



# **STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ECONOMY**

**Hansard Verbatim Report**

**No. 33 – April 28, 2015**



**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

**Twenty-Seventh Legislature**

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ECONOMY

Mr. Gene Makowsky, Chair  
Regina Dewdney

Mr. Trent Wotherspoon, Deputy Chair  
Regina Rosemont

Mr. Larry Doke  
Cut Knife-Turtleford

Mr. Bill Hutchinson  
Regina South

Ms. Victoria Jurgens  
Prince Albert Northcote

Mr. Delbert Kirsch  
Batoche

Mr. Don Toth  
Moosomin

[The committee met at 15:00.]

**Bill No. 159 — *The Family Farm Credit Repeal Act***

**Clause 1**

**The Chair:** — Mr. Minister, are you ready to go? Committee members? All right.

**Hon. Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have with me today Karen Aulie, assistant deputy minister; Laurier Donais, executive director of financial programs; and Ashley Anderson, chief of staff.

Mr. Chair, if we can proceed, this is about the repeal of *The Family Farm Credit Act*. *The Family Farm Credit Act* provided the ability for the Co-operative Trust Company of Canada, CTCC, to make loans to farmers and to issue securities. It authorized the minister of Finance to purchase or guarantee securities issued by the CTCC. It was enacted in 1979 in this iteration. There were previous iterations of it, starting in 1959 I believe. The last outstanding payments came due in 1994. There are no outstanding actions on this file. Repeal will have no impact on the agricultural community as the Act is redundant. So I'm happy to take questions.

**The Chair:** — Thank you, Minister. Before that, I just wanted to mention that Ms. Sproule is substituting today for Mr. Wotherspoon. All other members are present, and as mentioned, Bill No. 159 is here for consideration. And I just open it up to any committee members who may have questions. Ms. Sproule.

**Ms. Sproule:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and Mr. Minister, for your comments. Yes, certainly this came in originally in 1959, and I took a few minutes today to ask the library to pull out the minister's comments at the time it was introduced in second reading in 1959. And it was actually moved by the Hon. Mr. Douglas who was premier at the time.

And it appears this bill was a response to a report on the Royal Commission on Agriculture and Rural Life, in particular report no. 3 dealing with agricultural credit, and it was a very interesting discussion. And you could see the changes in agriculture that have happened in the 55 years since it was enacted. But what was very interesting is some of the quotes I would like to share with you, Mr. Minister. Just one was, one of the reasons in the Royal Commission was, and Mr. Douglas said — this is on page 8 of the document I have — but anyways he said:

The third reason they give to me [and they being the Royal Commission] is the most important, and it is that since national agricultural policies are vested in the federal government, and since agricultural credit is a crucial part of a total agricultural policy, this is a responsibility which should be carried out by the federal government.

And I don't know if you want to comment on that. I'm just going to share a couple of other ones. They did have . . . The opinion of the commission at the time was that agricultural credits should be a federal responsibility and that the provinces should make representations to the federal government to step

into the field. I think Farm Credit would be a definite response to those comments.

And then they decided at the time that in 1957 there was a conference of a number of co-operative organizations, and they decided that it would be appropriate for the Co-operative Trust Company to be the actual lender at the time because farmers were scared of private mortgage companies. And there was a number of historical reasons for that.

But this is the one quote I wanted to share with the committee, and he said:

What I do want to make clear, and I want to make this clear not only to the Assembly but the people of the province, is that we're not suggesting for a moment that this can meet the whole need for agricultural credit.

Long ago I came to the conclusion that a very good motto for your life, whether you were an individual or a member of an organization or of a government, is that "even if you can't do everything, you can do something."

So my question for you, Mr. Minister, and your staff, is that this was needed then. I think now we know, and I'm looking at an article from just recently, a magazine called *Farm to Table*, fall of 2014, and it's a lot of talk — and we've talked about this before, Mr. Minister — about the idea of institutional investment. I know that you flagged, for the province, the need to have a look at that type of investment in farm land, and I want to just read a quote from this article. It says:

There's also the idea that investment trusts may be putting farmers at a competitive disadvantage by allowing non-farmers to invest with pre-tax RRSP dollars. "It isn't widespread now, but it's one of the issues that we flagged with the Ministry of Finance."

And I'm just wondering if your government has flagged that and actually raised it with the federal Agriculture minister.

**Hon. Mr. Stewart:** — Well it's certainly part of the consultation that we're embarking upon with the people of the province. I haven't specifically raised that issue with the federal minister, but we'll be interested in hearing what Saskatchewan people think of that.

**Ms. Sproule:** — Thank you for that. And just one other quick question here in terms of an article in *The Globe and Mail* a few years ago now, but it was identifying the large corporate buyouts, or not so much corporate but institutional buyouts. And it says in this article that . . . This is in 2000 and it was updated in 2012. It says:

Similar deals are being struck around the world in what has become an unprecedented rush by global investment funds to buy farmland. By some estimates these funds have sunk as much as \$20-billion (U.S.) into these acquisitions. Last year alone they bought 111 million acres of farmland, a tenfold increase from previous years.

It goes on to say, "Saskatchewan has become one of the new

frontiers in this global trend.”

And then there was a quote from the founder of Bonnefield here that’s saying, “There are people that are dying to invest large sums of money to acquire farmland in Canada that aren’t Canadian citizens.”

Then they go on to get a quote from Terry Boehm, who was then the president of the National Farmers Union Canada, and he said:

We believe that family farmers should be food producers in this country. When you shift land ownership, you move into a new feudalism where those that work on the land become labourers. In the Prairie region and many parts of Canada, we have land resources that other countries can’t imagine having. Who do people want producing their food and under what kinds of methods do they want it done?

Just wondering if you could comment on that.

**Hon. Mr. Stewart:** — Yes. I want to be careful not to take strong positions one way or another during the period that we’re in this consultation with the people of Saskatchewan. But I can say that Saskatchewan’s not the only target for international investment in farm land, institutional or foreign. Africa has seen huge tracts of land bought up principally by the Chinese, but not only by the Chinese. Kazakhstan, Ukraine as well, huge tracts of land being purchased by interests from outside of their country. So yes, the article is certainly correct in that there is considerable interest.

**Ms. Sproule:** — I guess then what would you have to say to a young individual today who would like to go into farming and simply can’t compete with these large investment companies when it comes to acquiring farm land?

**Hon. Mr. Stewart:** — You know, as far as we can tell, the amount of land that’s been purchased to date by large investment companies or institutional investors or foreigners, foreign interests for that matter, has not really affected the price a whole lot. What has affected the price is low interest rates, high commodity prices, very good production years in the province. Farmers are usually the high bidder in land sales.

I think there is a legitimate fear that, you know, if institutional investors or foreigners get a chance to ramp up their investments — bear in mind there’s only been institutional investing in Saskatchewan now for a little over a year, and so it’s fairly early stages — I think there’s a fear, maybe a legitimate one, that given free rein, foreigners and institutions would freeze farmers out of the market. But I can’t say for sure if that’s a legitimate fear or not.

**Ms. Sproule:** — I think that’s borne out certainly in the reports I’ve read, Mr. Minister, and certainly our family farm of 105 years was just sold last month to the neighbours, so I mean I know that that’s certainly part of the story.

One of the things that’s been raised, and I’m wondering if you know this is a message for people wanting to get into farming as well, is the idea of property taxation and using . . . There has been significant changes in the way the education tax has been

levied against farmers in the last few years. Has there been any discussion or thought to perhaps instituting a type of property tax for out-of-province owners of land?

**Hon. Mr. Stewart:** — Well I haven’t been involved in any discussions of that. It’s, I suppose, an option. Certainly that’s another . . . Although the lower education property taxes that are levied against farms these days are another reason I should have listed for higher land prices, and so a lot of that tax saving is transferred to the price of the land.

**Ms. Sproule:** — At this point I think, Mr. Minister and Mr. Chair, there’s not a lot left to say. I think this bill is pretty straightforward. The time was then and that was important then. And I guess what we’re looking for is leadership and, you know, support for communities who are, you know, the farmers are . . . Farms are getting larger. There’s less and less farmers so communities are struggling keeping schools open and hospitals and all those things. So somehow I guess the role of government in this is to make sure communities stay strong and viable and that farmers are supported, and we look forward to more discussions on that.

**Hon. Mr. Stewart:** — Yes. I think that’s a fair statement, Ms. Sproule. We will have our consultation rolled out yet this spring, and we’ll expect to receive submissions from agricultural stakeholders and others who may be interested in the issue and who are Saskatchewan residents until sometime later on in the summer. And I urge those with an interest in this issue to respond to the consultation because if there is a . . . you know, if it’s clear what the wishes of the people of the province are on these land ownership issues, we’ll be inclined to follow them.

**Ms. Sproule:** — I think you have no further questions, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** — Thank you for those questions, Ms. Sproule. Are there any other questions or comments from committee members? Seeing none, we will begin voting on the clauses of this bill. So clause 1, short title, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — That’s carried.

[Clause 1 agreed to.]

[Clauses 2 and 3 agreed to.]

**The Chair:** — Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, enacts as follows: *The Family Farm Credit Repeal Act*.

I would ask a member to move that we report Bill 159, *The Family Farm Credit Repeal Act* without amendment. Ms. Jurgens, thank you, moves that. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. Mr. Minister, any last remarks?

**Hon. Mr. Stewart:** — I’d like to thank the committee and my

officials for attending today and Ms. Sproule for the well-thought-out questions.

**The Chair:** — Again thank you, Mr. Minister and witnesses. This committee will recess to change officials for the next bill under consideration.

**Hon. Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

**Bill No. 161 — *The Wildlife Amendment Act, 2014/Loi de 2014 modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la faune***

**Clause 1**

**The Chair:** — All right. Good afternoon. We're resuming the Economy Committee. We're considering bills this afternoon. The second one up today is Bill No. 161, *The Wildlife Amendment Act, 2014*. This is a bilingual bill. Before we ask questions of the minister, are there any opening statements you'd like to make, sir?

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Well thank you, Mr. Chair, and I'd like to just begin by thanking committee members for giving us the opportunity to sit here today. We're off to a 10-minute early start. I do have a few opening comments and introductions, if I may.

So again thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will have a few brief remarks and then we'll be moving the second reading of *The Wildlife Amendment Act, 2014*.

The proposed amendments that we will consider here today . . . I've made a mess of it already, Mr. Chair. I am pleased to be here this afternoon to discuss the proposed wildlife amendment Act. And with me here today I have our deputy minister, Mr. Cam Swan; our assistant deputy minister of our resource management and compliance division is Mr. Kevin Murphy; behind me to my left, I have Mr. Chuck Lees, our provincial wildlife manager with the fish and wildlife branch; and behind me to my right I have, from my office, my chief of staff, Ms. Megan Griffith.

So today I'd like to highlight some of the key provisions of the amendments to the Act. The proposed amendments here today will clarify the licensing authority for scientific permits to ensure that wildlife research is conducted consistently; to improve the legislative authority for issuing hunting and angling licences; to implement additional hunting suspensions to increase the protection of our Saskatchewan wildlife resources; and to lengthen the amount of time that wildlife officers have to bring charges forward.

*The Wildlife Act, 1998* and the regulations outline licensing provisions for scientific purposes that require the taking or disturbing of wildlife. Many research surveys, especially those involving species at risk, use non-intrusive detection efforts such as monitoring bird songs, such as passive wildlife observations or presence surveys. The ministry fully supports the use of these techniques. However the Act and the regulations don't speak to the authorization of these types of surveys. The proposed amendment will facilitate these surveys

while ensuring that they are carried out in a responsible and a consistent manner.

The ministry has entered into an agreement with Active Network Inc. to deliver Saskatchewan's automated hunting, angling, and trapping licence sales. Responsibility for this contractual agreement is authorized also by *The Wildlife Act, 1998*. The proposed legislation here today will ensure the new licensing system is fully supported.

Currently *The Wildlife Act, 1998* mandates a one-year hunting suspension for the most severe wildlife violations. The key message from hunters during the consultations that took place in the spring of 2012 was for the government to do more to conserve our wildlife resources. We propose to increase the hunting suspensions to ensure that the most serious conservation offences will carry an automatic two-year suspension.

People who fail to pay wildlife-related fines will be prohibited from buying a licence until their fines are paid. Individuals who are suspended from hunting activities in other jurisdictions will not be able to purchase a licence in Saskatchewan, and those convicted on three separate occasions for wildlife offences will have a lifetime ban.

The ministry's new automated licence system will more effectively administer and deliver these hunting suspensions by electronically having the ability to block a licence purchase. This automation creates opportunities to co-operate with other agencies and other databases.

The final measure proposed to demonstrate the commitment to protecting our resources is to lengthen the amount of time that wildlife officers have to bring charges forward for wildlife violations. Wildlife infractions are challenging to investigate because they often occur in unpopulated areas under the cover of darkness and without witnesses. In addition, poaching gangs are becoming more sophisticated and more difficult to catch, often requiring undercover operations to collect the evidence to support an appropriate prosecution. The proposed amendment seeks to increase this limit from two to three years.

Last spring the ministry made significant changes to the fine structure for unlawful hunting and unlawful fishing activities by doubling the fines for the most serious wildlife conservation offences. Doing so has placed Saskatchewan penalties equal to or slightly higher than fines for comparable violations in other jurisdictions. The ministry has consulted with and has the support of the provincial wildlife advisory committee as well as the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation.

The proposed legislation before you demonstrates this government's commitment to protecting our wildlife resources. Equally it sends a strong message to poachers that there are serious consequences associated with breaking wildlife laws in Saskatchewan. So with that, Mr. Speaker, again I'd like to thank the committee members for considering this bill here today, and myself and our officials will be pleased to answer any questions that may arise.

**The Chair:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Committee members, are there any questions? Ms. Sproule, I recognize you.

**Ms. Sproule:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Mr. Minister. I just wanted to go through some of the proposed changes in the legislation and ask a few questions. The first change in the legislation is the new definition for this new licence issuance agreement, which is described more fully in proposed section 22.

But just before we get to that, in the definitions in the existing Act, I note that there's a rather dated reference in there to First Nations people. Under the definition it's called, "**Indian**" means Indian as defined in the *Indian Act*." The more current usage is obviously First Nations person. I'm just wondering if there's been any consideration by you or your officials to update the language in the Act and use I guess what you'd call a more correct reference to First Nations persons instead of Indian.

**Mr. Murphy:** — Kevin Murphy responding on behalf of the minister. It is our understanding that that is the current federal definition and Justice has recommended that we maintain that definition until such time as the federal government decides to make changes to their defining of Indian under the Act.

**Ms. Sproule:** — It's absolutely true that that's the definition in the *Indian Act* but there's a number of federal bills that refer to status Indians under the *Indian Act* as First Nations persons so it's certainly something that's available in provincial legislation as well. I just leave that with you for your consideration. I know there are a number, like the *First Nations Land Management Act* for example, refers to First Nations people as First Nations people, so just an observation. Thank you.

The first section I'd like to talk a little bit about and get some understanding — maybe you could enlighten the committee — is the changes to section 21. You're repealing the old version and instituting a new, improved version. My first question is more a drafting issue as well. And I notice that in the previous version it was a positive section where, you know, the director may license someone but now the wording you're using is ". . . no person shall do the following without a licence . . ." So why did you switch to the negative instead of using I think in legislative drafting it's more common these days to use a positive?

**Mr. Murphy:** — While we recognized the change from a positive to a negative circumstance, in working with Justice the recommendation was that because we're now applying this to a much broader group of people that require the licence, in fact most individuals undertaking any work with wildlife, the recommendation was to move to this more restrictive wording.

**Ms. Sproule:** — All right, thank you. I just wonder if you could explain for the committee, somehow when I picture people doing this kind of activity, detecting or observing species at risk, I don't see them as a large threat. Like I can think poachers seem to me to be a real and present threat. And I know you mentioned in your second reading speech about the red tape exercise that your government went through. But were there a lot of people doing this that were causing problems? Or so what was the impetus for these changes to sort of bring these people into this licensing arrangement? It seems quite onerous when we look at section 22. So I'm just wondering, was there a bunch of people out there causing problems, or what sort of motivated

this?

[15:30]

**Mr. Murphy:** — Thank you for the question. In response to that, these provisions are less about the intrusive nature or problems with regards to protection and more about ensuring that we bring consistency to reporting and ensure that there's actually reporting to build data, to build data availability for the public, academics, and other industry undertaking this work. We had significant concerns that there were a number of practitioners doing this work who were not providing this information for the use of others or for the use of the Crown. The very nature of the surveys being not obtrusive means that by definition, as you've outlined, they're not something that we felt there was significant risk. The risk that we feel is that the data that's being collected is not being provided to the Crown and not being provided to the public and other users. So we want to build on that.

**Ms. Sproule:** — But certainly if it was for at least an academic purpose, that would be available to the public. It just seems rather intrusive for the government to be stepping into the research in this way, when this was the result of a red tape exercise to reduce red tape. Now you're actually increasing red tape for people who are, you know, scientific, academic, even at commercial purposes. For the government to step in this way seems kind of contrary to the whole purpose of the red tape exercise.

**Mr. Murphy:** — Thank you for the question. And to clarify, many of the individuals who have been undertaking this sort of work would have been permitted for the purposes of more obtrusive surveys, so we don't expect that this is a significant regulatory burden to most of the individuals who'd be undertaking this.

Our concern has been that aspects of the work that were being done by both academics and industry consultants for things like environmental assessments, work on any kind of environmental planning for projects, because of the lack of regulatory authority around these non-obtrusive surveys, we're not providing this data or information necessarily to the government or to anyone except their immediate clients. Particularly in the case of things like environmental impact assessment, if it were left out, it's not available to other users who might be operating in that area. It's really to build that foundation of data and to ensure that the data reporting is being done consistently.

This was the other problem that we encountered, is that this work is often being undertaken to varying protocols, to varying standards that did not allow it to be comparative across practitioners and users. And we want to ensure that if people are working with Saskatchewan Wildlife, they're providing opportunities for others to learn from that.

**Ms. Sproule:** — Are you not concerned that there's intellectual property here? I mean people who gather this information at their own expense are now being basically forced to share it with other people.

**Mr. Murphy:** — Thank you for the question. With regards to

providing this information, the director can stipulate conditions. And it is our expectation that when working with academics or members of industry who are citing concerns about intellectual property, that we will ensure the licence conditions and agreement allow that intellectual property to be protected and any publications to be written or provided to peer review prior to the date of being released. We have the capacity to undertake that with individual researchers and with corporations and other bodies doing that.

I would note that a number of both consulting agencies, academics, and non-governmental organizations have provided support for these changes and indicate that they do not feel that they will be obtrusive or cause issues of red tape for their operations.

**Ms. Sproule:** — Okay. I guess we'll observe and see how it rolls out. The other section in your bill that deals with this section 21 is section 10, where you're amending section 83 which is the regulatory authority section. And you're adding this new section 21 which allows regulations being made for the purposes for the licence being required, requirements of persons. So there's all kinds of requirements that can be now regulated, and then the circumstances in which a licence is not required. So I think in terms of us being able to comment and observe, much of it will depend on what actually will be in the regulations. When do you anticipate the regulations to be in place?

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — [Inaudible] . . . the regulations forward this summer.

**Ms. Sproule:** — Summer? All right we'll have to look at those closely, I guess, to make sure that they meet the purposes of this proposed amendment.

I know we will be discussing the particular wording of 83 in terms of maybe a change here in a minute. But one other very technical sort of drafting question is, you're adding a new section (s.1) and you're repealing clause (t) which is relating to the vendors. I'm just wondering, why wouldn't you just call this clause (t) instead of calling it clause (s.1) as it's just a substitution?

**Mr. Murphy:** — Thank you for the question. I would actually defer that to Justice officials to determine what the rationale for that codicil is. We're not certain of the reason for that.

**Ms. Sproule:** — All right. I guess we'll leave it there for now. Section 22 is the new licence issuance agreement. Again this is replacing the existing section 22, much more detail and certainly a lot more requirements for vendors in terms of the agreements that they're being asked to sign in order to sell licences on behalf of the government.

I'm just wondering, can you tell the committee how many vendors there are right now in Saskatchewan? Do you have that number?

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — So as of March of this spring there are 249 private vendors in the province of Saskatchewan. In addition to that, there are 71 ministry and provincial park offices.

**Ms. Sproule:** — One of the reasons I'm asking is that in the new section (7) of this section 22, there's a requirement for you, the Minister, to lay before the Legislative Assembly every licence issuance agreement entered into within 90 days. Does that mean you'll be submitting 320-or 10-odd licence agreements, licence issuance agreements with the Assembly?

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — So with regards to section 7, that refers to the agreement that the Ministry of Environment has with Active Network, and Active Network in turn has the agreement with the 249 private vendors in the province of Saskatchewan. So this would be referring to the one agreement that we have with Active Network.

**Ms. Sproule:** — Okay. That makes more sense. Now have you already tabled your existing agreement with Active Network before the Legislative Assembly?

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — So as of now we have not tabled the existing agreement. When it is renewed and this Act is in place, then we will be tabling it within 90 days.

**Ms. Sproule:** — I assume that section 13 of *The Executive Government Administration Act* has not changed though, so would there not be a requirement to do so now? Or when it was first signed?

**Mr. Murphy:** — Thank you for the question. ITD [information technology division] was the holder of the original agreement. I believe that they would have tabled that. When this authority changes, it will be our ministry's authority and we will be tabling it in the House.

**Ms. Sproule:** — Could you give me a little more information? ITD, is there a larger name for that company or is that . . .

**Mr. Murphy:** — Information technology division of government services . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Central Services.

**Ms. Sproule:** — So is it managed by the government? Who is Active Network? Is that a government organization as well?

**Mr. Murphy:** — Active Network is a private Canadian subsidiary of Active Network in the United States.

**Ms. Sproule:** — And when did you enter into an agreement with them to provide this licensing services?

**Mr. Murphy:** — We entered into the agreement as a government in 2012.

**Ms. Sproule:** — And is this for HAL [hunting and angling licence system] specifically, or is it for fishing licences as well?

**Mr. Murphy:** — So HAL stands for the hunting and angling licence system. It also includes trapping licences. That covers all of the licences under both *The Fisheries Act* and *The Wildlife Act*.

**Ms. Sproule:** — And so the agreement with Active Network has not been tabled, but the one with ITD was tabled. Is that correct?

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — That agreement that would have been tabled by ITD would be the agreement with Active Network. And when the legislation changes then it will be the Ministry of Environment that will be tabling that agreement 90 days after it's renewed.

**Ms. Sproule:** — So why is it switched from ITD to your ministry?

**Mr. Murphy:** — The original contract included development of the IT [information technology] system, and so it was undertaken by that office. Now that it has been developed and is simply being routine implementation, it's switching over to Ministry of Environment.

**Ms. Sproule:** — Okay, thank you. These 249 private vendors, can you tell me, has that gone up or down since the change to the electronic services was initiated in 2012?

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — We are up from last year. As we said, we have 249 private vendors in March of 2015. Last year we had 225 private vendors in the province. Just prior to the implementation of the hunting and angling licensing system, we were at about 300 private vendors. All of those numbers . . . In addition to all of those numbers would be 71 of the ministry and provincial park offices.

**Ms. Sproule:** — So there is a bit of decline. Is that . . . probably around 50, it looks like from prior to the electronic system. Is that basically vendors who don't have access to the Internet or computers at their business? I'm thinking of the campground that I'm part of; I don't think we do fishing licences anymore because there's no Internet. So has that been a problem for people, that sort of access to licences?

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Yes. I couldn't speak to precisely the reason each vendor would not have chosen to move forward with it but, you know, there could be various reasons for that. In addition to these numbers, we do have the online access, which we did not have before. So I can't speak to why each vendor would not have chosen to move forward. There could be for a variety of reasons.

**Ms. Sproule:** — Do you get complaints or calls from people that are concerned about this? Do you track those and, if so, how many have you received?

[15:45]

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — I can answer that maybe probably related to the constituency that I represent as well. At the turnover, the first, the inception, if you will, of the hunting and angling licensing system there was, you know, I'd referred to maybe as some growing pains or some concerns, as people went to their traditional place where they purchased their licences. And I'm sure you heard the same concerns. Through some efforts around advertising and communication, if you will, through newspapers and the radio and other efforts — and those efforts continue today — those number of complaints, both within the Ministry of Environment but also within my personal constituency office, the Rosthern-Shellbrook constituency office, those complaints are down to the point that I can't think of when I had the last one. I think the same holds true for the

Ministry of Environment.

Although we still do receive the odd phone call with regards to the hunting and angling system, they're normally cleaned up or cleared up quite rapidly. Alberta and British Columbia is where the contact information is provided online or on the telephone, and I think it's, you know, come a long ways and the complaints are much lower than they were at the inception of it.

**Ms. Sproule:** — I'm just wondering if you actually track the number of complaints and if you could provide the committee with those numbers since 2012.

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Okay. We don't normally track them per se, although we can. We are able to run a query for the purposes of the committee as with regards to complaints that have come in to the call centres, as well as we can provide the numbers of communications that our office has had in numbers regarding HAL.

**Ms. Sproule:** — I thank you for that. Moving on to the changes to . . . Well section 70 I think is fairly straightforward. The prosecution now is, you're extending it for another year to three years which, given the rationale, makes some sense.

I just want to talk a little bit about the changes to 76(2) particularly. There's some interesting rejigging of where clause 2 was, but I think that's just drafting. I guess the question I have first of all is with HAL and other provinces. You're prohibiting people from other jurisdictions that are convicted of contraventions that prohibit them from getting a licence in their area from getting one here. Now is that something that HAL allows you to do? Or are you able to actually punch in somebody's licence number from Alberta and find out if they've been banned?

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — With respect to an individual that may have a prohibition of purchasing a licence in another jurisdiction, what and how HAL would enhance our abilities, what HAL can do I guess is to block that person from purchasing a licence in Saskatchewan through the database that we have. Under the previous system, with the paper-based system you'd be able to pick a licence up anywhere, and it wouldn't be till a later date that you would be able to deem that licence not valid. So HAL gives us great opportunity to have some level of blocking those people that are not able to purchase licences in other jurisdictions from purchasing a licence here.

This is an initiative that a number of provinces have looked at, and I've had discussions with my colleagues in other jurisdictions on doing this, moving forward, as well as it's an initiative that is of interest I think and is starting to show some national leadership on it in Canada. It's also an initiative that has, to my knowledge, been operating in the United States in a number states, whereas if you are not able to purchase a licence in one jurisdiction or one state, you're automatically not able to purchase a licence in a number of states, I think in this instance 39 states. So it's something that we're looking at in the nation of Canada. The discussions are ongoing interprovincially. As well we now have some national leadership on this.

**Ms. Sproule:** — Thank you. Could you be a little more specific in terms of which provinces you can now do this with in

Saskatchewan and, if I may, which states as well, American states?

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — I'll just begin with the provincial perspective. At the moment there are no reciprocal agreements between provinces, although there is Alberta, Ontario, and the Yukon that are utilizing the same active network system that we are. So it's something we're working towards. This legislation change will allow us to implement that when we get there, and it's also something that I said it has some national leadership on.

With regards to which states are involved, I'd have to provide that information to the committee members at a later date.

**Ms. Sproule:** — But at this point in time, there's no reciprocal agreements with any of the American states.

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — We don't have any reciprocal agreements with the American states, no.

**Ms. Sproule:** — So basically this is a piece of enabling legislation that will allow the ministry to enter into those agreements if and when they come available.

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — That's exactly what it is.

**Ms. Sproule:** — Okay. It certainly is I think one of the appeals of having electronic databases is that you can hopefully share them with other areas. For example now Manitoba, what kind of system are they using right now? Do you know?

**Mr. Murphy:** — Manitoba is currently using a paper-based system. I believe that they have had some discussions with us about the utility of our system, but I don't know whether that implies that they have any intention to move to an electronic system.

**Ms. Sproule:** — All right. Thank you. I just want to get into the comments I guess you have made about the need for the stiffer penalties. I think we're seeing that mainly . . . Oh no, before I do that, sorry, I just wanted to ask, I notice that we see a lot of press releases from your ministry whenever someone's actually charged, sort of waving a big red flag there's another bad guy out there. So is that a deliberate attempt on the part of the ministry? I mean we don't see the Minister of Justice doing that when someone gets charged with break and enter or armed robbery. Is this a particular tactic that you've designed to bring this to the public's attention? Like why all the press releases?

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Historically the Ministry of Environment has released these, the public press releases, if you will, in the case of serious wildlife infractions and charges and convictions. More recently we've moved some of those releases to include some of the more serious environmental infractions. Most notably we'd note this week, north of Leoville, an area that both of us are familiar with, with the infraction there with the buried containers and whatnot, and the fines and penalties that went along with that.

There's a couple of reasons I suppose for that. One would be first of all to build that public trust and the protection that the Ministry of Environment, whether it be through our

environmental protection officers or our conservation officers, is providing on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. And the second piece would be it's an opportunity for that educational aspect, for people to understand what is maybe not so much what is allowable but most definitely what is not allowable and what will definitely not be tolerated and will be addressed by those in authority that are protecting the environment, and how it will be addressed and what the consequences of some of those environmental infractions or wildlife infractions may be.

**Ms. Sproule:** — Thank you. In terms of the wildlife infractions . . . And I guess that's today's bill, as I read through it, and I know you've extended the time frame for prosecution from two to three years. But yet you describe in your comments the notions that these poachers are very sophisticated. They have — I forget what you called it — poaching gangs that are becoming more sophisticated, more difficult to catch, requiring undercover operations to collect evidence. And the first thing that came to mind for me is, I'm not sure extending it from two years to three years will help if you don't have enough boots on the ground to sort of do the proper investigation. Are you increasing the actual number of people doing these investigations as part of your plan to deal with these poaching gangs? Or is it simply you're giving them extra time to do the investigation?

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — With regards for some of the reasoning behind the move from allowing two years for the investigation to three years, the first would be, this request has come through the Ministry of Environment from our prosecutions department. It is similar to other jurisdictions to have three years to bring those charges forward, and this is much due to, as I mentioned, the sophistication of some of the poaching. The people that are choosing to poach out there, they're often doing it in far removed and remote locations at odd times or evening or nighttime even and without a lot of witnesses around.

We do have a special investigations unit within the Ministry of the Environment with the conservation officers. And their staffing levels have remained constant through the last number of years, but we do have a special investigations unit that investigates those types of serious offences. Often that unit and our investigations branch is also involved with other levels of enforcement personnel, if you will, such as the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police] or city police even on many occasions, as those that will break wildlife laws or commit wildlife offences quite often are involved in other illegal offences as well.

[16:00]

So there's a lot of overlap that happens between different enforcement divisions. The request was to extend that from two to three years to allow for those investigations, to ensure that they can get to an appropriate prosecution in those investigations. So like I said, the three years isn't out of line with what a number of other jurisdictions or provinces have across Canada for this type of work.

**Ms. Sproule:** — Yes, I can certainly understand the extension of the time period, but as you indicated, I mean poachers are not wanting to get caught and so they are . . . And this is a serious business for a lot of them, especially, I think I read somewhere,

the prize horns or antlers or whatever that have huge black market value. And so I'm just wondering, you could extend it 10 years, but if you don't have the resources within your ministry to be there . . . And again I don't even know how you could do it. If they're doing it in the dead of night in a remote area, it's virtually impossible.

What occurred to me as I read these changes is that, you know, if you don't pay your fines or if you don't have a proper licence, you know, you will be banned from getting a licence. But these are people who don't care because they believe themselves to be outside the law and they're, you know, they're not following the laws. So I think without really aggressive . . . And I appreciate that you have the special investigations unit, and I'm thankful for that. And I'm just thinking that's where the support is needed, is to beef up, like I say, boots on the ground. I don't know if you want to respond to that. I'm just making an observation there. But I think too, you know, you could go to 10 years and still probably not catch a lot of these people because they have the resources and the sophistication and the desire to be outside of the law. I don't know if you want to remark on that. I have one more question on something else.

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Go ahead.

**Ms. Sproule:** — I've got a series of letters here with me in relation to the archery hunting season, and I just wonder if we could talk about that a little bit today. I've got a letter to Minister Cheveldayoff; I think Mr. Kirsch who's here today; Mr. Boyd; Ms. Tell; Mr. Brkich had a couple of letters. These have been coming in in the last couple of weeks to my office, and I know that you've received copies of them as well.

The one to Mr. Kirsch in particular was dated April 7th, and they raised a number of issues in terms of the hunting season. I don't know if you've replied to them. I certainly haven't received any copies of any replies from your office, and maybe you have. And I'm sure you've looked at these letters.

But the one particular question I want to talk about today is that . . . And this is an individual from Prince Albert, Andy Dubourt, and he said that:

We were told by the Minister of Environment that changes were coming to reduce the distance from 500 metres to 200 metres from occupied buildings for archery hunters, and that change was never made.

Can you just let the committee know whether that is something you are considering or whether you are not going to do it now?

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — With regards to the change from 500 metres to 200 metres for archery, it's something that we are currently considering. And just in response to the letters, there's a number of letters that I have received as well and will be replying to them. And any that you were cc'd on, we'll cc you as well.

And just in addition to that, yesterday I believe, Mr. Kevin Murphy and myself met with Mr. Ed Bergen, the Chair of the Saskatchewan Bowhunters Association, and had a good discussion on some of the concerns that the Bowhunters Association have with respect to season length. And we'll be

continuing our dialogue with them as we move forward.

**Ms. Sproule:** — Thank you very much for that response. I certainly look forward to your response to these individuals in what appears to me to be some fairly valid observations on their part. I'm glad to hear you met with them. And I think . . . I just want to take one last look here to make sure I haven't missed anything. I think at this point, Mr. Chair, I don't have any further questions on this bill.

**The Chair:** — All right. Thank you for those questions, Ms. Sproule. Are there any other questions or comments from the committee members? Seeing none, we will proceed to vote on the clauses.

So committee members, clause 1, short title, is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried.

[Clause 1 agreed to.]

[Clauses 2 to 9 inclusive agreed to.]

**The Chair:** — Clause 10. I recognize Ms. Jurgens.

**Clause 10**

**Ms. Jurgens:** — Thank you.

Amend subclause 83(1)(s.1)(ii) of *The Wildlife Act, 1998*, as being enacted by Clause 10 of the printed Bill, by striking out "personal".

**The Chair:** — Ms. Jurgens has moved an amendment to clause 10 as follows:

Amend subclause 83(1)(s.1)(ii) of *The Wildlife Act, 1998*, as being enacted by Clause 10 of the printed Bill, by striking out "personal".

Do committee members agree with the amendment as read? Ms. Sproule.

**Ms. Sproule:** — I just have a question on this, Mr. Minister, is, how did personal get in there in the first place, and why are you taking it out?

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — The original intent was for the word to be personnel, and it was entered as personal. And upon consultation with Justice, they have advised us that neither should be in there.

**Ms. Sproule:** — Just so I understand the intent then, these qualifications are things that the regulations will look at to see whether . . . This is the scientific activity we were talking about earlier. So what sort of qualifications would you be looking for if it's not personal?

**Mr. Murphy:** — The original reference was to the personnel undertaking the work. In point of fact, they are personal qualifications, but the clause does not require that in order to

apply. The qualifications are technical in nature regarding biological profession, etc., for undertaking that work.

**Ms. Sproule:** — I guess we'll have to wait to see what the regulations say. All right. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have no further questions.

**The Chair:** — Okay. Any other questions? Thank you for the clarification, to the witnesses. So do committee members agree with the amendment as read?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried.

[Clause 10 as amended agreed to.]

[Clause 11 agreed to.]

**The Chair:** — Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, enacts as follows: *The Wildlife Amendment Act, 2014*, and reminding members this is a bilingual bill.

All right. I would ask a member to move that we report Bill 161, *The Wildlife Amendment Act, 2014* — it is a bilingual bill — with amendment.

**Mr. Toth:** — I so move.

**The Chair:** — Mr. Toth has moved. Is that agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — That's carried. Seeing we have looked at both the bills under consideration, I would ask a member to move a motion of adjournment. Before I do that, maybe I should ask — sorry — if the minister has any concluding comments.

**Hon. Mr. Moe:** — Maybe just a few quick comments, Mr. Speaker, prior to adjournment. I'd just like to thank the staff from the Ministry of Environment for providing the answers to the questions on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. I'd like to thank all committee members. In particular I'd like to thank Ms. Sproule for her questions with regards to this bill. And that would be the close of my comments, Mr. Chair.

**The Chair:** — And I'm sorry I didn't mention that, Ms. Sproule, anything . . .

**Ms. Sproule:** — Likewise I just want to thank the minister and his officials for the work they do and the good work that they do and the provision of answers and information to the committee today. Thank you.

**The Chair:** — Again thank you for the minister and his officials for appearing before the committee today. Your information was very much appreciated. With that, I jumped the gun earlier. I apologize. I'd like a member to move a motion of adjournment. Mr. Kirsch has moved. Are all agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — Carried. This committee stands adjourned to tomorrow afternoon, April the 29th, 2015 at 3 p.m.

[The committee adjourned at 16:11.]