

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I consider it a privilege to present a petition on behalf of a number of individuals that are responsible for building this province. And I read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately reconsider the exorbitant fee increases for long-term care services in Saskatchewan.

And this is signed by the good people from Warman and from Hepburn.

I so present.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition signed by residents of the province of Saskatchewan. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately reconsider the exorbitant fee increases for long-term care services in Saskatchewan.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition are from Wiseton, Elrose, and Rosetown in the Rosetown-Biggar constituency.

And I'm very pleased to present it on their behalf.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to stand and present a petition from people who are concerned about long-term care fee increases:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately reconsider the exorbitant fee increases for long-term care services in Saskatchewan.

The people that have signed these petitions are from Saskatoon, Annaheim, and Muenster.

I so present.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Mr. Speaker, I too rise this afternoon on behalf of citizens who continue to be concerned about long-term care rates. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately reconsider the exorbitant fee increases for long-term care services in Saskatchewan.

Signatures on the petition this afternoon are from Saskatoon and from Melfort.

I so present.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition to do with the overfishing with nets at the Lake of the Prairies. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to work with the federal government, First Nations representatives, and with other provincial governments to bring about a resolution in the Lake of the Prairies situation and to ensure that our natural resources as a whole are used in a responsible manner by all people in the future.

The signatures, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Esterhazy, Stockholm, Yorkton, Churchbridge, and Whitewood.

Mr. Wakefield: — Mr. Speaker, I have a petition by concerned citizens who are concerned on the long-term care fees. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately reconsider the exorbitant fee increases for the long-term care services in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the signatures are from North Battleford, Battleford, and Denzil.

I so present.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with fee increases for long-term care services. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately reconsider the exorbitant fee increases for long-term care services in Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by individuals from the communities of Yorkton, Foam Lake, and Jedburgh.

I so present.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to present a petition that is really quite timely. It has to do with the crop insurance rate increases that were introduced by the government this year. The petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to halt its plan to take money out of the crop insurance program and hike farmers' crop insurance premium rates while reducing coverage in order to pay off the provincial government's debt to the federal government.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by producers from the communities of Gull Lake and Webb.

I so present.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too stand today to present a petition on behalf of citizens who are deeply concerned about the long-term home care fee increases. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately reconsider the exorbitant fee increases for long-term care services in Saskatchewan.

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

And this is signed by people from my constituency, namely Estevan and Midale.

I so present. Thank you.

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of residents who are concerned about the long-term care fees. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately reconsider the exorbitant fee increases for long-term care services in Saskatchewan.

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

And the petition is signed by residents of Weyburn and Big Beaver.

I so present.

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, I have a petition here with citizens concerned about fee increases.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately reconsider the exorbitant fee increases for long-term care services in Saskatchewan.

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

Signed by the good citizens from Davidson and Loreburn.

I so present.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon I have a petition from people in Saskatchewan who are concerned that the provincial government is using crop insurance to repay a loan that they took out from the federal government last year. And the petition reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to halt its plan to take money out of the crop insurance program and hike farmers' crop insurance premium rates while reducing coverage in order to pay off

the provincial government's debt to the federal government.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed from the good people of Paddockwood.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also would also like to present a petition from citizens concerned about the changes to the crop insurance program. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to halt its plan to take money out of the crop insurance program and hike farmers' crop insurance premium rates while reducing coverage in order to pay off the provincial government's debt to the federal government.

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

Signed by the good citizens of Mayfair, Hafford, Spiritwood, and Rabbit Lake.

I so present.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition today with citizens concerned about the deplorable state of Highway No. 15. And 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 highway budget to address the concerns of the serious conditions of Highway 15 for Saskatchewan residents.

And the petition is signed, Mr. Speaker, by citizens from Watrous, Viscount, Regina, and Simpson.

I so present.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to present a petition on behalf of concerned citizens. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately reinstate reasonable annual deductible amounts for prescription drugs in Saskatchewan.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And signatures to this petition, Mr. Speaker, come from the community of Wynyard.

I so present.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the Assembly today to bring forth a petition from citizens of Saskatchewan concerned with Besnard Lake. And the petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to work with the federal government, First Nations representatives, to bring about a resolution to the Besnard Lake situation and to ensure that the natural resources as a whole are used in a responsible manner by all people of the future.

And the signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Regina, Rosetown, Leask, Prince Albert, Hafford, and Shell Lake.

I so present.

Mr. Peters: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition signed by residents of the province concerned about the long-term fee increases. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately reconsider the exorbitant fee increases for long-term care services in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by people from the community of Unity.

I so present.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again with a petition from citizens concerned about the long-term care fees. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately reconsider the exorbitant fee increases for long-term care services in Saskatchewan.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the good folks of Admiral and Shaunavon.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and are hereby read and received as addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper number nos. 8, 17, 18, 24, 31, and 32.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health: what criteria is used to calculate the actual cost to providing housing and care for a nursing home resident; and how is this criteria used to calculate the actual cost per resident?

I also have two others questions directed:

To the Minister of Health: how does the government collect monthly nursing home fees from residents; and also what factors are considered when determining the percentage of income nursing residents are charged?

Thank you.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Finance: has there been or will there be any increase in pension benefits in the current year for those retired civil servants under the defined benefits old plan?

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a written question. I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Labour: what recommendations were made by the Saskatchewan occupational health and safety following the May 25, 2001 accident at Allan potash mine; and on what date were these recommendations implemented?

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Agriculture: how many agriculture producers lease Crown land; and further to that, how many of those producers are cattle producers?

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for SPMC: can the minister please provide the complete details of expenses incurred to date in the construction of the new Department of Highways facility located at Morse; as well, what further expenses does the department expect to incur related to the completion of this facility; and how this facility is being financed by Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation? Further to that, can the minister please provide the cost per year that will be charged to the Department of Highways?

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of CIC: what are the qualifications required for employment with the Government of Saskatchewan as a natural gas or plumber inspector in Saskatchewan? Number two, how many plumbing and natural gas inspectors are employed in Saskatchewan? And the third question, how many positions are currently vacant?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Legislative Assembly a very fine group of

students from Thomson School in Regina. I've been to this school many times over the years and they have great Christmas concerts, amongst other things.

But as you can see, it's a very diverse school and these students have really — and their teachers and their parents have really learned how to make the most out of diversity and to celebrate it and to help it work for them in their school. And I just want to say that this is a terrific school, Mr. Speaker.

The teachers today are Heather Walton and Michael Lamb accompanying the students. And I just want everyone in the legislature to help me congratulate these young people and their teachers for having such a great school. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you and to you, it's a pleasure to introduce to members of the Assembly, sitting in your gallery, a young man named Justin Wall. I am proud to say, Mr. Speaker, that he is my nephew.

He graduated a year ago and has spent a year working in Swift Current but plans to in the fall attend Briercrest Bible College in Caronport. And he's interested in politics and come to view the proceedings of the Assembly. So I'd just ask all members to join with me in welcoming Justin to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the House, a group of 15 adult students from the Dumont Technical Institute in Regina here. And they're seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. And they're accompanied here today by their teacher, Nicole Amiotte. And the group has already had a tour of the legislature and now they're going to take in the proceedings of the House.

And I just hope the group enjoyed their time spent in their legislature; and I ask all members to offer them a very warm welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this opportunity to introduce to you and through you to the legislature, Dr. Steve West, in your gallery. Dr. West, some might remember, is the . . . most recently was the member for the Alberta Lloydminster constituency, and most recently, among other ministries in Alberta, the ministry of the treasury.

Dr. West is here today to see how question period should be carried on in a very civil way. He's been through many of these in the Alberta legislature. Please welcome Dr. West to our legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the member from Lloydminster in welcoming Dr. West.

Dr. West and I had the pleasure — at least it was a pleasure for

me, and I hope it was for him — of working together on many issues at the provincial-federal-territorial level, and I always found him to be most pleasant and co-operative to work with. And I had the pleasure this morning of meeting . . . renewing acquaintances with Dr. West. And he's working in the private sector now and I know we all wish him well in his new role.

And I also join in welcoming Dr. West to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to the Assembly a guest in the east gallery, Mr. Clay Reich.

Clay Reich is the current president of the Saskatchewan Party. He works on a voluntary basis but he is invaluable to the party. He's been travelling throughout Saskatchewan, and one of the reasons that the Saskatchewan Party is faring so well is because of the fine work of Clay Reich.

Would you please welcome to the Assembly today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goulet: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, I too would like to join the member from Regina Northeast, of course, to welcome Nicole Amiotte and Dumont Technical Institute members at your gallery, Mr. Speaker. Of course, in Cree I would like to say, Ta wow, which means welcome.

And as well, Mr. Speaker, I used to be the former head of Gabriel Dumont Institute, and Dumont Technical Institute was a very important development in this province. And it is important to recognize that it's not only for the self-determination of individuals to create a strong education in this province but I think I'm very, very proud of each and every one of these students here.

I would like to as well address them in Cree as well.

(The hon. member spoke for a time in Cree.)

Welcome them, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join with members opposite in welcoming the students from the Dumont Institute here today. I hope that they have an informative visit to the Legislative Assembly and I would like . . . ask all members to join with me in welcoming them again. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I want to introduce a friend of mine.

And I've got up in this Assembly and I've done introductions in French and in Spanish and in Cree and sometimes English, Mr. Speaker.

But I want to introduce a friend of mine who ran against me in 1995 and he promised he'd vote for me this time if I done the introduction in Dene. So, Mr. Speaker, I've got notes which I'm following.

(The hon. member spoke for a time in Dene.)

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Mental Health Week

Ms. Draude — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's Mental Health Week across Canada and this year's theme is Emerging Into Light, Sharing Our Stories.

Mr. Speaker, statistics show that one in every five Canadians will be affected by mental illness at some time in their lives. More than 10 per cent of the adult population will have a depressive disorder. Even more troubling are the statistics concerning our children. Nearly 20 per cent of children and youth in Canada have a diagnosable psychiatric disorder, yet only one out of five of these children will receive help.

Mr. Speaker, 16 per cent of health care expenditures can be linked to psychiatric disorders. Among those aged 20 to 44, mental illness is the second leading cause of hospital use.

We know that there is a short . . . a growing shortage of mental health professionals and the government must work hard to address this issue.

Mr. Speaker, it's crucial that we recognize the devastating impact that mental illness has not only on those individuals affected, but also on their families, their friends, and the rest of society.

Only 43 per cent of adults suffering from depression seek care from a health professional, and 10 to 15 per cent of people with major mental illnesses will die by suicide.

Mental health is just as important as physical health, Mr. Speaker. More must be done to improve the social stigma surrounding mental illness so that those who are suffering from it will feel free to get help and medical assistance.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Geoff Pawson to Attend United Nations Children's Summit

Hon. Mr. Nilson — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to announce that Dr. Geoff Pawson, founder, president, and CEO (chief executive officer) of Ranch Ehrlo Society and Ehrlo Community Services, will be part of the Canadian delegation attending the special United Nations Children's Summit in New York this week.

Mr. Pawson is one of my constituents and has played an important and active role in our community for many years. He

was selected to be part of this delegation because of his years of experience in and dedication to child welfare.

Mr. Pawson started the Ranch Ehrlo Society 36 years ago, taking it from a single residential unit for troubled boys to a multi-service agency providing highly specialized programs for young boys and girls. The Ehrlo Society helps over 160 youth in both residential treatment and educational programs.

Mr. Pawson is also a founding member and incoming president of the Child Welfare League of Canada. In April 2000 he was named to the Order of Canada for his commitment to helping youth and their families. Last fall he received the Saskatchewan Order of Merit.

The extent of Mr. Pawson's contributions to child welfare and to this province cannot be summarized in the short time I have for this statement. Therefore I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate him for his commitment and to offer our support to him and the Canadian delegation who is joining 170 countries and 70 heads of state to review the successes and failures since the first World Summit for Children held in 1990.

We'd like to thank people like Geoff Pawson for their contribution to Saskatchewan and to the world. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

A Taste of the Vanscoy Rural Municipality Fundraiser

Mr. Weekes: — On Saturday, April 27 the Vanscoy and District Agricultural Society held its third annual A Taste of the RM (rural municipality) fundraiser gala. The RM of Vanscoy was bursting with excitement and exotic tastes. Tastes of the RM featured local treats such as bison, elk, ostrich, wild boar, lamb, fresh vegetables and salads, perogies, and saskatoon berries.

There were many great door prizes and throughout the evening people were able to tour past the silent auction table and place bids on many exciting items on display. We had the opportunity to browse through the country store where sumptuous items that had just been tasted were on sale to take home and enjoy.

Proceeds from this event will help to fund the many activities of the Vanscoy and District Agricultural Society. These include school bursaries, the district summer fair, farmers' night out in the form of a dinner meeting, and a district rodeo.

Congratulations to the Vanscoy and district agriculture society on another successful fundraiser gala.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

University of Saskatchewan's Master Teacher Award

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Those of us who were around this place in the early '90s will remember the excellent work of the then Chief Commissioner of the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, Donna Greschner. She has also been a professor of law at the University of Saskatchewan since 1982.

I am happy to report to the Assembly that at convocation later this month, Professor Greschner will be awarded the University of Saskatchewan's Master Teacher Award, an award which recognizes teaching excellence. This is just one more item in her long list of accomplishments. A cross-section of students and faculty nominated her, praising her ability to stimulate her students and to motivate them to achieve high standards.

In addition to her work in Saskatchewan, she has served as a member of Canada's Human Rights Commission as well as serving as a consultant on constitutional issues to women's groups, Aboriginal organizations, and foreign governments including South Africa, Mr. Speaker. She has lectured on constitutional law and human rights at universities in Canada and abroad.

Why am I making this member statement, Mr. Speaker? It's because Donna was a classmate of mine right through grade school, and her family is and are neighbours of ours on the farm in Goodsoil.

Donna, we are very proud of you, and I know members will want to add their congratulations to the university's recognition of this outstanding public servant and scholar.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Battlefords Business Excellence Awards

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last evening business excellence was celebrated in the Battlefords with the ninth annual BBEX (Battlefords Business Excellence) awards sponsored by the Battlefords Chamber of Commerce and SaskTel. The gala evening was another great success.

Winners were: Business of the Year, the Battlefords Trade and Education Centre; property appearance, Mark's Work Warehouse; new business, Dollar Store with More; young entrepreneur, Joelle's on Main Hair Salon; community involvement, Anderson's Construction; customer service, North Battleford Co-op Service Station; and Heritage Award, Charabin Seed Farm, a fourth generation operation that began nearly 50 years ago now run by sons, daughters-in-law and grandchildren of the original owner Ken Charabin— a very deserving tribute to a family farm and a successful business operation.

In accepting the Business of the Year award, the BTEC (Battlefords Trade and Education Centre) manager made the following statement:

Excellence is the result of caring more than others think is wise,
 Risking more than others think is safe,
 Dreaming more than others think is practical and
 Expecting more that others think is possible.

Congratulations to the winners, the nominees, and the business community of the Battlefords for striving for excellence.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Students Against Drinking and Driving Banquet

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Saturday night I had the privilege of attending the annual Students Against Drinking and Driving banquet, which was held at Greenall School in Balgonie. I was pleased to bring greetings on behalf of government and to take part in the awards ceremonies.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, the first SADD (Students Against Drinking and Driving) chapter was established in 1986 and it was established for one simple reason — too many people, too many students were being killed on our roads by drinking drivers. Now there are more than 100 chapters in Saskatchewan.

SADD has made a tremendous difference over the years in making driving after drinking unacceptable in this province. We all have more to do because people are still being killed or injured by drinking drivers, but thanks to organizations like SADD the public consciousness is being raised.

For just one instance, SADD this year passed out its one-millionth red ribbon, a ribbon to raise awareness to remind people to think twice about their drinking and driving habits.

I was honoured to hand out the Nicole Nakonechny Memorial Award, named after a young woman killed by a drinking driver. The award goes to the most active SADD chapter in the province. Eight deserving schools were nominated, and Swift Current Comprehensive High School received the award.

Let's hope, Mr. Speaker, that one day SADD chapters will no longer be necessary. But until then, our congratulations to each and every one of them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Knights of Columbus Family of the Year Award

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In April, the Knights of Columbus held their provincial convention in Regina and, Mr. Speaker, it was a special occasion for one particular family from Swift Current.

Stan and Marilyn Lautsch, along with their five children — Christine, Eric, Emily, Theresa, and Theodore — were recognized as the Knights of Columbus Family of the Year. Each year the honour is bestowed upon a family that shows exceptional commitment to their church, to their community, and to the Knights of Columbus. And, Mr. Speaker, there are many people in Swift Current who have been on the receiving end of the generosity of the Lautsch family.

Stan Lautsch is an instructor at the local college. He's a Boy Scout leader and involved with the Abilities Centre. Stan is also active with the Canadian Blood Services which time and time again in Swift Current surpasses its goal for blood donations.

Marilyn Lautsch is a registered psychiatric nurse. She's also involved with Girl Guides, and the Catholic Women's League, and the Swift Current branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association.

Their five children — Christine, Eric, Emily, Theresa, and

Theodore — are all actively involved with various church and community activities as well.

Mr. Speaker, Swift Current is very fortunate to be home to such a volunteer oriented family as that of Stan and Marilyn Lautsch. And I would ask all members of the Assembly to join me in congratulating them as the Knights of Columbus Family of the Year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:00)

ORAL QUESTIONS

Federal Response to United States Farm Subsidies

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Agriculture is back with us in the Assembly today after meeting with his federal and provincial counterparts in Ottawa and the news is not good. We understand from the media that there is no new money coming from the federal Liberal government. Nevertheless the US (United States) farm subsidy program is storming right ahead.

Mr. Speaker, we also heard from the federal Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Vanclief, that if there was any type of a program that he would expect the provinces to chip in a 40 per cent of the cost.

Mr. Speaker, Ottawa's response to this growing crisis is unacceptable. And I think it's incumbent upon the Minister of Agriculture to explain to this House and to explain to the people of Saskatchewan why yesterday's and the day before's meetings produced no good news for our province.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well, Mr. Speaker, first I want to say to the House that yesterday's deliberations were, and the day before's, deliberations were on two pieces, Mr. Speaker. The first piece was to talk about the agricultural policy framework of which we're now going to have a national agricultural plan for Canada put together by the federal Minister of Agriculture and all provincial ministers across the nation.

And I want to report, Mr. Speaker, to the House this afternoon that on that particular issue and file we were able to accomplish some very important strategies, Mr. Speaker. We were able to agree that the five principles that we were talking about and the five pillars are ones that we're going to move forward. We have a commitment from the federal government, Mr. Speaker, that they are going to in fact grow their \$1.1 billion, Mr. Speaker, to the chapters within the new framework.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have a commitment now from the federal minister that they are going to, in fact, use crop insurance as the lead risk management program, Mr. Speaker. That's the kind of progress that we got on the agricultural policy framework.

What we don't have, Mr. Speaker . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that Saskatchewan farmers will be concerned if crop insurance is going to be the lead in the fight against the US farm Bill, particularly in light of his government's move to withdraw funding from crop insurance and reduce coverage from crop insurance.

Mr. Speaker, the minister pretty much confirmed what I said in my first question. The papers are right — the minister has agreed to fight the new US farm Bill, but the details of the battle are very sketchy. In fact we have no details whatsoever.

Mr. Speaker, Agriculture Minister Vanclief has not indicated how Canada plans to fight these new US subsidies.

Mr. Speaker, could the minister enlighten us today? Could he tell us what options the federal government is considering? What sort of trade actions might the federal government be considering? Are they looking at the possibility of any sort of reaction — whether it be retaliatory trade actions, tariffs, more money for Canadian producers including farmers in Saskatchewan? What's going on?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Direct to the House, I want to make sure that the members opposite understand that in this year's crop insurance program this government, and this ministry, and this department added an additional \$14 million to the crop insurance program. Mr. Speaker, we added an additional 14 million.

And I want to say to the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, and I want to say to you, that all of the provinces except one said, Mr. Speaker, that we should be asking Ottawa to make up the difference on the trade injury — the 1.3 billion. All the provinces except one.

And I say, Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, this government, farm organizations, farm leaders in this country say that this \$1.3 billion should be paid by the federal government in mitigation for Canadian farmers. And I say, Mr. Speaker, and ask the member opposite, the Leader of the Opposition, are you on board, sir? Are you on board? Are you on board, sir?

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. I would just ask the minister to place all of his questions through the Chair. I'll give you another 10 seconds.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Through the Chair I ask the Leader of the Opposition, are you going to support . . . I ask the minister . . . I ask the Leader of the Opposition through the Speaker, will he, Mr. Speaker, will he and his party agree to supporting Canadian agriculture? Will he agree that in fact we should be receiving from the national government a \$1.3 billion injury payment?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The official opposition has been unequivocal in its insistence that the federal government should entirely respond to the unfair trade action by the United States. We have not changed our mind on that.

Perhaps the minister is changing his mind — I'm not sure. We've not really heard any news from his . . . after his return from Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker, the usual response isn't good enough. In response to the latest attack on Canadian agriculture, we can't get a clear answer out of Ottawa. The minister is going on about some changes to safety nets that may occur years down the road; and in fact is not a safety net that deals with price, it deals with production and with weather, Mr. Speaker.

We believe that a special conference is required. I wonder now after his failure to agree . . . consensus with the federal government, if the Agriculture minister would now agree that the Western provinces must develop a common front in response to unfair US trade action.

Mr. Speaker, in light of yesterday's failure, will the Agriculture minister or will the Premier reconsider our proposal?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, since this issue came to national and international attention, we have been applying ourselves to a variety, a variety of approaches. One was to have our minister fully engaged, leading the battle, if I may say, in Ottawa calling upon the national government to support Canadian producers to the tune of \$1.3 billion, 100 per cent funded from Ottawa.

I have met now with the Governor of North Dakota. I have been in contact, I have been . . . Mr. Speaker, it's very difficult to respond in this House when the opposition members would sooner play politics than hear answers.

Mr. Speaker, I have spoken to the Chair of the Western Premiers . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. Order. Order, please. Order, please. Order, please.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I have met . . . spoken with the Chair of the Western Premiers and insisted — and have been ensured — that this issue will be number one in the Western Premiers' meeting.

I have been in touch with the Premier of Alberta on two separate occasions. I met last evening in Winnipeg with the Premier of Manitoba. We are very close to bringing the Prairie premiers together on an urgent basis, with discussion of inviting our leaders of the opposition to be a part of that project.

But, Mr. Speaker, before I move further on scheduling this meeting, I need to know from the Leader of the Opposition unequivocally that he will support a position which calls upon the national Government of Canada to support producers to the tune of \$1.3 billion for trade injury, and that that money must be 100 per cent funded by the national government. I need him to stand in this House and declare it today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker,

yes, the Premier came back empty-handed from North Dakota. Yes, the Minister of Agriculture came back empty-handed from Ottawa. But, Mr. Speaker, I can assure the Premier, I can assure the Premier that we give our unequivocal support that Ottawa fund a program, a plan to compensate Canadian agriculture producers because of the unfair trade action of the United States.

He can be assured, as we have shown in past affirmation of the motions that he's moved here in this House . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. Order, please.

Mr. Hermanson: — As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, I would assure the Premier that we are fully supportive. He can count on our support. He can count on, I believe, on the support of all governments of the four Western provinces and, I believe, all opposition leaders of the four Western provinces to state very strongly that Ottawa's lack of action is not acceptable on this matter, that they have a responsibility to act, and that we're going to be more forceful than we have ever been in the past.

So I call on the Premier again to move as quickly as he can and to offer Saskatchewan as a place to host this meeting prior to the regular Premiers' Conference.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I did not hear the Leader of the Opposition and we need . . . Saskatchewan people need to hear this. Saskatchewan producers need to hear this. If we are going into a national negotiation trying to bring unanimity to Western Canadian position, I need to know that from this legislature we will enjoy that unanimity.

Will the Leader of the Opposition commit that he and his party will stand with us on calling for trade injury payment from Ottawa . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Will he stand and commit that he will support a position which calls for trade injury support from Ottawa which is 100 per cent financed by the national government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I quite enjoy being able to answer the question — the answer is yes. Now I think I'm supposed to ask a question so my question to the Premier is will he convene this meeting or invite the other leaders . . .

The Speaker: — Order, Order, please. Order, please. Order. No, order, please. Order, please.

Mr. Hermanson: — As I said, Mr. Speaker, my answer is yes, and so will the Premier call this meeting and offer Saskatchewan to host this meeting as soon as possible before the regular Western premiers' meeting?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, with the absolute assurance that's been provided, I think, from the Leader of the Opposition, I will be more than happy — perhaps as early as later today, certainly before the end of the week — to invite leaders from the Prairie provinces to attend to Regina to formulate — my hope will be, to formulate a unified position to put to the federal government on behalf of at least the three Prairie provinces.

That said, Mr. Speaker, this issue will also be discussed and take prominence at the Western Premiers' Conference about three weeks from now.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Water Quality Concerns at Last Mountain Lake

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Environment minister. Today we found out something the residents around Last Mountain Lake have been noticing all winter — the quality of lake water. Usually it's clean and very clear there; it has deteriorated rapidly over the past few months. And thanks to a local resident of Regina Beach who decided to call the media, we also know why.

Mr. Speaker, CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) Radio was reporting today that the Saskatchewan Water Corporation has been diverting treated sewage water from the city of Regina directly into Last Mountain Lake all winter. Now the water in the south end of the lake is turning into a potentially toxic brown and yellow mess.

Mr. Speaker, why is the NDP (New Democratic Party) dumping Regina's sewage water into Last Mountain Lake and why didn't the government tell the people that live around the lake that the water could be toxic?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Lorjé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member opposite for the question. And I would first of all point out that Saskatchewan Environment has asked CBC to share with us a copy of their test results. To date we have not received them but we are hopeful that they will give us those results, because quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan Environment will be collecting additional samples as part of our annual spring monitoring program and we want to see the CBC samples as well to compare them.

So we have not yet received the CBC results. I can't comment on them. But I can say that . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order. Order, please. Order, please. Order, please.

Hon. Ms. Lorjé: — I want to make a couple of additional points, if I may, Mr. Speaker. First of all, the water in Last Mountain Lake is clearly not drinking water. It is surface water. And it is very important that people realize that they should not be drinking non-potable water.

I also want to say, and I'm sure that the member opposite realizes this, the city of Regina treats its sewage at a very high standard. The water . . . The effluent from the treatment plant

then flows into the Wascana Creek which then flows into the Qu'Appelle River which then flows into Last Mountain Lake. At the . . .

(14:15)

The Speaker: — . . . question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, so I take it from that remark that the government . . . Sask Water is diverting sewage water into Last Mountain Lake.

Terry Fleischaker, a resident at Last Mountain Lake, said the lake water has turned dark yellow and brown with little chunks in it. They told Terry that the brown, chunky water was just fine except for a little algae. That's coming from the provincial government that's tested the lake.

But CBC Radio also had the water tested by an independent lab. They showed the results to a water specialist at the University of Regina. Professor Peter Leavitt concluded the water is not safe for any use.

Mr. Speaker, why did the NDP government tell local residents the water in Last Mountain Lake was safe when an independent expert said he wouldn't risk washing his hands in it?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Lorjé: — Mr. Speaker, I have to emphasize again, we are talking about surface water; we're not talking about drinking water here. We have different objectives for surface water as compared to drinking water, and we have different water objectives for water that's used for contact recreation purposes as compared to non-contact recreation purposes.

I want to emphasize again . . .

The Speaker: — I'm sorry, member, I just have to have a little order for you to be able to hear the question.

Hon. Ms. Lorjé: — I want to emphasize again, people should not drink untreated water. The water in Last Mountain Lake is not potable water; they should not be drinking it. That is just the bottom line.

I don't know how . . . what more I need to say about that. It is important that people understand that is water for recreational purposes. When it is used for contact recreational purposes, we have different objectives, different guidelines than when it's non-contact purposes.

We also, Mr. Speaker, require that the city of Regina . . .

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Until she became Environment minister, that lake you probably could drink out of it; but we're not talking about drinking it. That lake is used by recreational people all over the province — a lot out of Regina. It's used from swimming, showering, to brushing their teeth and bathing their children in it.

But the University of Regina biologist, Peter Leavitt, said the water in Last Mountain Lake is unsafe for any human use at all. It has extremely high counts of fecal coliforms, and I quote:

The water has too high a bacterial concentration to use for anything, period. So you shouldn't use it to wash your hands, you shouldn't use it to brush your teeth — you just shouldn't be in it at all.

Mr. Speaker, why did the Environment minister tell Terry Fleischaker the water in Last Mountain Lake was safe when an independent expert says it's unsafe for any human use? And what steps is the government taking to stop the Saskatchewan Water Corporation from pouring more sewage water into the lake?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Lorjé: — Mr. Speaker, I heard in the first part of that question the exact answer that I want to give the member in opposite now.

Mr. Speaker, I want to quote from Saskatchewan Environment's surface water quality objectives:

Water quality objectives for recreational use.

. . . recreationists are cautioned not to consume surface waters without prior disinfection (for example) boiling (or) chlorination of the water. Even waters which appear to be pristine may contain naturally occurring, disease-causing micro-organisms.

Mr. Speaker, when we say don't drink the water, we also mean don't brush your teeth with it either.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Investment in Ethanol Industry

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for the Crown Investments Corporation.

Yesterday Crown Investments Corporation president, Frank Hart, confirmed that the government has all but concluded a deal to invest up to \$80 million in the construction and operation of ethanol plants in the province. This, despite the fact, Mr. Speaker, that less than two months ago the then NDP minister of Energy all but ruled out direct government investment in this important industry.

Yesterday at the Crown Corporations Committee meeting, CIC president, Frank Hart, testified that CIC has been . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order. Order, please.

Mr. Wall: — Yesterday at the CIC committee meeting, Crown Investments Corporation president, Frank Hart, testified that CIBC . . . CIC has been talking to the same US company about ethanol since last fall. Given that the deal is apparently close to being done, Mr. Speaker, it's pretty clear that the NDP knew full well they would be getting into this industry directly with

taxpayers' dollars even while the then Energy minister was promising that government intervention would be a last resort.

So to the minister for the Crown Investments Corporation: which is it, Mr. Speaker? Did the then minister of Energy at the time, simply not tell the truth about the government's intentions or did Mr. Hart and the minister's other CIC officials not bother to tell the ethanol minister that they were working on an ethanol deal?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that the member opposite is unclear in a number of areas. And I think we understand that.

Yesterday, I read into the record — and it's in *Hansard*, page 1229 — the former minister responsible for ethanol development in this province is a direct quote from what he said with respect to the process:

The minister yesterday or today could have read *Hansard*. He would then know what I told him yesterday, which is what I'm going to tell him again today. He should get his facts straight before he comes into the House, which he hasn't been able to do on this file; he hasn't been able to do it on the purchase of natural gas in this province, Mr. Speaker, any more than he did when he was the economic development guru from Swift Current taking \$200,000 of public funds to put together a guitar museum in Swift Current, Mr. Speaker, that subsequently went broke three months . . . three years later.

Mr. Speaker, that's the expertise this member brings into this House. He knows full well what that member said. Why doesn't he be honest with the people of Saskatchewan with respect to . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — This morning on CBC Radio, the president of the only operating ethanol plant in Saskatchewan, Brad Wildeman, was asked about the government's apparent change in opinion on their direct investment in the ethanol industry and on the deal in general. Even among those who agree that there may be a role for strategic government involvement, Mr. Wildeman went on to say, went on to state some concerns. And I quote, Mr. Speaker, from the program this morning:

This sort of approach just kind of blows me away a little bit that we're asking taxpayers to first foot the bill for the fuel tax exemption trying to revitalize rural Saskatchewan and now we're prepared to put . . . a bunch of equity (in). But we didn't have time to wait (Mr. Speaker, he says, we didn't have time to wait) for somebody in Saskatchewan or groups (or) . . . partner in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, why did the government give up on the private sector investment potential of the ethanol industry only 60 days after they committed that the private sector would lead this industry in the province of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, let me say to the member from Swift Current that the private sector will lead this development in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — What I want to say as well, Mr. Speaker, what I want to say to that member, Mr. Speaker, in spite of his objections, there will be development in this province. There will be . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, there will be ethanol plants built and there will be an intensive livestock industry expanded as a result of the ethanol production that's going to take place here.

Mr. Speaker, that member cannot stand good news. When there's a good piece of news in this province, whether it's a new plant opening or new jobs happening, members in this side . . . on that side of the House run away as fast as they can, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, people of Saskatchewan understand who they are, what they represent. This member is trying to set up the Crown corporations for privatization. It's nothing more, and it's nothing less, and people see through it, and they don't accept it, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — You know, Mr. Speaker, the minister is always very, very angry in question period. A couple of weeks ago on *The Simpsons*, I think it was, they did a whole episode about how Homer couldn't control his rage. I think it was called "Angry Homer." And I always wondered, where did they get the inspiration for "Angry Homer." Well, Mr. Speaker, the inspiration for "Angry Homer" is sitting in this Assembly and he's going to . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — And he's going to stand up, Mr. Speaker, in a few minutes after I ask this question.

Mr. Speaker, the government promised only two months ago that, with respect to ethanol, the private sector would drive the industry. The minister indicated that again just now. They also promised though, Mr. Speaker, that they wouldn't pick winners and losers. They promised that they wouldn't get involved in questions of location or size of the plants.

And less than 60 days later, the CIC and its officials, like Mr. Hart, have taken over. They've broken the former minister's promises and . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. I would ask the member now to go directly to his question please.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, CIC officials have broken those promises and commitments made by the previous minister.

So, Mr. Speaker, to the minister for CIC, will the minister tell the Assembly why are his officials so out of control? Why is it Crown Investments Corporation is running the government and not the other way around, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, members opposite may think this is a cartoon and that this is a joke process that we're going through, Mr. Speaker. But I want to say to that member we're deadly serious about one thing. We're deadly serious about developing an industry to create jobs for Saskatchewan people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I want to say to that member we're also deadly serious about developing with that and through that an intensive livestock industry and growing that industry.

And I also want to say, Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet, that it'll be a private sector business decision in terms of the locations. And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, members opposite can lobby to have the investments in their riding and that's acceptable, because we're not going to choose based on whether it's their riding or our riding. We're going to choose based on whether it makes business sense or whether it doesn't make business sense. Mr. Speaker, that's what this is all about. We're deadly serious about that. And it may hurt the member opposite to see this positive development, but he's just going to have to grin and bear it because it's going to happen.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Saskatchewan's Credit Rating Upgrade

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Moody's Investors Services has taken the opportunity to review the province's books in light of the March 27 budget for 2002-03. And it is my duty to report to the House, Mr. Speaker, that this morning — and I know all members of the House will be pleased to hear this — Moody's announced that Saskatchewan's credit rating would be upgraded from A1 to Aa3.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I know that all members, all members of the House are pleased that this is our 10th consecutive credit upgrade since 1995. And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that one reason why credit rating upgrades are significant is that they represent the views of objective third parties from outside our province that examine our books and finances.

And I'm happy to report, Mr. Speaker, that only three governments in Canada receive a higher credit rating from Moody's than . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. I would just ask the minister to perhaps repeat a sentence or two so it would be

quite clear. Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Order, please.

(14:30)

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One reason why credit rating upgrades are significant is that they represent the views of objective third parties from outside the province that examine our books and finances.

Only three governments in Canada receive a higher credit rating than Saskatchewan does from Moody's.

Mr. Speaker, they look at the books and finances of all governments and major corporations. These, Mr. Speaker, are reports from objective third parties; as distinct, Mr. Speaker, from political debate and editorial comment.

Mr. Speaker, to say that we have a straight-A credit rating is almost selling ourselves short, because with this Aa3 rating, we've even improved on that. And I want to point out to the House, Mr. Speaker, that Moody's lists one of the reasons for this upgrade as, and I'm quoting:

Steady improvements in the province's fiscal position . . . reflecting prudent policies that have produced budgetary surpluses and a reduced debt burden.

Now what does this mean for the people of Saskatchewan? It means, Mr. Speaker, that they can have faith in their government's commitment to carry out the affairs of the province in a sound, responsible, and accountable manner. It means they can have confidence that their government will do what it says it will do. And most importantly, Mr. Speaker, it means we are building a solid foundation on which to continue to build a future of opportunity and growth.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to point out that Moody's has noted, and again I'm quoting here:

Over the past several years a series of modest surpluses combined with strong economic growth has resulted in a marked improvement in Saskatchewan's debt profile. Saskatchewan's debt-to-GDP ratio has fallen from over 50% in 1994 to 31.8% in 1998, 28.4% in 2000; and less than 25% (estimated) in 2002.

I'm happy to report, Mr. Speaker, that Moody's also commended the Crown Investments Corporation for rationalizing and restructuring operations and investments in the Crown corporations, and reducing the province's guaranteed debt exposure, Mr. Speaker.

This credit upgrade tells us the path we've been on is the correct path; with a path of balanced budgets, controlled public debt, affordable tax cuts, and spending on priority areas like health and education.

Mr. Speaker, we are pleased to have independent and objective confirmation that our province is on the right track.

Mr. Speaker, I would say that economic growth and good money management go hand in hand, which is why

Saskatchewan posted an average annual real economic growth rate of 3.5 per cent from 1992 to 2000 — the third highest among the provinces.

Mr. Speaker, credit upgrades like this are the rewards of sound planning, commitment to goals, being in it for the longer term, and the desire to work with people across the province to build a bright future.

The effect of the tax reductions over the last few years, combined with the tax savings announced in the latest budget, should further improve the province's competitiveness and its economic growth prospects.

This latest credit rating upgrade demonstrates to Saskatchewan people that we have every reason to take on the future with confidence. And just as we have delivered on our promise to turn our finances around, we will deliver on our plan for growth and opportunity, bringing tangible benefits for the people of our province, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take a moment or two to respond to the ministerial statement. This, Mr. Speaker, is a really good example of why we need to have summary financial statements in place in this province.

We need to be able to have a full view of the finances in the province and not just the General Revenue Fund. We need to have some idea in this province of exactly what's going on right across the . . . right across the whole piece.

Mr. Speaker, we talk about steady improvement in this province. I'm not sure that steady improvement or that confidence will be built up when we see the other side of the coin. Spending is on the increase in this particular budget and spending has been on the increase for the last several years. At the same time, revenues are going down. Revenues have been dropping over that period of time and yet the spending still increases.

The overall debt of the province is increasing. That is a fact when you look at all the financial resources of this province, both General Revenue Fund, Crown corporations, and government agency . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Order, please.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The signs over the last short while — in fact over the last number of years — are really pointing in a different direction, and the confidence is not being built up when particularly you have to change the legislation of The Balanced Budget Act just to make sure that you can comply with your own budgeting problems that are very evident.

You've got to remember, Mr. Speaker, that opportunity and growth — as the minister was talking about — opportunity and growth is based on confidence. And that confidence by the

investors is the key here. And when investors look at what's going on in this province, that is where we come up short in terms of trying to get economic development in this province.

We need that investment. We need that confidence. We need investors from both within the private industry in this province, as well as outside this province . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. I want to take a minute here, members, just to advise the House that I'm finding it quite difficult to be able to hear the statements, and that I ought to be able to hear all of the statements that are being made. And that means I have to request all members to refrain from interrupting, particularly from . . . after they've been asked several times in the House to refrain from interrupting.

And I therefore, at this time, would like to request the member from Lloydminster to complete his statement.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the problems in this province is a dropping GDP (gross domestic product). The minister talked about a GDP ratio and that might be one of the economic measures.

But the overall GDP in the province is actually down. In fact it's the lowest in Canada. That does not contribute to any confidence. If we have . . . No matter what the ratings show, we need investment coming in and apparently it just isn't happening.

So how does this, the GDP, how does this show any confidence? Why aren't, Mr. Speaker, why aren't investors swarming into this province if it's looking that good? Why is the population leaving this province? Why are the job numbers decreasing in this province?

Mr. Speaker, we have to look at the fact, we have to look at the records. And in fact this province is just not competitive and we have to make sure that it is competitive and continues to be competitive because without that we are not going to be attracting the necessary investment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

TABLETING OF REPORTS

The Speaker: — Members of the Assembly, as president of the Saskatchewan branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, I am pleased to table the 33rd annual report for the year 2001.

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

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

The Speaker: — Would the member briefly outline the nature of the request.

MOTION UNDER RULE 46

Impact of Proposed US Farm Bill on Canadian Farmers

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I will be very brief. This is the same motion that I have tried to introduce two times before with no changes. I am hoping that I will be third time lucky. The Minister of Agriculture has just returned from Ottawa, not reporting any progress in the way of funding from the federal government to counteract the unfair trading practice of the United States.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, the motion that I would move says:

That the province of Saskatchewan invite the government and opposition legislators from all four Western Canadian provinces to a conference hosted by Saskatchewan to discuss strategies in dealing with actions taken by the United States in terms of agriculture subsidies and softwood lumber tariffs, both of which will be devastating to the economies of all four provinces.

Mr. Speaker, I would move this, seconded by the hon. member for Saltcoats.

Leave not granted.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — Order please. Order. Order.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am extremely pleased this afternoon to stand and table a response to a written question 171.

The Speaker: — Response to 171 is tabled.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 25

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Axworthy that **Bill No. 25 — The Cost of Credit Disclosure Act, 2002** be now read a second time.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill No. 25 is one of those Bills that sounds very good. And I think we're going to have to have some discussion on it to see if it actually goes where it's supposed to go. When we heard the statement from the minister presenting this one back on April 18, he made the statement:

. . . this legislation is uniform legislation that fulfils (the) Saskatchewan's commitment under the 1994 Agreement on Internal Trade.

Interesting thing is why has it taken almost a decade for this government to introduce this Bill if actually it is as significant as they say it is. It basically deals with situations such as the advertisements we see about zero down, zero per cent financing, those sorts of things.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I phoned a number of car dealers and I described what this piece of legislation was all about. And they said they weren't at all concerned about that aspect of it because they have been doing this for years. But it seems the NDP over there being down on business, they sit there in their seats and they say, well, if it's business it must be bad so let's just go out and see if we can create some more rules for them to abide by. Business, Mr. Speaker, is obviously way ahead in the most part of this particular NDP government.

It sets out the type of information that must be disclosed for different types of credit. When you make a particular payment on your . . . on the amount that you owe, there's all kinds of paperwork that has to go back and forth. This does little more than just increase the amount of paper based on a lot of the things that most good lenders and good sellers are doing today in many ways.

It also allows the borrower to pay off a non-mortgage credit at any time without penalty and that's probably a particularly good aspect.

But as I said, this brings this into line with the nineteen four . . . 1994 agreement that was made on a national scale with other provinces.

There are a number of loose ends that remain on this one. I think this government, as we know, is totally out of touch with rural Saskatchewan. This particular Bill shows us, again, a minister who has been running all over the province and all over Canada trying to get money for Saskatchewan for farmers. Premier comes back from North Dakota, says we agreed to disagree, but I had a nice flight. Minister comes back from Ottawa and said, I came back with nothing, but I had a nice flight too.

And so, you know, they are busy buzzing around the continent trying to get some particular support. They are not getting any. They are totally out of touch with rural Saskatchewan. They need to get in touch. This particular Bill falls substantially short, Mr. Speaker, because it doesn't address anything related to the rural economy. It doesn't address anything that relates to lending for the purposes of farming. And for that particular reason, Mr. Speaker, there's a lot more research that needs to be done. It's another piece of misthought and miswritten legislation that this government is presenting on an ad hoc basis throughout this past session.

And for that particular reason, Mr. Speaker, we need to do a lot more research on this particular Bill, Bill No. 25. It has substantial concerns we have about it and therefore at this time I move to adjourn Bill No. 25, Mr. Speaker.

Debate adjourned.

(14:45)

Bill No. 26

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Axworthy that **Bill No. 26 — The Enforcement of Canadian Judgments Act, 2002/Loi de 2002 sur l'exécution des jugements canadiens procurations** be

now read a second time.

Mr. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 26, The Enforcement of Canadian Judgments Act — this is one of those particular pieces of legislation that I think everyone in Canada has been waiting for for a substantial amount of time. It refers to the Act that enforces monetary judgments across the country and makes it now unnecessary to go to court in every particular province when an individual moves.

And I think that's a definite advantage, Mr. Speaker. Because one of the concerns has always been that if someone had a judgment against them in one province, they could move to another province and sort of escape the long arm of the law, which in fact proved in Canada to be a rather short arm of the law.

And this particular Bill, Bill No. 26, lengthens the arm of the law that if you move from one province to another one, Acts that . . . or judgments that are passed dealing with monetary issues now allow that long arm of the law to extend to other particular provinces.

This deals with things such as injunctions, adult guardianship orders, restraining orders, all sorts of things that now if they are passed in one particular . . . judgments made in one particular province, they take effect all across this country. And I think that's good.

This is quite a non-controversial piece of legislation and we see no particular reason to hold it up at this particular stage of the proceedings, Mr. Speaker. It's important that these types of legislations are easily moved across from border to border across our particular land. It does not, Mr. Speaker, apply internationally, obviously. But on a national scale, these particular judgments would then be enforced.

And therefore, Mr. Speaker, it is our desire to move Bill No. 26 to Committee of the Whole.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

Bill No. 27

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Axworthy that **Bill No. 27 — The Enforcement of Maintenance Orders Amendment Act, 2002/Loi de 2002 modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur l'exécution des ordonnances alimentaires procurations** be now read a second time.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's interesting that, just in the little interlude, the Minister of Agriculture said it's nice to see this thing is moving across and we'll be out of here in a week. Well we won't be out of here in a week. It might get us someplace into from October to the month before that.

But I think there's one thing that is indicated by what's happening here is that the Sask Party is quite supportive, Mr. Speaker, of good legislation. We've passed quite a number of Bills already to Committee of the Whole. These are pieces of legislation that had some value in them.

But there's many others that we're going to have to hold up, we're going to have to debate. We will need to get much more information from the public on that, because the government across is very much out of touch with the people of the province. That's not to say, from time to time, they don't have an idea and they do go ahead and have a piece of legislation that is actually worthwhile passing. When that's the case, it would be far from us, Mr. Speaker, to hold up legislation in any way, shape, or form.

Bill No. 27 is what we're discussing here this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, enforcement of maintenance orders, and does something fairly similar, Mr. Speaker, to the Bill that we just finished discussing. And it brings into force those kinds of issues that traditionally again were on a province by province basis.

The main provisions of this Bill, Bill No. 27, Mr. Speaker, it applies to those who attempt to evade their responsibility — and remember, this is dealing with enforcement maintenance — by funnelling income through a corporation. This Bill allows the maintenance enforcement office to enforce an order against a corporation where the respondent is the sole shareholder. And I think that's important to underline that, Mr. Speaker, that the . . . that the person that this is against then must be the sole shareholder.

If the person happens to be a minor shareholder in a business, the maintenance order cannot be applied to that particular business because that would be extremely destructive and unfair to all the other individuals who were members and shareholders in that particular corporation.

Also if the respondent owns a corporation with other family members but is found to be in control of the corporation, the maintenance order can be enforced. So that's also there. But again the person who the . . . who's the respondent on this particular one must then be the major or the controlling individual in that corporation.

Another provision will remove the requirement for serving a second notice on a driver's licence suspension. And this basically just speeds that up somewhat. SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) can be directed, Mr. Speaker, to suspend a respondent's driver's licence or withhold it from renewal after 30 days notice.

And that 30 days notice needs to be in there to give the respondent the opportunity to bring his maintenance enforcement requirements up to date and then to maintain his driver's licence and in many cases maintain a job as well, Mr. Speaker.

It also allows the director to request and receive information respecting the status of dependants in the relationship of the respondent to any other person or corporation. Basically, Mr. Speaker, it allows the director to go ahead and do the research that's necessary, to do the due diligence to make sure that the maintenance enforcement that needs to be there can be done. It is one of those things, Mr. Speaker, that there's been many concerns about.

It also streamlines the process for out-of-province

garnishments, allowing that to be served on a respondent by general mail, by fax, or by other prescribed means. And again it has some similarities to the previous Bill in that it allows things to happen across provinces that are deemed to be important in our particular society. And for that reason, Mr. Speaker, we also see no reason to hold that one up at this particular juncture.

And we are also prepared to move this one, Bill No. 27, enforcement maintenance orders, move that on to Committee of the Whole.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

Bill No. 28

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Axworthy that **Bill No. 28 — The Inter-jurisdictional Support Orders Act/Loi sur les ordonnances alimentaires interterritoriales** be now read a second time.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill No. 28, An Act respecting Inter-jurisdictional Support Orders, a fairly straightforward piece of legislation. And it does, to a large extent, exactly what the title indicates that it does do in that it moves to an inter-jurisdictional area, support orders. And I think it's been one of those things that is fairly, fairly important.

Currently, Mr. Speaker, as it stands at present, a Saskatchewan resident would first have to have their evidence reviewed by a Saskatchewan court and then send it on back to the court in the respondent's jurisdiction. With this change, a support application package will be sent directly to the respondent's jurisdictional court. And what this does then is speed up support orders in a major sort of a way.

Ten provinces in Canada, Mr. Speaker, and Saskatchewan in this case happens not to be leading. We seldom do. We are the fifth jurisdiction in Canada, fifth jurisdiction in Canada to introduce this piece of legislation.

And I think this is a fairly critical piece of legislation. It's surprising the government again has taken years to get around to doing it, especially a government that says their full . . . have a social conscience. This should have been on one of their lead issues years ago. Especially when, for the most part, Mr. Speaker, they've been for so long the only socialist government in Canada and here they are, you know, at the back of the pack — they're lagging, they're lagging.

It's absolutely a shame, Mr. Speaker, that this particular government across has to be dragged kicking and screaming to go ahead and put legislation in place that is for the betterment of families across our province and across Canada. That's a shame, Mr. Speaker. The fifth jurisdiction in Canada — the fifth. And I'm underlining that but it needs to be said very often.

We would expect more from the government opposite. Unfortunately over the years, we've found out, Mr. Speaker, that our expectations have been much too high, have been much too high. We're lowering our expectations, and I think if we

lower them substantially more, we'll be about in line with the reality that exists over there.

Saskatchewan, as I said, is the fifth jurisdiction in Canada to introduce this legislation. And it seems that probably by August or September of this year, Mr. Speaker, year 2002, this should all be in place and all of Canada should be on the same page.

So we're going to be crossing the finish line; we're going to be crossing the finish line however, Mr. Speaker, with the last in the group. That's unfortunate.

But other than that, this legislation has some definite value. And, Mr. Speaker, we're quite prepared to move this on to Committee of the Whole in the spirit of co-operation and decency and helpfulness to the people of this province that we always are, Mr. Speaker.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

Bill No. 20

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Axworthy that **Bill No. 20 — The Consumer Protection Amendment Act, 2002** be now read a second time.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill No. 20, consumer protection Act. As the title of the Bill says, it's to protect the consumer in making Internet purchases. With the changing times, Mr. Speaker, of commerce, we need to bring the laws up to date concerning transactions in the area of e-mail and the Internet. And as we know, even though the Internet commerce had a meltdown recently, there still is a considerable number of transactions taking place and will be a growing industry and type of transactions in the future.

As we know, many consumers around the province and around the country are using the Internet purchases. And on the face of it, this Bill on paper is putting in place some rules and regulations concerning protecting consumer purchases.

It says that it's putting requirements of companies that are doing business over the Internet to supply sales contracts within 15 days, and gives the consumer an opportunity to cancel Internet purchases up to 7 days after receiving the contract or if the goods are not delivered within 30 days. And these are obviously measures that need to be taken and — in principle — and we support these features of this Bill.

It also speaks to some changes that are in relationship to stolen or lost credit cards and some limits are put on the liability of cardholders in those cases. And I believe that is probably a good thing, Mr. Speaker.

The minister stated that this piece of legislation is as a result of a template agreed upon by the Minister of Justice across this country, and it's very important that the country as a whole harmonizes its laws in this area as we need to harmonize legislation in many areas of this country. It's not only . . . we not only have to harmonize our laws concerning the Internet transactions in this country between provinces and the . . . with

the federal government, but it's very important that we also harmonize these laws internationally.

(15:00)

And I just question whether the federal government . . . or the provincial government has spoken to the federal government concerning transactions, particularly in North America. We have a free trade agreement with the United States and Mexico, and the Internet obviously is used in many cases across North America. And it's very important that we all live under the same rules across North America and in the global community. Now that speaks to the question concerning enforcement of this Bill in the wake of the global market.

And so I just would like to question the minister at some point in the future concerning those problems that may arise over enforcement of a Bill in a province or in one country in an economic area, and trying to enforce those rules in another jurisdiction.

As we know, Mr. Speaker, we have . . . the critic in this area has been doing a lot of work on this Bill, and has spoken to a number of the stakeholders concerning this legislation. We're still waiting for some word back on certain key areas concerning the legislation so at this time, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 21

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Axworthy that **Bill No. 21 — The Collection Agents Amendment Act, 2002** be now read a second time.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to stand up and speak to this piece of legislation, The Collection Agents Amendment Act, Bill No. 21.

Mr. Speaker, I think the Bill has some good intentions. However, Mr. Speaker, as my colleagues and I have been finding out, there are some major concerns with this piece of legislation as well.

On one hand, Mr. Speaker, when you look at the Bill and in view of the consuming public, you can appreciate where . . . and I appreciate where the minister's coming from in regards — regarding the Bill. The fact that some of the collection agencies that we have out there that are working to try and recover some of the costs or the bad debts that may be owed their clients, can be very unscrupulous; can be very heavy-handed at times; and just treat the public generally with very . . . with such disrespect and become very obnoxious. And, Mr. Speaker, I think in that regard we need to take a close look at the piece of legislation.

I think something is needed to make collection agencies know that they've got some responsibility. At least I believe they have some responsibility in how they go about their work.

Now one of the problems I have with collection agents, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that a business, or in some cases

government, goes to a collection agent and asks that collection agency to collect this bad debt. And the collection agent just gets on it right away.

It just seems like collection agents just enjoy going after people, and almost appearing like they're policemen or they're little gods on their own turf, the way they treat individuals. And they can be very, very persuading at times. They can make, when they come at an individual, make a person feel like they're nothing.

And the facts are, Mr. Speaker, on many occasions when I've been contacted by a constituent, I've found at times that had the collection agency demanded a little more of the business or the lending institution, demanded a little more information; they may have found that the person they are dealing with wasn't really that hard an individual to deal with and, as in one case, they may have found there was already an agreement in place between the person and the agency as far as repayment of an overpayment.

And one case that comes to mind was one that just happened recently, and it happened between a government agency — a government department in fact — where an overpayment had inadvertently had been made to a client and the client had sat down and they had come to an agreement about a monthly repayment that would fit within their ability and the job they had nicely acquired of making that repayment over a period of months. And it wasn't that long, Mr. Speaker.

And unfortunately about two or three months after they had come to this agreement all of a sudden a collection agency is calling the individual and saying pay up right now or we're going to go into your savings account.

And, Mr. Speaker, what I don't understand is how in the world a government department who has come to an agreement with a client on a monthly payment can go and ask a collection agency to begin . . . go after this individual for full payment when they had already agreed to a monthly payment.

So as a result this individual gets a collection agency on the other end of the line demanding full payment or else. In that case, Mr. Speaker, I think that collection agency needed to do a little more research before they just went off and started trying to collect something that was already being . . . had already been taken care of and agreed to. And as a result of a contact through my office and a contact through the minister, we were able to resolve that issue and get the collection agency off the back of the client because there was an agreement already in process.

So, Mr. Speaker, when I look at this piece of legislation, in that regard I don't have a problem with the legislation because I think we need to put some guidelines in place that cause collection agents to . . . or agencies to act a little more responsibly.

And maybe, Mr. Speaker, we need to go a little bit further than that. We need to hold businesses and groups that would look at collection agencies — maybe they need to be a little more responsible in the fact of how they go about their . . . the bad debts that are on their accounts. And maybe they need to work a

little harder at recovering and working out arrangements rather than just going to collection agents because someone can't make that payment immediately.

But on the other hand, Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of delinquent accounts out there. There are a lot of situations where people just refuse to make payments. And as a result, a business or a lender has no other alternative to go and seek the services of a collection agent because they don't have the tools and they don't have the time to continue to nag at a customer to pay their bill. And so they go to a collection agent.

And that's where we have a problem with this Bill, the way the . . . what the Bill does. And, Mr. Speaker, we've been getting a number of letters. And I just want to make a few comments from some of the letters that we've received. And this comes from one collection agent:

Many of our clients have called recently expressing their concerns as to the huge impact that this proposed legislation will have on their business(es). Without the assistance of a collection agency, many of these businesses feel they will experience much higher bad debt losses in an already tough economy.

And it goes on to say:

The real sad fact of the situation is that credit granters in general were never informed fully about the proposed changes until very recently, and then only at the time that it was already being introduced in our Legislature on April 9, 2002.

And I guess, Mr. Speaker, that's one of the major concerns we have — the fact that there didn't seem to be an appropriate time of consultation prior to. And while the government can argue that, yes, we did consult and we had a form of consultation, it certainly wasn't the type of consultation that businesses and lenders across the province expected that they would have prior to the introduction of the legislation.

And I quote from this letter:

As a collection agency, we received a questionnaire about a year ago, asking us our opinion on various proposed changes which we were told "was for the purpose of harmonizing legislation throughout all provinces in Canada.

The letter goes on to say:

The next we heard was in the way of a letter dated April 5, 2002, which we received April 12, 2002, three days after it was introduced into the Legislature to be passed as (a) law.

And the question is:

Who made this decision? Most certainly it was made without taking credit grantors concerns into consideration, as most businesses knew nothing about this new legislation.

And the letter goes on to say:

We could only imagine how devastating it would be to have no Police Departments controlling crime in our communities. Without our Police, crime would double and triple or even worse.

(And) I believe (it says) I believe this Legislation, if passed, would have a similar effect on credit grantors. Bad debt would (triple), double, triple, (or) worse. Businesses would have nowhere to turn in assistance in recovery (of) bad losses effectively, resulting in huge losses and many business bankruptcies.

So you can see, Mr. Speaker, there's two sides to this piece of legislation. And unfortunately the legislation, I think, needs to be reviewed a little more carefully and closely and we would hope the government would look at it a little more carefully before we really move forward with any further debate on the legislation to make sure that the people that would be affected the most would have been consulted. And if any changes are needed, Mr. Speaker, that they are brought forward so that they address the concerns of all those involved so that, Mr. Speaker, we aren't penalizing those businesses who are just trying to recover the losses that they are facing as a result of individuals who are taking advantage of the credit that they have been granted.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I think it would be appropriate that we take more time to review this legislation and therefore at this time I move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 24

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Axworthy that **Bill No. 24 — The Powers of Attorney Act, 2002/Loi de 2002 sur les procurations** be now read a second time.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to stand and enter into the debate on The Powers of Attorney Act.

I understand that this Act is replacing the Bill that was introduced in 1996 and it came as a response to a report by a committee that was dealing with the abuse of adults that are in vulnerable situations.

Mr. Speaker, all of us know that there are people in society that actually need help and need looking after and we have to ensure that the ones that are in charge of their rights are ones that are competent and ones that we can feel assured are doing their very best to look after these people.

We know that the intent behind this Bill is to protect vulnerable adults mostly from potential financial abuse. And normally when we think about a power of attorney it's to do with older people. But it's not always the elder people that require help with their financial situation.

This Bill is actually looking at provisions that are going to ensure that a person that is appointed as a power of attorney is trustworthy and reliable. And obviously that would mean that this person must be an adult and capable of making some very

important decisions.

There is a limitation set out in this Bill that is saying that someone who's been convicted of a criminal offence or an offence related to violence, fraud, or breach of trust in the last 10 years cannot be given this position. I know that there are provisions also for pardons. Or if there is extenuating circumstances, there may be an opportunity for this power of attorney to be given to a person, but it's probably very valuable that this be looked at.

No one that's in the business of providing care to someone who requires a power of attorney can act in this position. Again, that is a very important aspect of the Bill.

The Bill provides flexibility regarding the appointment of the attorneys and the corporate powers of attorneys. And this is something that we would like to ask further questions of when we get to in the opportunity to in Committee of the Whole.

Contingency powers of attorney is also discussed in the Bill — an example, that the grantor becomes incapacitated. And there are provisions that's going to help determine what will happen in that case.

Mr. Speaker, all in all, this Bill is something that, although it's going to affect a large number of people and it's going to have an impact on them, it's something that we feel is going to be . . . the number of people that have consulted it and are looking at it are very happy with the outcome of it. So at this time we're going to move to Committee of the Whole.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

Bill No. 3

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Thomson that **Bill No. 3 — The Correctional Services Amendment Act, 2002** be now read a second time.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this Bill, unlike the one we discussed just a moment before, is something that is affecting a lot of people and something that is actually going to bring a lot of questions up to people in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that Saskatchewan has one of the highest, if not the highest crime rate in Saskatchewan. And we have the dubious distinction of being the car theft capital of North America. We all know that crimes are not limited just to urban centres but we're seeing an increase in crimes right across Saskatchewan and rural areas as well. Regina and Saskatoon have the two highest per capita crime rates in all of Canada.

(15:15)

Actually there was a recent report to Regina City Council that indicated that the members of the Regina city police have the highest workload of any major Western Canadian city. I would imagine that makes it difficult to attract the officers that we would need in this province. When we look at that we should

suggest that we have a very little crime rate when we have the highest number of officers, but obviously that's not happening.

Mr. Speaker, the justice system in this province is something that's a concern to many people. In fact most people have a story dealing with justice in their area or something where they feel they've been unduly treated.

Statistics Canada reports that Saskatchewan has the highest rate of youth crime in Canada. The youth court caseload is more than double the national average, with 946 cases for every 10,000 young people compared to 400 cases for every 10,000 people in the rest of Canada.

In fact last year, Mr. Speaker, the province's caseload increased 7 per cent — that's in the last five years — but nationally there was a decline of 10 per cent. Overall people in different categories of different jobs in this province are saying: why is this happening? Why do we have this crime problem in the province?

The minister just a few minutes ago indicated that we have . . . the economy is rebounding, that wonderful things are happening. Yet most people are saying, if we have a wonderful growing economy, why is there an increase in crime?

The ministers haven't addressed this issue and I guess this is something that we have to be looking at. Youth and custody services tells us Saskatchewan has the highest incarceration rate of youth in Canada — 37 per 10,000.

Mr. Speaker, we know from speaking with the FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations) that they are very concerned of the rate of young Aboriginal people that are incarcerated. They by far have a disproportionate number of young people with Aboriginal background in our justice system, and it's something that has to be addressed.

The Bill that we're looking at today has amendments in a number of areas and it's a very significant Bill. One of the more significant amendment involves changing legislation that will require corrections officers to notify the victims of crimes when an inmate is being considered for release. The victim is also to be notified when a release has been granted.

I think this is something that people have been asking for not just in the one area that we've been dealing with a lot in the legislature in the last couple of years, that being offenders that are dealing with sex crimes, but in other areas of crime as well.

I think that the Victims' Fund that we've been talking about in the House for the last month indicates or shows that there are a number of people who are very concerned that we talk about the people who have committed crimes, but the victims of the crimes are people that are often forgot. So I do hope that the minister, when he's looking at these changes, is going to realize that there are two sides to the coin; that we have to be talking about the people who have been victimized as well as those who have committed the crime.

There are other amendments that are brought forward in this very comprehensive Bill. And we know that instead of automatically being credited with reduced sentence times,

inmates will have to earn this reduction through good behaviour.

I know most of us have people or friends or relatives that work within the justice system and I feel that this is a very good move. There's going . . . there's opportunities for people who are within the system to show that they are indeed reformed; that they have a willingness to make a change. And until that is done I think it is only fair that people should show that they deserve the opportunity to be out earlier, not just they've earned it with time.

I think that the word responsibility is something that we have to be looking at in many areas of our province, but in the justice system it's something that is very important.

People that have been victimized for sure would want to know that people who have committed the crime are actually earning some time off.

Removing the limitations. Respecting options for rehabilitative activities ensures that facilities like healing lodges can be used. In my speaking with various Aboriginal communities they are again excited about this opportunity and I believe that it is something that maybe can be beneficial.

We have to find a way to ensure that our correctional facilities are not always filled to the hilt. If there's a better way to deal with people who have been part of a crime, we have to find a way to do it. We also have to make sure that when there is a crime, people are paying for this crime.

So we've been doing the same thing for years and years. If it's not helping, then it's time we looked at a different way of doing it. So I applaud the opportunity to look at another alternative.

This Bill also provides for changes to how rules respecting reduced custody programs and criteria for offender participations are established. And again, when we take this Bill further we will be asking questions on this area.

Allowing the Criminal Code provision and recognizing conditional sentences is something that on the federal level has to be coincided with our provincial jurisdiction. And really with the young offenders, it's another area of justice that has to be looked at.

Revising wording to show consistency with the new federal justice criminal Act also is important.

Probation officers are going to be allowed to arrest an offender who has committed an offence. This is probably something that the police officers will be applauding and I know that this is going to put additional responsibility on our probation officers and probably make them busier yet. I know that a number of them are already saying that their workload is very high and I'm wondering how this is going to be affecting them.

Changes that are responding to the Criminal Code which allows the gathering of information about an offender's maturity, attitude, and willingness to make amends is something that again maybe is trying to make a different . . . put a different slant on what's happening in the justice system. And we are

getting responses from people who are dealing with individuals and they have some interesting remarks to make.

Changing provisions that allow for searches in correctional facilities, to include urinalysis, is the search procedure to determine if an inmate can participate in a program is something that is very important. I have . . . we have friends and relatives that work within the correctional system and I'm always intrigued to hear about some of the situations that they have to deal with within the walls of the correctional facility.

Many of us feel that once an offender is finally picked up and works his way through the justice system, the court system, and makes it to jail, they think okay, then the job is done. But we forget that there are people working within the system that are trying hard to work with . . . to rehabilitate and to ensure that the right thing is done for individuals within the system.

So, Mr. Speaker, looking at all . . . the comprehensive Bill that is in place right now and the changes that are required and the fact that there are many people still making submissions to us, I would like to adjourn the debate at this time.

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs Vote 30

Subvote (GR01)

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Sitting to my right, the deputy minister of Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs, Brent Cotter; to my left, Donavon Young, who's the acting assistant deputy minister of Aboriginal Affairs; behind the deputy minister is Wanda Lamberti, who's the executive director of finance, administration, and information technology.

Behind me is Glen Benedict, who's the executive director of Indian land and resources; and to my left and second row, Al Hilton is the assistant deputy minister, federal-provincial relations; and Paul Osborne, who's the assistant deputy minister of trade and international relations.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And good afternoon to the minister and all of his officials, who we're very pleased to see here today. And I'm not too sure that I can make use of all of your knowledge, but I certainly hope that the minister can refer these questions to you, if necessary.

Mr. Minister, some time ago I posed a written question to the Assembly — to your government — asking for the total amount of funding that was granted by the province to the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan as well as the organizations that are affiliated with the Métis Nation and the agencies. And I'm wondering if today, your department has the answer to that question for me.

(15:30)

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Mr. Chair, in response to the

member's question, I was just kind of thinking back to where the money to the Métis Nation comes from in the government. And as the member will appreciate, it comes from a range of different places.

And so I think . . . She says she sent us a written question and that is being completed. I'm not sure if she's received the answer yet but if she hasn't, she'll get it shortly.

From the Department of Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs, the Métis Nation receives \$425,000.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, to the minister: Mr. Minister, I thank you for that amount, for revealing to me what that amount is.

But I have had questions from different Métis individuals and agencies throughout the province that are wanting to know just exactly whether there are lump sums of money or incremental amounts of money that are distributed to specific Métis organizations or agencies other than the 425,000, or if in fact the \$425,000 is apportioned to the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan and they are under obligation then to distribute that money to organizations or agencies. So if that's not the case, are there any other organizations or agencies that receive funding?

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — The 425,000 to the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan is made available to the Métis Nation. It is not monies which are directed to locals or goes from MNS (Métis Nation of Saskatchewan) to locals. And it is money which is provided to deal with the bilateral relationship between the Métis Nation and the province of Saskatchewan, and also the bipartite relationship between the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan and the Government of Saskatchewan and the Government of Canada. And it enables there to be appropriate discussions about jurisdiction, about specific issues as they affect the Métis Nation bilaterally and trilaterally.

And for example, some of that money would have been used to deal with hunting and fishing rights; some of it would have been used to deal with election planning and election structures — as just two examples of what that money was used for.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, just in respect to part of your comments, the distribution of funding. Two different locals throughout the province is certainly a hot potato right now because it has come to the Saskatchewan Party official opposition's attention that a number of locals are being disenfranchised, almost arbitrarily. And there is a question as to whether there is authentic reasoning . . . good reasons for that happening.

We have coming to our attention from Métis people throughout the province that more and more locals have been disenfranchised and therefore are not able to have the availability of funding for their locals and their specific programs within those locals that they would like to issue.

Mr. Minister, I just wanted to ask you if you could give me an update on how the problems within the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan, the problems regarding democratic elections, the problems regarding unfounded reasons for disenfranchising

certain locals, and also the problem brought forward by a number of Métis people in Saskatchewan last year when The Métis Act was passed in this Assembly that had to do with the autonomy and the all-encompassing power that the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan now has.

So there have been a number of questions and there has been a desire by the Métis people of Saskatchewan to have this resolved and to have some amendments made to that Act. And I'm wondering if you could give me an update and let me know today what measures you have taken as the minister responsible for Métis affairs in addressing these issues.

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — The member raises an important point, not only for Métis people in the province but for all people in the province. And we share also her and many members of the Métis Nation's concern and frustration with the way some of these matters have been addressed.

As the member will know, the department provided \$25,000 for a study on electoral reform. That report was presented and has recommendations for the Métis Nation, has recommendations for the province of Saskatchewan and for the federal government, and we are all committed to ensuring that the process is one which is regarded as being fair and acceptable to all members of the Métis Nation.

We have had numbers of meetings dealing with this question, and one in particular I'll relate to the member. It was tripartite meeting between President Chartier, Minister Goodale, as the federal interlocutor, and myself where we discussed at some length the importance of resolving this issue so that we all can move forward.

The matter is one for, strictly speaking, one for the Métis Nation to resolve itself, but it is one which . . . in which we all have an interest and also the federal government has an interest.

So we've voiced our concerns. We've funded a study which has recommendations for all partners. And we anticipate and certainly hope that these measures will be implemented and that all members of the Métis Nation will perceive the next elections as being, as being fairer.

The matter she raises of locals I think is, again, a matter which is more properly dealt with not by another minister but by the Métis Nation, the Métis Nation itself. Again, something that we all have an interest in and will . . . we are ensuring, we will ensure that the Métis Nation treats these matters seriously, treats our concerns seriously, and hopefully makes changes which are acceptable to everyone.

But I think it is important to recognize that, at the end of the day, the Métis Nation is as it should be — self-governing. And the solutions to these challenges are within the nation itself.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, to the minister. Mr. Minister, one of the concerns brought forward to myself by a number of Métis people in the province was that the study on electoral reform, which your government put forward \$25,000 for, was certainly needed. But they expressed some concern that the Métis person that was appointed . . . or self appointed or appointed by your government to deal with

this issue in fact was — in the interpretation or the words of the Métis people — one of the very people causing the problems with the electoral process and so they wondered about the rationale.

And I just want to make that point because it was brought forward to me, and there was certainly some question and consternation in the minds of a number of Métis people throughout the province as to why that kind of a measure would have been put in place by your government. If in fact they wanted to heal and they want to be able to make sure that there is proper process in place and an issue looked at that was causing a lot of problems, certainly an independent person would have been a most likely . . . a better choice for this study on electoral reform.

So having said that, Mr. Minister, I'm wondering if you have a copy of the report that . . . the report with recommendations in it for electoral reform that you say the federal government has and that you have, if its possible for me to get a copy of those recommendations, I would really appreciate it.

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — With regards to the member's first point about the credibility of the author of the report, I think it's not wise to be — bearing in mind the person who did the report, the report itself — to be critical of her credibility. I don't think anybody would legitimately question her. She was a Department of Justice lawyer, became a consultant, and was chosen by all to write this report.

And I think the proof of her credibility and the proof of her independence is indeed in the report itself which makes a number of, a large number, of wide sweeping recommendations for Métis Nation itself, and also makes a number of helpful and constructive recommendations with regards to what the provincial government and what the federal government can do to facilitate the process.

I have every faith in Ms. Poitras and her capacity to do this work. I think the report was very helpful and constructive and should, if responded to appropriately, have a significant impact on the next election process.

So I take issue with the member's characterization of Ms. Poitras. I think she did a good job in this not very easy situation.

And as regards to the report itself, I thought the member was going to ask me if I had a copy of it sitting right here. I don't think I do, but I will make sure the member gets a copy. It's a public document and one that should be available to all. So by the close of day we'll make sure the member gets a copy.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, to the minister: Mr. Minister, the person and the name that you relayed to me was certainly not the name that I had been given as far as the Métis representative to deal with electoral reform.

And I just want to clarify very clearly that the whole issue of me asking this question is pretty well nullified because I was given, then, information that was not correct. And certainly I commend Ms. Poitras — I guess is her name — on her work. I have yet to see it but I want just to clarify that this was not the person that I was told was on the reform process.

(15:45)

Mr. Minister, I want to, just before I go on with another issue that involves First Nations people that has come to my attention and needs to be addressed, I want to just mention to yourself that I came, just came from, a one-day conference entitled Sexual Exploitation of Children Services Update that was being held at the Scott Collegiate here in Regina. And I was heartened by the number of different people attending from different agencies and organizations that are basically giving us an update on what kind of services are provided in the province, what kind of things yet need to be done.

And I bring this up in Aboriginal Affairs because just about every one of the presenters — or a number of them anyway — mentioned that 90 per cent of the children on the street are of First Nations or Métis descent.

And so I was very heartened by a number of the initiatives that are being taken and I commend Brenda Dubois for bringing all of these organizations and agencies together to enlighten each other on what we do have within the city. And it's certainly a good initiative because it talks about . . . they talked about the number of agencies that need to work together now and I guess it sort of surprised me that this kind of initiative had not been taken before. But nonetheless, it's important that it be noted and that Ms. Dubois be given a lot of credit for that.

One of the things that came up at this conference this afternoon was the idea that First Nations people, different tribal councils and so on, have been contacted by your government to make sure that their input is in play as far as services and the kind of services and programs that would assist children in their present situation as well as helping them off the streets.

So I did have assurance that the Minister of Social Services had been in touch with the First Nations people of Regina and area, but I am wondering whether or not First Nations people, for instance the tribal council from Prince Albert, La Ronge tribal council — La Ronge Band, rather — and the Saskatoon Tribal Council have also been contacted in order to make sure that they have a venue to come together to put forward their ideas about different services. So if you could relay to me today whether or not that has been done I would be pleased.

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Mr. Chair, the member rightly identifies the important . . . the importance of more integrated services and mechanisms, better mechanisms whereby those who are working in areas to enhance the lives of First Nations and Métis peoples in the province — and in particular, perhaps with regards to young people — that they have an opportunity to have a full and complete input into the decision-making process which affects so many of their own citizens.

And that certainly is a priority of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs. And I think the member will know that the Department of Social Services did ensure that there were opportunities for people to . . . for First Nations and for tribal councils and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations to participate in the building of strategies in this area.

And I might say too, most of my time as the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs is taken up meeting with and visiting First

Nations and First Nations leaders to discuss ways in which we can better coordinate these services and ways in which the province can play its role.

The member will know that with regards to First Nations communities, the primary responsibility is the relationship First Nations have with the federal government, but this is a challenge for all of us in this province and one which the provincial government treats . . . takes seriously.

We have programs on-reserve. The member will know in particular justice programs, but a range of other programs — victims services and so on — which assist First Nations in meeting the challenges they face.

So while there plainly is a border around the reserve, we very often don't pay much attention to it because it's our view that we all have to find solutions to the challenges that we have in the province. I think the member raises an issue that we all, I think, should take to heart, and that is there is really never enough consultation and work done before policies are generated.

But it is absolutely critical no matter what area of work we are in, that with First Nations and Métis peoples constituting a large and growing proportion of our population, that to move forward effectively and to move forward together, we need to partner right from the very beginning — from when we ask the questions about what needs to be done, on to developing the appropriate strategies, and then through on to protocols, and the work that actually gets done at the front line.

And I might just use one example of another department that I look after, the Department of Justice with regards to the Aboriginal Justice Commission, in which right from the very, very beginning, we worked — the provincial government, officials in my department, and myself — worked with First Nations and Métis leaders from day one. And came to — over time, after much discussion and much differences of opinion, worked out, through give-and-take — a strategy that we all thought would work towards finding solutions and that would be constructive rather than pointing the finger.

And I think there's a good example of how, if we sit down right from the beginning and work the issue through, we can all come to a solution which is both respectful and constructive.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I'd like to just move from that issue to concerns brought to me by First Nations women. And actually, this possibly doesn't have a great deal of bearing on provincial responsibility, but there is a connection between provincial responsibility and the federal responsibilities and so on.

And as you, I'm sure, have noticed in the last six months to a year, we have had a lot of First Nations women speaking out on issues and different policy changes, and so on, that they would like to see that would call for more accountability all the way around; not only from First Nations leaders, but from everyone as far as focusing on how things get done and funding for those things that need to get done.

So I've had some First Nations women in Regina bring to me,

or to my attention, their concern about the Indian Act changes. And they say that they're very detrimental to off-reserve Indian people. She also brought up — the woman that talked to me — also brought up her concern that even though off-reserve Indian people may vote for chief and council, they are not privy to be able to be elected or voted for themselves on that council if they're living off-reserve.

And I'm just wondering whether or not you have been in discussion at all with the federal government as far as the changes to the Indian Act that most likely are going to perpetuate these problems that this First Nations woman sees?

She indicated to me that Corbier intended for off-reserve Indians to have those rights, and in fact if the Indian Act goes forward the way it is, that will not be available to them.

So I'm wondering if you can comment on that and whether or not you had some discussion with the federal government regarding these matters?

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — The member raises the important question of elections on First Nations and the role of and the right of those living off-reserve to participate in those elections, and she raises the question of accountability — all issues which are important questions for, again, for both First Nations people and the people of the province in general.

I might say — and I don't say this in order to pass the responsibility off to the federal government — but this is primarily a federal, a federal issue. One which the federal government and individual First Nations are working on. Not finding it as easy to resolve as one might, one might hope.

The Supreme Court of Canada has made it clear that people who live off-reserve have the right to participate in the running of affairs on-reserve. And what you will find, as I'm sure the member knows, is . . . are many chiefs running for election, spending a lot of time in the cities of not only Saskatchewan but as far — in Alberta too — and as far afield as British Columbia, even in the United States, some members in larger American cities as well.

So a challenge for a person running for office, for a First Nation office at the present time is not just to work with those members who live on-reserve but in fact the members who live off-reserve, and those members who live off-reserve can be as many as live on or sometimes even more.

And it's also the case, as the member I think indicated, that some First Nations make it rather easier for off-reserve members to vote and to participate and to stand for office. Others make it rather more difficult.

But I can't recall certainly the numbers, but there are many First Nations who provide for mail-in ballots, for example, from members who live off the First Nation, making it very easy for members to participate; and indeed, making it easy for members who don't have a very strong connection to the First Nation to participate. And the member will know too a number of chiefs who've been recently elected who actually lived off-reserve before the election.

So this is a matter which is more preferably to be dealt with between First Nations and the federal government. It's a matter we discuss with the federal government at considerable length. Because one of the challenges we have in this province is to address the federal off-loading for those who live off-reserve. It's First Nations view, and our view, that the federal government should maintain its trust relationship with First Nations people, whether they live on-reserve or off-reserve, and that rights should follow the First Nations people who move into . . . move off their First Nations communities.

The federal government doesn't take that view. And in fact the federal government hasn't been more responsive to our view over the last little while; in fact, the reverse. The federal government has been more aggressive in its view that on-reserve is their responsibility and off-reserve is our responsibility.

So the kinds of issues the member raises generate a lot of issues for us too. And our concern and our focus is to try to do our part, to enable First Nations people to have the kinds of opportunities that other members of our society has, and to not be obsessed with jurisdictional questions but to be obsessed with trying to find solutions together.

And before the member stands up, I have to say that I think we've agreed that we will have Aboriginal Affairs until 4 o'clock. And it being 4 o'clock, I'm sure the member has some questions for the Minister of Government Relations about Aboriginal people or whatever. But I'd be happy . . . of course we'll be happy to be back dealing with some other of these important issues as time goes on.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well, Mr. Minister, I would suggest that Government Relations have to deal with the very issue that we're just talking about because provincial and federal government relations, this issue of whether off-reserve Indian people can in fact be entitled to be elected as council members is a very important issue.

I'm understanding what you're saying, but it's such a very important thing to come to some resolve with and to make sure there's fairness with because there's really no protection for off-reserve First Nations people as far as ensuring them that they have a say and funding that's needed for off-reserve services, like care homes for instance, like safe houses for their people, like any services that they may need.

(16:00)

And of course the bands, the reserves are granted funding on a per capita or per head basis, and so that money should be used for . . . or should be able to be used for off-reserve First Nations people who have some concerns, because they are being included in that head count.

And so I'm not quite sure whether or not you feel really desirous of speaking to the federal government once again on behalf of off-reserve people because we as a province are certainly conscientious and want to make sure that healthy initiatives are in place to assist people that are now off-reserve. But they are themselves saying that some of the funding for that should come from bands, and the council . . . chief and council

should make sure that some of that happens, some of that money is forthcoming to off-reserve First Nations.

But it often does not work like that. And so there is a concern, and it's not only a funding concern for the taxpayers of the province but it's also a major concern for First Nations women that are bringing this issue forward.

I will take my seat at this time and turn the questioning over to my colleague for — what is it? — Intergovernmental Affairs. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — If I can just make a brief response, Mr. Chair. The member's absolutely right about the challenge that we face here.

And we would be spending a great deal of our time in our discussions with the federal government on this very question. There simply are not enough resources in the Saskatchewan treasury to respond effectively to these challenges alone. And so we have to find solutions which work and which fulfill not only the federal government's responsibility, but a notion of assisting First Nations to achieve the goals they set themselves.

And this would be a matter in which the provincial government and First Nations are in full accord and do not support the federal government's view. Thank you.

The Chair: — The next area of this department that we'll be covering is Government Relations, and we'll make a brief pause while the minister brings in his officials.

I invite the minister to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to introduce again someone who was just recently here and continues to remain to support me in this matter, deputy minister of Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs, Brent Cotter.

On my immediate right, Paul Osborne who's the assistant deputy minister, trade and relations; Al Hilton, who's the assistant deputy minister federal-provincial relations; and Wanda Lamberti, who's the executive director of finance, administration, and information technology.

Ms. Eagles: — Mr. Chair. Before we get started, Mr. Minister, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and your officials for agreeing to sit and answer questions regarding Intergovernmental Affairs this afternoon.

And before getting into specifics, I'd just like to ask you to briefly outline what changes you have made in the department this last year, from personnel, program, and policy standpoints.

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Chairman, to the hon. member. As she will know, the province having embarked on this new direction to focus on specific areas as far as municipal, local governments, provincial and international governments are concerned, it's in order to be more focused and efficient in responding to some specific needs in those areas.

As one department responsible for Government Relations and

Aboriginal Affairs, we have an opportunity to focus more clearly on the relationship between our Aboriginal, municipal, provincial, and federal governments.

What perhaps might be of assistance is to indicate the mandate of the department which is to promote Saskatchewan's interests through management of the province's relations with other governments in Canada and abroad, and to work with Aboriginal peoples in the province and their organizations to — once again — to advance our common interests as we move into the future.

The department works in partnership with communities to support local governance, provide financial and technical support, and as well develop legislation, regulations, and other policies to meet the changing needs of municipal governments.

The department also coordinates and manages matters related to Government House, French language training — French language services, pardon me, and official protocol, provincial honours, and also provides administrative services to the Office of the Lieutenant Governor.

Specifically, perhaps a little more specifically, with respect to Intergovernmental Relations, what this particular responsibility is the support for the minister and the Premier at all Canadian intergovernmental and international meetings. It supports the development, coordination, and implementation of the province's intergovernmental activities and policies and is directly responsible for policies regarding trade, immigration, and constitutional and international relations. It also coordinates and manages matters relating to French language services.

Now there are another . . . there are several other headings within the department, such as federal/provincial relations, international relations, constitutional relations, trade policy, and immigration as well.

And, Mr. Chair, if the hon. member wants me to specify any specific area or . . . I believe your question was with respect to numbers as well. And please, if you would clarify that for me.

Ms. Eagles: — Well I'll get into . . . Thank you, Mr. Minister and Mr. Chair. To the minister: I will get into some numbers but it's . . . you said about efficient and focused government and, boy, I beg to differ on that, Mr. Minister.

It seems where one minister used to be handling the affairs of Municipal, Aboriginal, the Provincial Secretary, and Government Relations, now we've all got that, you know, we've got that spread around with different ministers. So we really don't know who to contact anymore because even under Aboriginal Affairs or municipal relations, you're dealing with different ministers.

So I fail to see where that is a more focused and efficient government. So perhaps if you could just, you know, help me to understand, you know, how it is compared to the way it was prior to this shuffle.

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That is a good question from the hon. member. Those jurisdictions which we now deal with, at least to this point, have not brought it to our

attention that there's been any difficulty with respect to their understanding of the relationships.

And I just want to focus particularly on municipal relationships which . . . nothing has changed in that respect. Our municipal sector, the commitment to the municipal sector has remained strong and continues. As a matter of fact, we are able to consult, and we have consulted, with the municipal sector on various areas of responsibilities with respect to information and tools that they would require to assist them in local governance.

So that, from that perspective those open lines of communication, I believe have been strengthened and the mutual relationships and needs of municipalities, the urban and rural, are such that allow us to more . . . to more actively interrelate with their needs.

So I'm not sure specifically which areas and if you'd like to . . . Mr. Chairman, if the member would like to specifically address what areas or where there might be some concerns, I'd be very pleased to hear about those so we can address them.

Our efforts have been to ensure more easy contact and responding to people's concerns or individuals, whether they're individuals or community's concerns with respect to any changes that are made within departments, and in order that we can focus on specific relationships with regards to communications; and as I mentioned, tools that particularly other governments, local governments, can utilize or have access to for assistance with the Department of Government Relations in assisting them in their efforts on behalf of the communities that they serve.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, in all due respect, you've just mentioned to my colleague that your Department of Intergovernmental Affairs includes duties to look at the interconnectedness and also the duty to make sure that there is — I guess affairs of municipal governments, First Nations governments, federal and international governments are looked at.

Now that includes Aboriginal Affairs so why does the Minister of Justice also have an Aboriginal Affairs portfolio? The other day when I was doing some questioning in estimates, I really came up with some questions about gaming pertaining to Aboriginal Affairs and he . . . the minister told me to refer that to you.

So does . . . my question for you is: does the Minister of Justice and Aboriginal Affairs have different duties than do you as Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs? And could you please clarify where the differences are?

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. For the hon. member, the alignment that we have created with other levels of governance is conducive to more open lines of communications.

Now your question with respect to why does the Minister of Justice . . . The Minister of Justice has to this point in time created that open lines of communication with the Aboriginal Affairs governance. However, it still ties in under the umbrella of governance structures — whether it be municipal, provincial, federal, or international.

So I guess . . . I guess, in effect, although it may be looked at as the responsibility under two ministries, there is a need to, under Government Relations, a need to still have . . . and as there is an interconnection with some other ministries with respect to specific issues dealing with perhaps treaty land entitlements, which would still require some participation by the Justice minister on those specific issues.

(16:15)

So it's an umbrella that's created under Government Relations which still engages, and as you will see as well, will also engage the Provincial Secretary under that particular umbrella which then allows the open lines of communications with the different levels of government, both locally, provincially, and internationally.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, those open lines of communication that are needed, I agree with that concept. What I do not agree with and I cannot understand is why you need to have two ministers that are both designated with a task, the same task basically. Intergovernmental Affairs is pertaining to Aboriginal people, in this instance, and so every issue that is brought forward that involves First Nations or Métis people is . . . we need open lines of communication for that, that's correct. But why can't one minister take care of all of those things? It seems to me to be only sensible.

It seems to me that it's not sensible to have a number of ministers that are to be expected to address or that are supposed to address or answer questions from the general public as well as the official opposition, because there are no clear lines of duties that are given to us as official opposition. There's no clear lines of duty that have been described to us by your government.

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Chair, once again, the Aboriginal Affairs provincially is still the responsibility of the Minister of Justice where he has developed these relationships. Under Government Relations, dealing with Aboriginal Affairs would relate to more of the international relationships with Aboriginal Affairs.

So again there's still a need to have the Minister of Justice who's developed the connections, the contacts, with Aboriginal Affairs in the province. And when in the international . . . on the international scene is where Government Relations becomes involved and would still probably need to consult with and discuss issues with the Minister of Justice who is directly responsible for Aboriginal Affairs within the province of Saskatchewan.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, you talk about your portfolio having the responsibility for international issues dealing with First Nations and whatever. Mr. Minister, your portfolio, one of your responsibilities is First Nations gaming in the province. That is not international, that is within this province. So your explanation that you've just given me doesn't seem to hold any point.

I just can't quite understand . . . I mean I think that my . . . The issue I brought forward to you about getting some clarification as to the kind of duties that you have as opposed to what the

Minister of Justice and Aboriginal Affairs has, and being able to relay that to us, is really very important. Because your duties are not only dealing with international duties, they have proven . . . you have proven that you're dealing with Aboriginal affairs in the province pertaining to First Nations gaming.

So why would the Minister of Justice and Aboriginal Affairs not have had that responsibility also? I mean it's something that you've taken on and the whole thing is very confusing. So you can comment on this if you would, please.

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To the hon. member, I regret that it's . . . And let's not confuse the issue further by involving First Nations gaming . . . (inaudible) . . . these responsibilities. Because that is, that is a separate ministry — Liquor and Gaming Authority with First Nations partnership. So that is a different ministry that deals specifically with those particular issues provincially.

So as I mentioned previously, the Justice minister will still maintain the responsibilities for dealing with Aboriginal issues such as treaty land entitlements and governance as it comes to First Nations.

The international aspect of other First Nations or Aboriginal affairs would come through Government Relations office and be dealt with in that fashion.

And as I mentioned whether it comes through my office or through the Justice minister's office, there is still a need perhaps for the different ministries to work together on some of these very, very complex issues.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, to the minister, I'm just going to take this in a little bit of a different area now, out of the Aboriginal area.

And in the annual report for 2000 and 2001 it says here the key challenge will be to continue to ensure that Saskatchewan's interests and objectives are effectively advanced through its relations with other governments. To address this challenge, the department plans to, and it lists several points here, but the one I want to get at is:

. . . aggressively advance to the federal government the interests of Saskatchewan agricultural producers and the economic interests of rural Saskatchewan.

And then back a little further it says:

The department will identify and achieve federal and provincial acceptance of Saskatchewan's objectives in a full slate of trade liberalization negotiations at WTO . . . (NTAA), NAFTA and AIT. It will also successfully (and I point out successfully) defend Saskatchewan measures and interests in international and domestic trade disputes such as U.S. trade actions on softwood lumber, steel, agriculture, and cultural industries.

Now, Mr. Minister, that brings me to a couple of points and then a question.

Today I found that our government's actions were very

uncooperative. But having said that, I feel we also have a very uncooperative and a very arrogant federal government. And it seems like when something happens in the province of Quebec — and I'll use Bombardier as an example — it seems that they are so successful in lobbying the federal government to come to their aid. And I guess it's because that's where the Liberal support is and we all know that trying to find a Liberal in Saskatchewan, they're about as rare as hen's teeth.

So I would like to know: is your department lobbying the federal government and have you . . . how have the meetings turned out that you have pointed out in here that you will be working towards? Were your meetings successful with the federal people as far as enhancing agriculture in Saskatchewan and the US trade tariffs and subsidies that they have implemented recently? Could you just enlighten us on that please?

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Chairman, I thank the member for that question, which is an important one.

Can I just perhaps review for the member the . . . what has happened in fact is, through Government Relations, there has been a coordination and management of the development . . . and management of the development of the communication to the federal government of the province's position with respect to some of the issues that the member has raised.

World Trade Organization negotiations broadened beyond agriculture and services, including dispute settlement. These are some of the ongoing discussions that are carried on including such things as trade remedies, procurement, trade, and environment, the NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) clarifications, as well as it relates to investment and services.

Free trade area of the Americas — that's another issue that the department becomes involved with, those negotiations; and negotiations which lead to free trade agreements with European free trade area, Costa Rica, Singapore, Central America, and so on.

As well, during the past, the department's managed Saskatchewan's participation and in . . . (inaudible) . . . represented the province in the ongoing negotiations of the built-in agenda of the trade to expand the procurement commitments and to complete an energy chapter and revise the code of conduct.

As it relates to the current situation, we are very actively working with, again, other ministries to ensure that the federal government is aware of our concerns and our position on this issue of softwood lumber and the recent farm Bill in the US which is of grave concern. And certainly we're continuing to work on those specific issues. This is not over and it will be something that will be ongoing. And hopefully we'll be able to convince the central government to assist us, perhaps jointly or with other provinces, in addressing some of the very serious measures that have been taken by the US which so . . . which is so devastating to our economy not only in the agricultural sector, but also in our lumber industry.

So those are key issues that we do become involved in and

ensure that it's brought . . . brought to the forefront and reinforced on an ongoing basis, as I say, working again with other ministries that are affected by some of those issues.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, to the minister, I am very aware that, you know, the issue of subsidies and that isn't over. I'm actively involved in agriculture. And I mean, right now the future is not that bright out there, as I'm sure you are aware.

But I'm just wondering, what other ministries have you met with when you stated that you had met with other ministries and were working with them? What other ministries have you met with? How many times have you met and what were the results of the meetings?

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Chairman, just . . . the hon. member, just to clarify, within the province or outside of the province? Outside of the province?

Mr. Chairman, for clarification to the hon. member, you addressed that question specifically: how many times have I met? I have not, given the brief period of time that I've been in this responsibility. But officials on an ongoing basis both from this ministry and others who continue on an ongoing basis to meet with and discuss these issues with counterparts in Ottawa in the International Trade minister's office, the agricultural minister's office as well, and as well with our federal representative, Minister Goodale.

So it's not . . . These issues are not taken lightly and there are ongoing discussions and meetings, not necessarily with individual ministers but with senior officials that ensure that these issues are brought to the forefront.

And, Mr. Chairman, I guess, as outlined in the beginning, that I would now defer to the Provincial Secretary for . . . and look forward to the opportunity to perhaps continue some of the discussions that we've had up to this point in time.

So, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to defer now to the Provincial Secretary.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, thank you for those answers. And it's unfortunate that we have run out of time today because there are a few more issues I would like to discuss with you so I look forward to the next time this comes up in estimates.

But for now I would like to thank you very much, and I would also like to thank your officials for being gracious enough to come here this afternoon and assist you. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: — The next area under consideration will be the Provincial Secretary (GR03). We'll pause for a moment while the minister gets into position.

(16:30)

Subvote (GR03)

The Deputy Chair: — I recognize the minister responsible for the Provincial Secretary and ask her to introduce any new

officials you may have.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Joining us for this portion of the questions is Wanda Lamberti, executive director of finance, administration, and information technology. And she's seated just behind the deputy here.

The Deputy Chair: — Madam Minister, you have a new official who has just joined you for this part of the . . . so would you introduce the new officials, please?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I'm joined by Florent Bilodeau, who's the director of the Office of French-language Co-ordination, who's seated . . . You could move down, if you'd like. And, of course, behind myself a man who needs no introduction, Michael Jackson, the executive director of protocol and Government House.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you, Madam Minister, for agreeing to sit this afternoon and also to your officials for coming today as well.

It feels like we've been having a little bit of musical chairs this afternoon. We've been dealing with three different ministers in the same department. But can you give those watching, who may be watching today, the basic functions of what the Office of the Provincial Secretary does and why this role is necessary?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The Office of the Provincial Secretary basically coordinates matters related to official protocol and Government House and provides administrative services to the Office of the Lieutenant Governor. So for the Lieutenant Governor's office we provide both administrative services, help with the arranging of hospitality events, ceremonial and constitutional functions of the viceregal office as well as providing liaison with the government and coordinating the province's anniversary messages.

From a protocol perspective, the office plans, organizes, and supervises visits of foreign diplomats, heads of states, and foreign delegations; oversees state ceremonial and symbols; organizes special events and anniversaries; provides protocol consulting; policy organization of provincial honours and awards program; and responsible for the Legislative Building art collection and the government gift policy.

And as well, for Government House provides management, programming, and policy and planning for heritage property including museum, hospitality facility and public tours, supervising Government House heritage property, centennial project.

And as well we have the Office of French-language Co-ordination which coordinates provincial initiatives in the area of French language services, providing linguistic support and translation services to government departments but as well liaising with the francophone community in the province.

And I think I'm tired. I might have to go soon. I don't know.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Madam Minister. And the hon. member said it was almost time to adjourn now after you listed all of those.

In this newly reconstructed government that is supposedly to be more efficient, we now see that the Department of Government Relations, where the Provincial Secretary is located, that we have three ministers.

Can you tell us the wisdom in having a different person in the role of Provincial Secretary than either of the two ministers currently in this department?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I believe the wisdom of having this particular responsibility be connected to the other duties that I hold right now is the link that it has to the culture and heritage portfolio that is the main responsibility that I have.

Now this is a very important responsibility because it does operate at a high level with many important guests and visitors and responsibilities from the point of view of our relationship with the Crown and with visiting people from other countries — visiting diplomats and others from other countries. So it's a high-level activity, but at the same time it is very connected to the interests that we have in culture and heritage.

And I think that . . . I think it's a very good thing to have people be able to be responsible for things that are in other people's departments if in fact it makes sense to do that. It's sort of organization by function, rather than just by structure.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Chair, to the minister: can you tell us how the staffing levels have changed in the Provincial Secretary office, outside of the Anniversary Secretariat? Were they affected by the hiring freeze? Is there any positions vacant right now and do you expect them to be filled soon?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The only reductions at the moment were the Anniversary Secretariat and there's no vacancies at the moment.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Madam Minister. So the hiring freeze never affected your department at all.

We see a rather large expenditure increase for the operation of Government House this year. Could you just enlighten us to what this increase reflects. Is it all related to renovations or are there other areas that we see an increase?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I'm just . . . (inaudible) . . . to get you a few more details, but generally this is for the revitalization of Government House as a major historical and visitor site in the province. And we appreciated very much the support of the Leader of the Opposition in coming to that opening, and certainly people within that community feel that it's important that he supports it as well.

It is a national historic site and this is work that's going on towards the centennial in 2005. So 2002-03 is the second year of a five-year redevelopment plan, and so increased funding of 112,000 is being provided for the work going on in this year.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Madam Minister. So you expect the completions to be done in 2005. Is that the idea of it all?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes. In fact we will be most

disappointed if we have to delay the centennial because Government House isn't ready.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Can you tell me how many official functions are held at Government House each year?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Because Government House is used by the Lieutenant Governor, by outside agencies, by government when there's honours and awards types of things involved, we would have to get the numbers from a variety of sources but we will pull that together for you and provide it to you.

Ms. Eagles: — I thank you, Madam Minister. What is the number of staff employed at Government House on a seasonal as well as a year-round basis?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The number of permanent staff would be five, and then seasonal could run around a dozen depending on the time of year and what the visitor demand is. But they're part-time and casual so there's a fair bit of flexibility in that.

Ms. Eagles: — When the renovations are complete on Government House, will the number of functions increase as well as the type of functions — will that increase as well?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Because the rationale of this upgrade is to make it more attractive for visitors and for tourists and for school groups, there will be actually more ability of Government House to host functions. And so we do, very much, believe that there will be increased visitor numbers and that this intention was built into the redevelopment.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, getting back to the cost, and I believe you said it was \$112,000 each year, are those, are those . . . is a 100 per cent of those costs being funded by the provincial government?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The 112,000 that we're providing is the operating cost to manage the project, but the actual funding formula for the 2 million, which will be the total cost of the redevelopment, is one-third provincial, one-third federal, and then one-third fundraising.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Do you have any plans as far as the fundraising — what avenues they're going to, to raise funds for this? Are there just private donations involved, or can you just tell me what you have in mind in that area, please?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — There's a foundation made up of people from the private sector and it's their responsibility to do the fundraising and to manage that part of it.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Madam Minister. And I'm sure the number of tourists will probably increase as well when this project is all completed. But I'm wondering if you can just give me an average number for the tourists that visit Government House per year?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well after hearing the number myself, I'm thinking we're going to have to be replacing rugs once in a while — 30,000 a year apparently, and that's expected to

double.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Yes, that is a large number. Do you have any information as to the amount of meals that are supplied through Government House? I understand that when meals are served that they are catered to; they don't keep cooks on staff all the time.

But I'm just wondering if you have an idea of how many meals are catered. I know when I visited the Governor General's house in Ottawa, I was told that they catered 85,000 meals a year, and this was two or three years ago. So I'm just wondering if someone has kept track of that.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — We'll again have to get that information, but we can provide you with a pretty close estimate once we have a chance to look at the details of the events that were held over the year.

Ms. Eagles: — Madam Minister, are changes being made to make this a large tourist attraction and does the government have a goal? I'm sure that the numbers will increase from 30,000 once this is all said and done. But I'm just wondering if the government is making some changes as far as attracting tourists and what their goal is?

(16:45)

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — One of the objectives in the reconfiguration that's taking place with Culture, Youth and Recreation was to get a number of the heritage facilities, tourist attractions, the science centres there, now the WDM (Western Development Museum), Wanuskewin, Government House. The idea to get some focus on I guess the value-added opportunities of the tourism that can be taking place in all of these facilities.

And certainly I've had comments from tour operators that they would like to work with us in enhancing the understanding of what people who are involved in the tourism business and the moving of tourists around are expecting from facilities that they work with.

And so I think there will be an emphasis over the coming couple of years, and certainly towards reaching full momentum during the centennial, to have a stronger emphasis on, you know, the value-added potential of all these facilities with enhanced promotion and marketing and closer linkages with other partners in the tourism sector.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, when the renovations are complete and the tourists start pouring in — as I'm sure they will — will there be an admission charge to get into Government House?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — So far it's been our policy with as many facilities as possible to have them fully accessible to the public without any additional charge.

Now every year, whenever dollars get tight, that discussion gets had again. But certainly a facility like this that's seen very much as a provincial treasure, I think the notion is that people have contributed towards its existence and continuation. And because of the strong link it has to protocol and to the Crown, I

think it would take quite a bit to go to that step of charging admission.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I have noticed though that the science centre and other museums do charge, and I'm not saying one way or the other that you should charge, but I mean it might be something to consider, especially if the rugs need replacing.

Do you plan on having a souvenir booth in Government House?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — We will, but we will call it a gift shop as opposed to a souvenir booth.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Now as far as the gift shop's operation, will you be putting it up for tender as far as who operates it, or how is that going to work?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Currently the historical society has a small gift shop there and I think because of that would feel they have dibs on that activity. And I suspect that, like the hospital gift shops and other things, there's likely a strong volunteer component as well because a lot of the people who are involved in Government House and whatnot have strong interests in history and artifacts and whatnot, so I think, I think there likely would be a discussion of whether that had merit or not. But because the Historical Society has a traditional relationship I think they would be, I guess, the first on the list in terms of people who would operate that gift shop.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Madam Minister and I'm . . . I know we all appreciate the work that volunteers do and in the end they are instrumental in whether a project flies or sinks. So I appreciate that, that volunteers are given the opportunity.

The total budget for the Provincial Secretary has fallen by about \$500,000. And all of the savings we see this year are on account of the Anniversary Secretariat being moved out of your department. Is that correct?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes, that would be the case.

Now at the moment we're undergoing a bit of a rethink of what's the best use of our, I guess, combined investments, resources, and assets to support the centennial. But certainly, with the connecting of the Anniversary Secretariat to the department, it linked it to a fairly strong network of resources in the culture, youth and heritage area. And what we're hoping to do is to increase the ability to pull those resources together around the centennial, as opposed to adding more layers of administration in preparing for the celebrations.

Ms. Eagles: — Is it true, Madam Minister, that the functions of the secretariat are now handled by a new Crown corporation?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — No, it's a very small group of staff within the department. We never did move on the question of a Crown corporation.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Madam Minister. As we all know, as you have mentioned before that Saskatchewan will be celebrating its centennial in 2005, and we can't delay it till 2006, so I was just wondering what the province . . . what kind

of plans the province is making in celebration of this wonderful event?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I think at the moment I would highlight three things. One is that we did have the committee that worked, produced the report and we can — if you haven't seen a copy of the report, we can send it to you. They actually published a booklet that had a variety of opportunities for the centennial that people could decide to move on.

As well there is an Internet site that people can post events that get information, share information. And then as well, there are a number of meetings going on with all the interested groups in the province who would have a stake in this like the Tourism Saskatchewan, the organizations that are organized under the lotteries — the, you know, Sask Culture, Sask Heritage, all of these kinds of people. And so anybody who is normally in the event celebration, provision of community and tourism service are involved in this discussion.

We haven't finalized yet exactly what people will be eligible for. The only funding that has been specifically directed at this at this point is for the Centenary Fund that's been directed at capital, and that's been the fund that many sectors have taken advantage of and that we were able to provide when we had a large surplus from oil and gas — that was 120 million over four years in six core areas. And so there's been a lot of work being done on infrastructure under that particular program.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Madam Minister. And we are running out of time, Madam Minister, so before I ask my final question, I would just like to thank you for being here today in estimates and also to your officials for agreeing to be here.

And finally are there any expectations of any member of the royal family coming over being that it's our 100th birthday as well as the ribbon cutting for the restoration of Government House?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — We feel that the centennial would be worthy of a visit from the Queen herself, and we have extended an invitation and certainly are hoping that we will be taken up on it.

And I will just now thank the member for her genuine interest in this area and look forward to any work we can do together on this in the future because, after all, it is the whole province's centennial.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 16:58.