there's a bridge there, we want to be able to deliver the goods -- not like it was done in the past. They did have those kinds of promises. I believe that's garbage. When we say we're going to do it, then do it. And so that's the way it'll be.

Now whether it's done this year, if it's in the Highways budget for design and engineering, that would be the time you could ask the Department of Highways. And whether I know or not -- yes, I know. And whether I'm going to tell you or not -- no, I'm not going to tell you.

Mr. Anguish: -- Oh I know you're not going to tell us, because you don't have anything to tell us, Mr. Minister, and that's the absolute truth. We all know that.

But while you're out playing politics with people's lives, maybe you could tell us, Mr. Minister . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well just settle down. You'll get your chance. If you're going to ask some questions, you get up after I'm done there, Mr. Hopfner, and you can ask all the questions you want.

I'd ask you, Mr. Minister: how many crossings a year are there over the Paynton ferry?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- In 1989 there was 31,359.

Mr. Anguish: -- Could you break those down to tractors and combines and vehicles and trucks and whatever else you have it broken down as, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- They got cars, 9,299; trucks, half-ton, 10,610; trucks, and that includes all trucks then, 11,285 -- that would be the bigger trucks; buses, 30; tractors, 110 and 2, 112; self-propelled machinery and others, 89; for a total of 31,359.

Mr. Anguish: -- On or about what date, Mr. Minister, did you go out and look at the two proposed crossings that the RM showed you to?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Two years ago, and I don't know any of the dates, whether it was July or what, I was out at Paynton. Last year I was out to Edam, and then this spring I was out to Edam again.

Mr. Anguish: -- Well this last trip to Edam this spring, did you go and look at the possible crossings of the river where a bridge could be located? Is that when they showed you the possible sites where they wanted the bridge to be located, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- No.

Mr. Anguish: -- Was it the time before that, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- It was twice before that I was there.

Mr. Anguish: -- Two times before the last time, Mr. Minister. Is that when

they showed you the crossings?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- I said I was out at Paynton and when I went to Paynton whenever it was, two years ago, they showed me the crossing and what they thought was where a bridge could go. Last year when I was out at Edam with some councillors they showed me again the one spot where they thought it could be an alternate spot. When I was out at Edam this year, we only talked about it. We didn't go over to it because I'm not an engineer. Showing me another time wouldn't do me any good. Discussion on the bridge would be more important.

Mr. Anguish: -- Well we have now determined you have seen two possible crossings for a bridge to go across with the expertise of people from the RM and their local knowledge of the area. Mr. Minister, could you tell us whether you were with officials of the rural municipality or whether it was some local farmers or some local business people who actually went with you each time to view the two proposed crossings?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- I can't remember who it was when I was out at Paynton. I know there was a van-load of us went. I don't remember who. I remember the reeve, a Charlie McCaffrey was the reeve of the RM of Edam. I remember him coming along. I remember one of the chamber of commerce people or board of trade or somebody from there, some folks from Paynton was there. I don't remember the second time. It was just a couple of farmers . . . three farmers and one business person that went.

Mr. Anguish: -- At what point, Mr. Minister, now . . . it's been two years according to your answers here this evening since you first saw a possible location to put a bridge across the river. Could you tell me, since that first time two years ago until present, how many pieces of correspondence you've had go from your office to the Minister of Highway's office, either the current minister or previous ministers? How many times have you actually sat down or your officials sat down with a pen and piece of paper and sent a communication to the Minister of Highways about this project?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- What we sent back and forth internally certainly wouldn't be for disclosure in this legislature. I think it's fair to say that both the department people, Highways and Rural Development, have met more than once -- in fact a lot of times -- and certainly the Minister of Highways and I have talked it over a lot of times.

Mr. Anguish: -- Well has there been any correspondence though, Mr. Minister? You're saying you can't say or you won't say whether or not there's any correspondence. And I guess what we're establishing here this evening is you go out closer to election time and you tell the people in the area of the Paynton ferry that utilize that service, a very vital service, that oh, we're going to build you a bridge because it's coming closer to election time.

But that's only your words, Mr. Minister. You do nothing in action. There's no evidence that you can present before us that you've communicated with any minister of the Department of Highways in terms of making sure that there are allocations set aside, to at least start design work on the

bridge across the North Saskatchewan River.

Now, Mr. Minister, don't you think it would be prudent, in your new mode of co-operation with the opposition and not wanting to play politics in this Chamber or with the Saskatchewan people, that you table some evidence that you have, in fact, communicated with the Minister of Highways requesting that there be some work started on a bridge across the North Saskatchewan River to replace the Paynton ferry; to make sure that there is some budgetary allocation there to enable some work to start on that so that people can believe you rather than the suspect that you are . . . being suspect right now, as you are. Because there is no evidence other than your words to people that there's a bridge needed to cross the river, and yet you do nothing about it.

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Mr. Chairman, he can run on on it as long as he wants, and I guess that's always a prerogative of this legislature, but I'll say this, is that we've done lots of work and looked at that bridge many times. They have a bridge committee out there that has contacted us, but not for a year or so now. I'd ask the department officials. So therefore they . . . we haven't had no direct contact with them over the last year, so as best they can remember.

Internally certainly we look at the bridge; we look at more than that bridge; there's other bridges that we look at as we go through the system. Not just where the ferries are; there's a lot of other bridges in this province that you look at. I can think of bridges across many river systems that have to be replaced. I can think bridges across such irrigation ditches that were built that leak all over the place, that was built and stuck up in the air, not very well done.

There's things that have to be done. So, you know, we look at more than just the one thing and we talk about more than one thing, as any government would do. That's one of the areas that we have had . . . give a lot of discussion on, had a lot of consideration on.

Mr. Anguish: -- During the budgetary process of your government, Mr. Minister, in the past eight years, do you ever recall one situation where you, as Minister of Rural Affairs, or a minister of Highways, requested funding to start design work on a bridge across the North Saskatchewan River to replace the Paynton ferry? Do you remember one occasion where there was funds requested?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- I think I made it very clear here, Mr. Chairman, what goes on in cabinet, as cabinet certainly is confidential. What we do internally amongst ministers, discussion at the cabinet table is certainly confidential. What internal documents? That's how you work. That's how governments function is with discussion and putting it all together.

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So no, you don't go out and disclose that kind of stuff, and you shouldn't; nor does any other government in Canada do that. In fact, even local RMs don't do that. So that's the way it goes; that's the way government

operates. And as I said earlier that I think that's one of the areas, should you give serious consideration to it, as we have financial capabilities to do it, I sincerely believe that, and I will do what I can with my colleagues to have them give it serious consideration.

Mr. Anguish: -- Well thank you, Mr. Minister, for being so straightforward, but there's no evidence of any funding ever being talked about for that crossing on the North Saskatchewan River to connect the Turtleford and the Cut Knife-Lloydminster constituencies -- absolutely no evidence of it.

I think that it would be wise of you not to lead people in that area to believe that you are going to build them a bridge or the member from Cut Knife-Lloydminster's going to build them a bridge when you have absolutely no intention of doing that because there's no evidence of it: no evidence of correspondence between you and the Minister of Highways; no evidence of funds being requested at budget time which we're in right now.

So, Mr. Minister, don't be deceiving the people of Saskatchewan, as some of your colleagues have in the past. Come clean with them and tell them that no work has been started and there's no consideration being given to a bridge across the North Saskatchewan River to replace the Paynton ferry.

Some Hon. Members: mHear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Well, Mr. Chairman, you know, you can say whether there's money in there or not, that will be a decision. You'll be able to look at Highways' estimates; you'll be able to ask those questions at that time. And I'm sure that he'll be very satisfied with the answers he gets or doesn't get.

But I just want to say one thing. As he can say, we have no intentions of building a bridge. We built the bridge at Lloydminster. The Meridian bridge was very, very important. I don't know of any bridge that was built in the '70s by the former administration. There may have been some, but I can't think of one, one that was replacing a ferry, I can't think of one. So, therefore, the record of the previous government certainly wasn't very good.

We have built one; that's better than none. And I grant you there's some of those people need and would like that kind of continued service. It lets our communities work together; lets the area work together; lets the flow of . . . particularly the heavy oil for the upgrader. So those are all important in that area. Other areas, the same; certainly other areas, as some of the ferries you addressed here. Those people like to have the same type of access. So you have to weigh them all very carefully and see which one . . . if you were to build one, which one and where.

Mr. Anguish: -- Mr. Minister, you know very well that the one bridge you say you built was started under the former administration, and there was a period of time where you even considered not completing the bridge, Mr. Minister. So come clean. You didn't even build one bridge for the people in the province of Saskatchewan.

Ms. Atkinson: -- Mr. Minister, as minister responsible for rural affairs, can you tell me what work your department has done in the past year or so or at present on the whole issue of rural day care.

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Mr. Chairman, under the Department of Rural Development, we haven't been involved in the day care at all, so we've done absolutely none there. It would come under Social Services, I believe.

Ms. Atkinson: -- You're telling me that as the minister responsible for Rural Development or rural affairs or rural Saskatchewan that your department has done absolutely no policy work or no thinking on the whole issue of rural day care in the province of Saskatchewan. Is that what you're telling me?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Well the member's right. We haven't done any . . . or put together any policy on rural day care. My advisory committee has never raised it with me, and they are representative of all different political denominations in this province and not appointed by me.

An Hon. Member: -- Why have you got a consensus group?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- That's right, I do have a pretty good consensus group. In fact, they are a good consensus group, and in such things . . . as the mayor of Melfort sits on that board; two from SARM; six from the ag district board selected by themselves -- and don't ask me . . . I know who they are, but I didn't have nothing to do with the selection of them -- one from the Saskatchewan Women's Institute, and they're picking them all. So it is a consensus board. They've never raised it with me.

And have we done any policy work on rural day care? The answer is no.

Ms. Atkinson: -- Mr. Minister, can you tell me how many people are on this advisory committee to you and how many are women? And how many are women that live in rural Saskatchewan with small children?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Mr. Chairman, there's two members. Two women sit on the board. One of the ladies is from the rural . . .

Mr. Chairman: -- Order, please. Order, please. I don't know whether some of the members are just trying to . . . Order, please! I don't know if the members tonight are just trying the patience of the Chair or if they have some other discussions they'd like to continue outside of this committee.

But while the committee continues, we will go back to the procedure of having somebody ask the questions. Will the members on the government side allow the question to be asked. And when the minister is responding would the members on the opposition side allow the minister to respond.

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- I was saying, Mr. Chairman, that there's two ladies sit on the committee. One is the mayor of Melfort who originally come from a farm that sits on there. She's a younger lady; I don't know if she has family or not. And the other lady is past president of the Saskatchewan Women's Institute and she comes from around Watrous; I forget her address.

The other six that sit on there, two from SARM, are selected by SARM and I believe they have no directors, no women directors on SARM. And the ag district board selects six members and they have not selected any women, although we've encouraged them to do so.

Ms. Atkinson: -- Mr. Minister, can you tell me how many officials you have in senior managerial positions in your department? And how many of those officials are of the female gender?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- I believe we only had one.

Ms. Atkinson: -- Mr. Minister, you didn't tell me how many senior officials you have in your department. If you're telling me you have one female manager can you tell me what position that female holds?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- We have a total of 45 out-of-scope positions, two of them being women.

Ms. Atkinson: -- And can you tell me what functions the two women fulfil in your department? Are they secretarial, or are they in charge of secretaries, or what exactly do these women do?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- The one lady is assistant director of communications. The other one is manager responsible for all the client service reps at the 52 rural service centres across the province.

Ms. Atkinson: -- So we have two women in managerial positions in the Rural Development department. As minister responsible for rural development and rural affairs in this province, do you think that that's a very good record, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- No I don't think that's a very good record. I think that many more women should have the opportunity to sit at managerial positions. It's sort of a flow through from the days before because there just wasn't many women involved at managerial positions within Rural Development or Agriculture, and we've got those two branches put together.

If you were to switch into crop insurance, which I have had for a few years now, we have now 32 crop insurance managers across the province -- all of them, I believe, all of them being women.

Ms. Atkinson: -- Well, Mr. Minister, we're not in crop insurance estimates; we're in Rural Development estimates. And when you say it's not a very good record, I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, what you plan on doing about your record of hiring women in managerial positions in your department.

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- As you probably realize, when we took over less than two years ago, lands branch and extension services, Rural Development was mainly roads and bridges and therefore the women that would be involved . . . they were just hard to find somebody to go into there. We have an employment equity now within our department, working with Public Service Commission to look at where we can find, and if we can find, some women that would fit the roles of management. We have been designed that way.

And I just want to say, that as we put the rural service centres together, with crop insurance involved in them, and if you look at the management within crop insurance with women, it is much greater. It's probably 70 per cent management is women within crop insurance. So if you take an average of it all -- in fairness to it -- we have a large number, in excess of 50 per cent that would be management between the two, between both crop insurance and Rural Development, all under the rural service network. So we have now in fact shifted a great deal towards women in management. Although I agree. I agree that within the Rural Development issue or the end of it, we could do a much better job.

Ms. Atkinson: -- Well, Mr. Minister, I'm not talking about crop insurance tonight. I'm talking about rural development, and you have two women in managerial positions in your department that you're responsible for, and you don't have any policy work that's being done on the whole issue of rural day care. And perhaps one of the reasons you don't have any policy work being done on the whole issue of rural day care is that you don't have any women in senior managerial positions in your Ddepartment that would deal with policy issues.

Now, Mr. Minister, I note here that the president of SARM has said that because of poor economic conditions, women are being forced into the work place in rural Saskatchewan and day-care facilities are needed. But then he goes on and says that he's against the concept of day care, saying it runs counter to the Bible, motherhood, and parenthood. And I'm wondering what your personal opinion is when it comes to the provision of rural day care in rural Saskatchewan. Are you in favour of that or are you opposed to it?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Mr. Chairman, I believe that the people of rural Saskatchewan make their own decision on whether they want rural day-care centres or not. I don't think it's my position to say whether I'm in favour of it or against it. I don't think that has any bearing on what will be decided by the people out there.

I'm not imposing it from the top down. I'm not saying you can't or should have it. Either way, I'm not saying either one and I don't believe I should. And I want to make it very clear that under the rural service centre, it is greater than just rural development. It's all the four branches put together. So therefore the rural service centre network, which is going to be across this province -- 52, it will probably be a few more than that before we're done -- as we put it together, those managerial positions are being filled in the great number, in the great number, by women, because for two or three . . . one, they're becoming very knowledgeable; second, we've been bringing them up through, from us hiring them, up through a process of crop insurance; and third, that we're going to be doing employment equity within rural development to increase that, too. So we will, we do have a good majority or a good number of women in managerial positions when you put it together, in fairness, as a rural service centre, and will have more.

Ms. Atkinson: -- Mr. Minister, I realize you have women managers in crop

insurance, but right now that's not going to help us get rural day care in rural Saskatchewan. What might help is if there were people in your department who were female, who were involved in positions of policy. And the reason I ask you why -- if you have an opinion on day care -- is that because it does help if we have a minister who has some sort of philosophical agreement with the whole concept of day care. Not necessarily the kind of day care we find in urban Saskatchewan but day care that is appropriate to rural Saskatchewan and meets the individual needs of families living in rural Saskatchewan, particularly farm families. So I have to ask my question again: do you or do you not support the concept of day care?

(2030)

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Well, day care is certainly, in many communities . . . and I don't know how you separate rural from urban, I don't know. It's fine to say out here in rural Saskatchewan, but if you live in Somme, Saskatchewan, let me tell you something, Somme, Saskatchewan and the RM of Porcupine Plain are one and the same. But the RM of Porcupine Plain and the town of Porcupine, they're all sort of community.

And then if you work on a job, if you're going to a job, probably that day care would be in one of those communities. It probably would not be out in the RM. So, it's a decision of the people to make that kind of decision as people of the community. There's co-op day cares, there's many kinds of day cares that they establish. Whether they establish them outside in the rural where you may drive five or six miles each way to get one, or whether it's where you're locate at your job. Those are the kind of decisions that rural people can and do make.

And I can think of day care centres in the town of Hudson Bay that's made and run by the co-operative group there, who run it for the benefit of their area because it fits in their area. It's not because I said they should have it, or because you said they should have it, or because somebody from up above said come on put some in or take some out. Decision of the people, by the people, and for the people.

Ms. Atkinson: -- Mr. Minister, for most of us urban Saskatchewan tends to be the bigger centres, like Saskatoon, Regina, Moose Jaw, Prince Albert, Yorkton, North Battleford, Swift Current, Weyburn, Estevan; rural Saskatchewan for most of us tends to be towns, hamlets, villages, and farms. That's rural Saskatchewan; municipalities. So, when I'm talking about rural day care, we're talking about rural day care, we're talking about day care that is appropriate for towns and villages and hamlets and rural municipalities.

Now I want to go back to the question that I asked you. Do you support the concept of day care or do you not? Answer the question. I'm not talking about the day care in Hudson Bay, Saskatchewan or the day care in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; I'm talking about the concept of day care. As a policy issue, do you support day care or do you not?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- I think I said very clearly that if the people of the

area want day care and it's available, as you know, they can go in. And I can think of the town of Hudson Bay that set up a co-operative day care that I officially opened and was part of it, and that's a few years ago. And the town of Hudson Bay is rural Saskatchewan -- it is not urban in the sense of concept. Okay, you agree. So therefore already we've got a day-care centre in a town like Hudson Bay. That was put up and run by the co-operative movement.

There is availability under Social Services to do that. It will be the decision of the communities whether they want one or don't want one. It's not up for me to say whether I like it or dislike it. Nothing to do with it at all. It's a community decision. The people who need it will put one in place. The people who will use it, will use it, and that's a decision they will have to make. I don't believe it has any bearing whether you like it or don't like it or whether I like it or don't like it. It doesn't make any difference at all. It's up to the people.

And for the first time I believe, and sincerely believe, it's up to the people to decide how and where they want it and what they want. And I don't think that I should, as a Minister of Rural Development, decide for them how or if or why or how they should or who should have day care, rural day care. That's a decision of the men and women who live out there and who work out there.

Ms. Atkinson: -- Mr. Minister, if the people that live out there wanted it, would you support it, Mr. Minister, as the minister responsible for rural affairs or Rural Development?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Sure, if somebody from my constituency or some other place come and said to me, will you help us work to get a day-care centre into Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan or Quill Lake, Saskatchewan or Humboldt, Saskatchewan, certainly I'll work with them to help do that. That's a decision they've made then and then I'll help them work to do it.

Ms. Atkinson: -- Mr. Minister, as the minister responsible for rural development in Saskatchewan. It seems to me that one of the things people in rural Saskatchewan are trying to develop are services appropriate for their families, and one of those services that people in rural Saskatchewan are talking about is the provision of rural day care. And obviously, Mr. Minister, day care in rural Saskatchewan may be somewhat different than day care in urban Saskatchewan, particularly when it's directed toward farm families.

I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, has your department undertaken any projects that would be pilot projects in those particular areas where these services are needed, particularly at spring seeding and harvest time?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- We leave that up to the local communities to decide. We got the rural development corporations out there; we got the economic development committees; we have ADD (agricultural development and diversification board) committees; we have ADD boards. All people run who are elected by or appointed by their own people who make the decision. It's like I said earlier, if somebody come to us and said, we need some

help with this, certainly we'll work with them.

Ms. Atkinson: -- Well, Mr. Minister, that's extremely disappointing because it would seem to us that as minister responsible for Rural Development you would be looking at various rural development policy issues. One of those issues, Mr. Minister, is the provision of rural services. They could be medical services, educational services, social services, or day-care services. And it seems to me, Mr. Minister, that you could broaden the mandate of your department if you perhaps would have some women in managerial positions looking at issues that are of concern to farm women or farm families, and one of those issues, Mr. Minister, is with the provision of rural day care.

We hear from farm women regularly about their need for a different type of day care. There have been various presentations, I understand, made to your government, your cabinet, about the need for these services. And I find it extremely disappointing that the minister responsible for Rural Development in this province doesn't have a position on day care, doesn't have any policy initiatives coming out of his department on rural day care, only has two women in managerial positions out of 44 or 45, I understand, and consequently it is quite understandable, given your record in promoting women into managerial positions and policy positions in your department, that you would have no understanding and no position when it comes to the provision of rural day care.

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- I just want to make it clear that we have two departments that deal extensively with families and with . . . whether it's rural day-care centres or whether it's day-care centres in the urban areas, or whether it's with seniors. And that's the two departments: one, department of families and seniors, and the other, Department of Social Services. Both have a good staff, both have adequate people or a lot of people in the field who do a very, very fine job. They are working on a continuous basis with program, design of programs, how you deliver it. That is the portfolio they do very well and they do it, and they handle it very well.

I believe that Rural Development has a focus. Every department should have a focus. We focus on building, restructuring rural Saskatchewan, on the rural service network for information links, so that there's a place for the families to be, a job for them, the opportunities for them. Then when you've got the families and the opportunities, then you can look at the things under families and seniors and under Social Services.

That's the way you structure it so there's some future there. Just having rural day-care centres is not the answer. You need a lot more than that. You need the opportunities for jobs and diversification. That's the role that we've been playing -- roads, bridges, development, diversification, information links, business, so that there's opportunities for families to be there in rural Saskatchewan, now and in the future.

Mr. Koskie: -- Thank you Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I want to turn to another area and that deals with the amendments to the RM Act (The Rural Municipality Act) which you introduced during the last session. What it

basically did, Mr. Minister, is to allow the assessment of dwellings and accordingly, if the dwelling assessment was higher than the base of the assessment of the land, that the individual paid the basic difference in the assessment.

I ask you first of all, Mr. Minister, in respect to that policy change in the basic assessment and the change in the RM Act, first of all, was there consultation with the various reeves throughout the province of Saskatchewan and indeed with the SARM executive prior to implementation of that change?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Yes, there was, about three years of it.

Mr. Koskie: -- And, Mr. Minister, could you indicate what was the reason for the particular change as introduced.

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- A few years ago we had a group go around; we called them the rural law review committee. They went around, there was five members on the board, SARM being involved. When they come back, they proposed to us to write into the new Act -- which hadn't been rewritten since 1905 -- SARM and the RMs proposed, in majority at least, that the old Act was outdated; that they could no longer define a farmer even through income tax purposes. If you were living on a properties and you were driving a school bus, particularly as the times got harder to define net income, most residents would have been, under the old Act would have been really . . . could have been taxed. So what they did was remove . . . instead of trying to define a farmer they just said the principle resident versus the land that you farm, not the land that you own, the land that you farm, or the land that you own if you lived on it. And so those two things they felt would make it more fair.

In some areas there was some people in pretty nice homes who were semi-retired, who had no other income except the farm and yet they lived on a few acres of land, and it wasn't . . . it was defined that they would be exempt. That was a concern raised by SARM.

So those are the things that they raised. And they asked us to make that change. The change is made at the request of the RMs and SARM to bring it up to date and not define a farmer but to use the land that they own or farm versus the residence that they live in.

Mr. Koskie: -- Mr. Minister, are you aware of any particular concerns? And have any of these concerns in respect to the new amendment to the Act, as you explained it, have you had any major concerns in respect raised to it as to the basic unfairness of it?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- We've had some concerns raised by seniors who were residing on their property and had sold all but a small holding, or had kept maybe only a quarter section back. There is provisions within the Act to allow the RMs to exempt those particular ones. And so that provision was put in there for that reason.

Now the RMs have felt somewhat reluctant to do that because they weren't

quite sure what it would lead to. And we have said at the district meetings that one of the issues of discussion for possible changes would be that. But I would like to have a consensus, at least of the RMs out there, to say what you want me to change and how you want me to change it because it's their tax base we're dealing with.

Mr. Koskie: -- But don't you, in fact, have the situation, Mr. Minister, and that's one of the examples that has been raised, where an older couple are retiring and what they do is they have developed a farm and they got rid of most of the land, kept a quarter section, but have a very comfortable home. And as a consequence now what is happening is their dwelling is going to, in fact, be assessed bringing it to a higher level of assessment in taxation that they'll have to pay then they previously did.

(2045)

Now you say the municipalities can in fact exempt. I want to ask you, Mr. Minister, is that exemption that the municipalities are able to put in place, is that exemption solely left to the discretion of the RMs, or is it restricted in any way as to what application it may apply to, that is, the exemption? There are a whole series of reassessments that have been made. And so what I want to ask: is there any policy decision, discussion, as to what will be exempt? Because obviously unless there is a policy decision or clarification in the Act what you're going to have is, in some municipalities you're going to have exemptions by their council and other municipalities you're not going to have exemptions, and it seems to me that you should have some consistency in the application of the exemption. So I ask you: is it a general exemption or is the exemption tied to specific factors that they may look at in exempting?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Well I'll read just a couple of copies of the Act here so you know how it stands. But previous to this new Act coming into place it was the same. Only they could exempt it, but before, they had to come to the province for approval to have that exemption issued. Now they don't have to, the RM can do it on their own, so they no longer have to come to us. So we really shortened it up and given the RM more authority in that regard.

The Act -- and you're probably familiar with the Act much better than I am, being a lawyer -- but, you know:

Council may exempt by by-law from taxation in whole or in part for the current year any land, improvements or businesses designated in the by-law, and in the by-law council may enter by by-law into an agreement, subject in any terms and conditions that the council may specify, with the owner or occupant of any land, improvement or business designated in the by-law for the purpose of exempting that land, improvements or business from taxation, in whole or in part, for not more than five years.

That is the law as it is now written, so that's how it is. It was there before and I really haven't done much to it except remove from the responsibility of the RMs to come to provincial government for final approval. They can do it on their own.

Mr. Koskie: -- Well I realize that there was some difficulty previously and in some instances, small acreages in the past were being assessed, but the point I guess that I'm making here is that what we're finding is not perhaps inconsistency I shouldn't call it, but variations of the application of exemption.

We had the opportunity of talking to the SARM executive, Mr. Minister, and we had a number of seniors, older people, that as you indicated, that were having problems. We asked them how that was going to be resolved. This individual that we spoke to at the SARM executive indicated that what they did was simply exempt this older couple because in the past they had large land holdings. Now they were reduced down to a quarter section plus a dwelling, but their taxes had gone up. They exempted them. That may be fine in that instance, and it may be justified.

But then you go to another municipality and they aren't applying that same principle. What I'm wondering is: have you had any discussions with your municipalities? I agree that perhaps they can best make the judgements and assessment -- I'm not opposed to giving them the power. But I'm just wondering whether, in the light of some fairness, that whether or not you had any further discussions with SARM in order to try to get some form of consistency in the application of the exemption. And certainly SARM was indicating that they were really recommending to the municipalities that the number of exemptions should be very few.

But all I'm saying is that it's unfair to be getting an exemption in one RM, and then in the other one, you don't have the same application. So I guess I'm asking you: is there any follow-up that you're doing on it or discussing with the RMs in order to perhaps get a consistency of policy?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- That's true and the member raises a good point. And it was a concern that has been raised with me several times -- more than several times -- quite a few times by different residents of RMs where they . . . Because it had been flagged in the new Act, now they're not exempting; before they just sort of left them there and didn't tax them. They didn't exempt them, they just didn't tax them.

As you say, I believe the RMs can make those kinds of final decisions on exemptions which they've always had the power to do. In some cases I know a few RMs just ignore them. They said, well all right, we sold you land; we won't even bother with the taxation except on the land.

I'm going to take it up at the district meetings, and I'd like some guidance from the RMs out there in what they would like us to see brought into, either regulations, if we could, or back into legislation. I'd have no trouble making some changes provided the RMs and SARM said, this is how we want it structured. You know, any time you make some change -- I had said that when we brought the Act in that I was prepared to come back and make some changes, recommendations either from yourself or from the RMs or from SARM. I will be guided by . . . put together and make sure it's, you know, it does what you want it to do and not make it more complicated.

I agree with you. Some kind of rules would certainly help, and I think that's what's said to me by a few councillors. If you'll give me some guide-lines, I'll more or less follow them. So I think what you're raising is a fair point, and I'm prepared to take it to the district meetings to see what they would think, what kind of guide-lines they'd like to see into there. And we have them coming up shortly.

Mr. Koskie: -- Pardon me. In respect to the RM Act, and there was a change in the basic rules there of assessment or a clarification.

What I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, are you aware, as minister of rural affairs, whether there is, in fact, consideration and very serious consideration by SAMA (Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency), the Saskatchewan association of assessment that do the assessing, the independent, so-called independent commission.

Are you aware that there is consideration now being given that not only will the dwelling in respect to farm land be assessed, but that all buildings on the farm site are under consideration; that indeed in the future, there will be assessment of all farm site buildings including the barns and the storage bins and the sheds for farm equipment, all of the farm site buildings themselves? Are you aware that this is certainly under consideration and that it has been delayed?

I know the recommendations from SAMA have been delayed for one year. I have a suspicion as to why it's been delayed, but I was wondering whether you could give me any intelligence as to whether or not you are aware that this is an active consideration that all farm buildings in the future, there's a possibility that they will be assessed.

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Well two things: first, under the RM Act, it lists as all farm buildings exempt except the residence, so that's in the RM Act to supersede anything. They go by the RM Act. So that looks after that.

The second thing is that we've heard that rumour too. We went to them. That's absolutely not true. They weren't even looking at it because the RM Act would not allow them to do it in the first place, and so they couldn't supersede the RM Act; second, that they weren't even considering it, realizing that a good portion of the board on there is farmers, you'd know that that would be absolutely true.

So there's . . . but you raise -- we heard that rumour too. We went to SAMA to ask them if they were even talking about it, or considered. They said, absolutely not; that, no, no, who started that or where it started from. But they can't. Even if they wanted to, they can't. The RM Act exempts those people. All buildings except residence is exempt in the Act, and you can read the Act.

Mr. Koskie: -- Mr. Minister, are you prepared and is your government prepared to give unequivocal commitment that you will not in the future allow the RM Act to be amended which would in fact allow the assessment of all farm site buildings, all buildings on the farm site?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Yes, Mr. Chairman, we are prepared to say that there will be no assessment other than the residence as long we're here.

Mr. Koskie: -- I want to tell you, Mr. Minister, your information is dodging the issue because it's certainly out there and it's out there among rural councillors.

And there's one thing that should be noted, Mr. Minister, because it's under way and you won't put it into effect, I know, before the next election because you'd get slaughtered on it, but what I want to ask you, Mr. Minister, if indeed you're proceeding with it, there is one very serious consideration that has to be made, because you have family farms and all of the buildings -- not all, but a large number of the buildings -- are put on to one site.

And if you go into the assessment of it, and it may be registered under, say, one son that's farming with other brothers and his father, and if you get into the complication of it . . . so I raise that as a consideration. It has been raised with me. Farmers in my area are concerned in respect to it, and some of them have indicated that that would be a problem because all of the buildings being on one site.

I leave that aspect of it, Mr. Minister, for your consideration in the event that you bring it in, if you were so fortunate as to assume office again after the next election, if the Premier of the province would have the courage to call an election so that we could get on with the affairs of the province.

But, Mr. Minister, I want to ask whether or not you're aware of a proposed road maintenance agreement regulations. And it has been brought to our attention that it was proposed by the RMs to charge 3 cents per cubic yard mile as a charge towards maintenance and restoration of haul roads; and secondly, it was proposed by the RMs to charge an additional 2.2 cents per cubic yard mile to compensate for deterioration of roadway.

This is the interpretation of a contractor that got in touch with us. He indicated that the proposal was that there be a total of 5.2 cents per cubic yard mile an RM would be allowed to assess. And it frightened him because if this is implemented -- and I don't know if it's gone beyond a proposal -- but he gives an example here of truck hauling gravel, for instance. And on the basis of his calculations, he said it would cost him something like \$41,600 per year. That would be assessed on one truck working approximately eight months, if that scheme were put into effect.

I want to ask you, Mr. Minister, are you aware of such a proposal being around the RMs and the imposition of such a proposal? And if so, what is the present status?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Well I have a copy of the regulations that are here. I just want to assure before I get in it, I want to assure the member . . . he was talking a moment ago about assessment of farm buildings, and I made it very clear here, unequivocally clear, that that was not true and not going to happen. But he went on to say -- and it's fairness to him to say

-- well if it does happen. Well I want to make it very, very clear while I'm up here that it's not going to happen. And I want to make it clear. So I just want to make that absolutely clear that I don't want anybody misleading this House saying I said differently or even heard differently, because just totally not truthful.

I want to go on and talk a little bit about the road haul, and he'd mentioned 5.2 cents a cubic yard and that's true. It is 5.2 cents a cubic yard. That's the maximum, the maximum that any RM can charge Highways or any contractors for the hauling of gravel over their roads. And that's the maximum. Some were charging up to 10 cents. There was no maximum on before. They could just charge whatever they want. That was within the legislation. They could do that.

The inclusion of that is 3 cents per cubic yard mile hauled for roads and that's for the maximum rate of 3 cents per cubic yard for hauled roads maintained by rural municipalities. That's for summer hauls. Inclusion in that is a maximum rate of 2.2 cents per cubic yard mile as compensation to rural municipality for the loss of road life as a result of the bulk hauls being carried out for summer hauls. Now I want to make that clear.

So when you haul over the road, and I'm sure the member knows that when you're hauling over the road with a heavy truck it's not only the top, the gravel that flies off or the holes that appear in the road from bounce, the base goes out as well. You lose the base. You lose road life.

Many RMs were complaining well, we have no sort of . . . I think he asked about this before, about having a sort of a standard for assessment. Well this is a standard for hauling. Now this is the maximum they can charge. They can charge less, they can charge nothing. That's an option they have. But it does put in place a way that the municipalities know what they can charge or what they can expect to get.

(2100)

And we have done a lot of work on what is a road life and what does it take out of it, and that's about what it really costs. And in fact that's even paired away down. I believe that's only about 40 per cent of the true cost of what it amounts to.

So I want to . . . I'd say, too, that the Department of Highways, when we met with them, agreed that this would be at least a compensation rate, that that would be fair and they would know when anybody's bidding on a road that this is what they're going to have to pay.

The contractors, road builders, we met with them. We met with them and worked it out with them and Highways. And we also worked with SARM who represents the municipalities. So we've worked with all those folks, didn't just happen. We spent, must be what, a year and a half I would say, working on this to put this into place. We've done a lot of consultation, a lot of work put into this, trying to be as fair to both sides as possible and yet have it in some kind of regulation so that you'd know the maximum you can charge for anything. You can't charge somebody such a high price

that he couldn't afford to haul the gravel. At the same time it's some recovery for a loss of road life and for maintenance of the road.

Mr. Koskie: -- What you're saying, Mr. Minister, is that you've put on a maximum, and obviously you indicate that they can charge nothing or they can charge that. The indication here from a contractor was back in November of . . . October of '89 when he was contacting us in respect to it.

Is there not a problem having one municipality charging nothing, another one charging the maximum, from the standpoint of, how is an individual, in seeking a tender, to know exactly what an individual municipality is imposing? And is it not true that . . . are you saying that this was in effect previously? And if so, can you indicate the range that was being charged prior to the proposal for a maximum of 5.2? Because here is a contractor that's been into it, and he said, just can't afford it. To him, it was a new imposition, that he indicated that it would cost him something like \$41,600.

Now I don't know whether he should have known that it was being paid before or not, but certainly the clear indication in his letter to us -- I'm sure that he got in contact with the government -- is that there was a 5.2 per cent per cubic yard-mile an RM would be allowed to assess. He cited this as being a new charge that he would have imposed upon him.

So can you give a little bit of a history as to what was being done prior to setting the maximum of 5.2? Have you got some idea as whether or not this was being used or not? Because certainly this contractor was certainly taken by surprise at the imposition. And as he indicates, that it would essentially drive him out of business with that kind of a money having to be paid over.

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Mr. Chairman, he asked what it was before. The regulations brought back in in 1981 was open-ended. They could charge whatever they wanted per yard-mile and they could charge that at any time. They didn't have to tell the contractor what they might be.

He asked how would a contractor know how much the RM's going to charge. I think a simple phone call to the RM would tell them what they're going to charge per mile when they're bidding on it. So at least they'll know what it is. Now they can negotiate within that and they may go out and say to the RM, if we haul over your road, what is the negotiated price? And that gives them some . . . at least you know what they're working within. There's some RMs that had been charged in the excess of 10 cents a yard-mile before this brought in. It was actually doing exactly what the member said, creating a great deal of hardship on some contractors.

So I want to also just say that this here regulation, these changes were presented at the sixth SARM district meetings in June of 1989. A questionnaire was circulated to all rural municipalities in July of 1988 and of the respondents, 89 per cent agreed in principle with those regulation changes.

Also, the president of the Saskatchewan road builders has forwarded a letter confirming their agreement to the proposed regulation amendment. So I think that we've been, in fairness, been to all the different players in the game and worked this out very well. Previous to that, there was no rules there; it was just open-ended. You could charge whatever you want or -- as you can now, you can charge nothing, too, at which they can still do. But at least now there's a cap on it, the maximum they can charge is . . .

Mr. Koskie: -- Okay, Mr. Minister, I'll pass that on to them, what you have advised in respect to that. I want to turn to a few specifics in the annual report, Mr. Minister. But I want to deal first of all with the community economic development committees. I take it in the latest report that I have, I believe there was some 55. Could you indicate the number of community economic development committees that are in existence at the present time? Could you also . . . Well give me that first of all.

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- There's 55 that we fund. There's about an additional 45 others that we don't fund but we work with on different development projects and work with them in regards to their community things they may have.

Mr. Koskie: -- What is there . . . You've got 55 that you fund. What is the basis of the formation of the community economic development committees rather than you, in fact, fund -- these 55? What is the basis of the formation of those?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Three things: they have to be over 700 and less than 5,000 of a population; they have to have an agreement with the urban . . . the all urban, with the urban municipality to fund 50 per cent; and they have to do a community profile.

Mr. Koskie: -- And the composition is people from those communities, I take it, the 700 to the 5,000. What is the basic formula that you use in funding these 55?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- We fund them 50-50 up to \$4,000 per committee, and their role is to work with and advise council.

Mr. Koskie: -- In '88-89 the total amount of funding was \$138,777. I wonder if you could indicate what was the amount paid out in '89-90, and what amount is budgeted for this year?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Last year we paid out just right around the \$150,000 and we have \$150,000 budgeted for this year.

Mr. Koskie: -- And the 45 other ones that you indicated, other than the 55 that are funded, what is the basis for having some operating that receive funding and those 45 that receive apparently no funding? What is the rationale behind that?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Three or four things. One, some are joining RDCs (rural development corporations), some can't get a commitment from their councils to fund it, others are under the 700 in number. And when you're asking who

gets in and who doesn't, we had a cap on dollars for the year over the past, and it was a five-year program which we allowed to go into seven years. And as the seven year has reached us now we've sent the letter saying, as the seven years is reached, some will gradually phase off of them and we'll bring some new ones on to use up the \$150,000 in funding that's available for them.

Mr. Koskie: -- In respect to the funding, you indicated -- I partly missed your formula for funding. I wonder, is it a one-time payment that they can receive matching up to 4,000 or whatever you said that time? Is it just one-time funding that they can receive and then it passes on to others, or is it on the basis of activities, or a one-year shot, or what is the limitations on the funding there?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- It's \$4,000, up to a maximum of \$4,000 once a year. And the program was originally started, it was five years -- some has now went to seven, as I was saying. Some will phase off and some new ones will come on, but it's once a year to a maximum of \$4,000 matched with the same amount by the urban municipality.

Mr. Koskie: -- Now let's just take a look at the rural development corporations also. What is the number of rural development corporations presently incorporated? And could you also indicate there -- I think you've gone through previously the nature of the funding formula -- but in 1989-90 you provided something like \$400,000 to the rural development corporations. I was wondering whether you could indicate first the number that are presently incorporated and, secondly, what amount was contributed to the rural development corporations in '89-90, and what amount is set aside in respect to this year?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- I explained, as you said, how they worked, so I won't go into that again. There's 23 now either incorporated or in the process of being incorporated: I believe 21 is fully incorporated and in operation; the other two are now being incorporated, so it will be funded. In '89-90 we used up all the \$400,000; in 1990-91 we estimate \$800,000 that we needed for the rural development corporations.

Mr. Koskie: -- I wonder if it would be possible to give me a breakdown of the names of each of the rural -- not now, but supply it to me -- the names of each of the rural development corporations, the municipalities that they encompass, the date of incorporations; secondly, the projects that have been undertaken by each; thirdly, the expenditures in respect to each of the rural development corporations and also the amount of job creation in respect to each of the projects under the rural development corporation. Would you be able to provide that information? I don't say necessarily right now, but if you have it, I'd appreciate going through that just to see how it is developing.

(2115)

Thank you, Mr. Minister. I want also to turn to the agricultural development and diversification board, the ADD committees, the boards that have been set up. Would you clarify the purpose of those boards and

indicate the current number of them. And could you give some description as to the size of each of those individual boards? I suppose they perhaps vary from board to board, but what is the composition, primarily, of it? And generally what size constitutes a ADD board? And also, can you indicate whether or not -- as a series of questions -- whether or not there was any particular funding that is provided to the ADD boards?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Under the ADD board structure -- which was the old agriculture diversification districts -- we didn't change that, so the districts remain the same, from two RMs to 15 RMs involved.

And just exactly how it was, the ADD board was designed . . . redesigned in name and structure of content of the board was to look at agriculture development diversification, as well as some of the other things that go on in the farming industry. They're appointed by the RM councils to the ADD board. So their board members are all appointed by their own councils. They get \$1,000 per RM per year to help fund the ADD board. And like I said, there are between two and 15 RMs in any ag district or ADD board.

Mr. Koskie: -- Is there any conceivable overlap in respect to the function, say, of the community economic development committees, the rural development corporations, and the agricultural development and diversification board? There seems to be that there likely could be some overlapping and I was wondering whether or not you would clarify that.

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Certainly, in fairness, there is some overlap there. We started out with the . . . we had the economic development committees which is sort of urban, and then we set up the RDCs which involved urban and rural.

But in the meantime, we had the ag districts out there. We had a lot of agrologists that we thought could also help in that area. So we put them together and called them the ADD boards to look at more development and diversification, and they could then work with their RDC, the Rural Development Corporation in the area. If they didn't have any, and some areas don't have any, in fact quite a few don't have any yet . . . so there is a bit overlap where you have both.

But the EDC (economic development committee) is basically sort of an urban type of, more of a retail end of it and they didn't get so much involved in the diversification, like the industry, the manufacturing, and processing. We've been trying to encourage that through our ADD board structures and our RDC structure. So, yes there is some overlap, but there's some areas where they don't have only the ADD board. So until such time as we sort of have a bigger content, whether it's the ADD board structure or the RDC structure, I think they're both needed there on the interim. And they do work with each other, and sometimes it's the same people on the same boards.

Mr. Koskie: -- In your program delivery, in your '89 report you set out some program delivery that you've undertaken, and one of them is the program called Farming To Win, and I wonder whether you could indicate who initiated this program. Who sets up the various meetings? Is there any

financing in respect to the program entitled Farming To Win? And basically, what is the overall function of that initiative or program delivery?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- The funding for Farming To Win, it was put together three years ago and it's sort of a two-year program. It's one day a week for four weeks. And it's a two-year program, so then the next year you go back again and you get the same thing and then whoever . . . like some are finished last year and some are just starting their second year this year and some will be starting their first year.

It's funded through the Ag Development Fund. Like I said it was put together three years ago. It looks at the markets; it looks at production on the farm; it looks at financial budgeting, such as budgeting and those kinds of things.

We've had a really good turn-out of people to it, not because to make them necessarily. In fact some that have come out have been very good managers. They felt they have learned a great deal from it. It's been really well received out there by the farming community who have attended the classes. A lot of women are attending the classes because as you know they do a lot of the books and that at home, and so it's been very well received and it's continued on. It's on its third year of the program and it's . . . well, that's where it's at.

Mr. Koskie: -- And who actually sets up and prepares the material that's presented? Is it offered through community college or is it special group set up and the department provides the material on markets and management? And what is the source and the resource material that is being used? How is that monitored and how is it set up and accessed?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- First of all it's access it's advertised in the local paper where it's being held, in the area it's being held, and anybody can access it; it's open to anybody that wishes to take the course.

The course costs \$50 a year to take. It's put on by ag and food, the farm management section of ag and food, our extension agrologist from the Department of Rural Development are part of the training in regards to production and some with markets. We also have some consultants from the area work with them as well, and look at the area needs as well as the basic type of stuff, whether it's budgets and financial types of information and so it's . . . I think that answered most of your questions.

Mr. Koskie: -- Yes. The question that I want to ask: like you indicated that 75 groups were established for the first year program and 24 for year two. I guess what I want to ask there is: why the substantial drop? And you say any group can access it. And it's through I guess the rural service centres or the agrologists in the given area. And is it that people just simply sign up? And can you indicate . . . or does it go out to different communities or is it just in the communities in which the agrologist or the ag rep, or whatever you call him these days, is located? That's really what I'm wanting to get at.

You say anybody can access it. There's no rural development or rural service centre in Leroy. There's none in some of the other communities. How do they access it? Is it strictly through the rural service centres or in communities that have rural service centres? And is that where they're located at?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- It doesn't have to be a rural service centre, necessarily. Any ag group that wants to set up one of these seminars, we will work with them to set it up. Any group of individuals could do the same thing. The ADD boards could be a promoter of one of these management seminars. It's available to basically anybody. They could contact their local extension agrologist, the rural service centre, and it could be set up.

So it's up to them. It's done during the winter-time when the farmers can't be on the land and they have some opportunity to take that one day a week for four weeks to go to those seminars and take them. So it's during the winter months. It's available to anybody that wants to go to. It costs \$50 and if one wants to be set up, a group wants to be set up an area for that training seminar, we're prepared to look at that, in an area where there would be some commode enough to hold it and warrant it.

Mr. Koskie: -- There's another program that you mentioned here, and you said in the North 150 farms participated in it. And you . . . pardon me. You describe it as in a market simulation exercise using futurism program, the role of the commodity broker. I wonder whether you could indicate what that futurism program is and the subject matter of commodity broker? If you could indicate to the committee the role of that program.

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- We're still doing them. We'll have seminars around the province during the winter time again. They're on computers, but the idea is to simulate markets out there. And so you would learn if you don't much about marketing, which personally myself probably don't know much about marketing. We would . . . they learn you to . . . how to adjust to the markets, how the markets work, and so they simulate that. And what it does is gives you an idea -- if you're interested in looking at markets -- it gives you the first step towards, you know, the knowledge of how you would do it if you had an interest in doing it.

There has been 150 out, as it said, in the first year who showed an interest. A lot of those would have degrees in agrology, young farmers who do use the markets and like that additional information that we could supply to them and how they may want to access to markets, not only now but in the future.

Mr. Upshall: -- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, Mr. Minister, I'm somewhat familiar with that program, and I can tell you at least it's done one positive thing. The people who I have talked to -- who have been involved in that program -- just after they've gone through that, just realize how important the Canadian Wheat Board is.

In this program where you're teaching people how to gamble with their commodities and move to a more deregulated system than we now have through the Canadian Wheat Board, have you analysed the project? Have you researched what exactly this presentation is -- as to its positive and negative effects as it relates to the agriculture situation in Saskatchewan, and how that program might be used in a positive or negative way in regards to support or no support for the Canadian Wheat Board.

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- I think, in fairness, the wheat board's always one option there. There's other grains that are off-board that you market. There's other things that you buy and sell that have nothing to do with farm products. So you've been to the seminars, you know that they show you how to do it, whether you want to do it or not.

There's not many farmers in this province that don't grow some type of off-board grains and if you're going to do the marketing . . . I was looking the other day at peas to see what the best price I could get and what should I buy -- should I buy future, should I hedge them, those kinds of things. And those are the market alternatives out there, and we need those available to us to know if we're doing it right or wrong.

And that's all to show you whether you market through the wheat board or whether you don't. It's a decision of each individual farmer. And in fact the wheat board is one option that's available. If you saw the community, you saw that it was on there.

Mr. Upshall: -- Well unfortunately, Mr. Minister, the wheat board as an option certainly isn't being promoted by your government, yet you're willing to spend money through your department to promote the open market and the commodity exchange. Now I realize that you may think that that's the way to go, but when there was a survey taken last year there was 95 per cent of the people in Saskatchewan who marketed their grain -- selling grain -- thought that the wheat board should be the sole marketer of that grain.

Mr. Minister, I ask you: what are you doing through your department to promote the Canadian Wheat Board? Are there any presentations being made in support to show how that option of the Canadian Wheat Board has been very beneficial to rural Saskatchewan? Are you going to be putting forward any programs to promote the Canadian Wheat Board?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Mr. Chairman, we don't promote any, any type of thing. We make available information in all the different areas that we think may be of interest. Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, I'm sure uses the markets as they're known out there. UGG (United Grain Growers) uses the markets out there. Everybody uses the markets. We provide information on markets. You've got to have that wide range of knowledge and how to use them if you so wish.

So we don't promote anything. We're not promoting off-board, on-board, whatever the case may be. What we're promoting is information to the farmer to make them a little more knowledgeable in the idea of if you wish to market, how you could do it. That should be I think a must for a young

farmer today, at least to know what is available; even he's buying, to know what he's buying.

Mr. Koskie: -- Clearly, Mr. Minister, your government and the government in Ottawa has been promoting and undermining the basis of the wheat board. There is a very major concern that as a result of the free trade deal that the effectiveness, if not in fact the very essence of the wheat board will be removed.

It is your government in Ottawa and the predecessor, the Liberal government, that were the initiators of getting more and more grains out of the jurisdiction of the wheat board. And a recent example of that, against the will of a large proportion of the Saskatchewan farmers, was in respect to oats, most recently. Previously to that, canola was done. And so the thrust is there. And what you're doing now, Mr. Minister, is really attempting to get people to adopt the Tory philosophy that all commodities, grains that are raised on the farm, should, in fact, be sold on the open market. That's the Tory philosophy. That's what you boys stand for. And here you have a program which is advocating and teaching people in respect to open market.

I want to say in respect to this, Mr. Minister -- and you can laugh all you want -- but I'll tell you, the pioneers went through the open exchange, selling on the future market. And I'll tell you that they came to the conclusion that the average farmer couldn't survive in the open market.

And here we have taxpayers' money being spent against the wishes of a large proportion of the people of this province, out there selling the commodity broker. Well it's obvious that if you get your funds and your campaign funds from the exchange boys, you'll promote their philosophy, and it's not inconsistent, Mr. Minister.

But all I want to ask you . . . can you indicate the farm organizations, the wheat pool, ask you to set up schooling in respect to the futures program and commodity broker? Is that the request that you got -- is from the wheat pool or from the farmers union? Who were your groups that were asking so desperately to get a thrust so that farmers would become more amenable to the commodity broker?

This is the question that has to be asked, Mr. Minister. And I just say to the farmers across this province that may be watching that there is undeniably the Tory policy to undermine the strength of the wheat board. It's in favour of the open market, as is demonstrated recently taking oats out of the jurisdiction of the wheat board against the will of the farmers across this province. And I want to tell you I attended a number of meetings in respect to that, and 3 or 400 farmers came out at Wadena, and the advisory board for the wheat board were there . . . or representatives. And one of the resolutions that they passed was that they opposed the open market and the exclusion of oats from the wheat board.

And here you have then a promotion of one aspect of marketing and you say, well it's an option. Well it's going to be a bigger option if you guys hang around any longer because that's where you're heading for and that's

where you'll want to take the system, into the commodity broker.

I want to ask you, Mr. Minister, could you indicate how much was spent in respect to these programs, how many meetings were held, how much funding was used of taxpayers' money in the promotion of the commodity broker, and what communities these meetings were held in?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- I want to make . . . I want to correct the member just for a moment there, that the Canadian Wheat Board as you know was brought in by a Conservative government to start with.

Second, that canola was never in the marketing. It was always an off-board product. So I just want to correct those two things for the member.

The third thing that he should remember is that the Canadian Wheat Board is only in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Alberta. We have to compete with two other biggies down there where the Canadian Wheat Board does and that's Ontario marketing system and Quebec marketing boards. They create a great deal of problems when you look across, particularly in the wheat, the soft wheats and that, and they compete very heavily with our . . . with the Canadian Wheat Board for some of the products.

I want to also mention that the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool does a lot of marketing on their own. In fact they were the ones we asked about looking at this and they were interested. They didn't come in, but they certainly showed an interest. They have as you know been involved in a lot of marketing now, our Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, the Elders Grain Company, Robin's Donuts, a Biggar malt plant, northwest grains. I mean their looking at the marketing, and they're looking at it from that point of view and I think very aggressively so. And you know, I think they're doing a good job.

Where the meetings were held? The meetings were held just scattered around the province. A lot were asked for by their Farming to Win people that were taking the courses.

The second one that we had no dollars in the budget for was all done by staff within extension services. The agrologist there did that. It was on computer. It was simulation so it was only just to show you how you would work on it, do it. We do have now in the rural service centres, we have all the markets are available on the computers at the rural service centres from across the country, as well as much more on there.

So those are the kind of things that . . . And I think that answers your three questions that you asked -- what communities, they were scattered around the province on request, staff was by the extension agrologists, and we didn't have no dollars in the budget at all. We were just on in-house by extension agrologists, by the department people.

Mr. Upshall: -- Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I note that you said it was extension services that provided that. Is it common practice for your department to be going around promoting the open market, promoting the commodity exchange when in fact you say that the Tory government was

the one that put in the Canadian Wheat Board? Well I'll tell you that it's going to be the Tory government who destroys the Canadian Wheat Board if you and your friends in Ottawa have anything to say about it as we have seen through pressures being put on through the free trade agreement.

Mr. Minister, you will know that the majority of Saskatchewan farmers wish to market through the board. You will know that there was a vote a number of years back under Otto Lang that was a rigged vote. When they asked if canola should be put under the wheat board and they had three options -- yes, no, or undecided -- they took the no and the undecided, lumped them together, and of course that defeated those people who wished to have the canola marketed through the board.

You will also know, Mr. Minister, that canola changes hands approximately eight to 10 times before it hits the export. I'm just wondering, Mr. Minister, is that the type of a system that you would wish to see, or obviously like to see your department promoting in rural Saskatchewan when we have times in this province where we're looking for stability, predictability of marketing -- the deregulated system of marketing and transportation? We have seen the impact on your deregulation to date. Is that the kind of program that you will be continuing and you wish to continue to promote in rural Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Mr. Chairman, the rural service centres and the extension agrologists, and the people that work in the rural service centres as well, provide information. We're an information bank. We provide whatever information is requested. We put on what is requested by the people for us if we can do it. We try to do as much in-house as we can to keep the dollars down. We don't want to spend out a whole bunch of dollars.

We're not professional people in the area. We never pretended to be in that area. It's just an information bank, an information link for the people out there who have asked for it, and if we can do that we're pleased to do it. We don't have any other role to play except for information.

Mr. Upshall: -- Mr. Minister, just one more question. How much time and effort has the extension services in your department put into promoting the other option, as you called it, the Canadian Wheat Board? You have told us tonight that there has been some initiative to explore and to understand the commodity exchange. Just how much effort has the people involved put into, and could you name if there was any meetings held to promote the benefits to the Canadian Wheat Board and the orderly marketing system? Have you examined that and promoted that in the country like you have the commodity exchange?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Let's make it very clear, Mr. Chairman. We didn't promote either the Canadian Wheat Board or the commodity exchange. We're an information group. I just want to make mention, I believe we talked about the markets and how important that everybody uses them. Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, I believe, hedge a great deal of their product on the market, and so they also use the market. So just everybody uses it in different ways. We don't promote any group. We're an information group of people

who will bring information to rural Saskatchewan where it's requested and where we can get the information to help them. And we're not a promoter of whatever; we're a promoter of information.

(2145)

Mr. Koskie: -- I'd like to ask, Mr. Minister: you indicated it was requested. Can you indicate to me, and be more specific, what communities were these meetings held at throughout Saskatchewan; when was this program started; how many meetings have been held since the program was established, and give me a list of the communities in which it was held.

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- We don't have a list with us because it's done on request, but we can get a list for you. We'll get a list and send over where it's at. Like I said, it's done by the local extension agrologists in the area. It's on request. It's on request; it's requested all the way from ADD boards. I understand the ADD boards have requested some. I said some of the folks with Farming to Win. It can be whoever's interested in it, and it's only on request and we do it in that area. So it's not a promotion of; it's just available, one more information link there that can be used if they so wish.

Mr. Koskie: -- You indicated that the agrologists were putting forward this here program on the open exchange, commodity broker. I want to ask you this: was this program put together by the agrologists -- all of the details of it -- or whether or not information in kits were purchased from outside of the agrologists putting the program together? In other words I'm asking you: did the agrologists put together the basic content of the program, or in fact did they go out and they purchase the selling of the open market to the people of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- My understanding is that it was put together by the farm management group of agriculture . . . ag and food. We got some information from Alberta Agriculture and that a consultant put this information together in a package that made available to anybody that wanted it.

Mr. Koskie: -- Will you name the consultant and whether or not any fees were paid to the consultant in formulation of this program?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Before the department came over it was done under ag and food; it was a Dahrl Vercaigne; Vercaigne was a consultant that put it together and I don't know, I don't have no idea what the price was that was paid, but we could certainly find you for you, or you could ask ag and food.

Mr. Koskie: -- And in other than setting up the consulting service in respect to the open market, this individual, is he in any way associated or tied with the open exchange or commodity market?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Not to our knowledge, no.

Mr. Koskie: -- Mr. Minister, you've got another program called STELLA (Saskatchewan Tele--Learning Association). I wonder if you'd tell me who

STELLA is?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- It was a satellite hook-up through the university for educational purposes, is now part of the SCAN (Saskatchewan Communications Advanced Network) network to bring university level classes to rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Koskie: -- And you indicated that these sessions were for farm groups in co-operation with the credit unions. Would you indicate to me, Mr. Minister, the number of the credit unions that participated in respect to this program?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- We don't know how many credit unions were involved; officials thought maybe eight or nine that were involved. It's basically the delivery of the information via satellite to the communities.

Mr. Koskie: -- Was there any cost in respect to the department in respect to the preparation and distribution of this?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- I understand we don't know the dollars, but there was a small amount from ADF (Agricultural Development Fund) to help put it together.

Mr. Koskie: -- A small amount -- what is a small amount, in your name? Find out what it is; that's what we're asking here. I want to know the amount, not the small amount. Small amount to you might be a large amount to the people of Saskatchewan.

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Less than \$10,000.

Mr. Koskie: -- I want to turn to another area, Mr. Minister, and that is the section indicated as communication services. And you indicate that this was "conceptualized during the year under review" in '89-90 -- '88-89.

The unit communicates (program) policies and the accomplishments consistent with the department's mission.

Communication (it says) also provides a series of publications (for) both internal and external users. This ensures Rural Development's external users are informed about the department services and purposes.

In respect to the communication services that you allude to and the one that was founded in '88-89, I was wondering, Mr. Minister, could you indicate the total amount that was expended in respect to the communication services, as I outlined here, in the year '88-89 and the subsequent year, '89-90, and how much is budgeted for the current year, '90-91?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- Communication budget for the Department of Rural Development for '89-90 was \$491,827.99 and the 1991 budget is 430,000.

Mr. Koskie: -- Can you give a breakdown? Could you send me over a breakdown, because this is a considerable amount of money, almost a half a million dollars. And I wonder whether or not you can give me a breakdown

as to how this money was expended in respect to communication services.

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- I can send these over. There's a list of it here broken down right to the penny.

Mr. Koskie: -- Mr. Minister, I want to touch basically on a couple of other items here. And in respect to rural service centres, I'd like to ask you . . . I think you indicated today in your general talk that there's some 22. I'd like a confirmation of the number of centres that you have in place, and how many more you intend to set up during the course of this year.

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- We'll have 42 completed by July 1, and we will have all 52, we hope, by late fall.

Mr. Koskie: -- Mr. Minister, I want to ask in respect to a couple specific rural service centres. I want to ask you in respect to the one that we recently opened in Watson. And I want to ask you this, whether or not there was a public tender for space in the location of the rural service centre in the community of Watson, and whether or not you received more than one submission for a tender.

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- It's handled through SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation). There was public tender; we believe there was more than one.

Mr. Koskie: -- You believe. I would have thought you knew there was more than one. But what I ask you, Mr. Minister, in respect to the subsequent acceptance, obviously, of the tender that was accepted by your department or property management -- I want to ask you: can you indicate whether or not the cost of all of the renovations in respect to the rural service centre in the community of Watson was in fact an expenditure by the Government of Saskatchewan; that they in fact initiated and paid for all of the renovations and improvements in the setting up in respect to the building that they accepted the tender from?

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- I don't know. I can't particularly say exactly about Watson, but the general policy is, is that there's two tenders -- one for the shell or the building, and second one for the tenant renovations inside. So there's two tenders issued for that. We're not sure about Watson because SPMC does it, but that's the procedure that we go through. So the first one is a rental space, whatever that would be, built or otherwise, and the second would be the renovations for the inside.

Mr. Koskie: -- In respect, well, the word is out that a very substantial sum was spent in Watson by the taxpayers of the province in respect to the renovations, and also that there was an additional tender and a building that would have certainly have met the standards as required under the tender -- some over \$70,000, I am informed, that was spent in the major renovations in respect to this building. I wonder whether the minister could indicate whether you know the term of the lease in respect to the rural service centre premises that was taken up in the community of Watson.

Hon. Mr. Hardy: -- SPMC negotiates that, but usually they're a five-year

lease with a five-year renewable; that's normally the procedure. Again, I can't say specifically for Watson what it was, but normally it's a five_year lease with a five-year renewal option.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 10:02 p.m.