

EVENING SITTING

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 33 — The Legislative Assembly and Executive
Council Amendment Act, 2001

Clause 1

The Chair: — I'll ask the minister to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you. Mr. Chairman, I have one official with me this evening, Darcy McGovern, with legislative services.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Many of our members have made the points of their concern about this Bill and in the second reading debates. And I think that what I'd asked the minister at this stage is for him to explain and justify why he feels it's important for the third party be treated any differently than it has in the past.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I think when I raised under my comments under second reading on Bill 33, that what this does is really brings this legislation as it treats the caucus funding into the new century. We have never under this funding formula had a coalition government. The former Act did not represent this, represent this change. It didn't contemplate it.

So what it did is, the amendments brought it up to speed. So what it does was allow the third party to be entitled to the same resource allowance for staff, supplies, stationery and services for the Leader of the Third Party, whether he's in opposition or whether it's in a coalition situation.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, realistically speaking do you think there's the same onus or responsibility of holding a government accountable when you're part of that government as it would be if you were in the opposition in the traditional methodology?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well I think it's fair to say to the member that I personally have never been in a third party position. I don't ever plan on being there. Now it may be that at some point in time, members on that side will experience third party position and some have.

But I would think it's fair as a member of a caucus to suggest that a critique and input from constituents — input from constituencies, input from party members with respect to proposed legislation as an example — it would be very much appropriate for the third party to have the kind of staff that the Leader of the Opposition would because that's the formula, and that's how it's based. The only difference is now the third party is treated in a coalition situation the same way they would be if they weren't.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 10 inclusive agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Chairman, I move the committee report the Bill without amendment, and I would like to thank the member for his insightful questions, and I'd also like to thank Mr. McGovern for his support this evening.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Bill No. 49 — The Land Surveyors and Professional
Surveyors Amendment Act, 2001

Clause 1

The Chair: — I'd ask the minister to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thanks, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to introduce the following officials to the legislature. On my right, Fraser Nicholson who is the president and chief executive officer of the Information Services Corporation. On my left, Ron Hewitt . . . on my right, Ron Hewitt, senior vice . . . shall we start again. Senior vice-president and chief operating officer of the Information Services Corporation.

Behind me is Darcy McGovern, Crown counsel for legislative services, who was here just a minute ago. Further to the right is Mary Ellen Wellsch, who is senior counsel with the LAND (Land Titles Automated Network Development Project) Project, Information Services Corporation. At the back over there is Kathy Hillman-Weir who is registrar of titles in the land titles registry. And beside her is Ed Desnoyers who is controller of surveys, Information Services Corporation. I'd ask you all to welcome them.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome to the minister and his officials for this evening and the discussion on Bill No. 20.

I'd like for the minister, if you would please, to clarify two terms that are fairly significant I believe in this Act, and that's primary and secondary monuments — exactly what they are; what makes one a primary one and what makes one a secondary one?

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Mr. Chair, I think the member raised the question of primary surveys rather than monuments. Is that what he is referring to? Primary surveys and secondary surveys.

The primary survey is the original grid survey system developed during the 1800s. Originally . . . the original map out, if you wish, of the province, and the secondary surveys are any subdivisions, consolidations, anything which has taken place in relation to that since.

Mr. Heppner: — I am glad the minister is here this evening, I must say, with his officials to give us some good answers.

This particular Bill is basically under consultation with land survey groups and the legal community. And what would be the significant change of this Bill as has been presented to us here this evening?

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — The member asks the purpose of the Bill. He will recall that The Land Surveys Act, 2000 was passed

last year and this provides for some further consequential amendments to further facilitate the implementation of the LAND project flowing from consultations and so on which have taken place.

For example, the Bill provides amendments to be made to The Land Surveys Act, 2000 to clarify the extent to which survey records in the registry may be searched and to replace the existing sections regarding primary and secondary monuments with one section applying to all monuments.

So some fairly technical amendments primarily to The Land Surveys Act passed last year.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I believe essentially, because this is largely a housekeeping thing, straightening out some of the situations from the previous Bill, we have no more questions on Bill No. 20.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 4 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

(19:15)

Bill No. 19 — The Land Titles Amendment Act, 2001

The Deputy Chair: — I'll invite the minister to introduce any new officials he may have.

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — No, the officials are the same, Mr. Chair.

Clause 1

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. A term used in Bill No. 19, I was wondering if you could sort of clarify, and that's the term that's called an abstract registry.

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — In response to the member's question originally, as the member will appreciate, the land in the province was all Crown owned. When the grid system was established the Crown land, in the process of settling the province, transferred land to other individuals. But in the event that land is not being transferred in that way, that is the abstract the member is referring to.

Mr. Heppner: — I'd just ask for a bit more clarification on that. The definition of abstract was anything that doesn't fit underneath the one heading has all been considered abstract. Okay, I got a nod on that, so I'll take for granted that's a yes.

I note that both the Land Titles registry and the abstract directory are public registries for people in Saskatchewan and that information in both of these is the property of the Saskatchewan government. The section also indicates that access to and disclosure of information in the Land Titles registry can only be provided in accordance with the Act and regulations. What exactly are those regulations at present that allow for that disclosure?

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — The member I think raises the question of . . . well a couple of questions. The proper use for the information which is contained in the registries and the nature of those registries which are public registries and are therefore designed to share as much information about the items contained within them as possible. On the other hand, of course the application or the enforcement or the procedures whereby this is conducted, conducted only under the rule . . . only in compliance with the rules under the Act to ensure that in fact that information is available for the purposes for which it was intended. The registry is public and consequently is accessible by the public in this way.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and that's I think the only questions we had on Bill No. 19.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 35 inclusive agreed to.

Clause 36

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. To amend this clause:

Amend Clause 134(1.1)(a) of *The Planning and Development Act, 1983*, as being enacted by Clause 36 of the printed Bill, by striking out "of survey".

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 36 as amended agreed to.

Clauses 37 to 44 inclusive agreed to.

Clause 45

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — I have an amendment, Mr. Chair:

Amend subsection (2) of Clause 45 of the printed Bill by adding ", 23" after "sections 20".

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 45 as amended agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill as amended.

Bill No. 20 — The Land Surveys Amendment Act, 2001

The Deputy Chair: — I recognize the minister. Do you have any new officials to introduce?

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — No, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I believe, having gone through the other questions dealing with land surveys this evening, we basically covered our positions on this one as well. So I have no questions on this one at all.

Clauses 1 to 20 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Bill No. 43 — The Police Amendment Act, 2000

The Deputy Chair: — I recognize the minister, and if he has any new officials, please introduce them.

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm joined by Murray Sawatsky, behind me, who is the director of police commission services in the Department of Justice.

Clause 1

Mr. Heppner: — Yes, thank you, and welcome to the minister's new officials. I think on this particular Bill we'll probably have a number of more questions than we had on some of the other ones.

There's quite a number of changes that take place here and I guess I'm interested in knowing what kind of research input was done and what kind of input came in and from where into these changes, and particularly, were the police forces involved in some of the changes that are here.

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — The member asks the extent to which consultations took place leading up to this Bill, and indeed the Bill is the product of an extensive consultation process with the police community. And consulted were the legal counsel for municipal police boards, municipal police boards themselves, the Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police, the Saskatchewan Federation of Police Officers, the Saskatchewan Police Commission, hearing officers, public complaints investigator, the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan, and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations.

(19:30)

Mr. Heppner: — To a large part we're dealing here with methods of investigation and disciplining members of the police for the province. And I'm wondering were these changes basically initiated — precipitated is probably a better word — by specific incidents that have occurred in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — In response to the member's question, The Police Act, as the member will know, is a little over 10 years old. And, in response to concerns raised and suggestions made by the Police Officers Association and by police boards, some changes were made to make the process more efficient, more effective. Rather than a wholesale, new process, it's a process of updating and responding to concerns raised by affected parties.

Mr. Heppner: — Sort of moving in a bit of a different direction on the same topic, in what specific ways was the present statute deficient when it comes to investigating and disciplining?

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Well one change here, Mr. Speaker, relates to the possibility of mediation. Police officer associations were concerned to see if when charges were laid — disciplinary charges were laid — whether or not the matter could be dealt with in the mediation process rather than through the other — the normal adversarial process. And over, after discussion, the chiefs of police were prepared to, to support such a move. So we now, for example, then have moved from a

process where mediation was not possible to where mediation is, can take place if a chief of police wishes to refer that matter to a matter of disciplinary investigation to a mediation.

So that there is an attempt to try and to find some middle ground, some solution to the process, and then present that to the, the complaints investigator.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. Mr. Chairman, it's been rather interesting. Usually I'm accused of having a barrage of questions. Today I'm getting a barrage of answers. So I'm getting about two or three of my questions answered with one set of answers.

Had this, this Bill 43 as we are going to be passing it tonight I believe been in place, would anything different have occurred in Saskatoon with the dismissal of the police chief that we heard of this week?

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Well, it's not entirely clear to me the process followed in Saskatoon other than what I have seen in the newspapers. But the short answer to the member's question is that there are no changes made in this Bill to the contractual relationship between the . . . a police board and the chief of police. So in that sense, there would be no changes flowing from this piece of legislation in terms of the way in which a matter of that sort could be handled.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. That concludes the questions we have on Bill No. 43.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 23 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Bill No. 35 — The Public Trustee Amendment Act, 2001

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I take your nod to be to go ahead, and I'm selflessly not to go ahead, it's to sit down and wait till you've said something.

To my left is Andrea Seale, from the Department of Justice, and behind me is Ron Kruzeniski, who is the Public Trustee, with his dog, Toby.

Clause 1

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, and welcome to the minister's officials. And I heard a number of people on this side expressing admiration for what apparently is a yellow Lab as contrary to a golden Lab. I don't really think that individual who was talking about that knew much about dogs but maybe he does. So welcome here.

Bill No. 35, Public Trustee Amendment Act, as you're probably well aware the auditor's report is very critical of what's been happening in that particular department and I'm wondering does Bill 35 address the concerns mentioned in the auditor's report, and if so in what ways?

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — This Bill, Mr. Chair, deals with

personal guardianship and not with the measures raised or not with the issues raised by the Provincial Auditor. But I would say that the matters raised by the Provincial Auditor relating to a period of time some time ago have all been addressed by two or three small items which will be addressed . . . which are in the process of being addressed and will be addressed by the summertime. So steps have been taken to ensure that the issues raised by the public . . . by the Provincial Auditor have been addressed.

This piece of legislation deals with the powers of the Public Trustee.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. There's one particular part that I think raises a fair bit of fear in some people, and myself included, and that's I believe, Section 40.9 that talks about the public guardian and trustee may apply to a judge for warrant authorizing him to search a premises for a record the officer needs.

That's a fairly scary piece of legislation, I think, for Canadians when we sort of expect that these things will be in our home and most of us, rightly or wrongly, do consider our home our castle and this seems like it can just be broken into without even having the first option to turn over those documents.

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — The member raises the question of the Public Trustee's ability to obtain documents when those documents are refused by the person from whom the Public Trustee is seeking them. And so, Mr. Chair, in response to the member's question, the person would first be asked to provide . . . document the record in question.

If that person refuses or neglects to produce it, the Public Trustee may apply to a justice of the peace or a judge of the provincial court for a warrant authorizing him or her to enter and search any premises and to take possession of the record in question. But first there needs to be a refusal, and secondly there needs to be an application to a justice of the peace or a judge, and then the entry can take place.

So I think, Mr. Chair, there are numerous safeguards, numerous protections, in that section. And plainly the provisions in that section would only be pursued in the event of the person in question not co-operating with the Public Trustee.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. In the past year approximately how many times has the department been refused documents that they have felt they needed?

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — At the present time, Mr. Chair, the Public Trustee doesn't have the power to respond in the event that a person refuses to hand over a record which the Public Trustee needs.

So what would happen in those situations now is that there simply wouldn't be an investigation conducted by the Public Trustee. This permits an investigation in the event that documentation isn't handed over when the Public Trustee requests it.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, in your last response you made a number of reference to the

justice of the peace. And I think you will appreciate that there has been more and more responsibilities delegated to justices of the peace over the last while.

And a lot of these are individuals in communities that are having to make a commitment in order to stay in the community so that they can be called upon — often times there'll only be one justice of the peace in the community, and often times there will be only one justice of the peace within a 60 to 100 mile radius as well.

And as you have indicated, there are more and more responsibilities being added . . . or more expectations being added to the role of a Justice of the Peace. And one of the things that I think really needs examined is the remuneration of the Justice of the Peace. The remuneration I guess at this point could be best described as a pittance, and while the training is being improved around the role of the Justice, and I think certainly the Justices are starting to feel more confident in terms of their ability to be able to do their job. Is there any plans in your department to review the remuneration of Justices, and if so, where is that at?

(19:45)

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — I thank the member for the question and the member does raise an important issue of the workload of Justices of the Peace. He will know that many of them are called out in the middle of the night to respond to requests from police services and so on, and that many of them may not feel that the remuneration is as much as they would like.

The department constantly is looking into how best to use Justices of the Peace, how many we need, and what remuneration they should receive. And the member is quite right that as time is going on we're asking Justices of the Peace to do more things. We're asking them to, in particular, respond to many minor offences and at times when judges aren't available. So I can assure the member that these are matters which we are constantly looking at to ensure that our Justices of the Peace get paid appropriately for the work they do.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, and I believe that concludes the questions that we had on Bill No. 35.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 24 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

**Bill No. 36 — The Public Trustee Consequential
Amendment Act, 2001/Loi de 2001 apportant les
modifications corrélatives à la loi intitulée
The Public Trustee Amendment Act, 2001**

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This job is probably seldom more fearful than when we're asked to pass a piece of legislation with which one is not that comfortable and has a difficult time understanding, not because of the content but because of the language used. So we have no questions on Bill No. 36.

And I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the minister and his officials that have been present here this evening.

Clauses 1 to 3 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

**Bill No. 44 — The Prairie and Forest Fires
Amendment Act, 2001**

Clause 1

The Deputy Chair: — I invite the minister to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I would like to introduce, to my immediate left, Stuart Kramer, who is my deputy minister.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good evening to the minister and welcome to Mr. Kramer.

Mr. Chair, this Bill, Bill No. 44, puts the supporting legislation into place for the Forest Fire Contingency Fund. This Forest Fire Contingency Fund, however, was actually established last year.

And I guess the first question I would have to the minister, Mr. Chair, is how is it that the Forest Fire Contingency Fund was established and that funds, monies from that fund, were expended without the supporting legislation last year?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to advise the member that the allocation last year was provided and authorized by the budget, and this year of course it's a separate Act and we are doing it through the legislative process. But clearly last year it was approved through the budget process.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you. Mr. Chair, given that this now has . . . this fund now has legislative legitimacy, will the money actually be set aside physically? Will the \$50 million be set aside and under what circumstances will expenditures from that fund be authorized? And at the end of the budget cycle, what will happen to any unused monies from that fund?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much for the question. That's a very good question. I'll point out that the amount that we are setting aside is 40 million; it's not 50 million.

And what happens is the Act will allow these funds to be rolled over from year to year. So the money that isn't used last year will certainly be rolled over to this year . . . or sorry, this year will be rolled over to next year. And the circumstances in which we use that fund is any escape fires that are greater than a hundred hectares. And that's when we initiate these funds for use.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, I apologize, my error. The fund is in fact \$40 million this year. It was \$50 million last year.

When I first addressed Bill 44, I raised some issues around the spending of firefighting monies in this province, Mr. Minister. And I indicated that I am aware of a review that was undertaken in Alberta that actually ended up saving the Government of Alberta and the Alberta taxpayers large amounts of money in terms of being able to, I guess, better streamline the whole forest firefighting operation. There were a number of areas where there were concerns around the health and safety of the firefighters themselves. There were instances of the agreements between the government and contractors not necessarily being monitored to the degree that they should have. Consequently money wasn't always being spent in the best interest possible way.

And I guess given now that we have a separately legislated \$40 million fund, and that is a considerable amount of money, are you and the government giving any thought whatsoever to undertaking a similar type of review in this province where perhaps if there were some efficiencies to be found and we could save some money through better monitoring, those kind of things, that that is something the government might be interested in doing.

And then the other side of that is through the review in Alberta. As I indicated, they also found a number of concerns about the health and safety of the firefighters. So it would be in the best interests perhaps of those out there fighting the fires, as well, if such a review were to be undertaken.

So, Mr. Minister, the question is then: are you considering or is the government and the department considering undertaking any review of this kind in the near future?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much for the very good question. I just want to point out that one of the conditions of the \$40 million that was granted for this Act was the Minister of Finance, and of course the entire cabinet, has asked that SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management) undertake on a constant basis ways and means in which we could improve our firefighting activities and to make sure that we always watch the bottom line.

And the review that was done in Alberta . . . certainly there's all kinds of lessons we learn from all kinds of jurisdictions. And after the very, very tough year in 1995 where Saskatchewan had a record fire season, we looked at how we fought fires. And a private consultant not only looked at the 1995 fire season but it also looked at the 1998 fire season which was of course also a difficult year.

(20:00)

And since those '95 and '98 forest fire seasons we looked at how we can improve this, and I guess the proof's in the pudding because we have made some major changes in the past few years. I can tell you that Saskatchewan leads the nation in my opinion in terms of fire preparedness and fighting fire overall.

In fact we've gone to a certain level in terms of our ability to fight fires that Alberta and BC (British Columbia) are now coming to Saskatchewan to investigate our fire program. So certainly the lessons of '95 and the lessons of '98 and having private consultants do an outside analysis in the manner in

which we fight fires and a few changes that we have made — major changes — is certainly paying dividends for the Saskatchewan taxpayers.

And as always every fire season teaches us new things and we are constantly on alert to make sure that we monitor how we spend this money and that we prepare for fire seasons.

The Chair: — Will the minister please introduce his new official?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to introduce Dave Pelech. He's with the forest fire management services.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and welcome to the new official.

Mr. Minister, the new section 8.6 designates the financial reporting requirements, which are consistent with the financial reporting requirements of other government special purpose funds. I wonder if you could just give us a brief overview of what those requirements are with respect to government special purpose funds.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Just to point out that there'll be an annual report . . . a separate annual report as a result of this fund, and secondly that there'll be an annual audit report done by the Provincial Auditor.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, in the new subsection 30(8) there are provisions for regulations to be developed for the size and nature of the fire to be fought, and it also indicates here that there are provisions for any other expenses not previously addressed.

Firstly, Mr. Minister, could you give us an idea of what the regulations around the size and nature of the fire might be. And I know you have talked about that a little bit, but if you could perhaps expand on that, and could you also indicate what those other expenses not previously addressed might be as well?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much for the question again. I point out that as you've indicated that the reason, or the regulations point out that we use the fund if there is a fire greater than 100 hectares. And terms of the other expenditures, it's standard clause. We don't anticipate any other cost, but we anticipate the regular forest fire fighting cost would be associated with the fund, and I'll point out again that the other expenses, primarily a standard clause for any cost that we may not anticipate . . . but again as I mentioned, we don't anticipate these costs, but sometimes things do come up, and of course we don't anticipate these, and we would minimize that as well.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Minister and Mr. Chair, that concludes the questions that we have on Bill No. 44, but I would like to first of all thank the minister and thank his officials.

And then I think on occasion, the government is sometimes critical of our perceived inability to be supportive of certain initiatives that they might take, and I would just like to take this opportunity in this instance to congratulate the minister and the

government on establishing the Forest Fire Contingency Fund. I think with the unpredictable nature of forest fires and the degree of difficulty that governments have had over the years in terms of trying to budget around that unpredictability, I think setting aside a Forest Fire Contingency Fund of this nature is probably a really good idea, and hopefully it will allow that little bit of cushion that we do need in those years where there is maybe a little more difficulty than what we originally anticipated.

So thank you to the minister, thank you to the officials, and I once again commend the government on establishing the Forest Fire Contingency Fund.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 6 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

THIRD READINGS

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

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

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

Bill No. 50 — The Mineral Resources Amendment Act, 2001

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

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

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

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

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

Bill No. 11 — The Freehold Oil and Gas Production Tax Amendment Act, 2001

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

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

Bill No. 3 — The Historic Properties Foundations Act

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

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

Bill No. 34 – The Saskatchewan Natural Resources Transfer Agreement (Treaty Land Entitlement) Amendment Act, 2001

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I move this Bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

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

Bill No. 29 — The Student Assistance and Student Aid Fund Amendment Act, 2001

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, I move the Bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

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

Bill No. 16 — The Film Employment Tax Credit Amendment Act, 2001

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I move this Bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

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

Bill No. 45 — The Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation Amendment Act, 2001

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I move this Bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

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

Bill No. 33 — The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Amendment Act, 2001

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I move this Bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

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

Bill No. 49 — The Land Surveyors and Professional Surveyors Amendment Act, 2001

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I move this Bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

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

(20:15)

Bill No. 19 — The Land Titles Amendment Act

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I move that the amendments be now read the first and second time.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, by leave of the Assembly, I move that Bill No. 19 be now read the third time and passed under its title.

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

Bill No. 20 — The Land Surveys Amendment Act, 2001

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

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

Bill No. 43 — The Police Amendment Act, 2001

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

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

Bill No. 35 — The Public Trustee Amendment Act, 2001

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

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

Bill No. 36 — The Public Trustee Consequential Amendment Act, 2001/Loi de 2001 apportant les modifications corrélatives à la loi intitulée The Public Trustee Amendment Act, 2001

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

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

Bill No. 44 — The Prairie and Forest Fires Amendment Act, 2001

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

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

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

**General Revenue Fund
Saskatchewan Research Council
Vote 35**

Subvote (SR01) agreed to.

Vote 35 agreed to.

**Supplementary Estimates 2000-01
General Revenue Fund**

**Saskatchewan Research Council
Vote 35**

Subvote (SR01) agreed to.

Vote 35 agreed to.

**General Revenue Fund
Public Service Commission
Vote 33**

Subvotes (PS01), (PS02), (PS06), (PS04), (PS03), (PS07) agreed to.

Vote 33 agreed to.

**General Revenue Fund
Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation
Vote 53**

Subvotes (SP01), (SP02) agreed to.

Vote 53 agreed to.

**General Revenue Fund
Environment and Resource Management
Vote 26**

Subvotes (ER01), (ER02), (ER08), (ER15), (ER04) agreed to.

The Chair: — Does the committee have leave to revert back to administration, (ER01), for questions?

Leave granted.

Subvote (ER01)

The Chair: — I invite the minister to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. To my extreme or to my immediate left is Stuart Kramer, deputy minister, and to my right is Bob Ruggles, the assistant deputy minister for programs, and directly behind me is Mr. Dave Phillips . . . sorry, Dave Phillips is to my right; Bob Ruggles is behind me. Bob is assistant deputy minister for programs, and Dave Phillips to my right is assistant deputy minister for operations.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good evening to the minister and welcome to his officials. I have just one question, and then I will be relinquishing the floor to my colleague from Shellbrook-Spiritwood. But the question relates to the general departmental inquiries that were made of your department quite some time ago, and we were wondering, are you prepared to table those this evening? Are they ready, and are you prepared to make them available this evening?

(20:30)

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — The question . . . I just want to point out that we have prepared the information. We don't have them tonight but we'll have them very shortly for you.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, welcome to you and to your officials tonight.

I want to start off tonight where I left off on the last part of questioning and that's in regards to CWD, chronic wasting disease. At the time when I was finishing off I remember asking a question regarding the number of deer that was shot around the Marsden area, and at that time there was 213. Of that 213 there was 212 that tested negative but there was one that tested positive.

At that time you had mentioned that the head was being sent down to Toronto, I believe, to the university down there for testing. Have you heard back from Toronto in regards to that deer head and what are the results?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much for the very important question. Just before I answer the question, Mr. Chairman, I want to introduce another official that joined me — Dennis Sherratt. And Dennis is the director of fish and wildlife branch.

I'll just point out what happens in terms of a suspicious head or a suspicious test, is we send the head to Ontario — Nipigon — and then we also forward the head to Colorado for second tests and a second opinion. And we do anticipate that that head will indeed be testing positive, and at this stage, the head is in Colorado, as we speak.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you for the answer, Mr. Minister. In regards to the deer head, I understand that it was another mule deer that was taken that was tested positive. If this does come back and that you say there's a good chance that it will come back positive, is the department going to be going out again and taking some more animals in that area to see if they can find some more specimens that do test positive for that area?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Just before we go on to answer the question, I want to point out that we have been joined by another official. Lynn Tulloch is the executive director of corporate services.

And the question that we have is . . . First of all, I want to really paint a very real picture of what's been happening with chronic wasting. Over the last number of years — three to four years — we have tested 2,000 heads of different deer. And the good news, I guess in the sense of the 2,000, so far we've had one confirmed case and another case that is probably going to be confirmed as positive for chronic wasting.

The other positive development I guess in the sense is that the second anticipated positive deer head was harvested within two miles of the first case. So we anticipate that the exposure may be localized to that particular area. And what we plan on doing is we plan on consulting with the landowners and the wildlife groups for an action plan this fall to try and look at reducing the herd and to also look at ways and means in which we could work co-operatively to address this fairly serious challenge to our wildlife population.

So it certainly confirms our suspicion that it is out there and we want to test to make sure the prevalence we hope is not as great as some people might anticipate, but that work continues.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, for the answer. In regards to my other questions that I asked before, it was stated that the department, when they took the 213 animals, they were all of older age. In other words the older animals were taken, the younger ones were not taken, at that time.

Now in concurrence that both animals were taken within a 2-kilometre span, would it not be possible to take all the animals in an area, say 5 kilometres, to see if that problem is in one area or if it's isolated problems?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much for the question and I thank you for the notion that a 5-mile radius would be adequate. It's really an educational exercise event we're undertaking here as well.

And I'll point out that while 5 miles is a fairly significant area, the Manitou Sand Hills, in which both these animals were found in, covers approximately a thousand square miles and, as you know, animals move freely. So the most effective ways and means in which we can depopulate the herd, it's more effective to do so in the wintertime because that's when the animals congregate.

So this is the reason why our strategy now is to look at the easiest and the quickest way to depopulate the herds and winter is when they congregate, and certainly that's where our window of opportunity is to depopulate the herd as much as we can.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, Mr. Chair. In regards to that, I did say 5 miles, but maybe even 5 kilometres would even help.

I guess the path I'm going down in regards to that is the fact that CWD does spread. You've only taken the older animals to check and see if they've got it. There is nothing saying that the younger animals that are two-year-old or three-year-old or four-year-olds would have CWD.

Therefore, in order to help prevent the continuing spread of this disease, would it not be in the best interests to continue with the slaughtering of those animals, but only in a small sector of the area, and take out everything at that time?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much for the question. I just wanted to point out there that the whole notion that the 5-kilometre radius option of trying to harvest as many animals and to completely clean out the animals from that particular radius — if that is the question — that option is not a very good option because first of all we need a larger area and secondly is that in our test we did take young and old animals.

The first one we took was a two-year old, and the second one that we have suspicion that it's going to be very . . . it's positive. It was a four-year old. So the other challenge with harvesting young animals is sometimes chronic wasting disease can be recognized in animals that are less than a year old.

So as you know chronic wasting disease, there are many questions about the disease, and there's limited information. And basically the approach we're taking in terms of trying to alleviate this particular challenge in our wildlife . . . we feel that the most effective method of controlling chronic wasting

disease appears to be in reducing the herd.

A number of options will be used to promote the reduction of herds, which includes increased bag limits, additional licenses, and adjustments to the length of hunting season. So I think the 5-kilometre radius — well in theory — would be most effective way to eliminate the problem in that specific area.

What I can say is due to our information, we need a much wider area, and we certainly need more animals to test. And basically that's the approach that we're going to take.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, and Mr. Chair. I guess I was going down the path of younger animals in that area because when I asked the question the time before it was just older animals taken not younger animals.

Also being in that area where this animal was tested plus the other one that was tested and they both tested positive for the CWD. Was there any thought of taking more whitetail in that area to test them to see if they would be susceptible to CWD at this time?

(20:45)

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Just to point out, we took both animals. I think we also took elk, and I'll get the specifics on the elk.

What I want to point out is the harvest total. We had 75 per cent of the mule deer and 25 per cent of whitetail. And both of the positive cases are the mule deer and none of the positive cases came from the white deer population.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, and Mr. Chair. You mentioned there that it would be better probably waiting until fall time so that the animals would congregate in a certain area. Also you stated that through hunting licences it may be a way of taking more animals.

Do you believe that hunters will come to that area with the anticipation of taking an animal and to utilize it for meat, or are they going to get a special permit to shoot an animal and have it brought into your department just for testing only?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — There again one of the most important things that we want to do, as we mention time and time again, is we want to consult the landowners and the wildlife groups on how we could meet this challenge together. And I guess, based on those consultations, we'll then determine what the best way to thin the herd out.

For example, one of the things that we need to look at is if hunters do want to go in there and they do want to harvest deer for consumption, that perhaps we would encourage them not to eat any meat until we do the actual testing on the head. And if the head were to come back negative and all indications are that this animal was negative for chronic wasting, we can then advise the hunter of those findings.

So that being said, again we don't want to speculate that's what we're going to do. What we want to do is sit down with the stakeholders and the hunters' groups and go through this process very clearly so people know what the objectives are.

And I suspect once we get that consultation under way that a lot of people will co-operate and that we can look at the most effective ways and the safest way to thin out the herd and begin to control and find out what the chronic wasting disease prevalence is in the wild — in particular for that area.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister and Mr. Chair. In regards to that, what would be the time frame for a person to wait? Having taken an animal, sent the head away to get tested, and have the game processed, put in his deep freeze — in a special deep freeze or whatever you want to do with it? What would be the time frame this person would be waiting for that information to come back?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — There is no question that as a result of the increase in the number of heads that we're testing that the firm that does the testing certainly has a backlog. And they're continuing working to reduce that backlog and now that backlog may take you a couple of months.

While SERM is now working on a plan for this fall where we hope to have a process worked out where the results could come back in less than a month. And as you know there's the whole process of testing the heads have taxed the entire testing system. And what we would encourage people to do is to be patient with the process. While we're fairly confident we could have the results back within a month, there could be further delays. But we're working on trying to minimize those time problems and get people some of the results back as quickly as we can.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, Mr. Chair. In regards to your answer then, if I myself was out there taking an animal and I bought a licence to go out there and take an animal and had that animal, put it in the freezer, processed or whatever, and in a month's time it came back negative, or even positive, what would happen with my money I spent already on that licence to take that animal? Would it be refunded or what's the process with that?

The reason I'm going down this path is I'm trying to establish why you would want to wait till fall time to take animals when the chances of hunters coming back to that area and going through all this whole process at a price tag, I have my doubts if you'll have any come over there. That's why I'm stressing, if it's got a CWD problem in a certain area, take it upon the department itself to look after it in a proper way. And waiting it out till the fall time at the hunter's expense, I don't think is going to work.

Could I have your comments on that?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much for the question. I want to point out that this stage of the game, farming operations are in progress, and as you know that's a very busy time for a lot of folks that live in rural Saskatchewan, and the animals are dispersed as well. Very, very difficult to track animals down. And of course as you're probably aware, we have the full leaf flush, which adds to the problem of hunting animals at this stage of the year.

What I will point out is there will be special permits allowed for any animals that are found unfit. We'll look at if there's a licence refund that is required, we'll certainly do that. There's

special permits that we would authorize if this permit were to be used to help us check into this problem. So you look at all these different scenarios of the farmers being very active, leaves coming out, animals are dispersed, that we continue working with the hunting groups and to see how we're able to come up with a strategy to resolve this issue. So quite frankly the best and clearest time, which we would look at having significant progress against this particular fight, would be in the fall time.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, in 1990 the Saskatchewan Agriculture Development Fund published a document titled "Review of Wildlife Disease Status in Game Animals in North America." There's one particularly intriguing paragraph in this document and I would read it to you.

Johne's disease, chronic wasting disease, and malignant catarrhal fever are three additional diseases of immediate concern to game farmers. These diseases occur in Saskatchewan but would have devastating financial consequences if introduced to game farms, as no reliable treatments are available. These diseases do not pose a major threat to free-ranging wildlife populations.

Now I think you probably, Mr. Minister, are very well that there are some people are looking at this particular document and they're interpreting it as meaning chronic wasting disease pre-existed game farming in this province. And I'm just wondering if perhaps you could clarify the understanding of the department in terms of the origins of chronic wasting disease and whether it pre-existed game farming, or as some like to think that game farming has somehow had an effect on the introduction of CWD in the province.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much for the question. In terms of the 1990 Ag Development Fund, in terms of the document that you made reference to, the disease status in North America. The question I think you asked was, did CWD pre-exist game farming in Saskatchewan?

An addendum put out . . . that was attached to that report indicated that CWD is not in Saskatchewan. And at that point it also pointed out that the only place in North America that CWD existed in 1990 was in Colorado.

(21:00)

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, I have a couple of questions around the issue of the elk disposal sites — the elk that are being slaughtered as a result of positive tests or as a result of herd eradication.

I managed to tour one of these disposal sites in the Nipawin area approximately a week or so ago, and I must say I was quite surprised. I hadn't thought it would be as large a site as it was. And certainly with some of the evidence that was left behind, it appeared that there had been a relatively major operation take place there over a long period of time.

And I guess I have a couple of questions. First of all, how is it that the sites are chosen? Secondly is, where are these animals coming from to these sites? Are they coming from all other parts of the province? Are they coming from certain areas? Is

there any geographic sort of logic behind how these sites are chosen? How are the animals transported there? Are they transported live and then slaughtered on site or are the carcasses transported from the farms? Perhaps if you could answer some of those questions.

I know that in that area, this particular site has created quite a bit of controversy over the last while because as you and I've discussed before, Mr. Minister, the science around CWD isn't all that good. And we have people in the outfitting industry, for example in the Nipawin northeast area, who are very, very concerned. There's fear that perhaps there could be some type of contamination into the wildlife population, and of course these people earn a living from their outfitting businesses.

So perhaps if you could respond on the questions around how the sites are chosen, where the animals come from, how are they being disposed of, and what is the process around all of that.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much for the question. What I want to point out is that the Canada Food Inspection Agency, CFIA, and SERM, of course, are collaborating on this particular challenge with CFIA taking the lead.

In terms of transporting some of the animals, I just want to respond in terms of saying that CFIA is taking every precaution to ensure that any risk related to the transport of game farm elk animals, game farmed animals, for chronic wasting testing is minimized. The Saskatchewan government has consulted with Canadian and American chronic wasting disease expert who agreed that the CFIA approach is valid.

The vast majority of animals being transported test negative. If an animal were showing signs of chronic wasting disease, it would be put down where it is, wrapped and transported to the disposal pit rather than taking the chance of spreading the disease through urine or feces associated with live transport.

And I would point out that some of the areas that are chosen are generally close to infected farms so we're not introducing some of the animals to non-infected areas. And SERM, along with the environment folks, approve the site and they do this by ways of eliminating the risk of water contamination. So having a good clay bed is so very important.

And there are about seven or eight sites throughout the province, and usually the sites are associated on a regional basis, where you see transportation to one specific site from a certain region.

And I would point out that the importance of having these sites minimized is so we don't have a hundred, a hundred and fifty burial sites throughout the province that could create a greater problem in the future. What we want to do is minimize these sites — there's seven or eight of them — and try and ensure that they're environmentally sound so there's no risk of water contamination, and it's in infected areas.

So we're doing that very closely with CFIA, and CFIA is certainly taking the lead on that, and we're collaborating with them. And so far it certainly sounds like a very reasonable approach. Things are working quite fine in terms of the

disposal, so we continue being diligent in that fashion. But clearly it's a very serious matter, and we're taking every precaution possible.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, first of all would you confirm that animals were transported to the Nipawin area from as far away as Lloydminster?

And secondly, I certainly appreciated your reassurances, and I know that the CFIA certainly have some very stringent guidelines that they follow and that they would like all of those involved in this operation to follow. But one of the things that I was very concerned about in touring the site and in talking to neighbours and people farming in the area, I actually had one person indicate to me that there was one particular evening where — and this site was left open for a period of time while the animals were being disposed of — where apparently wolves actually dug some of the remains out of the site and then the next morning, SERM personnel, CFIA personnel had to go and retrieve various body parts from out of the bush.

And if that is the case, then I think the people who are concerned probably have reason to be concerned. So if you could address those two issues, Mr. Minister, please. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — In terms of the question whether animals were transported from Lloyd to Nipawin is I can't confirm nor deny whether elk was transported that far. We don't have that information with us. But it would not be unusual for this to happen. Naturally, as I mentioned, CFIA certainly does have a lot of that information and we'll certainly check. Secondly, we would normally deal with the disposal on a regional site.

In reference to your second question, CFIA did indicate to us that it did find the animal parts and that they took corrective steps. And they also reminded us that the majority of the animals that were put down in that area were tested negative for chronic wasting disease. But nonetheless, they certainly have all the resources put on full max where they continue to work with this problem.

They have a number of animals they have to put down so they're constantly under the gun so on occasion — and this occasion certainly happened — they admitted that this was not done. The animals weren't buried in a timely fashion; some got out but they took corrective steps and they continue to be diligent in reference to making sure that doesn't happen again.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, are there any other disposal options? When I viewed the sites in walking over the mound obviously you have this large number of carcasses buried in the ground and as they're decomposing you've got the site is actually caving in. There was one area there where there was probably a cavern of two, two and a half feet deep already where the pit was starting to collapse in on itself.

And I mean it's probably not that big a stretch to imagine that at some point those animals could very well end up being exposed again. So firstly, what kinds of steps are taken to guard against the site failing in the long term? And are there other disposal

options that CFIA and your department could look at?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — First of all, in terms of the question, is there any other way to dispose of these animals, what I will say that . . . it is accepted worldwide for such a large volume of animals in terms of showing infection of some sort that burial would be the best option.

In Great Britain, for example, with the foot-and-mouth disease, most of the animals were buried. And certainly based on the information that CFIA and SERM have at their disposal, again following some of the worldwide standards . . . a large volume of this nature, burial is the best option. Certainly in terms of incineration, they're going to have to find an incinerator that could burn at that . . . at such a large rate to keep on top of this.

So clearly I can also point out that with burial there's so many questions about chronic wasting. A lot of scientists are looking at this. There's a lot of information they don't know. So at this stage of the game, with CFIA advising alongside of SERM following the worldwide disposal options, we feel that burial is probably the best option for the province.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, and Mr. Chair. I have a couple more questions regarding the CWD in deer before I go on to some other things. In your last answer that you gave me in regarding your department, you said that your department takes CWD very serious and work pretty hard to try and solve this problem.

I know that is true. I know a couple of your members that are here tonight that I've known for many years, even when I was back in the wildlife federation. And I know their work is very hard-working and diligent, and I know that they're trying their best to get a hold of the CWD.

In the questioning I did before, I also found out that Alberta was also doing some testing and they'd taken at that time . . . I don't know how many animals, but it was quite a number of animals. At that time of my questioning, 60 per cent of those animals had been tested already and they came back negatively, but you had no results from the 40 per cent left. Do you have any results at this time from those 40 per cent of animals?

(21:15)

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Yes, I can confirm that there was 241 head that were taken. And the latest information is of the 241 heads that were tested, they all proved negative.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. That is positive news for the Alberta side. Now hopefully you can do the same on this side.

In regard to those animals that were taken, they were right adjacent to the area that you had tested. Do you know at this time if Alberta is going to go further with their testing, or are they going to wait until fall time like the Department of SERM is doing in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much for the question.

I can also advise you, based on our information, that Alberta is going to do some further testing but they are also going to wait until fall; and to also point out that all four of the Western provinces, BC (British Columbia), Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan will be doing further testing this fall.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, in that regards I'd like to go on now to the elk problems. And my colleague, who just left for a few minutes, started regarding elk problems.

Is there any disposal sites in the Lloydminster-Maidstone area to deal with the elk problems there? As you know, in the northwest corner that is where there's the most abundant problems with CWD. Are there any disposal sites in that area?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Yes, I could confirm that of the disposal sites, we have a major site in the Lloydminster area. We feel that it is the biggest site. A wild guess would be about a thousand head or a thousand animals are buried there.

So to confirm your question, yes, in the Lloydminster area . . . we can't give specific information. There is a major burial site where we anticipate that as many as a thousand animals are being buried . . . or have been buried around the Lloydminster area.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, and, Mr. Chair. With that answer then I guess I'm going to go back a little bit in talking to my colleague's question. If there is a disposal site in Lloyd — which I knew there was — why then might there be some animals taken from the Lloydminster-Maidstone area and taken all the way across the country to Nipawin? It doesn't make a whole lot of sense. Your comments on that.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — I think it's very important for us to remember that SERM is certainly doing their part and continue to collaborate with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency.

And the CFIA are the lead agency and they are certainly the ones that would have a lot of influence in terms of how we're dealing with this particular problem. They're certainly putting as much of the resources into this challenge as possible.

What I will say though, as I mentioned before, that we can't confirm nor deny whether elk have been transported that far. We don't have that information with us. But it would not be unusual.

As you mentioned, we usually look at normally utilizing the regional sites. But as I mentioned time and time again, this is an ongoing operation. CFIA is involved. They have assured us that they're minimizing some of the impacts, some of the animals being transported that have been part of a diseased herd. And they're working very closely with us.

So your question why transported that distance? CFIA certainly has prepared for us the logic as to why they're doing this. And they're trying to minimize the number of sites, and minimizing the number of sites, and making sure it has good clay bottom. And it's only to the infected sites that we're forwarding some of the animals that have been part of the source herd.

These are all things that we're collaborating with CFIA on and we're certainly doing our part to make sure that we minimize the potential of infection to areas that don't have chronic wasting.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, Mr. Chair. The animals that are slaughtered off the game farms that go to these sites, are any of the animals tested before they go into the sites or are they just slaughtered and sent to the disposal sites?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — What I'll point out to you, Mr. Chair, is that if an animal is showing any symptoms or displaying any signs of chronic wasting disease on a particular farm, it is put down on that farm and it is then wrapped in plastic and transported to a burial site.

The other animals in the herd, if they're not showing any signs, they are transported live to the burial site. Once they arrive at the burial site, that is where they're euthanized and of course, after they're euthanized, they do testing on the heads. And as I mentioned, the majority of the animals that have transported live that are euthanized at the burial site, the majority of those tests have proven negative. So again this is CFIA's effort to try and minimize the potential of spread of chronic wasting.

And again I elaborate that these sites we're transporting to are infected sites already.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, Mr. Chair. Can you tell me, in the last two months — and I'm going to use the time frame of two months — has there been any game farms where elk have been where they've been determined that they have the disease and want to be slaughtered?

I know sometime, I believe it was the middle of the fall last year, it was down to a point where there was virtually no game farms that tested positive or had looked at being tested positive.

Has any farms in the last two months been stated that they had tested positive, where their herds will have to be destroyed?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much for the question. Again, in the past few months . . . the question you asked, was there any new elk farms that have been identified with chronic wasting disease? I can report that there have been two major farms that have been identified with at least 2,000 animals that we're dealing with here. And at this stage of the game, CFIA is doing follow-up on trace-outs, and once those trace-outs are confirmed, then CFIA will be making the appropriate public information calls. So I think quite frankly that the two major farms over the past two months with at least 2,000 animals doesn't make the news any more better.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, and Mr. Chair. No, the news you gave is not good news. And I guess it brings me to a question, and I don't really know how to put it, but in the northwest area of the province where there's a lot of animals and a lot of animals that are testing positive for CWD, there are cattle producers in and around the area. There's also cattle producers in Alberta next to the border are starting to get really, really concerned regarding the elk problem we have in Saskatchewan, concerned to a point that a number of weeks ago we went up to Lloydminster to a meeting regarding the

producers, cattle producers. And the main focus of that meeting was regarding mad cow disease in the cattle herd, but I'd say probably 50 per cent of the people there were more concerned about CWD in Saskatchewan and the spread of it, no matter how it is.

They were also acting on the fact that there could be some possibilities that the Government of Saskatchewan may be looking at that northwest corner as a serious problem and maybe it's time to act. Is there any truth to rumours floating in and around that area that maybe it's time to look at the northwest area and eradicate all the elk on the game farms at this time to get a hold of this problem without waiting to get to the bottom of it through the process that the department is going through?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Well, as I'd mentioned, Mr. Chairman, CFIA is a lead agency. Right now, as I pointed out, that they are doing a follow-up on some of the trace-outs and that hasn't been a recommendation that they have made for Saskatchewan. So it's not an option that Saskatchewan is considering at this time.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, and Mr. Chair. In regarding the trace-outs of the animals they're basically stemming from the northwest area around the Maidstone area. At a rate of 2,000 animals, which has just been stated in regards to the last two months that have been found, how many animals have been slaughtered in roughly the northwest area to date since the CWD has been identified? And another question, how many animals do we have in the northwest area to date still alive?

(21:30)

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

Mr. Harper: — To ask leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you, to all the members of the legislature, three special guests sitting up in the Speaker's gallery. Ms. Pamela Boisvert from Gaspé, Quebec who is visiting Saskatchewan and is visiting Regina right now. And she's accompanied here today by Kevin Sturgeon from Saskatoon; and Karen Leask from Regina.

So I ask all the members to offer them a very warm welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Environment and Resource Management Vote 26

Subvote (ER01)

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess the question in terms of how many elk have you slaughtered in the northwest to date, very ballpark figure if I can use that phrase, roughly a couple of thousand animals in the northwest. Saskatchewan wide, we have eliminated 20 per cent of the herd which roughly accounts to 55 animals . . . or sorry, 5,500 animals. So we've eliminated 20 per cent of the herd throughout the province of Saskatchewan. And these are approximate figures.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister and Mr. Chair. So that means that there's approximately 5,500 animals . . . there was approximately 5,500 animals, approximately, and that 2,000 of those animals have been taken with the trace-out factor that you've used to get to the bottom of CWD.

One quick question: are not all the animals that belong on the elk farms tagged? And if they are, then the department should have a pretty good number as to how many animals are out there. And is that the numbers that you've given me, that you've approximated, the 2,000 and 5,500 animals?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Yes, what I'll point out in terms of the question, are all the animals on game farms tagged; this is managed through Sask Ag and Food. And of course, as I mentioned, these are estimated. And of course these numbers change every day because you do have calves, you do have movement, you have animals that are being put down by CFIA. So that number varies. But clearly the information more specific, certainly the tag process is being managed through Ag and Food.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, one last question regarding the CWD with the elk problems. And I guess I just want to reiterate regarding what producers, both cattle producers and elk producers in the northwest area, are contending with and they're concerned with WCB — or WCD, pardon me — if taking all the animals from the northwest area is not an option to the department, have you got any other options that you are presently pursuing that you may implement in the next months, maybe year, regarding the elk problem?

And the reason I stated that is the fact that the numbers of elk produced are growing a little bit, but the number of elk taken out of the system through the CWD is rising fairly quickly. And how many more years is it going to take before all the animals will be gone? And the trace-out factor that you're using to eliminate these animals is spreading rapid every time we turn around, so what are some of the options you may be looking at at this time?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — There is no other question that this is a very serious matter. Chronic wasting is something that has hit the province very hard. And CFIA has the lead and SERM is certainly collaborating with CFIA. And CFIA is certainly operating as quickly as possible. And CFIA and certainly SERM — but more so CFIA — their intention is to eliminate chronic wasting disease in game farm elk. That is their intention.

And I believe the standard that they use if there is no new cases of chronic wasting disease over a three-year period then they can breath a sign of relief. But they fully intend, and we concur,

that if they want to proceed with the elimination of chronic wasting disease then they're going to continue harvesting or destroying some of the herd that have positive cases in those herds and they will not stop until all the infected animals have certainly been destroyed.

The other thing that's quite serious in terms of a threat is once all the animals that are infected — whether they come from trace-out herds or they show signs of the chronic wasting disease — once they're all eliminated then the question remains that does the disease stay in the soil.

So these are of course further questions the CFIA have to determine and certainly consult with SERM on. And as always we'll continue working with them. And as pointed out time and time again in the media this is a very serious matter and CFIA will continue destroying animals, putting animals down until their absolutely sure over a period of a three-year testing phase that no more chronic wasting disease is around.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, just one more quick question or comment regarding the elk and that is you mentioned that it was a three-year period that the animals would have to . . . or the industry would have to wait to get a clear slate in regarding CWD.

I'm just wondering regarding to the elk farms that are in quarantine now — and there's a number of them — and that's probably done through the trace-out factor that you've utilized. Is there animals on those farms to date that are quarantined being tested now?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Just to point out that the question that are quarantined animals being tested? The animals that have moved between farms are tested on the quarantined farms. So for example if you have a trace-out where an elk was transported from an infected farm A to farm B, they will then test that animal that was transferred to farm B. And of course if the test is positive then the entire herd would be put down.

So again I go back to CFIA's rule that they will continue putting animals down until they're absolutely sure when this particular problem is gone for three years. And I'll also point out that this process does take some time. It's very time consuming, but CFIA is certainly putting a lot of resources and time and SERM is collaborating with them as well.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, that's all the questions I have regarding CWD. Just a comment though in regards to CWD and the department. As we speak, the cattle producers both in Saskatchewan and also in Alberta are getting somewhat . . . I shouldn't say frustrated, but they're starting to look for some answers in regarding Saskatchewan's problem with CWD.

I think the longer we take in waiting to rectify this problem, and I know it's a problem, but when you start seeing an industry like the cattle producers, both Saskatchewan and Alberta, and the losses they may or may not occur they're going to start pushing the buttons and it's going to come to the Department of SERM in Saskatchewan. So in regards to that, I know that your department is working hard to rectify this problem with CWD and that's all the questions I have in that regard.

Just a couple questions. One happens to be in my constituency, has to do with forestry and that's in regards to the mill — the saw mill — the proposed saw mill that's going up just north of Spiritwood in the Penn-Chitek Lake area. There was an announcement a while back that agreements had been signed in regards to that. Is there any further progress in regards to the proposed mill at the Penn-Chitek Lake area and what is the status of it so far?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — I just want to confirm that this would be with the agency chiefs; that's the correct area. I want to point out that in terms of the saw mill, the status of the mill is that . . . I understand that they're still looking for a corporate partner and I hear they're having discussions with a corporate partner, and following those discussions . . . and of course they're also looking at some ag lands for some of the supply of wood and these consultations of course are always underway.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. In regards to the forest fire that happened at the Tobin Lake area, it was the hugest forest fire in this area this year and there was quite a number of hectares that were burned in that regard. A lot of those acres that were burned had quite a sustainable, large trees on it. What is happening with the burned forest area and what is the department's recommendations in regard to it at this time?

(21:45)

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much for the question. What happens in the normal course of a fire going through a forest, first of all because of our preparedness model, we respond very quickly to it and eliminate the continual burning of some very good wood. Following that, we'd do an assessment of the site and then we'd put out a request for a proposal in terms of the use of that particular area.

And we like to have the time frame of the actual harvest of the . . . or salvage of the wood within a two-year time frame because after two years, of course, the bugs would get at the wood and that would create further waste and that's not something that we would like to see happen.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, Mr. Chair. As you just reiterated, that it is a two-year time period regarding the forest after a fire goes through, when it's burnt, because of the bugs and stuff get in there.

I've had a few phone calls from that area regarding small logging operations that are very, very interested in obtaining some logging permits in that area. And as you know, with the forestry problems, with the embargo with the United States and Canada, the forestry industry has slowed down a little bit in regards to this. But I think it'd be an excellent opportunity for some of the small logging companies in and around that area to get in there and take that timber. But it's got to be done in a fair and effective measure and it's got to be done very quickly.

That ends my questioning, Mr. Minister. I want to thank you and your officials tonight for the answers you've given me on all my questions. And I'd like to turn it over now to my colleague from Carrot River. Thank you very much.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister,

over the course of the last month or so, we've been hearing a lot about the Saskatchewan Scrap Tire Corporation and some disenchantment within the tire recycling industry in this province.

And I am aware of a letter that you received not too long ago from Mr. Shane Olson, the chief executive officer of Shercom Industries. In his letter, Mr. Olson talks about the Saskatchewan Scrap Tire Corporation and the fact that they were established to help enforce regulations that limit the disposal of tires. Furthermore, that they would license approved recycling depots to ensure proper disposal.

A little further on in his letter he speaks to a number of issues that the industry now has with respect to tire recycling in this province. And he talks about the private sector having agreed to certain terms for the sake of the environment. And he goes on to say, and I quote:

The private sector moved in and invested hundreds of thousands of dollars to obtain the necessary equipment to meet the new disposal standards. The Saskatchewan Scrap Tire Corporation was entrusted to properly manage these funds and administer the collection and tipping fees for tires on behalf of the consumers.

It is the investment that the industry has made that has allowed Saskatchewan Scrap Tire Corporation to begin doing their job. The risk associated with the investment remained on the shoulders of individual investors.

Mr. Olson in his letter to detail a number of concerns, and I'm sure that you have considered his letter as well.

The question, Mr. Minister, is what is the department doing in terms of attempting to reconcile some of the differences that are apparent amongst some of the stakeholders in the tire recycling industry in the provinces?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much for the question. I just want to point out that in terms of what is the amount that goes as an incentive to all the recyclers out there, I can point out that the amount has been recently lowered by the Saskatchewan Scrap Tire Corporation. And the reason that it's happened is the Saskatchewan approach is the same across Western Canada. It is in line with the other provinces.

And equally more important is the Scrap Tire Corporation would not be able to survive if they did not lower these particular incentive payments to the recyclers.

And I guess I would point out that the concept of the Saskatchewan Scrap Tire Corporation is all those people that buy tires, they pay an environmental charge on each of the new tires that they buy and that money goes to recycle old tire products. And the Saskatchewan Scrap Tire Corporation has been doing a tremendous job and of course the recyclers have also been doing a good job as well. But clearly the move was made to ensure that the Scrap Tire Corporation survives but it also brings us in line with the other provinces in Western Canada.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, I

certainly understand the point of view that you are expressing here. But I think the difficulty here is that these people in this industry were originally led to believe that they would be operating at a certain level of collection and tipping fees.

Now what they have perceived this last round of cuts as is a breach of trust between two sectors that should obviously be working together in the best interests of the province. As a matter of fact, Mr. Olson uses some pretty strong language here, and I quote:

This is not a dictatorship where the Saskatchewan Scrap Tire Corporation can arbitrarily set the industry's collection and tipping fee and implement it in 90 days without first considering the impact it will have on their only partner. If the Saskatchewan Scrap Tire Corporation does not take the steps to reassure the industry and remove this wedge by managing the environmental levy and protecting the industry's investment, the industry will move in the direction of the great economic invisible hand.

Now I think what we have here is a situation, Mr. Minister, where we've seen a private investor come into the province and they obviously were willing to invest in the best interests of the province. And after having been led to believe that there would be a certain set of rules that they would be expected to play by, but those rules have now been changed.

I mean we're looking at the entire tire recycling industry possibly being compromised if we don't somehow reconcile the differences between these two groups. And the question, Mr. Minister, because the department does have the ultimate legislative responsibility here and legislates environmental handling fees, those kinds of things, is what is the department going to be doing in order to try and facilitate a reconciliation so that we can get on with the business of recycling in this province?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to point out that the Saskatchewan Scrap Tire Corporation has made the decision to proceed in this manner. A consultant's report was done, and I also want to add that the SSTC (Saskatchewan Scrap Tire Corporation) is an industry-run association. It's a non-profit corporation. And I think that the incentives were lowered to be in line with the western Canadian levels. And I think over all, I think some of these moves was necessary to help SSTC stay financially viable.

So those are some of the points I wish to make in reference to the SSTC.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 22:02.