

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition signed by citizens in the province of Saskatchewan regarding the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation's announcement that the 2003 premiums charged to farmers will increase by up to 52 per cent and further. Mr. Speaker, the prayer of the petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to have Sask 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.

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition are from Beechy, Birsay, Lucky Lake, Vanguard, and Elbow, Saskatchewan. I am pleased to present it on their behalf.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise this afternoon on behalf of citizens of Moose Jaw concerned about the lack of hemodialysis services. The prayer reads as follows:

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

Signatures on this petition this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, are all from the great city of Moose Jaw and I'm proud to present on their behalf.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again today I'm standing in the House to present a petition on behalf of citizens of the Cypress Hills constituency. The issue at stake here, Mr. Speaker, is the renewal of Crown grazing leases. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take the necessary steps to ensure current Crown land lessees maintain their first option to renew those leases.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by producers from the community of Lancer and Rosetown. Thank you.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise again with a petition from the citizens of Rockglen and area who are very concerned about the lack of health care services. And it's quite a huge area that they provide services to. 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 proper steps to cause adequate medical services, including a physician, be provided in Rockglen and to cause the Five Hills Health Region to provide better information to the citizens of Rockglen.

And as duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is signed, naturally, by people from Rockglen, but also from Willow Bunch, Wood Mountain, and as far away from Alberta and BC (British Columbia) who are looking to migrate to this province but require good health services.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of constituents of mine that are concerned with the alarming increases in the crop insurance premiums. And the petition 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 as is duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by my neighbours from Laporte, Mantario, and Eatonia.

I so present.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present yet another petition on behalf of constituents concerned with the condition of Highway 22, particularly that portion 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 community of Earl Grey.

I so present.

Mr. Lorenz: — Mr. Speaker, I present to you a petition on the saving of the twin bridges between the Battlefords in relationship to the economic development and recreational opportunities. The petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take all possible action to preserve the historic original twin bridges between Battleford and North Battleford.

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

And the petition is signed from people of the Battleford and North Battleford community.

Thank you.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the Assembly today to bring forth a petition signed by citizens of Saskatchewan concerned with the government's handling of the Crown land leases. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take the necessary steps to ensure current Crown land lessees maintain their first option to renew those leases.

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

The signatures, Mr. Speaker, on this petition are from Glenbush, Medstead, Leoville, and Spiritwood.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and are hereby read and received:

A petition concerning the continuation of services, current level services available at Kindersley Hospital; and

Addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional papers nos. 13, 18, 27, 35, 36, 40, 42, and 90.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 34 ask the government the following question:

To the CIC minister: can the minister please provide a copy of the cumulative investment of SaskTel International portfolio presentation currently being made by SaskTel CEO Don Ching and other senior SaskTel officials to various Saskatchewan groups including this morning's presentation to the Regina Chamber of Commerce?

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 34 ask the government the following questions:

To the minister of Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming: currently how many employees and full-time equivalents are found in each of the following branches and/or division of Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming? And all the departments are listed.

I will also ask a similar question for the fiscal year 2002-2003, 2001-2002, 2000-2001.

I so present.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of the House, a regular visitor to this Assembly, Ms. Karen Jackson. She's a teacher at Balfour Collegiate and she's here with three of her students, grade 12 students, that are seated in your gallery.

And I would ask all the members to join me in extending a very warm welcome to Ms. Jackson and her students. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's an honour today to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly, 33 students in the east gallery from grade 7, 8, and 9 and the great community of Colonsay.

And it's great to see them here today. Their teacher that accompanied them is Nadia Breckner and the chaperones are Judy Kalinocha, Cathy Weir, and Darla Rourke. And I hope they enjoy the proceedings today and I am looking forward to meeting with them later.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the member from Watrous in welcoming the students from Colonsay.

And you might wonder why am I welcoming the students from Colonsay. And that is because my grandfather was the implement dealer in Colonsay and when I grew up I was taught that Colonsay is the centre of the universe. Except my dad, who was from Zelma, which is down the road, said that Zelma was the centre of the universe.

And I also want to welcome the teacher who's a personal friend of mine, so I also would like to join in welcoming the students here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you, two young ladies sitting in your gallery — Karen Vanderloos and Carla Moreau. They are two University of Saskatchewan students who I understand left yesterday to visit Regina, and I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, when they left Saskatoon yesterday they had no idea that they would end up in your gallery.

Apparently, Mr. Speaker, they lost their wallet last evening when they were out with friends and they needed their uncle, the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood, to bail them out. So as part of their education, continuing education, they are visiting with us here this afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like all members to welcome them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I'm happy to introduce my friend seated in your gallery, Mr. Michael Wright. Mr. Michael Wright is from Saskatoon. He has just graduated from the University of Saskatchewan law school. It is because of Michael that I am now married to my dear wife — he was the man that introduced us.

And I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming to the proceedings today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Bicycle Safety Video

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a new bicycle safety video produced by two Weyburn policemen and using local talent premiered at St. Dominic Savio School in Weyburn on Thursday, April 17.

SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) wanted the film so Constables Marcel Roy and Garth Oberkirsch produced the 15-minute video last fall. Roy and Oberkirsch are coordinators of the police department's annual bike rodeo in Weyburn.

A light punk rock group formerly known as Happy Camper wrote and played the music for the video. Members of the band are Preston Roy, Michael Froh, Vaughn Hortness, and Kalen Swedburg, all of Weyburn. The band is now known as Away From Here and has been joined recently by Ryan Robillard.

Grade 5 and 6 students from Weyburn were used in the video. Logan Chinski appears as the professor and Richard Roy is the police chief. Scripting and directing by Nathan Binns; filming and editing by Rob Hillstead. Hillstead is a student in media arts at the U of R (University of Regina) and Binns has training in computer graphics from the U of R.

The video will be shown in schools in Estevan later this month. Copies of the video are being sent out to police departments in Saskatchewan, Alberta, and the video will be distributed throughout Western Canada.

I'd like all members of the Assembly to help me congratulate the policemen and students from Weyburn.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Employment Equity at Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Fundamental to this government's vision for Saskatchewan is our commitment to fostering an expanding economy from which no one is excluded.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation is proud of its partnership with the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations in the operation of the Regina and Moose Jaw casinos, and is committed to fulfilling the agreement that at least 50 per cent of the workforce at SGC (Saskatchewan Gaming

Corporation) be Aboriginal.

At last count the combined workforce of Casino Regina and Casino Moose Jaw was 768 employees. Of these, almost 53 per cent were women, almost 52 per cent were Aboriginal, visible minorities accounted for just over 6 per cent, and persons with disabilities comprised just under 5 per cent of casino employees.

Mr. Speaker, the SGC stresses training and development opportunities for employees and has won numerous awards for its human resource policies. But perhaps the best indicator that the SGC is, quote, "an employer of choice" is that last year the casinos experienced an employee turnover rate of less than 15 per cent, as compared with an average of 30 per cent in the gaming industry and 200 per cent in the hospitality industry.

Mr. Speaker, this government believes that the future of this province can't be wide open for anyone unless it is wide open for everyone. And that is why this government welcomes diversity and practises the politics of inclusion. An expanding economy from which no one is excluded is part of our plan, Mr. Speaker, and that plan is working.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Midwest Female Lazars Win Provincial Hockey Title

Mr. Lorenz: — Mr. Speaker, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have another hockey championship team. The Midwest Female Lazars finished this season on a high note by clinching the female midget A provincial hockey title. The girls had some very tough series to play to get there and they played some excellent and exciting hockey.

In the first round they defeated the North Battleford team 4 to 3 in overtime. Next they played Saskatoon and came out on top, 7-5 in an overtime win to win the northern title. They then met Estevan in the provincial final. The girls played some awesome hockey in the first game, dominating the play and defeating Estevan 6 to 0. They travelled to Estevan for the second game of this series and tied 2-all. The total points were 8 to 2 for the Midwest team to clinch the provincial title.

Please join me in thanking the coaches: Angus Phillips, assistant coach; Huntz Klachn, trainer; and Dale Robertson, coach. The girls were from the communities of Unity, Wilkie, Kerrobert, Denzil, Major, Maidstone, Neilburg, Biggar, and Meadow Lake. Congratulations, girls.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(13:45)

Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation Arbos Award Recipients

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in the House today to congratulate Sharon Armstrong and Doug Willard, the two most recent recipients of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation Arbos

awards for outstanding contributions to that professional organization.

Mr. Speaker, Sharon Armstrong's teaching career took her to a number of rural schools including Spring Valley, Kindersley, Ituna, Wadena, and Wynyard, where she taught for 16 years. Ms. Armstrong was an STF (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation) councillor for 22 years and served on a host of provincial committees prior to retirement in 1993.

Along with her work in the STF, Ms. Armstrong was also elected mayor of Wynyard six times and has been a board member for Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association. She has chaired the Wynyard district community health clinic and sat on the provincial Police Commission.

Mr. Speaker, Doug Willard is currently president of the Canadian Teachers' Federation but served on the STF executive for eight terms, including two as vice-president and two as president of the STF. As provincial president, he was instrumental in organizing the Saskatchewan task force on the role of schools. He also sits on the boards of such organizations as the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and the Canadian Education Association and the Media Awareness Network.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all members of this Assembly join me in congratulating these two fine members of the teaching profession. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Deregulation of Electrical Industry

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday in this legislature we had a very interesting debate about deregulation of the electrical industry. We were debating how it is indeed that the NDP government has taken the first . . . taken Saskatchewan down the first steps towards deregulation of the electrical industry here in the province of Saskatchewan, and also how they've increasingly allowed the private generation of power, of electricity here in the province of Saskatchewan.

And there was time afterwards for questions and answers, Mr. Speaker. And some members opposite asked some questions that I have been able to look at in *Hansard* and determine that the answers provided in *Hansard* by myself weren't as direct as they could have been, because all of the questions had been answered before right in this Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker, not more than a year ago in March 2002.

The specific question was — and it violated parliamentary process, Mr. Speaker — it said:

Will you, sir — will you, sir — guarantee to the people that you will never, never sell off any of the assets of SaskPower?

The answer to the question, Mr. Speaker, is this: the answer is no. We know, Mr. Speaker, that this government, this government with all of its hare-brained schemes in the international sides of SaskPower — and we detailed them in SaskTel — will present many opportunities for the people of

the province to review the Crowns and decide to get rid of those hare-brained schemes, Mr. Speaker.

So in the interest, in the interest of direct answers in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, we're proud to stand up and make that happen today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Curling Association Awards

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was my privilege last Saturday to attend the Saskatchewan Curling Association awards reception on behalf of this government.

Mr. Speaker, it was a great year for Saskatchewan curlers. Not only did Saskatchewan have four teams win Canadian championships this past year, we had three teams win world championships — the Steve Laycock and Marliese Miller teams from Saskatoon, and the Nancy Kerr team from Regina.

And, Mr. Speaker, there was another national award winner from Saskatchewan curling and that was on Saturday night. Bernadette McIntyre of Regina won the prestigious CCA (Canadian Curling Association) Ray Kingsmith award as the Canadian Curling Association's Executive of the Year. The award is presented to the volunteer who best exhibits a dedication to curling and Ms. McIntyre is the first Saskatchewan winner of this award.

Among her other curling accomplishments Ms. McIntyre is the first female president of the SCA (Saskatchewan Curling Association), chair of the SGI CANADA Charity Classic, founder of the Casino Regina Women's Challenge, a committee member of the 1992 Labatt Brier, board member and president of the Highland Curling Club, and a founding member of the Sandra Schmirler Trust Fund.

She does all this, Mr. Speaker, while working as an assistant vice-president for SGI, showing once again how many members of our Crown corporations go above and beyond the call of duty in giving back to our communities.

I ask all members of the House to join me in congratulating Ms. McIntyre's win and showing what Saskatchewan people can do when they work together.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Wynyard Honours Laycock Rink

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this month I had the privilege and the honour to be in attendance in the community of Wynyard when the community packed the civic centre to honour the Steven Laycock rink, the world junior men's curling championship team.

The reason that the citizens of the area gathered in the civic centre was to honour one of their own. Kyler Broad was the lead for the Steven Laycock team.

Mr. Speaker, the evening started with the traditional piping in of the head table, the curling team. And the program . . . part of the program, the father of Kyler, Ken Broad, had put together a video history of their run for the championship, Mr. Speaker, including their key shots in their winning games in Ottawa and a number of the highlights from the world championships in Switzerland, Mr. Speaker.

And certainly as one sat and listened to the comments of these young representatives from Saskatchewan, it made one realize, Mr. Speaker, that truly Saskatchewan people certainly can be the best in the world.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Government's Response to Questions

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday the NDP's (New Democratic Party) contempt for the legislature and the people of Saskatchewan reached a new low.

The CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) minister refused to answer question after question about the NDP's failing investments. And then he told reporters that he has no intention of answering opposition questions because he doesn't agree with our agenda.

Mr. Speaker, have you ever heard of anything so arrogant? We don't answer questions from people who don't agree with us — that's what the NDP are telling the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, does the Premier agree with the minister's arrogance? Does he agree with a minister who refuses to answer questions in this legislature?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well this government has been accountable and will continue to be accountable, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this government provides accountability that was never provided in the years, in the 1980s, when they were government, Mr. Speaker, never provided that level of accountability.

Mr. Speaker, through Public Accounts, Mr. Speaker, through Crown Corporations, through a new process, through significant transactions, Mr. Speaker, we will be accountable to the people of Saskatchewan. Should we improve on that? Absolutely we should strive for ways to improve on that and we will, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After a litany of cover-ups — cover-up after cover-up — the NDP is then saying, we're not going to answer any questions from people who don't agree with us. That's not democracy. That's dictatorship.

Mr. Speaker, we're not supposed, Mr. Speaker, we're not supposed to automatically agree with the government. That's why we have a government and an opposition. The opposition's job is to hold the government accountable by asking questions, and the government's job is to answer those questions on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the CIC minister is refusing to do his job. He is showing nothing but arrogance and contempt for the people of Saskatchewan and for this House.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan are asking the Premier: will he fire the Minister of Crown Investments?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Is it, is it the Sask Party's and the opposition's role to keep the government accountable? Absolutely it's their role, Mr. Speaker.

But I want to refer, Mr. Speaker, to this quote yesterday. Here's what a journalist who's covered the legislature for years had to say about — on CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) yesterday — said that, referring to the Sask Party Leader, says, that he asks questions that 99 per cent of which are a litany of political rhetoric, Mr. Speaker. A litany of political rhetoric.

Mr. Speaker, I have one disagreement. The 99 per cent may not be high enough, Mr. Speaker.

But if those members opposite want good answers, Mr. Speaker, if they want answers they should go to Public Accounts, Crown Corporations, where they get detailed answers, Mr. Speaker. And they shouldn't fill their questions full of rhetoric, Mr. Speaker — don't fill it full of rhetoric.

And they too should be accountable to the people of Saskatchewan. Tell us what your agenda is on privatization. Tell us, Mr. Speaker. They should tell us, Mr. Speaker, what their agenda is on selling off the Crowns?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday and on previous days the opposition has asked the minister specific questions and he has refused to give answers to those specific questions.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to read you a quote. I'd like to read you this quote:

We, the opposition party, have a responsibility to ask the government tough questions, and they have a responsibility to answer them.

Do you know who said these words, Mr. Speaker? The Premier did when he was in opposition. The Premier was specifically criticizing the former government's investment in Saskferco and he was demanding answers because in his words, this money is coming out of the public purse.

My, my, my, how the Premier has changed his tune. Today his NDP government loses millions of taxpayers' dollars out of the public purse and he doesn't think his government has to

answer.

My question for the Premier is: why doesn't he live up to his own words? Will the Premier become a man of his word and order his minister to start answering questions?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well such self-righteous indignation.

Mr. Speaker, I have a quote yesterday from the Sask Party leader yesterday. And here's what he said. Mr. Speaker, he said, and I quote, he says:

We will make a commitment to answer questions in the House. We will not stonewall and we will not disrespect the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, what did the member from Swift Current do less than five minutes later, Mr. Speaker — less than five minutes later? You know what? He was asked questions on privatization and on deregulation. He refused to answer the questions. Three times in a row, Mr. Speaker, he refused to answer the question.

Mr. Speaker, self-righteous indignation . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order, members. Order. Order. One at a time here.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So after their Leader of the Sask Party says that they won't stonewall and they'll answer questions, Mr. Speaker, the member from Swift Current gets up here — three chances he has to be absolutely clear on their policy on deregulation and privatization. He struck out, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well my colleague, the member from Swift Current, has answered that question previously; he answered it again today. We will answer it consistently every time we are asked.

Mr. Speaker, just two months ago in the wake of the SPUDCO (Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company) scandal, this Premier held a news conference to announce, we've learned our lesson; we're going to be more accountable from now on. But what's happened since then?

The NDP lost millions on bingo and they covered it up. They lost millions on their Palm Springs cable company and they covered it up. They lost millions on their Atlanta-based dot-com and they covered it up, Mr. Speaker. They lost millions on Ag Dealer and they covered it up. Yesterday the minister admitted that he had no intention to answer any questions about any of these events.

I ask the Premier today, who has defended his minister: what happened to the Premier's promise to the people of Saskatchewan to be accountable? Why is he allowing cover-up after cover-up after cover-up by his ministers?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well there are no cover-ups, Mr. Speaker. There may have been in the 1980s, Mr. Speaker. There may have been in the 1980s. But I'll read this quote again, Mr. Speaker, from the provincial . . .

The Speaker: — The Minister of Crown Investments Corporation.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well here's the auditor's opinion, Mr. Speaker, in 1991, March 31, 1991, referring to the years prior, Mr. Speaker, in the late 1980s:

In my opinion, (he says) because of the accounting principles used to prepare these financial statements (they) are inappropriate, these combined financial statements do not present fairly the financial position of the Government of the Province of Saskatchewan . . .

And then, Mr. Speaker, he goes on to say:

My general concern is that the legislators and the public are not provided the financial information required to help them understand and access the financial position and results of the operations of the Government.

(14:00)

And now, Mr. Speaker, here's what the auditors say now after we've come in and cleaned things up, Mr. Speaker. He says:

In our opinion, these consolidated financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the corporation as at December 31, 2002 . . .

Who isn't providing accountability, Mr. Speaker? It's right there.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the minister responsible for SaskTel, who keeps apparently saying the loud part quiet and the . . .

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

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, this minister has a bad habit of saying the loud part quiet and the quiet part loud. Because when he does finally get around to sort of, kind of, sort of answering a question, the answer's not correct.

Yesterday here's what he said in this Legislative Assembly, and I quote:

(The Saskatchewan Party) refers to investments in Palm Springs . . . Mr. Speaker . . . there never was any investment in Palm Springs. I'll say it again publicly — no investment.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to quote from a couple of documents:

Craig Wireless . . . (that's the company they've invested in, Craig Wireless) is a . . . cable and internet provider with operations in Manitoba, . . . (BC), and Palm Springs, California.

Here's another one:

Craig . . . International . . . is a wireless cable and internet (service) provider with operations in Manitoba, British Columbia, and Palm Springs . . .

Those quotes come from SaskTel's annual reports. So if they're wrong, Mr. Speaker, the question to the minister is this: did he approve of those annual reports before they were tabled in this legislature?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well so much gusto. Mr. Speaker, when SaskTel . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well listen if you want to hear the answer.

Mr. Speaker, SaskTel, when they . . . When SaskTel International, Mr. Speaker, invested in Craig Wireless — listen carefully — when they invested, Mr. Speaker, there was one employee in Palm Springs that was employed by the parent company. SaskTel did no business down there whatsoever. And you know what? That one employee, they wound down the business there, Mr. Speaker, within a year. One employee. SaskTel did no business down there whatsoever, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, that's interesting of course because that information about Palm Springs appears not only in one SaskTel annual report, it appears in the next year's annual report too. You'd think they might, you'd think they might of picked up on a small issue, like where are the companies that we've invested taxpayers' dollars actually active in, Mr. Speaker. But apparently it's not a priority.

We asked questions, Mr. Speaker, yesterday also and the day before about agdealer.com. So we didn't get any answers to those, but we'll ask the questions again today.

Will the minister confirm the NDP paid \$8.1 million for agdealer.com? How much money did Ag Dealer lose in 2001-2002? And what was the net value of agdealer.com's assets when they were transferred into DirectWest?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I stand by the original point I made, much more than 99 per cent of what they ask is rhetoric, Mr. Speaker.

In answer to the question, Mr. Speaker, as it relates to Craig Wireless — because that was the first part of his question, Mr. Speaker — I indicated that there was one employee, Mr. Speaker. And now, because the Crown corporation's report in minute detail down to apparently one employee, Mr. Speaker, now they're being critical of that. Mr. Speaker, one employee was employed down there.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to Ag Dealer, Ag Dealer was rolled into DirectWest in the year 2002, Mr. Speaker. I was absolutely clear about that. And the profits that DirectWest have made because we now own it 100 per cent, or DirectWest we've owned 100 per cent for two years, had a profit of about \$1.7 million. Is there any problem with that, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, there is still no answer. There's still no answer from this minister. This government's own financial statements book the assets of Ag Dealer, value the assets of Ag Dealer, when they were rolled into DirectWest, at under \$300,000. This is an investment they spent 8.1 million taxpayers' dollars only two years ago. There's a huge difference there — well over 7.5 million taxpayer dollars unaccounted for. The minister won't answer the question.

So, Mr. Speaker, the question then we can move to perhaps yet another SaskTel investment. Over the past couple of years, SaskTel has paid a total of \$5.4 million for a dot-com, a dot-com in Nashville, Tennessee called *tappedinto.com*. Will the minister tell the people of Saskatchewan how much money the NDP has lost so far on this dot-com gamble? And what is the value of the NDP's \$5.4 million investment in *tappedinto.com* today?

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, that question . . . First of all — I'll answer the question — but that question, Mr. Speaker, he knows it is very unlikely the minister would have that level of detail in the Assembly here.

But let me say very publicly, very publicly — and we've done this, Mr. Speaker; we do this through order in council with respect to *tappedinto* — the investment that was approved was \$7 million. That's what was approved, Mr. Speaker.

They have access to those records. They have access to them, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, he stands up in here and he asks the question.

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to make this point. There are one of two possibilities: either they ask these detailed questions because they don't want to get into the discussion about the big picture and the policy on their . . . their policy on Crown corporations or — or, Mr. Speaker — or they don't understand balance sheets like they didn't understand them in the 1980s, Mr. Speaker. And I think they don't understand them again.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, here is why we want to ask these questions about out-of-province investments by SaskTel. Here's why we want to ask questions and ask the government to defend its own record of losing . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order please, members. Take a minute or two and a deep breath, please.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the minister's records show, last week, that the NDP government blew 85 million taxpayer dollars. They lost them on out-of-province investments like

we're talking about right now and that's why we ask these questions, Mr. Speaker, because that \$85 million should have been available for health care and education and highways in the province of Saskatchewan. That's why we ask the question. This is the government that pleads poverty. It says it has no money to balance the budget, but yet it won't defend or account for the blowing of \$85 million.

The question was about *tappedinto.com* in Nashville, Tennessee. They've invested the taxpayers' money — \$5.4 million worth of it. What is the status of that investment and what is the total exposure for taxpayers on that investment?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well I don't understand the question, Mr. Speaker, from this perspective. He says they would have this extra money for things like health care and education. Mr. Speaker, correct me if I'm wrong, but I thought the Sask Party in their platform were freezing health care and education. I thought they were going to freeze it. What do they want with the extra money, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, they have no idea about balancing books, Mr. Speaker. They have no idea about business. None whatsoever.

Mr. Speaker, I say again and I will repeat in this House and outside this House, they have one agenda. It is to discredit Crowns; it is to discredit the investment of those Crowns so they can position themselves — irrespective of what the Sask Party member from Swift Current says today about privatization — so they can sell the Crowns, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the privatization plan on this side of the House that that member should be most aware of and most concerned about is our plan and the people of this province's plan to privatize that minister, to privatize that whole front bench back to the private sector, Mr. Speaker. That's the plan that they should be worried about.

Mr. Speaker, here is the record of this government. They lost \$28 million on a bad SPUDCO deal and they didn't tell anybody — they hid it; they covered it up — 17.2 million lost on Coachmen, 7.9 on mega bingo, 9.5 on Persona Inc., 10 million on Craig Wireless, 13.5 million on Navigata, 14.5 million on Retx. Mr. Speaker, the list of losers goes on and on and on.

Will the minister just stand in the House then and please provide the name of one . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order, please. Order, members. I just once again ask members just to lower the tone so that the questions can be fully heard. And I invite the member from Swift Current to put his question.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, will the minister just rise in the Assembly then and name one winner. And failing that, will he . . . I'll go back to the last question. If he can't name one winner, just tell us what's the value of the taxpayers' investment in the Nashville dot-com *tappedinto*?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well at least if they privatize me I would have the one benefit of not having to listen to the rhetoric from that member any more.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, but I have a bigger agenda than that, Mr. Speaker, and I think the winners . . . He asks where the winners are, Mr. Speaker.

You know who the winners are? The winners are the people of Saskatchewan. They're winners, Mr. Speaker, because our Crowns, Mr. Speaker, employ 9,500 people. They're the winners, Mr. Speaker, because over the last 10 years they got \$1.6 billion to provide services to the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. They're winners, Mr. Speaker, because, Mr. Speaker, because they have head offices here in Regina and Saskatoon. Mr. Speaker, they are winners because they partner with over 600 businesses, buy goods and services from over 12,000 businesses here in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, that's why they're winners, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Annual Report of the Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, in the 2002 Fall Report, the Provincial Auditor criticized SLGA (Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority) and SIGA (Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority). Mr. Speaker, according to the Provincial Auditor, SLGA is responsible for supervising SIGA and the SLGA's supervision of SIGA remains deficient.

Mr. Speaker, SIGA was required to table its 2002 annual report by September 30, 2002. According to the Clerk's office, this report has not yet been tabled. Mr. Speaker, SIGA's annual report is seven months late. Will the minister answer, why has it not been tabled?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Well, Mr. Speaker, as the member knows and the public know, there has been significant changes at SIGA that have involved the chief financial officer. We have new executive at SIGA. We have brought under control . . . We have met the benchmarks, Mr. Speaker. And it must be understood, with a new chief financial officer, with the new executives that head up that very competent, that very competent board and the executive, Mr. Speaker, that document will be filed in due course.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, this is the minister that allowed the NDP in the dead of night to form a coalition with the Liberals to enable the NDP to stay in power. This is why the province is in more debt and deficit . . .

The Speaker: — Order please, members. Order.

Ms. Bakken: — Now this same minister is willing to be less than forthright with his answers to protect this NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, we understand that SIGA's annual report has been delivered to the minister of Liquor and Gaming. Will the minister tell this Assembly, does he have SIGA's annual report?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That member has the audacity to stand in this House and talk about dead-of-the-night deals when she's surrounded with the very people that resulted in her being where she is, Mr. Speaker. She's spiralling totally out of control, Mr. Speaker.

And not only that. Now once again that member from Weyburn-Big Muddy, the Saskatchewan Party, their agenda not only to discredit Crowns, Mr. Speaker, but also to discredit SIGA, our First Nations communities that we have partnered with in this province and have been very successful in supporting communities, both for health care, for community funding. And, Mr. Speaker, they have the audacity to stand up in this House and be critical of their efforts.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:15)

Ms. Bakken: — In the fall of 2000 auditor's report, the auditor makes it clear that 7 of the 19 recommendations made by him to SIGA have not been met. The concern is around the timing of the delivery of annual reports and it's also about the content of the annual reports. And now the pattern continues.

And this minister dares to stand in this House and somehow tell us that he is not responsible for this NDP government being in power in the province of Saskatchewan today. He's the one that went with the minister, the Minister of Finance, and enabled this government to become the Government of Saskatchewan, and he is responsible.

Mr. Speaker, if the minister of Liquor and Gaming has the annual report, will he table it in the House and if he will not, what is he hiding from the people of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Well, Mr. Speaker, that member is certainly spiralling totally out of control.

Mr. Speaker, nothing's being hidden. We have made tremendous progress with our partners, the First Nations community of this province.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, I think — I don't think, I know — because a lot of people have told me: thank heavens that you and your leader did what you did because otherwise it would have been devastating to this province for that inexperienced group of men and women to try and take the seriousness of governing a great province like Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am extremely pleased today to stand on behalf of the government and table written questions no. 151 and 152.

The Speaker: — Responses to no. 151 and 152 have been tabled.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 13

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Belanger, that **Bill No. 13 — The Parks Amendment Act, 2003** be now read a second time.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's certainly a privilege to stand in this Assembly today and to speak to this piece of legislation we have before us, The Parks Amendment Act, 2003.

And as some of my colleagues have already indicated, Mr. Speaker, there were some issues in this Bill that I think we need to look at very carefully. Certainly we want to recognize the fact that the Bill acknowledges the need for grazing permits, and extending the grazing permits from one to five years is certainly an important first step.

Mr. Speaker, over the last few years we have seen in the province of Saskatchewan that farmers and ranchers across the province have been dealing with some very difficult times and certainly areas of this province that have seen significant drought conditions resulting in lack of pasture, a lack of grazing opportunities, as these farm families look to build their farming opportunities and their farming enterprises.

And one of the issues we have raised over the past number of years, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that we have felt very strongly that it's important the province of Saskatchewan be prepared to act and address some of these concerns, especially in areas where we have public property like parks.

And we've also noticed with the wildlife federations and Ducks Unlimited in the province of Saskatchewan where they control vast areas of land and over the past number of years have really limited, in fact in some cases just stopped, all grazing opportunities on these lands.

And what this Bill does . . . One of the things that this Bill does indeed is looks at and addresses an issue of grazing opportunity. And we certainly would take a moment to compliment the government for what they have done, especially last year, in opening up grazing opportunities in our provincial parks and on provincial lands where there was

basically a hold put on grazing over the past number of years.

Because, Mr. Speaker, when you look at the province of Saskatchewan, this province continues to have a very large dependence on agriculture. It's an agricultural-based community. And while we have moved into less of a dependence on agriculture and the economic activity and spinoff that we have from agriculture, Mr. Speaker, we still as a province will continue to see the economic impact in this province is, in a major way, will continue from agriculture.

And even the last few days, Mr. Speaker, while some areas of the province have experienced exceptionally good moisture conditions, whether it's rain or snow, there are certainly vast areas in the province that continue to see a lack of moisture and additional moisture that will be needed to help build up the reserves that have actually disappeared over the last few years.

And while those reserves are being built up, and while we're waiting for rainfall to establish the growth of our grazing opportunities and grazing lands and certainly our hay and pasture lands, it's important that the province react and, as we've seen, open up the doors for grazing opportunities.

And as I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, and my colleagues have mentioned over the last period of weeks in this Assembly as well, that it's important for the province to give some leadership and to show the people of Saskatchewan and the farming community, the agriculture community — and more specifically when we talk about grazing we're talking about the livestock industry in this province, Mr. Speaker — show, give some leadership in showing that we're supportive and we recognize the importance of your industry.

And so what this Bill does is adds to and goes, I guess I would say, a step further than what it has in the past, in the fact that it opens up the door now for the government to extend the grazing leases from one to five years. And we certainly think that is a move in the right direction. And I know many of the livestock associations across this province have been telling us that that is a good move; that is what they've been looking for.

Mr. Speaker, as we look at this Bill as well, and the amendments that are coming forward in the piece of legislation, an issue that continues to be raised with my colleagues and I is the issue of land entitlements. And while this Bill doesn't necessarily deal directly with land entitlements, basically one of the major concerns . . . While the Bill is extending grazing permits from one to five years, one of the big concerns in the province — and certainly coming from the livestock industry and people who rely on grazing leases — is the fact that until these land entitlements issues are dealt with, a lot of livestock producers are sitting in a situation where they really have a lot of uncertainty in regards to their farming operations especially when we talk about farming operations that have been in families for a number of years.

So, Mr. Speaker, we agree with and we acknowledge that this step of moving from one to five year grazing leases is an important step, and it's certainly a step that is going in the right direction, and we compliment the government for that.

However, Mr. Speaker, this legislation as well talks about

updating various park legal land descriptions and we have some major questions we'd like to raise in that area.

We feel that there's certainly been a lot of uncertainty over the past number of years as we've seen the changes in how the land titles have been handled in the province of Saskatchewan as we've moved from handwritten to a computerized program and the glitches that landowners and homeowners have faced as they've had land transfers from . . . either through a sale of land or transferring to a family member and the slowdown that we've seen in that area. And in fact it's what we've . . . What most people have experienced has become a more costly process of land transfers as a result of the changes to The Land Titles Act.

We feel that there are a number of issues that need to be looked at as to what the government is really talking about when it talks about updating park legal land descriptions. And I think we . . . There are some questions we need to ask, certainly some questions that are being raised with our caucus in regards to this issue and the changes in this legislation regarding legal land descriptions.

Mr. Speaker, I noticed as well that the minister has indicated there's also a land exchange between the Lac La Ronge Indian Band and Lac La Ronge Provincial Park. And I think the minister indicated the community of Sucker reserve and reserve land at Bittern Lake and the Lac La Ronge Indian Band — they're all involved in this certain section of the legislation.

I believe what it is doing is trying to address some of the issues surrounding Indian land entitlement. And we certainly are taking the time to look at this, to see exactly what it means in regards to the Lac La Ronge Provincial Park and what it will mean for the Indian bands in the area as the government looks at moving some land out of the park into the Lac la Ronge Indian Band to address their needs.

The minister indicated that this change will allow for accommodation of future housing needs on the reserve. And, Mr. Speaker, I think your colleagues, certainly my colleagues on many occasions have, as we've met with our First Nations leadership on our reserves, have . . . that one of the issues that has always come to the forefront is housing needs. And a little later on this afternoon I think we'll be able to get into some of that discussion with the minister now responsible for Sask Housing.

But in regards to the legislation we have before us, the changes in the Act that allow for some of the land to move from the parks to the reserve, as the minister indicated . . . He talked about the fact that it would allow for future housing needs on the Lac La Ronge Reserve. And I think that's an area we'd like to get into further discussion with the minister at the time, and it may not necessarily be with the minister responsible for housing in the province of Saskatchewan, but it's an issue that we want to look at very carefully.

And we need . . . The question that will need to be asked is, will the changes that this legislation is allowing, will they be instrumental in really addressing the serious needs that the band has in regards to its housing needs and whether or not we might be looking at some changes down the road?

So it's certainly important, Mr. Speaker, that we take the time to review this legislation more carefully. While at the . . . off the top it would seem that it's a fairly straightforward piece of legislation, I think there are a number of questions in this legislation in regards to a number of issues, as I've discussed, that need to be addressed. And therefore at this time, Mr. Speaker, I would move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 18

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Higgins that **Bill No. 18 — The Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2003** be now read a second time.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with mixed feelings that I stand today to speak on this Bill. This Bill brings forth presumptive WCB (Workers' Compensation Board) legislation for a cancerous link to firefighting.

I acknowledge that firefighting is a dangerous occupation. That every day men and women risk their lives in the line of duty, fighting fires to save lives and property. And I commend the good work that the firefighters of this province do for all of our communities.

I also acknowledge that there is a growing body of evidence that links the occupation of firefighting to occupational diseases such as cancer. This Bill recognizes brain cancer, bladder cancer, kidney cancer, primary non-Hodgkins lymphoma, or a primary leukemia.

If a firefighter suffers one of these diseases, it will be presumed that this disease is a result of his or her occupation. The individual must be or must have been a full-time firefighter for a designated period of time and must have been regularly exposed to the hazards of a fire scene. The mandatory period of employment for anyone contracting these cancers is to be determined by the regulations after consultation with the Workers' Compensation Board.

Toxins and carcinogens released during the combustion of synthetic materials — which is very common these days in industrial fires — pose both an immediate and long-term risk to firefighters.

I understand that the need for this legislation is because . . . well despite WCB's claim to recognize occupational diseases as compensatory, firefighters with these cancers have had their claims denied.

(14:30)

In fact in 1982, firefighters in Saskatoon were exposed to a burning heap of chemical waste at the University of Saskatchewan. This waste contained radioactive materials as well as acids and numerous chemicals. The Saskatchewan Professional Firefighters Association indicate, and I quote:

Of the dozen firefighters who fought the blaze, half have already died from cancer and two others have been

diagnosed with leukemia.

That's eight out of twelve people who responded to this fire, six died and two have leukemia, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And according to the Firefighters Association, and again I quote:

All but one of the WCB claims filed in connection with this case were denied.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, out of the eight claims, only one was accepted — one out of eight. So despite WCB's claim to recognize and compensate certain occupational illnesses, its track record is abysmal. In fact the WCB's track record is exactly the reason that this presumptive legislation is necessary. Because if the system was working the way it's supposed to work, firefighters who submitted their evidence to substantiate their claims of occupational illness would not have had their claims accepted. But only one out of eight had their claims accepted — one out of eight.

So what this legislation does is reverse the onus for firefighters. Firefighters will no longer have to prove they got the cancer from the job, but the WCB must prove that the firefighter didn't get the cancer from the job.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know it's very troubling that after we have men and women protecting our towns, cities, and citizens from fire and then they get cancer due to job-related causes, that while they're going through their cancer recovery process they're forced to fight the Workers' Compensation Board.

This Bill is good for firefighters who are struggling to hold onto their lives fighting cancer. They can put all of their energy into healing and they will no longer have to go through the frustration of dealing with the WCB in order to have their claim accepted. So I believe that this Bill improves the process for firefighters.

But I also have some concerns. Every fire is different and every firefighter is different. Now I understand that this legislation only applies to firefighters who have been regularly exposed to the hazards of a fire scene. And I assume that within the research that's been done, only long-time firefighters have been studied. And this is concerning because the term regularly is arbitrary when it comes to toxic fires.

Given certain chemical fires and given that individuals may face different circumstances while fighting these fires, it's possible that one fire may be enough to cause serious damage. So I would hope that the research in this area is ongoing and that the regulations are updated regularly to provide for future research findings.

I'd also hope, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that based on this research, improvements to firefighters' protective gear might limit exposure in the future and reduce the chances of them developing cancer or leukemia.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I support legislation that improves the process of settling claims for injured and sick workers. If workers are led to believe that they have coverage for occupational illness, and there is documentation that certain industries have higher incidences of certain illnesses, then these

workers should not be denied coverage under the WCB system.

I also have concerns for other emergency workers who may be at the scene of a fire — such as paramedics, policemen, so on — who may be subjected to toxins in some cases once, or in other cases perhaps on numerous occasions relative to their line of duty. They too would be acting in the line of duty and they may not have the protective equipment firefighters have, yet could be subjected to toxic smoke and fumes.

So I would hope that in the future some of these grey areas may be addressed. Which leads me to my next concern and that is this legislation is rather a band-aid solution to one of the many problems within the workmen's compensation board. When there is the kind of medical evidence available on occupational disease that there is, for example, on the firefighters and cancer, it seems that the WCB should not have to be forced into acting to accept this medical evidence.

Instead the firefighters must go through a lengthy process of organizing and lobbying, and extensive work must be undertaken to bring this Bill before the legislature to deal with a problem that should already be dealt with under the WCB system. To this point I would like to read a few clauses from the WCB policy and procedure manual on occupational disease. It says, and I quote:

A work related disease or condition normally refers to an injury which results from exposure to a causative agent in a work environment, or one that manifests itself following a latent period after exposure to a causative agent. Though it normally results from numerous exposures, it can relate to one, though this . . . (would) usually be (a) traumatic, (case) where it is . . . (easy) to identify . . . (with a) cause.

The policy states, quote:

When a number of claims are submitted for a disease or condition from the same trade, occupation, industry or employer, and the employment environment provides exposure to the causative agent, a record of these trades, occupations, industries or employers is to be maintained and referenced for any future claims of the . . . disease or condition.

In other words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, firefighters submitting claims for cancer should be well documented at the workmen's compensation board by this point. The policy also states, and I quote:

Where the worker's exposure to a causative agent is peculiar to a trade, occupation, industry or employer, the CSR (client service representative) shall make inquiries to determine if any non work causes exist and if none are present the claim shall be accepted.

Where there are both work and non work causes, the CSR will assess the degree of exposure or effect on the disease by both and determine, based on such things as: the latency, progression and the nature of the disease, degree of exposure and medical support of the cause, whether to accept a claim.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is the WCB's policy on occupational disease. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it's pretty clear that the WCB's policies are not being adhered to and hence the need for this presumptive legislation.

The problem is that this legislative amendment only deals with firefighters and not other workers who may find themselves in similar dilemmas. And I know that every MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) in this Assembly has had a substantial number of calls from injured workers seeking guidance about the WCB system because they have had a legitimate claim denied.

At the same time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I recognize that there are cases of WCB fraud which must be guarded against so workers with legitimate claims can be given proper compensation. I also recognize, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that employers who foot the bill by paying WCB premiums are also concerned with escalating administrative costs and increasing premiums.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, rather, these problems have yet to be addressed by this government. And with these comments, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm pleased to say that I support the Bill and move that the Bill now proceed to the Committee of the Whole.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Bill No. 9

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Serby that **Bill No. 9 — The Agricultural Implements Amendment Act, 2003** be now read a second time.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's an honour today to be able to stand and speak to Bill No. 9, The Act to amend The Agricultural Implements Act.

It, according to the minister, aligns our legislation with regulations with the other Prairie provinces, and it's quite long overdue, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because it's been some time since this Act has been amended and the industry has changed and evolved over time.

When I read the minister's notes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the minister stated that these amendments are directly a result of a series of consultations with key stakeholders who have worked with the government to improve and strengthen The Agricultural Implements Act. And he also stated that these stakeholders provided their expertise and thoughtful advice. And I quote — he said, "They spoke with us and we listened."

And it's a very interesting statement, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it was sad, quite frankly, to lead the public into believing that this is a very proactive and responsive government.

But sadly, as with most issues, it simply isn't true in this case

either. A more descriptive statement that the minister should have used is, we dragged our feet long enough, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we didn't have enough legislation prepared for the session to justify our existence in the House so therefore I guess we'll finally make the changes that the industry has been asking for, for probably going on six or more years.

It's to my understanding that the consultation process has been ongoing for at least that long. These are changes that the stakeholders in the industry have been asking for for at least that long. And finally, this particular minister did decide to act but, you know, as far as listening well, Mr. Upshall, I'm sure, listened too and Mr. Lingenfelter, he listened as well. And finally I think because of, due to lack of legislation that they have available for this session, they decided to amend this Act.

Many of the amendments, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are updates to the definitions and explanations that were within the Act. They simply make the Bill more clear, comprehensive, and definite. So that is a positive thing, I believe. And other changes that I view as positive improvements, you know, there's a number of those and I'm more than happy to support them.

The protection in the Act has been expanded to leases, with or without the right to purchase. And I feel that's an important change, as more and more equipment is being leased rather than purchased outright. So the members on this side of the House are quite pleased to see that the protection for the producers who are leasing equipment will be extended to those leases, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Another section of the Bill allows financial institutions on financial leasing corporations in Saskatchewan to provide farm implement leases — and the farmer who gains finances through these outlets, that they will still be fully protected under the Act. And that is a good thing for the producers of the province, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Two particularly very welcome changes that I like to see are that the dealer will be allowed to sell parts at a price different than the list price and that will mean that they can legitimately offer a discount, that there won't be . . . That will not be in question. It does make the dealers more competitive within one . . . against each other. But it is something that I think is very, very important to them.

And it will also allow the dealers to sell whole goods and parts for a product even after the manufacturer has gone into receivership. And again, that's an extremely positive thing for the dealers in order for them to serve their clients and their customer base. Because prior to the changes in this Act, the dealer was not allowed to make those sales until the assets of the manufacturer was purchased by someone else. So that meant that they were unable to service their customers who had equipment manufactured by the manufacturer who had gone into receivership. So those are, those are positive changes.

One that I know in talking to people involved with the industry that I don't see in this piece of legislation but I do think that it's very valuable to producers to have something in place, is that the dealers in Alberta are required to get a performance bond of no less than 50,000 from insurance companies. So that if a farmer puts a deposit on a piece of equipment and the dealer

goes into receivership before the farmer has a chance to pick up that piece of equipment, the farmer's not out his deposit, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And it's disappointing that that change wasn't also made in this piece of legislation because I feel it's a very important protection tool for the producers. When we're talking about agriculture equipment, we're talking about large amounts of money, quite frankly, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So it's something that I don't feel this minister addressed and he could of. So that was disappointing when I went through the Bill.

The Bill interestingly addresses changes to the Ag Implements Compensation Fund, which is a fund that is available to producers if they feel aggrieved in some way by a dealer or if they've suffered a loss for some reason. And the ag dealers quite welcome this fund, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because it alleviates small claims having to go to court. It's a good way to deal with smaller grievances by producers, if there has . . . something's gone wrong with the deal.

And in the case of a claim, the maximum award was \$5,000 and this amendment will increase that to \$10,000. And I realize that very few farmers actually have the need to file a claim. But for those who do it'll be interesting to question the minister what the size of those claims are because, as I mentioned earlier, when you're dealing with agriculture and agriculture equipment, you know, the bill can be quite large.

So is the increase from 5,000 to 10,000 even enough or should it have been a little bit bigger increase? And many of the people in the industry are saying they wouldn't have minded if it had have been increased even more because it does keep smaller claims out of the courts.

Something that is of concern that I've seen in the Bill is the Ag Implements Compensation Fund, which is a building fund to deal with claims, is now going to be directed into the General Revenue Fund. So it's something that I feel that is happening far too often with this government. They have specialized funds to deal with special situations and suddenly they're depositing more and more of those specialized funds into their General Revenue Fund.

(14:45)

Now I don't think it's a huge sum of money, but it is substantial. I've been told that it's around \$400,000 and I can be corrected if I'm wrong in that. And I'm looking forward to being able to question the minister why he felt that that specific fund should be directed into the General Revenue Fund. And unfortunately it happens far too often where then it is squandered by this NDP government.

Another really questionable change in the Bill is that it empowers the board who handles the claims to levy a fine if a particular dealer had a number of complaints filed against him. Now at first blush, this seems to protect the farmers a great deal and it would. You know, the intent obviously of the change is to address difficulties that occur due to a repeat problem dealer.

But I guess the question that I need to ask of the minister when that chance arises is, has that been a problem? Has there been a need that made him feel that this change had to be made? Because usually, I would think that if there was a dealer who wasn't maybe forthright and honest in dealing with his customers or his clients or the producers, fairly soon he would be out of business, Mr. Deputy Speaker; that the market would dictate who's the good dealer and who isn't a good dealer. So I question why that change needed to be made, why did the minister feel that that was a provision he needed to add to the Act.

Possibly one of the most concerning changes, and again it raises many questions as to why, is that this Bill gives unbelievable power to the minister himself. The minister may impose additional terms and conditions on a dealer for their licence that the minister deems appropriate. And this is not something . . . A lot of the changes within the Bill aligns the Bill with what's in legislation in both Manitoba and Alberta, so in the Prairie provinces. But this particular change is not in either Alberta or Manitoba.

So it will be interesting for the minister to answer that question as to why he felt the need to empower himself and his position in future years when he is no longer the minister. Why did he feel the need that that position should have that type of power?

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will be supporting this Bill. There are questions that I, you know, definitely will be asking when the opportunity arises.

And this is something that the industry has asked for. There's been consultation, as I mentioned earlier, for many, many years. And so this is a Bill that I think has a lot of merit to good changes.

But something else that I think that the agriculture dealers would be very, very happy to see, quite frankly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the agriculture dealers want to see a strong agriculture industry. And they want to see profitable farms and they want to see financially stable farmers.

And that is something that this government has dropped the ball in a big way in providing for this province. They, you know, a number of years ago, tore up the risk management tool that the producers of the province had available to them, promising to replace it year after year, and never did — and basically left the producers on their own, and something that other provinces did not do. Most provinces have companion programs in place, and so when a year comes along where there's a wreck — such as what we've been facing now for two years — they at least come into that situation fairly stable. And yes, it's a difficult time, but they're able to get through it.

It's unfortunate that our producers didn't have that opportunity to be able to access a risk management program that would have helped them through the situation. And that is where I feel that this government has failed the producers of the province in a great deal.

And the other thing that they're facing is increased crop insurance rates that are astronomical and extremely difficult to face considering that it has been years . . . or it has been two

years of a drought and low income. They're looking at low prices.

So if the NDP government had grown the economy, if they had grown the economy so that we had a strong economic base here in Saskatchewan, we could afford those programs for the producers of this province. Instead all we hear is excuses.

And that's what agriculture dealers would like to see — a profitable industry, profitable farmers who could afford to come and be their customers.

So with that, I would like this Bill to go on to committee. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization Vote 1

Subvote (AG01)

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

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I have these officials with me today. Seated next to me is Mr. Gord Nystuen. He's the deputy minister. To my left is Mr. Hal Cushon, who is the assistant deputy minister. Over to my far right is Mr. Doug Matthies, who's the general manager of crop insurance. Seated directly behind me is Mr. Ross Johnson, who's the manager of operational services, and beside Mr. Johnson is Karen Aulie, who's the director of corporate services branch. And in the back row I have Louise Greenberg, who is the assistant deputy minister; and Maryellen Carlson, who is the assistant deputy minister; Greg Haase, who is the director of lands branch; Dave Boehm, who is the director of financial services branch; and Laurier Donais, who is the senior manager of financial services, corporate services branch.

And those are my staff, officials that are with me today, Mr. Deputy Chair.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Minister, I'm looking at a copy of the Speech from the Throne that your government started this current session with, and in that speech there is a section dealing with the whole area of greenhouse gas emissions and carbon credits and so on. And the section that I'm referring to, your government expresses disappointment with the Government of Canada in that the federal government has refused to recognize credits for farmers' carbon sinks.

Your government indicates that you will be taking the federal government to task on this issue and make it a point of negotiation. I wonder if you could explain what action your government has taken to date on this issue.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well thank you very much. I thank the member, Mr. Deputy Chair. I want to just say a number of

things. That in the Throne Speech, as you know, our government has been front and centre in terms of ensuring that we have established in this province a grain strategy and an environmental sustainable strategy and done a number of things around it. On the greenhouse gas emission piece there have really been three things, three pieces of work that have been conducted, primarily led by the . . . initially by the Minister of Environment, certainly complemented by the ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs.

And to date the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs has been the lead ministry on this, certainly complemented by the work that we do out of Ag and Food around three things. One is that we want to see in the actual allocation of carbon sinks, which is I think where the member is leading this conversation to. We have already written to the ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs in Ottawa, led by our Saskatchewan minister, and we've asked for three things to occur.

One is that we want to see a larger recognition of the carbon credits for Saskatchewan because we feel that the work that the federal government has done in establishing the level of carbon credits for our province has been underestimated and so the minister has asked that we see a higher allocation for Saskatchewan.

Secondly, the provincial government has asked, the Saskatchewan government has asked the federal government to provide or see that those carbon credits can see their way to producers. Because we think it is they who in fact at the end of the day are creating the credit for Saskatchewan people and for the national government and accordingly they should be credited to Saskatchewan producers.

And thirdly, what we have also been saying is that the federal government has indicated that the implementation period of the carbon sinks would begin in the year 2000, I believe, and 6 or it might actually be 8. It's 8, I think; it's 2008. What we're saying here is that there should be a period of retroactivity here to incorporate those producers who have already been ensuring that we have capacity in our province today to provide for the carbon credit.

And so it's those three areas of which we've already written to the federal ministry. The Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs has yet not received a response from the federal government but it is on that front that we're proceeding to get the benefits of carbon sequestration for our Saskatchewan producers. It's a tough word, Mr. Member.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Minister. Then I take it from your comments, to summarize, the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs has written and raised this issue with the federal Minister of Environment. I wonder if you could provide us with a copy of that communication between the two ministers.

I guess secondly what I would ask is, within your own department, Minister, what type of resources have you devoted to this file, this whole area of carbon sinks and storage of carbon and the benefits that it could provide to our producers down the road?

We know that when the Kyoto is, when it comes into effect,

and that I guess hinges — is my understanding of the whole issue — it hinges on whether Russia signs on, signs the Kyoto Protocol. But if that time arises when we are into this whole implementation program, we know that farm producers along with the average citizen in the province will most likely see higher energy costs, higher gas and diesel prices, higher electrical costs due to the nature of the whole implementation plan where our energy producers will be required to spend significant dollars to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. And I'm sure they will attempt, as most businesses do, to pass those costs along.

So we know that our farmers will have higher energy costs. That's pretty well a certainty. And as far as I can see in this whole area of greenhouse gases and implementation plan and so on, the carbon sinks are about the only thing that I can see at this time that offer some benefit.

(15:00)

And it's a hugely important issue for the producers of our province and for our province, not only for our farm people but for our whole . . . for all citizens of this province. And I think your government — I'm hoping at least — that your government is devoting sufficient resources and energies to this issue. And I would like an explanation as, Minister, as far as the resources you have allocated to this file in your department.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I thank the member for the question. We have the intergovernmental department committee that's been working on this piece now for some time and we do have representation from the Department of Agriculture and Food that serve on this committee. This committee has been struck for, as I've said, for some months now.

The lead ministry has been Intergovernmental Affairs, given that the negotiations and discussions really do need to happen at the national level with the federal government. And accordingly it's been led by the ministry.

And you're absolutely right that, over the period of time that we move forward on this file, we're going to see a greater need for us to become far more responsive in terms of how energy is conserved and who gets the credits here.

And we, through our department, have had involved as well a number of farm organizations. The Canadian Federation of Agriculture, as you know, is very much involved in this process, as well at the national level. At the local level in Saskatchewan we have the soil conservation group that has done a tremendous amount of work on it. The Saskatchewan Research Council has done additional work.

So collectively we have a number of groups and organizations that are assisting us collectively in putting together the strategy and also to ensure that Saskatchewan at the end of the day becomes a benefactor of the decisions that are made at the national level.

Now we know that this will be a difficult discussion and certainly some difficult negotiations and the minister of Industry and Resources in the past, who led the campaign on this file and now is leading it from Intergovernmental Affairs,

clearly in my view has a very good understanding and appreciation of it, has served Saskatchewan very well in terms of the negotiations to date.

And I know that with his full knowledge of this file, Saskatchewan will be and Saskatchewan producers at the end of the day will be well served through his leadership and for sure through the work of the intergovernmental department committee.

Mr. Hart: — Minister, I take it from your comments that you have one or two departmental people that are responsible for this area, or is it just some individual who has this responsibility as a bit of an add-on?

I see that this whole issue, it's certainly not confined to Agriculture. Agriculture's only one area that will be affected by this whole . . . of this implementation plan, certainly Industry and Resources. And I would expect that that department would also be a key player in the whole . . . developing the whole, the position, the provincial position, and leading the discussions.

But I would hope, Minister, that your department is equally strongly represented and that you have personnel and resources allocated to this particular file because, although as you mentioned, farm organizations are playing a very active role with it, I don't think we can expect to leave everything up to those people. Quite often they're limited with as far as resources, and whether it be financial or personnel and that sort of thing. And I would certainly urge your department to take a very active role because this — as I had said — this is a hugely important issue. And I would certainly not like to see the province of Saskatchewan once again be left out in the cold on this issue. I think this is an issue that needs to be driven from the provinces.

I guess I would ask, Minister, are you consulting with our neighbouring provinces, the other Western provinces, who will be equally be affected and could also benefit from the implementation of a carbon storage regime or method in these . . . in our country that will recognize the contributions that our farmers are making and allow them to participate in the financial rewards that may be there, if this whole area is developed to the extent that that in fact could happen?

So, Minister, I guess to summarize, once again could you be somewhat more specific as to the type of resources you've allocated, and also are you in the consultation with our neighbouring provinces on this issue?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the member, we have a number of people, my officials tell me, that are involved on the Intergovernmental department team that is working on this piece. And they would be from individuals and folks who are working on the ethanol strategy, which you know has a significant impact on environment and on greenhouse gas. We have people in the Department of Agriculture and Food who are in the ag forestry side, and we have people from the soils division that are also working on this piece. So we have a number of branches within the government of which people are included in the larger intergovernment committee that's working on this.

And although we're not providing the lead ministry on this piece, the reality is that collectively the officials and the ministers are working closely, making sure that we not only complement each other but also ensure that Saskatchewan's position is well represented from a variety of different fronts.

As well we have had discussions with the provinces of Manitoba and Alberta around this piece because they too have large agricultural communities, of which agriculture will play a large part in terms of the carbon sinks, and accordingly those discussions will continue.

Collectively we have been raising similar and like issues and I expect that as we move along on this file, you'll see a stronger voice coming out of Western Canada collectively as ministers then approach the federal government for some of the more difficult challenges that we're going to have, as I've described in the onset, as to increasing the level of recognition on the sinks and to where the credits go to. We're going to have, as you can appreciate, a head-butt on that front because the federal government has their own position as to what that should look like. And at the end of the day we're going to . . . we know we're going to be in a difficult debate.

And just to make a short comment, Saskatchewan and its people have never been in the cold as long as we've been making sure that good public policy is in place in Saskatchewan, and you can be assured here that we'll be sure that this issue too will ensure that Saskatchewan is extremely well represented in our work.

Mr. Hart: — Minister, to refer to your last comments, what I was referring to and I think you would have to agree, that when it came time to develop some of the safety net plans that we've just seen go by the wayside — I'm thinking of AIDA (Agricultural Income Disaster Assistance) and CFIP (Canada Farm Income Program) — I would suggest that you may have to reluctantly agree, Minister, that Saskatchewan certainly wasn't at the forefront when AIDA was developed. In fact the minister at the time, Mr. Upshall, saw a slight increase in the PRO (pool return outlook) values of some 10 cents a bushel and says, we don't have a problem, and went off to Mexico and allowed the federal government and the Eastern provinces to develop AIDA. And then of course the rest is history.

But having said that . . . And that's where my fears come from, Minister. I want to make sure that Saskatchewan and your government has the responsibility of taking the leadership role on this issue, that you are out there actively looking after the interests of our producers.

I had recent conversations with officials from the Saskatchewan Soil Conservation Association and they tell me that the big issue out there is we have to determine — and I'm saying we, we in Saskatchewan and we in Canada, I guess — have to determine who actually owns the carbon sinks.

And as I understand the current position of the federal government, that the business-as-usual carbon sinks, they've taken those as a national treasure and there's some 10 million metric tons that will be applied to offset some other emissions and that anything beyond, any other carbon that is stored once we get into the . . . past 2008, the period when we start

measuring and accounting for all the carbon that's emitted and stored and so on, that that is the time when farmers will then be able to assume ownership. And in fact there is some question around that.

And so the whole question is . . . And the point of the business-as-usual carbon credits, that whole area, I'm assuming from the comments in the Speech from the Throne, that is the area that you will be discussing with the federal government. And I certainly support your efforts in that and I'm urging intense negotiations on that point.

And I should mention, Minister — you may not be aware of this and perhaps you are — at a recent annual meeting of the Soil Conservation Council of Canada, there were four resolutions passed on March 19 addressing this whole area of carbon sinks. And I am told that all the associations from across Canada were in agreement on this issue that carbon sinks should belong to the landowner— that we don't need two types of carbon sinks. We don't need the business as usual. And then the ones that will take effect after 2008 and producers . . . One of the resolutions recognize or call on governments to recognize agricultural sinks should go to the producers and as I said, recognize that; and that also we should go back to a baseline of 1990 to start counting the things that need to be done and farmers should be given credit for that.

So those are the points that I would urge your government to carry forward vigorously. And I had asked earlier whether you would be providing us with a copy of the letter that you have sent, and you're indicating that you will. And I would ask that you keep the farm organizations involved. They are both willing to be involved and as you indicated, they have been involved to this point in time. And I would urge perhaps a closer liaison with all interested parties, including members on this side of the House, Minister.

Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Chair, I appreciate the member's comments because this is a huge issue for Western Canadian farmers and for sure in Saskatchewan a huge issue, given the large land base that we have in this province and the contributions that we're making today into carbon collection, so through our soil conservation efforts that we make. So there's no doubt that you and I and others in this province agree that this is a substantive issue for producers in the province.

And we also appreciate the effort of . . . and the work which you had outlined has been led by the Saskatchewan conservation community, because we think that that's important as well. And for sure, over the next little while we too appreciate the support that you say you're prepared to give and that's a good thing because it's been a rare occasion that we've witnessed that from that side of the House. And so from time to time when you're able to, when you're able to put it forward, we will appreciate that.

And I wouldn't, I wouldn't say this at all, Mr. Chair, to the member opposite but he raised with me AIDA and CFIP. And any time he raises with me AIDA and CFIP, about how in fact AIDA and CFIP have in fact . . . that AIDA and CFIP have not been well supported by this government across Canada or in

this province, I always get a little bristly about it, Mr. Chair. And I don't like getting bristly but when it gets there for me, then I have to raise it.

And I want to say to the members opposite, we too, like you, did not like AIDA and we too didn't like CFIP. And at the end of the day it looks like CFIP will also be gone and we'll have a new national program in Canada, of which our Canadian farmers will have the benefit of. And we've been at the table negotiating that as best we can with our federal friends.

So I really do appreciate your comments about how it is that we need to keep you informed on this process, how you'll be supportive in that, and because the carbon sinks and the carbon issue is a huge issue for Saskatchewan. And collectively, I think that we can set the politics aside and should set the politics aside because it's about making a difference in Saskatchewan on the environment and crediting those people who really deserve to get them on the ground, which are the producers. And we are working with the farm groups and the organizations and will be sure that we include you in providing the kind of information that we need along the way.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Chair, just a few comments to respond to the minister's comments. Certainly we on this side of the House feel that this whole carbon sink issue is a hugely important issue and we are willing to work with you and lend our support when we see that it's fit to lend support.

Your government has a track record of dropping the ball on some key ag issues. We're hoping that this won't be such an occasion. And that's why I made the request that you keep us informed so that we can not only have some input but also to make sure that the direction that your government is taking is in the best interests of our agriculture producers. And as you've indicated, that is your intent.

(15:15)

Although history will have shown that sometimes you tend not to keep your eye on the ball, your government sometimes loses its vision and its way and we would certainly . . . And the people that are the net losers in that situation are our farm producers, Minister. And therefore, we feel that we have a responsibility as an opposition to make sure that you keep your eye on the ball. And having said that, that is in the spirit of co-operation that we would offer at this time, Minister.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well, Mr. Chair, I just want to say that I'm really pleased that the member opposite recognized that at least we're carrying a ball. And so as we carry the ball, we'll pass it to you now and then so that you can add a little bit to it, and we could then build a larger agricultural policy for Saskatchewan producers. And any time that you're prepared to help us carry the ball on agriculture, I'd be very happy to share it with you as we move along.

Ms. Harpauer: — It is such a delight to hear the minister is being so co-operative today because that's actually what I'm going to request is a little bit of co-operation in the explanation of his news release, the news release from his department on April 29. And I just had a couple of questions about that news release, Mr. Chair.

And it follows the day after a federal government news release. And the federal government news release said that a review has been undertaken, which is something that we asked, that an independent review be done, and the one that Vanclief is talking about is been conducted by IBM Consulting and George Morris Centre. And in his press release, he says that it shows that this will be a great program in the risk management envelope of the APF (agriculture policy framework) and it will work better than what previous programs have for the producers.

The minister's press release, the provincial minister's press release however, questions that. It says that it:

. . . raises questions about the level of funding committed by the federal government.

And he also . . . It mentions that:

The independent report indicates the risk management program proposed by the industry "resulted in better measures of stability . . . than does the proposed program."

I just wanted to question him as to what study was done by the industry. Who in the industry? And since he's being so co-operative today, could I get a copy of that, please?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well, Mr. Chair, to the member from Watrous, I want to first say that the report that you're asking about is really . . . was really prepared by CFA. The Canadian Federation of Agriculture prepared the report of which they submitted to the federal government, and it's that report of which the federal government alludes to in their press release.

And it's also that report of which IBM and the George Morris committee also talk about. So it's that report that they talk about.

Now I don't have a copy of it because it was delivered to the federal ministry, and it's this committee that we're speaking of today that actually did a short appraisal of it. When I responded to the press release that was . . . In my press release when I responded to the work that was done by the committee, I was really responding to the points of reference of which the committee addressed.

And in the executive summary, which I'm reading from here, they talk about, this committee talks about really five or six things that they believe have been well addressed by the national package on the APF in business risk management.

And these are these. They said this, that — and I quote — that they wanted to be sure that the new business risk management would be responsive.

And this group that's examined it led by Mr. Martin and Nancy Brown Andison, and Lloyd Davenport and Harry Stoddart, and Allan Mussell, it's the committee that actually did the work on the analysis.

They say that there was good responsiveness in the APF business risk management and it ensures that government dollars are in fact directed to areas of need with respect to

income stabilization, disaster mitigation, insurance coverage, and investment.

And then they also say in the second bullet, that this new package actually does provide equal treatment for farmers across Canada, because the compendium programs are coming out. And thirdly, they also go on to say that this new program provides the ability to minimize distortion of farmers' production and market decisions.

Fourthly, they said it provides better ability for farmers to manage risk management stability in the entire farm and to avoid duplication of payments; and it does provide simplicity and ease of understanding far better than what the three programs did in the past; and it provides the ability to facilitate long-term planning for farmers.

So from a general perspective they highlight those conditions, or those positions in terms of the package.

And they did some analysis on some farm plans. They took three Ontario cash crop farms, an Ontario swine farm, and then they took four Saskatchewan cash crop farms for the period 1995 to 2001. And I'm just simply reading from the executive summary, not actually having seen the data. And we'll get a more detailed response.

And then they go on to say — which I responded to in my press release because I think these are critical to the discussion that we've been having over the last year and a half and the ones that we need to have in the months to follow here — they say that the proposal that was put forward by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture is relatively sound but the problem with it is that the envelope of \$1.1 billion that's been set aside for business risk management in Canada is not sufficient. It's not enough dollars.

So to take the three programs, reconstruct them into two, and try to meet the kinds of expectations that the CFA package alludes to, there isn't enough money in the package is what this report said.

And then the other piece that this report really says and they make a point of saying it in their comments here, is that the three programs deal with short-term injury caused by such levels as dumping and single-year subsidy programs. But they then go on to say that none of the programs really address trade injury.

And this is where we part company and have parted company for some months with the federal government, by saying to them that we were successful in negotiating for Canadian producers \$600 million for last year and again this year, of which Saskatchewan's going to get 183 million, or 30 per cent, which is now off the Fredericton formula, which we too have been able to negotiate with the federal government.

But we've said that the problem with this new package is that the \$600 million stops after this year. And what Canadian producers will have access to is 1.1 billion and will no longer have any benefit . . . the benefit of the 600 million into the out years which really should reflect the trade distortion caused by the US (United States) farm Bill.

And so we've been arguing for months now that what we should . . . what should happen here is that the federal government, if it's not putting any more money into the business risk management package of 1.1 billion, they should at least put in the \$600 million over the next four years to correspond with the farm Bill in the US.

And it's there where I think we need to hang our hat and where we need to take up the debate not only as Saskatchewan producers but also as provincial ministers across the country, and I think oppositions.

There's a role here, in my view, where opposition parties do have a leg up to some degree. We should be hearing on the floor of the legislature . . . or the floor of the House in Ottawa on a regular basis, questions to the federal government from the opposition parties about how are they going to support in the future the trade distortion of which is in fact the big issue for Canadian producers and right here at home.

And so my press release addressed itself to the fact that if you're going to build a stronger business risk management package outside of the one that we have today, that is led by something like the CFA have crafted, you need to have more than the 1.1.

If you can't get any more than the 1.1, which is what the federal government has been saying to us all along, then you should pick the ball up — if I take the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood about carrying the ball — you should pick up that ball on trade injury and you should reinstate it again into the debate and you could see and should see whether or not we could grow into the out years, the next four years, an additional \$600 million per year. Because that's where I think we have our greatest opportunities.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. That was very interesting. I don't think you will hear any member on this side of the House not agree that we would like to see the 600 million per year extended.

However, I'm quite frankly and I'm sure a number of us and the producers are tired of the sandbox talk. We have a federal government that says it's got nothing to do with trade injury. We have a provincial minister who says it's trade injury. So we can say he said, she said, and go around, round, and round the circle on this one, but it's getting nowhere, quite frankly.

It gives the federal government the excuse then that, if it's not trade injury, they don't have to continue it. That's their excuse and therefore it's no longer all a federal responsibility if they don't call it trade injury. And the province can run around and say it is trade injury and that gives them the excuse not to put in 40 per cent.

So let's be realistic about what it is. We don't know what it is but each level of government's going to call it what serves their purpose. So yes, we agree it should be extended because it's necessary money and there's a number of issues that needs to be addressed in our agriculture industry.

But I'm going to go back very briefly to the press release because maybe I'm a little too analytical but when the wording

says that an independent report indicates that the risk management program proposed by the industry resulted in better measure of stability, then does the proposed program — I'm assuming that would mean the proposed program by the federal government . . . I would think there was a program, there was something that I could take my numbers or my neighbour's numbers or another farmer's numbers and plug them in and say, this works, this does not work, and if it doesn't work, how can it be fixed?

I am tired of these little statements of, you know, how it's responsive and how it's going to do this and that. We need to see a program that we can put money . . . or numbers into, quite frankly, and say, this is where there's a problem and this is where there isn't.

This insinuates that there is a program, there is something that we can put numbers into, and that there's two of them, quite frankly, is what the press release insinuates — that there is one proposed by the industry and one proposed by the federal government. Is that right or is it wrong?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well I can understand, Mr. Chair, the member's frustration because I too have sensed the same kind of frustration trying to answer this question for you for some months now, trying to tell you and your official opposition and your leader that there are two national programs now that have been designed.

There are two national programs in the business risk management side that have been developed. They're called crop insurance and an enhanced NISA (Net Income Stabilization Account) is what they are. And you've had ample opportunity to see what they are because they're public.

The farm groups and organizations have them today. SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) has a copy of the work that has been done today. And if there's somebody missing from this equation, APAS (Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan) has it. Farm organizations and groups know exactly what these two programs are looking like. And it's exactly against that analysis of which this review has been compared to — it's exactly against that analysis.

So if you're standing up today and representing your political party and saying we don't know what it is, then you should find out what it is because it's well-known across Canada today what those two programs are and what they look like.

In fact probably delivered in your mailbox to your community, you got a brochure from the federal government. For sure the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood did because he stood up and asked me a question during question period and said I got something in the mail from the federal government. Well what he got in the mail is a definition of what those two programs are.

So when you stand up today in this Assembly and say to me we don't know what they are, you should know what they are. And if you don't know what they are then you should have a conversation with your leader or whomever is in charge of the agricultural direction there and they will get a full explanation of what it is.

Now this isn't about who, what he said, and what he said, on the trade injury piece. And we should be sure that we get this right because the \$600 million — of which this province and this minister and this government and this Premier were successful in leading by the way — the \$600 million that we got for the last two years has been driven by this Premier and this ministry and this government. That's why we have it.

And Canadian farmers are the benefactors of it, and so are Saskatchewan producers the benefactors today of the \$180 million that's flowing to their jeans because of the work that we've done here.

And when you stand in your place and say . . . Because every farmer in Saskatchewan and farm group in Saskatchewan believe that that \$180 million that we got last year and will get again this year and the \$600 million is trade injury, it is trade money. And they all believe it's trade money. And for you standing up in this House and saying to Saskatchewan producers that it's not trade money is absolutely deceiving and you should not use that language.

(15:30)

Because you are allowing the federal government to escape without having to . . . There should never be any participation, Mr. Chair, in trade injury money here by Saskatchewan producers ever. And as long as I'm the Agriculture minister for this province and represent this government, we should never have anybody from that side of the House walking around this province saying that we should be contributing to trade injury. That's absolutely absurd.

And when I hear you say it and members of your opposition members' party say it and your leaders say it, it is disgraceful when you use that kind of language because it's asking producers to pay for something they've already paid for. The 40 per cent that we're receiving today in trade injury is what we should be getting from the federal government, and we should never be letting them off the hook on that.

And you shouldn't be saying that we should be participating on a cost share on trade injury money because it's not supported on any front, by any producer, by any farm organization, or any province.

Ms. Harpauer: — That minister can stand . . .

The Chair: — Order, order. Sorry, Member, before we begin I just want to remind hon. members that in the committee the Chair has taken a less aggressive approach in ensuring that members communicate to the Chair and through the Chair. But I do find that if the discussion continues to be pointed, that I will start to enforce that rule. So I just remind hon. members of that.

Ms. Harpauer: — That minister can stand here in this House all he wants and try to twist words and do a little rant, but I want him to tell me when the federal minister has ever said it was trade injury — and that was my point. Because we want to sit here as a province with our head in the sand and say it's trade injury and therefore we're not, you know, we're not taking part in it. And we have never pressured him to take part

in it and pay 40 per cent on this side of the House.

However, there has never in my knowledge been a statement by the federal government that says that this is a trade injury payment, because they too are shirking their responsibilities.

So for him to say that he and his Premier are largely responsible for this, I just don't buy it and the people in the industry do not buy it, the producers don't buy it. He can say it all he wants but the simple fact is he's dropped the ball. The NDP government has dropped the ball numerous times and this is no different.

It is because the agriculture producer groups, being out in Ottawa, that there was an extra \$600 million payment. And nowhere, absolutely nowhere has the federal government acknowledged that it had anything to do with trade injury.

Does that mean we should still negotiate for trade injury? Absolutely, Mr. Deputy Chair, because that is a federal government responsibility.

But to have this minister stand there and insinuate that I don't know what I'm doing because . . . and how dare I say that it's not trade injury. Well then let him stand up and put something where his mouth is and prove to me that that federal minister's ever called it a trade injury payment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Harpauer: — Now we're going to go back to this news release and he's trying again to say, if you don't know what we're talking about, there's two programs. Yes, I know there's two programs; there's new NISA and crop insurance. I know that.

I was questioning the wording in his own news release that insinuates that there was a risk management program proposed by the industry. It doesn't say proposed by the federal government, and it says that those results were better than the federal government's results.

Which one . . . Did the industry propose crop insurance or new NISA? Does he not even understand his own press release? And if he doesn't, then maybe he should get a better writer because it is a very confusing press release. It insinuates that there is two programs, risk management programs; and it is his problem and his department if they can't word these things correctly.

So with that I am going to turn it over to someone else because I don't even . . . I don't think the minister can answer that question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well, Mr. Chair . . . well, Mr. Chair, I'm going to try answer the question because I want to try and be sure that both she and I understand what the press release says.

The press release, in my view, says that what we say, Mr. Chair, is that in fact the report raises the question about the level of funding committed by the federal government. And I

say, and I say in my press release, the committee itself is saying in its review that the \$1.1 million cannot address the kinds of enhancements that the Canadian Federation of Agriculture proposal puts to the table. It's not enough money. It says that right here.

And I say exactly the same thing. I say they're right and we've been saying that for the better part of 10 months — that if you want a different, enhanced, broader program of which CFA is calling for, you have to put more than the \$1.1 billion in there. So that's what my press release says.

The other thing that I say, coming right out of the report that was done by IBM and the George Morris Foundation, by that committee, they say right in their report, there is no trade injury money. They say it right here. Now where on earth would they come up with that language if they wouldn't be . . . They're doing the work on behalf of the federal government and they recognize that the federal government isn't putting any money into trade injury.

And the member should just go back to last fall. I mean last fall in Saskatchewan, we had a number of people who came together. We had about 15 groups and farm groups and organizations, and your own leader was at this meeting in November . . . or in September of last year where we met in Saskatoon.

And what did we highlight at that meeting, Madam Member? We highlighted with the federal government, with Mr. Pettigrew, Mr. Chair — Mr. Chair and Madam Member — we outlined a number of things. So what we said is we need to see the federal government put money into trade injury. And your leader was at the very same meeting that we were at, Mr. Chair. Their leader was at the very same . . . (inaudible) . . . he too was at that meeting. And he said, you know what, this is trade injury and what we should have today is we should have the federal government participating towards trade injury.

And around that table was the Canadian Federation of Agriculture and SARM and other farm groups and organizations that were at this meeting, where we had about 150 people in a room. And we all agreed it was trade injury, including your leader said it was trade injury. And we were successful in negotiating with the federal government two lumps of money or two bags of money for \$600 million for each of those years and it's dedicated towards trade injury. So everybody in Saskatchewan knows it's trade injury. We call it trade injury.

The federal government doesn't call it trade injury, no. Why doesn't the federal government call it trade injury? Because they want the provinces to share in it. That's why they don't call it trade injury. And so we're not using and adopting that language. And I say to the member opposite, please recognize along . . . as your own leader has recognized, this is trade injury money; it's trade injury money for farmers. And you need to accept that language and we need to continue to work towards getting more money into the out years.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Through you to the minister today, if there's any confusion on your part or our part about what the APF is all about, I am sure it's only superseded

by the confusion created by your government as it relates to Crown grazing leases.

As you are well aware, Mr. Minister, the issue of Crown grazing leases has grown in significance over the last year or two. And I think it was brought to a head by the sudden arrival of a treaty land entitlement claim that was placed on many thousands of acres in the southwest part of the province last fall. And as a result of the TLE (treaty land entitlement) claim many of the producers in the southwest — particularly in the Cypress Hills but other areas that are as equally affected — have had a number of questions arise concerning the validity of their leases and the reliability of their leases and the role of the government in the renewal of those leases.

And as I stand in this House day after day and read petitions signed by leaseholders, individuals whose livelihood is largely dependent on continuing to hold those Crown grazing leases, and as I talked to producers throughout my constituency and other areas of the province, I'm finding that there is a growing element of confusion and uncertainty among those leaseholders as to the long-term viability of their operations, vis-à-vis the government's decision on what's going to happen with this lease land.

The issue of Crown grazing leases has been thrown into quite an uncertainty because of the TLE, because of what is known as a review that was sprung rather surreptitiously on producers at the last minute, and because of the complications brought about by the transfer of lease land to new owners when certain ranches and farms trade hands at commercial sale. And as we have discussed in private conversation in this House, Mr. Minister, the issue is even further complicated by the provisions of the new land ownership laws.

So would the minister stand in the House today and give us a very clear understanding of what it is his government intends to do with lease land, as it affects all three of the different scenarios that I have raised this afternoon. I think the producers of this province need to know definitively what the government stand is as it concerns Crown grazing leases.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well, Mr. Chair, this is a very significant and important question, and I have responded to it on a variety of different fronts. And there is in my view some less, there's some less confusion about this than the member paints, but there is certainly a number of very tender issues of which we're needing to address.

I said that to the group of . . . Saskatchewan landowner lease rights group, which I met with probably a month or so ago now. I met just yesterday again with SARM, who are also doing a good deal of work on this particular piece and are most interested in what happens with treaty land and Crown land, and have been certainly well apprised of the work that's happening today within our government, the government's interdepartmental committee that are working through this very, very significant piece.

The member would recognize the difficulties around this because clearly we have situations today where First Nations have made selections on Crown land. And when they make selections on Crown land, under the treaty right entitlement

legislation, they have right to the property or access to the land that's been, in fact they've selected.

And some of that land of which they've now selected is in fact Crown land, Crown lease land, of which there have been long-term leases that have been held by ranchers for periods of 33 years. And some have been renewed and they've been in the family for long periods of time. And at the same time, within some of that land that's being selected today, there are mineral rights of which we also need to ensure that we protect and also ensure that make their way to the appropriate source. And finally there is land today within the Crowns which is dedicated for wildlife protection.

And so there are four scenarios here of which you'd be working with and there are more than one group that you're working with. So it is ranchers, and it's First Nations people, and it is individual deed holders of property, and it is those oil companies or gas companies who wish to come and do work in Saskatchewan. So then it becomes a significantly larger complicated issue.

The issue is not just about making a decision about who should own the land. Should you extend the lease to the rancher or should you in fact turn it over to First Nations who've made the selection? And it's there where the debate really has centred itself. And what we're trying to do on this side of the House is to try to find a solution where those people who have had the land in their possess for long periods of time might continue to continue to possess it and use it for the kinds of efforts and work that they've had.

And can we also accommodate within the treaty land entitlement legislation a responsibility of ensuring that First Nations get access to the land that they're calling for today, and also protect the mineral rights for Saskatchewan people in the way it needs to be done? And has this been a difficult challenge? Absolutely it's been a difficult challenge. And it's not as easy as saying, well the lease expires, you should renew the lease, and the rancher should continue to hold it for 33 more years because it will get challenged in the courts.

And we have two pieces of legislation of which we have to . . . or one piece of legislation and a policy that we have to work with. We have the policy of Agriculture and Food as it relates to Crown land, and we have the treaty land entitlement legislation that we need to deal with. And so our task here is to try to find a middle ground. And so we've used mediation in some of those efforts where we haven't been able to find resolution. But at the end of the day we think that we can find some resolution on this piece without ending up in the courts.

Mr. Elhard: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. Through the Chair, to the minister, I appreciate the fact that you have responded by focusing primarily on the TLE issue. The other issues that I alluded to can be raised and discussed in more detail at a later opportunity.

But I guess the question for the minister and the government is this: in view of the legal opinion that you've received and in view of the expressed concern by the minister that simply renewing the leases might bring about legal action, I don't know that that opinion is necessarily an appropriate opinion.

(15:45)

I have not yet heard why it isn't possible for the LAND's (Land Titles Automated Network Development) branch, on behalf of the provincial government, to renew the leases as they existed, especially since the treaty land entitlement legislation says that there has to be a negotiation based on a willing buyer-willing seller scenario and by renewing the lease, that does not, that does not impede that process.

In fact, what it does is makes the process considerably more fair to the existing leaseholder than a situation where the government would refuse to renew the lease and then deal with the treaty land entitlement claim. This is not about denying the treaty land entitlement claim. This is about meeting the requirements of the existing legislation that provides for a very clear, definitive way to establish the value of any piece of property that a claim might entail or might encumber.

This is a . . . The process that was set out in the TLE legislation tries to address the issue of fairness. And by not renewing the leases, the provincial government is basically saying to the current leaseholders, your third party interests are of less significance and they're certainly going to be of lesser value by not renewing the leases.

The issue of fairness is the victim here. And I think that if the government was being completely fair and responsible in this matter, one legal opinion aside, they would go ahead and renew these leases, make their commitment to the existing leaseholders, and let the leaseholders and the First Nations people sort out the value of the property and the issue in a one-on-one type of negotiation. What has happened here is the government has imposed itself by an arbitrary decision which has undermined the long-term benefit of the current leaseholder.

And I really think that what we've got here is a situation where the province has decided that by not renewing leases, the province can then become the willing seller in this whole scenario and it just . . . it completely undermines the opportunities on behalf of the current leaseholders.

Will the minister undertake to get a second legal opinion, another legal opinion that might balance off the opinion that he says he has on this matter, and try and arrange a situation here that will recognize the rights of the existing leaseholders and give them some reasonable expectation of fair treatment on the behalf . . . on the part of the provincial government?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well you see, Mr. Chair, to the member, he describes this as being a very simplistic process, which is exactly — which is exactly — the problem with the issue. Because when you look at who owns the land, the leaseholder does not own the land. The land is held by the province; this is who owns the land.

So when you say that there should be an agreement between a willing seller and a willing buyer, that works fair and it works well, except that you have today inserted over top of that a selection. You have a selection by First Nations who believe in their legislation that they have right to that land because it's no longer occupied, because the lease expires. And that's where

the legal debate begins. Because First Nations people will say that, we have selected the property today, the lease is expiring, and it should now be turned to us.

And you're right. We have had situations where in fact a leaseholder and a First Nations individual and/or a band have in fact been able to reach a resolution. But it's when they can't reach the resolution that it becomes an issue for us — not ever, ever intended that we would find ourselves in this place when the treaty land entitlement package was struck.

And we had people from a lease . . . large leaseholders who were part of that debate and a part of that very discussion. And today, when I met with them a month ago, they too recognized that we have an issue today which they didn't anticipate would be unresolved within the work that we did. They didn't anticipate that we would find ourselves in this situation.

And there will be a legal challenge from either party. There will be a legal challenge because you don't have a willing seller and a willing buyer on all of these fronts. And you don't have people wanting to buy the entire package.

If you had today the band coming forward and saying we want to buy the entire package, you might find yourself in a situation where you could get a deal. But they're not selecting the entire package. They're selecting bits and pieces and parcels of a package, which makes the rancher's asset invaluable in most cases because they want to sell the entire piece. And as a result of that there'll be a challenge by the rancher. There'll be a challenge.

And as a result of that, that's why we're trying to find a mediatory process here so that we can ensure that the rancher and the landowner at the end of the day, and the land leaser and the First Nations might be able to find that kind of compromise. Because in fact, they are not, they are not willing to part with their land and their assets in the way in which you describe, as comfortably in which you describe it. They are not. And that's why we find ourselves in the middle of the process.

Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Chairman, through you to the minister. The reality of the fact is, Mr. Minister, that you are minimizing the opportunity for the ranchers to negotiate a fair deal with the First Nations if they so wish, by refusing to renew their leases.

You know, your argument is that if the lease isn't renewed, you have unoccupied land and the former lessee has no real claim to it. It becomes provincial land. But the role of the government has been in many, many instances to refuse to renew the lease when they had the chance well in advance. So you're creating a situation, Mr. Minister, where favouritism is being shown in this whole process.

I've looked at the treaty land entitlement legislation and there is no need for the provincial government not to renew the leases in advance if they're asked for. Now the scenario you've described is a situation where some rancher has left his lease renewal to the last few months and then all of a sudden finds himself on the short end of the stick not being able to renew the lease. But there are . . . In most instances, the ranchers are willing to come to you to renew the lease three, four, five years in advance, and your government is saying no, I'm sorry.

You're creating an imbalance in this situation that is unnecessary and whether or not, whether or not ranchers might want to sell is not the issue. The process that has been set in place says that a willing buyer and a willing seller is the requirement for a commercially transacted deal. And frankly, you've undermined the position of the willing seller. I mean you're putting them in a position where they have no choice but to sell if in fact the buyer is interested in providing them a commercial value or a commercial price for their place.

So I guess, Mr. Minister, I'm not suggesting that this is a simplistic or an easily solved problem. I know it's complex. But what I think has happened is by the so-called legal opinion you have received, you have actually created a more complicated problem than is necessary. And I think frankly that that has been an irresponsible position for your government to take.

The other issue that comes into play here, I suppose, is the decision by the government to undertake a Crown grazing lease review. Now this is something that arose quite unexpectedly and came about some time subsequent to the initial placing of TLE claims on a number of the ranches in the area that I talked about earlier.

It's my understanding that there were four TLE claims. The first two were denied within the 90-day period because of extenuating circumstances. Whether it had to do with sensitivity of the environmental concerns, whether it had to do with watershed, whatever the reasons were, the first two were denied. The last two were not denied within the 90-day period that the TLE legislation requires. What we got was all of a sudden two claims held in abeyance.

Now my understanding, Mr. Minister, is you don't have the legal authority to put TLE claims into abeyance sometime around that 90-day period; you have to make a decision within the 90-day period. Under what legal authority did the province undertake this review and put the TLE claims, the remaining two claims, into abeyance?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Deputy Chair, as long as the review is in place, we're not making any decisions, and that's what we've said. We've not . . . As long as the review process is in place, we aren't making those decisions on what we'll do with the land that's been selected.

But I want to go back just to make a comment or two to the member about . . . And I'm not referencing at all that the member thinks that this is a simplistic issue because I appreciate that your phraseology, understanding that it's not a simplistic issue. But as long as there has been a selection — as long as there's been a selection — then we can't renew it. We cannot renew the lease based on the legal opinions that we're getting from the legal . . . from our legal resources. That as long as there's been a selection, that we are not in a position to renew it. And that's why we have the process in place that we have today.

And you say to me that what we should be doing is, we should be in fact allowing ranchers to renew leases well in advance. Well you know what will happen when you do that and send that signal. That you'll have First Nations put selections on all

of our Crown land, all of it. And then you'll have a dog's breakfast and chaos like you've not seen in our province.

And we're not interested in doing that because as we're moving along today on land that's not being selected today, we're actually renewing it. We're renewing land today. As you and I sit in this Assembly today and have this discussion, we have the Department of Agriculture lands branch renewing leases for ranchers in Saskatchewan, based on as long as they've not been selected. It's the selected issues that become an issue . . . the debate. And I would not encourage us to have the debate about making sure that the leases are extended in advance because you'll have a selection on every piece of Crown land in the province, because that's where you'll send First Nations to.

So I say to you that there has been sensitivity. Yes, we've certainly permitted the two selections, or the two decisions to be made — two were outstanding — on the basis that we have the committee in place right now and expecting that that committee will be providing some report to me. We started the work in November. We said that within a year we're going to have a resolution to this.

I've said to the farm group with which I've met — the landowners and lease group that I met with — that they should not be concerned about the notion that they would not have access to their lease over a longer period of time when decisions are made. They should not have to worry about that because they're not going to have their farm disappear within — under their feet as they suggested to me — within two or three months of a decision. That's not the case. That will not happen as long as I am in charge . . . or as long as I'm the Minister of Agriculture. And our government understands this piece.

So there would be, in the cases where selections may need to be honoured and we may see court cases around them, but the ranchers and farmers today in Saskatchewan don't need to be concerned that when they wake up in a month's time from when a decision is made, they're not going to be a leaseholder of their property for some extended time to make some decisions around their own futures.

And so I say to the member opposite, we need to be extremely careful about how we proceed down this path. I know that it has tremendous impact in the area of which you serve and I appreciate some of the work that you've been doing in helping us deal with this particular issue because it has a lot of sensitivity and it has a good deal of concern, both for you and for us.

Mr. Elhard: — Well, Mr. Minister, I know the complexity of the issue and I do understand that there is a lot more we could discuss on this issue. It seems that time has proven to be our enemy today, so we're going to come back and revisit this at the next session. I appreciate the opportunity to carry on this discussion at that time.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chair, I move the committee report progress and move to estimates on Community Resources and Employment.

(16:00)

**General Revenue Fund
Community Resources and Employment
Vote 36**

Subvote (RE01)

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Thanks, Mr. Chair. I'm happy to introduce the officials who will be assisting us in estimates today. To my immediate right is deputy minister, Bonnie Durnford; directly behind me is assistant deputy minister, Shelly Hoover; and assistant deputy minister, Bob Wihlidal, is in the second row to my right; Larry Chaykowski, executive director of housing operations to my left; Bill Adams, acting director of finance and property management to the right of the deputy.

And behind the bar are Phil Walsh, executive director, employment income assistance; Marilyn Hedlund, the executive director of child and family services; Betty West, acting executive director of community living; Jan Morgan, acting executive director of career and employment services; Al Hickey, senior policy analyst in employment and income assistance; and Ken Cameron, director of children services.

I look forward to the questions of members of the opposition and proceeding with estimates, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Mr. Minister, a month ago, I believe a month ago tomorrow, I gave a file to yourself and asked that you look at this file because of its complexity as well as its seriousness and the need for something to be done with this file.

I tried to contact the family today and ask their permission to speak on this. I could not reach them so I will not use their name. I believe that you will know who I'm referring to.

I spoke with your department yesterday, or with your office in the legislature yesterday, and nothing has been resolved about this file. In fact the family had not been contacted. And so I know that since this time they have received a phone call with a reply that nothing has been done on this file.

Mr. Minister, I realize that this file, which the lady indicated, cuts across the lines of social services, health, and education because it involves her son. And her dilemma has been for some months that she has tried desperately to get help wherever she could, tried to get all these three departments to work together to try and find a solution. And as of yet, none has been found.

And I spoke with this lady yesterday and she has . . . My experience in dealing with her is she's been very, very patient and very understanding and just looking for a solution. However, she is becoming very agitated and very distraught because no one seems to be listening to her.

And the fact is that this lady is trying to find a solution which is in the best interest of her family. Her husband is also disabled and is under her care as well as her son. And as she indicates in the letter which I forwarded to your office, is that her desire is that she can keep her son and her family in their, within their family unit, and that she can give the care with the help of some assistance, both from Social Services and from the

education system so that she can do this.

And as she indicated to me, and which you will be well aware, Mr. Minister, that if she is not able to look after her son and her husband within their home, that there will be a huge cost to the public system — probably anywhere between 3,500 per person per month — and that's certainly not where this lady would like to go. But she is at the point where she is running out of, quite frankly, the physical stamina to continue in her situation.

And she has asked for various things. She's asked to be able to have her son home-schooled. She has asked for respite in her home. She has asked that some understanding of her need for some respite be given.

And in fact when she went to Social Services in November and they indicated to her that they would help her, what they did in fact was make her situation worse because they moved her into subsidized housing which moved her rent from 191 a month to 331 a month. So her question is how did this help me? And since that time she did get a small income tax rebate and then, of course, that was taken into consideration and her social assistance has been cut even more.

She's had various problems around receiving health benefits. She was going to be cut off by Social Services, then she was back on. There's been several concerns around this whole issue and with her dealings with Social Services and getting answers.

But her main concern, I guess, is for adequate care for her son. And the situation is so severe, Mr. Minister, that at times this lady drives around for hours with her son in her vehicle because that is the only way she can calm him down.

The RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) have . . . are working with her and are trying to get her a Plexiglas window to put in her vehicle as a protection for both herself and her son when she is driving him around.

The income tax money that she received back, her intent was to use it to make repairs to her vehicle which she has to have in order to look after her son and in order to be able to get him to appointments and so on. And she desperately needed this extra cash to do that. And then of course because she had these dollars and actually presented the bills to Social Services to show them that she had used this money responsibly and for a need that she had to provide for her family, still it was not taken into consideration and she has been penalized accordingly.

Mr. Minister, again, this lady just wants the government departments to work together to somehow find a solution for her and her family. And when I spoke to her, she basically had three requests. One, that she would have some kind of home-schooling for her son and would be provided aides to work with him in the home. He cannot be left unattended. He cannot be in the care of only one person and so there needs to be two aides in the home. When she tried to get this issue dealt with by Social Services, I believe she was told that it was some, I believe it was 60 — I'm just trying to find it, Mr. Minister — 60 hours that she would be allowed from Social Services to pay for home help in her home.

The other thing is that she stressed again upon me the fact that she has to have a vehicle. Her vehicle is not a good vehicle but it does enable her to make the appointments she needs within Regina. At one point they told her that she should have . . . she would have to come to Regina for appointment and she said, I simply cannot do that; I do not have a vehicle that is in good enough condition that I can come to Regina for an appointment.

And she is also very concerned about some kind of understanding from Social Services and Health that she wants to keep her family unit together, is willing to do that, but she needs a certain amount of money to live on and she needs some help in paying for aides to come into her home. And as she stated in her letter, Mr. Minister, her understanding is that all children in Saskatchewan are supposed to . . . are actually entitled to schooling. At the present time this is being denied her son.

So, Mr. Minister, I would like to know what you would do in order to help this lady and her family live in dignity and with some assurance that every day she isn't going to have to fight with another government department just to hold her family together.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chair, I thank the hon. member for her question and do appreciate as well the importance of, as she said at the beginning of the question, of not getting into names. I consider that to be an extremely important principle as we're dealing here on the floor of the Assembly that we avoid reference to individual cases and, in fact, I remind us all that we're obliged by law to do just that.

I do want to advise the hon. member that — and I think she'll be aware of this already, Mr. Chair — that my office was in touch with her office about two weeks ago, and I think there was a discussion yesterday with my office. However, regarding the . . . so that's related to the follow-up with the hon. member for the case that she did bring to me and that we've been following up on.

My office has had a discussion with the person this day, earlier this day as a matter of fact, and is working together with the individual to assure that all of the assistance that can be made available through the resources of the department, Community Resources and Employment, are being brought into play in as helpful a way as possible, in the way that the regulations that come into effect are applied.

And also my office, Mr. Chair, in dealing with the individual, will be aiding as much as possible in terms of assistance with other departments other than our own, as the hon. member has said, Mr. Chair. And this is not an uncommon circumstance that assistance is required related to more than one single department. And we're endeavouring to aid in a collaborative kind of way in terms of resources brought by the province to assist this family.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, and that is correct. I guess the point that I was making was that I did give the information to yourself which you passed on to your office.

It is very clear in the letter from this lady what she is wanting, and what her needs are. And when in fact she was contacted

today by your office, the gentleman that contacted her said to her, well I thought you were looking for placement for your son. And it is very, very clear from this letter that that is the last thing that she was looking for.

(16:15)

So first of all, she was not contacted until I phoned yesterday and asked why she hadn't been contacted. And secondly, it had been read in such a shabby manner that the person that was handling the file didn't even know what the request was or what the concerns were. And so, Mr. Minister, I have a real concern about that.

And after talking to her today and realizing what had transpired, that's why I brought this to the House today, because this is something that needs to be addressed. This has been going on since last November and nothing has been done to resolve this issue. And in the meantime, her son is in their home, he is not going to school, and their bills keep piling up. And she is finding herself in not only a state of financial difficulty, but also in a state of great emotional despair for herself and her family.

And, Mr. Minister, to add to her problems, as if she didn't have enough, then she had a great deal of difficulty dealing with Social Services in relationship to her health card, which was at one point cut off and then it was reinstated and then cut off. And I believe now it's been reinstated.

But one of the incidents that happened around that was that after she'd moved to the low-income housing, she did not receive her health card and was told she was cut off because no one knew where she was and knew what her address was, when it was Social Services that moved her there. And yet that was their excuse for cutting her health card off.

So then again, she had a . . . She went to get the drugs for her son at the pharmacy and was told that she didn't have a health card so, you know, and it had been cut off . . . And that was because of some lack of attention in an office where her health card had been cut off and supposedly because no one knew where she was or what her address was, which is very alarming when it was indeed Social Services that had moved her.

And again, the whole issue around her . . . by Social Services' request and by them trying to help her, she moved, and now finds herself in a greater financial difficulty than she was before.

In fact, in her words, she states:

I'm even further in the hole because of the rent difference, so I wish to pay back to Social Services what I have to pay. And I'll be writing a letter to them this week to repay them, although now I'm being told by a worker at Social Services that my health coverage could be cancelled so I'll go back to paying a third of the cost of my health care.

I do not think it was very fair not to tell me about the rent or income tax till the last minute, especially when they knew about the cut-off notice.

And then she goes on to say:

I'm also peeved about not qualifying in December, January when my income was exactly the same. I'm peeved at the three-hour conversation I had with Social Services on the 17th to do a needs assessment for my son even though they had doctors' reports to show the need.

And so this lady has been very traumatized by her dealings with government departments and the lack of any answer to her needs. I would ask the minister what timeline he sees towards resolving this issue.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chair, in response to the member's statement, I will resist commenting on the specifics. The important thing is that there is contact with the family. There is communication that's occurring that's current, and any issues that the family has regarding access to service will be followed through.

I would also point out, Mr. Chair, that that's not particular to this case, that that would be standard procedure. And that's what we will continue to do to work together with the family in order to aid them in their circumstance.

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Minister, I asked a question and I would appreciate some kind of an answer about the time frame that this family is looking at for this being resolved. And I would also ask you: who is going to be the lead person on this? Is it going to be your department and someone in your office, or is it going to be someone else? I need a name or a contact for this family because they have had a continual runaround. And as this lady has stated to me, I cannot physically go to any more meetings because that means that I have to find someone to come into my home and look after my son; I cannot leave him alone; and that's another financial burden that I simply cannot afford.

So I would like a time frame and who is going to be the contact person.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chair, there is, as I said in my previous response, there is contact with the family that is current. I understand that the party involved has a social worker and it will be the worker that will be the person that will be dealing with her.

Ms. Bakken: — So, Mr. Minister, if I understand you correctly then, this lady is going to once again have to deal with Social Services in Weyburn and this is not going to be handled from your office? And I also would like a time frame.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chair, casework is not done from the minister's office. Contact is made to ensure that the appropriate actions are being taken by the department. As is the usual and appropriate course of action, Mr. Chair, it would be in this case the family, together with their local Community Resources and Employment worker, who will be engaged in seeking the best solutions that are available.

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Minister, will this person . . . will you be asking for a follow-up to ensure that this is dealt with? And again I ask you for a time frame.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chair, as is the usual case when a matter is referred from my office, I do expect follow-up. That's the normal course of action. I do expect that therefore in this case as well. And it will be dealt with as expediently as possible, which is my normal expectation.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, and welcome to your officials. Mr. Minister, I'd like to follow up a little bit on some of the discussion we were just having in regards to dealing with individuals who have to — I shouldn't use the word have to — but work very diligently to provide the supports for family members.

I have a very similar situation in one of my communities, an elderly lady who's looking after her son. Her husband passed away, I believe, a couple of years ago and unfortunately didn't really have a lot of opportunity to . . . as a single, as a business person really didn't have a lot of additional CPP (Canada Pension Plan) benefits and what have you paying into. So this specific individual is left with her . . . just a standard old-age pension plus the supplements. And her son gets some employment opportunities in the summertime working for some of the rural agriculture community who do try and assist by involving him in his limited abilities to actually work in their operations.

But I guess what I would like to know, Mr. Minister — and it follows up along the question we've just had discussed — what avenues are there available to individuals who are providing assistance and caring for family members with disabilities who have limited resources to . . . as far as income opportunities? And in this case I think there is some support off and on from the Department of Social Services. There is also some recognition for some special supplements in the area of food requirements as a result of some of the health issues that are there.

And I guess the other issue as well is in some cases, in many cases, you'll find people with disabilities or some impediments do have some health problems as well. And while for a person on assistance there is health services provided or health benefits, I guess the question I'm asking is: what avenues are open to individuals that come to the department and seeking assistance?

And the other question I would have: when a person runs into a situation where they seem to be at loggerheads with their worker, what avenues can they pursue over and above the . . . My colleague had mentioned about your office, calling your office, and your office getting directly involved. And as you indicated, and I think rightly so, other than asking and doing some follow-up there's — rather than your office doing it — there must be, within the department, avenues that people can follow to indeed have situations addressed where they just have no . . . I mean have come to the end of their resources in trying to deal directly with their resource worker. And there must be an avenue that they can pursue over and above that to make sure that they are being dealt with fairly, versus just continuing to work with a worker that seems to be going nowhere.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chair, I appreciate the question. I'm interpreting this is not a question about a specific case that I'm . . . If it is, then I'm misunderstanding. I think it's a general

question that's being asked. And I see the hon. member nodding, so I'm assuming that.

First of all, I'll need a bit of time. This is a long list of things that are the response to the question.

Let me deal with the second part first. If an individual is unhappy with or feels that he or she is not being fairly or properly dealt with by the person they're dealing with in the system and would like to . . . So the question is, to whom can you appeal to have reconsideration?

There is a list there. The first and most logical person locally would be to the regional director, the person who's responsible for the operations of the office. So that would be, that would be the local answer.

(16:30)

As was previously referred to in previous questions, one course of appeal that some would use would be to call the minister's office and then a follow-up is done that way to address.

Other avenues that are available as well, of course, is the Ombudsman, which is an appeal mechanism that some will choose to use.

And if it is — although I think the question the hon. member asked was . . . if there is a sense of working relationship that's not felt then this won't come into play in that case — but if the person feels that they've not been fairly accommodated their rights as a Saskatchewan citizen, then there is an appeal mechanism and an appeal process. There are appeals committees — they exist around the province — that are available to hear the appeals that individuals may have.

I'm assuming the question is in the context of income security cases, when I'm answering it here too. There's other things if we're into other areas of service.

But those would be the various avenues of appeal to either decision or assignment that a person would have available to them.

The broader question, which was the first asked: what are the kinds of supports that we have here in Saskatchewan for someone who has disabilities of some sort? And again I'm largely focusing in my response here on income-related and employment-related things.

There will be in the income entitlements for people with disabilities, eligibility for perhaps — and these need to be dealt with, with the individual worker — for special needs.

There can be . . . There is, as he referred to, health coverage is provided, of course. The disability allowance, which is increased in the budget that we have before us right now. For families who are caring for somebody with a disability, there can be respite supports that are made available to the family.

Then there will be the whole list of employment-related things ranging from the child benefit to the Saskatchewan employment supplement, the family health benefit. These

would apply to people who are not necessarily receiving assistance.

Employment supports, child care subsidies is another part of that picture often; the EAPD — employability assistance for people with disabilities.

There will be some of the times supports that are available, not directly at the career . . . or at the Community Resources and Employment office, but sometimes these are available through community-based organizations that are contracted with the department.

And there will be, through the career employment services offices then, supports for employment attachment for people with disabilities and others, bridging, rate subsidies, self-employment supports, JobStart future skills, the provincial training allowance, skills training benefits. The list is really quite lengthy.

Perhaps if there is an area that the hon. member would like to focus on I can be a little more specific. I don't want to take the time of estimates here today to be going through and giving some description of all of those. But as you can see there is a fairly long list.

And the objective is to, as much as possible, to use the resources that we have in the various programs to apply then as effectively as we can in support of individuals living as independently as they possibly can. And as much as we can, supporting people's attachment to the labour market which we believe to be, at the end of the day, the most helpful kind of assistance in the long run whenever that can be achieved.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, Mr. Chairman. The circumstance I'm relating to, and I believe I've touched base with the office, I'll just do some follow-up to see exactly what's transpired in that situation.

But I think in general what we're discussing here, Mr. Minister, is the policy that is in place in dealing with families who have family members with disabilities and just find that they are somewhat strapped for income, especially when they've got limited resources. And in this particular case that I'm talking of, we're talking of an individual who's strictly on a pension, just the one pension, just the average regular pension, old age pension, plus . . . and thereby qualifies for the supplements.

And yet the needs of her disabled son are a little more than just having some standard support from Social Services and what would be just strictly the income . . . or not the income but the social assistance plan which does take into consideration the limited amount of work that is available during the summer months. And that's a limited resource.

But the thing I . . . The issue I think as well is compounded by the fact that when a person, the disabled individual is actually employed then the access to or the ability to continue to have some access to the health and the other benefits that would be there that you would have if you were solely on assistance.

And so the . . . that's the question, Mr. Minister, what the general policy is in that regard is, if you happen to find

employment and so you're employed right now and you're off assistance; even though you have got special needs, your employed opportunity may be fairly limited.

Is there a policy that would basically say you would still qualify for these benefits? And I think it's probably related to the income, but I just want to know exactly what I can relate back as far as what you could expect from the department.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chair, in response to the hon. member, he puts his finger on a very important subject that in fact we're dealing with in this budget that is before . . . not in this department, but in the budget that is before the Assembly as we are here in this term.

The hon. member may be aware that last week I did an announcement of a series of things related to supports for people with disabilities, many of which are supports related to the labour market attachment. And if I can just summarize those very, very quickly and then we can go into more detail if he wishes.

First of all, there is in the budget of this department that's before us right now an additional \$1.85 million that is — that's an additional amount, bringing to total I think 2.35, if I'm not mistaken, million dollars — targeted to assist individual people with disabilities address the barriers that they have to the workplace.

And there is about \$300,000 in addition to that in this budget that is intended to deal with employers in the promotion and recruitment of opportunities for people with disabilities to attach to mainstream employment. Those are in the context then of supporting the concept of citizenship for people with disabilities and ability to participate fully in the economic and social life of their communities.

There is in, not from this department, but in this budget as well, for people with disabilities, some, if I remember correctly, \$750,000 — 750,000? — \$715,000 sorry, from the Centenary Fund to add an additional 13 paratransit vehicles to aid in transportation, bringing to, if I remember correctly, I think the number is 76 vehicles that have been replaced over the last four years.

But particularly related to this point, in this budget from the Department of Health — not from my department — there is money that will enable people with disabilities who are currently receiving assistance to take their health benefits with them if they leave assistance to go to employment. And this has been an important move forward I think, addressing what has been a — by government policy — a bit of a barrier to, in the way of people with disabilities being able to move to mainstream employment, losing very important protections in the process.

To put this into a context, this is trying to move forward in support of people with disabilities in the same way that we did in the Building Independence Program for parents and low-income families, who still have then the family health benefit that they can take with them if they're leaving assistance or be eligible for it without coming on to assistance.

And so I think the hon. member, Mr. Chair, correctly identifies what has been to date a policy impediment, to being able to enthusiastically move from assistance to employment. And I'm happy to report that that's in this budget, although it's not strictly in the estimates of the department before us right now.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to welcome the officials that are with the minister this evening.

And, Mr. Minister, I have a few questions for you surrounding the recommendations that came out of the Special Committee to Prevent the Abuse and Exploitation of Children Through the Sex Trade.

And, Mr. Minister, to my knowledge, at this point your government has undertaken to make sure that there is some legislative matters in place . . . or legislation in place rather, that is addressing deterrents to men and women that would sexually exploit children. And today in fact I guess is the first anniversary of that, that legislation — or the legislation in fact being put into effect.

And I'm really very pleased and happy that in fact that did happen because from the information that I've received there has definitely been a positive effect in deterring johns and pimps as far as their exploitation of children. And so that is good news. There is some concern at this point that possibly some of this activity may be driven underground.

I believe this is a good measure that we have put in as a legislature — a good piece of legislation. And it certainly is being effected very well.

Mr. Minister, in addition to that measure that was put forward by government, there was a measure that you had mentioned last year. One of the recommendations that would be put forward and implemented was a safe house in Regina.

Now I talked with you a bit about that the last time we had estimates, I believe. And I believe that you mentioned to me that the safe house would be at the YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) in Regina. I'm not quite sure whether that was a suggestion of where it might be, but I'd like to get an update on the status of the safe house in Regina, please.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and I thank the hon. member for her question and her support, not only for the legislation.

I too agree that it is . . . In my judgment, a year later the legislation is as good as it was contemplated to be, I think it's fair to say, serving not only to put in place a vehicle for dealing specifically with actions of exploitation, sexual exploitation of kids, but also to serve as a deterrent, and not underestimate the significance of that. Clearly, in whatever ways that we can achieve the deterrence of exploitation is much more preferable than dealing with remedial circumstances after the fact.

On the safe house, there has been a process which in my mind has been an example of one of the best . . . sort of the best parts of what can happen from a partnership point of view. There was a call for proposal for the operation of the safe house and then that was successfully achieved by the Treaty Four Urban

Services who is the party then that will be providing the safe house services here in the city of Regina.

Levels of government, together with FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations) and Treaty Four Services, then have been working on identification of a location. And in fact this week the location has now been finalized. I don't intend to give the location here in the public record at this moment. Staff have been hired and will begin their training next week, and the training of the staff at the safe house here in Regina will also be offered to training to the staff at the safe house in Saskatoon as well. So there is the ability to get some synergy there as well.

And the training will be about a month in duration and it's expected that the safe house will be operating . . . will become operative in the month of June.

(16:45)

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, what will the training entail? What kind of training will be given to the staff at the safe house? My concern here, and certainly the concern of many people in this province, is still that we need to make sure that from the safe house, the voluntary safe house or protective safe house, that there is a real, ongoing, healing purpose for that; so that there are strategies employed, through assessment first of all, of what is needed for that youth, what kind of services they need — they and their families — and how those services are going to be delivered.

So I'm wondering whether or not the training that you're talking about today include those kind of things?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — The simple answer is yes.

Ms. Julé: — Right. So, Mr. Minister, there has been identified time and time again that we don't have enough services in place. It was identified actually through the report that was put forward by the special committee, and it was one of the recommendations that . . . In fact recommendation no. 17, on the rights of abused children to adequate services. And the committee recommended:

. . . that every child who is on the street and at risk of sexual abuse or suffering sexual abuse should be guaranteed the right to services in a timely and coordinated way including a safe place to stay, (so that you're addressing today, you're saying in Regina there's going to be a safe place) medical care, addictions treatment, counseling for abuse, help in making the return to school, and lending assistance to children to make effective steps towards a full recovery.

Now that is quite a huge order, Mr. Minister, there's no doubt about that. But I'm concerned that whatever services are provided through the voluntary safe house, that they do include at least an avenue from the safe house for youth to be able to tap into those kind of services. And we don't have adequate drug and alcohol addiction treatment for youth in this province at this time.

And so I'm wondering whether or not the minister can confirm that all of those services will at least be addressed at the safe

house, and from the safe house there can be a strategy employed that will ensure that there is timely — which is very important — a timely way to ensure that youth have some access to drug and alcohol addiction treatment.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chair, I'm happy to advise the hon. member that the 26 prioritized spaces that are distributed around the province of Saskatchewan, that I know she'll recall were identified as being available on a priority basis for kids who have been identified as sexually abused or sexually exploited, have been fully utilized over the course of the intervening period of time in a prioritized way. And I think sufficiently so, that at this point in time our judgment would be that it appears to be appropriately meeting the need. And it is arguably, is the right number.

Inevitably when you're dealing with human beings in unpredictable circumstances, there will be some occasions that you can find when it wasn't immediately available at that hour or that day, but within a very short period of time. The system seems to be accommodating the needs of kids there.

And similarly, I'm advised, access to addictions and mental health services for these kids as well — which I know is an item of some appropriate discussion — and that I'm advised that there has been prioritized access in the system there. And that that would be our judgment that at this point in time, the system seems to be dealing in a timely kind of way with the need for access to those support services for kids who are coming in contact with the system and making use of those prioritized services.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, you've mentioned that there are 26 spaces throughout the province that can be accessed by youth.

Now just imagine this, Mr. Minister, you know a youth 14 or 15 years old who is traumatized through sexual exploitation, abuse on the streets, who is undernourished, who has multiple health problems, who has mental health problems, are often associated with drug addiction, and in fact forced drug addiction.

Just imagine all of that, Mr. Minister, and a youth and their family looking at seeking some counselling and some treatment for how their family might be able to work together — because family is the most important — the child needs family support, especially in the event that the family is able to support to some degree. But certainly they need to be in the environment of their own community, somewhere where they can get some of these services, I'd say within a proximity of at least 10 miles from their home.

I know that sometimes it's beneficial if youth are really in danger of being exploited and being sought after by pimps and so on, that it might be necessary to remove them from in fact their environment. But in most cases, Mr. Minister, most of the youth are within their home community. They need the support that they're familiar with. And they need to have access to some of these treatment provisions, along with their family.

And so, how do we reconcile the fact that we may have to take a youth — 14, 15, 16 years old — and place them somewhere,

an available spot, which might be miles away? If that is happening too, I ask you — and time is so short and there's so much to discuss — I ask you too, how . . . has there been a determination about a time period that a youth may be staying in one of these spaces?

And at what point is it deemed that that youth may then return to their community and receive ongoing treatment? And have those treatments been identified in the communities that that child would be from?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Thank you, again, to the hon. member for the question, Mr. Chair. I think the — to cut to the chase — the important thing I think is that the principles that the hon. member refers to are high priorities, and in my judgment, are being actively put in place.

There are intervention committees that have been established in Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert and that's to aid in the process of appropriate referral and support plans for these kids. These are vulnerable kids.

The hon. member correctly identifies these kids as kids who have been through I think what many of us would call an experience that has trauma as part of its characteristic.

And clearly the intention is that the supports will be as close as possible to home. Clearly in a province as huge as we are with 1 million people, I think everyone understands you can't have all of the services right available in the community in which you live.

But clearly, I'm advised, in the substantial majority, substantial majority of cases in fact the services are delivered very, very close to home. Sometimes the nature of the support that's needed does require some distance but we minimize that as much as possible.

The treatment times are determined by the individual need of the — so there is no cookie-cutter approach here — and that would be what would guide our supports for these kids.

Mr. Chair, I think maybe, I know the hon. member would like to . . . I think we may have time for one more quick question and quick answer if she wishes before we'll have to move on, well, and go home. Pack up and go home. But I'll stop right there.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you. I'll have a really quick question here and if the minister doesn't have the details for the answer, I would certainly be willing to wait for the answer to be provided for me in the next few days.

Mr. Minister, since your government announced those 26 spaces that would be used, could you give me a number of youth that have in fact been able to use those spaces? And if you have that number right now, it would be great and I'd be happy to hear it.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — It's very close to 100 that have made use of that space since they've been in place.

With that in mind, Mr. Chair, and looking at the clock and

appreciating the need for others, for all of us to be moving to other duties, I'll now move that the committee rise, report progress, and ask for leave to sit again.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 16:58.

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