

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
Third Session — Nineteenth Legislature

Friday, April 10, 1981.

The Assembly met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

WELCOME TO STUDENTS

MR. PEPPER: — Mr. Speaker, today we are privileged, as the saying goes, to stretch our hands across the border and welcome to this Assembly a group of grade 12 students from Richey, Montana. They are situated in the Speaker's gallery. These 20 students are accompanied by Deb Milne, Tilda Conroy and Michael Conroy. I ask all members of this Assembly to join with me in welcoming these young American citizens. We wish them a very pleasant and very knowledgeable visit to Saskatchewan, to our capital city and to the provincial Legislative Building. I look forward to meeting with these students briefly at 11 o'clock in room 218, at which time pictures will be taken. I am sure that all members join with me in extending a real Saskatchewan welcome. May our American visitors have very pleasant memories of their visit here in Saskatchewan today and have a safe journey home.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LINGENFELTER: — Mr. Speaker, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to introduce to this Assembly a group of grade 7 and 8 students from the Admiral High School. They are here with their principal, Mr. Wanda Eddingfield. They will be touring the city and enjoying the question period, I am sure. With Mr. Eddingfield is Don Friesen, one of the teachers of the class. I'm sure all members will wish to join with me in welcoming them here today. We will be joining them for drinks and pictures after question period.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce another group of students from the Shaunavon constituency, from the town of Consul, a group of 12 grade 12 students who are seated in the Speaker's gallery. They, too, will be with us during question period. I am sure the debate will be interesting and we will be joining them later on. I'm sure all members will join with me in welcoming them here and wishing them a safe return to the constituency, which is some 300 miles away for the people in Consul and 250 for the people in Admiral. Thank you very much.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. TAYLOR: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to join with the member for Weyburn in welcoming the students from Richey, Montana to our legislature today. I think today is a very important day in our history, in the history of your country, with the launching of the space shuttle. I can assure you that all of us in Canada share your concerns. We hope everything gets off safely and has a safe return. Congratulations to you. Thanks for coming and I hope you enjoy your stay.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

QUESTIONS

Lawsuit Against SGI by British Insurance Company

MR. ROUSSEAU: — A question to the Attorney General in the absence of the minister responsible for SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance). Mr. Attorney General, I am informed that SGI has recently been sued by a British insurance company in London, England, and as a result of the lawsuit you have made an out of court settlement amounting to some \$4 million. I wonder if the Attorney General will advise this Assembly what the status of this court action is at the present time.

HON. MR. ROMANOW: — Mr. Speaker, I will take notice.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — Mr. Speaker, with your permission, I would like to ask a question of the minister responsible for SGI. I am informed that SGI has recently been sued by a British insurance company in London, England. As a result of this lawsuit you have made an out of court settlement amounting to some \$4 million. I wonder if the minister would advise this Assembly what the status of the court action is at the present time?

HON. MR. ROBBINS: — The information I have is that it was a settlement out of court. It was a long way from \$4 million. In fact, it was less than \$400,000.

MR. THATCHER: — A supplementary question to the minister. As a result of that court action, would the minister indicate whether the act to amend Bill 53 which was introduced in this Assembly yesterday, which in effect puts 20 per cent of the provincial government tax on gasoline directly into SGI coffers, is a result of the court action which SGI is presently engaged in or whether it is a result of the court action for the out of court settlement that SGI has recently made.

HON. MR. ROBBINS: — Mr. Speaker, obviously, it has nothing to do with it. The contention of the member for Thunder Creek that it is a 20 per cent tax in terms of gasoline is irrational and wrong. The fact of the matter is that the 20 per cent ad valorem tax went into effect last October, and has been in effect as it is in six other provinces across Canada. The idea of transferring money from the gasoline tax doesn't increase the gasoline tax at all; it is taken out of the gasoline tax. That money which goes to AAIA (Automobile Accident Insurance Act) is related to the fact that the more miles travelled, the more accidents that occur. It bears a relationship which has been in effect since 1977 (and I know the members opposite are always five years behind). All it is attempting to do is bring back flow of money into the AAIA from the gasoline tax to bear a reasonable relationship which it bore five years ago in relation to the repair costs of automobile accidents.

MR. THATCHER: — Supplementary question to the minister. Taking your own estimates for SGI, where revenue last year was about \$11 million and the estimate for this year which you have projected is \$20 million, this means that in this fiscal year drivers in Saskatchewan will pay 5.3 cents for every gallon of gas which they put in their cars directly as a premium to SGI . . .

MR. SPEAKER: — Order, order! I just want to say something about relevancy. The question that was raised by the hon. member for Regina South was with regard to a lawsuit and a settlement out of court. The supplementary which the member asked was whether there was any connection between a certain bill which has been passed and that particular lawsuit. I want the member's supplementary to be relevant to that. I am not so sure that his preamble was.

MR. THATCHER: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is: does the minister believe that, taking your own figures which come out to 5.3 cents this year, 5.3 cents is a fair price to charge Saskatchewan drivers for the inefficiency and incompetency and outright, almost, dishonesty which SGI has displayed to the driving public this year?

MR. SPEAKER: — Order, order!

HON. MR. ROBBINS: — The question has nothing to do with incompetency or anything of that nature at all. It has to do with the frequency of automobile accidents and the cost of repairing them.

MR. LANE: — A question to the minister regarding the heretofore secret court action in London, England. Colleagues in the government insurance in other provinces have informed us that, in fact, the settlement is in the range of \$4 million. Would the minister be prepared to table all documents. We have the high court of justice court documents here of an action between Reinsurance Management Company and Saskatchewan Government Insurance. Would the minister be prepared to table by Monday all documents relating to the particular court action — all costs including legal fees and the amounts of the claims as originally set out in that court action?

HON. MR. ROBBINS: — No, I would not be willing to do that at the moment. I will have to check and find out through SGI what might be tabled.

MR. LANE: — My final supplementary. Would the minister be prepared as well to table all instructions given to counsel, in this particular matter counsel for SGI, and what information they were required or authorized to tell the high court of justice, Queen's Bench division, in England?

HON. MR. ROBBINS: — I'll take it as notice, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — Mr. Speaker, a question to the minister responsible for SGI. Mr. Minister, would you mind advising this Assembly the reason for the lawsuit which happened between the British firm and SGI? Why did this firm in London, England, sue SGI?

HON. MR. ROBBINS: — I'll take it as notice, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: — Order, order! There are no supplementaries allowed when the minister says simply, "I take it as notice." If the minister makes a comment, then a supplementary is allowed. I'll take a new question.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — Mr. Minister, my question to you is this: are you saying to the Assembly that you don't know why you were sued? Is that your answer?

HON. MR. ROBBINS: — I know that they wished to get out of the contract with the Reinsurance Company.

MR. THATCHER: — Mr. Minister, the question you refused to answer a moment ago was a very basic question in light of a statement you made earlier. The question you refused to answer was: what happened, how did you get into this court case? You refused to answer that. Would the minister tell this Assembly how he would not know the answer to that question and yet very blithely and off the top of his head was able to put forward

April 10, 1981

an amount of \$400,000?

MR. SPEAKER: — Order! I think that members are not allowed to repeat, with slight variation, questions which haven't been answered. They may not like the answer. But . . . Order! The rules are quite clear that questions cannot be repeated with slight variation on the same subject.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — Mr. Speaker, I find it difficult to understand the minister's answers. He has answered a question as to the amount; I asked him to advise why they were being sued and he took notice of that question; then I asked if he didn't know and then he said, well, yes, he knew. Well, Mr. Speaker . . .

MR. SPEAKER: — Order, order! I'm quite prepared to accept a question from the member. I'm not prepared to discuss or debate why the minister wouldn't answer all that he wouldn't answer. If there's a question, I'll accept it.

MR. THATCHER: — A question to the minister in charge of SGI. Would the minister inform this Assembly whether SGI in the court case, which has been brought to your attention this morning, was in breach of contract?

HON. MR. ROBBINS: — SGI wished to get out of the contract with the Reinsurance Company. Reinsurance Company did not want them to get out of the contract and that's why the suit occurred.

MR. THATCHER: — Supplementary question to the minister. Would the minister inform the Assembly why SGI wished to get out of a contract which it had entered into, obviously a few years prior to that, and why SGI was not prepared to live up to the basic terms of a contract or a commitment which it had entered into with another company? Basically, why did SGI want out and what were the reasons?

HON. MR. ROBBINS: — Mr. Speaker, I do not think I should be expected to know all the legal complications with respect to that situation and that's why I wish to take it as notice.

MR. THATCHER: — Mr. Minister, in the light of your answer, and in light of the fact that you are the minister in charge of SGI and in light of the fact that you have just indicated you don't know what SGI policy was and you don't know what SGI was doing, may I ask the minister: would you take mercy on the drivers of Saskatchewan and resign? Let's get a minister in there who knows how to run a corporation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LANE: — . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . We'll be prepared to table it after question period. The Attorney General knows the rules. But I'm sure if the Attorney General doesn't have the court documents, he should be calling for the resignation.

MR. SPEAKER: — Order! Does the member have a question?

MR. LANE: — I'm wondering why, Mr. Minister, when I go through the annual reports of SGI there's no reference to possible legal actions as there is in, for example, Sask Tel's. In fact, would you not admit that you've been hiding this court action, and probably others, from the people of this province so that it doesn't show up in the annual report?

HON. MR. ROBBINS: — Mr. Speaker, we've been hiding nothing.

MR. THATCHER: — Would the minister in charge of SGI be prepared to acknowledge that many of the financial problems that SGI has had, such as the \$28 million loss, are very, very deeply interrelated with this court action which is going on in London, England, or which was about to go on in London, England, and that as a result of this action many of the problems encountered in the losses of SGI are tied into this?

HON. MR. ROBBINS: — Mr. Speaker, certainly I would not, because it is not true. SGI didn't lose \$28.5 million. It made \$1.023 million last year on its general operations. The automobile accident insurance fund lost \$28.575 million, and it was due to frequency of automobile accidents and the cost of repairing those accidents. The fact is that claims incurred appreciably exceeded the premium income. On top of that you had all of your administrative costs in relation to the automobile accident insurance fund.

Surely the members can understand, Mr. Speaker, that there are two sections of SGI. SGI administers the automobile accident insurance fund. That fund had to pay 154,518 claims last year — I'm sorry, it's 1979 I'm talking about. And the loss was \$28.575 million. There was \$15.280 million surplus in that fund at the end of 1978. The accident rate rose of 23 per cent. The costs of those accidents rose by 34 per cent. And that's the reason for the loss. SGI did not suffer a loss in 1979. It had a surplus of \$1.023 million.

MR. COLLVER: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister responsible for SGI this morning stated that in the first place he didn't know what the legal action was pertaining to them, but that SGI wanted out of a reinsurance contract with a London group. He further stated that there was a settlement made of less than \$400,000 to get out of that contract. So, presumably, SGI is out of that contract. What other reinsurance company are you using to replace the one that you cancelled?

HON. MR. ROBBINS: — I cannot answer that question at the moment. There are a number of reinsurers that SGI deals with, but I'll get the information for the member.

MR. COLLVER: — Supplementary question. Would you know whether or not SGI was in fact providing over half of its reinsurance business to an organization in Saskatchewan headed up by Mr. Fred Hill?

HON. MR. ROBBINS: — No, I wouldn't know that. I would have to take it as notice, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — Mr. Minister, you have indicated that you have settled out of court on this contract that you wanted to break. Are you in fact no longer doing business with this reinsurance company, or are you still affiliated in some way, shape or form with it?

HON. MR. ROBBINS: — I will check and get an answer for you.

MR. LANE: — Is it not true, Mr. Minister, that as a term of your settlement, in an admission to the High Court of Justice of England, you agreed to honor any reinsurance contracts or treaties which were signed, even if you were able to get out of the contract with Reinsurance Management Company.

HON. MR. ROBBINS: — That would seem to me to be reasonable.

MR. THATCHER: — Does the minister find it unusual that normally he is able to recite reams of facts and figures on almost any subject which he has been involved in, but today, when he's asked a few basic questions about a company of which he is the minister in charge, he can't recall some of the basics such as what companies SGI might reinsure with and the terms which SGI has been involved with in this legal settlement? Does the minister find it curious that all of a sudden his memory, which is usually pretty good, has gone blank? Would it be a fair conclusion for the members on this side of the House to draw that the minister is simply not telling the truth this morning?

HON. MR. ROBBINS: — No, it would not be a fair conclusion, but the member can draw any conclusion that he wants to. That's his privilege. The fact of the matter is that I'm not a legally trained person. I don't look at the legal implications that closely. Obviously, I wouldn't know all the legal details with regard to a legal action.

MR. SPEAKER: — Order, order! The member for Melfort . . . (inaudible interjections) . . . Order, order! The member for Regina South had a question. There were two supplementaries to the question. I'm now asking the member for Melfort, the Minister of Industry and Commerce, to bring forward an answer.

Alleged Sedco Dealings with McNulty's Welding

HON. MR. VICKAR: — Mr. Speaker, with your permission, I would like to refer to *Hansard*, page 1873, dated April 7, to a statement which was made. I'd like to read that statement and then make my reply. The statement was made by the member for Rosthern. This is what it says in *Hansard*:

Sedco had originally suggested to this manufacturer (and we're talking here about McNulty's Welding), which produces the only product of that kind in Saskatchewan, that a loan of \$1.2 million would be forthcoming. The loan was confirmed on March 6 at 4:30 p.m. to the Bank of Montreal verbally and followed by a letter. Prior to that in February, your officials met with this group of individuals as well as the people who had loaned money to McNulty's saying you were recommending that you would give \$1.2 million . . . why has the cheque not come forward? . . . Mr. Minister, I repeat on March 6 at 4:30, your officials from Sedco phoned and confirmed that the loan had been approved and the money would be forthcoming.

My reply of that day was that I wanted to look at the circumstances and at the file in Saskatoon to verify what the hon. member was trying to tell me.

Mr. Speaker, since that day, I have done that. I have confirmed it and have received the information from Sedco's office in Saskatoon, as well as in Regina. We find absolutely no letter, as indicated by the hon. member, that was sent to McNulty's Welding. Mr. Speaker, I would like the hon. member to table that letter in this House or, if he can't table it, to withdraw his statements and apologize to McNulty's Welding, which has been insulted and dragged into radio and press.

MR. SPEAKER: — Order! The member for Thunder Creek.

Lawsuit Against SGI by British Insurance Company

MR. THATCHER: — Question to the minister in charge of SGI. Mr. Minister, if we may return to the court case in London from which we were suddenly diverted, did you, as minister in charge of a large Crown corporation, namely SGI, on finding these legal implications facing you, consult with the Attorney General of this province concerning that legal problem? Would you tell us when you consulted with him, and if he or any of his officials gave you a legal opinion?

HON. MR. ROBBINS: — I did not discuss it with the Attorney General. The Crown investments corporation has legal counsel which was used in the case.

MR. THATCHER: — Supplementary question to the minister. Will the minister tell us exactly what the recommendations were of the Crown investments corporation, since the minister just indicated that you consulted with Crown investments corporation. You just said you used their counsel. Would you tell us what recommendation the legal department of Crown investments corporation provided to you as the minister in charge of SGI in this matter?

HON. MR. ROBBINS: — I was aware of the fact that the case was in process and that the legal counsel was involved.

MR. THATCHER: — Did Crown investments corporation recommend an out of court settlement to you as minister in charge (or to any senior officials in charge of SGI) rather than going through the entire court procedure in London?

HON. MR. ROBBINS: — I suppose both sides looked at the case and the Reinsurance Company was willing to make an out of court settlement. That was preferable.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — Mr. Minister, you indicated earlier that SGI attempted to break the contract and that was the reason for the lawsuit. Would you advise this Assembly as to the reason you wanted that contract broken with the Reinsurance Management Company, which you previously had signed some two to four years ago?

HON. MR. ROBBINS: — I think I'll have to take notice again, Mr. Speaker.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — Mr. Minister, you are the minister in charge of SGI. Did you not instruct SGI to break that contract? Did that direction not come from you, as the minister, or from the board?

HON. MR. ROBBINS: — The board was familiar with the situation.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — Where did the instructions come from for SGI to seek the breaking of this contract?

HON. MR. ROBBINS: — Obviously, it would come from the management of SGI and be discussed in the board.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — Mr. Minister, are you not a member of the board? As a matter of fact, are you not the chairman of the board?

HON. MR. ROBBINS: — I think the member is aware of the answer to that question.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — If you are the chairman of that board, the instructions came from

you. Why would you want to take notice of that question?

HON. MR. ROBBINS: — Negotiations have obviously been carried out by management.

MR. LANE: — I wonder, Mr. Minister, if you wouldn't give an explanation of the timing of this particular matter. It's interesting that our information about the matter with the Reinsurance Management Company arose at approximately the time the former minister of SGI resigned or was dumped, from the cabinet. Would you advise whether all the events giving rise to this act took place during the time you have been the minister of SGI?

HON. MR. ROBBINS: — I will take notice, Mr. Speaker, and check in terms of the total time related to the carrying out of the arrangements between the Reinsurance Company and SGI.

MR. THATCHER: — Mr. Minister, your answers of the past few minutes give rise to a whole new series of questions. My question to you is simply this: who is making the ultimate decisions in SGI? Will the minister inform this Assembly so that we are all clear? Are you telling us today that decisions as to how SGI would proceed in this legal matter (this very serious legal matter) were not conveyed to you and that you, in fact, were unaware of them? Are you telling us that instructions were given to legal counsel to proceed in a certain fashion without informing you as minister in charge? If, in fact, you were aware, then would the minister inform the Assembly why you are taking notice of questions which are simple management decisions and which you, as the ultimate head of SGI, should know as a matter of routine?

HON. MR. ROBBINS: — Management brought the information to the board and the board made decisions on it.

MR. THATCHER: — Supplementary question to the minister in charge of SGI. Out of frustration, I guess the ultimate question is: why aren't you answering the question? Why aren't you telling us the truth? If you can't, why don't you resign?

MR. SPEAKER: — Order, order! That's not a proper question for the question period.

MR. ROUSSEAU: — Mr. Minister, you just did the same thing. You are aware of the situation; you have the knowledge of what went on; you instructed. Again I repeat the question: why were you seeking to get out of that contract?

HON. MR. ROBBINS: — Obviously we felt the contract wasn't satisfactory.

MR. LANE: — Would the minister be prepared to admit today that he has been fully informed of the events and facts leading up to, and the resolution of (if it has been resolved) this court case?

HON. MR. ROBBINS: — I have been given information as we proceeded along the course in relation to the case, yes.

MR. LANE: — Have you been fully informed? Are you satisfied you have been fully informed?

HON. MR. ROBBINS: — Mr. Speaker, I do not think I should be expected to have at my fingertips all of the information related to legal action. I said before that I am not a

legally-trained person. The board was informed by management as we went along.

MR. LANE: — Mr. Minister, have you fully informed the Premier of the events leading up to this matter? We asked very deliberately, earlier in this session, whether the Premier had confidence in you as the minister. Have you fully informed the Premier of the events and the situation revolving around this court case and leading up to it?

HON. MR. ROBBINS: — I am not required, Mr. Speaker, to divulge any conversations I may have with the Premier in relation to cabinet responsibilities.

MR. LANE: — Have you kept the Premier fully informed, Mr. Minister?

HON. MR. ROBBINS: — I think the Premier is well aware of what goes on in this province.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 55 – An Act to amend The Executions Act

HON. MR. ROMANOW: — Mr. Speaker, I move that a bill to amend The Executions Act be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion agreed to and ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

Bill No. 56 – An Act respecting Jurors and Juries

HON. MR. ROMANOW: — Mr. Speaker, I move that a bill respecting Jurors and Juries be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion agreed to and ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

Point of Privilege

MR. COLLVER: — Mr. Speaker, before the orders of the day I rise on a matter of privilege for all members of this Assembly.

Today, during question period, the minister responsible for SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) stated categorically in answer to a question I posed to him that he did not know the names or the amounts of any reinsurance agencies responsible to SGI. Now that is so beyond credibility, Mr. Speaker . . .

MR. SPEAKER: — For the member to make a statement “that is so beyond credibility” is debating the issue. The member must state succinctly and as briefly as possible what his point of privilege is. When the member does it, since he has not given me notice of this and since it has recently occurred, I will take notice of it and I will check the record.

MR. COLLVER: — My very succinct matter of privilege is that the minister responsible for SGI, in answer to my question today about the reinsurance agency responsible to SGI, deliberately misled this House.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

CONSOLIDATED FUND BUDGETARY CASH OUTFLOW

DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM AND RENEWABLE RESOURCES

Ordinary Expenditure – Vote 39

Item 1 (continued)

MR. THATCHER: — Mr. Minister, last evening just before we closed at 5 o'clock, I asked you for some information and I am sure you have a wealth of officials who have been digging out that information. Before we move on, could you provide me with that information, because I'm sure there are some questions arising from it?

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, I would be happy to provide the member with the information. I have a list of the items that he wanted to address and I would be happy to table it with him.

MR. THATCHER: — Just hold on item 1 for a second, Mr. Chairman, until I get that. I'm sorry that to save time the minister didn't choose to send it across.

Mr. Minister, you have indicated the trips that you have made. Regrettably, I think I also asked you for the names of the officials who accompanied you and what the cost to the taxpayers was for the trips. I don't believe this information is here.

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, the member asked about the trips that were taken and the purpose of each trip. If he wants something different, if he wants to know about the cost and the people who went, that's a different matter. There's a place and a process for that and that's through an order for returns. It is almost impossible, in the short period of time that we've had overnight, to go through and do an accurate and precise job of making sure that we've accounted for every person and every dollar, with regard to the trips that have been taken or whatever mission the trip was.

Mr. Chairman, while I'm on my feet, I find it very interesting that the member for Thunder Creek wants to make this an issue. I find it interesting, because in the Conservative Party's philosophy, in their approach to tourism, I have watched, over the last couple of years, what it is that they would like to do. I note very much, Mr. Chairman, that they have placed a high priority on tourism. In fact, there are all kinds of press clippings around the country — you can take your pick of any one you want.

Here I have one on August 12, 1980, where Devine suggests investing more money in agriculture, timber and tourism. He goes on to say that he would put a lot of emphasis on tourism, that it should be a major industry.

I find that very interesting, Mr. Chairman, because nowhere has the Tory party opposite ever indicated how they would do that. The tourism business, as anybody will know, is a highly promotional game. In order to do a good job of it, one has to get out and promote the product that he has to sell. Now we find that the Tories opposite want to use the argument that we're doing too much promotional work. I have a real problem here trying to figure out what the line of attack is, what it is that they're looking for, what they're driving for, because we have a leader of the Tory party who is sincerely interested in promoting tourism.

The member last night went on a tirade, at some length, about a trip that was made to Orlando, Florida, to promote, for the first time ever in this province, the motor coach industry – the motor coach industry that has never been promoted adequately in this province. That's fine and dandy. He makes a point that somehow that's evil and somehow that's terrible. I want to know why he figures that's evil and terrible. He has a list now of all the trips and the purpose for every single trip. I want to go through that list with him. If he wants me to, I'd be happy to go through that list with him and explain to him in detailed form why we made every one of those trips. I think we are starting to put tourism on the map in this province and indeed the North American continent.

When he talks about the trip to Orlando, Florida, and tries to paint, by innuendo, that there's something evil and terrible about it, Mr. Chairman, he's making a misrepresentation. Two years ago in this province, there was exactly zero business in the packaged tour, motor coach business, and anyone who knows anything about tourism will tell you that the fastest rising segment of the tourism industry is the motor coach industry. There is no industry which has made greater strides in a short period of time than the motor coach industry, and this province, two years ago, had zero business. Oh, sure, we had motor coaches running through the province, but that's exactly what they were doing; they were going right through the province to Alberta and to British Columbia and to Manitoba and they weren't stopping here.

Because of that trip, and because a high-level person in this government, namely me and a number of other officials went down and met with the top 50 of 400 corporations and because we sat down with them, we increased the motor coach business in this province by 20 per cent per year in the last two years. We have established a direct link and a direct contact with that motor coach industry. Now, if the member wants to question and argue and go through every trip on that entire list, I would be only too happy to go through, in detail, that list. If the member wants to argue whether that was a justified expenditure of resources and funds, I would be very happy to respond. If he wants to argue that two trips to Denver were a waste of the taxpayer's money, I would be very happy to argue and debate it any time and anywhere.

In fact, Mr. Chairman, I would like to debate it with the member at the Northern Saskatchewan Outfitters' convention next year. I would be happy to debate that matter with the chamber of commerce, whether it is in Regina or in Saskatoon. I would like to debate in Saskatoon in front of the board of trade whether those two trips were a waste of expenditure on behalf of the province of Saskatchewan. I would love to debate that, because when I was at the NSOA (Northern Saskatchewan Outfitters' Association) convention, for the past two years, both times we got a standing ovation for what we had done in promoting tourism; no one had done anything in that regard previous to that time.

Does he want to go through the trips item by item, trip by trip? The trip to New Orleans to talk to Ducks Unlimited – if he wants to go through item by item to discuss what we did down there, I'd be happy to do that. I would be happy to inform him that Bud Miller, the minister from Alberta, was with me on that trip to New Orleans. I would be happy to tell him that Brian Ransom from Manitoba joined me on that trip and, between us, we put together a strategy on our migratory bird problem in this province and, indeed, all of the prairie provinces.

I would be happy to tell him that Boyd Anderson, a former Tory candidate, president of the SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) also accompanied us on

that trip, and made a tremendous speech with us in Alberta and Manitoba in regard to that. I would be happy to tell him that the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation endorses, with the SARM and with the other provinces, 100 per cent the stance taken in New Orleans. So, if you want to debate, trip by trip, Mr. Member for Thunder Creek, we are very happy to do that. If you want to indicate which one you have contention with, we would be happy to explain what it was all about. The sheet I gave you explains why we went and why it was so important that we go and the accomplishments.

So, Mr. Chairman, I don't think the member for Thunder Creek really has a legitimate argument in any of his cases.

MR. THATCHER: — Mr. Minister, we're going to shift to another subject for a minute. I want to assure you that I will be back, but unfortunately it's demanded that I go out and expose SGI in the corridor. I assure you I will be back and yes, we will go through a few items on that. I'm going to ask a colleague to change the subject for about five minutes, but I shall return.

MR. HARDY: — Well, I have quite a few subjects I would like to bring forward. Mr. Minister, I'm unaware of this motor coach program. Perhaps I should be more aware of it. I would just like to ask a few questions. What advertising have you done? I know the basic idea of it. What advertising has been done to induce these motor coach tours into our province? I'll start with that one first.

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, we have a number of brochures, which we have been involved in putting together, of promotional tours and packages on which we have gone together with various people who we, in fact, met with when we were in Orlando and made our first establishment in regard to the motor coach industry. I don't know if we have them handy with us, but we will be happy to supply the member with a complete barrage of package tours which we have put together and which have been very successful.

I should mention that we have been able to co-operate with some of the biggest names in the industry. If you want a list (and we will supply you with the brochures later), we will start right at home with the STC tour of Saskatchewan. The cost of the package tour to us is \$1,500. The one-day tour program which we have gone with STC is \$1,000; Suntour is \$1,200; Global of London, England is \$1,500; Renwick Travel is \$1,200; Western Explorers is \$1,500. There's Pacific Western, and we have a whole list here that we would be happy to supply him with. You can see it is a long list, and we would be happy to send it over to the member.

Mr. Chairman, the member asked another question. I had originally intended to table a copy of the proposal by Frontier Airlines to provide a jet service to Saskatchewan. He is very antagonistic about two trips I made to Denver to clinch the deal on Frontier Airlines. Frontier Airlines and that junket paid off in high dividends to this province. You will note in yesterday's *Leader-Post*, Frontier Airlines is coming to town on May 2. We will have scheduled first time ever a U.S. air international connection into the United States by Frontier Airlines. I think any junket with the expenditure of two trips would very much validate the need for that expenditure. So I would like to table, if I may, Mr. Chairman, a copy of the ad which appeared in the paper yesterday to every member in this House.

MR. PICKERING: — Mr. Minister, I would hope that you haven't suggested to Frontier Airlines to land immediately in front of the Legislative Building.

MR. HARDY: — In consideration that you are promoting tourism (which I agree with), I would like to ask you what you are doing toward the upgrading of the park areas where I am sure tours will have to stop along the way. These tours are not going directly to the initial stop.

HON. MR. GROSS: — Well, Mr. Chairman, it gives me pleasure to make the announcement with regard to what we are doing there. You will note that last year we announced that one of the major emphases of our department, as an organization and an important thrust in tourism, is to take our entire park system (and we started immediately last year) and bring our park program into a year-round situation. We are now in the process. It will be a fairly long program before it is entirely completed. We are in the process of a very active rejuvenating and upgrading of accommodation in our provincial parks system so that it is year-round and so that at the first sniffle of snow, we don't pack our bags and close the entire system down.

We started last year with the first set of year-round accommodation. The member will know that, in his very own riding in Kelsey-Tisdale, the very first park in the entire provincial parks system received year-round accommodation with probably one of the most beautiful set of log cabin developments that anybody has ever seen. That is the first step. We have moved since that into Duck Mountain with year-round accommodation with condominium complexes, and into Cypress Hills with year-round accommodation with condominiums. We will be proceeding along that line. If you have reviewed the budget, you will see that we will be moving more directly into that area and doing a lot more to make our system a year-round system as opposed to simply a summer operation.

MR. HARDY: — Well, Mr. Minister, you were saying that you are upgrading the provincial parks. My concern is more about the regional parks along the way. Most regional parks are finding it very expensive to keep up. The grant system, although it has not been bad, is certainly not keeping up to the cost of operating these parks. Does your department plan in any way to upgrade the grant system, give them more grants or assistance for the regional parks? I'm not talking about provincial parks.

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, the member may or may not be aware that regional parks fall under the jurisdiction of local government. It's local municipalities, towns, villages, rural municipalities which get together co-operatively and organize a regional park. We assist them in a granting program, roughly two-thirds in the capital, and I forget what the maintenance percentage is.

Last year we went from 50 per cent, in terms of the capital grant structure, to two-thirds of the cost of providing capital for regional parks. In regard to maintenance, Mr. Chairman, I believe it's 60 per cent of the total maintenance costs of maintaining the regional park program. We have increased from 50 per cent to 60 per cent of the costs; we did that last year. This year, in terms of the total grant which is going to be payable to regional parks, our increase in the total grant pay-out to the regional parks is 15 per cent. I think we've done everything we could possibly do in regard to increasing the granting formula. That's not to say we can't do more; we will do more in years to come.

Mr. Chairman, the types of programs which are launched by regional parks are the total initiatives of the regional park board. It's their right to do what they wish to do and their responsibility to carry their plans out. It is beyond our ability to direct them to go into

year-round accommodation or something like that. They direct their own operations; we only supply a good part of the money.

I said that maintenance was 50 per cent. I'm sorry. The percentage figure last year, when we changed it, went from 50 per cent to 75 per cent of all eligible maintenance costs which are paid by a grant system through our department.

MR. HARDY: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. One other thing comes to mind, and it has been happening in the province of Saskatchewan and probably in other provinces as well. A lot of motorcades or large groups of people travelling together have been travelling through our province. I know that three or four went through my area last year. They seem to be going through to Flin Flon; I don't know where they go in other parts of the province. Has your department done anything to promote this type of tourism within the province of Saskatchewan?

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, when I responded to the member for Thunder Creek, the member for Kelsey-Tisdale would have noted that one of our big emphases last year was to get into the motor coach business in tour packaging. We went forward with an aggressive program to the market as did other provinces in western Canada. Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario went forward with a very aggressive marketing plan; we did the same. Because of the action we took with the beginnings of the NTBA (National Tourism Brokers' Association) in Florida, and the result of the action taken, we have seen a dramatic increase. It was 20 per cent in the last two years. That is probably the only reason you are seeing those coaches roll through.

Because of that, we have the motor coach business not just passing through Saskatchewan to move on to Banff and Jasper or the Rocky Mountains, they are actually stopping here and taking part in what we have available. Some of the major events include the RCMP, our provincial park system, and our northern out-camp fishing — you name it. If the member for Kelsey-Tisdale is seeing those coaches running through his riding, I am happy to say it is because of the efforts of our department in tracking these people and actually booking and packaging one, two, three, four, five and six day tours.

MR. HARDY: — Mr. Minister, either I misled you or you misinterpreted what I was saying. I was saying that there have been a lot of travel trailers travelling together, not necessarily the motor coaches that you were insisting on. I wonder if you have promoted that in any way? I have a bit of a park there, and I know I have had calls from as far away as New York asking about facilities within the area. I would just like to know if you've done anything to advertise what Saskatchewan has in facilities for people travelling together in a group of cars, trucks, motor homes, whatever they are.

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, with regard to whether we have any facilities or have any way of telling people what we have in the province to show, the answer is that we definitely do. We've been in the business for a few years in that regard. SaskTravel is an organization that we have set up within the department. It's an organization that co-ordinates tour groups, whether they are from outside or within the province. Last year 7,000 travellers toured through our province through the co-ordination effort of SaskTravel. The member opposite will be familiar with this document which lists all the accommodations and services available through the parks and whether there is camping or not, etc.

Mr. Chairman, SaskTravel last year handled over 100,000 individual inquiries on the

same things that the member mentions. I can table it if the member wants the brand new copy of *SaskTravel*.

MR. THATCHER: — Okay, Mr. Minister. I'd like to return to the question of the airplanes, if I may. Mr. Minister, I'm intrigued with your fervent desire to debate here, there and everywhere. I'd be happy to debate with you anywhere, except that you're not really good enough to waste my time on. But I would be happy to debate with you in this Assembly right now, seeing we're both here, the merits of your going up to Sunshine at government expense. I would be willing to debate the merits of going up there to inspect snow grooming techniques on the top of Sunshine, which just happens to have a beautiful chalet and a top-quality ski run. I would be happy to debate the merits of a cabinet minister going up a ski hill at taxpayers' expense, ostensibly to learn snow grooming techniques that department people already had full and complete knowledge of. I'd be happy to debate that subject with you anywhere and I'd be prepared to do it right now.

It cost the taxpayers \$1,300 plus, to send this minister up to a beautiful ski hill, Sunshine, and I compliment him on his taste. He has good taste; I will acknowledge that. I think it is a highly questionable procedure for the minister to spend that amount of time up the ski hill to do something that I'm sure his departmental people could already do. Yes, I question the merits of that trip because under questioning last night, when he was cold, when he didn't know the question was coming, the minister was pretty vague on the equipment that he looked at. He didn't know what it was. He didn't know what the makes were. Oh, he said that it's a snow cruster. Maybe it was a Bombardier. I don't know anything about machinery that you would use on a ski hill, but even I could come up with Bombardier. His answer, when he was cold, when he had no preparation, when he was asked to recite some of the technical things that he as the minister in charge had undertaken to learn for the people of Saskatchewan, was pretty vague.

He was pretty vague about his trip to Orlando, Florida. Oh, yes, he's had overnight to make a speech on the merits of it. Originally the minister tried to give the impression that he and his officials travelled there by bus and it took a specific question – a very specific question – that he and his officials had, in fact, flown there. I don't know whether the minister's trip to Orlando, Florida, was merited or not, but it's not a bad trip. . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I was just about to ask the minister about that so I'm glad you clarified that last one.

I note the minister, in the itinerary that he has given, went to Helena, Montana, January 10 and 11. (This one will kill you.) He went to Helena to attend the inaugural ball for Governor-elect Ted Schwinden, on behalf of the Premier. I think that's a fine gesture. I shudder at the people of Saskatchewan being represented by the minister opposite, but I think that's wonderful. I wonder why we don't invite the governors of Montana and North Dakota, etc. to the opening of the legislature. I think that's a wonderful thing to reciprocate on, and I will watch with interest to see if the government reciprocates. I think that's an excellent gesture since normally this government has gone out of its way to antagonize our neighbours to the south.

Mr. Minister, in addition (and I did not ask you for this information), I would like you to tell me about any trips that you may have taken out of the province at anybody else's expense. Have you been invited, has your way been paid by any company, corporation or other level of government, and if so, where did you go and what was the purpose of the trip?

HON. MR. GROSS: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I'll start at the last part of the question and go up.

MR. THATCHER: — Mr. Minister excuse me, I didn't mean anything personal; I meant on government affairs. I was not trying to pry into personal things. I meant in your capacity as a minister of the Crown. If there was a misunderstanding, I apologize.

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, the answer to the last question is that there have been no trips such as that. In regard to the trip that the member made mention of, I promise him I'd be happy to debate him on any single trip, anywhere, anytime, and if he wants to have it right now I'm happy to go along with him. Let's take this last trip he talked about, to Helena, Montana, to attend a governor's inaugural ball for Ted Schwinden. For the benefit of the member opposite, he'll be happy to know that the Alberta Minister of Tourism, "Boomer" Adair, with a contingent of about four or five people in addition to him and his own department, the Minister of Education for Alberta, and two or three other ministers whose names have slipped my memory were also there in Montana attending the same ball with exactly the same function. I don't think anybody wants to quarrel with the protocol of our neighbours to the south. So just to put the record straight, the ball in Helena was not a mockery. It was an important event and our province saw fit to extend our protocol across the border and attend that ball. I don't think there is anything wrong with that, Mr. Chairman.

The other one of which he makes mention is Banff. He said last night that we weren't able to provide him with the details of the piece of equipment that he wanted to know about. He wanted to know the precise model number. He wanted to know the precise piece of equipment. He wanted to know the serial number. He wanted to know all that stuff. In the Department of Tourism we have a lot of equipment, for the benefit of the member opposite. I don't know how many individual pieces of equipment we might have in our inventory, but it's a fair amount. He expected me last night to know exactly the serial number. He expected me to know exactly the model number. I want to advise the member opposite this is a big operation — it's not a pretzel stand — and to know exactly every item of equipment we have in our inventory is totally impossible. Somebody has to dig through to identify it to make sure we have the correct and precise information for the member. Now for the benefit of the member opposite, the piece of equipment that was purchased for grooming the hill is a snow tiller. It is complete with two hydraulic couplers for our SD301 ski dozer, capable of connecting thiokol. The supplier is Couillard Developments. It is also equipped with a tandem-hitch powder maker. It is a 12-foot tiller. For the benefit of the member opposite, that is precisely the piece of equipment.

The member opposite says that the minister making a trip to examine snow making techniques in Banff is somehow questionable. Somehow it is suspect. In his words, it shouldn't have happened. For the benefit of the member opposite, he may not be aware of it, even though his party is the great promoter of tourism, the great supporters of what should be done in the tourism area, but the hill at Blackstrap, of which he may know a little bit about (and the member for Lumsden may know a little more about), has always been a problem. It has always been an ice hill, and nobody (including our department) has been able to solve that problem. To understand what the problem is . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . for the former government, as the member for Thunder Creek would know a lot about. Nobody could solve that problem. It was a pure ice hill.

The Saskatoon Ski Association, on countless opportunities that were open to them,

made representations to our department to say that the hill was incredible. It was not skiable. It was a disaster and it was time we fixed it up. We really had no answer. Finally, with the consultations back and forth over the years, with the Saskatoon Ski Association in particular (and one individual in particular, Ed Sebestyen) . . . If the member is going to be making a personal attack on Ed Sebestyen, he should go ahead and do it. I think he is a fairly reputable person in Saskatoon. His argument and his complaint about the Blackstrap hill is that it is not skiable. It is ice. The answer that we gave him all the time was that we have bad weather and the hill was positioned in the wrong place. That's true. The member for Thunder Creek will know that it was positioned in the wrong place.

He said the problem could be solved. In the last six months he discovered a tool that would do it. He wanted to make damn sure, if I may use the word, that we understood exactly what that piece of equipment was. He advised us of the place where a demonstration was taking place to prove to not only my department, but to the people of Saskatchewan, that it was possible to improve that hill. We followed it up in a very legitimate manner. The assertion made by an important individual in this province, Ed Sebestyen of the Saskatoon Ski Association, was a correct one.

I just want to add that since the purchase of that piece of equipment, the private operators in this province have also looked at it. In fact, we have loaned the tiller to private operators in this province, for instance, Mission Ridge, to help them solve their problems of icing. We also provided it to the private enterprisers in this province who are in the ski business. We showed them how we solved our problem and how it could help them.

If the member is saying that somehow that is evil and terrible and that the Saskatoon Ski Association has no right to ask us to improve the skiing opportunities in this province, I think the member's argument is fruitless and ridiculous. Not only have we proven that we can improve our skiing ability in this province, and we have, and the snow conditions in this province, by going out and first hand looking at a process which will work, we have actually done something about it to get those hills into shape and help our private operations as well in the process.

MR. HARDY: — Well, Mr. Minister, it seems we have been doing a lot flying both to the west and to the south. I have a few questions about ducks. First of all, I would like a copy of your agreement on crop depredation between the provincial government and the federal government.

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, we will certainly provide the member with a copy. I checked to see if we had the copy back in our hands. My deputy informs me that it has been returned from Ottawa with our signature on it. We will provide you with a copy today, if possible. If not, it will be here on Monday — a copy of the agreement in full.

MR. HARDY: — Have you an agreement signed for this year?

HON. MR. GROSS: — No.

MR. HARDY: — When do you expect to have an agreement signed, and what do you expect to be in it?

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, we are attempting, through the negotiating which

has been going on over the years – and it will continue to be our strategy – to pick up a five-year agreement, which is prorated so we will have a lesser share in the costing of ducks. We expect to sign another agreement (if we get a new agreement) probably next year for this year.

The practice of these agreements is that they have been lagging. We have been critical of the federal government because these lag. It takes us a year to get an agreement signed for the previous year. That has been the case with the federal government for an eon – for as long as I can remember. The federal government will not sign agreements on time, and have them ready. We have experienced that problem with both Liberal and Conservative governments in Ottawa. John Fraser, when he was minister of the environment, took a year to get the agreement put together from the previous year.

MR. HARDY: — Mr. Minister, with regard to waterfowl depredation, I was quoting a news release which said there were, last year, 5,000 farmers affected, at a cost of \$3 million to \$5 million. Many of those farmers were not reimbursed in any way for the depredation. I would like to know how much more adequately these farmers will be protected from waterfowl depredation in terms of actual loss and dollar value.

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, I share the feelings of the member opposite. I think the feelings he portrays are feelings which a lot of organizations around this province have shared with me with regard to the inadequacies of the present waterfowl depredation agreements we have with Ottawa. The member will know that migratory birds are the responsibility of the federal government. It is the responsibility of the federal governments of Canada, the United States and Mexico, who were signatories to an agreement protecting migratory waterfowl. When they signed that agreement they also said they would support, back up and enhance the development of the habitat for those birds. They have not carried out their responsibilities, which has been common knowledge for a number of years. The program which we have with Ottawa is inadequate.

The member says he accounts for 5,000 farmers not being covered under a program of any kind. The cost to the farmer is indeed great. I have made that pitch many, many times. It was my pitch in New Orleans, with Boyd Anderson of SARM, with the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation. In fact, I took the lead role in the negotiating in New Orleans along with the provinces of Manitoba and Alberta. It is their complaint; it is our complaint. I share the frustrations of the member opposite, because we have dealt with it for the last two years. We have yet to get a hammered-out, solid, locked-in agreement with the federal governments of Canada and the United States to share equitably more of the costs which are legitimately their responsibility.

If you are saying that you have 5,000 farmers who are suffering severe damage and are not being adequately compensated for it, we are in line with you and we support that cause. The program we have now is inadequate and it is inept. Nothing short of that is the answer.

MR. GARNER: — Mr. Minister, when did you start your negotiations with the federal government for last year's contract?

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, for the agreement which hopefully will come into place for this year, we started negotiations in Edmonton on March 11, 1981, with officials. Last year's agreement was started roughly (within days) at the same time. The year before that, we started in March. It's March or February when we start negotiating with the feds for a new agreement for each individual year. We try to start in the spring, early, in advance of the season. As members opposite will know, we've never had much success. When I say that we have never had much success, I mean that all prairie provinces have the same problem we have because we've adopted a co-operative strategy in dealing with the federal government. We, as ministers of renewable resources, have not had much success in getting agreements in place before the devastation takes place.

MR. GARNER: — Okay. You're stating then that, for last year's agreement, you started negotiating in March, 1980. What date was that agreement signed? Give me a month; I don't have to have a day.

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, last year's agreement was signed within the last two weeks.

MR. GARNER: — So, last year's agreement wasn't signed until March. It looks like we've waited a whole year. You're quite prepared, Mr. Minister, to blame the federal government. I'm not saying that they shouldn't be accepting some of the blame for this, but let's not kid ourselves. It took you one year to negotiate an agreement. You should have started negotiating 1981's agreement (by the past record) in 1980. You're quite aware of what the problem is. It gets very tiring, I guess, to have farmers phone to ask when their compensation payments are going to come. The ducks eat the grain in August and September, but there's no agreement in place. I think you have to take a bit of responsibility for this yourself, as minister. You're not a strong enough minister to negotiate with these federal people. You're not accepting your responsibility. It's the farmers who have to bear the costs through until March of the following year.

It's the age-old story. We've done it for two or three years, "Let's blame the feds. The ducks are Trudeau's ducks," or, now, "they're Reagan's ducks." How about you accepting the responsibility for them maybe being Gross's ducks? I mean, come on. It looks like you're going to start negotiating again for 1981. Do you mean to say that we have to go out and tell the farmers of Saskatchewan that it looks like the duck agreement (we might as well call it the duck agreement) is not going to be signed until the following year?

April 10, 1981

In light of that, Mr. Minister, I have a news release (which proves that) from tourism and renewable resources dated January 30, 1981. I think it came from the minister's office.

The duck factory is largely restricted to the southern half of the province and problems arise because 80 per cent of the land is privately owned and already developed for agricultural use.

Do you know where the duck factory is? You're saying that the duck factory is largely restricted to the southern half of the province? That's where all the ducks are raised?

Now, we go to another release. This one from Ducks Unlimited.

If the drought trend continues, Maculay said, these marshes in northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan will be vital to the survival of tens of thousands of ducks. The Saskatchewan River delta is an example of the area particularly important to the displacement of waterfowl.

Once again, we're dealing with where the ducks are raised. The farmers aren't concerned about where the ducks are raised. They're concerned that the ducks eat their grain in August and September, but there is no agreement in place until the following spring. They have to bear the costs.

Yes, there is a problem in dealing with the federal government. But I think that the responsibility is yours, Mr. Minister. You're the Minister of Tourism and Renewable Resources. You receive X number of dollars from license fees, etc. I think that you're going to have to start accepting the role a little more strongly, and if the federal government isn't going to pick up the tab, what are you going to do – have no season on ducks and tell everybody to shoot the ducks in the spring? It's a problem, and the old excuse that you're going to keep blaming the federal government is not going to wash. Something has to be done.

Give me the dollar figure on that agreement. What was your final dollar figure that you agreed on, in your agreement for the province of Saskatchewan?

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, the member has asked a number of questions. I'll start with the first assumption he makes where he says that because we haven't taken a strong negotiating stance in this agreement, we haven't been successful. He goes on to say that we haven't a strong minister in Saskatchewan to go out and fight hard and bargain for this agreement. The member is probably not aware of the fact that if you talk to the minister in Alberta and talk to my colleagues in Manitoba, the only minister in western Canada who has taken a lead role in negotiating migratory agreements has been me.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. GROSS: — In 1979 I was the only minister who went to Ottawa on a number of occasions and negotiated with the federal minister (fought, if you like, with the federal minister) to try to convince him of the fact that it was important for the federal government to sign a migratory agreement. The minister then, Mr. Fraser (a Tory minister in charge of the duck situation for the federal government), had no idea at all what our problem was or why we even would want an agreement or why it was important for him to negotiate with his federal treasury board to get money to re-

establish the migratory agreement. I can advise the member of every meeting we had and the discussions that went on. When I finally took out the coloring book and crayons and explained to him in living color what it meant to his operation out here in western Canada, he understood and he helped us out in the end, and finally we got an agreement. But there wasn't a minister in Alberta, there wasn't a minister in Manitoba, who went and carried the torch for waterfowl depredation. So I don't know how we've been playing a weak role or we haven't been negotiating in a strong way.

For the benefit of the member opposite, at last year's agreement for waterfowl depredation, Alberta and Manitoba made no representations. They made representations through their bureaucracy, I agree. As governments they made representations, but there was never a personal plea made to a federal minister after frustration would occur. The year had gone by, the ducks had eaten all the crop, and there still wasn't an agreement in place.

So again we took the lead role. Again we negotiated the agreement as three ministers and three colleagues who went to New Orleans to the single biggest symposium sponsored by Ducks Unlimited, the people who are the promoters and protectors of the duck resource in United States. We went together and co-ordinated with our organizations in our province and with the provinces of Alberta and Manitoba. We got together in a joint fashion, went down collectively and laid it on the Ducks Unlimited organization that we have a problem in Canada, a problem that's getting more serious, year by year, and is not being addressed by their federal government or by our federal government. Saskatchewan, Alberta and Manitoba stood strong in saying that we are not going to put up with this forever and before we start assigning new projects in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, we're going to have to have depredation dollars in place by the people who are promoting those projects, namely Ducks Unlimited.

You can talk to Alberta, you can talk to Manitoba and you can talk to Saskatchewan; our stand is collectively together. We have taken that negotiating stance with Ducks Unlimited and because of that stance, Ducks Unlimited is right now talking with all three provinces on negotiating a depredation clause into all new agreements. I think that's a breakthrough. It's a breakthrough that an organization which promotes the resource and which does a lot to make sure it's enhanced and the habitat is improved finally comes forward and sees our problem as provinces – all three prairie provinces in western Canada. This is an organization that has the fortitude to come forward and support our cause. They are not only supporting it but they're doing it in a physical way, as well. We give Ducks Unlimited a lot of credit for that, because they have moved in that direction. They are now lobbying.

The members says, "What role is your provincial responsibility? The feds aren't doing anything. Why don't you do something about it?" The proposal put forward by Manitoba, Alberta, and Saskatchewan to federal ministers and to the users in the United States is that we have to consider an agreement to have an international duck stamp put in place in Mexico, in the United States and in Canada – \$1, \$2, or \$3 a head, international duck stamp; that will be money set aside specifically to use in duck damage prevention and compensation. That duck stamp will be paid by all the users of the resource. Now that's what we've done. That has been the proposal and the negotiating that has gone on is basically the result of what Saskatchewan has done.

So the member's criticizing us for not taking an active or a strong role in negotiating and for being totally ridiculous in our approach. He is saying that our blaming it all on the federal government is ridiculous. Because if he did any research and checked with

people in Alberta and Manitoba, he would find that isn't the case. Those ministers in all prairie provinces would tell him that Saskatchewan has played the lead role and has convinced them that it's time to get off our rear ends and start doing something. They would tell you that the culprit in this matter is the federal Government of the United States and the culprit is the federal Government of Canada, in regard to the depredation problem.

He wants to know about agreements. Do you want to know the amount of the agreements for prevention? The prevention side last year was \$500,000 and the compensation side was \$1.8 million, and that money was cost-shared by Canada and Saskatchewan 50-50. I might add, too, for the benefit of the member who may not be totally familiar with the problem, migratory birds are the preserve or the right and the responsibility of federal governments through North America. The reason is they are migratory and they cross international borders. Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Alberta, the prairie provinces, are responsible for animals that do not cross borders. We take full responsibility when it comes to big game and in terms of compensation and landowner assistance, we have done our part.

We haven't gone to the federal government asking for 50 per cent funding for our resource that we look after. Saskatchewan, Alberta and Manitoba have looked after our resources that we are responsible for and have not gone to the federal government and begged for money or shirked our responsibility. We have taken our responsibility in full and we have done everything we can in our power and in our resources to make sure that we protect, enhance and look after the depredation that these animals cause.

MR. GARNER: — I want that figure, Mr. Minister. I'm not too happy about all these ducks. Where do these ducks spend the winter? Are you saying that the Americans have to pay the wintering cost, the spring cost, the summer cost, the fall cost? Are you saying now that we are going to have duck stamps in Saskatchewan? Is this a proposal your government is going to be making to the hunters in Saskatchewan? Also, what dollars do you receive from the hunting licences, from the game bird licences for one year? Give me that figure. What's your total revenue and also what revenue is received by the federal government from the sportsmen of Saskatchewan on the little clipping they have to get for their licence at the post office? I want to know your figures first on dollars received, plus I want that other figure on the agreement.

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, the agreement was \$1.8 million on compensation, \$500,000 on prevention. The member suggests that it's okay because the ducks are here during the feeding season and then they move south. He makes the assertion that when they get south somebody has to winter those ducks and pay for the wintering of them. Mr. Chairman, if that were true the member would have a very good point. But, if the member would examine and research the problem he'd soon find that where the crops are affected, farmers take out of their pockets millions of dollars a year to feed the ducks during the prime feeding time, when the harvest and the swath is on the ground.

I'll explain it to the member opposite. When the ducks move in the flyway to the southern parts of the United States for the winter, you will find that the crops are all up. The crops are not there. When the ducks get down there they are scavenging and they scavenge all winter. So it doesn't cost any producers, other than a few lettuce producers in California, out-of-pocket money.

The second point, which is more important and that the member perhaps doesn't appreciate or realize, is that the farmers in the deep United States, where the ducks winter, lease their land out to hunters. There are huge tracts of land in the United States (in Florida, Tennessee, Texas, Louisiana, you name it) where farmers lease their land to large corporations like Ford Motor Company or Dupont. I can give you a complete list of all the major corporations which lease from farmers in those areas. Some farmers in those areas of Florida, Louisiana and Texas make more money in the cash lease of their land to hunters who come in and hunt ducks during the winter season than they do off the crop that they raise during the summer.

The thing is that there are few (I admit there are a few – lettuce producers and cabbage producers) farmers who take a beating with duck problems on the California side. The majority of the loss to individuals happens right here in Canada, Saskatchewan, Alberta and Manitoba, because we feed the ducks . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, I'm just making sure the member knows the problem and knows the situation, because if he did any research he would soon figure that one out. The farmers in the United States, compared to the farmers in Canada, take no loss because of the problem. I think, Mr. Chairman, that answers the member's question.

MR. TAYLOR: — Mr. Minister, I was sitting here listening with interest to you say that you're standing foursquare with the minister in Alberta and the minister in Manitoba. I am pleased to hear this. I would ask you to have a little talk with the Premier and show him some of the moves you've made, because I think we'd be better off if he would get around to standing foursquare with the Premier of Alberta and the Premier of Manitoba. Perhaps you have a little lesson to teach the Premier of this province. I was glad to hear you say this. So just don't let it stop at tourism; let's get it up to the higher echelons.

But regarding these ducks (and I don't think we want to spend the whole day on ducks), your idea of the wintering and the Mexican government's paying for the ducks up here, and your saying that they are eating in the garbage dumps down in California are just so much rot, and you know it. I understand that down in Louisiana you were kind of a joke with this suggestion of yours. That's what came back to me. You know this idea of board and room for the ducks in the winter, and so on, was taken very, very lightly. I think my colleague has been telling you that the situation exists between the federal government and you and he's asking you to work out a program that is satisfactory. We'll leave it at that.

If I remember correctly – I don't have your news release here – you said something about the white-fronted or speckle-fronted geese and how they nested; you said that we produced that crop of ducks and the Americans shot them. I understand from searching that out (you asked for a little research) that the nesting grounds aren't even in Saskatchewan. They are in the Northwest Territories . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, they come through here, but you're claiming them as our resource and their nesting grounds aren't even here.

You might as well agree that your idea of Mexico's paying for the summering of the ducks, with our giving Mexico or those poor cabbage farmers or whoever something for the winter, is pie in the sky. It's not going to come about. It's a cop out by you because you cannot sit down and work out the agreement that is needed with the

government in Ottawa. That's the simple fact of it. The problem here exists between the Saskatchewan government and the federal government. I agree they certainly have a responsibility and I say that you as minister should get that worked out and quit putting up some kind of pie in the sky idea. Do you think that the Mexicans are going to pay us anything for the ducks? I think you're dreaming if you think that's going to come about.

HON. MR. GROSS: — Well, Mr. Chairman, the member said he has done a lot of research and he has looked into this matter very carefully. I advise the member that he has done no research. I don't know where he gets the story that our proposal wasn't taken very seriously because I can tell the member that if he says that our proposal was not taken seriously, then another person whose proposal wasn't taken very seriously was Boyd Anderson, president of SARM. If you're saying that my proposal wasn't taken seriously, then neither was his. The member is then saying that the proposals of Ed Begin and Keith Harde (Keith Harde being the president of the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation, Ed Begin being the executive director of the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation) weren't taken very seriously. And the other people who weren't taken very seriously were the ones from Alberta and Manitoba. If my proposal wasn't taken seriously, then theirs wasn't taken very seriously either. I think if the member had done his research he would have found out that Ducks Unlimited rank-and-file members, single-handedly, over a three-day convention, came out in full support of what our problem is here in Saskatchewan.

Ducks Unlimited rank-and-file members say that they, as members in the United States, can't expect any country (like Canada), to shoulder the total costs of providing habitat and feeding grounds for the ducks they shoot in the wintertime.

The member says that ducks nest in northern Canada. That's true. Geese nest in northern Canada. When they go from the North to Florida, they go south. When they go south, they stop in on Saskatchewan farmers and have a little breakfast, a little lunch, and a little dinner. Before you know it, they've eaten up \$20 million worth of crop. And, we're the guys who carry the load for it. So the member doesn't know what he's talking about, because the feeding takes place here. The feeding takes place here in Saskatchewan.

Maybe the member for Kelsey-Tisdale is more familiar with wildlife and what it's all about. Also the member for Wilkie is very familiar with wildlife. Maybe they should sit down and take a little time with the member for Indian Head-Wolseley and advise him how this pattern works – where the ducks feed, where they nest, whose crops they eat, and where they go to have a good time. They move south in the wintertime and scavenge all winter.

Maybe the two members in the back row, who haven't made it to the front row, should sit down with the member for Indian Head-Wolseley and explain to him where the ducks go and what they do.

MR. TAYLOR: — If we're into the maybes, maybe you had better bring your news release in where maybe (there's no maybe about it) you say those geese nest in Saskatchewan. I say more than maybe, my friend, you're dead wrong.

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, the member says they nest in the North and we agree with him – they nest in the North. But, they're not eating valuable crop there that costs some individuals money. When they eat, they feed down here in southern Saskatchewan, as our press release says. They feed on grains in southern

Saskatchewan. I don't know what the member's accusation is.

MR. HARDY: — Continuing on the same subject, I think you mentioned a little while ago, Mr. Minister, that you were negotiating a five-year program with the federal government. First of all, I would like to know what percentage your provincial department is prepared to put into this program, and what percentage the federal government is prepared to put in. Would you give that in dollar values as well?

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, the bottom line is 50-50, as the other agreements have been. If we can't get anything, we'll end up with a 50-50 agreement. Our negotiating stance is 75 per cent-25 per cent. It's the same stance that other provinces are taking as well; it's well known.

MR. HARDY: — When you say 50-50, what dollar value is this? Is there going to be a dollar value established? I know in the last few years it's been a problem with several farmers in the area. They have found that when they went to get their crop depredation subsidy, grant (or whatever you want to call it), it was not available. It was all used up. I just wonder how many dollars are going to be within the program?

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, again, the same scenario. When the percentages are 50-50 (if that's the bottom line), and 75-25 (if we can get it), in terms of the dollar figures, our top-line negotiating figure — recognizing what the member made mention of before — is the recognized damage in the field. If the full cost isn't being paid, we want the federal government to pay the full cost of the damage.

We have no expectations, although we're negotiating to that level. We'll have a hard time bargaining that point, as other provinces will, as well. Our bottom line, of course, would be the same amount of money as in previous years. That would be the minimum line. We'll probably end up there. Knowing the federal government, and the way they have been negotiating over the last five, six, seven or eight years with all the provinces in regard to this issue, that is where we are going to end up.

Our proposal now, as before, is that the federal government pay more. We're not being so ridiculous as to demand that they pay it all overnight or from one agreement to the next agreement. We are prepared to continue our contributions and slowly slip out of them. That is the sort of stance which other provinces have taken as well. The minimum would be the old agreement but there is no way we can live with that. We are going to fight hard and use every strategy and tactic we can to try to get them to recognize 75 per cent of the costs and, in terms of dollar figures, the total cost of the damage.

MR. HARDY: — Mr. Minister, for last year, could you give me the dollar figure the provincial government and/or the federal government, on a 50-50 basis, put into the program?

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, the figures I gave to the member for Wilkie were \$1.8 million for compensation and \$500,000 for prevention. That parcel of money is cost-shared 50-50, we put up 50 and they put up 50.

MR. HARDY: — So you are telling me that last year there was \$1.8 million allocated for depredation? I think I heard you say a few minutes ago there was about \$20 million worth of damage. The proportion doesn't seem to be very fair for the farmer. Would your department now not be considering a considerable increase in the amount of grants, because there is a real difference between \$20 million and \$1.8 million?

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, when I said \$20 million, that was for the year which right now is on record as being the worst for duck devastation in total. The average year in terms of damage is around \$3 million to \$5 million. The program we have in place is \$1.8 million for compensation and \$500,000 for prevention — a total of \$2.3 million. The average year is \$3 million to \$5 million. The member is right. On an average year, we still are not covering the total claims which are out there. That's our argument; that's Alberta's argument and that's Manitoba's argument. We have to get somebody to recognize the legitimate costs. We in the prairie provinces have been more than considerate by going 50-50 on the cost-sharing.

Our proposal is that we have the federal governments from Canada, the United States and Mexico negotiate, with their resource users, a duck stamp to help make the people who are utilizing the resource pay for the cost of protecting it, growing it and enhancing it. I think it's a fairly simple proposal; it's not very complicated and it's supported by everybody I know in the business. It's the proposal we put forward.

I agree with you, we do not on an average year even compensate for all the damage and all the prevention costs. We know that and that's our argument. If we were to compensate for that, then we would be assuming a responsibility which rightfully isn't our responsibility. We could pick up 60 per cent or 70 per cent of the costs and the federal government would be having a heyday or having a free ride. I don't think that's fair or equitable, given the understandings and protocol which have been established in signing all these agreements. The federal government has to recognize its responsibility. We've given them a way and a solution so they don't have to go to their coffers to get the money. It's a solution for their dilemma.

MR. HARDY: — Just to get back to that, I would wonder why we have an estimated \$20 million of damage last year — more than any other year which you say averages between \$3 million and \$5 million. My other question is: was all of the \$1.8 million paid out to the farmers in Saskatchewan?

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, for the benefit of the member opposite, the worst year was not last year. It was 1974, when the \$20 million occurred. Last year was considered an average year with about \$3 million damage. The \$20 million only occurred in 1974 and the reason was that because of an extremely wet year the farmers couldn't get their crops off in time.

MR. HARDY: — In relation to this crop depredation, I would like to know what your department has done toward big game depredation, namely elk next to provincial parks or even in the area where I live, there are a lot of elk. If it is a wet fall, there could be a great deal of crop left out, and there could be a lot of depredation due to elk.

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, the program we have in terms of big-game damage is \$100,000, which was a brand new program last year. It is landowner assistance that we have provided. I would be happy to send the member a copy of the policies that would probably explain all the questions that he will have next as to what it does, who gets protected, how you apply for assistance and where it comes from. It is a new program announced last year by our government. We will send a copy over.

MR. HARDY: — Does that include bear damage, as well?

HON. MR. GROSS: — Yes, it does.

MRS. DUNCAN: — How many applications have you received under the new program announced last year?

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, we expect to spend \$70,000. The 42 claims totalled \$70,000.

MR. HARDY: — One other problem is that the honey producers in the province have problems with bears. Do you have any program to cover their costs of depredation which would be the same thing?

HON. MR. GROSS: — I am advised that we use the same program to cover bear damage. People who have had bear damage have utilized this program already.

MR. HARDY: — What you are saying is that the same \$100,000 program will cover the honey producer as well as whatever damage elk will do within the province of Saskatchewan.

HON. MR. GROSS: — That is correct.

MR. HARDY: — There is just one thing left here. I understand Ducks Unlimited was stopped in the process of establishing any new habitats. Has the government negotiated with Ducks Unlimited for any new or further habitats? Have they negotiated for any new areas that they could locate in? What is the procedure so far?

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, the answer to the question, I guess, is yes. We are negotiating with Ducks Unlimited. Right at the present, Ducks Unlimited has submitted new projects for negotiation. We just received them and we are negotiating at the present. The member asked if the Ducks Unlimited project had been cancelled. The answer is yes. With regard to new projects, they have to have approval through us now. We have made it a requirement. We want to know what the depredation component of the new agreement will be, what they will be prepared to put up, what the increased damage will allow us so that we have a control and a handle on it. They have agreed to do that. That is what is being negotiated right now.

In terms of old projects or projects that have been under way (and the member will have to appreciate that there are a lot of projects at DU (Ducks Unlimited) that started three or four years ago, those projects can carry on business as usual because we have agreed to them in the past. We haven't made the new ruling retroactive. We have only made it progressive. Ducks Unlimited is quite happy to negotiate and show us whether they are prepared to put depredation money into their projects so they actually control the increase in population or have some way of making sure that farmers are not affected by their projects.

MR. HARDY: — What has Ducks Unlimited applied for? Have they applied for any new programs in the area? If so, which ones?

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, they applied for five new projects. We will send you a list of the projects, which ones we're negotiating and the status of each one.

MR. TAYLOR: — Mr. Minister, I would just like some information as to the existing laws in Saskatchewan regarding the commercial farming of wildlife. I will give you three

examples: the white-tailed deer, the elk and buffalo. I had the opportunity about two or three weeks ago to visit a quarantine station where there were 13 elk being shipped to New Zealand. They are worth about \$2,500 each and down there they make a very viable economic enterprise out of them. I have five native reserves in my constituency and many of those Indian people are interested in this type of thing. I don't know the legality of it. There certainly could be a whole commercial market for venison in the cafes of our province. There is a viable economic entity there.

The second thing is that the money made in New Zealand (I don't know if you are aware of this) is from the velvet of the horns. It's used as an aphrodisiac, but there is a real market there in the pharmaceutical business. I think we might be able to get something going here which would be beneficial to . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I won't go any further into that one. I just want to let you know where the markets are.

Would you respond on the legality of this? The Minister of Northern Saskatchewan, especially, should be paying attention to this, because I think this is something which could give an economic, viable enterprise to some of the native people of this province.

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, I just want to advise the member that anyone who has a proposal to go into commercial production regarding big game, pheasants, or whatever it may be, only has to apply for a permit. Federal health regulates the import or export of the animals, etc. If they are shipped out of the country, there are some very stringent requirements by excise people. They must comply with them, and they apply for a permit here. The regulations they apply are the captive animal regulations and they are under The Wildlife Act, and they are completely open to do that. There has been some interest already.

MR. TAYLOR: — You mentioned exporting and so on. Is it legal, or could it become legal, to commercially raise white-tailed deer and elk, and sell those products to cafes in Saskatchewan? Is that legal now? Have you looked at that or are you considering that type of legislation?

HON. MR. GROSS: — Well, Mr. Chairman, the answer to the member's question (if I have it correctly) is yes. It can be done, but, again, you would have to go obtain a permit under the captive animals regulations, and go through all of the proper authorities in federal health. If the animals are going to be exported or if they are going to be out of the province, there are regulations. But yes, it can be done. It's legal.

MR. THATCHER: — I want to go through another issue with you, and that pertains to parks in the rural areas, whether it is regional or provincial really isn't important. I'm thinking of a regional park in my constituency, specifically, where the traffic is abnormal for the rural countryside. In other words, there are grid roads leading to the park, and yet the traffic on it is from outside of the area. Would the minister agree that perhaps maintenance of the roads and capital construction of satisfactory roads in this situation does warrant an expenditure by your department? Now, whether it's your department or the Department of Highways isn't important. The fact is that some R.M.s do complain when you place a park in their area that the road servicing the traffic to it is usually inadequate. They complain, and I think with some justification, that they should not be obliged to carry the capital costs of upgrading that road to carry outside traffic. No one will argue that local traffic is their responsibility.

I would like to ask the minister if his department has considered some legislation or some funding to be available to R.M.s to upgrade roads which they are having to

provide to service parks, particularly when those parks are servicing many residents from far and away outside that area?

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, the member makes a very valid point. I agree with him that a lot of traffic will occur in a rural municipality when it has a regional park in the area. In order to compensate for that, because of the increased traffic on a particular stretch of road, it has complete access to the Department of Rural Affairs which has a program of resort roads. They fund 89 per cent to 91 per cent, depending on how the numbers work out, of the costs of the road. I believe the maintenance is 50-50 for resort roads. The capital costs are borne 90 per cent by rural affairs.

MR. THATCHER: — No, Mr. Minister, it doesn't work that way. I have two in my area; one goes to your provincial park as a matter of fact, and there is no funding available. I can cite one park — I have forgotten the name of it. It is a regional park up by Lake Diefenbaker. There are cottages in that park owned by people from Saskatoon, even from Alberta. The municipality involved, which is the R.M. of Maple Bush, has approached your department and has been turned down flat. It has approached rural affairs and has been turned down flat. It has approached highways and has been turned down flat. That is why I bring the point forward. Why should the R.M. be responsible for upgrading a road to handle traffic from Saskatoon, Alberta and Moose Jaw into these cottages. Is it the R.M.'s fault it is an attractive park, a park which has a great deal of potential? When the R.M. can't get assistance elsewhere, what does it do? I am citing this park south of Riverhurst (you may have some knowledge of it) where it has been turned down everywhere. I think your departmental people will tell you that this park contains residents from all over. It is Palliser Park, Mr. Minister. I have another one after you respond to that.

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, I can only say that rural affairs has a program of roads to resorts, a program it has administered very successfully. I think it has met the needs in a lot of areas for roads to regional parks. The member was absolutely correct when he says there is no reason why the R.M. should be responsible to carry that load of traffic coming in from Moose Jaw or Saskatoon or wherever it may be. We have a program to accommodate that.

The member made mention of Palliser Regional Park. It was approved in the last few days a grant of \$40,000 for oiling a resort road, cost-shared with the Department of Rural Affairs.

MR. THATCHER: — I am delighted to hear that. The second one I would like to make reference to, is in Buffalo Pound. Your department has recently built a parking pad near the area known as the Nickel Ranch. Obviously, you are anticipating a greatly increased volume of traffic, or else you wouldn't have constructed the parking area. I am advised, Mr. Minister, that the road leading to it is a very dangerous stretch of road. It is very narrow going down hills. Again, these people have been turned down by the three departments involved. Does the minister think that the R.M. should help to widen this road? Obviously, if it is going to have the traffic you think it is going to have (or you wouldn't have built a parking area) is it up to the R.M. to widen that road and make it safe for an increased volume of traffic?

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, I'm not sure which road the member mentions. The member and I discussed the road . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Not that road? A different road. If it's a different road, it's a road where a parking lot was provided cost-shared with the Qu'Appelle implementation. It's a parking lot that is designed for people

to park their cars, and it's an interpretative area for that marsh, for that area. The idea is that the traffic be slow. If the rural municipality wished to build the road or to do something else with regard to the road (widening, or whatever), there would be no problem getting permission to do that. I wouldn't think there would be any problem. I'm not exactly sure whether we understand which road he's talking about, but there probably wouldn't be any problem doing that.

Right now the area has been set aside as an interpretative area. Whether or not there'll be the huge influx of traffic the member makes mention of, I don't know, but it will be people who are interested in interpretation – in that marsh and with regard to that whole area. That's about all we can offer for an answer.

MR. THATCHER: — Mr. Minister, are you telling me that you built the parking area (and I understand it's quite an elaborate parking area) without anticipating any increased attendance in the park? Let me be sure that I understand you.

It was assumed by the R.M. that you were anticipating a much larger volume of people using that park, which was why you put in the parking area. Are you telling us that you put in this elaborate parking and, in act, you're not anticipating any greater influx of people?

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, no, that isn't the case. We'll be anticipating an increase in people all right. The reason the parking lot is there and the reason why it's built and constructed the way it is, is because of bus traffic. We expect that we'll have a lot of bus traffic carrying senior citizens or anybody, for that matter, who is interested in terms of studies – tours of all descriptions. And that is why there is a parking lot there, because buses will need to park. The area is designed so that it has slow-moving traffic because of the very nature of its being interpretative. That's probably one reason why we don't want to have a fast-moving traffic lane through there. I think it's a very legitimate reason. But the main reason for the parking lot is so that we have a place to park vehicles, such as tour groups, buses, cars, those kinds of things.

MR. THATCHER: — Mr. Minister, I am not going to belabor the point and this is the last time I am going to get up on this. If you're going to have buses in there and if you're going to have senior citizens, as you described, in there, that's all wonderful. But isn't it a prerequisite that you have a safe road in there? At the present time the rural municipality involved doesn't believe that it is a safe road. That's not to suggest that it has to be made into a freeway and that road be designed for traffic at 70 miles per hour, but there is a safety factor. The fact that you've indicated there are going to be buses going in there makes it even more incumbent upon you to ensure that this road be at least up to some sort of reasonable standard.

Again, I make the point that the R.M. has talked to your people and you've said, "Unfortunate; can't help you." They've talked to rural affairs and they've been turned down (it's the R.M. of Pense, incidentally). They've talked to the Department of Highways and they can't get any help. What do they do now? You say the people are going to be there; you say the buses are going to be there; yet they're turned down. So by all three departments turning them down flat for financial help, you are, in fact, saying to them, "Do it yourself".

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, the only thing I can get off to the member is that I don't know whether we understand which road he is talking about. The area where the

parking lot is located is adjacent to the park area, and there's a good road through the park that takes you to that parking area. In truth, it's probably another road that comes from the north and if that's the road he's talking about, it's a completely different question.

We have safe and good access to that area through the park, because when the people come to the park, they're going to look at a number of sites in the park. Because the thing is at the very end of the park, it may be the last thing they go to. That is why the parking lot is there and it wouldn't be true to say that there isn't safe access to the lot, because there is safe access to the lot if you're going through the park.

The traffic that he would be talking about, people coming from the north, from the R.M., is a completely different type of traffic and wouldn't be affected by this lot.

MRS. DUNCAN: — Mr. Minister, I would like to ask you: what is your projected revenue from the service and recreation tax levied against the 1,700 shareholders in the province with respect to cabin lots in the provincial parks? How much are you going to get on that in the first year?

HON. MR. GROSS: — We will have the answer right away. Mr. Chairman, the answer is \$112,969.15.

MRS. DUNCAN: — That's what you will get in the first year. What will the revenue be at the end of your four-year forecast, with the rates escalating each year for four years?

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, we don't have the number available but we will get it for the member for the four-year total period.

MRS. DUNCAN: — You have come across with a four-year service and recreation tax plan which is going to increase from year one to year four, so you must have a four-year forecast on the costs or the capital costs in the parks. Do you have an estimate of what you are going to be spending in the next four years?

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, it is difficult to give a precise figure and, as I think the member wants a precise figure, we will get her one. It is not going to vary very much on a per year basis over the \$112,000 which is the figure available for this year. There will not, for the member's information, be a great variance between now and the fourth year.

MRS. DUNCAN: — You have stated previously that over the next few years you will be making significant improvements as it pertains to facilities and services provided in the parks. Could you tell me what areas will be changed or improved?

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, the member wishes to know if we are going to get any returns from those benefits. Members will be aware that we have started moving in year-round accommodation. We have started improving, dramatically, the goods and services which are in the provincial park system. The moment we start doing that in any particular park (and the member will know from owning a cottage in the Cypress Hills), you immediately escalate the value of the cottage property so there will be some direct benefit. The amount of money we will collect out of this service tax does not compensate for the increased goods and services. I don't think anyone should even think that it will compensate for the increase in services which will be available because the amount will be much more dramatic than what this tax could ever hope to bring us.

I think the move announced by the provincial parks system last year from seasonal operations of the parks . . . For major destination points (and I think of Moose Mountain Provincial Park; I think of Duck Mountain; I think of Cypress Hills; I think of Meadow Lake, the big parks we have in our system), the services available to them will be dramatically improved. The cottage owners will see some return. The service tax is just a way of trying to gauge the goods and services we are providing to cottagers in those parks – water, sewer, fire protection, police protection, security and that type of thing. This will also include snow removal, if requested, and those kinds of programs which are in existence now which are being consistently improved and upgraded. In particular, in the destination points, they will be upgraded even more.

MRS. DUNCAN: — You still haven't answered my question. Could you be specific? Let's take Cypress park as an example. What increased services am I going to get, as a cottage owner, with the service tax? I think you know that presently we pay for snow removal in the winter. That is over and above the lease fee which we pay.

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, I guess the member says that the answer is not adequate. The only thing I can add to my past answer is that because of what we're doing in the park system, because of the fact that we're moving into year-round accommodation, because there are going to be more goods and services, we've assessed the service and recreation tax. I'm talking about better facilities in terms of laundry service centres, stores, cafes, restaurants, recreational accommodation, recreational programming, improved ski hills, better golfing. By the same token, the amount of money we're collecting from the service and recreation tax is very, very minimal in terms of what it's going to cost us to upgrade the park system.

Mr. Chairman, the member wants to know specifically what happens to the cottage owner: whether he or she receives more services. At the present time (and we'll do more of it in the future), we're grading and gravelling streets wherever and whenever necessary. In Cypress Hills we've oiled some streets, and we'll improve on that as time goes on. For street and traffic signs, potable water supplies, garbage removal in the summer, and street lights, all costs have gone up. There has been no way really to account for these costs through the Department of Tourism and Renewable Resources estimates or accounts. A lot of the stuff has been provided absolutely free to cottage owners. We're not saying that was a bad thing. We did provide it free, but I think we have to somehow start gauging with some kind of measurement what we are providing. I can't emphasize enough that the amount of money we're going to collect on the service tax is really insignificant in terms of what is being expended – not only for cottagers, but also for the general public in the new park system.

MRS. DUNCAN: — I don't, as a cottage owner, object to paying my fair share. I do object to releases from your department which seem to insinuate that those of us who have cottages are a select few, and that the average citizen in Saskatchewan is subsidizing our privilege (as you call it). I would like to know if the increased services will include increased fire-fighting equipment? Will they include availability of water on a year-round basis? Will they include snowplowing? At present we pay extra for that. That was never covered under our lease payment. If we had a bad winter, we had to pay extra for that. Will there be year-round garbage collection? At present, it is only collected once a year. As far as sewer is concerned, those of us in Cypress Hills have to have our own sewer system. Removal of sewage is our responsibility and not the department's.

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, in the cottage document (which I just sent a copy

over to the member), "Changing with the Times," she says we singled out cottage owners as being select. The member for Indian Head-Wolseley calls them bourgeoisie. I don't think that was the interpretation we put on it. You may have taken that interpretation, but what we meant by "select" was that anybody who leases a cottage lot from the provincial park system is, indeed, very fortunate. They are select in that inference. They are fortunate to be able to have the opportunity to lease a lot.

The demand for cottage lots in this province is astronomical, to put it mildly. An average lot, I'm told, has an average selling price this year of around \$18,000. When you compare that to somebody who has a lease of even \$200 or \$300 a year, and you work that out and capitalize it over 10 years, he has a deal in comparison to the poor guy who has to go the private market, to the speculator, and pay these ridiculous, exorbitant prices just to have a recreational opportunity on a lake or wherever it may be. That is a problem for a lot of people.

One thing we are trying to address in our department, and will be addressing in the future years and this year as well, is making more lots available to people at a lease rate that not only the rich can afford, but that everybody can afford, to provide them with that recreational opportunity. It is extremely beneficial for our tourism deficit. The chances of leaving on holidays to some exotic place are diminished if someone has a lot and a cottage, because he is obviously going to stay out at his cottage.

One of the areas that we are working on, and you will see announcements in due course, some very shortly, is in regard to providing more subdivision property in parks, and in areas that we have control of. Anyone is fortunate to have a lease in a provincial park, because, if you have to go the private side, you are going to get it where it hurts the most. So I can only say that that is the reason. Maybe the terminology is bad, and I apologize for that. You are very fortunate because there's no comparison. There is another point in your question but I forgot what it was.

MR. THATCHER: — Mr. Minister, I want to briefly move to a different area, but I think it's a key area for tourism. First of all, I'd like to acknowledge that the minister and his department have done an excellent job in their public relations with Frontier Airlines. The point I wanted to bring up briefly was the horrible air service which Regina enjoys. I'm advised that the minister and his department have been extremely co-operative with Frontier, and have done everything they possibly can to get a north-south connection into the United States. The benefits to the tourism industry will be immeasurable because anybody who has ever come from the United States, or tried to go to the U.S. out of Regina, knows how horrible the connections are.

That brings us to the other two airlines which service Regina. Frontier is an unknown quantity, but let's face it, the quality of service that Frontier is going to put in here, even if it makes a decision to provide the poorest, rottenest air service in North America, will still be superior to what we are getting from Air Canada and Pacific Western. Mr. Minister, I want to know what your department is doing with these two airlines in getting improved air service into Regina.

Now what happened when Pacific Western came in? All that resulted from that is that we had Pacific Western coming in and we had Air Canada cutting back in its flights. I am sure anybody who has occasion to go to Calgary or Edmonton, and attempted to return the same day, knows how horrible those connections are. They are a disgrace. And I would suggest that probably no other centre in North America enjoys the horrible level of air service we do in Regina.

April 10, 1981

Now, Mr. Minister, I know a great deal of this is the responsibility of the Canadian Transport Commission, but, none the less, I would like to be assured that your department has done everything in its power to lobby in the most intensive way possible to improve this disgusting situation. Mr. Minister, our connections are terrible anywhere you want to go in Canada. It doesn't matter whether you are going east, or west, or what you are trying to connect to, it is just hardly worth the hassle to try to go someplace out of Regina.

Now, view this from the point of view of an American. An American that is trying to come to Regina for Agribition has to be a pretty hardy soul to decide to fly to Regina. Let's say that that guy is in Denver, and Denver is about 800 miles due south of us. Let's also exclude the Frontier situation and hopefully this will alleviate it. What did that poor guy have to do before? He had to take a Western flight up to Calgary. He had to sit in that Calgary airport for about three hours and, then, finally, in the early evening he would get a flight across into Regina. That's from 800 miles south. Supposing you were trying to come from Texas, and there are an awful lot of Texans who come up for Agribition, it is just a horror story to get here. My question to you is: what sort of lobbying are you doing to get improved air service out of our present domestic carriers?

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, I very much agree with the member for Thunder Creek with regard to all the statements he has made about the type of service we have had in Saskatchewan. He will recall that we had a federal-provincial conference of tourism ministers meeting specifically with Jean-Luc Pepin in Ottawa. We went province by province by province through every rotten deal which we have in transportation. We very strongly highlighted one of the big points of contention I had, and that was the Regina airport. For 10 years or 15 years (whatever the history has been of the Regina airport) people have put pressure on every part of government to try and get that thing built. It has been announced (I don't know how many times) that they are building the Regina airport and nothing has ever happened.

We, as provincial ministers of tourism, right across the piece, individually raised our concerns. The member asks what we are doing. The transportation agency under the Hon. Gordon MacMurchy has been extremely active in promoting better air links in Canada with the present carriers we have available to us. I think they have done an excellent job. I've been involved with them because of the tourism side of the coin and I have supported many of their applications and recommendations for better air carrier service.

In answer to your question, it has been our understanding that PWA is looking at a night flight east, and we think there will also be a west flight, providing a good night service across the prairies. We are going to be endorsing and supporting them when they make their application to the Canadian Transport Commission.

By coincidence, CP Air announced two or three days ago that they are one or two years ahead of schedule in their plan to look at service for Saskatchewan in 1983. Because of some of the sessions which have gone on with our department and CP Air, they announced last week that they would be moving their schedule up and start the process of putting some kind of service into Saskatchewan. They haven't elaborated what that service will be, but they are looking at it. They have had an agent in Regina for six months now because of the discussions which have gone on. That's a pretty good indication that they are prepared to do something here.

I think a lot of it is because of the discussions our transportation agency has had with other carriers. They did a lot at an important meeting in Vancouver (I don't remember when it was) where the transportation agency got a lot of these things off the burner and moving. We have been supporting them and we will be supporting them in all the actions which have been taking place in regard to the carriers. I can only underline that we are not satisfied with what has gone on and we are actively pursuing it. The comments made by the member for Thunder Creek are accurate in their entirety as far as we are concerned.

MR. THATCHER: — Mr. Minister, based on the assumption that CP Air will be granted landing rights in Regina by the Canadian Transport Commission, is there anything the minister can do to see that we don't get, as a result, a cutback in Pacific Western and Air Canada's number of flights? When Pacific Western came to Regina, we all thought "Here we are; we're going to finally get some flights and be able to make some connections." But, instead, Air Canada simply folded up its tent and backed off.

Mr. Minister, I am sure that you have noticed (as has anybody who has done much travelling) that horrible plane which Air Canada lands in Regina. I don't think it lands any place else, or at any other major airport. Those old DC9s only come to Regina. If you are going to Toronto you don't get a plane like that; it's just Regina that seems to get that kind of airplane.

May I respectfully suggest to you that it's not good enough to leave it to the Department of Transportation. You have to lobby and push these people. The airport expansion has been delayed far too long. It's an interesting question: Why has Saskatoon such an elaborate airport while Regina has that little thing over there? Now it is a very interesting point. I am not suggesting Saskatoon shouldn't have it. It is a nice airport. Saskatoon is a city which needs an airport like that and it probably will outgrow it. But if Saskatoon needs it, then with the increased volume of traffic, Regina must need one far, far worse. I suggest to the minister, your department is going to have to do an awful lot of lobbying and a heck of a lot of pushing on the federal bureaucrats. I think it is the one common cause we have in this Assembly: when you are dealing with Ottawa nothing comes easy. There is just nothing for the West unless you virtually go in there, the next thing to gunpoint, to get it.

Mr. Minister, despite all the encouragement to bring American tourists and outside people to come in, if they can't get here with ease they are not going to come. It is just that simple.

HON. MR. GROSS: — I agree with the member. A lot of the accusations he makes are accurate and well-founded. The member makes mention of the Saskatoon airport terminal. I think he knows why there is an airport terminal in Saskatoon and not in Regina. An old buddy and drinking pal of his, Otto Lang, could explain a lot of those reasons why Saskatoon got the terminal as opposed to Regina.

Mr. Chairman, I note his concerns. The issue of the Regina airport has been high on my agenda. I have argued with Jean-Luc Pepin; in fact, he is getting tired of seeing me these days. When he sees me, he knows what I am coming for. He knows we are complaining bitterly about the air service. I don't know of very many other provinces in this dominion which have as poor airport terminal facilities as we do in Regina. I have made that point known.

April 10, 1981

At the meeting a month or two ago in Ottawa with my other colleagues, we got a commitment, and I think the first honest and sincere commitment which we have heard (our department) on the Regina airport. Pepin at that meeting agreed, after a fair amount of hounding on our part, that in looking at the entire Canadian scene, at the airports which are available, Regina should have an airport.

In fact, his comment was that if we could only sell you Mirabel, we would have a deal. The Mirabel airport is a complete disaster. It was put in the wrong place. It was overbuilt for capacity as opposed to some of the airports in western Canada. Calgary and Edmonton were big airports when they were built but before they were completed, they had outlived their usefulness in terms of size. It is true that western Canada has been ignored. I would not argue that point one bit when it comes to airports. Saskatoon airport is new. It is a good airport. It has barely been completed and it has outgrown its size and will need expansion as well.

We have fought hard for the Regina airport. We will continue to fight. Two or three weeks ago we received plans which they have pulled off their shelves now. They have showed us the plans they have for the Regina terminal. Pepin has assured us, subject to his treasury board submission which he felt would go through without any trouble, we could have a construction start in 1983. There are conflicting stories there. If you listen to the transport people in Ottawa, they tell us it is coming earlier than that. Pepin has assured that construction will start on the terminal in 1983. That's all we can say . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The member for Indian Head-Wolseley says to keep at it. You can be guaranteed that it will be a high priority item. He will get a love letter from us once a month if it is necessary to reassure our position with regard to the Regina airport.

MR. THATCHER: — Mr. Minister, going into the economic review of 1979 – I agree that is outdated. I will give you some numbers of United States visitors entering Saskatchewan: in 1975, 233,000; in 1976, 234,000; in 1977, only 228,000; in 1978, it dropped to 207,000. Could the minister tell us whether that trend has continued in the past two years? Do you have those numbers at your finger tips?

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, I am advised by my official that the increase this year over last year (because he doesn't have the figures for this year) is 6 to 7 per cent. The problem as to why our numbers are not higher is the same problem other provinces are experiencing: energy costs across the piece have curtailed the flow of traffic back and forth. Vehicle traffic has been a major factor in why it hasn't increased as dramatically as we would like. But it is not a problem inherent here; it is right across the western provinces. It is right across Canada, for that matter.

MR. THATCHER: — Mr. Minister, if you are serious in your desire to promote tourism and better air connections, let me ask you an interesting question. Are you prepared to put some capital funds into the Regina airport? Now, I know it is a federal responsibility. It is easy to beg off and say, "Yes, that is federal; it doesn't concern us." But can you think of anything which would shame the government in Ottawa any more than your having to put money into that Regina airport? Surely, even the government in Ottawa couldn't stand idly by and allow that to happen. So may I ask the minister: have you considered or would your government consider sharing some of the costs of upgrading the Regina airport? Now, I am not talking about runways or air control towers. I am talking about just the airport facility. I would point to an example in Toronto where, I believe, CP Air, in conjunction with one or two other airlines, offered to build a new airport, a new terminal at the Toronto airport, so there is some precedent for the

action. Has your government considered such an option?

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, the government has not considered such an option at this date. I think people have talked about it, but I don't think we have actively pursued the issue. If there were any funding coming forth from this government, it would come from the transportation agency. It would be their case to make to the government. I don't think in seriousness that we should even consider it because of the fact that terminals, harbors, and ports — those kinds of facilities — have been the germane jurisdiction of Ottawa and it should remain that way. They are shirking their responsibilities, we know, in a lot of areas. But surely they should provide something for the tax dollars that they collect out of this province? Something that is very important to Saskatchewan is decent airport facilities — as it is to every other province. I think the only thing we can say, at this time, is that we are considering a lot of things, but that hasn't been one. One thing we will do is continue to put pressure and keep the heat on. The member may have a point. Maybe if 10 years went by and nothing happened, we would have to do something in that regard. But I think right at this present time, we would have to consider it. We have not moved in any direction in that regard.

MRS. DUNCAN: — I would like to go back to your little pamphlet where you say with regard to lots:

Without this change, the feeling that public dollars are subsidizing privileged access to prime recreational land would be justified.

Could you explain that, please?

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, the demand on cottage lots and recreational property, the member will know, is extremely high. She knows the situation even in her own riding. She knows that in the park where she has a cottage herself the demand for any of that property is extremely high. We say there is an onus on us to make sure that, in comparison to the other people who are fighting for the same recreational property, we should have some fair and just way of allocating the property — and getting some return for it for all the people of the province. I think that is a very basic situation. The reason we made that statement is that a lot of the goods and services people get as cottage owners in provincial parks are not the goods and services people who have cottages outside provincial parks get. In a lot of places in regional parks where there are cottage subdivisions, where there are private subdivisions, they don't take security for granted. Although the RCMP is around, they don't get the same level of security; they don't have the same level of protection which you would have if your cottage happened to be within the boundaries of a provincial park. They don't get, for example, summer garbage detail. Someone has to pay for that. That's a cost which we have to bear. We've never really charged a realistic rate. The leases are extremely low and have been for 10 or 15 years. There has never been a change in the lease rate.

We've been paying people to do garbage detail. We've been gravelling streets; we've been oiling streets; we've been providing fire protection in subdivisions (some of them, not all of them). All this costs money. The amount of money we are collecting for what we are providing is very minimal.

In terms of rates, my deputy informs me, a comparison of 1980 rental rates to other jurisdictions (what we would assess in terms of an average lot in this province) would be \$200. In Manitoba, for an average lot, the assessment formula they use is 2.5 per cent. It would be \$250 for an average lot in Manitoba.

April 10, 1981

In Prince Albert National Park for an average lot (and they use an assessment formula s well), it is 6 per cent of the market value of a \$10,000 lot, which is considered average, it would be \$600. If you look at Kinookimaw Beach near Regina, the average charge for the same lot would be \$4,000 per year for the use of that lot. I'm sorry I have the wrong one.

In Ontario, by the same comparison, to lease an average lot is not \$200, as it is in Saskatchewan; it is \$1,000, so I don't think our rates are excessive in any stretch of the imagination.

MRS. DUNCAN: — I won't argue with those figures. I happen to live in Saskatchewan and not in those other places. What I am concerned with is the service and recreation tax. You say it has to be spread about. You're assessing the buildings on those lots. Now, it shouldn't matter whether I'm able to put up a \$30,000 cottage or a \$70,000 cottage. The services I get are the same. Are you going to increase park entry rates this year? Are you going to assess whether a person is pulling a fold-down camper or driving a \$40,000 motor home?

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, the member says that she lives in Saskatchewan and therefore things should be different. This is really the first time ever we have been in the field of the service and recreation tax. Somehow we have to make a measurement. I think the only thing I can add to my previous remarks is that we have to measure the benefits that cottagers are receiving because of the developments in provincial parks.

The member will know there have been a number of improvements in the department and there are more improvements on the way. Those benefits and those improvements, on a recreational basis, will be felt by the member, who probably will use that cottage a fair amount during the summer and the wintertime. She will be getting direct benefit out of it.

We have tried to make a measurement similar to what is being done in other provinces throughout the dominion — in fact, I think, in every province throughout the dominion. Our rate, on an assessment basis, is tremendously less than it would be anywhere else. Ours is 2 per cent and it ranges as high as 10 per cent on the assessment in Ontario, for example. The only way we can do that is by having that comparative way of writing the data and trying to extract from cottagers their fair share for the opportunity they have available to them for recreation. This is the way we do it. I think it's a fair tax. Mr. Chairman, I think I've answered the member's question.

MRS. DUNCAN: — Would you be specific then? In the areas where the services are going to be increased, does that include increased fire protection year-round, increased garbage collection year-round; will water be available on a year-round basis?

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, for the benefit of the member opposite, we have had an extremely easy ride in terms of the rates cottage owners in provincial parks have been charged. For 15 years there has not been one single increase in terms of the cost to the cottage owner. In the meantime, we have provided the goods and services that the member takes for granted: roads (which cost money, oiled roads, oiled streets, gravelled streets, potable water, security, garbage pick-up, lights, street lights. A lot of people in private subdivisions don't even have street lights. A lot of people in regional park subdivisions don't even have street lights. A little issue like that and they don't even

have it.

In our provincial park system we have provided a high degree of service, we have provided a high degree of capital costs for cottage subdivision and we have really extracted from the cottage owners nothing in return.

This rate that we have in front of us is a very minor rate. I've compared other rates across the country. Take Ontario, where the same rate is \$1,000, compared to our \$200. For the recreation and service tax that the member makes mention of (that's the one I mentioned before as the assessment on the service and recreation tax), the maximum level would be \$100, and I don't think that's excessive.

The member says, "Well, what are we getting in return?" You've been getting it for 15 years. The thing is that you haven't been paying for it, because we haven't been assessing it. We've been supplying a lot of those services gratis. Again, I can only stress that the amount of money we're going to receive in return for the service and recreation tax is minimal. It amounts to hardly anything compared to what it costs us to provide the things that you take for granted and have taken for granted for a long time. When I say "you," I mean cottage owners. I'm a cottage owner too and I know the feeling that it's been an easy ride for a long time in terms of this service.

The other thing is that we are improving our parks. We have dramatically shown how we've started the process of improving them. The member for Kelsey-Tisdale can tell you of the improvements in his parks. The member representing Moose Mountain (who may be familiar with Duck Mountain; I don't know whether he is or not) can talk about it. You'll see improvements in Moose Mountain this year. The member for Maple Creek can talk about improvements that she's seen this year in Cypress Hills. We're putting in a lot of money; that is how they're getting the benefit on the recreation side. They're going to have the same access and the same ability to use those recreational facilities that are provided a half-mile down the road in the core park area, the same as the day users who would come in there and pay day use or pay for a camping spot or whatever it may be.

So I think we're being fair. I don't think the rates are exorbitant, and I don't think the member can make a case at all that we're somehow taking advantage of these cottage owners because they're captive clients of ours. I don't think it is true in this case, because it certainly isn't the case when you compare it to any place else or when you compare it within the province in the private sector.

MRS. DUNCAN: — You still haven't answered my question. I asked you very specifically. In a statement you made on March 31, you say, "My department will, over the next few years, be making significant improvements to the park in both facilities and services rendered." Okay, you're building a condominium and there have been improvements to the ski hill, but what services, specifically, are you going to increase?

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, I have repeated this and it's hard to keep on repeating it. The member asks what the cottage owner will directly receive for her dollar or his dollar in terms of the service and recreation tax, this maximum \$100. What will he receive in return? I said before that he will see improved and continued improvement in gravelled streets or paved streets. That's what he's getting now. He's going to see an improvement in that area in a lot of places, and as time evolves, we'll try to pick up all the subdivisions and provide the same type and level of service which we provide to a lot of

subdivisions.

You'll see lighting; you'll see garbage detail; you'll see the continuation of all those programs for which we have not charged anybody before. And I don't think it's fair for provincial taxpayers who don't have cottages in provincial parks, who were not fortunate enough to have picked up a lot whenever they were available, to have to pay for the garbage detail, to pay for snow removal, to pay for gravelling, oiling and streets in those subdivisions, when they, for whatever reason, haven't been able to pick up a lot. The thing is that we have demand on recreation lots and that demand is incredible. There is no way we can even come close to meeting it. But the people who are fortunate enough to have a cabin are getting fair return for their dollar. In fact, they have a deal second to none. For them to complain that they are not getting service for their money, is ridiculous.

MRS. DUNCAN: — Surely that isn't justification for increasing it as you are not increasing the services as you say you are. Now there's a big difference.

MR. TAYLOR: — Mr. Minister, one of the things most often brought to my attention is this hooliganism which goes on in the parks in the off-season. I think many of the people are concerned because their rates are going up and they are not getting the security they deserve. They are away from their cottages. When they come back, the cottage has been broken into, wrecked and smashed. I think these are some of the concerns which you could be looking at.

I would like to turn our attention to Moose Mountain Park since you mentioned it. I can remember in your estimates last year, having considerable discussion with you about your plans for establishing inns and taverns in the parks. I understand this is your plan at Moose Mountain. I wonder if your service and recreation assessment is going to provide this type of facility in Moose Mountain. The member for Souris-Cannington and I are very interested in hearing just what you have planned for the Moose Mountain inn. Is this a new venture by the government opposite to start getting into the pub business in the provincial parks of this province?

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, the member makes mention of security. My seatmate says that if he would stay out of Moose Mountain Park we would have no security problems.

The security that we have in the provincial park system is provided by the RCMP. If we have any major problems of vandalism or whatever the term the member made mention of, "hooliganism", we have been receiving very good co-operation from the RCMP in stamping it out and providing that kind of support with regard to vandalism. As well, our own people provide a limited amount of security in terms of rowdiness in the camping areas or wherever they may be. If the member has been at Moose Mountain very many times, he will have noted that our people have provided some enforcement when it was needed. If they had a major problem the RCMP have been quick to respond.

With regard to the taverns at Moose Mountain, we haven't announced in detail any plans in that particular park for establishments. There are establishments in Moose Mountain, as the member will be aware, where there are taverns and liquor establishments in the private side.

MR. TAYLOR: — Mr. Minister, in discussing your portfolio in government services the other day, you did make mention that you are building an inn in Moose Mountain Park. Now this certainly falls into tourism, and we want to know what you have planned for

that.

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, I am not sure whether I understand the member's question. Is he asking a question about alcohol in that establishment?

MR. TAYLOR: — What services are going to be provided in this inn in Moose Mountain Park which you mentioned? Also, how many patrons will it hold? Let's hear what you have planned for Moose Mountain.

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, the member wants to know precisely what it is. I read the DGS (Department of Government Services) estimates in here the other day. He had an opportunity to question them there. We will be happy to provide the member with what it is and the detail (if that's what you are looking for), what the project will look like and why it's conceived to be at a later date. Is that okay?

MR. TAYLOR: — No, it's not okay. In your other estimates you asked for the money; that's fine. Now this is where we're talking about the facilities for the tourist public. Come on, come clean. Gosh, I was after you all last year! You skated around it. Now you tell me you are building an inn. Let's hear what the inn in Moose Mountain is going to be like; what services it is providing. Are you going to own it; are there going to be government employees running it; are you going to lease it out? Come clean and let us know what you are doing.

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, the member wants to know what services are available and what's going to be in it. He asked me to give exactly who it will be and what it will be. I can't do it right now because that isn't in place yet. What we have is a policy throughout our system, and that will be the same policy which will apply here. Wherever we have an operation — whether it's a restaurant or a cabin or a café or hotel accommodation or lodge condominium or motel — it's our policy, when it's a new facility, that we will be responsible for the capital facility. I think you want to know who will operate it. We'll do as we do with our stores and cafes right now. We lease them out. As a rule we have a formula to follow. It goes out to tender. Every time there is a new facility, it goes out to tender and somebody will have the opportunity to lease it; so, as a policy, it goes to tender. I think I'm answering the question. If you want to know in detail what it looks like, I will provide the detail privately, but I can't do that here, sorry.

MR. TAYLOR: — So actually what you are doing then with some of this revenue is building pubs in the parks and leasing them out — pubs or taverns or bars, or whatever you want to call them. Some of this money you've been talking about for fire prevention — is that where it's coming from?

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, the member is off on the wrong track completely. The money the member for Maple Creek was talking about was \$112,000 which we will collect from the service and recreation tax right across the province for every cottage subdivision we have within the provincial park system. The member can appreciate that \$112,000 will not even cover the costs of gravelling. You couldn't gravel or pave one subdivision for that price at today's cost. It's a very minimal amount of money to assess cottage owners. It has nothing to do with the thing you make mention of: building an inn or building a condominium or building a log cabin. It would contribute nothing in terms of offsetting revenue. And a lot of our new projects are out of the heritage fund so the money doesn't even come from that source. The member will appreciate that all of that money will not cover the cost of our providing street lights.

MR. TAYLOR: — I assume I'm right on this. The government opposite, with Moose

Mountain being the most highly-visited park in the province – or one of the most highly – is going into the building of a tavern in Moose Mountain Park, and we can probably expect to see that come along through the other provincial parks in this province. And I ask you what kind of hypocritical action you take when I hear the Minister of Health get up and talk about lifestyles and talk about recreation and talk about stopping smoking, and then the Minister of Tourism comes around with a recreation facility for the young people of this province! He starts building pubs and inns. I say that's a bunch of nonsense and hypocrisy on that side of the House.

MRS. DUNCAN: — I would like to talk about your leasing policy, because it would appear to me that there are not many people in your department who are aware of what your leasing policy is. Do you have a manual in which it is set down in black and white what the leasing policy of your department is?

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, we don't have a copy with us, but if the member's question is about the leasing of cottages and business enterprises, there definitely is a policy. The policy is available and we will provide a copy to the member opposite. I don't know who she is referring to who doesn't know what the policy is, but there definitely is a hard policy that has been in place for some time.

MRS. DUNCAN: — Okay, we'll get down to the nitty gritty then. Concerning the leasing of the new restaurant at Cypress Hills, the people who had the lease prior to last year sent in their contract to be signed by you in December. Now, why were they never informed of your so-called leasing policy? I might add that it seems strange that the person who ultimately was given the lease (a good friend of the Minister of Social Services) was making inquiries prior to that tender going into the paper.

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, I don't know what the member makes mention of regarding some kind of discrepancy in the policy, because there isn't any discrepancy. I'm informed that the reason the lease on the restaurant at Cypress Hills was retendered was that within the policy of leasing, when there is a new facility or the structure of a building is changed dramatically and, for example, the type of operation is changed from a fast-food restaurant to a sit-down, full-menu restaurant, it is retendered.

I think, in fairness, the member for Maple Creek would have a very valid argument had we not retendered that project, because it's a completely new facility. The facility that we had two years ago at Cypress Hills and the facility that was put in place last year are two different operations with a completely different function. It is our policy in the leasing program that when we have a completely different and new facility, the business community in total has a chance to tender on that lease. In the case of Cypress Hills (and you can correct me if I'm wrong) that was retendered. There was a different operation, so it was on a competitive bid system. The tenders were made public, and the person who was successful made the best bid, and that can be the only reason why.

MRS. DUNCAN: — I think if you go back to the bids, Mr. Minister, those bids were exactly the same. It seems to me that someone in your department doesn't know what your policy is, because the previous lessee was told to go ahead and hire staff and order equipment and stock for that; so don't tell me that policy is in place, because no one knows anything about it.

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, I'm not totally conversant with the argument that the member makes, but I'm told by my officials that in this case the money was the same, but in terms of the services being provided and in terms of equipment, the new lessee

put in many thousands of dollars worth of equipment, in addition to what was already there, and he provided a superior menu in that it was a western and Chinese menu as well. The member may not disagree with tendering the project, that's a different matter. The project was tendered fair and square. We received a better tender and a better proposal from the present operator at Cypress Hills.

The tender was a public tender and everyone had the right to bid against it. They did and we had a successful and a good tender. From what I understand, we have an excellent operation in Cypress Hills. I am sure the member wouldn't want to assert or make the claim that we don't have a first-class operation there because I think we do.

MRS. DUNCAN: — Okay, you tell me then: when that contract was sent in December, why was that person not notified that that would be retendered? Why did someone in your department tell the previous lessee to go ahead and hire staff and to order equipment and supplies?

HON. MR. GROSS: — Mr. Chairman, I am informed that the building was retendered. The people, who the member makes mention of, say that they were informed that it wouldn't be. That is completely incorrect. I am informed by my people that the people were informed the project would be retendered, that it would be retendered on the basis that the lease policy said, "when the building is severely altered." Or, in this case, a completely brand new facility, with a completely new style of operation, had to be retendered following the confines of the policy. It was retendered on that basis. The successful tender we ended up with, I think, was a good tender. I don't think the member can argue with what was done.

The committee reported progress.

MR. COLLVER: — Mr. Speaker, on reflection, earlier today, I raised a matter of personal prejudice. I would like to withdraw the remarks I made.

MR. SPEAKER: — It shall be noted in the record.

The Assembly adjourned at 12:58 p.m.