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EVENING SITTING

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund
Justice
Vote 3

Item 1

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome to the minister and his officials once again today. Mr. Minister, my colleague from Moosomin, who has been Justice critic through this session, asked you a number of questions at the end of which you indicated you'd respond in writing to.

Can you give us some indication of how long you believe it will take to come up with those answers. He asked you questions pertaining to cost, some other issues surrounding investigations, that type of thing. Can you give us an idea?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — It's hard to say but let me put it this way to the member. We'll give you an answer within two or three days on the . . . to the extent we're able to. Some things like the costs are difficult to calculate and I don't think we can provide very good information about that. But we'll do the best we can on all the questions and answer them to the extent that we're able to, and try and get that to the member in a very timely way.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Minister. How long did it take you to compile the costs associated with the Martensville situation?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I'm told that the Martensville calculations took a couple of days, that all had been completed and all were . . . just a matter of rounding up the information; that took a couple of days.

Mr. Swenson: — Good. Well thank you, Mr. Minister, because that was an extensive investigation and entailed a lot of individuals doing different things, so I would expect that we can probably have your answer sometime within a week on some of the other issues. I appreciate that.

Mr. Minister, there's another issue which I want to touch on which you have not been able to fully answer, at least up to a few days ago. And you were asked some questions about how long the investigation into Phoenix Advertising would take and you indicated there had to be some transcripts prepared for, I believe, it's a Mr. Martin in Calgary. Can you inform the Assembly where that's at?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — We referred this matter to Mr. Martin with all the material that we had at the end of March — around about the end of March. We just can't put our finger on the exact date. About three weeks ago, two to three weeks ago, we got a request from him for the transcript. The transcript, of course, hadn't . . . there was no transcript; it had to be ordered, and the department requisitioned the transcript, and we're told that it will be ready in two weeks. Yes, about two weeks and

we'll send it on to Mr. Martin as soon as we get it.

There had been no indication prior to his request that he wanted a transcript, and as I say, that happened about three weeks ago which would be around about the end of April. So that's where it sits.

Mr. Swenson: — I find that strange, Minister, given modern electronics. You're telling me this stuff isn't on diskette when it's done — I presume you're talking about the transcripts of the actual trial process which only lasted a few days — that none of that stuff is on diskette that can then just be sent over and run through a computer and run off on a printer? That's not the way it works?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — No, I'm afraid, Mr. Chairman, we're not that advanced. The proceedings are recorded on an ordinary tape recorder and the tapes have to be transcribed by typists. And that's the state of the art in Saskatchewan courtrooms.

Mr. Swenson: — Now, Minister, you're going to have to talk to some of your colleagues. They figured this out real fast. We've been asking department after department what they do with all that fancy electronic wizardry that they've bought in the last year. And I mean they got laptops and they've got stuff that won't end, coming out their ears, all purchased by SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation). And this is all the finest stuff too, Mr. Minister, so I think you better get to the front of the line and talk to some of the rest of them. Because they're doing very well, believe me — very, very well.

Well that being the case then, Minister, what you're saying then is that you don't expect any report back probably within the next four or five weeks. Would that be what your expectations are?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Well we're not going to delay it. We'll send it along as soon as it's finished. And we will do the best we can. I don't know what I can add to that. We'll just do the best that we can. And I undertake there'll be no delays at all so far as the department is concerned.

Mr. Swenson: — What will be the process, Minister? That will come back to your deputy, I would presume. He'll brief you of it. Will you then have to brief cabinet or will this become public immediately upon receipt by the department? What will be the process in your mind of how the release is done?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Well I have said publicly that when we get the report we'll release it. Now if there is an election call, I don't expect cabinet to meet, but I don't know. I'll have to ask my Premier about how all that works. But I have said publicly what I just told you.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you. Minister, given the remarks that you made in this House quite a few years ago now in a similar situation dealing with the Cabri Credit Union, were you . . . and I think you're aware of your remarks — there's no need for me to repeat them back to the House once more — about how you felt about only one individual being singled out when, as we

say, the givers of the money were not also investigated thoroughly.

Do you believe, given your own feelings on this issue, that the mandate with Mr. Martin is sufficient to cover off your concerns of some years ago as it would relate to the Phoenix situation? Do you feel the mandate has enough breadth to cover off the concerns which you voiced in this legislature some years ago?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The answer is, I feel comfortable. But let me try and explain why I feel comfortable. In these kind of cases, I'm told by the prosecutors that charges are generally laid against the party or the parties, the persons who are the most culpable. And the Crown looks to see who initiated the scheme, and who most benefited from it.

And they don't necessarily charge everybody who had any connection with it at all. So it's . . . the charges . . . I think I can properly say that it . . . the charges are laid against the person most responsible for getting the events moving that are the subject of the charge.

And that was what led them in this situation to charge the person who was ultimately convicted and not to charge the other. Now we have asked Mr. Martin whether, in his opinion, charges ought to have been laid against Phoenix. And that's what we await.

But the prosecutors, in making the decision they made in this case, were following a long-established practice that I have just described to the member. I want to say to the member, and I want to say this just with all the sincerity that I can, there is no political influence applied at all in this situation. That the decisions were decisions made by the professional prosecutors without any interference from anyone else.

Now in the Cabri situation, you know that's . . . I can't remember my exact words but I remember the thrust of them. And there, there was a situation where one person had been charged and not others who had been involved in the events. And just applying the test that I just applied, I think that what I said at the time was an appropriate thing to say.

Who got the events moving there? And so on and so forth. Now you know I'm not raising that again. I'm not criticizing anybody when I say that. But I am merely making the point that I'm comfortable in this situation that the department proceeded in an appropriate way. If Mr. Martin says otherwise, well so be it. But at the moment, I'm comfortable.

Mr. Swenson: — Well you see, one of the problems that people in the public have with this, Minister, is that it seems that the mandate is very narrow — very, very narrow. What you said in the Cabri case was that it would seem that if the credit union manager was found guilty of the offence of accepting a secret commission, it should also be an offence to offer a secret commission. Okay? And the similarities are striking. But the problem that seems with the mandate is that yes . . . and I believe you're correct in asking Mr. Martin to find out whether the prosecutors erred or not in their summation of what should

be done there.

(1815)

But the bigger question arises; on the one hand we have — and that was recognized by the judge — a relatively small amount of money involved here. Because you're a public figure, when you get into breach of trust, there is an added onus put upon you. And I understand that very clearly from other movies. But we're also dealing with an advertising firm that does, not tens of thousands of dollars, not hundreds of thousands of dollars, but potentially I guess over the term of time, you could look at very large figures of advertising with government.

And that is what gives the whole thing . . . I guess if these people had been off in Timbuktu and had never had any relationship to government advertising no one would care, really, beyond the fact that you had this obvious scheme and breach of trust involved. But the simple fact is, because they are related intimately in different ways with government, through previous personal relationships, through different things, then you have an aura of things that are not, in the public's mind, totally satisfied by being very narrow.

And I don't want to get into any personal names here or . . . not my place tonight in going through this, but I can say to you if Mr. Martin's report is so narrow that it simply looks at the issue of whether one particular prosecutor made the proper case, the other, bigger questions will not be answered, sir. They will not be answered.

And the fact that many, and we don't know how many, other members may have also done advertising contracts with that particular firm, that political parties may have done advertising contracts with that political firm . . . or with that particular advertising firm, none of that, none of that, as I understand — and you can correct me if I'm wrong — none of that bigger question is being answered by this particular investigation by Mr. Martin. Am I on the right track there, Minister?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — No, the member is perfectly right. The member knows perfectly well that the police just don't engage in fishing trips, checking out everything to see whether there's anything wrong anywhere. I mean they act on the basis of information that comes to them in one way or another, and if that information suggests that a criminal offence may have been committed, then they'll investigate. But they don't just go around on a fishing trip, as we normally say, just to sort of check out the whole situation and see whether there's anything wrong. And so when we referred the matter to Mr. Martin, we were . . . I'll quote from the letter:

We are asking that you review this file and provide us with your opinion and assessment regarding whether Phoenix Advertising or any of its employees should have been charged in relation to these transactions.

And that's the question. As you say, it's narrow, but I think it's appropriate in the circumstances.

Mr. Swenson: — Okay, Minister, I'm going to put this to you,

and I'm going to use myself as an example, okay? On the allegation of . . . and, Mr. Chairman, if the members want to visit, can they go do it somewhere else? It's very difficult to converse — if you wouldn't mind.

Mr. Minister, in my case, an allegation was made about some things, and as I understand it, all of the records pertaining to myself as an MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) from the period of time between 1987 and 1991 were removed from this building, taken away, gone through, looked over. No one has ever said that I did anything wrong, but there was an allegation made, and I and a whole lot of other people had that happen to them. And as far as I know, those records have never been returned. I'm going to leave this place, probably in a few days, return to private life, and I don't know what the process will be about my records.

But an allegation was made in a bigger scheme of things, and my stuff was all removed from here, I presume with a warrant, and that's the problem I have in resolving this thing; that one individual does some business, maybe inappropriately, according to the judicial system — convicted, but no one else is looked at. And yet in my case I had my stuff taken even though it was just a sort of a general allegation, and to this day remains in the hands of the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) and your prosecutor.

And that's the thing I have difficulty squaring, and why the mandate perhaps was not larger, and that then everyone have the cloud of suspicion either lifted or not.

And that's a very difficult thing to square in the minds of the public, Minister, when you define these things in such a narrow way. And then it raises all sorts of questions and you get people maybe making silly statements. But they think about the comparison.

And the law, your prosecutors, the RCMP, I guess, have every right to do that. They can come and take my records because someone made an allegation. And I guess if someone had made maybe a further allegation, is what you're telling me, then that could have happened also to a whole lot of other people. Is that the case?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — It's all very well to talk about the member's case, because there's no charge. But there are other charges going on so I have to, I suppose, be careful of what I say. And I've learned that one must be very careful about what one says in these circumstances.

I say to the member that in order for the police to pick up records, as the member has just advised happened in his case, they have to obtain a search warrant from a judge. And that requires a certain level of proof, or certain proofs to be offered to the court, usually in the form of affidavits, which set out in some detail what is the information on the basis of which the police feel that a search warrant is justified or required.

And the courts then apply the tests that they apply to those applications and then either issue or not issue a search warrant. The system works like that.

I think that is meant to screen out frivolous or vexatious allegations and ensure that the allegations have enough substance to meet the threshold test of the court in determining whether or not a search warrant should be issued. But I have no knowledge of the member's particular case at all.

Mr. Swenson: — I can appreciate that, Minister. Nor should you have any knowledge of my records being removed from this House. But I don't mind telling the public that that happened. I have nothing to fear from those records being looked at. I find it strange that it has gone on for as long as it has, that my records . . . I'm going to leave this place and that stuff's still not going to be back here. And I don't like to leave any business like that. Unfortunately, I guess that's going to be the case and it is somewhat bothersome.

But I'm just saying to you, when you release this report and if it stays that narrow, then I don't think you're going to defuse the issue. I really don't. And I really wondered at the political wisdom and at the legal wisdom that you perhaps applied by keeping that as narrow as you did. It's one thing to be perceived and one thing to be. And I'm not going to say any more about it, but I believe that I wouldn't want to be in your shoes the day you release that particular report because I don't believe you're going to answer all the questions that need to be answered.

Mr. Minister, I asked you a question in this House some weeks ago and you did not have a reply at that time. I asked you if there were any conflict of interest guidelines that were followed by your department, individuals, that type of thing. It was no more than that, no less than that; just simple, because I did not know. And you did not get back to me on that issue.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I'm sorry. I apologize to the member for not having conveyed that information. I remember the question.

There are no specific guidelines that exist as such within the prosecutions unit. But there's a lot of jurisprudence on the case of conflict of interest so far as lawyers are concerned — and prosecutors — and we apply that law. In addition to that, there is a code of professional conduct governing lawyers and the way in which they conduct themselves, and there's a public service code of ethics as well. So between those three sources we have a fairly comprehensive code for sorting these cases out.

Mr. Swenson: — So if it was thought there was anything controversial at all — and I don't understand the processes inside there — but the chief prosecutor would bring it to the attention of somebody or there would be some discussion. Obviously you wouldn't, as people in the legal community, go in and out of . . . and people go from private practice into that role and back out again and that sort of thing. So what you're saying is there would possibly be a discussion if something looked contentious. And the recourse that is there is tied to professional conduct standards by the Law Society. Would that be sort of the ultimate governing body? It would not be a government thing but it would be a Law Society type of issue.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I think the governing source would probably be the jurisprudence about when prosecutors are in a

conflict of interest situation. But that's not to diminish the importance of the code of professional conduct for lawyers because that is a very serious thing. And as the member says, that's laid down by the Law Society and administered by them. And it governs our ticket, you know, our licence to practice. So it has considerable weight.

The other thing that . . . in answer to the first part of the member's question — lawyers come into the department and they come with a background in private practice, and conflicts of interest situations are usually readily detectable. They wouldn't be asked to prosecute a former client, for example, that kind of thing. So we keep track of it to the extent that there is knowledge of it, and it's a relatively small unit so everybody knows each other pretty well, and most situations are readily identifiable.

Mr. Swenson: — And I suspect, Mr. Minister, you would expect there's a lot of onus on the individual to identify situations where there might be that potential conflict and they would then inform somebody higher up the ladder that there was a possibility . . . what, up to the deputy minister perhaps, or would it have to go that high? Where would you identify that?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — These matters would normally be decided by the director of public prosecutions and there'd be no . . . I can't imagine circumstances in which it would go higher. That would normally be made at the level of the director.

(1830)

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Minister. I want to just for a minute go back to the Martensville scenario. I believe you told the Assembly earlier today that there was in excess of \$800,000 expended over the duration, and that included the subsidy which you're now giving back to the community.

Does any of the potential litigation that is evolving . . . is there anything there that could add to that liability? Any of the civil actions that are currently before the courts directly pertain to the Government of Saskatchewan, or are they all limited to the Martensville police force? Is there a contingent liability that's sitting there waiting to potentially happen?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — There are a number of actions outstanding, civil actions claiming damages from the government. And I don't know how many there are — five, six, seven, something like that.

Our legal advice is that none of those actions are well founded, so we haven't set up any fund or allocated any funds on a contingency basis for that, and we are of course defending all of them.

Mr. Swenson: — What you're saying then to the Assembly is, other than the cost of your defence and whatever that may entail, you don't anticipate any further costs.

Going through your budget here, which area does that . . . where would that be picked up out of? This obviously is an over-budget item. You didn't plan on being sued and having to

defend yourself, and giving Martensville money. Where does this enter into the budgetary process of your department?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — All of these actions are being defended by our own staff and they are all employed under the legal services subvote.

Mr. Swenson: — So that would be your salaries, operations, grants, that type of area?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The legal services item is in subvote JUO4 on page 87 of the *Estimates* and the bulk of the cost would be under civil law and salaries because, I repeat, all of these actions are being defended by Department of Justice lawyers.

Mr. Swenson: — I notice that your total budget there for the coming year has been up by approximately \$800,000. Would that primarily be tied to the actions of the Martensville case, or are there other large cases that would up that budgetary requirement?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — None of it relates to the Martensville case. Most of the increase there is accounted for by the conversion of temporary prosecutorial positions to permanent positions.

Mr. Swenson: — Okay, so you had to obviously have people around more. Is that because you're being sued more or because you're prosecuting more?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — No, neither. These are people who have worked for the department, some of them for years, and they were classified as temporary employees or contract employees, temporary employees, and we're making them permanent positions and bringing them within the regular employment of the government.

Mr. Swenson: — So instead of farming out, for instance, drug prosecutions which was done a lot in the last few years, those minor type of events, you're not farming that out to the private sector any more; you're actually bringing people back on to redo that as it was prior to the mid-1980s? Is that what you're telling me?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — We don't farm out many prosecutions. There are, however, contract prosecutors who are attached to the department and there is a flow of work to them as circumstances require, when the regular staff can't handle it.

The conversions were, I think, from temporary to permanent and contract to permanent. Yes, I included both categories. But there are still a number of situations in which we farm the work out to contract employees. We haven't done away with them; we've just taken the ones that were employed full time as temporary or contract employees and converted them to permanent employees.

Mr. Swenson: — How many individuals are we talking about here then that would make up this \$800,000?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Sorry to take awhile, Mr. Chairman. But there were 17 conversions from contract prosecutors to permanent prosecutors. And I think I gave the impression to the member that that explained the whole difference, and I was wrong. I was grossly simplifying the situation because they had been contract employees and they were paid anyway, and now they're being paid as permanent employees so the extra money involved is just minimal.

In addition we have hired two additional prosecutors. We have increases in witness fees for doctors. We have out-of-scope salary increases. We have professional dues, increases. I can provide all this information to the member. It does go on and on though about . . . a small increase in civil law, again for professional dues and out-of-scope salary increases. And in public law and policy, which is included under this subvote, there is \$330,000 for aboriginal initiatives in this current year, as well as dues for lawyers and out-of-scope salary increases and that sort of thing.

So that's a fuller answer, and I can provide all the details if the member wants them.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Minister. I'm just going to finish off with a question. I thank you for your answers, and to your officials, and leave it at that because others wish to ask questions and time is moving on.

Are any of the people that have been hired moved back into permanent positions, any of the ones which when there was a downsizing in this area some eight, nine years ago, are any of these the same people being brought back into permanent positions?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — No.

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I wish to welcome you here tonight and your officials. I haven't got too many questions; it won't take too long. I firstly, Mr. Minister, want to congratulate you for being returned to Justice minister.

As we know, you were under investigation for something that was of a criminal nature, but they chose — which I was glad of — they chose not to have you charged and you returned to your position. So that's fine, and I'm glad for you. But you weren't as lucky as I was. I was under investigation and I got charged and convicted and the whole bit. And I was charged with breaking a law that wasn't even a law, so you can understand how I feel.

Just a few questions . . . I don't want to comment on that, Mr. Minister. I will be touching on a few questions that does pertain to some of these charges later on, just in a few minutes later. And I know and I'll respect anything that you can't answer. I can make the comment, but if you can't answer it, I'll not push you at all, Mr. Minister, if it's related to something that you can't answer.

Just to your office and under Department of Justice, who makes the decisions to actually lay a charge? Who does that final decision come down to on a criminal charge? Who actually makes that decision?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — In the normal case it is the police who will make the decision about what charge will be laid. There will be cases in which they will make that decision in consultation with prosecutors from the department. That's the answer.

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Minister, when . . . as you . . . as minister when are you notified that anybody has been charged specially? I suppose some of these . . . all these little charges that happen, everyday somebody breaking into a store or something, they wouldn't be bothering with those. But of a more serious nature, when are you notified, as minister, of somebody being charged?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Almost invariably I learn about it from a television program or a newspaper. For example, the two persons who are charged in Regina with murder over the last couple of days, I learned about that the same way that the member did, likely.

On some high-profile-type cases where I'm likely to be asked questions about them, and charges against members of this House would be an example, I am usually briefed by my deputy minister, and usually on the day that the charge is laid, or perhaps the day before so that I will be able to . . . I think the purpose is that I'll be able to deal with any questions that may come from the media with respect to those charges.

(1845)

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Minister, would you call of a serious nature when a lawyer or a judge or an MP (Member of Parliament) or an MLA . . . would they be more important to be notifying you, those kind of people? When they're charged, would you be notified ahead of time? Like I understand you did know about the last 11 that were charged because you said from your office door that there was three more but you thought the media knew. So that means that you knew that. So are you informed on these more complicated or more serious charges?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The test is not that the people are important, but rather that the people have such a profile that I'm likely to be asked questions about it.

I think in that circumstance, if I recall correctly, the charges had been laid before I was briefed about them. And I think I was briefed on the same day that the charges were laid, or perhaps the day after. Yes, I am advised by my deputy it was the day after the charges had been sworn and laid.

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Minister, I was charged with a criminal charge on November 4, 1993, and indirectly we were talking to a judge who is now a judge in New Brunswick. And he informed us that you can rest for sure — and I know that maybe this is not in your case — but he informed us without any doubt whatsoever that there would never in Canada ever be an MP, MLA, judges, lawyers, mayors of larger towns, and people in important public positions, would never be charged without a nod from the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Well that's just not correct. I mean it's certainly not correct in this province and never has been through succeeding attorney generals. The member's been in my office and you see there the wall of pictures going back to the time that Saskatchewan became a province, 1905. And I can't speak for all of those people, but I do know the tradition dating back to the days of Bob Walker, when he was the attorney general, and the member's information is simply correct.

I've just given you an example of that. I was briefed with respect to the most recent charges, the ones you referred to that I commented on outside my office door the day after the charges were laid. And that's just routine, that's just how it has been in this province for a long time.

And I think we do it properly. We just simply have to keep the political people out of the administration of the justice system. If we don't do that I think we're asking for a lot of trouble.

Mr. Muirhead: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, I'll accept what you're saying and I believe you when you say that. But I know it hasn't always been that way. I didn't spend five and a half years as Legislative Secretary to the last minister of Justice, Mr. Gary Lane . . . and he always told me he didn't. He said the same thing as you. But it sure wasn't that way before. And I had lots of connections, being involved in Justice for those years through Gerry Williams and myself and we know that Justice ministers have been notified.

But anyway, if you didn't, I'll take your word for it and that's fine. I'll accept that.

I just want to ask one more question on this particular procedure. Who did lay the charges in the Martensville case? Was it the city police all involved 100 per cent, or was the RCMP, or did Justice completely lay that charge?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — All the original charges — I think there were 160 of them in all — were laid by the Martensville police and the department never became involved until after the charges were laid. People started to be arrested and bail applications started to be made and that's when the department became involved. We later then quickly formed up a task force and got involved with it and events proceeded from there.

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Minister, I understand what you're saying but I've been told by, and I'm going to name them, Inspector McFadyen, Mr. Leitch — I don't know his title, I think he's a sergeant now — Mr. Couprie and Inspector Thorne that their department as police never, never lay a charge. That we always give our information to the Department of Justice and then it's up to them whether they lay the charge on the information.

Is that . . . so does that . . . it kind of contradicts what you're saying, but maybe it's different in certain circumstances. Maybe you could explain because I was told very clearly with witnesses from these police. So could you explain that, please, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The charges are laid by the police. Now

in complex cases, and particularly commercial crime cases, they will get the help of a Crown prosecutor in drafting the charge. But the decisions are police decisions.

Mr. Muirhead: — Well I'm just going to touch briefly on how I was charged because that's the one I'm interested in, of course, and mine's over with. So I'll tell you how it worked with me.

I was in the RCMP barracks on Dewdney giving a statement to a Mr. Couprie in relation to a constituent over something entirely with nothing to do with MLAs or anything to do with that whatsoever. It was a three-hour interview and there was several ministers that was called in. It was over quarry rights.

So just leaving the building, Mr. Couprie said an Inspector Thorne would like to talk to you but it's not requested because there had been no arrangements made. And I said, well certainly. So I sit down in Mr. Thorne's office and he asked me what I knew about the 500 to \$800,000 missing from the Conservative caucus funding. And I knew nothing about it at that time. I find out later that many of my colleagues did, and some people did, but I never knew. And this was the day of moving after the election, in November of '91, because I was in Regina that day responsible for the moving from the government offices to our opposition offices.

And he said, well I was told if I could ask you some questions pertaining to that, that I could trust you to give the right answers. But I told him I knew nothing about it whatsoever. And when I was leaving he said, and I have something to check out with you, Mr. Muirhead, he said. That while the election was on, there was a complaint made that you misused your communication. And he told me a little bit about it, and he wasn't too concerned, and I sure wasn't. But he said, I'll call you in and you bring in either a picture of this parade equipment or bring in all the equipment, and we'll talk about it. And he didn't get back to me till December 31, 1991. As soon as he seen this picture brought in, two feet by two feet, he says now I understand what you were doing — it was a picture of me riding in the parades that were enlarged.

And we talked for a little while and he said, I want to give you a warrant statement. I never had one in my life, I didn't even understand it, and I wasn't in such a situation before. And he said that you don't have to do it, you can have a lawyer here, or you can leave at any time or whatever. And me being so proud, and figuring that there's nothing that I can't say, I'll just tell the truth and that's it. And so we had an interview.

And it was done very quickly. In fact you're able to read what he said and I said in three and a half minutes — very slowly. And that was the extent of the interview. And when we finished he said, now I understand this, Mr. Muirhead. I'll be recommending to Justice that there'll be no charge whatsoever because I can see there's no intent.

And he said, I'm also going to recommend to Justice that they get in touch with the Board of Internal Economy and have these lists and their whole directive cleared up so people can understand the rules and the regulations like you do, Mr. Muirhead. Because I told them I was on a committee back in

1981 from our caucus in setting up this Board of Internal Economy in the first place. He says, I understand that you really understand this. So he said, that will be the end of it. Goodbye, and that's it.

Now without any more . . . no more police work, zero police work. Because when I got my disclosure, after I was charged, all disclosure was prior to that date.

Now how come when I'm called in Mr. Leitch . . . and this is maybe not . . . I shouldn't say how come. I'm just making this statement, and see if you want to comment on it or not. Mr. Leitch kept phoning me. Would I come in and give a statement like they were asking all MLAs on this big scenario — the one that's in the courts now.

And I was advised not to, but I wanted to get it over with because I was going to a hospital for six weeks of treatments. And so I phoned him one morning after harvest and I said, I'll come in as soon as I can come in. He said, well this afternoon at 2 o'clock. And I said, I'd been advised by the caucus lawyer that I should come. I'd go ahead and go as long as . . . I asked him if I was going to be charged or not and whether it's a warrant or a witness statement and I should . . . as long as I get a tape of it. So that's the arrangement we made and we did it.

So when I went in and we were about an hour and I wasn't able to help them too much and I went to leave, and they said, I'll get you your tape. And Mr. Leitch went out and came back. And while he was gone, Mr. Skead or Snead, his name is — I'm sorry I'm not pronouncing it right — handed me my charge. He says the Justice department has decided to charge you on what happened back in 1988. So the police are not agreeing with you, Mr. Minister, that they say the Justice department definitely charged me. And Inspector McFadyen said that he was dealing with Eric Neufeld whether they should charge me or not.

And, Mr. Minister, I had a part-time prosecutor that has told me in this last year that he knows in the prosecutor's department, in the prosecutor's department, a part-time prosecutor if there ever has to be . . . he'll be named. That they were discussing the investigation of Mr. Koskie. And they said, we're told that if we have to charge Mr. Koskie, we can pull the Muirhead file.

So something's not just quite right here that all these things can happen. I hear these things and I know they're factual, I can bring them forth but they're not agreeing with you — the statements that I hear that it's nothing to do with Justice whether you get charged or not.

I mean I just don't understand the conflict here. Why RCMP . . . When Mr. Thorne — or sorry when Mr. Leitch — took me to the elevator, I wasn't a very happy man holding this charge in my hand — something I felt I was very innocent of — and he says, Mr. Muirhead, get off our backs. He said, it's completely Justice doing this.

So who's misleading who, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — What can I say? The fact of the matter is that the police did lay the charges, and I just . . . I can't

account for what the police said or the explanations they gave. I'm sorry. I'd like to help the member but I just can't.

Mr. Muirhead: — That's fine, Mr. Minister. I've always appreciated you and your forthwithness, and I have to accept that. Then I have to take in my mind that somebody has misled me because what I'm telling you — I believe you, you'll believe me — that it's the facts. So somebody has misled me and the RCMP.

Going back to whether there . . . I heard you say to the member from Thunder Creek that to get files and what not out of this building — members' files — there'd have to be a court order. Do I understand that right, Mr. Minister? Did I hear that right?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Yes, there has to be a search warrant unless the records are voluntarily given over by whoever is in possession of them. But the normal way would be to obtain a search warrant first.

(1900)

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Minister, will you do this for me? Would you find out if there was a search warrant ever issued to take my files from this building?

Because I'm told the contrary, that the RCMP came into this building, which they're supposed to first talk to the Sergeant-at-Arms; never mentioned to them they're supposed to have a court order, they're supposed to do this, and they have several things they have to go . . .

But my file was given over, and I'm not going to name the person who turned the file over, but this individual said to me very clearly that I thought it was my duty to turn it over. And I say that she didn't do any wrong because she thought it was.

But I want you to find out for me — at a later date if you have to, that's fine — did anybody have a court order to take my files out of this here building?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — None of my people that I have with me tonight know the answer to the question, but I'll find out the answer and communicate it to the member.

Mr. Muirhead: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. See how it came about with me is a Mr. Hilton Spencer, who was a candidate against me in 1991 election, and he reported to Inspector McTavish three weeks and two days before voting day that I had misused my communication fund, but nobody bothered me till after the election.

Then I went through the story about Mr. Thorne, and I told you about that. But I don't want to hit any more on that right now, except I just have this I'd like to say here. The independent candidate for 1991 election in Arm River, Hilton Spencer; Liberal candidate for the 1991 election in Arm River, Rev. David Ashdown; Rev. Larry Brotherton from Davidson; Dale Claypool of Regina; and Janis Patrick, employee in legislative accounts, all perjured themselves in the court case which resulted in myself . . .

The Chair: — Order. The member is making statements that he ought not to do about persons who are in the employ of the Legislative Assembly, and therefore the member, I must warn him, must cease. And to set the record straight, the member should withdraw the comments that he has made about any employee of the Legislative Assembly. I ask him to do that now.

Mr. Muirhead: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will do such, but maybe she should go and take back what she . . .

The Chair: — Order. I would ask the member to simply say that, I withdraw any allegations against any employee of the Legislative Assembly, and leave it at that.

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Chairman, yes, I will withdraw the statement that I've said about any employee of the Legislative Assembly.

But this individual that I want to mention now is not in this Assembly, so I shouldn't be stopped from saying this, that when my transcripts were printed, Mr. Minister, you will find out that Eric Neufeld, the prosecutor in my case and in many other past and present MLA cases . . . but he knew, he knew very well that people were perjuring themselves to convict an MLA. And it doesn't make me happy that some RCMP in this province and Eric Neufeld knowingly knew that people perjured themselves on a stand to convict an MLA.

Now I know that you can't, or probably wouldn't, even comment on that, but I'm just telling you that and I wanted it on the record.

The Chair: — Order, order. I want to refer the member to Beauchesne's, section 493, and in particular subparagraph 3, where it states:

The Speaker has traditionally protected from attack a group of individuals commonly referred to as "those of high official station".

This section goes on to say that it covers senior public servants. The member is making allegations and is attacking a senior public servant. We must protect the rights of those public servants. They must be immune from attack in the House as is suggested in Beauchesne's. And therefore I ask the member to withdraw the comments that he has made respecting this senior public servant, and to do so now and without any further comment.

Mr. Muirhead: — No, I will not.

The Chair: — Well I will give the member another opportunity and just to remind him that these are the rules that we follow. The rules are there to protect those who are in the employ of the government, to protect them from attack in the House, and I'm satisfied that the individual that you named falls within that definition. And therefore I ask the member one more time to withdraw.

Mr. Muirhead: — A point of order, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: — There is no point of order. I ask the member to withdraw the comments that he has made.

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Chairman, this is not fair when I've had . . . This has happened for 17 years that a people attack public . . .

The Chair: — No. No, no. I ask the member again to recognize and to observe the rules of this House, which are there to protect, in this case, certain persons, including senior public servants. And I'm satisfied that the person that you mentioned is in fact a senior public servant. And a person such as that must be protected from attack.

And therefore I ask you again, I ask the member again to, in respect for the rules that we have, just out of respect for the rules we have . . . and the member is one with a long history in this Chamber and in this institution, and I know that he has a great deal of respect for the rules. And out of respect for those rules, I ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. Muirhead: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I withdraw any statement I said about Eric Neufeld.

The Chair: — That's satisfactory. I thank the member for that.

Mr. Muirhead: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I just have one more thing I want to discuss, and I'll do it as quickly as possible because I know the agenda for the night.

Mr. Minister, I want to know how familiar you are, and your staff, with directive 4 pertaining to The Legislative Assembly Act, especially section 56 regarding communication.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chairman, and to the member, I'm not familiar with it at all, and none of my staff can just recall immediately what it says.

Mr. Muirhead: — Well, Mr. Minister, that does appal me. We just had myself charged on that, pertaining to directive 4, and we just had many MLAs, past and present that are now in the court, and they're using directive 4 on the opening sentence.

You're an MLA yourself, Mr. Minister. You must have bought something since 1986 through the communication fund. Surely you as the Minister of Justice or somebody here must know every rule about . . . everything about directive 4, or there's no way there could have been a charge. One of the prosecutors is sitting right behind you. He'd have to know something about it. How could I get charged on it on directive 4?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Well I guess, Mr. Chairman, and to the member, that that demonstrates that the political people don't get involved in any investigations or prosecutions. Because I may have read it in my capacity as an MLA, but I have no immediate recollection of the numbers or anything like that. I have a fair working knowledge of the communication allowances and what's covered, what isn't. But I don't have any knowledge nor any circumstance in which I would have

occasion to review the section, because I don't get involved in either the investigations or in the prosecutions or in the appeals.

Mr. Muirhead: — Mr. Minister, but directive 4 under the communication Act has nothing to do really, out of this building. It's a directive that was made by the Board of Internal Economy. And you must have been called in by the Clerk, as I was when I was elected in 1970s, and explained to me what the communication fund was. And then in 1982 it become . . . there was a Board of Internal Economy put together. You must have certainly read it in your black book. But we won't labour that any more. If you don't know anything about it, well you don't.

So I'd just like to leave this . . . this is a guideline, directives, and laws that I received from . . . information from all jurisdictions, many jurisdictions in Canada, like several provinces and the House of Commons. And I'm not going to go through all . . . It's one page, and I'll have a copy sent over to you, Mr. Minister. It's saying what the Act is and how it came in '76, and then went on in '79 to a change, and then '82 and '88 — twice, I believe, in '88. I won't get into that; I'll send you a copy of it. I know that your staff have copies of them because I have given them to the prosecutor's department, this same paper.

But I do want to put on the record what they're saying, how they determine this here Act to be. I'm going to start . . . only a third of the page left and then I'll leave it and you can maybe get me an answer for it. You can maybe get someone to . . .

Because that seems to be the problem all over. I haven't talked to a lawyer that agrees on this thing here yet. So if lawyers are having trouble agreeing on whether this is law or not, well how . . . we are going to have little trouble in the courts. And we got many MLAs, past and present, are going to go through this now, especially some of the lesser charges. It's very, very serious.

However, this is after talking about: "Thus, on May 19, 1988, Directive # 4 became law." And there's where I think the problem came in — it says, law.

However, it is unfortunately drafted in the form of a guideline, as 1981-pre May '88 directives had always been. The "Not acceptable" list, for example, is not sanctionable as a "law", as no accompanying legislative sentence establishes a command to do something or prohibition from doing something directed to an identifiable entity, thus it remains simply a list. To be enforceable as a law, a statement should have preceded the list to the effect that:

"No member shall claim the following items under their communications allowances:

(like) material of a blatantly partisan nature . . . etc."

This sentence (above) now states to whom the "list" is directed (members), what it is that the member shall (or shall not, as is the case) do, but even it still fails to define "who" is to make the judgement call as to what constitutes material of a blatantly partisan nature — the

RCMP? the Speaker? the Board? a Judge? the Clerk? the member? If a judgement call is to be made, it should not be set out in a list. The list should specify exactly what it is that is prohibited. Any necessary judgement calls should specify who is to make the call, and set out criteria which defines a prohibited action or establish a threshold activity beyond which an action is prohibited.

Now, Mr. Minister, this is a very, very important document and it affects many, many futures of people in this province, not on the more serious cases but some of the lesser cases, and I hear it's even happening in Mr. McLaren's case right now. So what I'd like to do, Mr. Minister, is have a copy of this sent to you and if your department can put an answer to me in writing, I'd appreciate it, and if they can't just tell me that they can't. And that's all the questions I have, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chairman, we'll look at the paper and consider it.

Mr. Muirhead: — Thank you very much.

(1915)

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome again this evening, Mr. Minister, and officials. Indeed, Mr. Minister, I wish to talk about gun control. Nothing too heavy tonight on gun control, Mr. Minister. I simply want to table some more petitions that arrived today after question period so that we can get these on the record.

Also I would like to just comment on the fact that we've had another positive day or last couple of days on the question of gun control with the statements coming out of New Brunswick. I believe that will be good news for all of us who are opposed to Allan Rock and his initiatives with the statements from Frank McKenna of New Brunswick coming out in opposition to the general registration of firearms.

Also I have a news clipping here which might be of interest to the minister. I would hope that it would be of interest to Allan Rock and to Morris Bodnar and all those on the committee who tried to tell us that the chiefs of police were all in favour of gun control and registration of firearms. Because this clipping comes from *The Estevan Mercury* which the chief of police there says he has never been contacted by the chiefs of police association to determine what his stance is on gun control.

And he further goes on to state that he's opposed to it. The board of police commissioners in Estevan has also come out in favour of opposing Allan Rock's initiatives, which is in direct opposition to the association that supposedly represents the associations of boards of police commissioners.

So, Mr. Minister, I believe that perhaps for Mr. Rock things are unravelling a little bit. I'm not sure that he expected that and I believe that for the firearms owners of Saskatchewan and Canada that's indeed good news.

The fight is not over by any means though. We haven't backed him off in the House at all, although he is talking of making noises about making some changes at the end of the day with

the way that the regulations . . . or the Bill is going to be written to allow for regulations. Any changes could simply be stuck back in again after the legislation is passed and that will cause a great deal . . . continue to cause a great deal of concern amongst the people of Canada and the shooting fraternity, Mr. Minister.

So if you wish, I'll give you the opportunity to respond to those comments and to Mr. McKenna's comments.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I was very excited to hear the radio reports this morning about Mr. McKenna's statement and I am very, very pleased that New Brunswick now sees the proposed licensing and registration scheme in the same way that we do in this legislature and as they do in our sister provinces on either side, as well as the two territories.

I have always wondered how New Brunswick could possibly support this legislation considering that it has more guns per capita than any other province in the country. And this proposal of the federal government must fall upon New Brunswick in even harsher terms than it does on the Prairies. At least it would certainly have the same kind of impact and stir the same sort of reaction, as once again we've got the federal government coming back to the lawful users of firearms with yet another layer of gun control, as though they were any part of the problem.

And as the member knows — we've attended all sorts of meetings together — it is just outrageous to our people to be pointed at as though they were part of the problem, and if they had this further regulation imposed on them, that would be part of the solution. But I was glad to see that.

I have not been encouraged by what I've heard Mr. Rock say during this week. It seems to me that he is merely saying he is prepared perhaps to compromise on some items that were clearly throw-away items in the Bill in the first place. I don't think he was serious about some of the search and seizure and penal powers that were in the Act. I think he inserted those in order to be in a position to later compromise on them and withdraw them and appear to be flexible.

As far as I am concerned, he is inflexible on the heart of the Bill which is the problem, and that is the licensing and registration system. And until I see him blink on that, I will just see him as being an individual who is aptly named.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Indeed, Mr. Minister, he certainly is, and I have commented as such in some of my reports that I have written, much to the chagrin of some of the Liberals in my area.

Mr. Minister, I would like to thank you for sending over the list of litigation files for your department and for the Government of Saskatchewan. Unfortunately, though, part of the list is missing. Not in the names of the files; I'm sure that they're all complete — what is missing, though, is the information on the costs associated with each of these cases, with each of these litigations that are proceeding.

Would it be possible for you to supply those particular costs? You have done so in the case, I believe, of the one file dealing

with the Martensville case. Can you also provide the costs associated with each one of these files, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — These cases are, I believe, all being handled by employees of the Department of Justice, and they're salaried employees in every case. And we have never tried to keep track of their time, as between different files that they handle and different bits of advice that they give. So it's not correct to say there's no cost because there are the salary costs and the office costs and that sort of thing, but there are no cheques we have to write in relation to any of these particular actions. They're all handled by our in-staff lawyers.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. So in the case of all of these files there are no outside counsellors employed in dealing with any of these?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I think there are five where there is outside counsel that are employed. I just don't know which ones they are right now but I think that five of them have been . . . have had outside counsel retained. And it's usually in such a big action that the department can't easily handle it so that outside counsel are retained.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I wonder if you could provide the information as to which cases those are, who the outside counsel is, and the costs associated with such. We'd also like information, if you would, please, on whether each of these individual matters have been resolved. I know that some of them are . . . it's whether they've been active in the last 12 months is listed here, yes or no. But they may have been active within the last 12 months and have been settled. Can you please indicate whether or not they have been settled, and if so, what the settlements were.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — All of the cases that are on this list are not settled. They're active. And we may or may not be able . . . be successful in settling some of them, but at this stage we're just not able to say.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay. Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'd like to go on to another issue and that deals with Indian land entitlements and some of the settlements. I'm not exactly sure just how involved your department would be in this, whether it would simply be Indian and Metis Affairs or whom it might be. But it deals with some compensation matters for the treaty land entitlements to the RMs (rural municipality). Would your office be involved at all in those kind of arrangements?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — No, but if you're talking about the tax loss compensation arrangements for specific claims, I am able to give a lot of information about it. So if the member wants to take a crack at me, this might be a good time.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Indeed that is exactly what it is, Mr. Minister. It deals with RM 95, Golden West, who have turned down an offer of settlement which I believe is in the range of five times their assessed tax values and they have just flatly turned it down. The letter says: Please be advised by the RM of Golden West No. 95 have rejected your tax loss compensation offer as outlined in your letter of May 9, 1995. And this is to

the regional director of Indian and Northern Affairs, Mr. Minister. Can you give us any further information on this?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Yes, I can. We met yesterday with the president of SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) and the vice-president of SARM together with a person from the rural municipality of Golden West. I met yesterday with my colleagues, the minister of Government Services and the minister responsible for the Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat, and we went over this issue.

We as a province have taken a very strong position on the side of the rural municipality and the SARM, and have tried to assist the situation and induce the federal government to come to some more reasonable position. It's really unconscionable — the proposal made in the letter to which the hon. member refers is really unconscionable. This matter has been settled — I use the wrong term — has been dealt with by the federal government twice. At one time their deputy minister, the then deputy minister, made an agreement, a specific agreement, that the tax loss compensation would be handled in specific claims on the same basis as the treaty land entitlement lands — 22 times the assessed value. And that's in writing, and the federal government . . . as soon as that deputy minister was transferred, they just disowned that agreement and they refused to follow it.

Then they settled it again. When Pauline Browes was the minister, she wrote to the SARM and specifically laid out an offer which, while not 22 times, was still far more generous than the five times assessed value that is in that letter.

So I don't know why there's a problem here. I think it's just budgetary. It's a federal government going back on its word, twice given, and it's unconscionable.

We agreed yesterday that we would continue to help resolve this situation. We strategized about what could be done. We made some tentative arrangements and we intend to follow through and be of all the help we can.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Again it seems like it's another one of these Liberal plots to totally ignore western Canada in favour of eastern Canada at our expense while we pay the bills. I believe that the RMs need to have sufficient compensation to maintain the infrastructures that they have in place around the treaty land entitlement lands that are turned over to the native bands, who are entitled to that property through the treaty land entitlement settlements.

If we had settled our treaties properly in the first place, we wouldn't have to be dealing with them a hundred years later in the manner that we are. And we need to settle these properly and the RMs need to be compensated properly and the federal government is not . . . seems to be not prepared to do that. And I would certainly encourage the provincial government to do all they can to get a . . . to reach a satisfactory solution for the RMs.

Dealing with another issue of the federal government, Mr. Minister. You just presented and passed eight pieces of legislation in this House dealing with French translations of

eight of our Bills and two of those Bills were very large and very significant pieces of work I would have to assume.

Can you give us some indication as to the cost associated with those translations, Mr. Minister?

(1930)

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — As the member will know, there were eight Bills that were presented and passed today and the cost involved in the translations was about \$40,000, of which the federal government will pick up 75 per cent under the 1988 agreement.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Another issue, Mr. Minister, from the Southeast Saskatchewan Surface Rights Association from their annual meeting. They passed a number of resolutions calling on you as the Minister of Justice to do certain things. And the second of their resolutions dealing . . . the first one which deals with you, Mr. Minister — states that the Minister of Justice be asked to implement a policy requiring a surface rights performance bond of no less than 10 per cent of the cost of drilling each well. Have you given any consideration to this particular resolution from the surface rights association?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — My department, along with other departments, have been considering for some time now this bundle of issues of which the proposal that the member just referred to is one of them. We have been in consultation with this association as well as others across the province trying to improve and update that law. And the work goes on. I can't say when it will bear fruit but it will bear fruit as soon as it's finished. And we are moving the project along as expeditiously as we can.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. One of the issues in my corner of the province is orphan wells that are drilled and then left abandoned, and it's up to the landowner in some cases to bear the costs of the abandonment. And those costs can be significant, especially when we take into consideration some of the rules and regulations in place under the Minister of the Environment's department. Those can be quite onerous at times on the landowner if the landowner is the one left holding the bag to pay the bills, Mr. Minister.

So indeed this type of a bond should be posted for at least up to a certain level. Perhaps you could have a cap per company that they would have in place, because hopefully not all of their wells would be abandoned at the same time and that they would have to maintain that bond at that certain level.

The second request that they have, Mr. Minister, is to implement a policy of consulting the association on all appointments to the Saskatchewan Surface Rights Board of Arbitration. What is your department doing about that particular request, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — We have, as I know the member knows, made appointments in the past of people who are representative of or drawn from those associations. I think we're already meeting the requests, that's what I mean. We don't have a

formal process of consultation but there's a good deal of informal consultation because at the end of day the board has to have credibility. And the best way to get that is to appoint after discussions, and we try to do that.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you, Mr. Minister. My last question dealing in this particular area — and I may get into your globals a little bit — but it deals with requesting the Minister of Justice to require the Saskatchewan Surface Rights Board of Arbitration to render a decision within 30 days following a hearing. Have you been making any progress on that particular issue?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — That's one of the issues that we're also considering. There are a number of procedural issues, of which that is one. And when I last met with the association, which was about a month ago, I was quite positive about that group of procedural issues. It seems to me that's something we can do quite quickly.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. I would certainly encourage you to do all that you can in this area because we have a situation here where there are two property owners, that that owns the surface and those that own the property below, and both need to have protections for their properties and access to their properties. And some form of mechanism must be in place to allow each to have the fair value of their properties.

Now, Mr. Minister, have you provided us with the information related to all of the travel associated with your department, with yourself, from the globals, for all of the travel? Where did you go and who accompanied you on those particular trips, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Yes, we provided all that information to you.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Including a breakdown of all of your trips, both in and out of the province and who accompanied you?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Yes, my travel was included.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. I'd like to thank you and your officials for your cooperation and your answers this evening.

Item 1 agreed to.

Items 2 to 8 inclusive agreed to.

Vote 3 agreed to.

Supplementary Estimates 1994-95
General Revenue Fund
Budgetary Expense
Justice
Vote 3

Item 1 agreed to.

Vote 3 agreed to.

The Chair: — If the minister would like to thank his officials?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I would indeed, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to thank all my officials for coming again tonight as they have a number of times in the past, and I really appreciate the support that they gave to the committee.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It seems like my colleagues got the job done without me while I was riding elephants. But certainly I want to thank the minister and his officials for the deliberations over the past few weeks and few months. And I guess we'll just take it as a given that he may not agree with everything I've said, and I certainly haven't agreed with everything he's said, but I think that's the name of politics and trying to address the issues and bringing out each individual point. So thank you, Mr. Minister. Thank you to your officials.

General Revenue Fund
Public Service Commission
Vote 33

Item 1

Mr. Toth: — One last bid. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, a question came to my office the other day and what I'm interested in is, this individual has worked in the public sector on a student summer employment program for the past couple of years, reapplied, has still yet to hear whether or not they have a job, and what I'm wondering, what the normal policy is for individuals.

If a person has worked in the public sector through the student summer employment program, is going back to university, do those individuals get preference to start with? Are they notified and sent applications for the new program? What's the criteria, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The process is completely random. They don't have any dibs because they had the job last year. So each year they reapply and each year they go through the same process.

Mr. Toth: — I guess the last question is, what policy is used to inform students whether or not they don't have a job? I guess that's what it is. If you've got a job, then that's no big deal, because usually the information gets out. But for students who are still waiting, have applications in in a large sector, there should be something in place that would inform them that all the jobs available have been filled, and unfortunately they weren't one of the students that happened to fall on the raffle this year.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The member may want to hear the answer to this vitally important final question.

About half the positions have been filled; the other half remain to be filled. So nobody's been turned down yet. We're still in the process of filling them. So the person who made the inquiry is still eligible and still has some hope.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, would it be appropriate for those

persons who still are waiting for a job, to at least inform them that there are some jobs still coming available and that they will be considered, versus just to leave them out in the open as they try to plan their schedule for the summer?

Is there some kind of notification process that informs students about the fact that while they're still waiting, there might be still an opportunity for them if some of the jobs still aren't open, so that they're not kind of sitting there and maybe letting go of an opportunity that comes along.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — We have about 5,500 applications for employment. So if we were to call them or write them it would be a very time-consuming and expensive process. But we do encourage them to phone us to ask about prospects and ask what the situation is.

And again, by this answer I would encourage students who have applied to give us a call and we'll bring them up to date.

(1945)

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, isn't it election time? Maybe there's a few more jobs you could pull out of the hat like the magician today.

But as well, Mr. Minister, I'll get that name and I'll call that individual. Who do I send them . . . or have them contact?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I suggest Ron Wight. Ron Wight.

Item 1 agreed to.

Items 2 to 4 inclusive agreed to.

Vote 33 agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to thank all of my officials for coming down tonight and helping us wrap up these estimates. I appreciate the effort that they make and their patience in waiting for the House to come to their turn.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And again thank you to the minister and his officials for their time and efforts. And certainly we wish them well this summer. I don't know, I saw a gentleman today who was just picking up a pile of golf balls. Maybe you're looking forward to that. But enjoy the beautiful weather. Thank you.

**General Revenue Fund
Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat
Vote 25**

The Chair: — The last time that the secretariat was before the committee was on March 31, and so I'll ask the minister to reintroduce her officials.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. This evening joining me is Marv Hendrickson, deputy minister; Ernie Lawton, assistant . . . oh, there he is, assistant deputy minister; Donavon Young, assistant deputy minister of Metis Affairs; and

John Reid, executive director of policy and planning.

Item 1

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome to the minister and her officials. I guess the first question I'd like to raise is, I was quite conveniently corrected at a meeting in Maidstone about who was the minister of Indian and Metis Affairs, but Mr. Lawton . . . and unfortunately at that time I didn't realize that when . . . the fact that when Mr. Mitchell had returned to the post of Justice minister . . .

The Chair: — Order. I think the member just recognized the error that he made and I'll ask him to pay attention to that.

Mr. Toth: — Sorry, Mr. Chairman, for mentioning the name of the minister. But the Minister of Justice had been returned and I was expecting that Indian and Metis Affairs would have moved along with him, but Ms. Crofford actually continues to have it and . . .

The Chair: — Order, order. Now the member seems to have acquired a habit here and I'll just ask him to be cautious about the use of members' surnames, please.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's just that I'm having a hard time hearing myself with the drone that's over there. And I notice that the officials are having a hard time hearing.

The Chair: — Order, order. Now I think the member from Moosomin makes a good point. And the Chair doesn't need the help of the Leader of the Official Opposition to make rulings here. And will the member for Saskatoon Idylwyld please come to order . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . the member knows where she's from.

If we could just keep it down and allow the proceedings of the committee to proceed. And I know that the member from Moosomin would like to proceed with his questions and I'll ask that the committee members allow him to do that.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, the question that arose at the meeting in Maidstone regarded land entitlement and the request by the Thunderchild Band for some land within the Bronson forest.

And of course, two major concerns: number one, part of the concern was the fact that some of the park area may be part of that land entitlement that may be requested by the Thunderchild Band. And the feeling I got from most of the people I talked to at the meeting was, at least have the park area free, or not part of the land entitlement. By the end of the evening, most of the people at the meeting were suggesting that they didn't want any of the Bronson forest involved in a treaty land entitlement.

I'm wondering, Madam Minister, where things are today. Because I guess one of the major concerns that was raised was the fact that there was an 18-month period to arrive at some kind of solution regarding this treaty land entitlement and that was now expanded or extended for another 18 months.

And so I'm wondering, Madam Minister, where we are today. What discussions are taking place? Is the department endeavouring to address the issue of, first of all, the regional park that's in the Bronson forest, and then secondly, the overall question of the Bronson forest?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Apparently this issue was gone through in some detail with the Minister of SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management) yesterday. And this has been about two years that this discussion has been taking place with the stakeholders in the area. And one of the reasons why the process has taken so long is that we are trying to reach a congenial, mediated settlement to this particular issue.

I would mention that the Thunderchild Band has been very reasonable in their approach to the stakeholders involved and have committed themselves to a long-term co-management arrangement where the area would continue to be dedicated to the existing uses rather than any dramatic change in the use of the area. It's not really part of the park, but what park holders are concerned about is access to the forest which is part of the claim. So we're optimistic that as people talk and understand each other's positions and issues that this issue will work itself through.

Mr. Toth: — Well, Madam Minister, I just want to reiterate the fact that certainly there wasn't anyone who didn't feel that the Thunderchild Band wasn't doing everything within their power. And they seem to have a good working relationship, which was positive.

I just want to also acknowledge that in the area of the world that I come from, we do have a provincial park and we do have a native reserve that's just down the road a few miles. And we do have individuals who have cottages in the park; we have individuals who have cottages on the reserve, on the lake there. And it seems to be a fairly good working relationship.

And I think, as the ongoing discussions follow through, at the end of the day I think most people realize that eventually we need to learn to work together and there was . . . as long as there's a feeling that, and an understanding, that the Thunderchild Band will respect the rights of other individuals to use parts of the Bronson forest for their nature trails or for even for their cottages — they've got access — those are some of the things, major concerns, that were being addressed. And I just would encourage the department officials to continue to work and maybe be, if you will, the mediator that may be needed just to address the questions.

I have one other further question and this comes with regards to taxation of . . . and the taxation problem that has arisen as the land base is eroded by RMs. And this specific issue I have here comes from the RM of Golden West No. 95, and they received a letter indicating that there was a compensation package, a lump sum of some \$96,000.

It was their feeling, and it's the note that I've received, is that they feel the compensation is not adequate enough to address many of the problems they're facing. I'm wondering, Madam Minister, where . . . where the Indian and native . . . or

Saskatchewan Indian and Metis Affairs sits today as far as the ongoing discussions regarding compensation for land that becomes or is turned into reserve status.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — It's the provincial government's position that we certainly support the position of the municipalities that there has to be adequate tax loss compensation as was previously committed to them by the federal government. And I would urge all members of this House to support us in our efforts to make sure that the federal government honours those commitments.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — I think, Madam Minister, in view of the fact that the current federal government continues to cut back funding, maybe you're going to have to work just a little harder. I know there was some agreements and have been a diligent process prior to the last federal election where a lot of . . . there seemed to be a good understanding. And I trust that at the end of the day we can arrive at that same understanding. And I would encourage you and your officials and any of your government that are involved in this discussion to continue to pursue this matter with the federal government.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Madam Minister, officials, we've received some correspondence in our office from the reeve of the RM of Lakeland No. 521. Mr. Lionel Roy writes to our office regarding the federal government's proposed co-management plan with the Montreal Lake Indian Band.

The ratepayers of the RM of Lakeland are extremely frustrated in the manner in which the federal government has dealt with this entire matter. Mr. Roy was seeking funding to conduct an impact study on this co-management plan as to what effect it would have on the RMs of Lakeland and the surrounding districts.

Our leader has forwarded this issue to your office and we were wondering, Madam Minister, just what actions you have taken in this regard.

(2000)

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — We have clearly indicated to the federal Minister of Indian Affairs that all of his actions in this regard have been unacceptable, not agreed to, certainly with no prior commitment by the province to be involved in any such process with him.

There's been a number of factual misrepresentations of the actual circumstances as far as the province's involvement. We told them a year ago we weren't interested in their plan and we have reiterated lately that we're not interested in their plan.

And the province is prepared to do, in that area, what is within the province's jurisdiction to do. And we would only do that with the involvement of the affected stakeholders, and certainly not through any kind of arbitrary and unilateral action as proposed by federal Minister Irwin.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. It seems that the federal government is in for a significant amount of well-deserved criticism this evening.

Madam Minister, were you able to provide some funding for this area to provide for the impact studies that would be requested by the reeve as they deal with the RM of Lakeland and the surrounding districts? It only seems fair that if the federal government is prepared to fund the Montreal Lake Indian Band that the governments also fund the impact study that would be necessarily done by the reeves, RM, and the district surrounding that.

Can you indicate whether or not you've been able to find any funding for that type of impact study?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — We are currently working with the other stakeholders, and the departments of government will give support to those other stakeholders regarding concerns that they have about potential impacts and what not. But it is the federal government's responsibility when they're dealing with claims that are particular to their responsibilities.

It is their responsibility to involve people properly and to give support to the process properly. So again I would suggest that you refer your members to the left there, of the Liberal Party, and get them to do a little work on this issue before they create unnecessary tensions in the community.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Madam Minister. Indeed it is the federal Liberals' responsibility and it's hopeful that their provincial brethren would see fit to provide some assistance for the people of Saskatchewan in dealing with this particular issue. But it would seem that they are much more interested in playing old-time politics than they are in actually dealing with the day-to-day issues of the province, and in particular, dealing with the day-to-day issues of the legislature.

Madam Minister, since the federal government is more than prepared to fund one area of the impact study or the co-management plan in dealing with the Montreal Lake Indian Band, surely, though, it's incumbent on the provincial government, in the absence of the federal government or in the presence of the federal government on the opposition side, to provide some assistance for the residents of Saskatchewan so that they can provide an impact study that would show their side of the story and the impacts that this co-management plan might have on their jurisdiction.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Again, we've conveyed our disagreement with this process to every relevant federal minister and it is SERM and municipal services . . . SERM is the lead department in dealing with this issue; municipal services also works on it, and we also provide support. So my suggestion would be that if there's someone who feels they aren't having the support they need, we do have the technical capacity and the ability to give that support they need.

But meanwhile, at the political level, we are totally rejecting this process.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Madam Minister. We'll pass on to Mr. Roy and the RM of Lakeland that you're prepared to provide them with some technical assistance on this matter. Thank you.

Item 1 agreed to.

Items 2 to 4 inclusive agreed to.

Vote 25 agreed to.

**Supplementary Estimates 1994-95
General Revenue Fund
Budgetary Expense
Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat
Vote 25**

Item 1 agreed to.

Vote 25 agreed to.

The Chair: — If the minister would like to thank her officials?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Mr. Chair, I'd like to thank the members opposite for their thoughtful and relevant questions. And I'd like to thank the very capable officials from SIMAS (Saskatchewan Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat) for all the support they've provided. Thanks very much.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Chairman, I'd like to express my appreciation to the minister, and join her in thanking her officials for their time and efforts. I've actually really enjoyed dealing with this issue, raising the questions over the past number of years, and the responses and the way the officials have worked in addressing this situation. Thank you very much.

**General Revenue Fund
Agriculture and Food
Vote 1**

The Chair: — The last time that this was before the committee was April 20, so I'll ask the minister to reintroduce his officials to the member of the committee.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With me I have Terry Scott, the assistant deputy minister; Doug Matthies, who's with the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation; and Norm Ballagh from ACS (Agricultural Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan); Peter Rempel from lands and regulatory management; Jack Zepp and Sandi Kennedy from administrative services. Thank you.

Item 1

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome, Mr. Minister, and your officials, once again.

Last time we were in committee I had asked you some questions pertaining to a legal question involving Crop Insurance. And you were to bring back to me an explanation of why that

dragged on so long and also the amount of money that your legal firm — I believe it's Olive, Waller & Waller — had spent on doing this case over a protracted period of time.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — The amount of money spent in '94-95 on this case was \$14,201 in legal costs. Again as I explained earlier, this case has dragged on because we have not been able to arrive at a settlement. I believe it's going before the courts again very shortly.

Mr. Swenson: — So I understand that since you and I discussed this in estimates last year, the taxpayer of the province has now spent another \$14,200 in legal fees for an unresolved case. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — That's correct.

Mr. Swenson: — Well I'm thankful, Minister, that we don't have too many of these laying around because I'm sure there's something in your budget in Agriculture that could use the \$14,000 rather than pursuing a low level employee of Crop Insurance, for some reason, for three years, on a settlement that's probably only a couple of times bigger than what you spent on legal fees.

And I don't know why in the world you would want to perpetuate this drain on the taxpayer over something that, from what I've heard of it, is very, very minor. I mean this guy wasn't even an upper management type of person. He was way down low. And I don't for the life of me understand why you can't settle it. What you're going to tell me then is that you're simply going to let all of Waller & Waller keep charging the taxpayers of this province legal fees and let this thing go on indefinitely. Is that the case?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — There is a pre-trial conference set for May 29, 1995, so we would certainly hope for a settlement at that point. If not, then it will proceed through the normal legal channel.

Mr. Swenson: — Well that's sad, but I'm not going to belabour it. I suppose next year in estimates somebody will have to find out what happened there. Hopefully somebody will take the bull by the horns and get the thing settled. I mean it just should not go on, in my view. It's not fair to the individual. It's not fair to the taxpayer that your government would drag this person through the courts for this amount of time over a very small issue.

I want to go now to questions surrounding your announcements of a successor program to the GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) program. You've pulled out of GRIP. It's being wound down. The money's been all taken away, and there was to be a successor program.

And I think you would be very interested in that because of the problems on the east side of the province with water. We had snow the other day again, up to six inches I'm told in certain places, lot of potential acres. In fact they say up over millions of acres potentially not getting seeded in the proper amount of time.

Can you tell me about your successor program and what safeguards you see built in in case there are large areas of the province that can't be seeded?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Well, Mr. Chairman, we've gone through the successor program in the last set of estimates; I can go through it again. What we have is a NISA (net income stabilization account) that's enhanced, whereby grains and oilseeds producers will contribute 4 per cent and have that matched. There will be a one and a half per cent start-up fund which will be government money that's not matched.

We have the sector program for crops and oilseeds which will provide protection if gross . . . or net revenues for the province drop. And we have crop insurance which again would probably apply to localized drought area — crop insurance — or flood areas. We're certainly aware of that area. There is an unseeded acreage option and so on for crop insurance. So those essentially are the safety nets that are in place at this time.

Mr. Swenson: — Well really, Minister, the first two don't count because if you don't have any product to sell you don't have any revenue to make payments on. So if you don't get your crop seeded, you don't have anything to make a NISA contribution with. So that's sort of immaterial to the discussion here. What you do is have crop insurance I guess, and that would be about it if you don't bring in a crop.

What is the flood protection? Where I come from we don't have that problem very often. Can you tell us what kind of protection would be available for people in a lot of the rural areas on the east side of the province if they can't get that crop seeded?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Yes, we're certainly much more familiar with floods where I'm from. There is an option that farmers can take for acres that they don't get seeded. It has a premium of about 75 cents an acre and the coverage is \$25 an acre. There's a 20 per cent deductible. In other words, it has to be more than 20 per cent of your acres not seeded in order to qualify for that. That's available in Crop Insurance and has been for a number of years.

Mr. Swenson: — So the \$25 has a deductible attached to it — 20 per cent. You're looking at about 21 bucks an acre then, net. Is that what you're saying would be available to a producer if he couldn't get that land seeded?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — No, actually there would be \$25 . . . if he didn't get anything seeded, he would get \$25 an acre for 80 per cent of his acres. So I guess that, if you worked it the other way, would be the calculation that you did.

(2015)

Mr. Swenson: — Do you believe that's sufficient in light of your own experience? We've had a lot of calls from producers in the last two weeks asking us to raise questions in here pertaining to this issue. They don't have the GRIP program any more, which they did understand.

Some of these people had guarantees of, you know, upwards of \$150 with some of the crops that they grow. And now they just don't have a whole lot, and they're very concerned that \$25 an acre doesn't do much more than pay the taxes and some of the very small essentials.

Do you think that there's any chance of the federal government being prepared to look at a better program, given the circumstances both Saskatchewan and Manitoba face?

The Chair: — Why is the member on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — With leave, Mr. Chairman, to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Chairman, it's my pleasure to introduce to you my son, Travis, who is up in the west gallery, and his friend, Rylan Peters. They've just returned from a very important soccer game. Travis is in grade 2 and he's here to watch the agricultural estimates. And so I want to introduce him. Although Travis is embarrassed right now, I know he's going back to the office soon and then we'll be going home to bed. So I wanted to introduce him before he left.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Chair: — Well the Chair joins the member for Regina Elphinstone in welcoming Travis and his friend.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund

Agriculture and Food

Vote 1

Item 1

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Certainly, they picked the best time to come and watch the most interesting part of the session.

The member makes excellent points on crop insurance. Crop insurance agreement expired last year — our federal-provincial agreement. We have a one-year extension, so in the next year we will be looking at crop insurance and how to amend and fix it.

I do believe that crop insurance is better designed for drought and hail than it is for flood and frost. And there may be some ways that we can improve the program in the future. And certainly we will be talking to the federal government on possible disaster aid if indeed that arises. It's very difficult to assess the nature of the disaster in the east and east-central portion of the province until we see what happens to the weather in the next week or two.

But certainly, a \$25 an acre option is something that farmers have. I might point out to the member that if you didn't get your crop seeded under GRIP, you had no GRIP coverage at all.

So it's certainly been a long-standing problem with the east side of the province, and it's one of the hazards that we contend with in that area of the province, is floods and frosts.

Mr. Swenson: — For what it's worth, Minister, an observation I have when you're dealing with the federal government. I almost believe it's beyond the capability of any one western province to have an effective insurance program. My view is that I'd like to buy insurance on basis of my own operation. Most of us these days have fairly high cash flows and fairly high debt loads and insurance is a viable cost as long as you're getting something out of it.

An option certainly could be a western Canadian risk area, because if the more people you have in a risk area the easier it is to provide insurance. It's just a mathematical equation.

I would encourage you or anyone else that's around here after the next election to seriously look at that option with the federal government. Why one particular province — in our case, with the majority of the farm land in Canada — would want to try and undertake that type of protection . . . is very difficult, very difficult indeed. You've got to put your treasury at risk to do it. And it's been done in the past.

And I think maybe the other provinces have come to the same conclusion and maybe the federal government would see it as a way for them to also save on the premium side of the costs.

I'm wondering, can you bring us up to date where you are with your discussions with the red meat industry vis-a-vis NISA, and some of the those questions that seem to keep popping up both here and Alberta, particularly in the unhappiness that a lot of people in the red meat business have with the proposed plans.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Well certainly NISA is in effect for red meats for this year, not at the enhanced level of grains and oilseeds, but at the 2 per cent matching contribution level.

There is, as the member points out, some concern amongst the red meat industries, most particularly the beef industry, with regards to the American market. Again our best legal opinions are that this program will not trigger a countervail or should not trigger countervail under the agreements that we've signed. In fact by parcelling out and leaving pieces of the industry out, that increases the possibility of trade sanctions.

We certainly sympathize with the stockgrowers in regards to the American market. That's a very important market to us, and we just, I think, have a difference of opinion about whether or not this program is more likely to cause that border to be closed. We believe there's a danger that the border may be closed at any time, as we saw with wheat and durum, even though there were no violations of trade agreements. There was political pressure and the border was closed. And that's always a danger with the American market.

We need to continue to work with the Americans, to have our federal government press for having the Americans live up to the agreements that they've signed. If we accomplish that, then this program should not be a problem.

Mr. Swenson: — Minister, in the last month since we last met in committee, I have heard almost nothing come out of your government vis-a-vis the proposed Crow pay-out. Mr. Goodale seems to be off doing his thing again and there has not been resolution of some of the issues. And yet I've heard nothing coming from the Saskatchewan government on the issue. I believe it was April 20 the chairman said that we last talked about this.

Why have you been so silent concerning Mr. Goodale and the federal Liberals when obviously a lot of people would want resolution of some of the issues that are in front of us?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Well obviously I agree with the member, that farmers want resolution of this issue. We have pushed, and I have talked to Mr. Goodale privately and by letter. And my position has been that they need to make a decision very quickly.

Producers know that the freight rate is going up on August 1, and they know that there's some sort of inadequate compensation package. But they don't know who's going to get the money, they don't know when they're going to get the money, and they don't know how it will be distributed. And that's very unfortunate.

The legislation, I think, is coming before the federal parliament. Certainly we are concerned that the amount of money is not adequate to begin with and we have been pushing for a decision as quickly as possible as to how it's going to be paid out, and we'll continue to do that.

Mr. Swenson: — Well I would encourage you to do that, but I think you're going to have to get more forceful than you certainly have been the last month.

My experience with Mr. Goodale is that if you don't stamp your feet and do a little yelling and screaming once in a while, he doesn't pay a lot of attention to you. He's sort of typical of the way that Liberals handle western Canada.

And confrontation, Minister, I would say in this regard right now, might be the order of the day, because that shipping date is coming closer and closer. We're on fast forward here now. There's crop being seeded right now and people just don't know what's going to happen.

To me it's just categorically unfair of the federal government to drag us to the very last day before there's any decisions made. And maybe not even on the last day. We may be through August and September, I'm told, before things become apparent. You'll be into your A quotas, A contracts, and who knows where it's going.

We've got grain companies running off. I notice Sask Wheat Pool and others talking to Seattle. We've got all sorts of to-ing and fro-ing in the industry and nothing concrete coming out of the federal government. They seem more concerned with selling CN (Canadian National) Rail than they do with resolving the Crow problem.

And for the life of me, I don't know why you're being silent at this time, because now is the time to express very strong views. And I have heard nothing come out of your government over the last month.

Can you tell us what . . . do you have an action plan over the next four or five weeks in order to push this issue before the House of Commons shuts down at the end of June?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Well we certainly will continue to push the minister. I think the member is absolutely right — this is an unacceptable situation. We certainly fought this for the last number of years, saying that paying some compensation for the producers would be fraught with dangers and that there would be very difficult administrative problems with it.

We certainly encouraged that at least \$7 billion was the amount of money; we fought very hard for that. We ended up with \$1.6 billion, which is not acceptable. We ended up with no plan as to how to pay it out. We have a budget that says yes, on August 1 freight rates are going up, and yes, we're going to have 1.6 billion paid out somehow, somewhere, some way — and that's not acceptable and I agree with that.

The question is, how do you get the best results talking to the federal government? We can do it in a confrontational manner and probably do ourselves some political good in the process, or we can do what we've chosen to do more, is work with their officials and with the ministers in attempting to make the case that they need to make a decision and that we need it drastically.

We will certainly try to turn up the heat. Certainly in the eastern side of the province we have an added problem to that, is that he's now announced that on August 1 they're changing the pooling point one year sooner than they had planned, which is fine, and there's going to be some compensation. But again, we don't know what the compensation is going to be, how much, when, and to whom.

The producers are already getting seed in the ground, or should have had their seed in the ground. It's very difficult to make decisions when producers in some areas . . . and where I'm from, the freight rate on feed barley is going to go from \$12 a tonne to \$40 a tonne — we know that — on August 1, but we don't know what compensation is coming and really it's too late to decide that I don't want to seed barley at this point in the game. So it's obviously not fair.

We continue to make that point and if the member has any way of raising a higher profile I would appreciate it. The farmers are now on the land; they don't have the time or the energy to be protesting down to Ottawa at this time of year. We need to do that on their behalf and we continue to try to do that.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Mr. Minister, I was listening to some of the questions earlier and they were regarding the flood situation on the east side of the province.

Is there any consideration, has your department given any consideration, to any relief over and above the \$25 an acre that could be purchased in crop insurance?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — No, there are no provisions in crop insurance, and as the member knows, it's a federal-provincial agreement which requires a change to policy in order to do that.

We'll be talking to the federal government about what might be done for disaster if it occurs somewhere outside of crop insurance, but I think we've had experience in the past where we've tampered with crop insurance in order to try to cover up other disasters or income problems, and that's created big problems within the crop insurance program. We still believe that crop insurance basically should be an insurance program and if there's income support or other support above and beyond that, it can't be done through the crop insurance program.

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Minister, have you considered then any ad hoc help or any other help in any other way where it doesn't involve crop insurance? Has your government been involved in any consideration of this or in negotiations with any other level of government in regards to helping out that flood situation?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Well certainly we are working at what possible solutions could be. Again, we won't know what the damage is there until at least June 21 at the crop insurance seeding deadline. Certainly there will be some land in that area that will have damage and won't be seeded. That's almost certain.

But by far the greater portion of it, if we get decent weather and if we get an open fall, will be fine. But if we get more bad weather and further delays, then there will be a much larger problem. So it's difficult to have any concrete solutions when we can't measure the problem at this time.

(2030)

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Minister, the last time you were here in estimates, or one of the other times, there were some questions I believe I posed in the area of Ag Credit Corporation. And my understanding at that time was that you or your department was going to in fact send some figures, which I don't recall receiving, and that regarding the number of loans at ACS, dealing with now both in spring seeding and — what was the other one? — there was spring seeding and the one that was before the spring seeding loan. And also I think it was the interest-free cash advance on livestock. Do you have those numbers with you now?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Yes. As regards to some of the questions that the member asked last time, as we had recorded them, one of the questions was the total of all production loans outstanding December 1, 1994 — is \$293.4 million. That's the total amount outstanding as of December 31 on the production loans.

An Hon. Member: — Darrell, can you table them?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Yes, I can table these. I'll just read into the record. There's 519 customers have been granted write-downs for interest only; 64.8 million was written off to 3,097 customers. I'll just table these for you or get the page to make a copy.

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Minister, just . . . I think probably the sheets that you have, that you're going to send across to me, probably have all the answers that I'm requiring. Because there were figures as far as the amount of write-downs and dollars of write-downs? So we can move on then while I'm waiting for the sheet.

The rules for any write-downs in ACS — do you have a standard set of rules or criteria as far as who gets the write-down? And are the rules the same for everyone?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — We attempt to treat the ACS loans on a best business basis. We try to operate in the best interests of the taxpayer and the farmer. Essentially write-downs are done on a basis of the repayment ability, what our security is. So in other words, if somebody's offering us a settlement of \$20,000 on a \$40,000 loan, if that's all he has the capability of paying and if we were to go to court and try to collect and in our judgement we would end up with no more money, then we will take the settlement. So that's the basis that we try to operate on and obviously every farm is different so the settlements tend to be different. But we attempt to operate on the basis of the best business decision and that's the basis for dealing with the individual cases.

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Minister, at what point was there any policy changes in regards to the write-down of ACS loans? Because I believe it was in the last session that I asked him the same questions. And I believe your answer was there was no deviation. Like the only way you could get a write-down is, in fact, farmers exiting, and there's a list of criteria that you could give me. So I assume now that there's been a policy change from the last time you were up in estimates in the last session to now. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Yes, we did make some slight change in policy and it's been in effect I think October, November of '93. So we've for the last year taken a slightly different approach. Essentially the ability to let people remain farming was one of the policy changes. And I think that was made at an earlier date.

Essentially we are treating them more on a businesslike basis. For instance, there are producers who have . . . we have security on the home quarter. We cannot realize on that, many times, for a good number of years. The security will survive a bankruptcy, but there's a time factor involved, and so it's more a judgement of what the best business basis for the corporation is. And in assessing that basis, we haven't really changed the basis of the policy but we have sort of changed our measure of the time value of money, which has resulted in, I think, results that farmers can live with and continue farming with in a better manner. And hence I think we've gotten a speed-up in the settlements in the last year.

But it's also a factor of better crops and better prices for products that's enabled us to settle up a good number of accounts in the last year.

Mr. McPherson: — Well, Mr. Minister, I would . . . you know, I'm just hearing you tell me that you're taking a slightly different approach, but you know, the basis of your policy's the same. I dare say that it sounds like the policy has completely reversed itself. In fact before, the farmers had to exit farming, there was hard and fast criteria; a few fell within this criteria, and now in fact I think if you're doing fairly well on retrieving some of the loans, it's in fact because your government has softened its stand somewhat. Perhaps going into election, you realize that the only way some of these people are going to stay on the land is to in fact start striking a few deals with the farmers. I think that's probably a better way to go.

I don't disagree with you. I'm just surprised that so few people know that there's been a shift in the policy, such a dramatic shift in the policy. And I'm just wondering, have you made this known to the farmers? Or to all farmers? Any farmers that in fact deal with ACS?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Well obviously we make our policy known to producers who are in difficulty and who come in to talk to us about their situations. Again this isn't, I think, a dramatic shift in policy. We found that the policy criteria that we had were forcing us to do things that weren't in our best business interest. And therefore — that was the goal from the beginning and our policy wasn't quite meeting that goal — so we changed the policy in order that it would meet those goals.

And certainly we attempt to treat all farmers the same who are in difficulty and try to work within a framework of policy. Again, realizing that every farm is different, the settlements are often different in nature.

Mr. McPherson: — But, Mr. Minister, what . . . essentially what I'm asking you is not have you informed those people that have come in and asked for a deal to be made, but in fact have you considered . . . or have you sent a letter under your own name or just sent a letter out to all participants in ACS loans to in fact consider making a deal with your department? Have you given that consideration?

Or have you more or less just sat back and waited to see who actually comes in in the dying minutes of their farming career to see if they can strike a deal or not?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Well obviously, we don't contact people who are able to make their payments because there are no deals for people who are able to make their payments. We expect our customers to pay us the same as we always have.

The only time that we're prepared to make a deal is when producers are in financial difficulty and then we're prepared to work with them. And we always have been prepared to work with producers, and any producer who comes to us and says I'm having difficulty making my payments, we certainly then sit down with them and go through their numbers and look at . . . then put forward options for them to deal with the difficulties.

So certainly, again remember that most of our customers are not in financial difficulty, are not getting write-down. It is only the customers who are in financial difficulty who we need to deal with on write-downs.

Mr. McPherson: — Well, Mr. Minister, I just see this as something that could be unfair for the farmers. Because I suspect there's a number of farmers who aren't going to be coming in and asking for such a deal to be made. I mean these are still proud people out there. They don't really want help, but if they're right up against it . . . I mean you're only dealing with the ones that know full well that if they can't strike a deal with you, in fact they're finished.

But yet I've had several calls in the past six months to twelve months from people who are saying that they can't get any break from ACS. And of course if some are and some aren't, I just think that's unfair for a government to have a policy of only those people who happen to walk into an ACS office and ask the right questions to find out in fact if they can strike a deal or not . . .

And I'm just wondering why you won't consider perhaps letting several others know. The very fact that these ACS loans are out there today means that people had to lengthen them, otherwise wouldn't they basically all have been paid off by now?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — No, the loans were extended in 1987. It's a 10-year loan, so most of them will be completed paying out in '97. Most of them are being able to make their payments.

Again we have many producers who come to us wanting deals or write-downs. Again our policy is on the best business basis that we do that. So if somebody has the assets and have the income flow, even though, I mean, they're obviously not in great financial shape, as any other lending institutions, we continue to demand the payments.

We may stretch them out over a longer period of time to help them. And if we have any delinquent loans we obviously quickly do follow-up and try to point out options to producers. But we are not doing a general write-down for all ACS customers, and that's not our policy nor do we intend it to be our policy.

Mr. McPherson: — But in fact, Mr. Minister, if you're operating on a best business basis, what you're not seeing are those people that are . . . perhaps their families are doing without many things at home. You know, if the people are bent on ensuring that they can make their payment, something else is suffering.

If in fact they've extended that loan in 1987, what would make one farmer who had to extend it in '87 a lot better off than another farmer? So I mean, to me it only makes sense that anyone that had to extend their loan or that, you know, or that your ACS managers know have had some problem, why wouldn't you offer the same deal to everyone? I mean that's what government should do, I think, is give every taxpayer the

same break.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Well if we gave everybody the same break, obviously we wouldn't help the farmers who are in financial difficulty. And there are many reasons for people who extended a loan in '87 to have different circumstances, most particularly in the agricultural sector, depending on the weather.

People who have had good crops are generally able to keep up to their loans and make their payments. People who have had bad crops, or hail-storms, or some other circumstances, are in difficulty. And in those cases, we have a choice of pursuing them through courts and trying to get settlement and ending up with only a portion of the recovery; or making some settlement with them whereby we can get the same amount of money without going through all the collection and court procedures. And that's the policy we're following.

(2045)

Mr. McPherson: — But you see, Mr. Minister, the problem that I have with the policy is because yet it's only those people that are hearing from neighbours or other farmers around the province, in fact, that they can get any sort of a write-down at all. Because I know several people in the south-west don't think there's any chance of a write-down; they still believe they have to exit farming.

And when I take a look at . . . This was a newspaper article, and I'll send you over a photocopy of what I have here. We'll table it, I guess, so that the official opposition can get a copy of it. But here's a newspaper article that came out on March 23 in the *Kamsack Times*. It's about a fellow — are you familiar with the article? — he helps to restructure farm debt.

And so this is the point I'm making. I'll just read one bit out of here: "Often, as a last resort, Fraser is contacted, farmers having heard of him through word of mouth."

You see that's the problem. If you're in government you're in government for everyone. You know you've heard of this guy or what he can do through word of mouth. He interviews . . . This is in the third column about half way down, Mr. Minister.

He interviews the client in order to assess the problem and bases his fee on the time it takes to make an intervention.

For example, many farmers took advantage of the \$25 an acre loan from Ag Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan in 1987. But many are unable to pay it back, until a year ago they (that meaning the lenders — ACS) went on a collection binge. Now they're willing to settle these loans.

See there's the problem, Mr. Minister. I suspect people that get the *Kamsack Times* are well aware of the government policy and no doubt . . . And in fact I think it states somewhere in this article — oh, sure it does — he gets 75 calls a day with people wanting their ACS loans restructured or dealt with.

But you see, in Swift Current or North Battleford or, you know, pick another area in the province, they don't get the *Kamsack Times* and they don't happen to know about this fellow that can get a deal from ACS. And they don't happen to . . . you know, most of those people aren't reading *Hansard*; they don't know what you're telling me here tonight.

You know I follow agriculture closely. I didn't realize until I got this newspaper article that ACS was in fact willing to settle some of these loans, because I was just going on what you told me in the last session — in fact there were no deviations from the criteria, that in fact you had to exit farming.

That, Mr. Minister, is why I'm saying that I think that you should perhaps be making it public as to the new policy that ACS is following. Why wouldn't you agree with that? I just think it's fair to the taxpayers of the province.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Well if the member opposite wants to know ACS policy he should read the notes that he got from last year's estimates. Certainly he should have better access to ACS policy than reading a newspaper article.

Many of Bill Fraser's clients — and I just talked to Bill Fraser on the phone, I think yesterday or the day before — most of his clients right now are people with outstanding Canadian Wheat Board cash advances that they are unable to pay back, not ACS loans. But if this article implies or the member's implying that there's some kind of general write-down available for farmers, that's not the case. We continue to collect the loan from producers.

And the only case where we don't collect loans is where the producer is unable to pay. And you can't get blood from a stone. And as all other lending institutions have done — the Royal Bank, Farm Credit Corporation, and credit unions and others — when farmers are in financial difficulty and can't make a loan there's a farm debt review process that's available, there's mediation services that are available.

Lending agencies find that it's in their best interest to sit down with the farmer-client and other lenders and arrive at some settlement, rather than to pursue collections through a court case where you know you're not going to get the money in any case.

That's essentially what the policy is. And if we can realize the best return we can and still leave the producer on the land with some chance of recovering and making his living from the land, that's the obvious best happening for everybody. But there is no generally available write-down for ACS. There's no point in writing a letter to all the ACS clients and say, come in and see us, because if they have the ability to make the payments, we're going to collect them. If they need extensions or whatever to handle the payments, we'll deal with that. But there isn't a general write-down available to ACS clients.

Mr. McPherson: — But, Mr. Minister, I'm not talking about a general write-down. I'm talking about making sure that those people that are in financial difficulty are in fact all being dealt with fairly. But I won't debate the issue with you. I can assure you that I'll be sending a lot more people your way now instead

of me handling their calls. I think it's incumbent on you to explain the new policy to them.

Can you, Mr. Minister, give me the legal costs of ACS for each different loan. What was it? The \$25 an acre and the spring seeding and the livestock cash advance. Do you have the legal costs of what it's been costing ACS and in fact which law firms are representing ACS?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — We don't have the legal costs broken down on the different loan types. I can give you the total legal costs and the firms to whom we paid the legal bills. The total legal cost is \$348,969.93. But we don't have it broken down by production loan or spring seeding loan. So we just have it in total.

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Minister, I assume that that's just for this year or last year. I was wondering if you could give me the breakdown for the last three years.

I recall — this was only a few years ago — when I saw some figures that showed the amount of money that the legal firm then was collecting was just about right on par with what they collected . . . as to what they charged to collect it. It was just about 50 per cent. I don't know if that . . . if I was looking at the right figures; you could clarify that.

But what I'm asking here tonight is to give me a breakdown over the last three years — not an aggregate — but you must have it broken down unless the same law firm is doing the livestock cash advance loans and all the other loans. Then it should be easy to give me a breakdown as to, you know, the total amounts collected in each of those loans and the law firm that worked on each of the loans; in fact what their charges were. Just so I can see if, in fact, the monies that we're spending on legal work makes some sense. In fact if it wasn't, then of course your new policy makes a fair amount of sense.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — I don't have a three-year breakdown on loans. I do have it on legal fees. We do have two years' data on legal fees here. For '94-5, it's \$348,969.93 which is the number I just gave you. A year earlier, it was \$474,107.76 and I would say that the year before that was, I'm assuming, was higher. We have gone through a good portion of some of the bad loans and some of the litigation that we've gone through. So it is dropping.

I don't have a breakdown of, as I said, which loans, legal fees for each individual loans. Some of the analysis done suggests that we're getting about 17 or \$18 in collection for every dollar in legal fees that we spent. But I don't have . . . That's from the recollection of one of the officials here. I don't have a breakdown between exactly which legal fees . . .

An Hon. Member: — You don't have it here or . . .

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — It's not available. I don't think that we can get the breakdown on legal fees. We've got the legal fees that we paid to each firm and it would be very difficult to go back and sort out which loans which fees applied to, and try to calculate it that way.

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Minister, can you table the documents that you were just quoting from? I don't know what else is on the document but if you could table those?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Yes I can table these documents.

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Minister, could you give me the average premium that was paid for, say, a thousand-acre farm on the 1991 GRIP program?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, miraculously, although we're doing estimates for '94-95, we have the numbers that the member's asked for. The average premium in Saskatchewan in 1991 for GRIP was \$6.43 per acre.

The Chair: — Order. I'll just ask members to just calm down just a tad. The member and the minister are having a bit of difficulty concentrating, and so I'll ask you to just come to order and allow them to proceed undisturbed.

Mr. McPherson: — So then if we're looking at, say, a farm with a thousand seeded acres, and I guess that's a common-sized farm today, and we're looking at, say, \$7,000 in GRIP premium, then the amount of money that in fact was allowed to be deducted . . . Mr. Chair, there's such a roar over there, if we could get some of the members to visit outside perhaps.

If there were \$7,000 roughly per farm on the '91 GRIP, now when these people were allowed to opt out . . . and the reason I'm dating it back to '91, this will become relevant in a moment, Mr. Minister. But in fact really what these estimates are . . . really looking at the first term — or perhaps the only term, the term of your government, not just the year under review; I've noticed a lot of latitude here for all members of the House in this last bunch of estimates — so if we're in fact looking at this thousand-acre seeded farm and to opt out of the 1991 GRIP program, or 1992 GRIP program, the deal was that they had to pay back any monies received under the GRIP program less four times the 1991 premium. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Yes, that's correct.

(2100)

Mr. McPherson: — All right. So for . . . well you could easily be looking at deducting amounts of 20 or \$30,000 off of the amount that somebody would have to repay, any extra monies on '91 GRIP.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Yes, if the producer's premium was \$7,000, he would have to pay back to the GRIP program everything above \$28,000.

Mr. McPherson: — Right. So could you then tell me what . . . Did you look at each and every district, or do you have the figures for each crop district as far as the amount of producers that dropped out of the program? And in fact what I'd like to know from you is, if there is certain areas of the province where you noticed a lot more farmers dropping out of the program than other areas, you know, say risk area 4 in my area versus

risk area 16 or risk area, you know, 20 or . . . did you ever do a breakdown on that? And in fact if you did — I see one of your officials with some notes there — if you could table that breakdown.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — No, we don't have a breakdown by crop district. There were 5,010 producers who bought out of the program.

They were likely in areas where they didn't get huge pay-outs from it in '91, because if you didn't get a large pay-out in '91 you were able to get out without any cost. If you got a huge pay-out in '91 it would cost you money to get out. So I would surmise that it likely was in areas like mine where we didn't get very big pay-outs in '91, where producers got out. But I don't have any evidence of that and I don't have any breakdown here.

Mr. McPherson: — But in fact, Mr. Minister, if we take a look at these 5,010 producers that did get out of the program, then in fact they would have done quite a bit better, and I know I have a letter here that you sent out to the producers February 3, 1995. Firstly it talks about, "As part of developing these safety nets we have consulted with producers about how to wind down the present GRIP program." And that's why I was asking the earlier questions.

That's my concern as to winding this program down and having the surplus that was there — and I've raised this; I won't debate it with you — but many times I raised with you the fact that I believe both governments, federal and provincial, should have left their monies in the program regardless. I know what your answer is going to be, is that, you know, the program was designed or developed under certain criteria.

The fact of the matter is it should have been left there because it was in fact, Mr. Minister, it was first of all brought in from other budgets. All right? It wasn't money that you should have had to have found in any upcoming budget; it was money already budgeted for. I think it was only fair that those monies stayed in there.

The producers had to live through program changes. In fact program changes that they didn't make. And when they signed in with the GRIP programs, it wasn't the producers that were forcing any changes. In fact it was the minister of Agriculture before you that in fact brought in . . . I guess it was the member from Rosetown that brought in the retroactive legislation against the farmers and forced changes upon them. So I think it's only right given what farmers had to go through.

And you recall the 14,000 farmers in a rally in Saskatoon, the farmers on the steps of the legislature, and rallies all around the province. Now it wasn't those people that asked for changes to the program; it was the government. So then for the government to take the money out of the pot at the end, I don't think was right. And I don't care what you tell me about how the program was designed initially, I just don't think that was fair. I don't think it was just to the farmers. So now when we're looking at the winding down of the program . . . Mr. Chair, there's a dull roar in here and it's hard to concentrate.

In fact, in winding the program down — and we have a surplus in GRIP, only the farmers' share — then what I think we have to look at is who should get that share. Now in fact your letter states that all producers who participated in the program will share in the producers' portion of the surplus distribution based on their share of total producer premium contributions.

So essentially, I guess, what you're saying is that anyone who was ever in the program will get a share of this surplus money. Is that right?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — That's correct. Based on the premiums that they paid into it. That's correct, each producer will get a pay-out based on the share of premiums that they paid into the program.

Mr. McPherson: — All right, but we're not talking about just producers that are active in the program today. Are you talking about all producers that were ever in the program, or just the ones that are participating today?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — All producers who were in the program based on their premiums that they paid into the program. So if they were in the program in '91 and paid premiums in '91, they will get their share of the surplus based on the share of the premiums that they paid in, which will be only the premiums for '91 if that's the only year they were in the program.

The Chair: — Order, order. I will ask the members of the committee to come to order. I'm having difficulty following the member asking questions and the minister responding. And I will ask members to exercise a bit of jurisprudence in their conversations and to allow the proceedings of the committee to take place in an orderly fashion.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, thank you a great deal, Mr. Chairperson. The producers then that dropped out of the program in . . . well in the spring of . . . and I have it here, I have letters from . . . that you sent out to the producers, July 7, 1992 in a press release. So those producers that in fact . . . there was what, three, three times, four times, that deadline was extended? Those producers that did opt out and in fact did have a reduction in their buy-out of . . . you know, it could easily have reached 20 or \$30,000, I take it, four times that '91 GRIP premium, so then how are you calculating when we're paying out the surplus of today? Are you taking into consideration those people that, even though they were paying in premiums, but they dropped out and took advantage of that four times the 1991 premium amount to deduct . . . how are you actually arriving at an amount for them? Or are you even considering that?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — All we do is take the total producer premiums paid in and take each producer's share that he paid in. So if a producer paid in one-thousandth of the premium, he would get one-thousandth of the surplus. That's the calculation, regardless of what year he paid the premium in. It's the total premiums paid, divided by the total premiums in the program, and that gives each producer's share.

Mr. McPherson: — You see, Mr. Minister, the problem that people can have with in fact that kind of a pay-out . . . If we take a look at the south-west where they grow a lot of durum . . . and I know that the way it worked in 1991 — supposedly a larger pay-out. But in fact a number of people had a large carry-over of durum into 1992. That carry-over was valued on the 1991 GRIP program, so they lost a great deal of money, probably enough that they couldn't afford to drop out of the program — couldn't afford to stay in, but they couldn't afford to drop out of it.

Now do you see my point here, is just how negatively affected they are when you're saying to the people, we're going to pay out the GRIP surplus to everyone and you're including people that already have breaks of perhaps 20 and \$30,000. And on the other side of the coin, people that live in my area of the province, perhaps with their carry-over of durum, really were unfairly treated. It might have cost them 20 or \$30,000 that they never received. So how do you justify that?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Well, Mr. Chairman, the carry-over of durum is irrelevant as the member well knows. We measured under the old GRIP program every bin in the province of Saskatchewan in the fall of '91 and the calculation was based on what you grew in '91. So whether you carried it over or dumped it in the ocean is irrelevant to the argument.

It was the producers in the south-west who did best under GRIP because under the old GRIP program you got paid for growing a crop and they were lucky enough not to grow a crop in '91 and got a huge pay-out. We changed the program so you were better off to grow a crop, and up in our area we were unlucky enough not to grow a crop for two or three years. And so I don't know what point the member's making.

Mr. McPherson: — Well the point I'm making, Mr. Minister, is that . . . firstly, I'd like to know who gave you the advice that we should have this surplus money paid out to all producers? Tell me who gave you that advice?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — We consulted with the . . . and got advice from our Farm Support Review Committee, which the member knows has been doing work since '91 in farm support. And we consulted with the National GRIP Committee members from Saskatchewan. There obviously are a hundred different ways that you could work it out. I think this is as fair a way as you really could come to distributing the surplus. In my mind it's simple and it is as fair a way as any that you can design for redistributing the surplus.

Mr. McPherson: — Well, Mr. Minister, I would say it's not fair. If in fact someone has already got a 20 or \$30,000 write-down — for lack of a better word — a write-down on what they would have had to have paid back to get out of the program versus people that couldn't afford to do it — and I could give you a list as long as your arm of people that . . . durum growers that got huge, huge bills in the mail that following fall. They in fact couldn't buy their way out of the program. And now you're not even going to share the surplus monies with them?

You want to share monies . . . and that's why I was asking what

area of the province? I mean is there some areas of the province — I don't want to accuse you of playing favouritism with your own people or even looking at it for political reasons — but are there areas of the province that you felt it was best to make sure that they received a share of this surplus money, when in fact they bought out and had a huge break before — 20, \$30,000 break?

Now you say it was the Farm Safety Review Committee that suggested it be handled this way. Well I got my facts from some members of the Farm Safety Net Review Committee who are saying they don't feel it was fair. And in fact they have raised that with you on a number of occasions, that they don't feel it was fair. And I believe you've had one or two members step off the committee because they didn't feel it was fair. So how can you say it was up to them? It was up to you, was it not?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Well I don't know the point the member is making. If they couldn't afford to get out of the program, the only reason they couldn't afford to get out was because they'd gotten more than four times what they paid into it in the first year.

So it was people who had the large payments in the first year who couldn't afford to buy out of it. So if you were going to adjust it on the basis of what you got out of the program and who'd got the most out of it, those people obviously wouldn't do that well. It would be a very, very complicated and almost impossible exercise to measure what each person got out of the . . . and what they paid in. Everybody got back more out of the GRIP program than they put into it, or almost everybody. And there may be exceptions to that but they certainly are very few and far between.

To determine who got the most out of the program and have some very, very complicated mechanism of paying it out would have also delayed the pay-out and that if we weren't sure roughly what the pay-out would be to farmers — it wouldn't be roughly equal — we wouldn't have been able to forgive the premiums or the '93 overpayment because we might have been in a position of having to collect that later.

(2115)

So I still think that that is a fair method. I believe Alberta who now . . . Incidentally, 95 per cent of the producers in Alberta have opted out of GRIP, this great program that the opposition parties say we should go back to; 95 per cent of the producers in Alberta have opted out of this program and there's now a small surplus in there and they're looking at copying our method of redistributing that surplus, including paying back to the farmers only the portion that the farmers paid in.

Mr. McPherson: — Are you saying that in Alberta that they were also having deducted four times their amount of premium for the first year that they were in the program?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Producers in Alberta had a buy-out option, although not the same one-time buy-out option that Saskatchewan producers had in '91.

Mr. McPherson: — Well can you tell me what their buy-out option is?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — They would have to pay back any money in excess of the premiums. That's the buy-out option that was there. They would have to pay back any money in excess of their premiums in order to buy out of the program. That's the standard buy-out option. The buy-out option was offered one time in Saskatchewan — because of the changes to the program — was an option whereby they would only pay back a quarter of . . . only pay back if they got more than four times what they paid in.

Mr. McPherson: — Well then, I mean if they have an entirely different buy-out option to what Saskatchewan producers had in the spring of 1992 when you were extending the deadline up until I think it was July 20, or the three or four times that you extended the deadline, how can you use Alberta as an analogy of what should happen here? You know I think that's unfair because we're getting back to this point I made earlier, is that in the spring of 1992 there were people that were getting 20, \$30,000 — perhaps more — break than what they got in Alberta, or what people could get today. In fact I maintain that there's got to be other reasons, and only you can tell us what they are, Mr. Minister, as to why you feel that these people that already received a fairly healthy buy-out option are in fact sharing in surplus GRIP dollars today.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Well again, there were 5,000 producers only who bought out of the program. Some of those received a break. Again, the reason that they could buy out . . . and again I think there were probably more in my area than in your area because they got a smaller pay-out in '91. But that assumes they got more out of the market-place. And that's why they had a smaller pay-out and that's why they could buy out of the program.

So I mean the program was designed to help producers who didn't get money out of the market-place, and now you're saying that well, if they got more out of the program, therefore they shouldn't share in the surplus of their premiums. That doesn't strike me as making a lot of sense.

I don't know what you're . . . I'm not sure where you're coming from and how you're viewing this as unfair. People who bought out in '91 will obviously get a smaller share because they only paid premiums for one year. So their share of the premiums is obviously smaller than somebody who paid premiums for four years.

But from a point of view of simplicity and a point of view of being administratively possible and a point of view of being fair, we think we've picked the best method for redistributing the surplus.

Mr. McPherson: — Well, Mr. Minister, as far as being administratively complicated, I don't think it is, because everyone's dealt with on an individual basis anyway. I mean you have that on computer. Your officials could give a print-out on any one producer in the province. So I don't agree with you that

it's administratively a problem.

In fact as you said, as I just heard you tell me, that in fact there were more people that probably bought out in the spring of 1992 in your area than mine. That's exactly what my concern is, Mr. Minister.

Should the producers in your area, at election time, be getting a share of the surplus monies that in fact they probably don't deserve because they already received benefits from a buy-out option that the people in the south-west didn't get, by and large?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Well a buy-out option was available to everybody in the province. Some producers took it and some didn't. I just don't follow the member's logic here at all.

Mr. McPherson: — But, Minister, how could you not follow the logic? There were people that received 20 and \$30,000 buy-out options, a write-down, in the spring of 1992. Those people now, I don't believe . . . and I've had several calls on this. I've had members of your Farm Safety Net Review Committee say that those people already got their break. Why should they share, Mr. Minister, why should they share in getting part of this surplus when it's already small because you and your government kept millions and millions of their dollars to help balance your books. That's what they're saying.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Well there are two very different arguments, and one about how the surplus should be redistributed. Again, this was distributed the way all tripartite programs were redistributed. This is exactly what Alberta is saying, if you read *The Western Producer*, which I just read at the back of the room. It's exactly what Alberta's doing. They're going to pay back the producers based on the premiums that they paid in. If you get to how you distribute that surplus, it seems to me to be logical. It was an insurance-type program. You paid in premiums to get protection. You got some money out of the program or you got some money out of the market-place, hopefully. And therefore we're redistributing it basis the premiums that producers paid in, and that seems to be the fairest way and the simplest way to do it.

Item 1 agreed to.

Items 2 to 12 inclusive agreed to.

Vote 1 agreed to.

**General Revenue Fund
Loans, Advances and Investments
Agriculture and Food
Vote 146**

Items 1 and 2 agreed to.

Item 3 — authorized by law.

Vote 146 agreed to.

**Supplementary Estimates 1994-95
General Revenue Fund**

**Budgetary Expense
Agriculture and Food
Vote 1**

Item 1 — authorized by law.

**Supplementary Estimates 1994-95
General Revenue Fund
Loans, Advances and Investments
Agriculture and Food
Vote 146**

Item 1 agreed to.

Vote 146 agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Yes, Mr. Chairman, I certainly would like to thank the oppositions for their questions and their cooperation, and the officials for very good answers and very diligent work. Thank you very much.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I also want to thank the minister and his staff for providing the answers as best they could and thanks so much.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I too would like to thank the minister and his officials. It's always interesting in agriculture in this province and those officials have been through some good times and some bad. And I suspect the coming years will not prove any different, Mr. Chairman, so good luck in the future.

The Chair: — Thank you to the minister and his officials.

**General Revenue Fund
Finance
Vote 18**

Items 1 to 8 inclusive agreed to.

(2130)

Item 9

Mr. Swenson: — One question here. The line dealing with members of the Legislative Assembly superannuation plan — with the changes coming into effect for the Premier and the others that were under the old plan, are there any changes in that particular line, Madam Minister?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite, no, there will be no change in that line because the members are not receiving a pension. So the line will remain as it is.

Item 9 agreed to.

Vote 18 agreed to.

General Revenue Fund

**Finance
Servicing the Public Debt
Government Share
Vote 12**

Item 1 — authorized by law

**General Revenue Fund
Debt Redemption, Sinking Fund and Interest Payments
Votes 175, 176, 177**

Items 1 to 3 inclusive — authorized by law.

The Chair: — If the minister wishes to thank her officials?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, I'd like to thank the officials and I'd like to thank the members opposite for their questions.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to thank the minister and her officials for the several times that we've had the opportunity to discuss the finances of the province, and good luck to you all in the future.

Motions for Supply

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I hereby move resolution no. 1:

That towards making good the supply granted to Her Majesty on account of certain charges and expenses of the public service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1995, the sum of \$94,396,000 be granted out of the General Revenue Fund.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I hereby move resolution no. 2:

That towards making good the supply granted to Her Majesty on account of certain charges and expenses of the public service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1996, the sum of \$3,149,895,000 to be granted out of the General Revenue Fund.

Motion agreed to.

The committee reported progress.

FIRST AND SECOND READING OF RESOLUTIONS

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that the resolutions be now read the first and second time.

Motion agreed to, and the resolutions read a first and second time.

APPROPRIATION BILL

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. By leave of the Assembly, I move:

That Bill No. 77, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of Money for the Public Service for the Fiscal Year ending respectively on March 31, 1995 and on March 31, 1996, be now introduced and read the first time.

Motion agreed to and the Bill read a first time.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. By leave of the Assembly, and under rule 55(2), I move that the Bill now be read a second and third time.

Motion agreed to and, by leave of the Assembly, the Bill read a second and third time and passed under its title.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 62 — An Act to Maintain Financial Stability and Integrity in the Administration of the Finances of the Province of Saskatchewan

The Chair: — I would ask that the Minister of Finance please introduce the officials who have joined us here for consideration of this Bill.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. On my immediate left is Bill Jones, the deputy minister of Finance; behind Bill is Jim Marshall, the executive director, economic and fiscal policy; behind me is Craig Dotson, associate deputy minister, budget analysis division.

Clause 1

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: — Order, order. Order. Could I ask the members to take their seats, please. Order. Can I ask the member to take his seat, please.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Madam Minister, and your officials. Maybe the obvious hilarity which the government members are displaying right now is the reaction that most people in this province have to the minister's legislation.

The opportunity was obviously before the government to come forward with something of substance, given what has transpired particularly in provinces on either side of us, and instead the government has chosen to come forward with a piece of legislation that really is nothing more than, in my view, a political ploy to try and get through an election campaign without the honest to goodness goods attached to it, Mr. Chairman.

So obviously the government members treat this Bill the same way that the public will, with laughter, with derision, with absolute contempt. And that's probably the way it should be treated. Because there's nothing here that will prevent

government in the future, in my view, Mr. Chairman, from doing what has made the public of this province and this country very sceptical of the political process. And that is not put in place legislation that truly, truly puts some roadblocks in the way of politicians from spending the taxpayers' money in a foolish way. I don't believe this government had any stronger mandate than one ever given in this province, either through plebiscite or election, to do what needs to be done.

And that's why, Mr. Chairman, we brought a piece of legislation before this Assembly that would truly protect the taxpayers and would say to government, it is in the best interests of all — best interests of all — to have legislation in place that would truly protect the interests of taxpayers. And instead the government has come forward and said, well over the term of four years we'll have a balanced budget providing some natural disaster or whatever doesn't occur.

And I say to the minister, and she can answer the question, why in the world would you not want to be in step with Manitoba and Alberta and other jurisdictions that clearly have realized that the taxpayers of this country are sick to death of government being able to either directly or indirectly tax them?

And you see, Madam Minister, because of the way the Government of Saskatchewan is structured with such a huge Crown corporation sector, there's many ways that you can structure the funds of this province to meet the obligation of a four year . . . of a four-year balance but not meet the obligation that you owe taxpayers. And that is a true shame, with the mandate that you have, with the plebiscite to back it up, with the power of your majority, to not want to follow the wishes of the taxpayers of this province. Your polling says it; our polling says it; the Liberal polling says it — they all agree.

And instead you take the easy way out and I do not understand — and I understand politics, Madam Minister, as well as most in this province — why you would not want to follow the wishes of the people and why you would take this expedient way, why you would want to get around the wishes of the people of this province. They expect more out of you; they expect truly to have more out of you.

So I say to you: the only question that has to be answered here tonight is, why do you not want to be in step with the reality of the 1990s? Why do you want to get the cheap and easy way out? Is politics so important to the New Democrat Party, is politics so important to you, that you would find ways to weasel around instead of enshrining in legislation and law protection of the men and women of this province that have to pay the taxes that fund government.

And that's what we're all here for. There's no other reason — at least there shouldn't be, in my view — than to protect and do the bidding of the families of this province who pay the taxes. And why you would not want to protect them from yourself or any other government that comes along in this province I do not understand; when you have such a powerful mandate in your hands, why you ignore what everyone says?

Madam Minister, why should we pass this legislation, this

weak-kneed piece of legislation, that will only make the cynicism of the taxpaying public grow larger instead of having the confidence that they should have in their politicians?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite. I won't give a lengthy answer but I do want to give him some sort of answer because he's asked a very serious question.

We heard from people in the province that they wanted us to do something, pass legislation to ensure that we would never return to the 1980s and the problems of overspending and tax cuts of the 1980s.

We looked very carefully at other jurisdictions that had balanced-budget legislation to see why, in many cases, it hadn't worked. And one of the reasons sometimes balanced budget has not worked in places like the United States is because it is so strict, so restrictive. It is so difficult for governments to actually help people when they need help, that it occurs, as it did in California, that after passing a series of referendums restricting what the government could do, what it could spend, people found in California their schools were having to close in April because they had run out of money. And in 1992 and '93 the state of California, with the approval of the people of California, set aside their own legislation.

So what we believe the legislation has to be is it has to ensure that there is requirement on the part of the government to balance the books, but it also has to have enough flexibility that the government can act and the legislation can be practical. That's why we provide that you have to lay out a four-year plan to balance the books and a four-year plan to manage the debt.

Now you mention our legislation relative to other jurisdictions. There actually are safeguards in our legislation that exist nowhere else. Because what we looked at is how could you potentially, and how have other jurisdictions, gotten around this sort of legislation?

What happens often is government simply change their accounting practices. So yes, they're balancing their books, but they've changed their accounting practices so that they move things off budget; the most common way of getting around balanced budget legislation. This legislation prevents governments from changing accounting practices.

It does cover the Crowns. The debt management plan has to cover all of government so you can't, for example, take big dividends from the Crowns, force the Crowns to borrow more, because your debt will go up. So it actually does cover the Crowns.

And the other loophole that has been closed is in jurisdictions like Alberta. In Alberta you could change your accounting practices to get around their legislation, as you could in Manitoba. And in Alberta and Manitoba you could sell major assets and merely put the money into spending and balance your books, but not truly balance your books.

Here in Saskatchewan you cannot sell a major Crown and merely spend the money. If that were to occur, and we're not

advocating it, you'd have to put it to the debt.

So it's a piece of legislation we spent a lot of time thinking about and working on. We think it's reasonable and practical.

Mr. Swenson: — Well, Madam Minister, you know it simply isn't true that anybody's going to change their accounting system. I mean the public accounts committees of this country have been moving to accrual. It's been a recommendation of the House of Commons, everybody has followed suit, and that's going to be the standard practice. And that will be it.

There's no such thing as anybody changing their accounting system to get around balanced-budget legislation when they've all finally come to agree on the same thing. So that's a red herring. Throw that out the window; that doesn't exist anymore.

And most provinces, Madam Minister, don't have the Crown sector that we do. If you had brought this legislation in and followed the auditor's requirement that the 40 per cent of government that does not appear before this Legislative Assembly would come in here, I would totally agree with you. I would totally agree with you. And you can give me all of the song and dance you want about the Crowns. Until the Crowns hit the floor of this legislature and we understand their capital budgets, their depreciation allowance, and how they set their rates in a public way, your legislation simply doesn't wash. It simply does not wash.

So I say to you again, Madam Minister, why don't you make an amendment then at least if we're going to go with this four-year stuff — to say in future the Crowns will come before the House and that we'll truly know the picture of the province of Saskatchewan. At least when we set a four-year budget it isn't 60 per cent each year; it's 100 per cent of what we're dealing with.

And if you had done that, maybe you would have confidence from people instead of an advertising campaign that goes every day in this province from groups that say you brought forward a wishy-washy political document rather than a true taxpayers' document.

Why will you not amend it then to bring forward the Crown sector to the floor of the House and at least give us some confidence that we're looking at 100 per cent of the picture instead of only 60 per cent each year?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite, as I've mentioned before in this legislature, the Crowns are quite different than other parts of government because they operate in a competitive environment. And you can't have SaskTel forced to release all kinds of information when competitors do not have to do the same.

I would say to the member opposite though, the summary financial statements which we produce cover the Crowns, and the debt management plan covers the Crowns. So I would say that the Crowns are covered in terms of the accounting of the government.

Mr. Swenson: — Well, Madam Minister, I only have one final comment, and I'm just going to put on my soothsayer's hat here a little bit. I'm going to predict that in the next four years, whoever forms the government of this province is probably going to divest themselves of SaskTel and SaskEnergy and parts of other Crown corporations. I'm going to predict that. And whether it's you or someone else, you're going to be faced with the realities of the 1990s. And that'll be quite a leap of faith for New Democrats, but I predict that.

And, Madam Minister, I also predict to you that the pressure to do what is right in the next four years will come down square on the head of any government in this province, and that is balanced-budget legislation that protects the taxpayers of this province from politicians, of whatever stripe they are. And until that's in place, I don't believe, I honestly don't believe, that some of the major issues in front of us, whether they be debt or employment, job creation, reducing our welfare numbers, keeping our hospitals, keeping our schools, will be addressed until that's in place. The public want it and they want it desperately. And I don't know why, in the face of overwhelming support, you would not want to give the public of this province what they sent you here to do. Why you would not want to take your mandate and bring in true legislation instead of a political charade, I don't know, Madam Minister.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, I guess I would agree with the member that was just up speaking. In fact I don't think the legislation has nearly the teeth in it that you're trying to let on to the House and to the people that it does. In fact I question whether . . . just how much you are committed to some of the principles that you've laid out, when in fact we look at a four-year plan, your four-year plan, to have balanced legislation.

What it could give you is the ability to manipulate, run three successive deficits, having the people believe that in fact in the fourth year you're going to have it all balance out over a four-year term.

Now if that's the case, if that's how this could play out, I know the public would have some concern that perhaps what you would then do is go to the polls before that fourth budget came down. In fact it would give you the ability to do what the former government, the members here, were doing in 1986 where in fact they said the budget's going to come in at a certain level. I think they . . . well as the Premier mentioned yesterday, they missed it by some \$900 million.

So I'm not sure what assurances you've really given the people of the province that in fact you won't do the same. The only way that in fact you could do that is by having set election dates, so that people know that on a certain date in June, every four years for an example, we're going to be going to the polls. And that way there's no reason why you wouldn't have the budget passed each and every term, and each and every year. Have you given that some consideration, Madam Minister?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite, I think that a lot of people who have thought about this vis-a-vis Saskatchewan have concluded that because of the

nature of the economy here, where there can be swings in prices, and swings in crops, that it's only reasonable to allow the government a period of time in which to balance the books. Dale Eisler had it right: it's actually returning to Keynesianism where you in tough times, yes, you might run a deficit for a year, but then you make it up in the surplus for the year after.

What I would say to the members opposite is that there is support for this legislation. The Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce issued its own press release and the headline was, "Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce Welcomes Balanced Budget Legislation." And they talked about the fact they think the legislation is very positive. The president of the chamber says she especially likes certain checks and balances and this legislation also meets with Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce policies. For example, the government cannot change accounting methods midstream. Any monies from the sale of a Crown corporation cannot be used for the general revenue purposes and any budget surpluses go towards the debt reduction fund.

They also conclude on a very interesting note. The Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce also believes that this would be an appropriate step for the federal government to take in order to eliminate the federal deficit and come up with a plan to repay the federal debt. Balanced-budget legislation undertaken by provinces and at a national level would go one step further in improving both the business climate and how we are perceived by the international financial market-place.

(2200)

Mr. McPherson: — But, Madam Minister, what I'd asked you is what assurances you could give to the people or what amendments perhaps you could make to the Bill to ensure that governments — your own or future governments — in fact can't manipulate the process.

And I'm suggesting to you the only way you could have this happen is to perhaps have set election dates so we can be sure . . . We're allowing you, Madam Minister, that ability for these swings supposedly if in fact . . . you know, as I've heard other members refer to the need for some latitude in the event of a major drought.

Well firstly, I don't think any farmer in Saskatchewan would ever for a moment think that your government's going to help them anyways — but in fact you would have the latitude and we are all in agreement to that, give you that latitude. But what if in the fourth year . . . what's to stop your government from doing exactly what the former Conservative government did and in fact not be truthful with the people of the province and run a deficit which I believe missed the target by some \$900 million. I'm just asking you why you wouldn't consider an amendment to that to allow . . . you know, just to tighten it up.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, what I would say to the member opposite is that the ultimate judge of whether or not a government is doing a good job in managing the finances is going to be the electorate. And I think this government has said consistently that we can put in place laws that say you have to

have a four-year plan. You can't manipulate accounting practices, which is occurring in other jurisdictions in Canada right today. You can't just sell off assets and spend the money.

But nobody can legislate virtue and if the government . . . if you want to get good government, people have to look very carefully at who they elect and ask very serious questions. Because in the end, it is the people that are going to decide and determine.

Mr. McPherson: — Well, Madam Minister, you talk about the ultimate judge. What I'm saying here is that the ultimate judge wouldn't really know whether or not they're being dealt with fairly unless in fact, they can have some assurance that the budget in that fourth year will definitely be passed before you go into an election.

Now I don't see where in your Bill, you're giving that assurance. Because as the Premier alluded to a letter from a former Conservative Finance minister where — I forget what the amount was — \$265 million deficit ended up being whatever, 1.1 or 1.2 billion . . . I'm sure the ultimate judge at that time felt that they were given a decent amount of goods. That they could actually believe in the figures that were given in the letter from then Finance minister to the member from Riversdale.

So I'm saying, I don't see anything in the Bill to actually stop a problem like that and would you consider an amendment to ensure that that can't happen?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite, we would not consider the amendment but there are safeguards in the Bill. Unlike when Lorne Hepworth was minister of Finance, what occurs now is when you have to lay out a financial plan — a four-year financial plan — you have to lay out all your numbers. Here's our spending. Here's our revenue. Here's our economic assumptions. And they have to be scrutinized by international financial agencies.

And the agencies . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . no, not in the detail that we do today. No government in this province has laid out plans with this sort of detail ever before in the history of the province.

And the financial agencies comment on those plans and if they say those numbers are wild, they can't work; the government's credibility is undermined. And they have done that with Mazankowski's last budget. They said these are wild numbers, they can't work, they're rosy. With Paul Martin's last budget — we'll give him credit — they said these are reasonable forecasts.

So you have to lay out the plan. Then if you run a deficit, you have to come back with a new plan showing how, over the three years left, you're going to balance it. And again your numbers have to be scrutinized.

So unless — again I come back to my main point — unless the press and the opposition is totally asleep, a government trying to manipulate is going to be caught, and the electorate is going to be alerted and the electorate is going to do what they should do, which is fire that government.

Mr. McPherson: — Well, Madam Minister, I won't debate this point all evening with you. Because as you said, you wouldn't make the amendment anyways. I'm only stating to you that I think, Madam Minister, that it could have been handled easily. We wouldn't worry about whether the press or opposition parties would have to catch something that . . . perhaps dealing with financial institutions.

You could have had this in the legislation, and in fact you could have made it easy and lived up to other campaign promises that were being made at one point, and that's having set election dates.

You choose not to do that. I won't debate any longer. I think that you should have it in there; you don't. Fine, we'll move on to another point that was raised here this evening and that had to do with the debt elimination schedule. And I know that you've quoted from chamber of commerce. I don't know who all, Madam Minister, you've been quoting from tonight, but in fact I think you know, everyone in the province, or probably everyone in the province, feels that a debt elimination Bill, a balanced-budget legislation was necessary.

And it is supported. I can tell you right now I'm going to be supporting this Bill when we sit down here later. I'm just saying I think there's some problems with it; I wish you would have dealt with it. If you don't, well I can assure you that the next government will make some of these changes which I think are needed and perhaps we'll be able to make them soon — sooner rather than later.

I see no problem though, with you . . . you were talking, Madam Minister, about having the first — I think I'm losing my voice here tonight — having the first budget to come down with a lot of detail in it. So why couldn't you have done some detail, in fact, putting out a debt elimination schedule. I don't know if people feel completely at ease with you having the latitude to spend some of these monies on program expenditures, for example.

I mean either you're going to have it in your budget . . . you know, what you can do with programs or not, but in fact what we're talking about is having a set schedule that they've had in other provinces. I'm sure that these same groups that you're quoting from and saying that they support your legislation are also very supportive of knowing a date in the future when they're going to be debt free. Why wouldn't you consider this?

I understood that I had put a question to the minister and I was waiting for an answer. I didn't realize that she was going to not give answers this evening.

But in fact, there's other problems that we could see with the Bill, and that's one where you're saying you needed some latitude in the event of emergencies or unforeseen circumstances, to have some latitude to deal with those. And I'm wondering, Madam Minister, have you considered having some clear definitions of what would constitute an unforeseen circumstance?

And I raise it for this reason. I recall back in 1992 in the summer where we had quite a drought in the south-west corner of the province. And in fact on behalf of the farmers and ranchers in south-west Saskatchewan, I had requested some help or aid to make sure that they could see their way through that given year. And the government wouldn't even consider it.

But I'm not so sure now in election year, especially if your government decided not to call the election this spring but in fact go in the fall, that in fact where there's a flood area, you wouldn't see that as an unforeseen circumstance that would perhaps need some resolve.

But is that something that we can only expect in an election year, or in fact only in certain ridings? I think that you should be giving an answer to the people of the province as to what we can expect to be . . . and when these kind of unforeseen circumstances could be expected, how you deal with them.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite. First of all in response to his earlier question, the legislation requires the government to come out with a debt management plan. We have included in this budget a four-year debt management plan in which in this past year alone more than \$500 million is actually taken off the debt.

Now with respect to emergencies, emergencies are very clearly defined. They have to be significant events. They have to be identifiable events and unanticipated — so something that is major, you can see, you can identify, and you couldn't anticipate.

And if you're going to call that an emergency you have to give a special report to the legislature identifying the event and identifying the costs associated with the event.

So it's the sort of thing that would be quite unusual in the province and there's nothing in recent memory that would qualify for an emergency provision.

Mr. McPherson: — The only . . . well not the only other concern but one other concern I would have, Madam Minister, I noticed in your Bill, and in fact in your press release, you made the statement — wherever it is, here we go — and it was alluded here this evening, that the sale of Crown corporations couldn't be used just for whatever reason the government of the day thought they would use the monies for. In fact they would have to go into debt.

And I'm not sure in reading the Bill here right now that I see that; in fact I don't see anywhere in the Bill where it really says it's going to go to debt. And perhaps let me even expand on this example where I think it was SaskPower that had about \$10 million worth of shares in, I think it was Wascana Energy — the minister of CIC (Crown Investments Corporation) I guess could help out here — but there were a substantial amount of shares held by Crowns that were sold.

And in fact if you were to go out and ask the people of the province what they would want done even with the shares that are being sold, they would say, well they should be . . .

everything that's sold should be applied to the debt. Have you given consideration of this? I think that's it.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite, what the legislation says is that if you sell a Crown corporation or a major part of a Crown corporation, you cannot merely take the money into the General Revenue Fund for spending. And that's a serious issue because in the 1980s that's one of the things that happened in the province. A whole list of Crown corporations were sold and the deficit of the province continued to rise because the money was simply spent.

So that would no longer be possible. You would no longer be able to just transfer it across and spend it.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 10 inclusive agreed to.

Preamble agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

(2215)

The Chair: — If I might be allowed an opportunity from the Chair, I think I speak on behalf of the Deputy Chair when I say that we both appreciate the help that we have received from the Clerks, the knowledge and guidance during proceedings of the committee; the Sergeant-at-Arms for his excellent help in maintaining decorum at times; the pages for their attention; the ministers, the opposition critics, and all the members for their cooperation in ensuring a productive and relatively harmonious environment in the Committee of the Whole and the Committee of Finance.

Thank you, one and all.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 62 — An Act to Maintain Financial Stability and Integrity in the Administration of the Finances of the Province of Saskatchewan

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

Motion agreed to on division, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

ROYAL ASSENT

At 10:20 p.m. His Honour the Lieutenant Governor entered the Chamber, took his seat upon the throne, and gave Royal Assent to the following Bills:

Bill No. 13 — An Act to amend The Freehold Oil and Gas Production Tax Act

Bill No. 14 — An Act to amend The Crown Minerals Act

Bill No. 51 — An Act to amend The Student Assistance and Student Aid Fund Act, 1985
 Bill No. 52 — An Act to amend The Teachers' Federation Act
 Bill No. 43 — An Act to amend The Municipal Revenue Sharing Act
 Bill No. 24 — An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Housing Corporation Act
 Bill No. 36 — An Act to amend The Municipal Employees' Superannuation Act
 Bill No. 12 — An Act respecting the Application to Saskatchewan of the Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in respect of Intercountry Adoption
 Bill No. 49 — An Act respecting Interior Designers
 Bill No. 58 — An Act to amend The Income Tax Act
 Bill No. 60 — An Act to amend The Department of Health Act
 Bill No. 61 — An Act respecting the University of Saskatchewan
 Bill No. 26 — An Act respecting Saskatchewan Assessment Appraisers and to enact certain Consequential Amendments to The Assessment Management Agency Act
 Bill No. 30 — An Act to amend The Assessment Management Agency Act
 Bill No. 56 — An Act to amend The Provincial Emblems and Honours Act
 Bill No. 21 — An Act to amend The Securities Act, 1988
 Bill No. 54 — An Act to establish an Aboriginal Courtworkers Commission
 Bill No. 75 — An Act to amend The Provincial Court Act
 Bill No. 44 — An Act to amend The Local Government Election Act
 Bill No. 28 — An Act to amend The Northern Municipalities Act
 Bill No. 27 — An Act to amend The Urban Municipality Act, 1984, and to make a Consequential Amendment to The Municipal Board Act
 Bill No. 29 — An Act to amend The Rural Municipality Act, 1989
 Bill No. 9 — An Act to amend The Environmental Management and Protection Act
 Bill No. 65 — An Act to amend The Members of the Legislative Assembly Superannuation Act, 1979 (No. 2)
 Bill No. 69 — An Act respecting the Interpretation of Enactments and prescribing Rules Governing Enactments/Projet de loi no. 69 — Loi concernant l'interprétation des textes et édictant les règles les régissant
 Bill No. 66 — An Act respecting Changes of Name/Projet de loi no. 66 — Loi concernant les changements de nom
 Bill No. 67 — An Act respecting the keeping of Vital Statistics/Projet de loi no. 67 — Loi concernant les services de l'état civil
 Bill No. 68 — An Act respecting Regulations/Projet de loi no. 68 — Loi concernant les règlements
 Bill No. 70 — An Act respecting the Solemnization of Marriage/Projet de loi no. 70 — Loi concernant la célébration du mariage

Bill No. 71 — An Act respecting Victims of Crime/Projet de loi no. 71 — Loi sur les victimes d'actes criminels
 Bill No. 73 — An Act respecting Elementary, Secondary and Post-secondary Education in Saskatchewan/Projet de loi no. 73 — Loi concernant l'enseignement élémentaire, secondaire et postsecondaire en Saskatchewan
 Bill No. 74 — An Act respecting Non-profit Corporations/Projet de loi no. 74 — Loi concernant les sociétés sans but lucratif
 Bill No. 62 — An Act to Maintain Financial Stability and Integrity in the Administration of the Finances of the Province of Saskatchewan

His Honour: — In Her Majesty's name, I assent to these Bills.

Bill No. 77 — An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of Money for the Public Service for the Fiscal Years ending respectively on March 31, 1995 and March 31, 1996.

His Honour: — In Her Majesty's name, I thank the Legislative Assembly, accept their benevolence, and assent to this Bill.

His Honour retired from the Chamber at 10:26 p.m.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, by leave, I would just like to say a few words of thank you before we move the adjournment motion.

Mr. Speaker, first of all, I just want to say, on behalf of the members of the government caucus — this possibly being the last time that we meet in this particular configuration in the Assembly — I want to say a special thank you to all members of the Assembly, first of all, for the hard work and endeavour that each and every one of you has put into making the last four years productive and worthwhile.

A number of people have decided not to seek re-election. To them, I want to say thank you and especially to you, Mr. Speaker, for your tolerance and good humour in the many days when we may have had disagreements. And I really do want to wish to you and to your family the very best in your retirement. Although, knowing you personally and working with you as an elected member for almost 20 years, I know that your retirement will be anything but retiring. And my understanding is that you are looking forward to volunteer work both in Saskatchewan and other parts of the nation and world. And I'm sure that you will do great things with your extra time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I want to say as well to Mr. Goodhand — we've recognized his work earlier today — I just want to add my personal thanks to you.

I know there were a number of times when he has turned the corner with the mace and we've been misbehaving. On this spot he has attempted to lean over just a little bit to clip us, I think, as he turns the corner with the mace, but we've been able to

avoid it at every turn. But I do want to say to you, sir, thank you for your hard work and the work that you do every day in securing the building. You've done a great job.

I would also like to take just a few moments to thank a few other people. First of all, to the benefit of the Assembly, the Clerk, Gwenn Ronyk; her Deputy Clerk, Greg Putz; and Clerk Assistant, Meta Woods, who has joined us in this session. I want to say also to the secretary to the Clerk, Monique Lovatt, and the secretary to the Clerk at the Table, Pam Scott, this is a great group of people.

(2230)

All the way back to the early days when I was first elected in 1978 and Gwenn Ronyk, who was then, I'll say, a younger Clerk, assisted us on a library committee that travelled across Canada. And this becomes a very close family over the years and those people who have not had an opportunity to serve in the Assembly will not understand the closeness that develops, not only between caucus members, but also between other members of the Assembly. And I know that the Clerks have played a big role in bringing us closer in many, many ways.

I'd also like to thank the Legislative Assembly employees — those in the personnel and administration staff — Linda Kaminski and the other staff who work in that area. In the journals we would like to thank as well the Clerk Assistant, Rose Zerr, and the assistant journals clerk, Teena Embury; in the financial services area, the director, Marilyn Borowski and staff.

I'd also say that the public who have watched — and believe it or not there are people who watch the proceedings of the House with great interest — that would not be possible without the broadcasting services director, Gary Ward, and the other technicians who work in that area.

I would also like to thank the members, on behalf of the members of the Assembly, the hard work that goes into visitor services. The director, Lorraine deMontigny, who works very closely in getting people into the galleries and lines us up for introductions every day. Thank you very much.

Finally, I would like to say special thanks to Legislative Counsel and Law Clerk, Bob Cosman, who works not only with our members of the Assembly but with the opposition. And maybe it's logical probably, developing legislation, private members' Bills, actually works closer with the opposition. And in our nine years in opposition, I know that that office worked very diligently in helping us out in many areas.

Finally the pages, who have carried many, many books for us and have very much been involved in the working of the Assembly. It is our honour to have had you to work with us for the past months.

And finally, I just want to say again to all the individuals who are elected — some for short terms, some for long terms — I know that when we leave here, although we have had tough debates, long debates, we leave here as friends and comrades

and look forward, whether successful in the election or not, to a long association in one form or another because our paths will cross a number of times in the days, weeks, and years to come.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my place. If there are other comments, and then I would have the House entertain a motion of adjournment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's certainly an honour and a privilege to stand in this Assembly this evening at this hour and to make a few remarks on behalf of my colleagues. First of all, to extend a number of thank you's to people who have worked so hard to not only work in this Assembly, but who have given of their time and energy to serve the people of this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, when a person comes to extending thank you's, sometimes you enter into that extension of thank you's with a little bit of a reserve because you often wonder, who are you going to forget. And I will attempt to, with the notes I have in front of me, make sure I do not leave out anyone. If I do, it certainly isn't because it was intentionally done.

I would like to thank the employees of this legislature who have made our jobs in this Assembly so much easier. And let me begin, Mr. Speaker, by including you and extending a heartfelt thank you to you and, in your absence, the Deputy Speaker.

I think, Mr. Speaker, if we were to look at your job and if we were to assess it, and if we were to assess the performance of the Chair on the basis of 1 to 10, there might be quite a variance in this Assembly as to where that assessment may have finally arrived and been achieved. But I would say, Mr. Speaker, that while we've had our differences of opinions, I believe you have endeavoured to really represent the Chair and represent it well over the past three and a half years. And I can only wish you every success in your future endeavours and in your retirement.

To all the Chairs of the various committees we say thank you for your hard work and your diligence. To the security staff, to the library staff for their expedient and informative service to this Assembly and to the individual caucuses; to the Dome Cafeteria, the ladies downstairs, the individuals downstairs who have kept our engines fuelled for some of the fiery debate we've entered into in this House; to the hard-working pages who have joined us in this Assembly and been so diligent in their work and efforts, we say thank you.

To our Sergeant-at-Arms, Mr. Goodhand. Mr. Goodhand, we certainly . . . in some ways we look at your retirement — and for those of us who may be getting there sooner than we think — we're almost thinking it would be nice to be there already. But we appreciate the work you've done for the past number of years. We thank you for your endeavours and your work in this Assembly and we wish you well in your retirement. I don't know, did you slug Iris's golf ball off the tee yet? I'm not sure. But good luck in your golfing.

To the Clerk's office, to Gwenn and Greg, and Margaret who's

joined us this session, we say thank you. And to all those who have worked in the back rooms, whether it's in broadcast services, *Hansard*, tour guides, janitorial and maintenance staff, and certainly to our Legislative Law Clerk, Mr. Bob Cosman, and the law counsel staff.

And I noticed as well there's a comment here, I think our staff were . . . just felt that they didn't want to be left out, and they say here, especially the clever and efficient research staff, particularly those working in the PC (Progressive Conservative) caucus office who put the information in here. We certainly say thank you. I'm sure the government members say thank you as well.

We would like to as well thank the media. Now I guess we could rate their performance on a scale of 1 to 10. We'll let them be the judge tomorrow when they make their remarks. And everyone who I may have missed who have helped to keep this legislature running smoothly, we say thank you.

Mr. Speaker, might I also add a very sincere thank you to those in this Assembly who have chosen not to seek re-election. The fact that you chose to run in the past, the fact that you were elected, has shown that people had confidence in your abilities to come here and represent them well. And I don't think there's anyone, regardless of which side of the House they're sitting, cannot at the end of the day say they did their best; and that their constituents will thank them in the future for their hard work and endeavours.

And I think each and every one of us in this Assembly certainly want to pay our tributes and thank you because your presence here has made this a better place to work in. And we say thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, when a person's giving their thank you's and when a person's making comments about the wind-up of a session, there's a number of things you can get into. You can certainly make it a political speech. We could certainly talk about a number of the issues.

I appreciate the fact that the Government House Leader chose not to really get into politics and maybe I'll make that choice as well tonight — not to get into the real nitty-gritty of politics.

I think as I've learned in the past, as I've learned in the past, Mr. Speaker, there are times to really get into political rhetoric and there are times to just sit back and appreciate the moment.

And I would have to say that whether or not, as the House Leader indicated, the Government House Leader indicated, the configuration in this House is definitely going to be changed and quite a different face-lift after the next general election . . . Whether it's before we have another session of this House or not, the Premier, as I understand, only knows — or does he?. Maybe others have already been clued in as to that date. But I can say that I have enjoyed being here, and whether or not I'm back here to join with the number of others who will be re-elected, I would like to indicate that it's certainly been a pleasure to stand in this Assembly to represent my constituency.

I can add, Mr. Speaker, that certainly this place has many differing views. But we live in a great country. We certainly live in a wonderful province. And I think one of the things that we can be thankful for and we can really respect each other for is that while we have very differing views in philosophy and opinions, we do not turn around and start using our fists to take out our differences and to get even with the other guy.

We have shown respect. We may not have agreed with the responses; we may not agree with party views; but we still have shown respect, and respect each and every one for their views and for their understanding and for the positions they have taken. And I say thank you to each and every one of the members for having shown that.

And I can only conclude by suggesting, Mr. Speaker, that I would wish each and every one well as this House is dissolved and as we approach the next general election. I look forward to being back in this Assembly, but I'll let the constituency that I represent make that choice. And I thank you again for the opportunity, on behalf of my colleagues and on behalf of everyone, for this opportunity to speak this evening. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, members of the Assembly, I'd like to take a few minutes to express on behalf of the member from Saskatoon Greystone, the member from Shaunavon, myself, and our legislative staff as well, our appreciation to all of the people who have been so helpful to us in doing our jobs by doing their jobs.

To the hundred or so individuals behind the scenes who have worked hard during this past session to ensure that things moved along smoothly and efficiently as possible, I extend my gratitude for the professional and competent manner in which you do your daily work. I am personally very grateful for the valuable guidance they have given me when I asked for direction on matters of procedure and protocol that were all so new to me when I first came to this Chamber just 15 months ago. Their knowledge and experience has been very valuable to me in my education as a legislator.

I'd like to acknowledge the Speaker and his staff for keeping this House operating in a seemingly flawless manner. His Solomon-like rulings are thoughtful and fair, and I think we've been very fortunate to have had such a fair-minded person to adjudicate our proceedings.

I'd also like to thank Gwenn and Greg and Meta for their work, and to the pages for their daily work that makes it easier for us.

In the Legislative Assembly Office, we are very fortunate to have Linda Kaminski and Marilyn Borowski. They and their staff are all very committed and capable people.

And our thanks go also to the broadcast staff, director Gary Ward, and technicians, Kerry and Ihor, for the unenviable job they have watching us do our job for hours on end in their small glass booth.

The legislative library staff have been of great assistance to me and to our staff again this session, and their ability to locate obscure information is indeed admirable and sometimes very remarkable.

Although they are unseen, the staff of *Hansard* perform an important task by transcribing the procedures in this Assembly and in its committees. We want them to know also how much we appreciate their diligence and attention to detail.

To all the security personnel, both the commissionaires at the front desk and the nattily attired security people outside this Chamber itself, we extend our thanks for the many long and sometimes boring hours you spend sitting and watching us rush to and fro from this place. And of course a special word of thanks and best wishes go to our Sergeant-at-Arms, Bill Goodhand, as he launches his retirement.

The cafeteria staff are another group of people whose contribution to the functioning of this building often goes unnoticed. How good it is to see Joan back here, looking wonderful after her serious illness.

And finally to the visitor services personnel who make such a wonderful first impression on the thousands of visitors we have every year. You represent our province very well.

Mr. Speaker, it is truly an honour and a privilege to serve the people of this province by representing them in this august Chamber. It is an experience that few people ever come to know firsthand. I hope all members appreciate how blessed we are to be given the opportunity to sit here as the elected representatives in this bountiful and beautiful province. It is an experience that I will treasure for all of my life and one that I hope to repeat very soon.
All the best to all of you. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I wonder if members would permit the Speaker to say just a few words at this time. Since I put in midnight for the ending of the session in the pool . . .

An Hon. Member: — Take it as read.

The Speaker: — Someone said take it as read, but not this time.

I want to say just a few words about this place and about the members. As I think most of you know, I've spent 20-some years in this legislature and I think I will leave this place with mixed feelings. I'll be glad to go and some of you will be glad to see me go.

But I will also miss the place which I have come to know over the last 25 years. I served as a back-bencher in 1971 and 1975 and then had the privilege to serve in a number of capacities in the Blakeney cabinet for seven years.

And then I had the privilege — and I say it was the privilege —

of serving as a back-bencher in opposition. That was a very good learning experience. And then you gave me the honour and the privilege to serve as your Speaker.

(2245)

And let me say that I am not sorry that I have been your Speaker for the last three and a half years, although there have been a number of times in the first two years where I did walk into this Chamber with the thought of resigning that afternoon. I want to thank particularly Gwenn Ronyk for convincing me to stay on and to learn with you people the role of the Speaker. And it's not an easy role, I can assure you. I'm not asking for any sympathy because I asked for the job.

I hope that I have served you people fairly but that I have served you with some toughness, but that I have done so for the betterment of this institution.

I think that this institution is a great institution. And I hope that all members who presently are going to be running for re-election will be a model for the new people who come in. This place must continue to keep its dignity. And I hope that you will be a good model for those who come in.

I had an excellent person to model myself after because he had such a great reverence for this place. And that was the boss I worked for for seven years in his cabinet. And I hope that we will continue in that fashion and obey the rules that you yourself set down.

I want to tell members that I'm going to have lots of time on my hands in the next little while, and that I have made copious notes on certain individuals in this House and pertaining to certain things that happened in this House. But I will put an embargo on my writings for the next 30 or 40 years, so not to fear.

Now I think this is just an excellent place in which to serve. As one person once said, it's a very noble profession. And we are honoured and we are privileged to be able to serve the people of Saskatchewan.

And at this time I would like to thank the people of Saskatoon who saw fit to elect me five out of six times. And I hope that I've been able to serve them well in all the capacities in which I was able to do so. I want to thank them very sincerely.

I want to very quickly run over some of the other people. I think I would be remiss if I did not thank, for example, the security people, and certainly Bill Goodhand. I want to thank the library people, the *Hansard* people, visitor services, and financial services.

But most of all I want to thank the people of the Legislative Assembly Office. They've been just a tower of strength to me as the Speaker. Though we've not always agreed on how the decisions should be made, they certainly have a vast volume of knowledge to which . . . to help the Speaker in making his decisions.

Let me thank my personal staff also. I want to thank Darwin Burgess who was with me for two and a half years, served me very well, and then moved on to something else because he wanted a new experience.

I want to thank Margaret Kleisinger, who has recently joined my staff. But most of all I want to thank Debbie Saum. She has certainly taken over the running of my office and has done it very, very capably, and I want to thank her for the generosity of time that she has devoted to her job.

Let me also thank the pages for their work that they've done for the members in the Assembly. They've served, I think, with a lot of dedication and a lot of extra time. And I know from talking to them, they've certainly enjoyed their experience.

Let me finish by simply saying thank you to everyone. I will remember many of you personally, and I do want to wish you well. Those of you who are not running again, I want to wish you well in your endeavours. And those who are running, on both sides of the House, good luck. And abide by the wishes of the people. Thank you very kindly for giving me the honour in which to serve you as your Speaker in the last three and a half years.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MOTIONS

House Adjournment

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Regina Churchill Downs:

That when this Assembly adjourns at the end of this sitting day, it shall stand adjourned to a date and time set by Mr. Speaker upon the request of the government, and that Mr. Speaker shall give each member seven clear days' notice, if possible, of such date and time.

I so move.

Motion agreed to.

The Assembly adjourned at 10:52 p.m.