

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**PRESENTING PETITIONS**

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition regarding the education portion of property tax which has grown as the provincial government has reduced its share of education funding in Saskatchewan. The prayer of the petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly urge the provincial government to take all possible action to cause a reduction in the education tax burden carried by Saskatchewan residents and employers.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition are from Kylemore and Wadena. And I'm pleased to present it on their behalf.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased also to stand today to read a petition from people who are concerned about the cost of education on property owners:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly urge the provincial government to take all possible action to cause a reduction in the education tax carried by Saskatchewan residents and employers.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

The people that have signed this petition are from Wadena.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I stand on behalf of producers in the constituency of Cypress Hills concerned about cost increases associated with this year's crop insurance program. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to have Sask Crop Insurance reverse the 2003 premium increases and restore affordable crop insurance premiums to our struggling farmers.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, these petitions have been signed by producers in the communities of Liebenthal and Mendham.

I so present.

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with the intolerable lack of a hemodialysis unit in the Union Hospital in Moose Jaw. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to provide the people of Moose Jaw and district with a hemodialysis unit for their community.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by citizens all from the community of Moose Jaw.

**Ms. Eagles:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again today I stand to present a petition on behalf of people that have grave concerns regarding the condition of Highway 47 between Estevan and the Boundary dam resort:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take immediate action and make necessary repairs to Highway 47 South in order to avoid serious injury and property damage.

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

And this is signed by citizens of Estevan and Bienfait.

I so present. Thank you.

**Ms. Bakken:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition on behalf of those citizens that are concerned about the increase in crop insurance. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to have Saskatchewan Crop Insurance reverse the 2003 premium increases and restore affordable crop insurance premiums to our struggling farmers.

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

And the petition is signed by residents of Lampman, Kipling, Ogema, McTaggart, and Carlyle.

I so present.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition from producers in the Kindersley area who are concerned with the rapid and too high increase in the crop insurance premiums. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to have Saskatchewan Crop Insurance reverse the 2003 premium increases and restore affordable crop insurance premiums to our struggling farmers.

And in duty bound, our petitioners will ever pray.

This petition, Mr. Speaker, is presented . . . is signed by the good folks from Marengo, Saskatchewan.

I so present.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here to improve Highway 42.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to make the necessary repairs to Highway 42 in the Arm River constituency in order to prevent injury or loss of life and to prevent the loss of economic opportunity in the area.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens from Eyebrow and Brownlee.

I so present.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present a petition from citizens opposed to the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance 2003 premium increases to farmers. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to have Sask Crop Insurance reverse the 2003 premium increases and restore affordable crop insurance premiums to our struggling farmers.

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

Signed by the citizens of Biggar and district.

I so present.

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present today on behalf of constituents who are concerned with the condition of Highway 22, particularly that section of highway between Junction 6 and Junction 20. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take immediate action and make necessary repairs to Highway 22 in order to address safety and economic concerns.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signatures to this petition, Mr. Speaker, come from the communities of Earl Grey, Southey, and Strasbourg.

I so present.

### READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

**Deputy Clerk:** — According to order the following petition has been reviewed and hereby read and received as an addendum to the previously tabled petition being sessional paper no. 13.

### NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

**Mr. Hillson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice I shall ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Finance: in reference to the 6.8 per cent growth in GDP forecast in the 2003-2004 budget and the related revenue estimates, what would be the revenue estimates generated based on a 2.8 per cent GDP growth as projected by the Finance department of the Government of Canada?

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd be very pleased to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House, His Excellency Sir Andrew Burns who is the High Commissioner of Britain. He's accompanied by Dr. Michael Jackson, chief of protocol.

Sir Andrew took up his appointment as the British High Commissioner to Canada in August 2000 and this is his first official visit to Saskatchewan. He was planning a trip last April but the unfortunate passing of the Queen Mother . . . due to that event the trip was postponed.

I know he's meeting with a number of officials in the province in the interest of exploring mutual interests between United Kingdom and Saskatchewan. I was able to meet with him this morning, Mr. Speaker — a very helpful meeting. I understand you hosted Sir Andrew for lunch. He will be meeting with the Premier this afternoon.

And I'd like to ask all members to give a very warm Saskatchewan welcome to Sir Andrew Burns.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join with the minister in welcoming His Excellency Sir Andrew Burns to the Assembly this afternoon.

I had the distinct pleasure of meeting with His Excellency this morning in my office and we discussed a number of issues of mutual concern, the good relationship that Canada, and within Canada, Saskatchewan, has with Great Britain. We discussed the rather courageous position taken by the Prime Minister of Britain, Mr. Blair, in regards to the action in Iraq, and we discussed potential future good relations between Saskatchewan and Great Britain.

So it's our pleasure to welcome His Excellency to the Assembly this afternoon and I hope he enjoys the proceedings.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In your gallery here to visit with us this afternoon, I'm very pleased to welcome and introduce His Worship Mayor Wayne Ray, who is also accompanied by city manager, Jim Toye. And I'd like the members of the Assembly to kindly join me in welcoming them here for this afternoon's proceedings.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Hillson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I also want to join in welcoming Mayor Wayne Ray and city commissioner, Jim Toye, who came to Regina today for meetings with the Premier. They inform me that those meetings were cordial and constructive, and we are very hopeful that it will result in the early construction of the sewage treatment plant as recommended by Commissioner Laing.

And they are pleased with their work here in Regina and I ask all members to join in welcoming them to the legislature this

afternoon.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like this afternoon to introduce to you and through you to other members of this legislature, eight home-schoolers seated in your gallery. They are from my constituency and they are spending some time in Regina doing, I believe, an educational component on government and a few other things that this city has to offer.

And I would like to introduce them specifically to the legislature this afternoon: Mr. Ron Derksen, Heidi Derksen, Levi Derksen, and Joshua Derksen. And another group of . . . another family that's here as well: Mr. Gordon Penner, Mrs. Susan Penner, Caleb Penner, and Sarah Penner. And I hope also to be able to meet with them afterwards and explain to them the details and nuances of everything they are going to see this afternoon.

So would you join me in welcoming them to the legislature please.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Seated in the west gallery are a group of men and women who are here today to deal with the agriculture implement board Act that will be introduced in second reading, too, later this afternoon. And I want to just introduce them individually, Mr. Speaker, and they might just give us a wave from their chairs.

On the board of the ag implements dealers, Mr. Speaker, is Mr. Norm Overland from Churchbridge; Mr. Allan Smith, who's the Vice-Chair from Swift Current; Mr. Doug Slough from Bulyea, Saskatchewan — he's a farmer there. Also have from the Canada West Implement Dealers Association, Mr. John Schmeiser; Gerry Engel from PIMA (Prairie Implement Manufacturers Association). Also with PIMA is Zelda Davidson, who is the manager of corporate affairs; and two staff from the Department of Ag and Food, Mr. Lorne Tangjerd and Mr. Andy Jansen.

I look forward to introducing second reading later this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, and speak more about the work of the industry. And I appreciate them being here this afternoon and ask all the House to recognize them with me.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the official opposition I would like to join the Minister of Agriculture in welcoming the representatives from the Implement Dealers Association. And we will also be looking forward to meeting some of them to discuss the upcoming Bill that the government has proposed. So I hope they enjoy the procedures this afternoon, and welcome.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly, a guest who's joined us. She's seated behind the bar,

so to speak, Mr. Speaker. And that is Violet Stanger, a former member of the Assembly from 1991 to 1999. And I would ask all members to bid her a warm welcome.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Goulet:** — Yes, Mr. Speaker, Otuyumiw. Mr. Speaker, in your gallery we have special visitors to the legislature. These are First Nations people who are dealing with issues of governance and accountability.

Now I notice, Mr. Speaker, that in your gallery we have Charley Rockthunder with granddaughter Kiese Sunshine, and we also have Chad Nahnepowisky, Darcy Alexson, Claude Cody, Rod Peigan, Frederick Fox, Edward Badger, Marcel Fayant.

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

Welcome, please, all members of the House.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

(13:45)

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and to all members of the legislature another registered home-schooling family from my constituency; that's the Craig family with Mrs. Cathy Craig. They're sitting in the Speaker's gallery, and they're here learning about the legislature which happens to be in their neighbourhood.

So let's all welcome them.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the official opposition, we'd also like to welcome the members of the people from the Piapot Reserve that have brought issues to the legislature.

I'm hoping that you'll enjoy the proceedings this afternoon.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

### Resource Sector

**Mr. Yates:** — Well, well, well, Mr. Speaker, more good news for the people of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, this NDP government has a vision, a plan for this province. And, Mr. Speaker, that plan is working. The Saskatchewan economy is on a roll, Mr. Speaker.

Sale of oil and gas rights in April reached a six-year high, generating \$35.7 million in revenue, Mr. Speaker. And not only do these land sales produce revenues for the provincial coffers, Mr. Speaker, they also indicate . . . are good indicators, pardon me, of future drilling activity, Mr. Speaker, which is already up 80 per cent over the first quarter of 2002. As of April 4, 667 total wells have been drilled, including 374 oil wells and 240 gas wells.

Mr. Speaker, these wells don't drill themselves. They need workers, which might be one reason why Saskatchewan's employment numbers are going up, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan has experienced 11 straight months of job growth.

Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party has nothing to offer but empty slogans, predictions of doom and gloom, and a leader whose leadership abilities are highly suspect according to the weekend poll, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's future is wide open because this government has a plan based on performance, not slogans. And that plan includes the initiatives that have resulted in the resource sector of the economy expanding, moving into new areas of the province, and benefiting more people than ever.

Mr. Speaker, the future is wide open.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### **Royal Canadian Mounted Police Charity Ball**

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this past Saturday my wife, Lois, and I had the privilege of attending the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Charity Ball in support of the Saskatchewan Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services.

This annual event is hosted by the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) Depot and "F" Divisions here in Regina. The charity ball is a wonderful opportunity for the RCMP to show its support and gratitude to the community, and in the process raise funds which are then donated to a local charity.

Mr. Speaker, for the second year in a row, the funds raised from this year's RCMP Charity Ball will be donated to the Saskatchewan Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Inc. to assist them in helping people with disability meet the challenges of everyday life.

Mr. Speaker, one of the goals of the Saskatchewan Deaf and Hard of Hearing Society this year is to foster pride in our youth, and that's why proceeds from this year's event will be focused on the development of programs and services for deaf and hard of hearing youth in the province.

Mr. Speaker, not only was this impressive event a fundraiser for a very worthwhile organization, it was also an excellent opportunity to meet new people including the many friendly RCMP officers from across Canada who acted as hosts for each of the tables. In addition, those who attended were able to meet with members of the Saskatchewan Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, along with some of the individuals who benefit from the services this organization provides.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate RCMP Depot and "F" Divisions for hosting yet another successful charity ball. I ask all the members of the House to join with me in recognizing them for their efforts and supporting the many worthwhile causes in our community through their local fundraiser. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### **British Columbia Government's Approach to Collective Bargaining**

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, teachers right across this country are concerned with the British Columbia government's approach to collective bargaining — an approach that has earned censure from the United Nations. A short time ago the UN (United Nations) Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women singled out the BC (British Columbia) government for not meeting its obligations to women under international human rights law.

And now, Mr. Speaker, a UN body has taken the right-wing BC Liberals to task for their treatment of public sector unions, saying laws that stripped teachers of the right to strike and imposed contracts in education, health, and community services violate international agreements.

Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party is on record as saying they like what the Liberals are doing in BC. The Sask Party has even bandied about the idea of adopting BC Liberal policy wholesale, never mind that the BC Liberal policies have outraged BC voters or that the United Nations find BC Liberal policies towards teachers and other public sector employees reprehensible.

Mr. Speaker, teachers and other labour organizations in this province should be very concerned with the Sask Party and its leader's desire to implement an ideologically and morally unsound, right-wing agenda in this province, just like the one the UN has found such fault with in BC.

And I ask all members in this Assembly to join me in condemning the BC government's lack of respect for worker's basic democratic rights. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### **Mike Weir Wins Masters Golf Tournament**

**Mr. Wall:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, yesterday afternoon I must confess that my kids and my wife were looking at me a little bit strange. During four solid hours of commercial-free broadcasts of the Masters I, like so many other Canadians, went from jumping around the room for joy to biting my nails and being a little nervous. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I haven't been that nervous watching someone golf since the last time I was out with the member for Arm River — he can hit, he can hit even his own playing partners from anywhere on the course.

But, Mr. Speaker, the source of the emotional roller coaster was Bright's Grove, Ontario resident Mike Weir. What a great day for Canadian golf, Mr. Speaker. Mike shattered through so many barriers with his fantastic, gritty win at the biggest tournament of golf. He is the first left-hander in over three decades to win a major; the first left-hander ever to win at Augusta; the first Canadian ever to win at Augusta; and the first Canadian to win any of the four majors.

And, Mr. Speaker, like Mike, I too am a short, left-handed Canadian golfer, and I have a green jacket. Sadly, sadly, that is where the similarities in terms of golf end. But we can all be

fans. And we can be proud fans today, proud Canadians, of what Mike Weir did yesterday on international television.

You know, Mike Weir was talking at his press conference about the advice he got from Jack Nicklaus. He wrote to him as a youngster and asked Jack if he should switch from left to right. Jack wrote him back and said, stay left. And we're glad he did. We're glad he did. Now you've got to give me some . . . (inaudible) . . . But, Mr. Speaker, it's important to note that Mike Weir won the Masters on a shot, his approach shot into the overtime hole that moved from left to right, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### Seventh Annual Festival of Words in Moose Jaw

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Speaker, this is the House that runs on words. And in Moose Jaw words are cause for a festival. The seventh annual Saskatchewan Festival of Words has lined up a kaleidoscope of talent that would blow your mind, Mr. Speaker. Talented poets, playwrights, songwriters, authors of fiction and non-fiction will come from across Canada and include over 30 of the nation's best.

The four-day festival will include readings, presentations, workshops, film, and drama, including no less than six Governor General Award winners and 11 of Saskatchewan's top literary talents. A special event will be a musical about the Sandra Schmirler rink's quest for Olympic gold entitled, *Gold on Ice*.

A highlight will be the Saturday night banquet tribute to the late, great, Peter Gzowski, held at Temple Gardens Mineral Spa, where Peter hosted his final *Morningside* show. It will feature one of Canada's favourite satirical songwriters and singers, Nancy White, along with CBC's (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) Shelagh Rogers, Booker Prize winner Yann Martel, Gloria Sawai, Robert Currie, Sharon Butala, Guy Vanderhaeghe, Mel Hurtig, and many more. They'll all be there, Mr. Speaker, and so can the rest of the world. It's July 24 to 27 in Moose Jaw, and it's a can't miss, arts lovers' dream come true.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### South East Regional 4-H Public Speak-Off

**Ms. Eagles:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this last Saturday I, along with Colin Beaulieu, the extension agrologist for the Estevan area, and Cal Gratton, morning man for CJ1280 Radio, had the pleasure of judging the South East Regional 4-H Public Speak-Off held in Estevan.

Twenty young people participated at this level of competition. And while they are all winners, Mr. Speaker, we had a very tough decision in deciding who would represent the Southeast at the provincial finals taking place in Moose Jaw on April 26 and 27.

In the junior category, aged 9 to 12 years, the winner was Dakota Jackson of the Fillmore-Francis Beef Club; runner-up was Justin Van De Woestyne of the Benson Beef Club.

In the intermediate category, aged 13 to 15, winner was Nicole Wood of the Corning Multiple 4-H Club; runner-up was Roxy Mutton of the Black Gold Light Horse Club. In the senior category, aged 16 to 21, the winner was Matt Thompson of the Carievale Beef Club; runner-up was Jamie Mack of the Benson Beef Club.

4-H clubs are very much alive and very strong, with the southeast region boasting 964 members. Mr. Speaker, there are over 5,000 members throughout the province.

Hats off to Wes Mack, Chair of the South East Speak-Off, for organizing this successful event. Wes has worked tirelessly for the 4-H for many years.

Congratulations and best of luck to Dakota, Nicole, and Matt as they compete at the national level. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### Living with Diabetes

**Ms. Lorjé:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to commend three of our legislative colleagues, the members for Regina Coronation Park, Saskatoon Idylwyld, and Saskatoon Mount Royal, who accepted a challenge to live with diabetes for one day.

In a small way, Mr. Speaker, for one day they were walking in the moccasins of the 53,000 people in this province who live with diabetes every day of their lives, including staff and MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) in this Assembly.

Imagine, Mr. Speaker, the courage it must take to have the symptoms and risks of diabetes as a constant daily companion. Imagine the daily insulin injections, glucose monitoring, nutritional evaluation, and exercise routines.

The members reported on their experience with Type 1 diabetes at our annual meeting with the Canadian Diabetes Association. At this meeting we were introduced to a new public awareness campaign being launched by the CDA (Canadian Diabetes Association). In turn, the Minister of Health elaborated on the provincial diabetes plan, which is dedicating \$650,000 to support diabetes initiatives including primary care, prevention, education, and surveillance.

Mr. Speaker, it was a worthwhile and informative evening for all present. And I know all members will offer their encouragement and support to the work of the Canadian Diabetes Association. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### ORAL QUESTIONS

##### Out-of-Province Investments

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, we see this NDP (New Democratic Party) government blowing millions of dollars to cover its losses on out-of-province investments. An order in council released today shows that this

government has dumped another \$9.4 million into Coachman Insurance, its money-losing subsidiary in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, we recently learned that SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) lost \$11 million last year on Coachman which took SGI CANADA from a profit to a loss last year. Now we learn that SGI is putting yet another \$9 million into Coachman.

Mr. Speaker, the question is: why is the NDP throwing good money after bad? Why did they pour another \$9.4 million into this money-losing insurance company?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well first of all let me be absolutely clear. They're not putting another \$9.4 million in. They're simply transferring from SGI CANADA into Coachman, 9.4, Mr. Speaker. It remains under the control of SGI and SGI CANADA, Mr. Speaker. There's not additional money put in.

Mr. Speaker, again I say this attack from the Saskatchewan Party opposition, Mr. Speaker, is nothing more than an agenda that will discredit our Crowns so they can position themselves to privatize and sell our Crowns.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we all know that SGI owns all of Coachman Insurance so they're putting another \$9.4 million into it.

Mr. Speaker, in SGI CANADA's annual report, there's a section entitled, measuring success. It says, and I quote:

Financial success at SGI CANADA is measured through the Corporation's ability to provide an above average return on the equity invested by the shareholder.

So what kind of return did SGI CANADA have last year? They lost \$8 million because of their \$11 million loss in Ontario. Mr. Speaker, SGI's annual report clearly defines how they measure success.

Will the minister admit that SGI did not have a successful year in 2002 due to its investment in the Ontario insurance company?

(14:00)

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Sask Party over there says, will I admit that the Sask Party didn't . . . that SGI didn't have a successful year last year, Mr. Speaker. Well I'm going to ask him to defend this, Mr. Speaker.

I look in *The Globe and Mail* on the weekend and I see, "Auto insurance increases across Canada," Mr. Speaker. Auto insurance increases across Canada — Alberta 60 per cent, Ontario 30 per cent, Quebec 37 per cent, New Brunswick 70 per cent, Nova Scotia 66 per cent, Manitoba 7.2 per cent,

Saskatchewan 9.5 per cent, and BC 7.3 per cent.

Did SGI have a successful year? I don't know; you be the judge.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the minister is making the case for me. SGI CANADA lost \$8 million — not on its investments in Saskatchewan. They made money in Saskatchewan but that profit was wiped out because they lost \$11 million in Ontario.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Mr. Speaker, this is the same NDP government that has no money for the College of Medicine. This is the same government that has no money for a North Battleford sewage treatment plant. Mr. Speaker, this is the same NDP government that has no money to keep crop insurance premiums down, yet they lost \$11 million in Ontario and now they're putting another \$9.4 million into that venture.

How does the NDP justify losing millions of dollars in Ontario? How is that going to get Saskatchewan growing?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Mr. Speaker, this Leader of the Saskatchewan Party wants to be Premier of the province and this leader doesn't understand. This leader . . . Well, Mr. Speaker, this leader, this leader wants, Mr. Speaker, this Leader of the Sask Party wants to lead this province and this leader doesn't understand, doesn't understand how the auto insurance works, Mr. Speaker.

There is no connection, Mr. Speaker, there's no connection between an investment in Ontario and the Auto Fund. The Auto Fund looks after itself, Mr. Speaker. He doesn't even understand how it works, Mr. Speaker.

Please, Mr. Speaker, understand, people of Saskatchewan, this is all about — this doesn't matter that he doesn't understand — this is about discrediting our Crowns and selling them. That's what it's about.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Mr. Speaker, we've heard some math from the other side that defies logic in the past. But no matter how you cut it, this is a huge loss, especially when you consider that the government paid \$8 million for Coachman in the first place. Now the NDP has lost more money on Coachman than it was worth in the first place.

Mr. Speaker, we lost \$28 million, the NDP lost \$28 million on SPUDCO (Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Corporation). Mr. Speaker, they lost nearly \$30 million on dot-coms in the United States. They lost \$6 million on bingo, Mr. Speaker. And now they lost \$11 million in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, we've already added up \$75 million lost by the NDP government for Saskatchewan people. Mr. Speaker, that is

money that could have been invested in health care. That is money that is gone forever because of the mismanagement of the NDP.

My question: how much more money is the NDP going to lose before it learns to stop making these terrible kinds of investments?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Well again, Mr. Speaker, it's clear where this leader of the Sask Party is going with Crowns, Mr. Speaker. It's a constant attack on the investments; it's a constant attack on the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

What have our Crowns done, Mr. Speaker? They employ 9,000 people. They buy goods from over 12,000 businesses in the province, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, they have paid dividends and equity payments to our General Revenue Fund of \$1.6 billion, Mr. Speaker — 1.6 billion.

What do they want to do? What do they want to do? They want to sell our Crowns, Mr. Speaker — sell them. It makes no sense and the people of Saskatchewan don't agree with them.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### Information Services Corporation

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there is nothing, nothing that discredits or attacks our Crown corporations more than that minister and that NDP government, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for ISC (Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan). When the NDP first considered the computerization of our paper-based land titles system, the estimated price tag was \$19 million. Five years later they've spent \$107 million and the land titles system is still full of problems, Mr. Speaker. And now land titles fees are increasing, increasing, by a total of \$4.3 million.

Mr. Speaker, the new land titles system is 500 per cent over their very first budget. And now they're imposing a multi-million dollar rate hike to pay for the financial mess that they've created. Will the minister finally admit, Mr. Speaker, will he finally admit that the NDP is raising land titles fees by 4.3 million to pay for its \$107 million disaster that is the Information Services Corporation?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Mr. Speaker, I want the people of this province to know that that member sat in the Crown Corporations Committee last year and accused the ISC of misspending money in the development of the system.

That member, Mr. Speaker, called for a special audit by the Provincial Auditor to see how that money was spent and that member said that if the auditor showed the money was properly spent, he would apologize, Mr. Speaker.

And I'm quoting from the Crown Corporations transcript of

June 18, 2002 where that member said this, Mr. Speaker. He said that if the auditor found that no costs were buried, he would apologize. And then he goes on to say he would apologize because there was no activity of that sort done, Mr. Speaker.

And that member is getting up in the House today and misleading the people of the province, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, what the Provincial Auditor said was that the accounting principles were right. What we say today is that the NDP government has been wrong, Mr. Speaker, that it's the NDP government that has let down taxpayers.

And notice the difference. On this side of the House we make that commitment to apologize; it's kept. And meanwhile that minister that lost \$28 million — the minister for SPUDCO — and lied about it for six years, stayed . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — Well members, I would just ask . . . Order. Order. Order, please. Order, please, members. Things get a little warm and people get a little excited at times, but there is a line in this House which has just been crossed and I would ask the member . . . Order. There's another line about to be crossed here. Order, please. Order. I would ask the member from Swift Current to withdraw the statement he just made and apologize to the House.

**Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, I withdraw the statement and apologize to the House. My question . . .

**The Speaker:** — Thank you, Minister. I would ask members to be . . . I would ask members to be mindful of their language throughout the rest of the question period and on to the future. Order, please. Order, please.

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this side of the House will accept no hectoring, no lecturing on the truth from that side of the House, Mr. Speaker — not today and not ever.

The question for the minister of Information Services Corporation is this. We know what the total cost of the land titles system is. What has been invested by the taxpayers is \$107 million. We also know now that the old paper-based system used to provide a dividend back to the taxpayers of \$11 million a year and now because of this NDP debacle, the taxpayers will receive nothing, Mr. Speaker — nothing.

So the question to the minister is this: is this the minister's idea of success — the creation of a Crown corporation that runs 500 per cent over budget, loses millions of dollars, and creates a land titles system that doesn't yet work?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Mr. Speaker, I think we can see who the strangers to the truth are when we see the Leader of the

Opposition having to apologize to Grant Schmidt in Melville. We see the member here having to apologize today as he did in the Crown Corporations Committee.

And just to show how ridiculous the statements and allegations of the members opposite are, Mr. Speaker, the member gets up again and says that \$107 million was spent to build the land titles system for ISC, when the special report of the auditor, Mr. Speaker, showed that the cost was \$60.5 million.

Now how is it, Mr. Speaker, that the opposition can ask for a special report from the auditor, can get the report, can apologize for the misinformation they've got out there, and get up and make the same false allegations again, Mr. Speaker? And the reason is that this is a group of individuals who will stop at nothing in order to attain power.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — Order, please. Order, please. I would ask the minister to also be careful with his language. When he uses phrases like, stranger to the truth, that is an indirect way of something we should not be saying and I would ask him to withdraw that remark at this time.

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — I withdraw the remark and apologize, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, maybe the minister was reading the poll over the weekend, but he should calm down; he's going to pull something over there, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, my question for the minister is this. The problem with, the problem with Information Services Corporation is that the NDP were really, really excited about this new Crown corporation. And nobody in the NDP — even as this thing began to go downhill and out of control — nobody in the NDP would raise any concerns about the fact that it continued to lose millions of dollars; that the land titles system wasn't working as it should; that they would have to increase fees by \$4.3 million; that the previous dividend it used to pay to taxpayers would now be eliminated to zero; and that out-of-province travel was in the order of 200,000 a year to try to sell the system around the world. Nobody except the former Finance minister, Janice MacKinnon. Nobody except her. She, Mr. Speaker, she warned the government about how out of control ISC is.

And so the question is to the minister is this, simply and plainly: why in the world did he ignore the good advice of the former minister of Finance and let ISC get so far out of control?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Mr. Speaker, I want the people of the province to know that no one is suggesting that the land titles system didn't need to be computerized, and that has been done. And I want the people of the province to know that that project came within 5 per cent of budget, Mr. Speaker. And that information comes from the Provincial Auditor. And the opposition can laugh, but that information comes from the Provincial Auditor.

And I also want the people of the province to know that the system is working, Mr. Speaker. It is a state-of-the-art system that is getting the transfers through in about three days and lately about one day turnaround, Mr. Speaker, because they are good and dedicated people working at that system who are doing a good job, Mr. Speaker.

And this is simply another example of the opposition trying to discredit the men and women in this province who work for Crown corporations and provide good service, Mr. Speaker, because they have one ultimate objective and that is to sell off the public assets, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, well, Mr. Speaker, it's no great accomplishment to come within 5 per cent of the budget when you keep increasing the budget, Mr. Speaker. Even the NDP can do that, Mr. Speaker. I thought the Premier would have taken the opportunity over the weekend or sooner to read Janice MacKinnon's book. It's very informative when it comes to the Information Services Corporation because Ms. MacKinnon says she never really supported the Premier and the government's decision to expand ISC that far beyond its mandate. That's where they got into all the trouble.

Why, Mr. Speaker? Well because there was no business plan other than that which Frank Hart doodled on the back of a napkin maybe, Mr. Speaker. And that meant there were serious potential for ISC to lose millions of taxpayers' dollars.

Mr. Speaker, Janice MacKinnon was right. Will the Premier admit, will the Premier today admit that Janice MacKinnon and the Saskatchewan Party were right, that the NDP were wrong? Will the Premier stand in this House and apologize for this \$107 million disaster to the taxpayers of Saskatchewan?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

(14:15)

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Mr. Speaker, what that member is saying is absolutely false. Mr. Speaker, I am quoting from the Provincial Auditor in the special report that that member asked for. First the member made the same kind of allegations he's making today. The auditor's note, Mr. Speaker, at page 2-13 of the report, and I'm quoting:

... this level of variance (in the costs) for a complex project involving substantial technology and major changes in policies ... (etc.) is low in comparison to similar technology projects of this size.

What the Provincial Auditor said, Mr. Speaker, in response to those allegations ... And they asked for a report. A special report was done. The auditor said that the project was well close to budget, only a 5 per cent variance. And the auditor said the cost was 60 million and yet, Mr. Speaker, we see this kind of allegation repeated again today when the Provincial Auditor has said it is false, Mr. Speaker. And that is shameful, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!



**Comments by Former Finance Minister**

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Janice MacKinnon's book is now officially, officially out and it couldn't be more timely, Mr. Speaker. Things like ISC and Coachman Insurance, these are exactly the kinds of bad investments she wanted to stop. But the Premier wouldn't let her.

Mr. Speaker, this is what Janice MacKinnon said about CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan), and I quote, Mr. Speaker:

My goal was . . . to move out some of the wheeler-dealers who had lost their sense of accountability to cabinet and caucus, and to try one last bold stroke to move the government out of making direct investment in companies.

Mr. Speaker, why didn't the NDP listen to this advice?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Melnychuk:** — Mr. Speaker, we all recognize that Janice MacKinnon was a former member of this government and a former member of this cabinet. And she sat around the cabinet table and the Treasury Board when many of these decisions that are being talked about today were made, and fully concurred with those decisions, Mr. Speaker.

And the reality of the day, that they don't want to dwell on the good news of the budget today, they want to dwell in the past. They don't want to talk about the \$2.5 billion we're putting into health care this year, Mr. Speaker. They don't want to talk about the record \$1.2 billion we're putting into education this year, Mr. Speaker. And they certainly don't want to talk about the \$650 million in capital investment that the Crowns are putting into the province this year. They don't want to talk about that because that good news is too good for those doom and gloomers over there, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure which cabinet meeting the Finance minister was attending, but I want to read to the minister and to this House the quotations directly from Janice MacKinnon. Here's what she said about ISC. She said, and I quote:

A new Crown corporation, ISC, was created to automate the government's land titles system but it soon produced a vague business plan to move into other information technology areas in direct competition with many small and struggling private companies. To make matters worse, there were cost overruns and the need for more injections of government cash that I had always considered ill-conceived.

So those are the real words of Janice MacKinnon, probably also said at the cabinet meeting, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, why didn't the NDP listen to Janice MacKinnon? Why did they blow over \$100 million setting up a land titles system that still doesn't work properly?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, once again we have the opposition getting up and saying the system cost \$100 million, when the Provincial Auditor has already investigated and said it cost \$60 million. That's what we have in this House, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to say to the member opposite and I want to say to the people of this province that I, as minister in charge of ISC, and the president of ISC, Mark MacLeod, held a news conference some time ago — I think the member from Swift Current was there — where we laid out the cost of the system which had been audited by the Provincial Auditor. And we said, Mr. Speaker, that our objective was not to provide other services outside of Saskatchewan — that we had realized that the objective of the ISC should be to provide good service to people within Saskatchewan, that that's what we were going to do.

And we have been working diligently, Mr. Speaker, to do just that and the members opposite should be very pleased because that system is working. And since the beginning of this year, the average turnaround time for a title to go through the land titles system is three days where it used to be a month, Mr. Speaker, and that's progress.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, let's continue to look at the things that Janice MacKinnon slams. Let me see. She slams the investment in ISC. She slams the NDP investment in ethanol. She slams the NDP's investment in SPUDCO. And then, Mr. Speaker, then she asks the following question, and I quote from her book:

Why were we investing time, energy, and taxpayers' dollars returning to the 1970s view that governments can use economic engineering to kick-start the economy? Why were we not focusing our efforts and dollars on the critical jobs . . . government needed to do effectively . . . education . . . health care . . . and infrastructure . . . The government seemed to be reverting to the patterns of the past more than addressing the challenges of the future.

Mr. Speaker, why does the NDP continue to cling to these failing economic policies when all the evidence, including the words of Janice MacKinnon, are telling them it simply doesn't work?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — . . . apparently has not read Ms. MacKinnon's book very thoroughly because I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, what exactly it is that she slams. She slams the right-wing extreme mentality represented by that party that governed this province during the decade of the '80s that brought this province to the very brink of bankruptcy. That's what she slams, Mr. Speaker.

And he wants to stand . . . The Finance critic over there wants to stand and talk about failed economic, failed economic policies. Mr. Speaker, failed economic policy, not on your life

— 11,400 new jobs under this economic policy.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Leadership, leadership, Mr. Speaker, in the ethanol industry. That's developing the economy.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, record housing starts, record new housing starts in this province.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — That's the economic policy. The failed economic policy we witnessed in the 1980s, and it is replicated by the ladies and gentlemen across this House.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — Order, please. Order, please. Why is the member on his feet?

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On a point of order.

#### POINT OF ORDER

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of order, Beauchesne's rule no. 489, page 186. It deals with the words that are allowable for use in the Assembly, and how they're words . . .

The Minister of Justice, Mr. Speaker, used the words as he pointed to the member from Swift Current and said, that member is misleading the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Clearly under Beauchesne's it says the words that are prohibited — misleading the public. Mr. Speaker, the public and the people of Saskatchewan are the same.

I ask that the minister rise in his place, retract those statements, and apologize unequivocally, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to respond to the point of order raised by the Sask Party House Leader.

Mr. Speaker, this . . . to put it plain and simple, this House is all about debate. And there will be frequently, frequently differences of views, Mr. Speaker, from points of views of members of this House and sometimes they get pretty passionate as they did today.

Mr. Speaker, I think the Minister of Justice made it very clear that there was a distinct difference between the perspective being represented by the member for Swift Current regarding the cost related to ISC and the auditor's amount represented by the auditor, and that he was of the view that there was a distinct difference in view about the cost.

I notice, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of Justice specifically

did not, the Minister of Justice specifically did not use . . . refer to the member for Swift Current as intentionally misleading, which would be a violation, which would clearly be a violation of the rules of the House in debate, Mr. Speaker.

I do make the point of view the debate was passionate, there was a difference in point of view, but the member . . . for the minister for Justice, debate was clearly within order and I would ask that you would find it the same.

**The Speaker:** — Order, please. Members of the Assembly, the member for Cannington was quite accurate in his representation of what was said in the House. I did hear it quite clearly at the time . . . Order.

The protocol that the Speaker in this House has used is to distinguish between when a member has said that people have been misled or when members have been allegedly intentionally misled.

There have been many times over the past two years that the word misled has been used. And because of the protocol that was established, which is that there wasn't any intent mentioned or alleged in the statement, the Speaker has continuously not ruled on that word being abused in that sense. Order, please.

Now I will review this with the House leaders, and if the House leaders agree upon it at a future time that any time the word misled is used that the Speaker should call it, I could easily adjust to that, it would not be a difficult thing. But at this stage the point of order is not well taken.

Why is the member on his feet?

**Mr. Hermanson:** — With leave, to introduce guests please, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

**The Speaker:** — Order.

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce a Member of Parliament to the Assembly, Ms. Carol Skelton, the Member of Parliament for Saskatoon Rosetown-Biggar.

I have the privilege of being Ms. Skelton's MLA, unfortunately she does not have the responsibility of being my Member of Parliament. But we do want to welcome her to the Assembly today. I have a hunch she's in Regina visiting grandchildren, but I'm not sure. We welcome you to our Assembly and hope you're enjoying it. Thank you.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — Why is the member from Regina Dewdney on his feet?

**Mr. Yates:** — With leave, to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce through you and . . . to you and through you to all members of the House, two friends of mine sitting in the government gallery.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Bob Bymoer and his wife Gail, good, long-term friends of mine and I hope all members join me in welcoming them here today.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

(14:30)

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### WRITTEN QUESTIONS

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased today to stand on behalf of the government and table written responses to questions no. 81 through 85 inclusive.

**The Speaker:** — Responses for questions 81 to 85 have been submitted.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased today to stand on behalf of the government and convert for debates returnable questions no. 86 through 128 inclusive.

**The Speaker:** — Questions 86 to 126 . . . 128, to 128 have been converted to orders for return debatable.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

### SECOND READINGS

#### Bill No. 9 — The Agricultural Implements Amendment Act, 2003

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Thank you very much. Earlier this day, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to introduce some folks who were involved in the consultation around The Agricultural Implements Act, Mr. Speaker, and I'm very pleased to have had the co-operation of all the industry in bringing this Act to its fruition today, Mr. Speaker.

At the end of my remarks, I will move second reading of the amendments of The Agricultural Implements Act.

The Act, which was initially passed in 1968 and last updated in 1979, is clearly in need of amendment. The Act needs to be updated to do a number of things, Mr. Speaker. It needs to reflect the current market in agricultural implements; it needs to maintain and improve protection for farmers; it needs to balance the rights and responsibilities between farmers, implement dealers, and manufacturers; and it needs to make the Saskatchewan legislation similar to laws of other Prairie provinces.

In doing so, Mr. Speaker, these amendments are directly a result of a series of consultations, of which I've talked about earlier, with key stakeholders who have worked with the government to improve and strengthen The Agricultural Implements Act. Those stakeholders provided their expertise and thoughtful

advice; they spoke with us, Mr. Speaker, and we listened. Today, we act with the introduction of the amendments.

Mr. Speaker, in consultation over the past 18 months we concluded our conversations with the Saskatchewan Agricultural Implements Board, the Agricultural Manufacturers of Canada, PIMA, the Canada West Implement Dealers Association, the Canadian Farm & Industrial Implement Institute, the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan, and finally, financial institutions and other agricultural groups.

The Saskatchewan Agricultural Implements Board, which includes members from PIMA and CWEDA (Canada West Equipment Dealers Association), achieved the consensus of changes that have been incorporated into this legislation. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to share some of those changes with members of this Assembly today.

Provisions of The Agricultural Implements Act now will apply to leases as well as sales. Amendments will clearly allow financial institutions such as the credit unions, the banks, and the Farm Credit Corporation Canada to provide farm implement leases, while at the same time ensuring that warranty and other rights of producers are protected. This provides more options for farmers to lease agricultural equipment.

Warranty provisions now will apply from date of first use of the agricultural implement rather than on the date of delivery. This provision makes Saskatchewan laws consistent with both Alberta and Manitoba.

Amendments will allow the Saskatchewan Agricultural Implements Board to establish a penalty fee under certain conditions such as repeated offences, failure to attend hearings without adequate excuses, or intention disregarding the warranty and the Acts.

Another large, large change deletes the requirement for the implement dealers to change prices as a set of lists . . . list provided to the Agricultural Implements Board. No other province has such a requirement.

The 72-hour time frame for providing emergency repair parts now will also include Saturdays. The requirement for a manufacturer to buy back unused parts and equipment when an implement dealer closes is another area of the Act that's being updated.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to reiterate that these changes were developed through the consultation process with groups including farmers, implement manufacturers, and implement dealers. The changes represent consensus on what the 2003 agricultural implement Act should look like.

Mr. Speaker, we believe that these changes will have a positive impact on agriculture, on rural Saskatchewan, and on the provincial economy for years to come. Therefore this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, I would move that the amendments to The Agricultural Implements Act be read a second time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, this is a fairly extensive Bill, dealing with a very important segment of the agricultural industry that we have in Saskatchewan — that dealing with implement manufacturers, dealers, Mr. Speaker, and the farmers that use those implements.

They're all a part of this particular Act, Mr. Speaker. They are all covered under the protection provisions and the responsibilities that each and every one of them has to play in the entire system, Mr. Speaker — from the manufacturer, the sale and purchase, Mr. Speaker, including in that as well are the financial institutions which bear some of the responsibility for financing, Mr. Speaker, particularly on the leasing side which is a new area, Mr. Speaker, dealing under this Act.

There are, I'm sure, going to be questions from people on both sides, Mr. Speaker — from the people who are doing the leasing and from the people who are putting the leases out, Mr. Speaker — on just how this Act is going to impact on them at the local level.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that the financial institutions — the banks, the Credit Union Central — has worked through these themselves to their own satisfaction, but at the local level how are the branch managers, how are the credit union managers going to be affected, Mr. Speaker?

And I think there are a number of issues like that that still need to be pursued just to determine, Mr. Speaker, how this is all going to work — how it's going to affect the dealers that are going into the business, how it's going to affect the dealers that are exiting the businesses, Mr. Speaker. And what happens with the products that they have sitting on their lots? Who has the responsibility for those, Mr. Speaker?

That's all part of this Bill and I think it needs time for the public, for all of the stakeholders in this to digest this, to see if it's exactly what they were asking for, Mr. Speaker. Therefore at this time I would move that we adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

### **Bill No. 11 — The Municipal Employees' Pension Amendment Act, 2003**

**Hon. Mr. Melnychuk:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Municipal Employees' Pension Amendment Act, 2003.

It is necessary to amend the Municipal Employees' Pension Plan to improve benefits to plan members and to create a new structure and composition for the Municipal Employees' Pension Commission.

Mr. Speaker, based upon consultations with employers and members in the education sector, the Municipal Employees' Pension Commission is recommending the crediting of pensionable service on a 10-month year for plan members who are employed in the education sector and have their employment tied to the academic year.

The members' pensionable service will be pro-rated based on a 10-month year where the member works a portion of an academic year. The proposed changes will treat term employees employed on an academic year more equitably, Mr. Speaker.

On application to the commission, and with the commission's approval, all members who are contributing to the pension plan on the date this amendment comes into effect will retroactively receive credit of pensionable service if they normally work in a 10-month academic position.

Mr. Speaker, it is desirable to restructure the composition of the Municipal Employees' Pension Commission based upon the outcomes of consultations with stakeholders of the pension plan. The intent, Mr. Speaker, is to maintain fair and equal representation between employees and employers on the commission.

Mr. Speaker, upon termination of employment or retirement, a calculation is performed by the pension plan to determine if the member has paid for 50 per cent of their pension benefit. The amount by which the member's contributions with interest exceed half the value of the pension is known as excess contributions.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if the member has excess contributions at retirement, the member may receive the excess contributions in cash less income tax or use the excess contributions to enhance his or her pension benefit. This amendment allows the pension plan to use the excess contributions to enhance the member's pension where the member has not chosen to exercise one of the above options within 120 days of being informed of them.

Prior to the payment of the pension benefit, the member may transfer the value of the pension out of the plan to a financial institution of personal preference, Mr. Speaker.

I hereby move second reading of The Municipal Employees' Pension Amendment Act.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege to speak to Bill No. 11, An Act to amend The Municipal Employees' Pension Act.

Listening to the minister and having a chance to briefly go through the Bill, it looks like there are some changes here that are probably going in the right direction. They're not significant changes but certainly improving the benefits for different people that are covered under this pension plan. The minister talked about the improvement of benefits for the teachers because they are on a 10-month schedule as opposed to a 12. And pro-rating that over the 12 months would seem to make sense and would be a benefit to them.

I think there is always a . . . maybe a question or an issue when we look at The Municipal Employees' Pension Act and we look at the whole issue around . . . And I know this Act covers more than just municipal employees per se, but when you're changing some of the benefit structure in the packages that are offered, how does that affect then the municipalities themselves? Will it have some effect on some of the municipalities?

This Act doesn't just cover municipal employees as we would

think of municipal employees. But as the minister has spoke, it talks about the teachers, the School Trustees Association — these are some of the areas that it would affect — SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association), urban municipalities, school trustees, rural municipalities, administrators, and other school board officials.

So this Bill, although it's not a real lengthy Bill and looks like it's moving in the right direction, there are a number of groups that it will affect. And especially these groups need to and, as the minister has probably mentioned, have been talked to and it's probably driven from those groups themselves.

But, Mr. Speaker, we would like to have an opportunity to talk to not only the people that it's going to affect directly, but some of the people that it's going to affect indirectly, some of the managers of these . . . whether it's municipalities or the school trustees, that type of thing, Mr. Speaker. So at this time we'd move to adjourn debate until we are able to consult a little bit further.

Debate adjourned.

#### **Bill No. 15 — The Saskatchewan Insurance Amendment Act, 2003**

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of The Saskatchewan Insurance Amendment Act, 2003. This Bill is the result of this government's decision to review and modernize Saskatchewan's financial services legislation. The changes outlined in the Bill are part of an ongoing process to update the legislation. A number of the provisions are aimed at either removing unnecessary requirements or updating outdated requirements. In addition, the proposed amendments harmonize Saskatchewan's legislation with the legislation of other provinces.

The first amendment eliminates the deposit requirements for insurers. In the existing legislation, certain classes of insurers are required to deposit securities with the minister in the amounts of \$25,000 or \$50,000 as a condition of obtaining a licence. The original purpose of the deposit was to serve as security for the payment of claims against the insurer in the event the insurer became insolvent or unable to pay claims.

Today, solvency regulation of insurers is more effectively achieved in other ways such as liquidity and capital adequacy requirements. A number of other provinces have repealed their deposit provisions and there has been support for the repeal of these sections by stakeholders in Saskatchewan as well.

Mr. Speaker, today's Bill also updates and revises the annual filing requirements for insurers. For example, the amendments harmonize the annual provincial filing deadlines with the deadlines of the federal regulator. In addition, the proposed amendments allow federal insurers to make — excuse me, Mr. Speaker — to make one filing with the federal regulator instead of having to file a separate annual return in Saskatchewan.

(14:45)

The federal regulator is then able to use electronic means to

forward the relevant parts of the annual return on to the Saskatchewan Superintendent of Insurance. Stakeholders support these amendments as they reduce overlapping filing requirements.

The amendments also provide an exemption from the Act for mutual benefit societies. Mutual benefit societies are organizations that offer funeral benefits not exceeding \$400 or sickness, accident, and disability benefits not exceeding \$12 per week. Any organization offering benefits in excess of these stipulated amounts would be required to be licensed as another class of insurer and would have to meet the requirements of the Act. These amendments are consistent with the approach taken in other provinces.

The Bill also proposes changes in the area of fraternal societies. A fraternal society provides life or accident and sickness insurance to its members. It may offer death benefits that do not exceed \$10,000. The amendments provide that no new provincial or extra-provincial entities may obtain a licence as a fraternal society but they allow federal fraternal societies and the two existing provincial fraternal societies to continue to be licensed.

Participation in fraternal societies is on the decline and it is anticipated that there will not be any new organizations wishing to offer these limited benefits to their members. In terms of consumer protection the Bill includes disclosure requirements for insurance agents that place insurance with unlicensed insurers. Under the existing legislation unlicensed insurers are allowed to transact insurance in Saskatchewan in very limited circumstances to ensure reasonable access to insurance. However, there is some concern about consumers entering into contracts of insurance with unlicensed insurers as claims may not be paid.

Accordingly, a proper balance must be reached between consumer protection and the accessibility to insurers. These amendments achieve this balance. They allow unlicensed insurers to sell insurance in Saskatchewan in limited situations, but require agents to disclose the risks associated with dealing with unlicensed insurers to consumers. This ensures that consumers are informed of the risks before purchasing insurance.

Further amendments, Mr. Speaker, include moving the classes of insurance from the Act to the regulations, and moving the details regarding the guarantee fund, and reserve fund requirements for reciprocal insurance exchanges, to the regulations.

In addition a number of outdated requirements have been removed in the area of fraternal societies, and changes have been made to the liquidation provisions to specify that The Companies Winding Up Act does not apply to all provincial insurers in the case of liquidation.

Mr. Speaker, in reviewing this legislation we have consulted with all licensed insurers, other provincial regulators, industry groups, and consumers. The results of the consultations have been positive as they show that there is broad industry support for the changes.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Insurance Act.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again it's a privilege to enter the discussion . . . debate on Bill No. 15, An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Insurance Act.

The minister spoke of a number of changes that will be taking place when this Bill passes, if this Bill passes — a number of changes such as removing some unnecessary provisions which, you know, I think if there's provisions in place . . . We hear over and over again, not only from insurance companies but other companies where it seems like they have to go through a lot of necessary . . . unnecessary hoops. And there are a number of provisions they have to meet that really they question are they necessarily needed.

The minister talks about really what this does, at the start of the Bill anyways, cleaning up the Act, and removing some and discarding some provisions that are no longer necessary.

He also spoke about — it was interesting — the 25,000 to the \$50,000, and he didn't really call it a bond, but that is paid to the minister in case there are some problems with payment of insurance. And he's saying that in case of solvency, there's a better way of handling things. And he quoted a couple of examples where insurance companies could handle it a little differently than the process that's in place now.

I guess we'd have some questions in making sure that the ways that the minister had explained that insurance companies will be handling this issue do make sense and are better for the industry. But not only better for the industry, better for the person that has purchased insurance and has a claim, and if by some chance the company has had trouble that they will get paid out, Mr. Speaker.

And so that . . . Although the minister talks about a couple of different ways, until I get my mind around how that all works, Mr. Speaker, we'd certainly have some questions on into the future.

Although it talks also again about annual filing — provincial and federal — and harmonizing those dates, that makes perfect sense to me. Again we'd like to talk to the insurance companies and make sure that that was what they would want, although I could really question why they wouldn't want the harmonization of that so that it's done in one process as opposed to at different time frames.

The minister spoke that most of the stakeholders are in favour of the changes being made. The proposed changes in the fraternal society — I found that kind of interesting. I don't have a whole lot of background in any of that but I'd be interested in finding out how those proposed changes work with those groups and those societies and if it is really the direction that they want to see it . . . this Bill go.

The one other area that the minister talked about was unlicensed insurers and selling insurance. And he talks about the Bill making sure that in this process, when there's some unlicensed insurers insuring, that the person that's purchasing insurance is properly informed, that he knows the consequences of this . . .

dealing with an unlicensed insurer. Because, I mean, it's all fine and dandy as long as they have the proper information and that's certainly what this Bill, I believe, is moving towards, is making sure they have the proper information before they enter into contracts with unlicensed insurers, Mr. Speaker.

So there are a number of changes in this Bill that will be impacting the insurance business in a number of different levels that the minister spoke on and I've just had a chance to listen to and read through.

I think until we have the opportunity to consult with not only the insurance companies but the people that are purchasing insurance and making sure that it's going in the right direction for them . . . I think it's far too often . . . I know in different situations that I've been involved in, sometimes people really don't know the insurance that they have and all the ins and outs and idiosyncrasies of an insurance policy until they have a claim and they're put in that position. And unfortunately sometimes we're maybe not covered like we thought we were covered or whatever.

So any time you're dealing with the Insurance Act and people that are reliant on buying insurance to be covered properly, Mr. Speaker, if we're looking at changes in this Act we had better make sure that the changes are welcome both by the insurance companies and by the people that are buying insurance.

So, Mr. Speaker, until that is done and the proper consultation is done from our side of this House, Mr. Speaker, I'd move that we would adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

#### **Bill No. 16 — The Coroners Amendment Act, 2003**

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of The Coroners Amendment Act, 2003.

Mr. Speaker, The Coroners Act, 1999 provides a framework for the coroners system. That system is designed to ensure that unnatural deaths will be investigated to determine the facts surrounding the death, and to make recommendations to avoid preventable deaths in the future, and to maintain public confidence that deaths that occur in unusual circumstances are examined.

The legislation sets out the rules respecting which deaths must be reported, how investigations of the circumstances surrounding the death will occur, and the rules respecting inquests.

One of the amendments will eliminate the requirement for a mandatory inquest where a person in custody has died from natural causes. In recent years, inmates with terminal illnesses have been transferred to the federal Regional Psychiatric Centre in Saskatoon because of the availability of care for the terminally ill at that institution. In these cases, Mr. Speaker, we know what the cause of death is. It is known at the time the person is admitted that the person is dying and will likely die of their illness, and extensive documentation is maintained with respect to the person's health problem.

In July 2002, the jury in a coroner's inquest respecting the death of a terminally ill inmate recommended that an inquest not be held in cases of natural death of persons in custody. Inquests into such deaths involve significant expense and rarely produce meaningful recommendations because we already know, Mr. Speaker, that the person was transferred to the institution because they were terminally ill and dying. The amendment leaves the holding of an inquest into the natural death of an inmate to the discretion of the Chief Coroner.

Another amendment, Mr. Speaker, will allow coroners to seize bodily fluids taken from the decedent prior to his or her death, where these fluids may assist in determining the cause of death.

There have been cases where individuals are seriously injured and blood samples are taken at the time of admission to the hospital. The individual subsequently dies and these earlier blood samples are relevant to the coroners' investigations. Hospitals are reluctant to provide these samples to coroners without specific authority in the legislation. The proposed amendment clarifies this authority.

Other minor amendments allow coroners to obtain photocopies of records and confirm that reference to oral testimony in an inquest includes evidence by a telephone conference call. These amendments facilitate the investigative and hearing processes.

The proposed amendments recognize the coroners' investigations and inquests should be thorough, efficient, and effective and are designed to achieve these objectives. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move second reading of An Act to amend The Coroners Act, 1999.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to be able to speak on Bill No. 16, An Act to amend The Coroners Act, 1999.

As the minister outlined, it relates to inmates, deaths of inmates that are considered or deemed that a death from natural causes is one of the areas of concern, and in that case that an inquest would not have to be held in those cases where an inmate died from natural causes.

It's very important, though, that we keep in mind that not only with inmates in correctional institutions but that all people that have passed away, that investigations are done and the cause of death is determined. And we do not want to leave any holes in the Act or in the justice system that would allow a possible unnatural death to not be investigated and a possible murder or something like that would take place where the cause of death would not be determined.

The Minister of Justice also went on to talk about some other, basically housekeeping duties that this Bill would straighten out concerning access to body fluids that may be asked for by the coroner in case of a death in a hospital, and related information from hospital records so that the coroner could have the information concerning the death of a patient or a citizen. And also it clarifies that a coroner may make copies of relevant documents instead of having to have the originals in place, and so on and so forth. It seems like that it's just bringing the Act up to date.

(15:00)

It also goes on to talk about relief from jury service and also concerning testimony from witnesses that could be done over the phone. This is a very important . . . an Act and we certainly would like to speak to all the stakeholders and people in the law enforcement area and the coroners of Saskatchewan and . . . just to get their view on whether these changes are necessary and to improve how their work will be done in the future, and really want to make sure that there are no slip-ups or holes left in the justice system that things may fall through.

So at this time we'd like to take this back to the people of Saskatchewan and discuss with individual groups concerning this Bill. And at this time I'd like to move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

### **Bill No. 17 — The Land Surveys Amendment Act, 2003**

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of The Land Surveys Amendment Act, 2003.

The Land Surveys Act, 2000 was passed in part to modernize the rules respecting surveying of provincial land and in part to facilitate the implementation of the new LAND (Land Titles Automated Network Development) system. The Act was proclaimed in June 2001 and has been in operation across the province since August 2002.

In the last two years ongoing consultations with stakeholders have led to some suggestions for improvements. The proposed amendments will: firstly, provide certainty with the definition of the expression, legal description; secondly, provide flexibility in requiring a surveyor to conduct a field inspection on a survey that is more than two years old; and thirdly, enhance the provincial survey system by requiring surveyors to re-establish lost monuments in some situations.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to move second reading of An Act to amend The Land Surveys Act, 2000.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, dealing with land surveys and the land survey system in Saskatchewan is certainly full of pratfalls.

Mr. Speaker, we've seen the new government's ISC attempt to register land and deal with legal descriptions, Mr. Speaker, and hopefully this piece of legislation will help clarify the legal descriptions of the land.

But one of the big issues, Mr. Speaker, on the legal descriptions of land is determining who the owner is, Mr. Speaker. Certainly the new \$107 million system that they have in Moose Jaw can't do it, Mr. Speaker.

I was just listening to Gormley over the weekend and somebody is phoning in there complaining because every Jim Smith in the province is getting caveats put against his property because the new system can't determine who owns the piece of land in question, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, while the government

may be providing a better definition for the term, legal description of the land, they've got to do a heck of a lot better job of getting the legal description of the owners, Mr. Speaker. Certainly much more so than they have.

You know, Mr. Speaker, under the old system it actually worked; you could tell who owned it. You got the legal description of the property and you had everything on one piece of paper detailing the requirements of that land, any caveats and liens.

But, Mr. Speaker, under this new system you get reams and reams and reams of paper and it's still wrong, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it also deals with the replacement of lost monuments. Over the last hundred years, Mr. Speaker, that has been a . . . there's been a major loss of monuments when it comes to surveying. What they were, Mr. Speaker, in most cases, is a long steel rod that was driven into the ground at the northeast corner of the section and it detailed the legal land description at that time — the section, township, range where this was at. And a lot of these have disappeared, Mr. Speaker.

There was a mound that was dug by the original surveyors and the stake was placed in the centre of that. Those have been worked over; they have been pulled out. A number of people look at them as nice souvenirs to have, Mr. Speaker. But what it does is when you come now to do a survey, you don't have the original marker to make the determination from and it makes it a lot more difficult.

I'm sure that with the new, modern technology that does work, Mr. Speaker — as opposed to the government's land registry system — new technology such as GPSs (Global Positioning System) can make that determination very accurately, Mr. Speaker. And so that helps a lot when it comes to doing the land surveys, Mr. Speaker.

But the government is certainly falling way behind when it comes to providing the ownership description. So hopefully they can get the terms, a legal description, done correctly and that it works properly, Mr. Speaker.

But we're going to have to take some time to check this over to see if the government has their act together or not on this particular issue, because they have certainly failed when it comes to the whole land registry system recording in this province. So, Mr. Speaker, I would move that we adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

## COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

### General Revenue Fund Northern Affairs Vote 75

#### Subvote (NA01)

**The Chair:** — First I would like to recognize the minister to introduce his officials.

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. To my immediate right is Alan Parkinson, the deputy minister of Northern Affairs, and directly behind me is Cheryl Stecyk who's the business affairs and human resources manager.

**Mr. Wiberg:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, welcome this afternoon and to your officials. It'll be a pleasure to be able to spend an afternoon here being able to discuss the affairs that go on in northern Saskatchewan. And certainly we know that in northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Minister, there are many challenges in front of everyone in regards to economic opportunity, to quality job placement, and certainly it's incumbent upon all of us to be able to provide the type of open atmosphere, Mr. Minister, that the people of northern Saskatchewan will feel a welcome part of the entire province.

Mr. Minister, I wonder if we may start out with kind of a generalization of the Department of Northern Affairs, just what all the department is involved in so that the people of Saskatchewan who are following along may have an opportunity, Mr. Minister, to be able to keep up, Mr. Minister, with the affairs of the Department of Northern Affairs.

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Chair. First of all, the mandate of the office is to promote the social and economic development of northern Saskatchewan communities, in partnership with the federal government and northern communities, by supporting regional development and development of businesses and industries and coordinating government activities in the northern administration district of Saskatchewan.

And some of our key focus areas, for the member's information, is on economic development, business advisory services, co-op development, Northern Development Fund, the Northern Development Agreement, and the community sub-regional economic development planning.

On resource and industry development we do mineral surface lease administration, northern mines monitoring secretariat, the environmental quality committees. We're the lead on the northern abandoned mines reclamation, northern forest products in timber and non-timber efforts, tourism planning partnership with Tourism Saskatchewan, and on broad policy coordination with the northern strategy, the northern accord, the Northern Development Board, and we're key participants on other policy development. And the example I'd use in this case is the Métis and off-reserve strategy.

So, clearly, I think with the direction of our mandate and our key focus areas that we keep a fairly busy and tight schedule.

**Mr. Wiberg:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, to the minister, it's quite a pleasure this year. That's probably the briefest briefing I've ever had from a minister on Northern Affairs. Certainly in the past we've been used to 20-minute preambles and hopefully we can get some very clear direction in the future questioning here this afternoon, Mr. Minister, as we expand on many of the areas that you talked about.

Mr. Minister, I want to at first stay within the parameters of the actual budgeting for the department because, Mr. Minister, I



noticed that under the full-time staff complement, that there is going to be a half-time increase in the department, going from 35.1 to 35.6, and yet I notice in administration that there is a significant reduction in staff salaries.

(15:15)

So I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, if you'd be able to explain to the House this afternoon how it is that you're going to be able to increase staffing in your department and yet be able to have such a significant reduction of over \$200,000, Mr. Minister, in your salaries?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much for the question. First of all, I'd say . . . I was hoping to be able to say, well that's because we have a pretty good Northern Affairs minister. But obviously what I'll point out is that the reason why you have a staff salary that's, you know, the staff numbers that's higher and the staff costs that are lower on the estimates, is you're looking at the administration section and we have other staff that are in programs, other staff that are in support roles.

So clearly I think the staff costs have gone up this year, the staff complement stays the same, and the extra dollars of course are all being used for staff costs overall. So clearly I think those costs you're looking at, if I'm correct, clearly are just for the administrative purposes. There's other staff salaries that are in programs and support work.

**Mr. Wiberg:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I guess we're trying to clearly understand here on this side of the House and that what has really happened then, is that there's been a shuffling of the staff out of administration into more project-specific roles in regards to the department in trying to establish in the North some continuity in the delivery of programs.

Mr. Minister, I want to stay again . . . We'll just stay on this entire page here for several minutes. I notice that there are some significant changes in the northern strategy and of course, I guess we're going to be confused on this side of the House, Mr. Minister. And you're going to need to provide some very clear direction here that in the year 2003-2004, this significant increase of \$300,000 for the northern strategy, the bulk of which is going for supplies and other payments is why, since 1996, you've had to have such a significant increase this year for northern strategy?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much for the question. Clearly, I think a lot of folks in the North might say well \$300,000 is a nice amount of money, but of course a lot of effort is required in the North. But that's the increase that we have in reference to some of the work that we have to do when it comes to the Northern Development Agreement.

And as you know, the Northern Development Agreement is something that I've been working with the federal government on for a number of years and that agreement has been signed and we're moving forward. So the initial dollars are to help complement some of the work we're doing under that agreement.

**Mr. Wiberg:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. In your response you talked about the federal agreement that you struck in regards to

the northern strategy. Is this increase, this dramatic increase, then to be accounted by not a sheer expenditure by the department but rather because of funding that had come from the federal government, specifically for the northern strategy?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. If I take a few minutes here just to explain to the member opposite the process of the Northern Development Agreement and how we wrote . . . we arrived at that. And what we signed last fall, or this past year, was an agreement between the federal and provincial governments and this agreement was the Northern Development Agreement.

And there's two components to what we signed with the federal government. One is the Northern Development Accord, which was kind of an umbrella agreement, and the specific Northern Development Agreement is one component under the umbrella agreement if you will.

And we hope to accomplish other agreements with the federal government whether it's mines cleanup or whether it's a specific training program. So at the end of the day you have a federal-provincial accord, and under the accord you have seven or eight or nine or ten agreements. That's what we hope to eventually achieve and accomplish with the federal government because we feel the federal government's got to do their part in northern Saskatchewan to help move along things like infrastructure needs, social development, economic strategies, so on and so forth.

So as a province we've engaged the federal government, we've signed the accord, and under the accord we have one agreement in place and this is the Northern Development Agreement. And in that agreement we have a five-year time frame in which we will spend \$20 million towards economic development strategies. And of that \$20 million, 10 million comes from the province and 10 million comes from the feds, and that's roughly at a rate of \$4 million per year. And those dollars are directed to five categories.

And this is where I think, you know, to be . . . to draw a very clear picture is where we as a province have positioned northern Saskatchewan as an area where we want to create jobs and have the economy move forward. And that's exactly what the Northern Development Agreement talks about.

So again, to very quickly wrap up, we've signed an umbrella agreement called the accord. And under the accord we have a number of component agreements that we're trying to arrive at. So far we've had success at one, and that's the Northern Development Agreement, where we each contribute \$10 million over five years, for a grand total of 20 million.

**Mr. Wiberg:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. We'll keep moving along on the budget page here for Northern Affairs, on page 98.

Now under resource and economic development, this area of the budget deals with, to some degree, policy development. And I see under resource and policy development there is a more than doubling — well virtually a doubling, Mr. Minister — of that budget.

What is it that your department is trying to do here with a

virtual doubling of a budget at this time for policy development when we would have liked to think, Mr. Minister, that in the past there would have been significant policy development already done, and that we're starting to move forward with implementation of strategies rather than the development of strategies after a seven-year time frame?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much for the question. No question about it that one of the things that we want to do is we want to move forward on implementing some northern-based solutions.

We think that northerners have — for many, many years — have been asking and have been requesting and have been demanding a share of the opportunity when it comes to northern economy. The opportunity associated with resource development, whether it be oil and gas, whether it be forestry, tourism, and so on and so forth.

So one of the questions that we have in terms of policy development is a lot of the policy should be developed and should be refined and should be in place in order for us to have a timely implementation. And what we've done there — because Northern Affairs has been reinvigorated and because Northern Affairs has been kind of the effort of trying to refocus how best we can use Northern Affairs' dollars and to again complement some of the work of the former minister — we put together a cluster, if you will, of policy and program development to look at things like regional development; to look at the Northern Development Fund operation and to look at the abandoned mines work that needs to be done.

So we've taken policy and program development under three or four different wings and put it in a cluster. So in essence there is no extra policy development people per se in the section here. But it is policy and it is program development that we've clustered all together to make for a more efficient Northern Affairs' operation.

**Mr. Wiberg:** — Mr. Minister, thank you. I understand that you want to do a lot of work in a lot of specific areas but I'm not sure, Mr. Minister, that you clearly defined why you need such a significant increase in budget if you're not putting it into human resources. All these areas need to be looked at. You're indicating you know there's the abandoned mines, and tourism, forestry, oil and gas. Just pure economic development certainly in northern Saskatchewan.

You're going to need . . . I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, if you could be a little more clear in your definition of why an almost 200 per cent increase in this budgetary item for Northern Affairs. If it's not going to be used for human resources, why, why would you need such a significant increase?

(15:30)

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Again just to explain very quickly and briefly, as briefly as I can explain. The situation here is that there's a number of sectors that we've identified as part of our mandate and part of our strategy to deal with northern Saskatchewan.

And what we want to do is we want to see . . . not only have the

staff work very hard, but have the staff work very smart. So we have the Northern Affairs portfolio looking at number of initiatives in forestry, a number of initiatives in northern mine monitoring. And as you know we also have the environmental quality committees that are very active in the North. And you take seven or eight of these components and seven or eight of these exercises that we're undertaking, what we want to do is have all those activities under one kind of cluster of policy and program development personnel.

Now what you see in that little spike in spending, it is not any new people; it is all the people that we have lumped together in a cluster. And it's also we've added in the abandoned mines cleanup, work that has to be undertaken as part of our effort to try and get the federal government to look at the environmental moral obligation that they have when it comes to the northern abandoned mines. And that's where we have a little bit of increase in program spending, not additional staff.

So what we're doing is we're developing a cluster of not just policy development, but program staff to become more efficient. So the increase you're seeing is not an increase in policy development, but rather a collaboration of some of the programs and policy development that we want to undertake in Northern Affairs.

So to reiterate, it is not any new people; it is just lumping in the program dollars together. And the increase in dollars is clearly related to the northern mines cleanup project that we're currently contemplating and negotiating with the federal government on.

**Mr. Wiberg:** — Mr. Minister, if you're talking about the work that's going to have to be done by your department — meeting with federal officials, travel in the North, the work that's going to have to be done around the northern mines cleanup and certainly that has . . . that's going to be a big project and needs to be taken very seriously by everyone in Saskatchewan and certainly by the feds.

But, Mr. Minister, you have two lines here that cover off the supplier and other payments. We would assume that travel expenses associated . . . other expenses associated with travel would be covered under those lines. So I don't think we've received a very clear answer for resource and policy development.

Wouldn't it not, Mr. Minister, be the type of a budget line that you would use to meet with people in northern Saskatchewan, officials in northern Saskatchewan, community leaders, interested groups in northern Saskatchewan to discuss policy development, the needs around economic development, the needs around social development in northern Saskatchewan? Wouldn't that be the more appropriate line for resource and policy development, to actually meet with the people in northern Saskatchewan to understand clearly where they see northern Saskatchewan heading when it comes to areas of social and economic development, Mr. Minister?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much for the question. One of the things that I think is very important to note, when we looked at Northern Affairs itself for the first time this year, Northern Affairs is a separate department altogether.

As the member knows opposite, prior years were a subvote under the economic development strategy because Northern Affairs was primarily an economic development-focused department.

So this year, you know I'm very proud to say that Northern Affairs is a stand-alone department. They are recognized in a separate vote. They're not a subvote to any other department.

And while that psychologically doesn't change or physically doesn't change the mandate of Northern Affairs nor does it really impact the work that's going on, it's more of a psychological achievement in the sense of saying yes, in this particular government, we recognize Northern Affairs as being a very important and vital part of our government. We're going to continue building upon Northern Affairs. We're going to look at the role and value of Northern Affairs' staff and move forward from there.

So a lot of the things in the reorganization of government — as you know, we've been undertaking that for the last several years — we want to make sure that we position Northern Affairs to be strong and independent, to be a small unit but very strong and independent and focused.

And that's why you see the jump in policy development and resource development, is that we've lumped all the staff together under that heading. We've got 35 staff that we have working in a number of other sectors, and we've lumped all the staff that looks at resource development and policy development and I believe the number there is 23.

So we have 23 staff working on a wide variety of spectrums right across the North, working on policy development and program development. And a lot of the program development of course is resource development. So that's why under the title you see resource and policy development; they do both aspects and there's a lot of coordinating going on in that particular shop.

So it's not any new people; it's really an amalgamation, if you will, under the resource development and policy development unit of Northern Affairs. As a result of Northern Affairs becoming a separate vote, that's where administratively we've entered the folks to work as a unit.

**Mr. Wiberg:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Of course we understand and certainly we picked up very quickly on budget day that Northern Affairs had become a stand-alone department after many years as a subdepartment, so to speak, of the . . . of first Economic and Co-operative Development and then last year under Industry and Resources.

So are you indicating to this House today, Mr. Minister, that this resource and policy development budget line at one time was somewhat under the purview of Industry and Resources and has been transferred in its entirety under the mandate of Northern Affairs?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much for the question. Just to be very clear here, what we've done was there was no new staff added to Northern Affairs. Northern Affairs had staff members before, and as I mentioned, we had the administrative

requirement to enter these staff under one cluster of staff personnel that looks at resource development and policy development. And this is why you see that line there indicating that that's where we clumped all the staff together.

Because Northern Affairs became a separate department we wanted to make sure that administratively we done things proper so that the Treasury Board folks would know that when it comes down to the Treasury Board process that this is the process we put in place, and they could understand it, and some of that required administrative work. So what we've done, just for the member's information, is we clustered all our resource development staff and our policy development staff under one unit — there was no new staff added; no staff were raided from other departments — and we put it under resource and policy development unit, and that's the number you see here.

Any additional dollars are program dollars and any additional program dollars are directly attributed to the abandoned mines work that Northern Affairs has been undertaking at the request, and hopefully with the collaboration, of the federal government.

**Mr. Wiberg:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. So now it's become quite clear then, the significant reduction for salaries under administration and this significant increase for resource and policy development is the actual tools that the department is using to show where the expenditures are going for your staffing complement in the department. And certainly on this side of the House we understand that now and we thank you for that, Mr. Minister.

The Northern Development Fund, I see there's a small increase in that. But, Mr. Minister, the Northern Development Fund loan loss provision — you have \$629,000 for the Northern Development Fund and \$500,000 for the loan loss provision. Now, Mr. Minister, is this rather a backdoor method that a department could use to indicate that these monies are actually being used in more of a grant form and that there's no expectation of repayment, or how is that working, Mr. Minister?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much for the question. First of all I want to point out that in northern Saskatchewan the business community of course really wants to play a very important role. And certainly from our perspective, the private sector plays a huge role in northern Saskatchewan. We have northern people, some business people, that are very active, and they look to the Northern Development Fund to try and look at ways in which they can borrow money to go forth and create jobs and create your own business opportunity and so on and so forth.

(15:45)

So when we lend money out in northern Saskatchewan to the Northern Development Fund, there is the expectation, and there is the process that repayment of loans is very, very important to us. So we're not looking at any kind of relaxing of any kind of rules. We have collateral on assets. We have collateral on equipment. We have collateral . . . personal collateral on a number of loans that people have undertaken with Northern Affairs.

So I want to reiterate and to emphasize with the member that in northern Saskatchewan and with the Northern Development Agreement, clearly I think our role is that there will always be the expectation of repayment of any loans that the province of Saskatchewan makes.

Secondly, as each year moves forward, we lend out about approximately two and a half million dollars in loans. And there are some times when the small-business community does struggle, and there are, as any other case, there are businesses that don't do well. And while we continually work with the business community — we continually push out loans, try and make sure things are moving — we do our due diligence. We explain the rules and regulations, as you understand that there are, like other sectors in other areas of the province, there's always those that simply don't make it. And this is where the loan loss provision applies.

And this year while we have more money to lend, we anticipate that the loan loss would also increase, and this of course is being complemented by our Northern Development Agreement. So as you looked at how things worked out, there's more money to be lent out and more money to be invested. So as a result of that, we do anticipate that the loan loss may increase as well.

**Mr. Wiberg:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And certainly on this side of the House we are pleased to hear that your department is going to be using due diligence. Certainly we have seen from the Minister of Crown Investments Corporation, the former minister of Industry and Resources, that due diligence hasn't been used all the time. So we're very pleased to see that your department is going to be exercising due diligence. Although I have to be honest, if you're going to have two and a half million dollars out on the books and expecting loan losses of 500,000, it is rather high. Although we need to admit on both sides of the House that economic conditions are rather severe in northern Saskatchewan at this time. So I think we need to be honest with ourselves in this case.

Mr. Minister, I want to leave the mundaneness of the budgetary items now and move on to many of these other areas that you have mentioned. And I know that from year to year there are slight changes in strategies for different areas of northern Saskatchewan, and we've talked about some of the economic conditions that need to be addressed, some of the social conditions that are going to need to be addressed.

But the biggest thing that really caught our eye this year, Mr. Minister, is that finally Northern Affairs is a stand-alone department. It is not a subvote of Industry and Resources as it was last year, or Economic Development . . . Economic and Co-operative Development as it was in its prior life.

So, Mr. Minister, I'm wondering if you could explain to the House what it is that has taken place in your government and in cabinet that the decision was made to move Northern Affairs under your leadership, to a stand-alone department as opposed to the way it was in the past under the previous minister, where there seemed to need to be someone watching over that department, as we had become accustomed to?

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

Just to point out that one of the things that I think is very important is the former minister of Northern Affairs, the member from Cumberland, was very instrumental in the reorganization of government and forwarding the idea and supporting the idea and lobbying for the idea to have a stand-alone Northern Affairs Department.

And I want to commend him for his work, and thank him for his work, because today now we're a stand-alone, and we're the benefactors of his effort. So really the credit goes to the former minister.

**Mr. Wiberg:** — Mr. Minister, you can certainly give all the credit to the former minister if you want, but I wonder if you might be able to want to maybe have an addition to your comment as to why, after all this time, it was finally done. Why the cabinet finally decided to go to a stand-alone department at this time, rather than have it done in previous years.

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Well thank you very much. I would point out obviously every few years a government needs to look at reorganizing itself, reinventing itself. And as we now have the former Department of Social Services becoming the Department of Community Services; as we've had a separate portfolio with Energy and Mines and the Department of Industry, now it's all combined for the Department of Industry and Resources.

And this is clearly one of those cases where the former minister lobbied to have no change in the mandate, an increase in the amount of money we have, but to really recognize that this psychological separation, if you will, would do a lot of good for the efficiency of government.

So clearly it coincided with every other department's redesign, if you will, phase of government services and that's all this is. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Wiberg:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Of course it has always been a concern on this side of the House that Northern Affairs was not a stand-alone department. So you're just going to have to pardon us through this next several months if we're not a little bit cynical that as we get closer to an election and that — all of a sudden — Northern Affairs becomes a stand-alone department.

But I want to switch to some of the nuts and bolts now, Mr. Minister, in regards to some of the issues that your department might have some influence in, Mr. Minister. And certainly we know that under the Department of Community Resources and Employment that the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation is an agency, Mr. Minister, under that department.

Could you explain to the House, Mr. Minister, does your Department of Northern Affairs have influence for Saskatchewan Housing Corporation in northern Saskatchewan? And if not, why not?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much for the question. And I'll point out that I think we are not skeptical about the North. We believe that northern Saskatchewan will certainly be a tremendous part of the economy of the province.

And yes, we certainly have some challenges. And yes, Northern Affairs is targeted specifically to make sure that we take components and strategies of every department of this government to make sure that they have a northern focus. We are adamant, and we are going to fight every inch of the way. And this cabinet has recognized that.

And that's one of the reasons why I think when you look at the role that the Northern Development Agreement came under, the cabinet came forward and said, yes, we'll invest in the North, and we'll do our part for the North.

So the answer to the question about Saskatchewan Housing: absolutely. We — on a continual basis, on a continual basis — sit with the minister responsible for Sask Housing, the minister responsible for Community Resources and Employment. And yes, the minister responsible for Community Resources and Employment says to us, well northern Saskatchewan has housing needs. They're part of our province, so yes, we'll collaborate with Northern Affairs.

So as minister to minister and staff to staff, there is very good collaboration, not only on housing but on health care; not only on health care but highways; not only on highways but infrastructure needs; and not only on infrastructure needs but employment strategies; and not only employment strategies but tourism. And the list goes on and on and on about the coordination and the influence that Northern Affairs has — because that's their primary role — when it comes to the overall government objectives.

We feel that we would not be sitting in a portfolio that did not have the effect . . . would be of any benefit to northern Saskatchewan. This is why this government has promoted Northern Affairs and has pushed Northern Affairs to the forefront on every discussion that we've had when it comes to housing, when it comes to training, when it comes to road construction, and the list goes on and on and on.

This government is clearly serious about dealing with northern affairs. And we know that northern Saskatchewan has tremendous challenges: social, infrastructure, and economic challenges. And now is not the time to blame. Therefore, I would suggest today that as the Minister for Northern Affairs, the answer to your question is absolutely yes. We have a lot of collaboration and a lot of influence on how housing in northern Saskatchewan works, and we've been having those successful efforts. Whether it's new construction of housing or the remote housing program or repair program, we have good collaboration and good consultation on those fronts.

**Mr. Wiberg:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I wanted to discuss with, Mr. Minister, because of the influence your department has with the Saskatchewan Housing Corporation . . . I guess on this side of the House, we're going to have a great deal of concern here, and you're going to have to clearly outline for us how we're going to be able to alleviate the fears in northern Saskatchewan . . . the commitment of your government to affordable housing.

On page 37, under Community Resources and Employment, Saskatchewan Housing Corporation budget has been reduced by \$1.6 million, Mr. Minister. Now if your government is going to

be reducing investment in low-cost, affordable housing in Saskatchewan, are you going to be able to assure to the people of northern Saskatchewan that they are not going to be paying part of the brunt of this reduction in investment in low-cost affordable housing?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Well first of all, I can't speak to the Community Resources and Employment ministry. Of course the minister will answer those questions. But from the perspective of Northern Affairs we understand . . . We look at the disincentives out there for people to work, and we express to the cabinet some of the challenges that northern people have to go to work.

And a lot of these strategies that the department — formerly the department of Social Services — a lot of the strategies that they have implemented is a result of the former minister of Northern Affairs. And certainly our role, as well as the current minister in explaining to the rest of Saskatchewan, to the cabinet, that in order for us to have the reduction of disincentives out there so people can go to work . . . is housing has got to be one of the areas that we looked at.

So today I'm very proud to say that while Northern Affairs doesn't control the housing budget, there are programs out there that talk about remote housing programs that really have a lot of people that can afford to buy a lot and build their own homes . . . that they have a program in place now that families could build their own homes without having the government build it for them. And in very short order, 12 to 15 years, they could own those homes, provided how much down payment they put on their homes.

And some of the communities that have done a tremendous amount of good work in northern Saskatchewan — communities like Beauval, communities like Buffalo Narrows, La Loche— where you're seeing, I think over the last two or three years, well over 100 families have taken this opportunity to participate in the remote housing program.

And this is a way — the road to independence that we often speak about — instead of us proposing, as the Sask Party's proposing, to cut \$50 million from the Social Services budget come hell or high water, the dramatic effect they will have on disadvantaged families, low-income families, the disabled group, on this side of the House, we believe, we believe that if you work with people you foster independence, you train them, you take away disincentives in housing, and so on and so forth, that you can have these people become proud owners of their homes and thus become more and more in control of their own lives. And that's the whole role and the whole notion that we're trying to undertake when it comes to Northern Affairs impacting and influencing what happens in northern housing.

So I can say today that northern Saskatchewan is well served when it comes to housing needs whether it is the early mortgage and discount program, or whether it's a remote housing program, whether it's a repair program. We want to make sure that people have that opportunity to own their own homes and build their own homes, that that opportunity is maximized right from day one.

Secondly, that we also have to understand that once these

people own their own homes then of course the cost to the government housing budget is down dramatically. And I would suggest that some of those families that are now owning their own homes — which they are very proud of and we're proud of as well — is having a positive effect on making sure that the Social Services budget doesn't keep crawling up.

And to us we believe that pragmatic way of providing independence to families that are on social assistance or can build their own homes, it's probably the better way to go for the North and for the taxpayers of this province, as opposed to a blunt cut of \$50 million as proposed by the Sask Party.

**Mr. Wiberg:** — Well, Mr. Minister, that was quite an informative little speech on the election platform of the Saskatchewan Party. Unfortunately it had little relevance to do with the question that I'd asked.

Mr. Minister, I'm wondering if then . . . I guess we're going to have to assume that you have no idea in your department as to what effect it's going to have on northern Saskatchewan, this significant reduction for low-cost housing in northern Saskatchewan. And we'll just have to leave it at that.

Mr. Minister, the other area of social development that, of course, that all of us are concerned about and in some degree it relates to economic development.

(16:00)

Now, Mr. Minister, in the area of education young people are finding it very disconcerting to, in northern Saskatchewan — and you talked about the communities of Beauval and La Loche, and I believe it was Buffalo Narrows you mentioned also, that . . . and of course we can see it whether it's in Pinehouse or Black Lake, Fond-du-Lac — we have communities where young people are staying in school to a certain age and then they start to reach that age of majority and they start to lose interest in school. Because the reality is, Mr. Minister, is that even though they are going to school, after they finish school, say they complete a high school education, there's not a lot to look forward to. And this is a huge, huge area and it's a huge social problem in northern Saskatchewan.

And I know, Mr. Minister, that you're fully aware of this and certainly your government is opening up, what, 40 more seats for northerners to become involved in the nursing field. And certainly that's needed to try to get those seats filled . . . those job openings filled in northern Saskatchewan. But the reality is, Mr. Minister, that there's a lot more people than 40 dropping out of education in northern Saskatchewan.

I think this is really relevant when we talk about the northern strategy, is that your government since 1996 with the creation of the Department of Northern Affairs, is that the people of northern Saskatchewan are still waiting to find out what that strategy is. Because if you are going to go to school, you've got to have something beyond grade 12 to look forward to. And if all you're going to be looking for . . . And I'll use La Loche as the exact example, Mr. Minister — 90 per cent unemployment in the northern town of La Loche.

What is it, what is it that your government is going to be doing,

starting today, to ensure the people of northern Saskatchewan that if they're going to further their education that there's actually going to be an opportunity for them in northern Saskatchewan to be able to make use of that education?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much for the question. And one of the first things I'm going to say is, what is your government going to do today? One thing we're going to do is we're going to afford northern Saskatchewan people the amount of respect that this government has been giving them and will continue to give them.

And number two is you look at the scenario, you look at the scenario, and I don't want to be political here, I'm trying to be as calm as I can by telling the member opposite this: you made reference to the former minister and I'd like to make reference to the former minister as well.

In the early '90s when your cousin was in power, when your cousins were in power — the Sask Party cousins were in power — the employment rates at the northern mines went from 50 per cent down to 15 per cent. And now in the last 10 years with some of the work that the former member from Cumberland done, we went from 15 per cent back up to 50 per cent of northern people working.

When your cousins were in power, your cousins went from \$20 million in contracts for northerners, for northern-based companies. And when the minister, former minister came into power, he went over the 200 million. Now that's one example that we like to use — one example. Now we can go on and on and on, if you wish.

But the bottom line here, I think, when you talk about what impact does Northern Affairs have. What is Northern Affairs going to do? And I would say this. When we began this role as Minister of Northern Affairs and the former minister began, they needed a brand new hospital in Lac La Ronge. Guess what? Lac La Ronge got a brand new hospital. They needed a brand new hospital in La Loche when we . . . when I became, you know, the minister. Guess what? La Loche got a brand new hospital. Black Lake needed a brand new hospital. Guess what? Black Lake got a brand new hospital. Pinehouse needed a new school. Guess what? Pinehouse got a new school.

Beauval and Green Lake wanted saw mill opportunities. Guess what? Tomorrow marks a very special day in Green Lake. Beauval and Green Lake are working on a saw mill joint venture effort to share the wood allocated by this government towards creating an economy in northern Saskatchewan.

And guess what? The small communities of Bear Creek, the small community of Stony Rapids, they needed water and sewer. And guess what? They're getting water and sewer.

So I think clearly what we're trying to do today to the people of northern Saskatchewan is this, is we're trying to make sure we deal with the quality of life issue — at the same time work on social strategy, at the same time to develop an economic policy. And those things don't happen overnight. It's been seven or eight years of good, solid work by a number of folks.

And the first few years that this government was in power was

really paying down a debt and getting our books in order to be able to do more for northern Saskatchewan. Now if we had 600 or \$700 million extra each year that we would use for northern Saskatchewan and other parts of the province as opposed to paying interest on the debt piled up by the Sask Party, then I think clearly we would be able to do much more at a quicker pace.

And secondly, when your cousins were in power, they displaced a lot of northerners from economic opportunity, whether it was in forestry or whether it was in outfitting or whether it's an attack on the commercial fishing industry. There was never no effort at all to recognize northern Saskatchewan.

So as a result today, as a result today, you go along the forestry fringe, the forestry fringe, you will see not one FMA (forest management agreement), not one TSL (term supply licence) for forestry issued without an Aboriginal partner attached to it. And, Mr. Speaker, that goes a long way to saying to the people of Saskatchewan, to the Aboriginal people and many northern community groups up there that we will position northern people to become very strong and very active when it comes to the resource development, to create opportunities for themselves. And we will invest using CIC, or we will support using the grant system, these regional development strategies. It is clear to us that we have a vision, and that vision talks a lot about making sure that northerners are positioned.

Now when you get up and ask the questions, I say fair enough, ask the questions.

But I'll say this. When your leader, the Leader of the Opposition Sask Party, was asked in La Ronge, what do you think of the future of Northern Affairs? What was his comment? I'll ask the member the question: what was the leader of the Sask Party's comment? His comment said — on the future of Northern Affairs, would it still be there? — he said, likely not, likely not. And I would point out the northern people are very acutely aware of those statements.

And the day that you begin to ignore half the province, or one-third of the Aboriginal population, is the day that you do not recognize the pan-provincial challenges that we have to make sure everybody's part of this economic future.

And that, I believe, is the most important thing that we have to tell folks out there. A lot of work has been done, much more needs to be done, but you've got to have the right party in place, working for the right people at the right time to have the most dramatic effect on turning around some of the social and economic challenges that the North has.

**Mr. Wiberg:** — Mr. Minister, it's quite a little campaign speech you made, but I'm going to have to point out to a few holes in your diatribe.

To being with, you've had 11 years in government and things are not better in northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Minister. In fact if you talk to the people in northern Saskatchewan — like members on this side of the House do — then people will clearly understand on your side of the House, Mr. Minister, that things are not better in northern Saskatchewan.

In fact, in fact what they're telling us, Mr. Minister, and you said this deliberately, very clearly, Mr. Minister, that from now on under your government, if someone of First Nations ancestry wants to become involved in the forest industry, they must partner with an established forest operator in business now.

Well, Mr. Minister, no one has asked for that except your government. The existing forest operators didn't ask for it. The First Nations forest . . . people who want to get involved in forestry didn't ask for it. What they asked for, Mr. Minister, very clearly, was just an opportunity to go to work in the forest industry, which your government has denied them.

And, Mr. Minister, it is very clearly, it's very clearly understood in northern Saskatchewan that when there was opportunity for economic forestry development that this . . . your NDP government prevented that from happening to the people of northern Saskatchewan. And you know very well, Mr. Minister, that there has been a multitude of proposals brought to your NDP government from people in northern Saskatchewan of First Nations ancestry who have come up with an idea for a small business in forestry and have been denied by your government.

And we know that for a fact because we have oodles of document on that on this side of the House, Mr. Minister. And I would suspect that you have that also. And I would suspect that the former minister of Industry and Resources knows about those opportunities also that have been denied. And we're sure, Mr. Minister, that in your dual role as the minister of Environment and Resource Management that you know also from two sides — you're probably getting it from two sides — that there has been opportunities for forestry growth in northern Saskatchewan that have been denied, been denied by that NDP . . . your NDP government.

So to say that the only way you can have forestry operating in this province is to force First Nations in the North to partner up with existing businesses in the South is something that no one has been asking for.

And so, Mr. Minister, we want the people of Saskatchewan to clearly understand that your NDP government has denied repeatedly the people of northern Saskatchewan opportunities to invest, to invest and create economic wealth and provide jobs in the forest industry.

Now we know also too, Mr. Minister, and we know that your government has on a multitude of occasions blamed everything that's gone wrong in this province, right from the time of the . . . blamed the Iraqi war on Grant Devine and everything else that you can think of.

The fact of the matter is, is that you have been in government, Mr. Minister . . . There's been an NDP government in this province since 1991 and economic conditions have not improved as promised by your NDP government.

In fact, the former Premier Roy Romanow promised 30,000 more jobs in the forestry sector alone — 30,000 he started out. Well then somebody renegeed on that and it went down to 10,000. The reality is if you go into Saskatchewan's forestry sector in northern Saskatchewan, there's probably 5,000 jobs

lost, there's probably been 5,000 jobs lost.

What needs to happen, Mr. Minister, is we need a government in this province that gets out of the way of economic development in the forestry sector in northern Saskatchewan. And we have heard nothing as you've talked about forestry earlier, Mr. Minister, that you're going to get out of anybody's way to allow forestry to happen.

Now we know that there's some issues in regards to trade tariffs in moving product into the United States of America, but that, Mr. Minister, that, Mr. Minister, is only on raw product. That does not apply to finished product. That will not apply . . . that injury duty was not going to apply to the OSB (oriented strand board) that's going to be turned out in Meadow Lake. And I'm wondering if anybody in your government even knew that.

So we also know, Mr. Minister, that some of the opportunities for economic development in northern Saskatchewan for finished product have been denied. In fact, your government, Mr. Minister, actually shut down a mill that was turning out a finished product that could just as easy have gone across the United States border, the Canada-United States border, Mr. Minister, without injury duty because it was a finished product, and your government shut them down.

Your government shut them . . . a First Nations operator has been shut down for a finished product that he had been doing for years and years — a high-priced, finished product that was providing quality jobs and quality opportunity in northern Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Minister, we also know, we also know that in the past that First Nation organizations on the west side have tried opportunities in the mining sector, in the mining sector, and specifically uranium. They actually come up with an idea to create jobs and opportunity in northern Saskatchewan.

And where was your government on that issue? Well I'll tell you where they were, Mr. Minister. They were nowhere to be seen. In fact they did not back up . . . I would wager, Mr. Minister, they did not back up that First Nation organization when they tried to create economic opportunity in the uranium industry.

So, Mr. Minister, I think we want to be very careful. We want to be very careful in this House when you talk about the opportunities that have been provided in northern Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Minister, we also know that in tourism, in tourism, Mr. Minister, the only thing that has stopped First Nation people from having tourism opportunities in this province has been your government because you won't even give them the permit to operate. You won't even give them a permit to operate.

The reality is they can simply set up business and go to work and attract, attract high-priced American dollars into this province to create jobs for the people of northern Saskatchewan, to create opportunities for people in northern Saskatchewan. They can't even get a permit. They can't get a permit to set up a business in northern Saskatchewan. And your government has

been in power since 1991, and it has regressed in the area of tourism in northern Saskatchewan.

(16:15)

So, Mr. Minister, in this whole area of economic development . . . and certainly we, you know, I was trying to get from you some sort of a commitment that the hopelessness that the young people of northern Saskatchewan feel as they finally decide to give up on education, so many of them, because it's one of the highest dropout rates anywhere, anywhere in the world. It's appalling. You know it. I know it. All the members on this side of the House know it, and I'm not sure whether very many of your members on that side of the House know it or understand it. And we are concerned whether they even care. All they're talking about is, we're putting more money in. We're going to just hand money out. And you know, Mr. Minister, that's not the answer. The reality is they need quality job opportunities to go to.

So I'm wondering if you could take the time, Mr. Minister, to explain to us . . . in the northern strategy, is there an opportunity for people to feel hope, to want to stay in school because there is going to be opportunity, there is going to be opportunity, Mr. Minister, for a career in northern Saskatchewan?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much for the question. First of all, when the member says to me, you know, we're tired of hearing you blame Grant Devine, well then tell a couple of your members behind you that served in Grant Devine's government, that that's not an issue for us today.

And secondly I think one of the things we want to point out is that, yes, this government made a commitment of getting 10,000 jobs. And yes, I can say today we did not meet the goal of 10,000 jobs. We're at 8,000. And the reason why we're not getting to 10,000, Mr. Speaker, is the member hit the nail on the head. There is a softwood dispute with the Americans where they're charging our Canadian lumber extra tariffs and extra duty to be sold in the market of the US (United States), in the American states, at 29 per cent. Of course that's going to have some effect on the job numbers out there. And it's going to also have some effect on the investment of the forestry industry to make sure things are happening.

But despite that, despite that, we still got to 80 per cent of our target, and there is still a lot of negotiation and discussions to remove those trade barriers so we can access the American market more and create more jobs. I think that member knows very well that it does . . . it's not our doing or something that we did not do right that created that trade dispute. It is clear the American sawmill producers don't want the Canadian products in their jurisdiction because it undercuts them and undervalues their industry. And this trade dispute is a result of that particular activity.

So despite those efforts, we have looked at the notion of how forestry and Northern Affairs could help. We've put a lot of effort into the process, and as was indicated, there was 8,000 jobs created in forestry. We have a long ways to go.

And the second point or the third point you made in reference to training and education, absolutely we want to train as many



young people as possible, not just 40 new spots for nursing. That's just one aspect of what this government is trying to do.

In 1991 when we took over government from your cousins, the Tories, there was about 1,200 Aboriginal people in post-secondary. Today I can tell you there are 2,600 people in post-secondary. That's well over double the amount of people in post-secondary as a result of this government's initiative and this government's recognition that the Aboriginal people are a very powerful, proud race, and all they need is the opportunity to train their young people and an opportunity for employment.

We know, we know that a lot of people need to be trained, and we've got to find that trained, dedicated labour force for the business community. We understand that, and that's why we went from 1,200 post-secondary positions to 2,600 in 10 years, Mr. Speaker. And that's every single year, we're seeing those kinds of students turned out. And mark my words, that kind of investment in northern students will pay off.

And I'm somewhat offended as well, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about the northern education, the quality of education. Yes, we have challenges in northern Saskatchewan, but I'm a bit offended when you mention the fact that the quality of education in the North is not good. You know, I think you are very, very wrong in stating that, saying the dropout rate is a direct result of some of the efforts we have in education. Absolutely not. I think that there are many teachers out there and parents and school board members that work very hard for the students. They work very hard for the students. And yes, there's got to be a goal. There's got to be hope. I agree with you.

And when you talk about the project in Meadow Lake where we shut down the project in Meadow Lake . . . and I believe you're making reference to the Clearwater mill. Well guess what? For the member opposite, Northern Affairs critic, guess what? We are now in a situation I'm hoping to move that mill, that Clearwater mill if possible through some government support program, move the Clearwater mill further north to perhaps La Loche or between La Loche and Buffalo Narrows, so we're able to utilize it to create jobs. But before you create jobs, you've got to have investment into the industry. You've got to have training into the industry, and that's exactly what we're doing.

And the fourth thing, you mentioned about the OSB project. Well a news flash for the member, there is a 20 per cent ownership for Métis and First Nations community in that area that have that stake in the ownership mill — 20 per cent. Why? Because this government invested into that opportunity, so the people of Beauval, the people of Green Lake, the people of Pinehouse and Patuanak— well guess what? — they're part owners of the OSB. And those dollars and those training opportunities, guess who built, guess who built the OSB frame? That was built by the northwest communities who are part owners of this effort.

So if you look at the agreement, not only have we positioned these communities well in forestry. We have looked at the training aspect. They are now owners of TSLs and FMAs. They are negotiating amongst themselves. They're going to manage that forest very well. They're going to work with the private sector.

And I believe that if you're patient with the northern people, that you invest with the northern people, and that you watch the northern people build a capacity to take over these industries, that in due time — in due time — that's a recipe for success in northern Saskatchewan.

Now your response when I looked at some of the notes of your questions, when you said well if you want to try the sawmill and the sawmill doesn't work, well at least they tried. Well I'm sorry; that kind of attitude just doesn't cut it in northern Saskatchewan.

The province of Saskatchewan's got to be there, step by step with the northern people, to make sure they take full advantage of the resources around their community. And La Loche is one good example. We talk about the road to Fort McMurray. We don't have to have another 10 meetings in La Loche or another 20 meetings in Buffalo Narrows trying to make sure we get that road. We don't got to convince ourselves. We're all convinced, all that area, that that is a good solution. The road to the border has been built. Who has the final decision on whether the road to Fort McMurray gets built or not is the Alberta government, number one, and, number two, the federal government. If they don't come through, then that road doesn't come through at all.

So today we're talking about economic strategies. I say to the northern people, forestry, tourism, oil and gas, mining, accessing huge industries like oil and gas especially in the Fort Mac area . . . and looking at some coal managing groups and some of the roles that they have in forestry or fishing and trapping. And all the opportunities we have in northern Saskatchewan are there. They're right there, and nobody's stopping them. On this side of the House, we're helping them a tremendous amount. On that side of the House, your history clearly shows, it shows in spades, that your support for the North was never there. It was never there.

You gave away our forestry rights. You gave away our outfitting opportunity. You tried to kill our commercial fishing. And today now you stand up and say what are you going to do for the North? Well the northern people know. The northern people aren't silly. They weren't born yesterday. They didn't fall off a fish truck a couple of days ago. Mr. Speaker, they know exactly what they got to do, and they know what government has produced results and which government will continue producing results for the North.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Wiberg:** — Mr. Minister, that was rather . . . some interesting comments. We find it highly amusing on this side of the House that you would allude to the fact that I — that I personally — mentioned low-quality education in northern Saskatchewan. Well imagine the surprise of the people in northern Saskatchewan tomorrow when they read *Hansard* and find out that the people of northern Saskatchewan have been misled by the Minister of Northern Affairs. That's what they're going to find out tomorrow, Mr. Minister.

There has never been an opportunity for more in northern Saskatchewan than there is right now. And what did we hear? We have heard that you are going to put every roadblock in front of them that you can. If someone comes up with an idea

for economic development, you're going to be there, one, putting up roadblock and stopping it if you can. You're telling them that unless they can guarantee 100 per cent absolute success, which is not guaranteed anywhere else in the world, Mr. Minister, that they're not going to be allowed to set up a business opportunity.

Well the people of northern Saskatchewan are certainly not asking for that, and you know that full well, Mr. Minister. We on this side of the House are quite aware that it's your government that's fallen off the fish truck. And all we had to do was read *The StarPhoenix*, the front page of *The StarPhoenix* on Saturday morning to find out that.

Mr. Minister, you have pointed out again . . . You have pointed out again the lack of tourism opportunities in northern Saskatchewan. Which government is in power since 1991 . . . has not allowed any more further tourism opportunities in northern Saskatchewan? You keep saying that it's all been given away. We hear someone else on your side of the House, Mr. Minister, saying it's all been given away up north.

Well, Mr. Minister, last year, we had a written question from this side of the House to the Minister of SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management) asking specifically how much land in northern Saskatchewan is under lease — is under lease, Mr. Minister. And the response came back 0.01 per cent. There . . . Means then that 99.99 per cent of the land in northern Saskatchewan should be available for opportunity. It should be available for opportunity.

So since 1991, the only government that has denied opportunity on that land has been your NDP government, Mr. Minister. It has been nobody else in the past that's had anything to do with that. You've had lots of opportunity in the last 12 years.

Now you say that you had budgetary restraints. Now you know what you could have done, Mr. Minister, is you could have opened up northern Saskatchewan for development. Then there would have been lots . . . There would have been lots of finances available to help out your sorry budgets that you've had in the last few years, specifically these last three deficit budgets.

If there had been economic opportunity going in northern Saskatchewan, they could have almost single-handedly saved the Saskatchewan budget rather than to be going backwards \$1.1 billion in the last three years. That's what could have been happening, Mr. Minister.

Now, Mr. Minister, we have a significant increase now. Several months ago, we had the same massive opportunity . . . oil and gas prices, very high. There could have been lots of opportunity going on in Saskatchewan. We know that the present Industry and Resource minister has been talking about how that has benefited the budget. We have heard the Minister of Finance talk about how that has benefited the budget. In fact what it's allowed, Mr. Minister, is that because of that increase in oil and gas revenue that's been coming into the province, that the government has not had to borrow money to balance the budget for last year, although the Crowns had to borrow money. We certainly understand that, and it was very clear in the budget that they had to borrow money last year to pay their dividend;

we understand that.

Now why, Mr. Minister, as the Minister for Northern Affairs, what has your department done, what has your department done to encourage to the cabinet, to your government, to the caucus, to the people of northern Saskatchewan to assure that the oil and gas fields in northern Saskatchewan could be opened up for economic development to provide highly skilled, quality job and career opportunities for the people of northern Saskatchewan?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Well thank you very much for the question. I can also advise the people of Saskatchewan and the Assembly that we went from one very capable Minister of Industry and Resources to a very capable, brand new Minister of Industry and Resources, that have one fundamental point, one fundamental point. And they say that as far as we're concerned, northern Saskatchewan and Northern Affairs, we want to make sure we incorporate every Aboriginal group that's possible to be partners in oil and gas development that's going to happen.

And whether it's the potential for diamonds around the P.A. (Prince Albert) area or whether it's oil and gas in the Southwest, we know that the Aboriginal people are eyeing these particular sectors. They're going to start moving forward. And as in the North, there's a number of organizations that are also looking not just at oil and gas. For a case in point look at the Pinehouse, the community of Pinehouse. They're looking at a limestone project. They're hoping to develop this limestone project to make sure that they're able to provide that particular lime to the mining industry. And they're doing tests on that, and the analysis on that particular lime to see if it's good, if the project is feasible. And some of that work continues.

And guess what? The Department of Industry and Resources provided a grant to Pinehouse to look at that potential opportunity for the entire community. And things are moving along quite well. Now what we have to do is convince the mining sector that if this lime is good from Pinehouse, that they can produce the quality and the amount that they need. That's what we have to do. That's how business operates. And in order to get that done, we also have to make sure . . . if we meet that hurdle, then we've got to make sure that we look at investment into a facility to make sure that the lime production starts up.

So it's clearly not just identifying your resource and saying yes, okay, let's move. You've got to have trained personnel. You've got to do your business case. You've got to do your identification of your markets. You have to have investment. The list goes on and on. I'm sure the member understands how you get these projects moving.

(16:30)

Now when I say we talk about what specific efforts are being undertaken in oil and gas, well let's not just look at oil and gas. Of course we're want to incorporate the Aboriginal community in all sectors of minerals and in oil and gas.

We also want to make sure they're involved with forestry. We want to make sure they're involved with tourism. We want to make sure they're involved with outfitting. We want to make

sure that they're talking about a fish processing plant in the province, bringing that from Winnipeg to somewhere in Saskatchewan.

So we want to make sure that we do that. We instill in people a sense of ownership and independence when it comes to their own particular industry. So it doesn't matter if it's oil or gas. It doesn't matter if it's forestry or tourism. We're going to move forward when it comes to northern Saskatchewan people and incorporate them into making sure that this is something that the province of Saskatchewan and this government wants to do — over the Sask Party — is we want to make sure that we position the North quite well.

Now when we talk about the percentage, the percentage of ownership of some of the northern lands in the North, don't forget your Open For Business slogan under your former boss, the former premier, Grant Devine. Open For Business, and guess what? Northern Saskatchewan outfitting opportunities were open, except they were closed to northerners.

A lot of northerners didn't know this was going on. A lot of northerners weren't aware this whole sell-off of some of the Crown land and some of this willy-nilly approach to development, some of the tourism opportunity. They weren't included. They weren't aware of some of these opportunities, and that was your Open For Business slogan.

And even if they were aware, they didn't have the opportunity to seek the investment to make sure this thing was . . . that some of these hospitality efforts, whether it be in hunting and fishing or whether it be in northern tourism opportunity . . . The investment dollar was something that they had to seek. And how do you find 20 or \$30,000 in some of the people who wanted to start up? They would have to invite an outside partner to move forward. And that's kind of putting them behind the eight ball as well.

So what we're trying to do here is we're trying to make sure people know that if they work together collectively and they look at opportunity and they look at all the sectors of opportunity, that on this side of the House we believe that the northern Aboriginal people in general will have opportunity if we're patient with them, and we stand beside them and we invest with them.

We don't just have the slogan, Open For Business, and then everybody come in and these people are swamped. We want to sit down and make sure they see the merits and the benefits and that they position themselves, and we help position them better to make sure they maximize the benefits to themselves, their families, and their communities.

**Mr. Wiberg:** — Mr. Minister, you certainly outlined clearly the differences in philosophy between those who believe in the people of Saskatchewan and your government who does not believe in the people of Saskatchewan. In fact you outlined very clearly a position of where we have to distrust the people of Saskatchewan, and specifically distrust the people of northern Saskatchewan who do not have the ability to put together business plans, who do not have the ability to attract financing, and who do not have the people to explore markets for their opportunities.

Now, Mr. Minister, certainly . . . And you brought up the . . . a couple of things here that I want to respond to real quick. One, you talked about the change in leadership for the Department of Industry and Resources. And certainly there was one thing that we have noticed very clearly on this side of the House, Mr. Minister, is that, is that the present Minister of Industry and Resources has never had to get up and apologize to this House for misleading it. That has never happened. And so then, Mr. Minister, I just wanted to point out that little glitch in your response.

I also want to just briefly talk about the limestone deposit at Pinehouse. Did you know, Mr. Minister, did you know that the people themselves of Pinehouse — that the business community in Saskatchewan, the financial community out there — already knows how to know whether that's a developable opportunity, whether there's a market for it, whether they can do a business plan without the government having to sit there like a babysitter and watching every step of the process? The fact of the matter is the people of Pinehouse, whom I have met, Mr. Minister, know full well and are educated enough to be able to understand the process of being able to develop an opportunity that sits at their doorstep. They don't need this government, your government, getting in their way again.

And that's all we've heard time and time again, Mr. Minister, is that your government keeps getting in the way of economic opportunity in northern Saskatchewan. Your NDP government, Mr. Minister, wants to control the people of northern Saskatchewan.

In fact, that is a term that they use very clearly up there. In fact the term they use . . . they have a very specific term that they use. They call it colonialism. They feel like a colonialists inside the province of Saskatchewan, that they are not first-class citizens. That's how they feel, and they feel that today in the year 2003, and it has nothing to do with the 1980s. In the year 2003, they still feel that, Mr. Minister.

So I would suggest that your government has not been as successful as you've tried to paint, as you've tried to paint in this House this afternoon, Mr. Minister. You have talked at length about the forest industry, some oil and gas, and certainly there's ample . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** — Order, order. Order. Why is the member from Kindersley on his feet?

**Mr. Dearborn:** — To leave the Chamber, sir.

**Mr. Wiberg:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. We'll have to remember in the future that if we want to leave the Chamber we have to ask permission.

Mr. Chair, to the minister, I think you have failed to clearly present to the House the opportunities that exists in northern Saskatchewan and the positive steps that have been taken by community leaders, by business leaders in northern Saskatchewan to be able to establish partnership in the energy sector.

These are community leaders, business leaders, Mr. Minister, who have a very clear vision, a very clear vision, Mr. Minister,

on what it's going to take to provide the people of northern Saskatchewan with the job opportunities, with the career opportunities that they are so sadly lacking right now.

So, Mr. Minister, I wonder if you could explain to the House the extent of your knowledge as Minister of Northern Affairs, how much the oil and gas sector could be developed? And what existing partnerships are in place to date, Mr. Minister, to ensure that the people of northern Saskatchewan will be actively participating in an oil and gas development in this province?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Well thank you very much for the question, Mr. Chairman. I'd leave too, but these are my estimates, so I have to listen to some of the speeches.

I wanted to point out that I think one of the things we're going to mention when you talk about Pinehouse is that the community itself, as the member knows, is a very vibrant community. They are part owners of the northwest communities. They have a brand-new school. They have water and sewer extension. They've got remote housing. They're benefactors of many of the programs that the province puts in place in concert with some of the things that they're doing.

And they also, on the limestone project, they actually approached the government saying, could you help us find some money to look at the investigation, the feasibility of this, to which we said sure. And this is our project, to which we said sure. We've identified this as our opportunity, and we said sure. And if you don't want the government involvement, well that's fine; you can find your private partner, or do things on your own. There's not a problem with that. We've never, ever said there was a problem with that. We are going to support them all the way.

So whether it's commercial fishing, tourism, forestry, or limestone development, we will stand beside the people of Pinehouse. They have a lot of hopes and dreams and aspirations, ambitions for themselves. And secondly, I think the people of Pinehouse clearly know, people . . . (inaudible) . . . know that there is no vision in the Sask Party-Tory government for the North. You guys have never cared about the North. Every northerner knows that. Every opportunity you guys had when you were in power in 1991, you proved it. You proved it.

Whether it's reducing your work to the mining companies from going down to \$20 million, and now we're up to 200 million, you didn't hire northerners at these mine sites. At one time there was 18 per cent; now we have over 50 per cent. The training programs in the province went from 1,200 students in 1991 when Grant Devine was in power and now it's over 2,600.

So the people in the North are saying, well my goodness, you let these guys ever come to the North and decide the northern strategy, if they try something that doesn't work, then you're responsible. Well at least they tried. And you can rest assured that the rest of the North will be so loud and giving it to some of your friends.

And you can forget about the northerners that want to have part of the resource base for their development. You can forget about their aspiration and their visions and their hopes because

on that side of the Assembly you say, no. You're not part of the solution. You never have been, and you never will be. On this side of the House, we're saying northerners are the solution. They will be part of the economy, and they will determine the future of the North.

So as long as this side's in power, Mr. Speaker — or Mr. Chairman — we are going to make sure that the North is well served. And come election, come election, northern people are saying one thing, Mr. Speaker. In northern Saskatchewan we know you guys pretty good. We know you guys pretty good. Been there, done that. Been there, done that. We ain't going there no more. And I promise you, come next election as I mentioned before, we are going to rock you in the North, in the South, in the East, and in the West, Mr. Speaker.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I move that we report progress.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 16:44.



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