

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Clerk: — Members of the Legislative Assembly, it is my duty to inform you that Mr. Speaker will be unable to be present to open today's sitting.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the EMS (emergency medical services) report was released several months ago, there was a great deal of consternation raised by the possible ramifications of that report in the constituency of Cypress Hills. The community of Richmond, if the EMS report came into being, would not be served by an ambulance any closer than 50 miles away. For that reason the people of that community have signed this petition, and the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to not implement the consolidation and centralization of ambulance services as recommended in the EMS report and affirm its intent to work to improve community-based ambulance services.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is signed by residents of the community of Richmond, Saskatchewan.

I so present.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition regarding two of the government's Crown corporations — SaskPower and SaskEnergy. Both have recently announced significant rate increases for residential and business customers. And therefore, the prayer in their petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to use a portion of its windfall oil and gas revenues to provide a more substantial energy rate rebate to Saskatchewan consumers.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, these petitioners come from the communities of Biggar, Rosetown, Springwater, and Sonningdale. And I'm pleased to present the petition on their behalf.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have a petition to present today by people who are concerned about the Fyke report:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Wadena Health Centre be maintained at its current level of service at

minimum, with 24-hour acute care service, emergency, and doctoral services as well as laboratory, public health, and home care, and long-term care services available to users from our district and beyond.

The people that have signed this petition are all from Wadena.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise on behalf of citizens concerned about the increasing cost of energy. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to use a portion of its windfall oil and gas revenues to provide a more substantial energy rate rebate to Saskatchewan consumers.

Signatures on this petition, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are from the communities of Melfort, Kinistino, and St. Brieux.

I so present.

Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to present a petition on behalf of those concerned with the prevalence of youth smoking in this province, recognition that over 80 per cent of new smokers are children and adolescents. The cost to this province is incredible at over \$141 million per year, and the petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to pass comprehensive provincial legislation to prevent children from starting to smoke, to protect all citizens from second-hand smoke in public places and workplaces, and to control youth access to tobacco products.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Thank you.

Mr. Stewart: — Thanks, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with the possible conversion of some paved highways to gravel. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to set aside any plans to revert Saskatchewan highways back to gravel, commit that the government will not download responsibility for current numbered highways onto local governments, and to consult with local residents and to co-operate in finding and implementing other alternatives.

And this petition is signed by individuals from the communities of Bayard, Moose Jaw, Saskatoon, Regina, and Minot, North Dakota.

I so present.

Ms. Bakken: — Thanks, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of citizens of Weyburn-Big Muddy constituency, who are concerned about their ambulance service.

And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to not implement the consolidation and centralization of ambulance services as recommended in the EMS report and affirm its intent to work to improve community-based ambulance services.

And the petition is signed by residents of Gladmar, Radville, Minton, Bengough, and Lake Alma.

I so present.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I too present petitions on behalf of citizens of Saskatchewan regarding the EMS report. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to not implement the consolidation and centralization of ambulance services as recommended in the EMS report and affirm its intent to work to improve community-based ambulance services.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this petition is signed by people in the Carlyle, Redvers and Bellegarde area.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I also have a petition to present today on behalf of the people of the Redvers area. The petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Redvers health centre be maintained at its current level of service at minimum, with 24-hour acute care, emergency and doctoral services available as well as laboratory, physiotherapy, public health, home care, and long-term care services available to the users from our district, southeast Saskatchewan, and southwest Manitoba and beyond.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

These petitions, Mr. Speaker, come from the Fertile, Redvers, Alida areas.

I so present.

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of citizens from Regina, Saskatoon and Bladworth concerned with tobacco use in the province.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to pass comprehensive provincial legislation to prevent children from starting to smoke, to protect all citizens from second-hand smoke in public places and workplaces, and to control youth access to tobacco products.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Thank you.

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from citizens concerned about the high rates SaskEnergy and SaskPower charge.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to use a portion of its windfall oil and gas revenues to provide a more substantial energy rate rebate to Saskatchewan consumers.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

The petitioners who have signed this are from Bladworth, Springside, Davidson, Regina, Girvin and Imperial.

I so present.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from citizens concerned about the EMS report. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to not implement the consolidation and centralization of ambulance services as recommended in the EMS report and affirm its intent to work to improve community-based ambulance services.

And this petition is signed by the good citizens of Leroy and Englefeld.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and pursuant to rule 12(7) they are hereby read and received.

These are petitions of citizens of the province on the following matters:

To cause the government to take steps to ensure current levels of services and care are maintained at the Wadena health centre;

To cause the government to provide funding for the proposed alcohol and drug abuse treatment centre at Weyburn.

And a number of other petitions that are addendums to previously presented petitions, addendums to sessional papers no. 3, no. 4, no. 5, no. 10, no. 58, and no 121.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, I give notice I shall on day no. 38 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of CIC: how much rent money did the government receive from private producers in the RM of Rudy and the RM of Canaan for the use of government-owned potato storage facilities in the 2000-2001 fiscal year; did the Saskatchewan Valley Potato Corporation pay rent for use of these same facilities in 2000-2001; and if so, how much?

Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 38 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Agriculture: who currently sits on the Farm Support Review Committee on safety net design; and how many times has this committee met since January, 1999?

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 38 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Highways: what is total number of kilometres of highways in Saskatchewan; how many of these kilometres consist of primary highways; how many kilometres of the total consist of secondary highways; how many kilometres of the total consist of 200- and 300-numbered highways; and finally, how many kilometres of the total consist of gravelled highways?

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day 38 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Justice: has the government formulated a response to demands for a Justice inquiry as a result of the frozen bodies discovered in Saskatoon over one year ago; if so, will the minister table his response; and (2) will a Justice inquiry be convened; if not, why not?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it gives me a great pleasure today to introduce the entire grade 12 class from the community of Eastend. I appreciate the fact that they're here today. I was unavailable last year when the grade 12s came — I was called away to fill potholes in the vicinity of Val Marie, and with the increased highway funding this year, I decided that I would stay here and let the potholes heal themselves.

This class of 16 students make this trip on an annual basis — at least the class does, not these particular students — and they're accompanied by their teachers, Shelley Morvik and Marie Hanson; and the driver I'm assuming, Connie Sue McAtamney.

I just wanted to say for the benefit of the students, that I'm looking forward to meeting with you after question period today. I know you'll have questions after question period. And I'm looking forward to that opportunity.

And for the teachers and the adults travelling with you, some of my colleagues couldn't pick out the adults from the students, so you should feel complimented in that regard as well.

Please welcome this group to the Assembly today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's my pleasure to be able to introduce to you, and through you to all my colleagues in the Assembly, 30 grade 5 students seated in the west gallery.

They're accompanied by their teacher, Ms. Deb Bresciani; and also accompanied by Genelle Nicholson, Jacque Furneaux, Celine Novak, Rae Kaytor, and Susan Askin.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have had an opportunity to be in St. Dominic Savio School and it certainly is a wonderful community place to be. They offer Christian education and certainly have taken an interest in being a green school and an environmental school.

I'm looking forward to meeting with these students after their tour, and having a photo with them, and we'll meet for refreshments.

I ask all members to give a warm welcome to the grade 5 students and their accompanying adults. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly, a number of guests seated both in the Speaker's gallery and in the west gallery. I did not notice any behind me.

But these are members of Saskatchewan's Professional Firefighters Association. Members will know that they're here for their seventh annual MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) lobby, a job that they do very, very well each year. And one that I personally look forward to, an opportunity to renew acquaintances and pick up some new ideas from. Later this day all members are invited to meet with the firefighters at one larger gathering as well.

(13:45)

Mr. Speaker, earlier in the day I had the pleasure of meeting with Gerry Huget, the Saskatchewan president; with Dick Hildebrandt, the vice-president; Brian Beletsky, the treasurer; and from the national office, Sean McManus. There are other firefighters, as I mentioned, in both galleries now.

I ask all members to join me in welcoming them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Yes. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Supplemental to the Minister of Labour, I'm pleased to be joined myself today by two members of the North Battleford Fire Protection Service seated in your gallery — Mr. Clint Bullerwell and Rob Campbell.

I welcome them and I'm sure all members will look forward to chatting with them at the reception this evening. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with my colleagues, the Labour minister and the member for North Battleford, in also welcoming the professional firefighters here today.

We had the opportunity this morning to meet with a couple of the firefighters, I believe, from Yorkton and had a very good meeting with them. And we're looking forward tonight to also attending the reception and meeting many more of them tonight.

So I would also ask everyone to welcome them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Highway Improvement Projects

Mr. Harper: — More good news for Saskatchewan and our road system, Mr. Speaker. Six more highway improvement projects have been announced. Four of these projects are resurfacing projects taking place on: Highway 13 east of Assiniboia, Highway 2 south of Moose Jaw, Highway 32 west of Cabri, and Highway 155 north of Green Lake.

Completing the six announced improvements is a lighting improvement on Highway 11 and 16, cloverleaf south of Saskatoon. And surfacing has begun on a 9-kilometre section of Highway 1 just east of the Alberta border.

Work for this \$3.8 million project began last week and should be completed by the end of July. This project alone will create 67 full-time jobs, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The twinning of our national highway system will increase safety to the driving public on this busy route.

These new announcements are only the tip of the iceberg, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as Saskatchewan Highways and Transportation's budget this year is a record \$311.7 million.

By accelerating our twinning projects and resurfacing highways, we are ensuring a transportation system that will connect our province to the future. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Fundraising for Craik Golf Course

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to talk about an event that occurred in my constituency last month. On April 7, the community of Craik held a fundraising event for the Craik golf course.

Mr. Speaker, this was the fourth successful annual event that the organizing committee has held. The evening started off with a delicious supper served by Shirley Peddle and her helpers. After that there were various games of chance at which participants could win a variety of prizes. Throughout the evening, various draws were held as well. It was reported that over 200 people attended this fundraising event.

Mr. Speaker, this is a classic example of people coming together to work towards a common goal. The community of Craik has worked hard to make their community a very attractive place to live. With the prime location along Highway No. 11, they realize they can offer an attractive stop for tourists travelling along the highway.

They already have a regional park complete with an old-fashioned dugout house that I spoke about in the Assembly a while ago. Now with the funds they have raised towards their golf course, they attract tourism to the community which is something this government seems to be failing to do.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate once again the community of Craik for their hard work in making their community an attractive spot for tourists.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatoon YWCA Women of Distinction Awards

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to add to the list of provincial Women of Distinction, the women who were honoured in Saskatoon at the YWCA Women of Distinction awards ceremony. More than 700 tickets were sold for the 20th annual dinner. All proceeds go to fund YWCA programs and in particular the Y women's shelter.

Excellent women were nominated in 11 categories — an honour in itself. And as we can all appreciate, choosing a recipient for each category was very difficult for the judges. However, award recipients were chosen. I want to mention each by name.

Malvina Gersher, a University of Saskatchewan student with a very large resumé of activities was named the young woman to watch. Three co-founders of the HOPE Cancer Help Centre were awarded the health, well-being, and spirituality category — Olga Stefaniuk, Lilah Brehon, and Marie Thiesson.

Reverend Pamela Thomas received the award for community development and social activism; and for science and technology and the environment, Deborah Fergusson; for entrepreneurship, Jean McKen; for education, Lillas Brown; for culture and heritage, Bernie Cruikshank; Brenda Baker for the arts; Suellen Beatty for management; Marilyn Georgas for sports and fitness; and Diane Gossen for lifetime achievement.

My congratulations to all recipients and nominees. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres Awareness Week

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to congratulate you on your election to this position as of yesterday.

This past Sunday, Estevan Diversified Services held a barbecue to wind up SARC (Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres) Awareness Week. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Estevan Diversified Services had a very impressive display at the Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres open house

last week at the Travelodge Hotel in Regina here. And I was very impressed by all the displays, as I'm sure were members from both sides of this House.

I would like to thank Wilf Tisdale, manager of the Estevan Diversified Services, for so graciously acting as my tour guide last Sunday. Wilf proudly showed off the paper and SARCAN recycling facilities, as well as their woodworking and craft shop.

I extend my congratulations to Wilf Tisdale and all those involved at Estevan Diversified Services. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Youth Week

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I had the great pleasure of speaking at a business luncheon held to kick off Youth Week celebrations in Regina.

Youth Week is hosted by the Rainbow Youth Centre's peer helpers' program. As many of us here well know, Rainbow Youth is Regina's only non-profit, multi-cultural youth serving agency, and it meets the diverse needs of youth between the ages of 11 and 25 through recreation, education, and skill development.

The peer helpers' program is one of the many excellent services offered by the Rainbow and it is especially noteworthy, Mr. Speaker, because it is centred on youth helping other youth. Every year the peer helpers coordinate Youth Week to honour the achievements of young people and to bring attention to the issues which affect youth.

Yesterday's launch luncheon was well attended, enjoyable, and informative. Other events this week will include a symposium on youth and violence, a showcase for youth talent, and a dance.

Congratulations to Rainbow Youth, to the peer helpers, and to everyone who is making a contribution to the success of this year's Youth Week celebration. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Radville Entrepreneur Recognized

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'd like to congratulate and recognize Radville entrepreneur, Natalie Regier. Natalie has been a teacher of the primary grades and also a resource teacher for some 12 years now.

Three years ago, Natalie began writing her own teaching materials, which she found a great benefit for both her regular classroom and the resource room. Natalie then started writing materials for other teachers and selling them independently.

Following the birth of her daughter, Natalie quit her teaching job and began committing more time to writing and promoting her material. Natalie's resource material allows teachers to add creativity and imagination to their classrooms.

Natalie has now had her teaching resources published and is working towards marketing her product throughout Canada and the United States. What started as a way to make her job easier, as well as helping other teachers, has turned into an exciting, growing business.

I'd like to congratulate Natalie on her success. Natalie is an inspiration to all who dare to dream, because through hard work and determination she has made her dream a reality. We'd like to wish her all the very best in her most exciting new venture. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Prince Albert Abbeyfield House

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As The Prince of Wales was unable to include Prince Albert in his Saskatchewan visit, as you will know, yet in an indirect but very significant way, Prince Charles was already making his presence felt. He's the royal patron of Abbeyfield homes.

Since the first Abbeyfield House was established in England in 1956, over 1,100 homes have been developed in 12 countries. Abbeyfield is an international, non-profit movement dedicated to providing affordable accommodation and companionship to seniors.

And, Mr. Speaker, thanks to the world of Abbeyfield House of Prince Albert — the work of — we have our own residence. In 1995 a small group of volunteers had the idea and the vision. Since then the society has grown to over 80 people, many of whom provide volunteer work on the construction of this home and will continue to help in its operation once the residents move in.

The target date for occupancy is the end of June. Ten single persons and two couples will move into the 14 units, with space for a manager, and a visitor suite.

This is a good project, Mr. Speaker, and I'm very proud that Sask Housing approved a grant of \$150,000 from the Centenary Fund, along with financial support from the city and several businesses, service clubs, and individuals. In particular I want to mention the Prince Albert Rotary Club, which donated the building site.

To Sylvia Gent, president of the society, to the future residents of Abbeyfield House, and to all who have made this a reality, congratulations and best wishes.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Molson Brewery

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well unfortunately today Saskatchewan experienced another turn of the screw by the socialist government opposite. Regina lost its brewery today, not because its beer is bad — or so I'm told — not because its workforce is weak, not because its bottom line is poor. So why did Regina lose its brewery today?

The reason, Mr. Speaker, not enough people in Saskatchewan to form a large enough market. Ever since the 1940s, the CCF-NDP (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation-New Democratic Party) have kept our population from growing, Mr. Speaker. They have caused some half million people to move out of this province — and thereto today, went the brewery.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Achievement in Business Excellence

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Battlefords' residents took time out from their problems last night to salute the successes of local businesses that make the Battlefords the trading centre of the northwest. I was delighted to join with over 500 people at the Tropical Inn for the annual Battlefords Business Excellence awards banquet in the Tropical Inn.

Our host Pius Pfeifer received the heritage award. Business of the year was the newly renovated Battleford's and District Co-op. Other winners were: property appearance, Doug's Paint Shoppe; new business, Vera's Restaurant; customer service, Tirecraft Auto Centre; young entrepreneur, Rob Deschsner of Pizza World; and community involvement, M&M Meats.

Congratulations to all the nominees and winners, and to a community that is pulling together in response to the challenges it faces, and as a result will emerge united and stronger.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Water Quality Infrastructure Program

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Premier. Yesterday the House of Commons passed a resolution calling for national water quality standards. While the Saskatchewan Party supports the intent of this motion, we also recognize that national standards have little value if we don't have the infrastructure we need to provide safe drinking water.

Today in Saskatchewan, as far as we know, 37 communities are under a boil-water advisory, and tens of millions of dollars are needed to upgrade water treatment facilities all across Saskatchewan.

The money needed is beyond our fiscal capacity of municipalities, or the province. That's why today the Saskatchewan Party is calling for a national water quality infrastructure program to deal with this growing problem all across Canada and so that we ensure that we never see another situation like Walkerton or North Battleford.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier support our call for a national water quality infrastructure program?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm pleased to respond on behalf of the government. And just to remind the citizens of Saskatchewan and the members opposite, that two years ago there was a \$10 million infrastructure program, funding for municipal infrastructure that the province introduced. A year ago, once again, in addition to that there was \$5 million for municipal infrastructure through the Centenary Fund.

This year the federal government has provided \$12 million, an injection to our budget, to support a tri-partite program to build our municipal infrastructure. This year with the grants in lieu of, which reached \$13.1 million dollars, there has been continued support for municipalities, including — including, Mr. Deputy Speaker — the \$33 million to school boards. So there has been ongoing continuous support to municipalities to care for the needs of our citizens.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the minister for underscoring the statement I made that the funding is certainly terribly inadequate. He reinforced that in his answer.

(14:00)

Mr. Speaker, if there's anything that's good, anything good that is going to come out of the situation in North Battleford, it's that it's brought the issue of water quality to national attention.

Many experts have said that the issue of water quality is a ticking time bomb. We should not wait for this bomb to go off again before we act. Mr. Speaker, because of North Battleford, Saskatchewan now has the opportunity to take a lead on this issue.

Will the Premier contact the Prime Minister and other provincial premiers and see that the development of a national water quality infrastructure program becomes a top priority at the next federal-provincial first ministers' conference?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The additional funding, of course the federal government obviously recognizes now, following the lead of Saskatchewan that initiated municipal infrastructure programs with \$10 million two years ago.

This year the province has an agreement with the federal government for Canada-Saskatchewan Infrastructure Program for \$113 million of federal-provincial money for municipal infrastructure. The province's share, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is \$56.7 million. With the municipal portion added in, that will be \$170 million over the next five years.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, those communities that have had advisories and have applied for help out of this program have been approved for that assistance. It was the initiative of the province that got this money here to help these people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish the minister wouldn't read his scripted answers and actually listen to the question. Because we're talking about inadequate funding and how we can improve on that by consulting and working with the federal government.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know if anyone really has a firm grasp of how big this problem is in Saskatchewan.

The Deputy Speaker: — Order, order. Order.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. North Battleford continues to be under a boil-water advisory. Thirty-seven other communities in Saskatchewan are also under a boil-water advisory. And all across Saskatchewan, after years of cutbacks in municipalities, there has been widespread deterioration in their water treatment facilities.

Mr. Speaker, instead of waiting for the next water crisis to come along, the government should get out in front of this problem.

Will the government, will the government conduct an overall review of water treatment facilities all across Saskatchewan to determine the current condition of these facilities and how much money would be needed to bring them up to acceptable standards?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I regret that the Leader of the Opposition would not want to hear the facts about monies that this province and the actions that they've taken to assist communities throughout the province.

There have been ongoing reviews of the water situation across the province, and as a result there have been precautionary drinking water advisories given. Over half of those communities now have approval under the Canada-Saskatchewan Infrastructure Program to assist them in making sure that their quality of water is adequate for their citizens.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the minister also knows that many requests for funding have been turned down under these very programs for lack of funding.

Mr. Speaker, today the Saskatchewan Party has called for a national water quality infrastructure program. We are also calling on the Premier to make this a top priority issue at the first ministers' conference.

Immediately after question period, I will be calling for an emergency debate on this issue. I will be asking members on both sides of this House to support our call for a national water quality infrastructure program, and to send a strong message to Ottawa by unanimously passing a motion on this proposal.

To the Premier: in light of recent events, will he allow this important debate to take place? Will the Premier allow this important debate to take place, and will he support our motion calling for a national water quality infrastructure program?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, the federal government obviously recognized the lead that the province of Saskatchewan took in putting money up front two years ago for infrastructure programs that addressed the problems and the issues that we are now concerned about.

This has been ongoing. These communities that have had the precautionary boil-water advisories, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have already had monies approved to correct those problems. And I'll be happy to read the list of all those communities for the members opposite.

I just wonder why the official opposition, Mr. Deputy Speaker, voted against a budget that would add 10 additional people to inspect and examine our water quality system throughout the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Reporting to Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Yesterday I asked the Minister of Environment a series of questions about routine operating policies and procedures within his department. In every single instance the minister said wait for the inquiry, completely abrogating his responsibilities as a minister of the Crown. Well, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party does look forward to the work of the inquiry but that does not absolve the minister of his duty to answer basic questions, and what his department knew and when they knew it.

The minister has now had another full day to find the answers to these questions. So I will ask again: how many times in the past year did the city of North Battleford report the discharge of untreated sewage to SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management) as required by their very own legislation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. First of all, I want to say that this is a very serious matter as I mentioned time and time again. And once again, I want to point out over the last year SERM has not been contacted by the city of North Battleford as to when and where they dump their raw sewage. And I want to re-emphasize that — over the past year SERM has not been contacted at all.

Mr. Speaker, I told the member time and time again yesterday that I have a full copy of the report that was done by SERM trying to assess what went wrong in North Battleford, and today I will table that document to make sure, to make sure that he knows exactly what he's dealing with here, Mr. Speaker. Very, very important, Mr. Speaker.

The opposition talks about a number of arguments they have in terms of safe water. First of all, they called for an inquiry. We established the inquiry. Then the next day they say, oh, it's a cover-up. And then the member gets up and asks me yesterday,

why weren't you at that national ministers' meeting talking about safe water? Well, Mr. Speaker, I was in this very Chamber voting in favour of a budget to increase our staff by 10 while he voted against.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Well perhaps the minister can tell us: was he or was anyone in his department aware of any unreported discharges of sewage during the three-week period that the water treatment plant facility in North Battleford was not fully functioning?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Let me re-emphasize and definitely say that SERM was not notified by the city of North Battleford of any dumping of raw sewage by the city's treatment plant into the river over the past year and over a past number of years, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We don't understand why we aren't getting the direct answers, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to these questions. Either the city was reporting the discharges, or they weren't — one or the other. Which is it? Either SERM is aware of unreported sewage discharges or they weren't. Which is it?

The minister keeps asking us not to speculate. Well we're not speculating, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We're asking some straightforward questions here, looking for some straightforward answers.

Mr. Speaker, why won't the minister point-blank answer the question? Is he or isn't he aware of any unreported discharges?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, once again I stand up and I give the definite answer today — no speculation — that no member of SERM was contacted by the city of North Battleford to say that there was raw sewage being dumped into the river. Again I re-emphasize that no official of SERM was advised by the city of North Battleford.

And, Mr. Speaker, I also want to point out that in the event that the member does not get the full details, I've said before and I'll say it again, the report's right here, and we'll give him the full information.

As a minister, I was advised on April 30, the same day that the rest of the SERM officials were advised. And, Mr. Speaker, again I ask the member not to speculate. This is a very important issue. We will provide all the timely details to the media and to the opposition and to anybody in the province that wants to know.

We have nothing to hide, Mr. Speaker, and we're looking forward to the inquiry. We want to see what went wrong, where, when, and how.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the minister then saying that no one at SERM was aware of any discharge of raw sewage into the North Saskatchewan River prior to April 30, the date it was first reported to the minister, even though it was in the media on April 25?

And yesterday, I might remind the minister, he couldn't even remember who it was that had reported it to him on April 30. Is that when SERM first became aware of any raw sewage discharge — yes or no?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — We've tabled the document. That document was released to the public by the city and with SERM.

And again I point out, when the event occurred, in terms of my knowledge of when the spill, if there's any spill that occurred in the river, it was April 30.

And what I want to share with that member is very, very important, is that document went and we done a thorough inspection of the plant. And upon inspection of the sewage treatment plant, that's when we noticed that there could have been some dumping, and we asked the questions. And that was when we were notified, Mr. Speaker.

And what I want to point out as well, Mr. Speaker, is that we have gone out to the Battlefords, and we're working with the community, and we're doing daily testing — daily testing — of the water to make sure that we're able to ascertain that the water levels are, where they should be, and this is safe water.

And furthermore, Mr. Speaker, after we're done making sure that the water treatment plant is safe and within standards, then we want to flush the entire system out so we're able to do what we said we were going to do, and that's to make sure that we have no more threat to the public health of the people of North Battleford and area.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Canada West Report on Demographic Patterns

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Economic Development. Yesterday in Saskatoon the Canada West Foundation held a seminar on economic and demographic trends in the four Western provinces. Unfortunately, the news out of the meeting was grim for Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Saskatchewan has the highest percentage of residents age 15 and over 65 in Western Canada. Saskatchewan has the smallest number of people in the prime taxpaying years, and that's between the age of 15 and 65. It's a percentage of the population.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is a demographic time bomb that threatens our ability in our province to provide even most basic public services. What is the minister doing to defuse this demographic time bomb before it really blows up?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member from Lloydminster that this government has been delivering budgets since 1991 that have been very consistent in a number of ways.

Firstly, we have attempted to get control of the deficit budgeting and we won that battle, sir. And the reason we did that is because the amount of money that was going into service Tory debt from the 1980s was consuming program dollars to create jobs and to create education and to create infrastructure here in this province. And, Mr. Speaker, we won that battle.

As well we've been cutting the debt load in this province consistently when we had the ability to do so, so that we aren't serving the debt to the degree that we did before. We've made the largest tax decrease in the history of this province. Part of it is being implemented this year and some more of it next year. And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, we have built a healthy economy in this province.

We've got some difficult challenges facing us in agriculture but I want to say, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan will win this battle by working with their government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:15)

Mr. Wakefield: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Canada West Foundation also released research indicating 40 per cent of our young people, those who are between the ages of 18 and 24, plan to leave Saskatchewan within the next five years.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is yet another indication of 10 years of failed NDP economic policy. But it's also a wake-up call because if we keep heading down that road the NDP has put us on, Saskatchewan's tax base will continue to shrink and our ability to fund basic public services like health and education and the infrastructure will continue to deteriorate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, will the minister admit that the NDP's gross mismanagement of the economy is fuelling the continuing exodus of young people from Saskatchewan? And will the minister tell us what he is going to do to fix the economic mess that the NDP government has created for us.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, that member can continue to ask the questions that have been prepared for him. I want to have them look on a broader perspective at what this government has done working with the business community, working with Aboriginal community to develop jobs and job opportunities.

And I want him to look around his home community and the increase in the oil and gas activity.

And I'd also like him to look around northern Saskatchewan in terms of the hundreds of millions of dollars that have been

invested in forestry development, which includes First Nations people as partners, because that is the largest growing population of our youth, is the Aboriginal people.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, these were the same people that opposed the gaming industry when it was introduced in this province that now employs hundreds of young Aboriginal people, First Nations people.

But I want to say what's more important, Mr. Speaker, is the attitude of the people of this province which is so inconsistent from the doom and the gloom that you hear from those people every day.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When I look around my city I see where the development is and where people are moving to — it's very plain. And whatever the NDP is doing in Saskatchewan right now, it just isn't working. And the situation is getting desperate, according to the Canada West Foundation, as well as a lot of the people that were at that meeting yesterday in Saskatoon.

Mr. Speaker, people want this provincial government to focus on highways and health care and safe drinking water. But what we're getting from this NDP government is Crown corporations running out of control, deteriorating infrastructures, and non-competitive taxes. No wonder almost half of our young people have written off this NDP government and decided to leave the province.

So, Mr. Speaker, will the minister finally admit the NDP's economic policies are a failure and will he tell us what specific measures his government is taking to stop this exodus of young people?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I will admit a failure in this province, and it's the failure of the members of the Saskatchewan Party to win the hearts and the minds of the people of this province because of their negative attitude. And that's the failure, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the other part of the failure is the budget that's before this House, which these people vote against, that put more money into highways, that put more money into education, and that put more money into health care.

Mr. Speaker, he talks about infrastructure — \$319 million is the most that's ever been spent in this province to rebuild highways, to rebuild infrastructure because of the growing demand on the oil and gas industry, the growing potash industry, and the uranium industry which is on the cusp of a great big leap forward because of energy shortages across North America.

Now they can holler as loud as they want, Mr. Speaker, but this population has grown since 1991, and they know it, unlike the record of the previous administration where they lost 33,000 jobs from '87 to '91.

Mr. Speaker, we've got some challenges, but we are going to succeed — this province is going to succeed in spite of them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Municipal Property Assessment

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, my question's for the minister of Municipal Government. On Monday the city of Swift Current voted to dump SAMA (Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency) and hire a private contractor to do their property assessment. And Swift Current is just the latest in a list of cities that has opted out of SAMA; North Battleford, Lloydminster have also decided to look elsewhere for assessment services.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what is wrong at SAMA? Why did Swift Current decide to join other cities and look for their . . . services SAMA's providing elsewhere?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, again for the edification of members opposite. SAMA is an independent agency, and under the Act, those communities do have the option of opting out.

However, there still needs to be an assessment and an evaluation carried out in accordance with the manual that's provided, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That option exists. They have certain requirements that need to be met under The Assessment Management Agency Act, and as long as those commitments are met, as long as those criteria are met, they have the opportunity to opt out.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, municipal governments and school divisions rely on SAMA to give them reliable property assessment information. More than \$1 billion in tax revenue is raised each year from the property tax base and most of that billion dollars is based on the assessment information that comes from SAMA.

But many local governments are saying the assessments they're getting from SAMA are seriously flawed. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, some have already decided to go elsewhere to get these services provided.

Mr. Speaker, it's not good enough for the minister to simply shrug his shoulders and gaze at his navel. The problems at SAMA are obviously very serious.

What is the minister, Mr. Deputy Speaker, doing about municipalities' loss of confidence in SAMA and its property assessment services?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I didn't realize my navel was over there, because that's where I was gazing.

But let me just reiterate, the communities across this province have the option of opting out of having SAMA do their assess

. . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Order.

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Regardless of which community, I'm not just shrugging my shoulders.

The communities have the autonomy to choose whomever they wish, but they still must carry out their assessment in accordance with the rules, in accordance with the manual that's established by all the participants that the hon. member mentioned that need to have input into ensuring proper evaluations of properties throughout the province, no matter what community.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Department of Labour's New Information Booklet

Hon. Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, young and first-time workers are at greater risk of being injured at work than are their more experienced colleagues. We know workers between the ages of 15 and 24 make up 16 per cent of the workforce and this same age group accounts for a full quarter of the injuries reported to the Workers' Compensation Board.

We also know that young and first-time workers are generally anxious to know more about their rights and responsibilities at work.

Mr. Speaker, we believe that young and first-time workers should have every opportunity to enjoy safe and positive experiences in the workforce. I'm therefore pleased to inform the Assembly that this week the Department of Labour is distributing a new information booklet aimed at helping new workers as they enter the workforce. The *Guide for New Workers* contains practical information on more than 30 workplace topics to help young and other new workers to have positive first-time work experiences.

The guide includes information on workplace rights and responsibilities, occupational health and safety, and numerous other topics including valuable information for workers to use during the four phases of the job cycle. The four phases of the job cycle, Mr. Speaker, are, one, entering the workforce; starting the job; during the job; and of course, leaving the job.

Sample copies of the booklet which is part of the department's Ready for Work program are being distributed to high schools and employment centres across Saskatchewan this week.

It's very appropriate that this new resource is being distributed this week, Mr. Speaker, as this is North American Occupational Safety and Health Week. And this year's NAOSH (North American Occupational Safety and Health) theme is Prevention is the Cure, and nowhere is prevention more important than with new workers.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan workplaces are facing the challenge of changing demographics, and we must look to young people

to fill the jobs that baby boomers are leaving. It's therefore incumbent upon all of us to work together to ensure that new and first-time workers have the kind of first-time work experiences that will encourage them to recognize their abilities and become full contributors to the Saskatchewan workforce.

The *Guide for New Workers* was prepared as part of a partnership with Saskatchewan Labour and in consultation with teachers, employment counsellors, students, young workers, and other employment-related agencies. It's an example of how Saskatchewan Labour is working with employers, employees, teachers, and students to help young people prepare to join the labour force.

Mr. Speaker, this is the guide, and it will be distributed certainly to all members today and tomorrow and beyond. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I at this time congratulate you on your election yesterday.

I'd like to respond to the minister's statement. As the minister has said, that it's very important that young and first-time workers gain experience and are aware of the dangers — possible dangers — in the workplace. And definitely the young people between the ages of 15 and 24 are at risk — as the minister has said, make up 16 per cent of the Saskatchewan workforce and unfortunately has one-quarter of all the injury claims at Workers' Compensation Board. As was said, it's very important that the young people and the first-time workers have every opportunity to enjoy a safe and positive experience at the workplace.

This guide, on the face of it — I haven't seen it — but on the face of it, it seems to be a positive step helping young people and first-time workers enter the workforce, starting a new job, and their experience doing a job, and also leaving a job. As I mentioned in my private member's statement yesterday, about the North American Occupational Safety and Health Week, prevention is the cure. And we all must — as a society, and as employers, and employees — take up that challenge to prevent injuries.

As the minister has stated, as the economy grows and the workplaces develop, we will need these workers as much as they need the jobs. And it's very interesting to note, in the paper today, the number of young people that will be leaving over the next five . . . as discussed in the foundation, it says that 40 per cent of Saskatchewan people 18 to 24 are anticipating moving out of the province within five years.

And that really brings up the question, not only do we need workers in the workforce, and we need jobs. We have to have a place for young people to work in Saskatchewan. And that means getting jobs, and building jobs, and creating jobs in the province for the young people to keep them in the province. And these statistics are unacceptable to the people of Saskatchewan.

It also goes on to say that the guide was prepared as a partnership with Saskatchewan Labour, in consultation with

teachers, employment counsellors, students, young workers, and other employment related agencies.

Unfortunately, nowhere in here do I see that it was in the consultation with employers or small businesses in the province. And I think they've totally missed a very important part of the equation in Saskatchewan, that the employers and small businesses must be included in all these areas concerning employment. And not only the responsibility of the employers and the new employees in the workforce, but the government must take into account the small businesses in this province and work with them so that not only at first that there are jobs, but there are also safe jobs in the province.

(14:30)

The other area I'd like to speak on, on this matter, is also the young people in this province should not only be informed of their rights in the workforce, but also have an opportunity to become aware of the opportunities in building their own small business, and not only be a worker in the workforce, but being a small-business owner.

This information the minister has prepared kind of begs the question, is this guide really a statement that hints at the taxpayers of this province paying to promote unionization of young people in the province. And I think we would like to take a look at this guide to make sure that this is not the direction that the government is taking, and really encourage the government to also include in the equation small businesses and young people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, with leave, to move a motion of urgent and pressing necessity under rule 46.

The Deputy Speaker: — Proceed.

MOTION UNDER RULE 46

Water Quality in Saskatchewan

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, the last few days or so have come as a real revelation for many in our province. The problems we have seen in North Battleford with their water drives home the point of how important it is that our citizens have access to good quality drinking water.

This is further driven home by the fact that there are over three dozen other communities in this province currently under boil-water orders. And, Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with water quality control systems and infrastructure in our province that is rapidly aging and in serious need of upgrading and, in some cases, even replacement.

Mr. Speaker, the municipalities cannot afford to do this work on their own, but the work must be done. The province of Saskatchewan cannot afford to do this work on its own, but again I insist the work must be done.

It will only be with the participation of the federal government, along with the province and municipalities, that we can do the necessary work to keep our water quality infrastructure operating at an acceptable level and that people can be comfortable . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Why is the member on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I would argue that that member is entering into debate. That is not the proper protocol. He has asked for leave to introduce a motion. That is appropriate, but debate in this forum . . . in this format is not.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. On the point of order, the Leader of the Official Opposition, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is merely explaining why this is an emergency motion, why it is an emergency and needs to be presented immediately, as the procedures of this House call for.

The Deputy Speaker: — It is understood under rule 46 that it is a brief explanation as to the matter of the emergency debate, so I would ask the Hon. Leader of the Opposition to please put his motion forward with brief comments before his motion.

MOTION UNDER RULE 46

Water Quality in Saskatchewan

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that. And as I was making the case for the emergency debate I actually only had a couple of sentences left, so I will continue where I left off, Mr. Speaker, saying that it is only with the co-operation of the federal government, municipalities, and the province that we can restore confidence in our water.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I move the following motion . . . Mr. Speaker, I move the following motion, seconded by the member from Carrot River Valley:

That this Assembly . . .

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, we believe that a motion should be debated:

That this Assembly urge the federal government, in consultation with provincial governments, to develop and fund a national water quality infrastructure program and that this initiative be added to the agenda of the next federal-provincial first ministers' conference.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — Why is the member on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, we are not prepared to debate this without the proper notice having been given and it wasn't given. We were not notified, and for that reason we're willing to debate this on a motion tomorrow, once proper notice

has been given.

Leave not granted.

The Deputy Speaker: — Why is the member on his feet?

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: — Please state your point of order.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, the Government House Leader rose, not on a point of order, not on a point of privilege, not as a question of debate, but his comments were not part of the entire procedures of this House and should be struck from the record. Mr. Speaker, I so ask.

The Deputy Speaker: — I will take that under advisement.

Why is the member on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Point of order, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member will recognize that this House has no tradition of striking the records. He knows that fully well, Mr. Speaker. And I think it is in order to simply find his point of order not well taken.

The Deputy Speaker: — I will take that under advisement. I will take that under advisement and report back.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We'll convert.

The Deputy Speaker: — Question 152 is converted to motions for return (debatable).

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm extremely pleased to stand up today and table the response to question 153. Being an open and accountable government, we're very pleased to answer the questions.

The Deputy Speaker: — Questions 153 and 156 are answered.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am extremely pleased this afternoon to stand and table a response to question no. 154, being an open and accountable government, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — Question 154 is answered.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am once again extremely pleased to stand and table a response to question no. 155. Being an open and accountable government, of course we want to answer their questions.

The Deputy Speaker: — Question 155 is answered.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Once again, I'm very pleased to stand and table a response to question no.

156. Being an open and accountable government, of course we want to answer their questions.

The Deputy Speaker: — Question 156 is answered.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 15 - The Credit Union Amendment Act, 2001

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm pleased today to rise to move second reading of The Credit Union Amendment Act, 2001.

In 1998, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government introduced The Credit Union Act. This legislation provided credit unions with a new legal framework to take the system into this century and the Act was proclaimed in February 1999.

The credit union system has worked with the new Act and the regulations for a little over a year now, and I'm pleased to report, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that credit unions are generally pleased with the new Act. As expected with any major piece of legislation, the credit unions have identified areas that require correction, further clarification and change, and the government is pleased to address those areas in this Bill.

During the process leading up to the development of the new Act, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the regulatory framework for the credit union system was closely examined, and an important component of that framework is self-regulation. Not surprisingly, credit union committees play a very important role in self-regulation.

Credit unions have requested improvements in relation to two such committees, the Conduct Review Committee and the Audit Committee.

The Conduct Review Committee is responsible for ensuring appropriate practices and procedures are put in place inside the credit union when dealing with certain related parties. The committee ensures that business considerations, combined with the overriding purpose of credit unions to serve members, is the basis on which business dealings or transactions occur with related parties of the credit union.

Credit union experience has been that current provisions dealing with related party transactions are difficult to understand, administer, and apply. Accordingly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government has responded by introducing amendments in this Bill which will address those concerns.

Another important committee is the Audit Committee. This committee is responsible for the review of audit procedures and works in conjunction with the credit union auditor.

Certain sections of the Act have caused some confusion as to whether the president and vice-president of the credit union can sit as members. Amendments here are being proposed, which clarify that these officers can in fact sit as members.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the balance of amendments addressed,

address detailed corrections such as grammatical and spelling errors identified over the past year.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to move second reading of An Act to amend The Credit Union Act, 1998.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, Bill 15 relates to a very important part of the Saskatchewan economy, and that is our credit unions. Mr. Speaker, they are spread across this province. They provide a lot of support for particularly rural communities, but very much so the larger urban communities as well, Mr. Speaker. Each one of those has a number of credit unions in. So it's an integral part of our entire life and lifestyle in Saskatchewan.

The changes being proposed in this Bill, Mr. Speaker, some of them seem to be pretty straightforward and valid reasons. The change to allow the president and vice-presidents of a credit union to be a part of the audit board certainly seems to be eminently reasonable, Mr. Speaker, and you would have to ask, why was this not the case originally? What was the reasoning that these members were excluded from sitting on their very own audit boards?

Mr. Speaker, another part though brings into question some reasons of what is happening, and what are they? The Conduct Review Committee, Mr. Speaker, what is that committee about? Who sits on that committee? Is that a committee made up of members of the board? Is it made up of members of the credit union at large — the individual members that have paid their \$5 fee to be a member of the credit union? Or is it made up of staff?

I think that's a very important question, Mr. Speaker, and needs further explanation to determine what the value of it is. Who are they reviewing and who sits on that board, Mr. Speaker, I think is very critical to the operation of every credit union.

The Bill also deals with what is termed related parties. Again, Mr. Speaker, there is a need to determine exactly what is meant by the term related parties. And who does that relate to? Is that employees of the credit union? Is that members . . . is that the board members and their families? Exactly what do they mean by the term related parties, Mr. Speaker? And how is this going to work in context of the operations of small credit unions and large credit unions, Mr. Speaker?

(14:45)

In some communities where a credit union exists, there may be members of virtually every family sitting as either a board member or as an employee of that credit union. Does that mean that all of the members virtually of that credit union are somehow a related party to the credit union and those transactions should then be reviewed by a conduct review committee?

I think those are some of the questions that need to be asked of the credit unions themselves, Mr. Speaker, before a determination can be made on whether or not this is a good and valid piece of legislation; whether it's going to serve the needs

of the credit unions, of the credit union members, and the people of Saskatchewan as a whole, Mr. Speaker. Therefore I would move that we adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 9 — The Power Corporation Amendment Act, 2001

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the House today to move second reading of The Power Corporation Amendment Act, 2001.

The Power Corporation Act which governs SaskPower was drafted first in 1949 and these are the first substantive changes since 1996. Over the past several years, the electrical industry has evolved and it obviously continues to change, Mr. Speaker. The amendments that I am introducing today reflect some of those industry changes. The amendments also relate to SaskPower's commitment to continue to provide customers with safe, reliable, and cost-effective source of electricity.

Mr. Speaker, these amendments are especially important as SaskPower prepares to introduce the open access transmission tariff, or OATT as it is commonly referred to. The OATT will mean that third-party suppliers of electricity will be allowed access or rent, if you will, of SaskPower's transmission lines. SaskPower customers will also benefit from the corporation's access to other utilities for importing and exporting electricity.

The amendments will also help bring the Act into alignment with other Crown corporations' Acts. The Bill includes some wording changes related to the collection of delinquent accounts, some access matters, as well as easement issues relating to moving power lines to correct a hazardous situation. There are no direct financial implications to these amendments, Mr. Speaker.

In summary, these changes will enable SaskPower to meet the challenges of a constantly evolving electrical industry, continue to carry on business in a responsible manner, and impact positively on the continued reliability of the province's electrical system.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of a Bill to amend The Power Corporation Act.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to stand today and speak on Bill No. 9, an Act to amend The Power Corporation Act.

On the face of it, as the minister has said, it seems that it's . . . many of the amendments are really housekeeping in nature, but I'd like to point out a few things. And some questions arise out of some of the explanation notes as far as the comments concerning advance of deregulation and the amendments in the Act. And it just makes one wonder is that leaving SaskPower really with a leg up on the private sector in many areas, and is it reducing competition in the province.

And when you talk about authority to transmit power across the province on behalf of third parties also raises the same question. And I wonder if the Act is again limiting the private sector in those areas.

The minister also mentioned a number of things concerning construction of power lines, under a parcel of land, and so on and so forth. This brings to mind health issues and the rights of people or the people . . . or the owners of the land that do not have rights to stop power lines overhead or otherwise, and the whole area of the health concerns concerning power lines and the research that's been done into that area.

The minister also mentioned concerning SaskPower's ability to enter the land adjoining right-of-way for the purpose of construction and operation and maintenance, and I was just wondering if this Bill says anything to the compensation to owners of land and the amount that landowners would receive in compensation if there's any damage done to crops or property and equipment.

Again, the explanation for the amendment that gives SaskPower the explicit right to consent to not only supply but also the transportation. Again, it makes one wonder about the lack of commitment to opening up any competition in this province to competitors.

And lastly, Mr. Speaker, I don't see anything in this Bill that reins in or possibly stops the corporation from making any more unwise foreign investments, as a number of Crowns have done, and this is an area that's of great concern to the Saskatchewan people. We believe the investments and jobs should be created in this province.

And just like *The Leader-Post* from today says, that 40 per cent of Saskatchewan people age from 18 to 24 are anticipating leaving the province in the next five years. And I think the government owns the Crowns and should take steps to increase the opportunity for young people to have jobs in this province.

And there is many questions, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to take this back and talk to all the stakeholders and many of the people of this province that have concerns with this Bill. And at this time I'd like to adjourn.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 10

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Sonntag that **Bill No. 10 — The Oil and Gas Conservation Amendment Act, 2001** be now read a second time.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would like to address today some of the issues brought forth by Bill No. 10, which is of course The Oil and Gas Conservation Amendment Act.

There are several aspects of this Bill that I would like to address today, Mr. Deputy . . . or Mr. Speaker. It is very important when we look at our oil and gas sector that all issues in regard to environment and of course economics come into play.

In particular, this amendment provides for a program that will ensure Saskatchewan oil and gas wells and facilities-related sites are properly disposed of, reclaimed once they are no longer needed.

These wells, which are commonly known as orphan wells, are wells which are temporary suspended or shut down, or due to low — I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker — due to low prices or rates of production are shut down. They're also wells I guess that are abandoned or companies that have gone broke or have since gone out of business, have left them.

I understand there's as many as 10,000 non-producing sites and wells. And of course that number is growing by roughly 200 to 500 wells per year.

SaskEnergy and mine officials have stated that there are, right now, are fewer than 20 wells have been properly abandoned or shut down by their owners, which I would say says a lot towards this industry. With that many wells, I would say this industry so far polices itself and is a very responsible industry.

Although we must remain diligent as to whether a lot more of these wells will be properly shut down in the months and years ahead.

As with 10,000 non-producing wells, an increase of possibly 500 wells per year would dictate that we must be very careful in seeing that these sites are properly cleaned up.

I'm very encouraged by the fact that this new oil and gas orphan program is modelled after a similar program in Alberta, and one that has been working quite well there I understand. It is always of note when Saskatchewan decides to follow the Alberta example.

I understand, Mr. Speaker, that this industry will pay into this fund through annual fees, which is important. The industry will look after itself. There's a few questions I have about this Bill. I don't know if the government also is going to pay into this fund, which I believe they should throw in a little money.

Mr. Speaker, right now I think there are approximately 41,000 oil and gas that service . . . related wells, along with numerous flow lines to facilities, like old batteries and gas-producing plants. We must be very careful to look at the environmental aspect of this as well as any footprint that will be left on the land. We would definitely like to ensure that this footprint is temporary, and the program such as the one put forward should go to addressing that, we hope.

We must also ensure that the licensing system of this amendment Act also ensures that the industry will meet their abandonment and reclaim responsibilities.

We must look at the two important aspects of this Bill, which of course includes a licensing system for wells and facilities, as well as a system of financial guarantees that will ensure that all who are licensed will be able to meet their responsibilities.

When it comes to abandonment and reclaim of all well sites in the province, we look at the fund that this program sets up, sets up to be used for abandoned and reclaimed wells and facilities,

and very important to note of course that this, so far as we understand, is just an industry-funded program.

As we look at other environmental issues that have sprung up in the past and the government's reaction, it's very important that we look at this industry and sponsored fund for cleanup and make sure that what it does . . . what it claims to do that it does.

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

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, I ask leave of the House to introduce a guest.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I appreciate also the willingness of the hon. member to give way to allow me to introduce a guest in the House.

Seated in the west gallery, Mr. Speaker, is a young woman who just about a week and a half ago was the valedictorian at the University of Saskatchewan agricultural diploma and certificate graduation. Her name is Alberta Swan, and she's a young woman who I think has a very bright and promising future here in our province.

Many of us who were there I think were much moved by the motivational address, in fact in what she presented to her friends and colleagues and those of us who were present. And, Mr. Speaker, along with wishes for success in her future, I would ask all hon. members to extend a warm welcome to Ms. Alberta Swan.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 10 — The Oil and Gas Conservation Amendment Act, 2001 (continued)

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I may have to start from scratch again but I think I can remember where I started from.

As we look at other environmental issues that have sprung up in the past and the government's reaction to them, it's very important that we look at this industry-sponsored fund for clean-up, make sure that it does what it claims that it can do.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the oil and gas industry in Saskatchewan will have a bright future, and that should mean further development of the oil and gas revenues in this province. And then amendments and programs such as this definitely should begin the sooner the better as a rapid influx of new development hopefully will occur in the future.

Mr. Speaker, it's very important that I impress upon this Assembly today how strong I feel about the further economic

development to this province and how we should be developing our resources further. We should be attracting more businesses to the province, and there's definitely potential for our young people who are graduating from our colleges today and in the future to have that future here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, businesses in Saskatchewan like to see these kinds of developments, but these go hand in hand of course in maintaining the natural beauty of Saskatchewan. I can see that this kind of program hopefully in regards to orphan wells that when wells are dug and utilized, they are cleaned up and essentially the landscape is unscarred from the experience.

This can be done and it will be done because I believe strongly in the people of Saskatchewan — particularly the young people of Saskatchewan who will be working in this industry. They see how beautiful our province is and they want to develop it more and they want to retain its beauty. I think that it is important that we impress upon our young people today that this must be in their thoughts when they consider developing our province economically.

Mr. Speaker, there is no reason that we cannot see our province develop well economically while at the same time being in tune with mother nature. I think that this view is also shared by most Saskatchewan residents who wish to keep our province's natural beauty in the state while allowing our people to develop and thrive further as we look into the future.

I would like to talk for a few moments about the oil industry in Alberta. I have several friends and relatives working in the oil field industry and some of them have been working there for many years.

One thing that has impressed them from the last boom period, which would have been in the late '70s and early '80s and now the boom that's going on there right now, that at that time oil was needed as quickly as they could pull it up from the ground. And that's, I believe, when this orphan well program legislation came in effect in Alberta; that Alberta enacted on it probably I think in the early '70s or '80s, which also can bring into question why this province is lagging behind probably 10-15 years looking at a program like that.

It seems now that this legislation may go in place and this fund will be set up . . . And the fund that is in Alberta, from what I hear, that the leases in the areas where the wells are dug in Alberta and the oil is moved off the land, are very tight, and very strict rules applying from loading oil into trucks and for the trucks to take it out, as well as the rig movers to get in to move the equipment away from the well.

And this seems to be the general consensus across the province, that this cleanup program and the licensing program to ensure that these sites are looked after is definitely working well in Alberta.

Now of course during this present boom in Alberta, the oil industry in such good economic conditions that we see today, it is very important that this legislation continue and ensures that these companies take responsibility, and which I've stressed before in this Bill, they have been looking after their industry quite well. I would like to put that on record.

But when we also look at the oil industry in Alberta and just see how well it's developed there and how many people it employs, a lot of these of course are younger people who haven't been able to find any economic opportunities here in Saskatchewan. So many of them from Saskatchewan are working out in the oil field industry in Alberta.

It's just another sign Alberta is doing the right thing at the programs, and the industry itself is very healthy and there's a bright future there ahead.

Indeed the price of oil in the last while has almost doubled, and it seems like it may hold that way for a long ways into the future. And of course this bodes well for the future, as the Alberta government is doing quite well, and there's even talk of them further removing the provincial income taxes presently paid there.

I think there isn't a person from a small town in this province that they don't know a friend or a relative that isn't working in the oil fields in Alberta. In fact I think that's what's keeping most of the Saskatchewan farms going, is going to the rigs and coming back and keeping your farm going.

Also when we take a broader look at how much oil industries impact in taxation decisions such as this, that it is clear that the Government of Saskatchewan should be looking at further and rapid development of the oil sector here in the province. And that could be further developed with additional incentives.

Of course, hand in hand, that goes with Bill No. 10, which will ensure that even a rapid expansion of the oil industry in Saskatchewan would be kept in check similar to Alberta, and that environmental issues would be nailed down by the aspects of the licensee having to follow all the rules and regulations of well cleanup.

Definitely we would have to keep a close eye on how the equipment is moved in and around and again off the lease.

We must ensure that all clauses in Bill 10 ensure that the oil field companies, the drillers, the rig movers, and the related industries all realize their responsibility in keeping our environment safe while at the same time allowing for the economy to grow.

This is why I am very concerned that these licences do the job that they're meant to do. It's all well and good to ensure that a driller has a licence, but it's also good to see that . . . to make sure that they can fulfill their responsibilities.

However if Saskatchewan does incur dramatic growth in the oil industry, then we must also have a more streamlined way to ensure that the companies that are set up and that want to run here are able to get this licence in a timely fashion. We'd like to make sure that it would happen and that further, any streamlining would still engage the oil field company in attaining all the safety aspects of which I've just spoken about.

Mr. Speaker, the conclusion we are reaching here is that we must not allow too much micromanagement here, which would probably end up delaying the licensing process to oil field companies when there's intent to engage in drilling wells and

helping our economy along here in Saskatchewan.

I would suppose that there can be a way to reach a certain level of efficiency when it comes to licensing each company that would definitely guarantee that the company is reputable and deserves a licence and would have the opportunity to drill here in the province of Saskatchewan without too much red tape, but at the same time also guarantee that our Saskatchewan environment is intact.

Mr. Speaker, our environment is of the utmost importance, I believe when you talk to all the residents. I know I've stressed it in many times in this address about my Arm River constituency and the beauty there.

But I think it is key to what people are concerned with when it comes to the oil industry. People want to see jobs, they want to see progress, and they want to see our economy grow; but of course they also want to see that environment is looked after and that wildlife is not threatened. They want to see that our land does not get scarred as a result of oil field development. And of course all these concerns are ones that we all hold close to our heart.

And I'm very proud to say that our province is one of the most diverse, most naturally beautiful in Canada, when we look at the southern and central part of our province and we see our beautiful prairie landscape and we continue on further north into our forest areas, which include hundreds and hundreds of lakes with a beauty all of their own.

There's also another important industry up there that has been a major part of Saskatchewan economy, and that's the forest industry. And also that is . . . there's many environmental concerns with that, but that's another industry I think has looked after, policed itself very well and looked after it.

Another large industry concerning Saskatchewan is our potash industry, and it seems to be doing very well these past few years, and there of course there's many environmental concerns there.

But all aspects of this have to be looked at, and I think this is something we all should remain very aware of as we watch out for environmental concerns. Of course when we're talking about Bill No. 10, it's just a small step towards a broad range of environmentally safe solutions to some of the problems that are brought up by industry in the province.

Mr. Speaker, I think with all these different ideas in mind, we can definitely take a serious look at this Bill, conclude that this is definitely a step in the right direction towards caring for environment as well as allowing the oil industry to proceed in the province while maintaining many safety standards. And also looking at the industry more closely, I think that by relying on the Alberta model, we have seen a model that has worked and will work in Saskatchewan. And that makes us more prepared for an expansion of our own oil industry, which I believe firmly will take our province in more of a solid economic direction.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, all that is holding us back is a proper policy to come into play to allow industry and business to thrive. And I would call on the present government to look

more seriously, as we need to further develop our provincial industry base. We need to bring in new businesses. We need to keep our people here in Saskatchewan. They are the future of our province.

So I'd call on the government to seriously address these issues and come out with more Bills which provide more of an incentive to bring businesses into the province, into the oil and gas sector, as well as all the sectors about which I've discussed in this address. So I'd call on the Premier to form some sort of action plan to further our economic future here in Saskatchewan.

With that I would like to adjourn debate right now on Bill No. 10.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 11

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Sonntag that **Bill No. 11 — The Freehold Oil and Gas Production Tax Amendment Act, 2001** be now read a second time.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this Bill deals with one of our most important industries. Probably our largest net contributor to the provincial government in royalties, Mr. Speaker, is the oil industry. And the freehold oil and gas production tax deals directly with that industry.

Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan there are two kinds of minerals holdings. There's that held by the Crown, which are known as Crown minerals or Crown leases; and there are those held by individuals or corporations through ownership rights, Mr. Speaker, and those are known as freehold.

This Bill deals with those freehold leases, Mr. Speaker, freehold minerals that are held by individuals.

Now most of the province, Mr. Speaker, is not directly affected by this Bill. The freehold oil and gas is generally held, Mr. Speaker, on the extreme east side of the province. And fact is, Mr. Speaker, all of the land, including homestead land, Mr. Speaker, east of the first meridian — east of the second meridian, Mr. Speaker, had to get my meridians straight — the mineral rights were given with the land titles initially, Mr. Speaker. When you got your homestead, you got the mineral rights. When you bought land, you got the mineral rights with it, Mr. Speaker.

West of the second meridian, Mr. Speaker, you had to pay an additional fee to acquire those mineral rights, either at the time of initial purchase when it was homesteaded or settled, or at a later date you could have purchased it. I believe at one point in time during the 1930s, it was possible to buy the mineral rights for your property. Now what that means, Mr. Speaker, if you have freehold mineral rights, the resources below the ground belong to the owner, not necessarily the surface landowner although that was the initial case, but now the person who holds that right.

The government on Crown leases collects a percentage from the company that does the drilling and recovers the oil, Mr. Speaker, collects a percentage of that as their share; plus, Mr. Speaker, charges a royalty tax on the entire production. The royalty tax, Mr. Speaker, in old oil in this province is roughly about 49 per cent. It varies on new production, depending on how long it's been in production and what kind of well it is, etc., but on old oil, Mr. Speaker, it's roughly 49 per cent.

But on freehold, Mr. Speaker, those, depending on when they were contracted — the arrangements made between the owner of the minerals and the company that wanted to come and drill — could range anywhere on average, Mr. Speaker, from 12 to 18 per cent. That portion of that revenue for the total production would be turned over to the freehold owner. Then as well the government would charge their royalty on the entire production.

But under this Act, Mr. Speaker, there is part of the production of the oil, that's when it's extracted from the ground remains in the water, or remains in sand or in paraffin wax, Mr. Speaker, and that is not taxed because it's not measured necessarily at the normal measuring points of production.

If your measurements are simply a gross measurement going through, with a calculation for the amount of water versus the amount of oil, then it would be calculated. But if it's measured at a later point where it's just the oil being measured, Mr. Speaker, there would be some water in that, and that will be recorded. That percentage, Mr. Speaker, can be up to a maximum of .5 per cent — so one-half of one per cent — and that will be recorded as well. And I'm not exactly sure, perhaps that's a question that the minister can answer for us when it comes forward in Committee of the Whole sometime this summer, that whether or not royalties are paid on that .5 per cent, Mr. Speaker, or not; whether that's calculated as oil or it's calculated as water and therefore not taxable.

But part of . . . when you're producing, part of the cleaning process will still have some small amounts of oil remaining in the water production that'll go for disposal. That oil over time can be collected, Mr. Speaker, and that's what this Bill deals with, is charging a royalty tax on that secondary production shall we say.

The question though, Mr. Speaker, has to be asked. That oil doesn't belong 100 per cent to the producing company; it doesn't belong 100 per cent to the oil company. A portion of that, Mr. Speaker, that roughly 12 to 18 per cent belongs to the owner of the minerals. Is he, Mr. Speaker, being compensated in any way, shape, or form for his asset that has been extracted from the ground, has now been collected, and will be utilized as oil to make gasoline and diesel fuel and plastics and all those things that we make from oil and gas, Mr. Speaker? Will the individual freehold mineral-right owner be compensated?

I don't see that in here, Mr. Speaker. The government is certainly bent on extracting their share. The oil company already has it; possession is nine-tenths of the law, Mr. Speaker. So they get to receive their share of any profits that may be available there.

The Crown is taking their share of the profits. But does the freehold mineral-right owner receive his share, Mr. Speaker? I

don't know. It certainly doesn't seem to indicate that in this Bill. The government gets theirs, the oil company gets theirs, but the individual, Mr. Speaker, seems to be left out.

So that's another area, Mr. Speaker, that we need to very much ask the minister about. Does the freehold mineral-right owner receive his rightful percentage of that recovered oil, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, it also talks about the government being able to force shut-ins off production if they're claiming that there is recovered oil there, that the operator needs to pay a certain amount of taxes on it. If that operator does not do so within the appropriate time frame, Mr. Speaker, they will shut that piece of production in.

(15:15)

Well this may work very well, Mr. Speaker, if the facility you're talking about is completely owned by one entity, be it one individual or one corporation. But in a large number of cases, Mr. Speaker, in this province we have what's called unitisation — one facility will actually represent a number of entities all coming together for a similar service.

An example of that would be, Mr. Speaker, would be sort of like a grain elevator — the grain in the elevator is not necessarily all owned by one individual; it may be owned by a number of farmers that have pooled their grain for shipment.

And that's what happens in the oil industry, Mr. Speaker. Oil is brought in from the various production wells, owned at times by a good number of different people. As well, Mr. Speaker, owned . . . the mineral rights owned by various mineral-right holders, freehold mineral-right holders.

So if the government has the authority and the ability to shut in that facility because one operator refuses to pay his share of the recovered oil, what happens to the other members, Mr. Speaker, that are utilizing that facility? Their facility is shut in also.

I think this needs to be clarified, Mr. Speaker. What are the rules that the government is looking for on facilities that are unitised rather than singular entities, Mr. Speaker? And again it's not addressed in this particular Bill.

Further, Mr. Speaker, there's a large number of regulations in this particular Bill. And it's been a growing trend throughout the last decade, Mr. Speaker, of governments taking more and more power onto themselves to be utilized through regulation. And I'm sure that the government would say, well these are just standard. Yes, Mr. Speaker, they're standard now, but they weren't standard necessarily in 1990 or in 1980 or in 1970, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to read you part (a) of clause 32.8(1). It says:

For the purposes of this Part, the Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations:

(a) defining, enlarging or restricting the meaning of any word or expression used in this Part, but not defined in this Part;

So, Mr. Speaker, what does that really mean? Does that mean that by any other name you can call it a rose or something else; that you can change the meanings of any of the words, the definition; that you can expand the scope of their application or restrict it, narrow it down so that freehold may mean all of the oil being produced? Recovered oil may mean all of the oil extracted from the ground, rather than as this Bill initially defines it, Mr. Speaker, that recovered oil is oil that has been recovered from either water collection or from sand.

So what does it mean, Mr. Speaker? The problem is, government is taking onto itself the ability, without coming back to this legislature, without explanation to the stakeholders — the freehold owners of the minerals, the oil companies, and anyone else involved, Mr. Speaker — to either change the meaning of this Act in its entirety almost, by changing the meaning of the words.

Part (c), Mr. Speaker, says:

respecting the basis of calculation of the tax, including any allowances, credits or other deductions that may be made or taken in calculating or paying the tax.

So again, Mr. Speaker, the government is taking power onto itself to change the amount of the tax, what is allowable for a deduction, what isn't allowable, Mr. Speaker.

The power again is handed over to the minister to make all determinations on this particular Bill without regard, Mr. Speaker, to the wishes of this Assembly or to what the original meaning of this particular Bill, Mr. Speaker:

(d) respecting the price to be used in valuing recovered crude oil for the purposes of the tax.

So while the minister may say initially in establishment of this Bill that we have determined that the tax is to follow the West Texas crude prices, let's say. Well tomorrow West Texas crude drops, but the minister wants to recover X number of dollars through this value, so he says no, I'm changing this part, Mr. Speaker, that the value of this recovered oil will be the value of West Texas crude on May 8, 2001. This gives him the power to do that, Mr. Speaker. It gives the power . . . the minister too much power, Mr. Speaker.

It also says under (f):

respecting the times at which the tax is to be assessed, calculated and paid.

So the government has established that the tax, let's say, will be paid on December 31 of every year. But it's election time, Mr. Speaker. It's time to have a little more money in the kitty when we go into the House and prepare the budget. We will now deem that the annual tax instead of being paid on December 31 will now be paid on March 30, Mr. Speaker, so that it'll fit into our budget cycle and we'll be able to claim it this year and spend, and give all the good citizens of the province all of those things we want to hand out, Mr. Speaker. Again the minister has taken this power unto himself.

Mr. Speaker, under (h), it says:

prescribing the interest rate for the purposes of section 32.41 . . .

Again the minister can establish an interest rate, let's say tied to the provincial annual rate of borrowing. But again, if he wants some more money to come through his department for the Minister of Finance, he can change that rate and there's no reasons given unto what that rate should be tied to, no explanations; it's whatever the minister wants, Mr. Speaker.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, under (k) it says:

authorizing the minister to estimate, determine, establish, approve or authorize factors, allowances, allocations, charges, credits, deductions, exemptions, fees, methods of payment, time periods, values . . . prices to be used in the assessment, calculation and payment of tax imposed pursuant to this Part . . .

It allows the minister, Mr. Speaker, to change virtually the entire operation of this Bill without any reason, without any consultation, without providing any rationale for his doing so, Mr. Speaker. The power simply resides in his hands to do what he wants.

Mr. Speaker, we don't feel comfortable with that. And I'm sure that the industry, when they look this Bill over, will be similarly concerned that this Bill puts too much power in the hands of the minister without any checks and balances in place.

There is an appeal process, Mr. Speaker. There is an appeal process that you have to file within 90 days of the assessment or reassessment, act, or thing done by the minister. But it doesn't tell you that the minister has to give you notice when he has done something.

So the minister can change the Act through regulations at his whim, and the individuals involved that need to know this may not even be notified within the 90-day period, Mr. Speaker.

If this minister is going to make these changes, then it's incumbent on him, Mr. Speaker, to notify all of the stakeholders involved, including all of the individual freeholders of mineral rights, Mr. Speaker. And from the point of notification of that, then perhaps the 90 days should be in place.

But there's no place in here, Mr. Speaker, where it says that the government has to give notice to any of the people involved. But the people involved only have 90 days from the point of the minister doing something to appeal it. That's not good enough, Mr. Speaker, that's not good enough.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm prepared to give the minister an opportunity to consider my comments and to come back with the answers that are needed to these questions to determine whether or not the powers that I have outlined here that are in here, Mr. Speaker, are how he interprets them as working, whether he intends to give any notification of any changes to the stakeholders on this matter. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of debate.

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

**General Revenue Fund
Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs
Vote 30**

Subvote (IA01)

The Chair: — I call on the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs to introduce her officials.

Hon. Ms. Lorjé: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Today with me, assisting in our consideration of the estimates of Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs are Brent Cotter, deputy minister; Donovan Young, acting deputy minister of Aboriginal Affairs; Glen Benedict, executive director, Indian lands and resources; Melinda Gorrill, director of administration; Michael Jackson, Chief of Protocol, and Eric Johansen, federal-provincial relations.

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Chair, I'd like to welcome the ministers and their officials today. And first of all, I'd like to ask a few questions of the Provincial Secretary. On looking at the estimates, we see that we have an increase in every department . . . in every line in your department under sub-programs, and so I'd like to go through them one by one and have you explain why there is an increase in each of these areas, starting with the Lieutenant Governor's office.

Hon. Ms. Lorjé: — The member opposite has correctly pointed out that there is an increase in the budget appropriation for the Lieutenant Governor's office, an increase actually of \$76,000. That increase is accounted for by an increase of 1.5 full-time equivalents to assist Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor with respect to speech writing and various hospitality functions that she undertakes. And then there has been as well staff reclassifications and adjustments for actual staff costs of 20,000.

(15:30)

And I am advised by my officials that what we see here will be the staff component for Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor for the remainder of her term. It was important for us to work with Her Honour Lynda Haverstock, and find out her actual needs with respect to staff. And as you will be aware, she is taking a very active role in representing the Queen of England here in Saskatchewan. She's building on the tradition that was established by her predecessor, Jack Wiebe, and Sylvia Fedoruk, and has decided that it is extremely important that she get out to as many of the communities in Saskatchewan as possible, and meet with as many of Saskatchewan's citizens as possible.

In that sense it was important that she have the ability to have good advice with respect to speeches and so forth that she might be giving. And so it was seen as more than reasonable to assist her in that function, and to have a hospitality coordinator hired, as well as her private secretary and three additional secretaries.

She is an extremely busy woman. She is doing a very good job representing the Queen to the people of Saskatchewan, and representing the people of Saskatchewan to the rest of Canada

and the world. Thank you.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I appreciate what you've said about the Lieutenant Governor. I guess my question is, in the past we have had also very good lieutenant governors. And why the need for extra . . . What is she doing that they did not do to require this extra funding? We are now spending \$375,000 on the Lieutenant Governor.

Hon. Ms. Lorjé: — I think I have tried to indicate to the member, but I'm going to reiterate, that the Lieutenant Governor has indicated her wish to cover as much of the province as possible over her five-year term; to meet with people in their home communities; to talk with them about the importance of our constitutional monarchy; to hear their concerns.

She is taking a very active, hands-on approach to her function; is being very committed and dedicated to listening to the people of Saskatchewan; and also to letting them know, as much as is possible, the historic importance of having . . . of the kind of constitutional monarchy that we have and how this helps all of us in our work here in the House to maintain and enhance the tradition of constitutional democracy that we have in Saskatchewan.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Well I don't believe my question was answered. I believe that we have had good representation from former lieutenant governors, and I think that the people of Saskatchewan are probably, rightfully, wondering why we need an increase in funding in this area when we have a lot of other areas in Saskatchewan that are of prime importance and that are underfunded. But we will move on.

Under the Office of French-language Coordination, we also have an increase, and could you please explain to me why.

Hon. Ms. Lorjé: — I would thank the member opposite for her question. Before I move to the Office of French-language Coordination, I want to give you more specifics. I have been talking in general, glowing, positive terms about what Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor is doing. I think it is important for you and for the people of Saskatchewan to know just exactly how active she is in her job.

Last year alone, she attended 200 official functions, and she delivered 146 speeches to communities and organizations around the province. And the research for those speeches and the remarks are now being prepared in-house rather than as previously being contracted out.

As well as attending all those numerous community functions, the Lieutenant Governor has a goal of bringing the Crown closer to the people of the province, and she's doing this by sending out special letters of greetings to Saskatchewan residents celebrating milestone wedding anniversaries and birthdays. And I'm sure that you've had constituents of yours who've received wedding anniversary congratulations from her.

In the past year, the Office of the Lieutenant Government received approximately 2,800 requests for greetings, which were forwarded to other provincial and federal officials under a

congratulatory greeting program, and her office alone sent 1,748 greetings to citizens in this province.

And also, some 45 messages were prepared to recognize achievement of special events by various organizations or groups. She has very broad based plans for this coming year. There will be an unprecedented participation by the Lieutenant Governor in five Saskatchewan treaty days in five different communities.

She is very active in support of the United Nations declaration of 2001 being the International Year of the Volunteer, so she is attending a great number of volunteer recognition and appreciation events. And she also has an increased number of speaking opportunities in schools, in particular high schools.

So as you can see Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor is extremely busy. We are all, I think, very well-served by the excellent job that she is doing. And I think that the slight increase in her budget is a very worthwhile thing.

Now turning to the Office of the French-language Co-ordination, you asked what the increases were. I want to start my answer by, first of all, noting that there actually is a decrease of \$2,000 in operating expenses in this office.

Now the increase that you see is because we have hired a director into that office; Monsieur Florent Bilodeau is the director. As you may know, Madam Member, that office of the director was vacant for some time. And so upon receipt of a unanimous recommendation from ACF (Assemblée communautaire francosaskoise), the province was very pleased to hire Monsieur Bilodeau and we find that he is doing an excellent job in that office.

And I think that that accounts almost completely for the slight increase that you note in the line for this office.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I'll continue on about the French-language co-ordination and then I want to go back to what you just . . . the information you just gave us about the Lieutenant Governor's office.

You've told us that you've been without a director, and I think the people of Saskatchewan would really like to know what actually goes on in the . . . like what does the Office of the French-language Co-ordination do; and in specific what does this director do? If you were without one and now you have one, what is he doing?

Hon. Ms. Lorjé: — To the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy, I have two and a half pages of activities that the Office of the French-language Co-ordination does. So I will start and give you some idea of the flavour of the activities. They come under the rubric, generally, of awareness and liaison activities, as well as translation services and linguistic support.

So if you will bear with me, I will give you some idea of what they do. And I would also encourage you to, at some point, go over and visit with Mr. Bilodeau in his office and find out just exactly what he does. They are always more than willing to talk very directly with members of the Legislative Assembly and let them know just what a good and valued service they do for the

people of Saskatchewan.

In the last year the OFLC (Office of French-language Coordination) staff participated in and provided financial support to major meetings, conferences, and events held by Saskatchewan's francophone community, in particular the Fêtes francosaskoises and the Forum économique francosaskois and the community radio pilot project, Radio réseau, which we are very proud of.

They also met periodically with francophone community representatives to learn about their priority projects as well as any concerns that they had with respect to provincial programs and services. Because of course this is an office of coordination and so they do meet very regularly with members of the Fransaskois community.

I'm just going to carry on. I'm going to struggle here in English.

I would like to say they also began implementation of the multi-year, cost-shared Canada-Saskatchewan General Agreement on the Promotion of Official Languages agreement that started in June of last year. And they did that.

And this is why, getting to your particular question, about why we needed a director. We needed to reinstate the director's position, and Monsieur Bilodeau took up his functions officially in September 2000 and then began laying the groundwork for the creation of a joint provincial government/Fransaskois community French-language services liaison community.

Last July they hosted a meeting of senior federal/provincial/territorial officials responsible for French-language services to prepare for the fifth meeting of ministers responsible for francophone affairs.

And if I may be permitted to put in a slight advertisement at this point, these last couple of weeks they've been working very actively, preparing for another meeting that's coming up next Wednesday, l'Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie.

The Chair: — Your mike's not working, so they're using the other mike.

Hon. Ms. Lorjé: — And I said so many important things en français while the microphone was off, so I'll start all over again.

I'm doing a bit of a commercial for what the OFLC has been doing over the last couple of weeks. They are laying the groundwork for an extraordinary meeting that's occurring. Representatives from L'Assemblée parlementaire de la Francophonie are coming to Regina to meet with various MLAs to discuss that particular organization and the possibility of this Assembly taking out a membership in it.

They also have been working with the Department of Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training, and they jointly funded with them the community-wide consultations on French post-secondary needs, structures, and programs just this past February and March. They assisted government officials and francophone community representatives in preparations for Les

Rendez-vous de la Francophonie, March 15 to 25, I believe.

You and I both participated in some of those events. It would not have been possible, for me at least, and perhaps for you as well, to participate in those functions if it hadn't been for the excellent help that we received from Monsieur Bilodeau and his staff.

We also launched OFLC section of IAA's (Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs) Web site as part of the Rendez-vous de la Francophonie celebrations. That was very well received. And just today I received in my office a media clipping from the on-campus news here in the University of Regina, extolling the virtues of that Web site. And I want to congratulate all the staff who were involved in the preparation of the Web site at this point.

Finally under awareness and liaison activities, they have regularly participated in meetings of the subcommittee on the implementation of sections 41 and 42 of the Official Languages Act in order to explore potential partnerships with federal government departments and agencies in the delivery of French language services to the Fransaskois community. Now, Madam Member, that is only what they're doing on awareness and liaison activities.

(15:45)

Turning now to translation services and linguistic support, they responded to 382 translation requests and, if you will believe it — I mean this is what's wonderful about the day of computers, because we can find out immediately what people are doing — they translated 292,292 words, 292,292 words into French.

In-house translators handled approximately 83 per cent of the requests and 52 per cent of the translation volume. They completed 37 specific revisions requests, and they entered into 59 contracts totalling over \$27,000 with nine different freelance translators based in Saskatchewan.

As well as that, they continued to assist the general public francophone community representatives and the media with terminology questions especially as they related to the Government of Saskatchewan departments, agencies, and programs.

And finally, they completed a large number of translation projects including translation from English into French of background documents and Web site content for the heritage fairs that are held in Saskatchewan schools; translation from English into French of material for the HEALNet Web site; translation into French of the forage rainfall pilot program and the 2001 highlights brochures for Canada-Saskatchewan crop insurance; translation from French to English, an appellant's factum for the Department of Justice.

And finally, they continued to assist the provincial government departments in meeting official languages obligations in their delivery of programs delegated to the province by the federal government in the areas of social housing and labour market development.

Madam Member, I'm sorry I took so long in answering your

question, but I think it is important for you and through you for all people of Saskatchewan to know just what an active and energetic and important office we have in the Office of French-language Co-ordination. They perform very valuable services for the people of Saskatchewan and they assist in ensuring that Fransaskois people can receive services in the language of their choice. Thank you very much.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Madam Minister, for that lengthy answer. And it is good to know that there is really something happening in that department, and I'm sure the people of Saskatchewan will be glad to hear that.

I'd just like to go back to your answer when you went back to the original . . . for the Lieutenant Governor's office. I think it's important to note that you had talked about how she was responsible for events at Government House and so on. Not only do we spend \$375,000 on the Lieutenant Governor's office and those services, we also spend an additional 349,000 on Government House.

And I guess the question is where is the breakdown between what is allocated to her office and what is allocated to Government House. And I might note that Government House expenditure has risen by \$88,000 this year as well, and if you could explain why.

Hon. Ms. Lorjé: — I feel like an astronaut. You hit it, and the microphone turns on here.

The Lieutenant Governor's office, as you know, she worked . . .

The Chair: — Order, order. I just want to inform the House that we are having some difficulties with the air conditioning and the audiovisual, our audio equipment in the control room, and so that's why the mikes are cutting in and out. So I guess question period was just a little too hot today. So bear with us as they fix the problem.

Hon. Ms. Lorjé: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And here I thought I had all this wonderful power, that I was actually getting that microphone turned on by banging it. See, another illusion down the drain.

But I hope that the staff are able to iron out the technical difficulties as soon as possible. You're right, it's getting a little hot in here. It was probably from my lengthy responses, so I'm going to try to skinny them down just a little bit.

We've already talked about the Lieutenant Governor's office. Her office is centred out of Government House, but Government House as an entity has quite a lot of other functions that are totally separate and apart from the Lieutenant Governor.

Various hospitality occurs at Government House. For instance the Lieutenant Governor herself hosted a dinner for His Excellency the Prince of Wales there last Thursday, April 26. There have been other banquets and lunches there hosted by other organizations.

There is a very active museum at Government House, and they have done just an excellent job in restoring what was a building

that had been almost decimated by being used for other things, other than what it was intended for.

And I do want to commend all the excellent volunteers and the staff over at the museum for the work that they have done in recreating Government House as it would have been at the turn of the century when, as you know, Government House was the seat of government for all of Western Canada.

They also do a lot of tours for people. And school kids, in particular, really love going over and seeing how things were in our grandfathers' and great-grandfathers' time — and grandmothers' as well.

They are doing an incredible job, through the money that government provides them, in the preservation of Government House and also preservation of the grounds.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Madam Minister. There is an increase of \$88,000 in the budget from last year to this year. Could you please explain why?

Hon. Ms. Lorjé: — Yes, you are exactly right, Madam Member. There is an increase, and the increase is due, first of all, to the increases . . . because of public demand, basically. We are responding to public demand, the great public interest in Government House. So we've had to increase our ability to have tours, to have guides helping out with those tours; we have longer opening hours for Government House.

And then finally, we are doing some major planning for Government House revitalization. And part of the increase that you see, the \$88,000 variance, is for that planning for Government House revitalization.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Just one more question on the Lieutenant Governor's office. You indicated that the present Lieutenant Governor has enhanced her services to Saskatchewan, and I'm not doubting that at all. But what I think would be important for this side of the House to see is a comparison to the events that the former lieutenant governor attended, and what he did, as compared to what the present Lieutenant Governor, so we can see the difference between.

So if you could provide us with that comparison, it would be much appreciated.

Hon. Ms. Lorjé: — I certainly will undertake, Madam Member, to provide you with that comparison. I don't have the exact statistics here with me today.

I do want to say though, that former Lieutenant Governor Jack Wiebe served the people of Saskatchewan and the Queen of Canada very well in his job. And he responded to the needs and concerns of Saskatchewan people of the time.

The current Lieutenant Governor, Lynda Haverstock, is responding to different, slightly different times and different needs. I don't want to imply in any way, shape, or form that the former lieutenant governor did not work very actively for the people of Saskatchewan, because I feel that he did. But certainly he did not, for instance, do some of the functions that

the current Lieutenant Governor is doing.

Each lieutenant governor has different areas of interest and expertise and focuses on them, and brings their own personality and their own areas of interest to the office. So there will be slight . . . it is slightly different.

But I do want to emphasize that Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has made a commitment to being very actively out in the different Saskatchewan communities.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Chair of Committees, and I want to congratulate you on your new election and welcome you to your position. I hope you enjoy it. Madam Minister, Mr. Minister, a welcome this afternoon, and welcome to your officials.

Madam Minister, one of the most exciting events that took place in this province occurred about two weeks ago when the Prince Philip, the Duke of Wales, had the opportunity to spend three days in our province. It was certainly quite a time for members of the House. There was a lot of special events that went on throughout the province. Members were able to attend many of those events, and it certainly was enjoyable to meet the man who will eventually become our king.

Well, Madam Minister, of course as we're all aware, somewhere along the line that there is a price tag attached to these very special events. And I'm wondering if, Madam Minister, you'd be able to enlighten us as to a breakdown of the costs and the overall costs that were incurred with having the Prince Philip, the Duke of Wales, in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Ms. Lorjé: — I thank the member opposite for the question. And you are right — we were very honoured to have a visit by His Excellency Prince Charles The Prince of Wales and the Duke of Edinburgh's son. And I think that all of Saskatchewan was honoured, excited, and very pleased that he was here.

Of course there would be a few anti-monarchists who may be wondering why he should have come or questioned the expenditure. I want to say as a somebody who used to be an agnostic monarchist, I am now a true believer, having spent some considerable time with His Excellency the Prince of Wales. I think that the benefit to the people of Saskatchewan was immeasurable.

But the cost, while not substantial, I think is something that the people of Saskatchewan deserve to know about.

As you will be aware, the Government of Canada pays the travel cost, the plane, to transport His Excellency and all his officials to Canada. And then when he's in the different provinces or territories, the funding arrangements are that we would pick up our portion of the visit while he is actually in the province.

So having said that, in total, we estimate, and we budgeted for the royal visit to the province of Saskatchewan, \$130,000. We do not have all the bills in yet, but we are confident that the visit will come in either at or below the amount that we had budgeted. We can provide an itemized account for you, if you

wish, when all the bills are in. We think that we got very good value for our money.

And I do at this time want to publicly thank all the staff and all the many volunteers who were involved in the planning and coordination of the royal visit. I think that Saskatchewan was able to show off its best. And we were blessed with good weather, so we were able to have the sunshine in, and no doom and gloom while he was here in the province.

I can't emphasize enough what a great job the Office of Protocol did; what a great job Debbie Saum in Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs did, all the other staff over there; as well as the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) who handled all the security while His Excellency was in the province; and then the large number of volunteers involved in the different events — like at the Meewasin Valley Authority weir in Saskatoon; the Saskatoon Community Services Village; the opening of the Prince of Wales Community Complex in Assiniboia; the visit to the Moose Jaw air base; and of course all the many events here in Regina, including the events at city hall.

So I think we had a great number of people working either on a paid or a volunteer capacity to ensure that we would have a seamless and fantastic event while the Prince was here and I think we have achieved it. And as I say, the total cost is estimated to be in the order of \$130,000.

(16:00)

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Madam Minister, and I appreciate that you have provided with a good deal of information here. And certainly as you mention, there are some information that you're not able to bring to us today, and maybe, Mr. Chair, when Madam Minister brings her official back again for estimates, we could get a further detailed . . . some further details and have them read into the record.

I'm sure the people of Saskatchewan will be very pleased to know that the budget was set as to how much it would cost to have the Prince here in Saskatchewan, and that the province is looking at coming in under budget. And we're always pleased to hear that any time a budget line can come in under budget, of course, on this side of House.

Madam Minister, I want to change gears to a large degree. One of the things that is happening in the country, is being looked at on a federal basis, is accountability — accountability in all part of government lives, and is certainly is something that those of us on this side of the House hold quite dear.

Now, Madam Minister, the federal government is looking at setting up a process to help First Nations people be able to achieve an accountable electoral system. On this side of the House, we're certainly applauding that lead. We think it's extremely important that everyone in this province especially help to understand the importance of elections, help for them to understand what it means to be held accountable during an electoral process.

Now, Madam Minister, of course we also understand quite clearly that for those people who live their lives under treaty

obligations, is that those responsibilities lie with the federal government. But there is a very, very large population in this province, Madam Minister, I dare say in the tens upon tens of thousands of people of Metis ancestry who are also very keen on having their own electoral process that is open and accountable.

We hear on occasion in the papers, Madam Minister, where there's a great deal of concern about how MNS (Metis Nation of Saskatchewan) elections are conducted. And I'm wondering, Madam Minister, if you'd be able to . . . if we can start down a road of discussion here this afternoon on any plans or any thoughts that the provincial government and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs has around open and accountable elections for the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan.

Hon. Ms. Lorjé: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would like to respond to the member from Saskatchewan Rivers.

Again, before I move to the question of Metis elections which I think is the main substance of what you're asking, I want to just provide you with a bit more detail about the royal visit. Because in my haste to answer the question about the cost of the royal visit, and mentioning that it was \$130,000 in total, I neglected to tell you that almost 20 per cent of that is actually something that will be of ongoing benefit to the people of Saskatchewan.

We have plans to put out an educational booklet, an historic memento of the visit to the province of Saskatchewan, and we anticipate that that will likely cost around \$10,000. We know from when Her Majesty the Queen was here in 1987, and the former government put out a similar commemorative booklet, that they are very well received by the people of Saskatchewan, and excellent souvenirs by all people whose lives were touched in some small way by the royal visit. So \$10,000 of that \$130,000 cost will go to that commemorative booklet.

And as well, we were very pleased, and again here I would like to commend my staff, and in particular my deputy minister, for coming up with what we think was a very good idea for a gift for His Excellency. As you probably observed in any of the events that you attended that the Prince was at, the people of Saskatchewan loved having him here, and they were showering him with gifts, flowers, books, CDs, and things.

We knew that we wanted to give him a gift, but we wanted to make sure that it would be a gift that would be meaningful both to him and to the people of Saskatchewan. And so we announced the creation of scholarships for grade 11 students who were going into grade 12. And those scholarships will be given in the name of His Excellency The Prince of Wales. And the total cost for those scholarships is estimated to be \$12,000.

An Hon. Member: — That's part of the 130,000?

Hon. Ms. Lorjé: — That is part of the \$130,000, yes. So those two things that I've just mentioned, totalling 22,000, are part of the \$130,000. As well, as you know, we had to pick up the costs of the Prince's travel while he was here in Saskatchewan. He flew on a very big plane. And we had to pick up the cost of the . . . his accommodation, our share of the accommodation. And then we had to hire a few contractual staff.

If you want, as I say, we certainly, we have nothing to hide. We're very pleased that we were able to have such a great royal visit and do it so economically. And it was due because of the great staff and volunteer component that we had.

We did it the Saskatchewan way and I think all of us can be very proud.

Now turning to the question of accountability amongst First Nations and Metis people. You point out quite correctly that Indian and Northern Affairs Minister Robert Nault has announced plans to revamp the Indian Act. It's not been evaluated seriously for many, many years and so this will be a fairly lengthy consultative process.

Some people would say it's not long enough; other people would say it's overdue and we should get on with it. It's not my position to comment on that because it is of course a federal Act and that process is proceeding.

Now you asked me about Metis and about the Metis elections. I want to, in answering you, first of all emphasize that it is important for all of us to be aware that Metis people, the Metis, are a federal responsibility — not a provincial responsibility but a federal responsibility.

And as I mentioned to your colleague, the member for Humboldt, when we were last dealing with estimates and she was asking about the possibility of, for instance, the Chief Electoral Officer of Saskatchewan becoming involved in the Metis election process, at that point I emphasized to her that if any electoral officer were to become involved, it would be the position of the province of Saskatchewan that it ought properly to be the federal elections officer, not the provincial elections officer, because Metis, of course, are a federal responsibility. And in that sense we have an office called the Metis interlocutor, and the Hon. Ralph Goodale is in charge of that office.

Now having said that Metis are a federal responsibility, I want to also say though that we recognize very clearly that Metis people live in Saskatchewan. And because they are Saskatchewan residents, we have concerns as well, and we share the concerns that you're expressing about recent events.

And in that sense I have written to Mr. Clem Chartier, the president of the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan. I actually sent the letter on April 23, and with your indulgence I would read into the record the substance of that letter. And I think you will see that we take the concerns that have been expressed very seriously, and we do want to see the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan acting on those concerns expressed by Metis people in Saskatchewan.

And my letter is as follows. It is, as I say, to Mr. Clem Chartier, President, Metis Nation of Saskatchewan, and I write:

Dear Mr. Chartier:

I am writing to express concern respecting the outcomes of the recent Métis Nation — Saskatchewan (MNS) election.

Prior to the MNS election, my Department communicated

to the Métis Election Commission that it respected the MNS' internal election processes but that it was concerned with pre-election grievances made by some Métis candidates and voters regarding the democratic structure of the election.

As you know, Métis people, as well as the non-Métis public, are again expressing concerns about the election outcomes and the processes for addressing electoral disputes. Confidence in the MNS election appears to be waning. In light of these concerns, I urge you and the MNS, in accordance with the processes established for such purposes, to address these concerns as expeditiously as possible.

I believe it is in the best interests of Métis people in Saskatchewan that the MNS election issues be addressed promptly. This will enable us to continue our work together, and make the progress we both envisage for Métis people in our Province.

And I have signed it as the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Chair, to the minister, I appreciate your concerns and I appreciate the letter that you have read into the record. It was very important that you do so.

What's important here is that, you know, we've seen this government write letters before. Mr. Chair, to the minister, we've also heard where the Premier has written letters to the Prime Minister who are answered by some minor official in his department. I guess we're concerned, and rightly so on this side of the House, that when letters are sent from this government that often they receive very little attention from the people who receive them.

I think it's, you know, this is a big issue in Saskatchewan. There are tens of thousands of people who are of Metis ancestry. And yet we noticed in the last round of elections, for the Metis Nation, is that about 8 per cent of the Metis participated in the election process. And to us that causes a great deal of concern.

Here we have a group that we hear, and certainly we've seen it in the papers, is of some question who seem to have trouble even running elections and yet want to be able to recognize that they're representing the Metis people of Saskatchewan when less than . . . or approximately 8 per cent only participate in the electoral process.

But, Madam Minister, the Metis peoples of Saskatchewan also participate in provincial elections, and rightly so. And I believe that those people have every right to be able to expect some responsibility, or a great deal of responsibility actually, Madam Minister, to be taken by this government to help them better understand and better use the electoral process.

We have a Chief Electoral Officer in this province completely capable of handling provincial elections in a fair and democratic matter. I wonder if, Madam Minister, any thought has taken place in your department in having the services of the Chief Electoral Officer of Saskatchewan being used by the Metis Nation to help them work through their elections?

(16:15)

Hon. Ms. Lorjé: — To the new critic for Aboriginal Affairs, I want to assure you that we share your concern. This is a big issue and it will receive attention. And I am very confident that the letter I have sent to Mr. Chartier will be not only read, but will be acted upon.

Having said that, I do have to respect their internal governance processes, and I can only say to you that this government, like the opposition, is concerned that we have fair and open electoral processes for all people and that includes for people who vote . . . who participate in the Metis Nation selections.

You mentioned that they had an 8 per cent participation rate and you are decrying that. I think that it was probably somewhat higher than 8 per cent. I think, if memory serves me correctly, around 4,000 people cast their votes. And I think that was probably about in the order of a 20 per cent participation rate.

To put that into context, 20 per cent participation rate is fortunately or unfortunately — I would say unfortunately — about what we see in a lot of municipal elections too. And I know that municipal officials are constantly concerned about the low participation rate in their elections, yet nobody suggests that we wouldn't have mayors and councillors, or reeves and councillors.

So they had about the same participation rate as happens in local governments. Now what we have seen subsequent to that is that approximately 1,000 of those ballots were disqualified. And so I think that that does raise concerns that 25 per cent of the ballots would have been considered ineligible by the Metis Election Commission.

With respect to your question about whether or not I would intervene and ask that the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer of Saskatchewan become involved in the Metis elections, my answer is no. I have already indicated to you that Metis people are a federal government responsibility and I think we, all levels of government, are always concerned about off-loading and about inadvertently taking on responsibilities that more properly belong with a different level of government.

It would be irresponsible of me in the extreme to say anything that would imply that I feel that the federal government should not be exercising their responsibility and authority with respect to Metis people in this country and in Saskatchewan.

Having said that, you are probably aware that we do have a tripartite process — Canada, Saskatchewan, and the Metis Nation. We are very concerned, as is the federal government. Canada is at the table. Just as early as tomorrow morning, there will be talks between my officials and the federal government officials. We will be raising this whole question of the elections at that tripartite table. We are not ignoring the concerns. We believe, as I'm sure does the opposition, that there have to be fair, open, and accountable election processes in this country. That's the only way a democracy can carry on.

And I would hope and I'm sure that the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan believes that as well. And I'm sure that they are probably concerned when they look and see that the

participation rate in their latest election was only 4,000 people, and one would have expected probably about 12,000 people to vote. So it is very concerning to see a lower and lower number of people voting in those elections.

So I don't know what more I can say to you. We share your concern. We are working to encourage and indeed to insist that the current MNS executive address this very serious issue very seriously and expeditiously.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good afternoon to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and the minister responsible for Intergovernmental Affairs, and I must say we've got somewhat of a broad and mishmash process here for dealing with all of the affairs that pertain to First Nations and Metis people, as well as justice and so on and all of the other things that we try to sort out that have to do with our First Nations and Metis people.

Madam Minister, I have heard your comments thus far regarding the responsibility of the federal government as far as Metis affairs go in the province and, for that matter, First Nations affairs also.

But I think you would have to agree that there is a great deal of taxpayers' money . . . Saskatchewan is contributing money for Metis organizations, as well as for First Nations organizations in the province. And there is a tripartite process in place, as you have mentioned, to deal with these matters.

And so that would mean to me and other people in this province that, in fact, there is a say on the part of the provincial government and your ministry in dealing with any issues that come forward, that the Metis people are putting forward to you or First Nations people are putting forward to you, and especially issues that are of great concern to them and where they're asking you for their assistance.

For instance, Madam Minister, we have the Associated Entities Fund in this province. Gaming money comes through this fund that is then directed to First Nations and Metis people. And that's just one example.

And I've had a number of questions, in fact, from Metis organizations and Metis grassroots people on whether or not the kind of funding and organizations that are put forward in public accounts and financial statements are the only way that money from the province or the federal government comes down to Metis organizations and so on.

So in respect to that, Madam Minister, I'd like to ask you some specific questions. In looking through public accounts and financial statements, I came across a group called Regina Youth Development Corporation and apparently they're a vocational mentoring program, from what I can pick up. But I'd like to know who these people are. Are they First Nations? Is it a First Nations organization or is it a Metis organization?

And I'd like to know what programs they offer. And I ask that because there has been a great deal of concern over overlapping services in the province.

And so I'd like to know who the Regina Youth Development Corporation are and I'd like to know when the organization

began.

And I understand from looking at financial statements and so on that this group has now been closed down, as such. So to my understanding, they were in operation for one year, received quite an amount of money, and I don't think there's been any accounting or monitoring of what has happened with this group. And so I'd like to know a number of things surrounding, first of all, who this group of people were that had this Regina Youth Development Corporation and what their mandate was, what they spent their money on, and why they closed their operation down within one year of setting it up?

Hon. Ms. Lorjé: — Thank you, and I would like to welcome the member from Humboldt, the Aboriginal Affairs critic. I thank you for the question. It's a very specific one and I apologize for the delay in responding to you. But the reason for the delay is my officials have been frantically flipping through the paper that we have here and searching their memory banks and trying to find any knowledge, any corporate knowledge, of this group, the Regina Youth Development Corporation.

On a cursory review of the documents that we have here in the legislature to answer estimates questions, I have to say we have no data that indicates that our department has provided any financial support to this organization. Indeed, no one here seems to have any knowledge of this organization at all.

Having said that, though, I certainly will undertake to check with my colleagues in cabinet and find out if any other government department knows anything about this Regina Youth Development Corporation and if they did provide them with any financial support. If they have, I will certainly undertake to provide an explanation for you.

And just, I'm going to close my answer in this regard by emphasizing again what I said the last time we were up for estimates in Aboriginal Affairs, I do not feel that my office is one that is directly responsible for First Nations and Metis people. We can provide an advocacy role. We can provide facilitation and mediation, but we believe very strongly in the process of self-government, and we respect the structures that First Nations and Metis people have in place.

And what I can undertake to do though, when you have concerns that are brought to you by First Nations or Metis people such as the concern that you raised in the House the last time we dealt with estimates about Piapot Reserve, we will immediately sit down with people and undertake a mediation and facilitation role and help them to get the answers to these financial questions that they're raising.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, I can understand your views and your thoughts exactly on how you feel your ministry is involved with Metis and First Nations people, but I don't think it cuts a lot of ice with the people of the province. Not what you've said, but if that's all that your mandate is, I think people are asking for more than that and I think that grassroots Metis and First Nations people are asking more than that, simply because they've made the statement to me a number of times that there's taxpayers' money that is flowing through to these organizations, the leadership of these organizations.

That money should be accounted for. There should be detailed accounting for that. There should be an ability for First Nations and Metis people to access audits, detailed audits of how the money was spent. And they don't find that at the provincial level there's anyone really that seems to have the authority to give out these detailed audits or to look after these affairs when there is allegations of corruption. And actually there have been, I guess, some proof that there has been corruption.

So certainly I think people in the province — Metis people and First Nations — are expecting that you, within your ministry, should have the right and the responsibility in fact to make sure that there is accountability and responsibility for the funds that are being used, because the tax dollars come from all people in the province.

(16:30)

Madam Minister, I'd just like to refer again to the percentage of funds that come through the Associated Entities Fund to Metis and First Nations people. Now, Madam Minister, it is my understanding that the policy is that there's 25 per cent of funding that should go to First Nations and Metis people organizations through gaming money. I have had it brought to my attention that the Clarence Campeau fund receives \$2 million, and I did bring this up with you the last time we were talking about this in estimates — that in fact there's a feeling that there is more than 25 per cent going to the Metis association of Saskatchewan.

And there's an allegation brought forward to me that money . . . that there's money beyond the Clarence Campeau fund that is being distributed to different organizations that is, in fact, bringing the Metis association's funding up to about 40 per cent rather than 25.

So I guess what I'm doing is I'm looking at things that I have here . . . In fact the Regina Youth Development Corp, I'm trying to find out from you if this is a Metis organization, if it's a First Nation organization — who it is? — because there was a certain amount of money given there. And for instance, if this is one organization that is Metis that is receiving money above and beyond the 25 per cent, we need to know and find out.

I appreciate the fact that you've mentioned that you're going to be looking into it. And if your officials can look into the last two fiscal years and see if they can find that, it has been something brought to my attention and people are concerned about it.

Madam Minister, I'd just like to move over to some First Nations concerns that were brought to me. As you well know, I think the Government of Saskatchewan has stated a number of times that they'd like to see First Nations people running certain First Nations programs and so on. But the Women of the Dawn have been quite concerned that they received a letter that they were not going to be successful in their bid this last while to be the preferred service provider for services to multi-barriered clients in Regina.

And I would like you today, if you could, Madam Minister, to give me an explanation of why the Women of the Dawn did not have a reissuing of the contract that they have had in the past

couple of years.

Hon. Ms. Lorjé: — Thank you very much for that extensive question; I think there were probably three or four questions embedded in your remarks, Madam Member.

So I want to first of all assure you that while I am telling you I do not feel I am the minister responsible for these people in the sense that you seem to be implying, I certainly — and I want to assure you that I have a great deal of respect for the First Nations and Metis organizations and their self-government process — I do feel that my office can act as an advocate in certain circumstances and can provide mediation and facilitation services to iron out some of these issues that you raise.

But we do far more than that. We are engaged very actively in the treaty land entitlement process and, as you will know, we have a very active and extensive Metis and off-reserve strategy with four goals — employment, education, economic development, and community health. And we will be making more specific announcements about the strategies and objectives of those goals in the coming weeks.

So we do an incredible amount in our office. But I want to tell you that the one thing I do not think is my job is to hold the federal government accountable for monies that it transfers to different organizations. It's not my job to make sure that the federal government's money is spent properly. The federal government has its own processes in place.

I've already indicated to you that my officials have no knowledge at this time about the Regina Youth Development Corporation. I have undertaken to do a search throughout government to find out if any departments do know about this particular organization. We will look, as you have suggested, in the last two fiscal years and find out if any provincial government department did provide any funds to this organization. And we will find out how the money was spent and how it was accounted for.

I want to assure you that any money that Aboriginal Affairs gives out is given out with strict accountability and responsibility criteria. We ask for work plans and quarterly reports. Basically, Madam Member, we ask them to tell us what they're going to do and then we ask them to tell us what they did. And we make sure that the two match.

But I do have to say that I'm a little disturbed by the tone of your questions, both today and the last time that we were up in estimates, because you keep bringing up comments like corruption and non-accountable and so forth. And I categorically reject that view of First Nations and Metis people. It seems to me that no one does the people of Saskatchewan a good service by running around and suggesting that Aboriginal people are nothing but problems.

And I would ask you, Madam Member, in your responsibility as opposition critic for Aboriginal Affairs, to look at the great number of successes and the positive role models that there are in First Nations and Metis organizations. These are proud and strong people and it is simply a wrong-headed notion, I would maintain, to continually drag out stories of failure or to suggest

that there aren't very positive things happening in Metis and First Nations communities.

Now with respect to your question about the funding for Women of the Dawn. Last year my ministry provided \$2,000 to the Women of the Dawn. We can give you more specifics on that if you wish.

With your respect to your question of, why were they denied funding for this year, I do believe that that question should be more appropriately addressed to the Minister of Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training because it was his office, his department, that evaluated the services that were being provided by Women of the Dawn. They did call for a request for proposal for the training that Women of the Dawn had been doing, and his office is the one that would have the specific reasons why the Women of the Dawn contract was not renewed.

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — . . . report progress, Mr. Chair.

**General Revenue Fund
Economic and Co-operative Development
Vote 45
Office of Northern Affairs**

Subvote (EC10)

The Chair: — I recognize the Minister of Northern Affairs. Would he please introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Yes, with me is Alex Campbell, the deputy minister; and also Alayne Bigwin, who is the ADM (assistant deputy minister); and Donna Dumont, who is the director of finance and administration.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, welcome to you and welcome to your officials. It's a pleasure that you could be here this afternoon.

Unfortunately, as we see by the clock on the wall, we're not going to get an awful lot of time. So I'll have to hope that you . . . Mr. Minister, that you'll be able to bring your officials back for another time and we can explore some other avenues that need to be explored.

And certainly, there are other members on this side of the House that would also like to take an opportunity to be able to quiz you about the events and the affairs that Northern Affairs is involved in.

Mr. Minister, I was noticing that — and I have of course over the last couple of years — certainly the Department of Northern Affairs is involved in a peripheral way in quite a few programs in the North. And I wonder if you would take a few minutes and illustrate for us all the programs that your department becomes involved in, in northern Saskatchewan.

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Well thanks very much for the question from the member of Saskatchewan Rivers.

Overall, in regards to the program itself, I'll give you the program headlines. And if you want some specific questions in regards to the programs itself, I know that you will be asking

me more questions later on at a different time. So I'll just give you an overview.

What we have is a Northern Development Fund. Basically we operate a Northern Development Fund which provides loans for development for small businesses in northern Saskatchewan in various areas, from traditional resource use to the different areas in forestry and mining, etc.

Then we have a commercial fish transportation subsidy. We know the high costs of transportation, particularly as you go up north and we know that there are problems relating to the flying in of fish from the Far North. So we have a transportation subsidy. And I note that Manitoba has one as well and we operate one in Saskatchewan. And so that's another program area that we work in.

We also have a Northern Mines Monitoring Secretariat, and the work that we do with the environmental quality committees, which are unique in Canada. Environmental quality committees are a unique aspect in regards to involvement of peoples in particular areas. You know, in regards to making sure that they're involved in strategic decision-making processes relating to the environment and making sure that our goals of sustainable development are being followed. So that's an important aspect in regards to northern mines monitoring, as well as environmental development.

We also have surface lease agreements. And along with the surface lease agreements we have human resource development agreements.

Those human resource development agreements, of course, first of all, the licence itself provides a licence for the mining companies to operate in the North. But we have conditions in regards to the improvement and the utilization of the resources in our area, means also utilizing the people and resources in our area.

(16:45)

So we have a human resource development agreement that's fairly flexible, probably a leadership role across Canada in regards to these development agreements that deal with training. And they also deal with the question of making sure our people are employed, from the North, as well as business contracts, and so that in effect we have a, what you would say, a positive effect on the people in northern Saskatchewan area.

We also have the northern strategy. And on the northern strategy, we have an overall northern development, an Interim Northern Development Board, and we look at the strategic areas in regards to where the developments should occur — on what aspects of mining, on what aspects of forestry, whether we should move into the newer areas of the berry picking, as well as getting the aspects of mushrooms and other areas.

So those are the major areas: Northern Development Fund, commercial fish transportation, northern mines monitoring, environmental quality committees, the surface lease agreements, the human resource development agreements, and the northern strategy.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, to the minister. You spoke about the Northern Business Development Fund and certainly it's incumbent that businesses that are trying to get started up in the North have an opportunity to have access to monies that they can use to get their businesses up and running.

Is the Northern Business Development Fund tied entirely to the Department of Northern Affairs, Mr. Minister, or is the fund tied to other lending agencies that the province uses to help small businesses get started?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Yes, they are tied in. We try and work out with that strategy to do the linkage, not only with the fund. We have a max of 250,000 in one of the funds. So you get a lot of funds that range at the smaller level, some at the medium level, and some at the higher level of 250,000.

And in that fund we try and create a linkage with the federal programs, you know, like community futures, and we try and then figure out a strategy where we will linkage not only the federal programming but the private sector funding; you know, the banks. And we try and then figure out a strategy on each project, depending on the size, on how this'll be done. So there's co-operation with the private sector, you know, banking institutions, as well as the federal government programming and the provincial government program.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And, Mr. Chair, to the minister, you talked about the Northern Business Development Fund being used to help link northern businesses in setting up new businesses or expansion and linking them to federal programs. Does the Northern Business Development Fund also help businesses in northern Saskatchewan link with the Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation or the Saskatchewan Government Growth Fund?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Yes, as an example, on the Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation . . . I happened to sit in on the Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation. What we did was we created a northern arm of the Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation, and very interestingly enough the person that used to work for us in Northern Affairs is now working for the northern arm of the Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation. And that person is located right in the North, so that people can have easier access to the person in regards to the development that they will have.

And they've been involved right now on the mining sector, and now we're talking about the forestry sector. And I think it's a fairly good strategy in this sense. The development that we do have, the smaller-scale development on retail and other sectors, a quarter of a million is fine. But once you get into the larger-scale development, on a \$20 million mill, it's insufficient. So it becomes very important to have another funding arm, which is a little bit more than the 250,000, maybe roughly around a million dollars.

So that's where SOCO (Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation) then becomes a strategic player and that, in effect, that is what we're doing by creating a northern arm of SOCO. So that where it was not accessible before, now it has become accessible by the people of the North. Because obviously it's a

Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation, and northern Saskatchewan is part of Saskatchewan, so in that sense SOCO has now become part of northern development in the recent past two years.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, to the minister, you talked also about the fish transportation subsidy. And certainly being able for Saskatchewan to participate in national and international markets, it's incumbent upon us to be able to get that fish to market, and certainly we're in a competitive world and this government is looking at every way they can to be able to keep the fishermen in northern Saskatchewan competitive.

My understanding, Mr. Minister, and maybe you can correct me, but the fish that are being transported out of northern Saskatchewan are not processed. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — That's correct. What's been happening is this: when the decisions were made way before our time, and I think it was back in 1969 when they developed the federal Crown, you know, in Winnipeg, and from there all the provinces particularly in the Western Canada co-operated to make sure that the marketing was done by the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation out of Winnipeg. So that's where, you know the processing is done on the fish. There is an initial level of cleaning, etc., that is being done at the lakeshore over here but then it is shipped to Winnipeg.

And the main point on your other information is that in Manitoba they provide about 200,000 on a transportation subsidy. Alberta I think provides about 20,000, something like that. But our subsidy is about \$305,000. So that we do provide a greater bit of help for our people. It's a little bit further on from than even Manitoba and their 200,000 because of the costs of the transportation when you're trying to fly in from the northern lakes.

And we also did do this this past year. We had a study that was done on the fishing and it was relayed back to us that some of the facilities in keeping the fish fresh were not up to par. So many of the people from the North said we need to improve our ice-packing plants to keep the fish fresh at the community level, at the lakeshore level.

So we provided for 700,000 this year to be able to deal with that issue so that indeed we can keep our fish a lot fresher to take them to the market. Because in some cases what had happened was that because of the long trip to Winnipeg and because of the lack of proper facilities, you know, at the lakeshore level, the fish was not as fresh as it should have been. And in some cases therefore there's a loss to the fisherman and fisherwoman in regards to what happens. So I think in that sense, the province is providing a leadership in Canada on the support that we provide for people doing commercial fishing.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, to the minister. Certainly we want to applaud all efforts that are made to enhance the quality of product that comes out of northern Saskatchewan so that we ensure that a quality product hits the tables of the consumer.

But, Mr. Minister, has any thought been put into expanding the

processing opportunities in northern Saskatchewan even further than what we're at now so that the fish might arrive to the consumer in an even fresher condition, and also give the people of Saskatchewan more opportunity to be involved in job opportunities in packaging fish.

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — That's an excellent question. We tried to do some work in that area over time because there was a lot of concerns raised in regards to the possibilities of getting a processing plant and there was a proposal done for Prince Albert. Now when that was done, that study was commissioned and the feedback we got from Freshwater and the report on it was that it would go in a hole by about \$600,000 per year.

So when that report came to us we were very, very concerned that we don't create something that's not going to be viable and sustainable over the long-run. So the basis of the study that was done about . . . I think it was about four years ago.

Since then we have been meeting with the people in the industry and they have come back with newer ideas on what is possible — that there might be private sector interest in this area and possibly even the bands may be interested in coming together with a plan, or even some people have talked about the fact that when we did the lakeshore facilities we had the co-ops involved. So we created co-ops to get at the level of development when we built these lakeshore facilities. So we thought maybe the co-op could get involved.

So a lot of ideas have been brought forward to try and get a, you know, the idea of value-adding into our product in Saskatchewan. So we're looking at that.

We're also looking at the possibility of aquaculture. There are definitely problems with aquaculture in different parts of the world, especially not only in terms of the environment but in terms of the economics on it over the long-run. So we're looking at that as well.

So we're trying to find out exactly our next steps on it, and we're working with a co-operative in the province and we're moving forward. And I'm pretty sure there will be newer plans that will be coming forward.

But the idea of processing itself is not lost and we are trying to figure out what is the best strategy for it.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Minister.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 16:59.