

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
May 16, 1983

EVENING SESSION

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

CONSOLIDATED FUND BUDGETARY EXPENDITURE

AGRICULTURE

Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 1

Item 1 (continued)

MR. KOSKIE: — I want to, Mr. Minister, turn briefly to the FarmStart program and I want to ask you . . . There was a portion of a loan and a grant attached to that program, and it's my understanding that the start-up grant portion of it has been eliminated. I'd like to know when that was officially cut off.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — The grant no longer existed as of August 31, 1982.

MR. KOSKIE: — Can you indicate the rationale for deleting that portion of the assistance?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Yes, there was very little demand for it, number one, and number two, we felt it more important to deal with the overall picture of interest rates. The mechanism that was in place by the previous administration to trigger interest rates upwards would have taken effect on or about that same date and we froze the interest rates at what level they were at that time — a very significant saving to the clients of FarmStart as a result of freezing those interest rates.

MR. KOSKIE: — When the grants were terminated as you indicated, I'm wondering whether or not all the existing commitments were honoured, in respect to those who had actually applied and would have qualified. Did you bring it up to date?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — All commitments will be met as they qualify to meet them.

MR. KOSKIE: — And who is the present general manager of FarmStart?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Dave Leslie is officer in charge of FarmStart. Dave Leslie.

MR. KOSKIE: — When did he start in that particular position?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — January 11th of this year.

MR. KOSKIE: — Can you indicate what happened to the former general manager?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Mr. Layne Hetland resigned as of March 31.

MR. KOSKIE: — Are you saying voluntary resignation, or was it requested?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — I think it's best described as voluntary and mutually agreeable.

MR. KOSKIE: — Was he, in fact, suspended from his duties during the term of your administration?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — He was suspended for a period during your review of the FarmStart Corporation by a consultant's firm.

MR. KOSKIE: — And during that period of being suspended was any other offer provided for him for alternate employment?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Well, no, but during his suspension, my understanding is he was suspended with pay.

MR. KOSKIE: — In respect to the matching grants for international aid, there was a substantial cut there from 2,100,000 down to a million; I'd like to ask you the reason for this very substantial cut in grants.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — At the time of the cut it was not in Agriculture's bailiwick; it was transferred into Agriculture's bailiwick, and it was transferred with \$1 million in it, and I suppose I can defend it by saying that it's easy to be benevolent when you have something to give, and our priorities, quite frankly, lie in getting the economy of Saskatchewan humming again so that we would indeed have much, much more to give. Having said that, we are dealing at this very moment with . . . through Agdevco, as the hon. member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg knows, in joint ventures in Third World countries that amount to far, far more than the million dollars we're talking about through this particular program.

MR. KOSKIE: — That's all very well, that first of all you indicate that you cut the grant because really what you're concerned about is getting Saskatchewan rolling. So that's the first reason, and secondly you indicate that you have an alternative program. But I think that here is a voluntary international organization, and various groups in society have been able to make donations, and there was a matching program. And I think that it's rather a sad commentary, the reasons that you give for cutting it. Certainly the purpose of these international aid was to assist in underdeveloped countries, many of them. And certainly the circumstances there, as the world recession strikes, is needed probably more than anywhere in the world. I'm rather disappointed that you have, you know, indicated that you've cut it off and really take no responsibility, because it was transferred over to you with a million dollars in it.

I still think that if you take something into your budget that it's been reduced by over a million dollars, or cut in half, that certainly we should be able to expect a rationale for it somewhat better than what you have.

What I want to know is . . . I want a list of all the organizations which you are going to continue to fund, and the proposed amount. I want a list of all the organizations that you have discontinued to fund.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — I'm not sure that the — I would have to check to make sure — that the act is passed to give Agriculture legislative authority to deal with those applications yet. If it passed, it passed very recently, and of course the applications are yet to be dealt with.

But getting back to your earlier question, there's no question at all that in times of a

world-wide recession, that that's the time when the Third World countries need some additional help. And we think that \$1 million is significant as it relates to that help. And I don't see what possible help some of the programs that were funded by the previous administration would be to any Third World country.

I'm just going from memory, but I can recall quite distinctly when this was raised in previous estimates with the Attorney-General, who was then responsible for this particular program, talking about some of the educational programs that dealt largely in philosophical things rather than in real need. And, Mr. Speaker, I make no apology for cutting those things. And I'll be prepared after consulting with my colleague, the former minister responsible, to table for you, or to send over to you, a list of those programs that we would view as being those kinds of programs that we would not fund.

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Chairman, thank you. Mr. Minister, just a point on the matching grants. Are you saying of the two-plus million dollars that were spent in the last year, that some of that funding was used for purposes other than development projects? Do you want to stand up in the House and say that?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Well, my understanding is that some of it in fact was used for educational purposes and the education that was being given under those programs was philosophical in nature, rather than technical in nature.

MR. ENGEL: — Do you, Mr. Minister, intend to change the program as it existed where Saskatchewan Council for International Co-operation was encompassing body that had, say, 27-29 members? I think a couple of the memberships aren't direct voting members, but are involved in it.

Are you saying that the application that they make to the province for funding was money other than development projects, and were not projects that were development projects in relation to what CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency) approved originally? Are you saying you want to get involved in reviewing their list of projects under a different criteria? Is that what you're telling this House?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — What I'm saying is that we will not fund projects that are not truly developmental.

MR. ENGEL: — Well, I'm sure if you get into the files, as long as Wes Robbins was the minister responsible for international development, and even after that, the last year when your minister, the Attorney-General, had that portfolio, he was kind of suggesting that he'd like to have a review of the projects themselves and wasn't satisfied with the church groups; and when the Catholic council of bishops recommends a project, that you then want to put staff in the field and review that project to see whether that's one you're going to fund or not; and the Mennonite Central Committee comes with a project and says, 'This is the one we want to do' where we do a water project, say in Africa or a reforestation project in Ethiopia; that you are going to look at these projects and review them yourselves. Are you going to set up a bureaucracy to look at that, or are you going to stay with a well-established tradition that's been in place since I've been a member of the legislature?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Well, I think obviously we have some obligation to take a look at the applications as they come in, and each application will be assessed on its own merit. And if it's deemed to be developmental it'll be approved within the funding limitations. If it's not deemed to be developmental, obviously it won't be approved.

MR. ENGEL: — The developmental thing you're talking about are projects that are agricultural in nature and development nature type things. I don't think the criteria has changed there. Where the minister is a little bit mistaken — and I don't know if we should be using this time to correct and train you on what your department's all about — but the educational aspect that SCIC had — they had a budget of \$250,000 or so. That was an operational budget for here in the province. Fifty-five or sixty thousand dollars of that was spent on educational projects, as such, that you're questioning.

That has nothing to do with the matching grants aspect of it, Mr. Minister. And the funding that you've cut — the million dollars you cut in half that were for matching grants — were not necessarily, were not directly involved as educational projects because the criteria that was in place from day one was development projects, and particularly agricultural in nature. And teaching people how to grow their own food, because you give them a loaf of bread, the next day they're going to come and want two — need another one — and aren't going to grow their own.

And I agree with that philosophy, but from my observation of it, SCIC and the church groups, and the international development aid groups and CIDA (Canadian International Development Agency), they have a lot of people out in the field. And I don't think you have to waste a lot of bureaucracy to try and match that and review what that is. If they can make the hoops and get an application to a place where it needs to be reviewed, I think that's far enough. Then the province decides how much you're going to go.

What I see happening is similar to what happened in Manitoba. They had a decent fund in place. I went to a conference at Fort Qu'Appelle, and the Manitoba director from the Manitoba Council for International Co-operation reported back and said that they were cut back to \$300,000 from a million dollars the year before. So Sterling Lyon was doing exactly the same thing you're doing. And you're selfishly looking at your own pocket, and you're not recognizing the generosity of the people of Saskatchewan.

And as I said to you earlier, that the people of Saskatchewan, when the chips are down and when they're facing hard times, they're going to be selective where they're spending their money. And one of the first places they're going to be spending their money are helping their brother in need. And Saskatchewan is known to do that.

And income giving in Saskatchewan is up over \$4 million. And you've cut it from 2 million down to 1, where you're only matching a quarter. You can't get out and say that we've got a matching grants program, because you're only giving two bits, you're only giving two bits on the dollar what's being raised by Mennonite Central Committee, by the United Church group, by the Catholic council for development. There's 27 groups there. Study that area and see that that's an important issue to stay up on top. And I think that a million dollars there would be well spent. It'd be appreciated.

Now, if I may, I want to get back to the question we finished off with on the last day, when we were talking about selling the province's Crown land. And the editorial in the *Leader-Post* . . . I hope you read it, Mr. Minister, because I don't want to take time to read it into the record. But just the title is very revealing: 'Selling the province's Crown land is like discarding a family heirloom.'

I think that that's one key and I asked our Clerk here, when I came into the House . . .

suppose after being around here for as long as I have, I should have known that you can't move a substantive motion in this committee. But if I could move a motion, I would like to move a motion that all the people in this Assembly would agree to, that we shouldn't get involved in selling parcels of land that are larger than three sections. If a piece of land, or a parcel of land that you intend to sell is part of a block of land that is larger than three sections of land, I don't think you should touch it with a hundred-foot pole. And I think you should refrain from selling parcels of land like that.

If the Crown wants to get involved and use the prerogative where a young farmer can put 15 per cent down and buy a parcel of land that's a nuisance to your department — it's just two quarters here or three quarters there, even a section and a half — sell it. Give the guy a chance to own it on your philosophy. Heap some more debt on his head. If that's what he wants to do, that's great, but don't get involved in selling our heirloom — you know, our future, something that we've inherited. And what I want to point out again is: your government of the same breed as you are took on this responsibility from the federal government and assured Canada that you would protect this heritage of ours — this grasslands area down there. So I'd like your reaction to that, and your staff's reaction to not getting involved in sales of land, or Crown land, where the parcel of land is larger . . . adjoining a piece of land that's larger than three sections.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — I haven't measured it, and it varies from area to area, but the policy is quite clear that no land will be sold except land that meets the following criteria. Well, I'll give you the criteria of the land that won't be sold. Land will not be sold that is environmentally fragile. Land will not be sold that is deemed to be critical to wildlife habitat. Land will not be sold that is otherwise deemed to be best held in the name of the Crown for the public good. And to cover off your particular concern, no land will be sold where the owner, through deeded land or land that he is to purchase, exceeds a 500-cow carrying capacity. And so these large, large tracts that you're talking about, obviously, the guy won't be able to buy them all. He will buy up to a 500-cow carrying capacity, including his deeded land, and that's the ceiling for him.

MR. ENGEL: — The minister missed the point I was making. I think you did. The point I was making is that under that criteria, we'd have a hard time proving that it's environmentally fragile, or unless you'd have some special criteria there that would deem it valuable to the Crown, or to the province, or to the people of Saskatchewan.

The point I am making is: here you have a large tract of land. Adjoining that large tract of land that's larger than three sections is this section of land or three quarters of land or four quarters or five quarters, Mr. Minister, and my concern is that you'd be selling that parcel that adjoins it. The parcel you're selling wouldn't necessarily be the large tract; it would be a small portion of that large tract is what I'm worried about. My concern is that you're selling off a little chunk of land that's up against a large tract, and you slowly chip and whittle away, and everybody takes their turn, and pretty soon that large tract is gone. So even if you're selling a parcel that is only, like I said, three sections of land which would possibly meet that 500-cow operation criteria. But my point is: if this is adjoining a larger tract of land, what is there in your guarantee that you're not going to start chipping away on the south country, particularly where you have that large wilderness area?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — It seems to me that even when members opposite were sitting on this side of the House, the land had already been well identified and well catalogued — that is deemed to be fragile; that is deemed to be critical to wildlife; and that is deemed to be held in the public good for various reasons, whether standard gravel

deposits or whatever. And you know, I don't know how far we have to go. I have every confidence in our agricultural community, particularly our ranchers in the south-west and I suppose it's a philosophical difference between you and I. We believe that they should have the right to own those lands that qualify, rather than be tenants of that land, tenants to the government. I share your concern as it relates to the wildlife habitat, the environmentally critical lands, and lands that are otherwise unique and should be held in the public good, and those lands are well identified and well catalogued and obviously they won't be sold.

MR. ENGEL: — This is where I and you differ. I don't think that those lands are well identified, and I don't think those lands are categorized as saying that this is an environmentally fragile piece of land and this section right beside isn't. I think the rules will be such that you're giving your staff some leeway, and in comes a rancher and he makes his case and he sells his son a parcel of land, a section of land adjoining that wilderness area and that large tract of land that's exactly like it was created, that hasn't been cultivated and hasn't been touched. And my major concern is that we're slowly going to move the farmland south and pretty soon we'll be at the United States border and a part of Saskatchewan's history will be down the tubes and down the chute. Like I said on Friday morning, for a buck, you know we'll sell our birthright for a bowl of soup. If you buy a bowl of soup for a buck, that's what you're doing. And I think this right that you have and this responsibility that you have to maintain and hang on to, that for the future . . . You know for, just for an immediate gain, for the short-term gain to sell off this Crown land, I think is pretty serious. You haven't assured me or my colleagues or the rest of this House that you have a program in place that will assure us that you're not going to sell the large tracts or anything near them.

If you stick with the program that was spelled out and was in place by the previous administration when we opened up to sell some Crown land, then that's fine. Then I have no argument with you because you'll just be selling the smaller pieces of nuisance land, as I call them, around the country where the department is administering a little piece here and a little piece there and all over, spread all over Saskatchewan. Those parcels of land I can see could be in private hands and isn't going to affect Saskatchewan. But if you are familiar with our country down south — you've flown across it many times and tramped through the hills likely — you know what's down there and I don't want to see that disrupted or changed. I think the park — if you ever get off whatever you're sitting on and finish the exploration in that area so that they can go ahead and turn a block of land over to the federal government . . . That's in the grasslands park. I understand what the hold-up there is and your minister said once money is available he's going to go ahead with the exploration. So he's sitting on that one.

Well, as long as you're sitting on that and if you're not going to sell any land out of the grasslands park, that's fine. That'll hold and that's staying. But the area around there is very fragile and that kind of land, do you expect to be selling sections or six quarters or seven quarters or two-section parcels of land that's adjoining that kind of land? That's my concern.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — You know, you've just told me that the land around the grasslands park is very fragile and I'll take your word for it. And two things: would you suspect that an owner of the land would treat it in a less husband-like fashion than the tenant of the land? It seems to me that an owner of the land would have far more respect for it than the tenant, number one. Number two: if you tell me that the land is fragile, I'll take your word for it. But in lands branch, we have the same people there that your

government had when they were there. And I have confidence in them. And I think if they go out to make the assessment as to whether a particular parcel of land is fragile or not, they will do it with objective professionalism. And if they don't do it with objective professionalism, I would invite you to come and tell me about it. And if it can be demonstrated that they can't do it, well, we will fire them. But I have confidence in them, as obviously your government had confidence in them. And I think that the safeguards are built into the system. You find me one staff member from lands branch that's not dealing with objective professionalism and he'll be on the street tomorrow.

MR. ENGEL: — Well, Mr. Minister, you're getting right down to the point where I'm trying to make. Your staff are professionals; they're very objective. If they get a directive that spells out which parcels of land are for sale, they'll follow that directive to the letter. They'll cross all the i's and dot all the t's, you know — they'll do it right down the line. But, any of your colleagues think that's funny — he thinks I should have said it the other way around, but I said it intentionally like that, because they know what the score is and what the political implications are. So when you tell me the story I'm supposed to say versus tenants and owners. Why does a person want to own a piece of land? Just plain easy. Tell me your reason for wanting to own land and I'll tell you the reason why I own it.

I'll tell you why I own my land. You tell me why a person wants to own land. Everybody in Saskatchewan . . . Why do they want to own that piece of land?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — I can't speak for everybody in Saskatchewan, but I know when my grandfather came over from Norway, he came over because of the pride of ownership — because of the pride of ownership. I doubt that he would have come — and it would have been Saskatchewan's loss. I might add but I doubt that he would have come, had the signs back in Norway said 'Come to Saskatchewan — land for rent.' No, he wanted to come over, he wanted to come over and own the property that he lived and worked on. And there is a fundamental sense in Saskatchewan farmers of pride of ownership and I think it's a healthy thing.

I think it's a healthy thing because with that pride of ownership, you're prepared to get out and give it that little extra, because what returns come from it are yours at the end of the day, rather than going to Big Brother in Regina. And I think that's healthy, Mr. Chairman, and obviously philosophically, the member opposite and I have a difference here. I doubt that there will ever be any danger of us sharing a desk so we'll just have our philosophical differences and carry on.

MR. ENGEL: — The answer I wanted you to give me and talk about it is: a person buys something to get a return from it. You know, you own some land and all the pride in the world isn't going to pay the bills. He owns that land to make a comfortable living and if he can live well off that land, he'll be proud of it. An ownership question is involved: can I make a little more money and when I get to the end of the road, will I have done a little better job by owning it? And I'll agree that there's reasons for owning, but a pragmatist looks at it and says, 'Where do I make the best returns?'

I'm not going to get into a philosophical argument over your programs that you've destroyed, and new ones that you've tried to put in place with ownership. I'm talking now about Crown land down south and the statement you made regarding the difference between a tenant and an owner. My question is: somebody is going to come down there because of your free enterprise approach. I don't know if this rancher is going to come from Alberta or where he's going to come, but some ranchers are going

to come along that have a buck. They'll want to buy some Crown land, and they'll buy it to make a buck. And if it looks like the price of grain goes up and the wheat starts moving because they killed the Crow or whatever, they'll say, 'I've got to cultivate that stuff. There are some rich valleys down there that I want to plough up.' They own it. Nobody is going to tell them not to plough it up, and not to plough the grass under and grow some wheat if the price of cattle drops down. Nobody's going to tell them that if they own it.

If they've got that land rented and it's stipulated what it's rented for, and the lease agreement is stipulated, and if they wanted to regrass some of the valleys, and if they're seeding some back to grass, they'll only do it under one condition, and that's if they get permission from your department. And that's the difference between owning it and renting it. As long as you have control of that parcel of land, it's going to stay exactly the same way as your philosophy and as your policy sets out and the dictates are there that this is what happens to the land. The big bulk of the land down there, nothing has happened to it. There's a fence around a township and that's the division that's happened, and that land stays, the delicate nature of it stays there. But if you start selling little blocks of land, that's going to shrink more and more and more. And I challenge the minister to tell me that he's going to leave some rules in place that's going to prevent that from being so.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — A couple of points I want to make: number one, my understanding is, and obviously the hon. member doesn't understand this either, there's more Crown land north of No. 1 Highway than there's south of No. 1 Highway.

Number two, and this goes back to a previous time that you were on your feet when you were saying, sure, the staff people are objective and professional and they also understand the system, and if the direction comes down that they should sell this land or sell that land, they will sell it. Well, perhaps under the previous administration there was that kind of political interference, but there certainly isn't under this administration, nor will they ever be. When policy is set, Mr. Chairman, that policy is the guide-line for the staff and there will not be political intervention at any point.

I want to point out one more safeguard, Mr. Speaker, and that's on all Crown land. Parks and Renewable Resources will have the first right of refusal, and the assessment is going on now relative to critical to wildlife and environmentally fragile. And my understanding is that the assessment is virtually completed. In those categories, at least, the land will be identified and catalogued.

MR. ENGEL: — Does the minister know what the word policy means, or where it comes from? Are you trying to tell me that setting policy isn't political? Is this what you're trying to convince me tonight? You know, Mr. Minister, I'm sometimes wondering just how you got to be the second in command over in that troop over there. Because if you're trying to tell this House that setting policy isn't something that's done by political parties and isn't political, I'd like another run at that one.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — I guess after that question I have to ask how you got here at all, because, Mr. Chairman, policy doesn't necessarily have to be riddled with political . . . Policy doesn't necessarily have to follow along the lines of the pork-barrelling attitudes of previous administrations. Policy may well set a direction, Mr. Chairman, for the public good with no particular gain — no political gain except by way of enhancing trust and integrity.

Mr. Chairman, I don't know why we're even getting into this argument, because obviously it's being wasted on members opposite. But if they still wish to pursue it, I'll oblige them.

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Minister, I don't consider the policy of selling Crown land a waste of time. I don't consider that a waste of my time, deciding why you sell what, and which parcels you sell. I maintain that your department will review the policy that you set out before them. And if you tell me that the Crown land that you're planning on selling, and the heirloom that you're planning on selling is north of the No. 1, the item's closed. Then I'm satisfied. But if you're talking about Crown land that is the land down south, and you can stand up in this House and you can't enunciate, other than that it's environmentally fragile — that that's your criteria — how is a rancher supposed to know which parcel of land's for sale and which isn't? Why don't you spell out some criteria? We did it by size. We did it by size — if it's connected to a larger unit. Now I'd triple the size: anything that's closer to three sections or more, would be a decent policy to follow, and then you wouldn't sell the large tracts of land.

My concern is that you're going to sell a section here and a section there that's adjoining a large tract of land, and I think you should have some policy on that. If you don't want to enunciate some policy, that's just telling me you want some political leverage to sell some to friends and others not to friends. Otherwise, you'd have a policy there.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Well, you know, I hope we sell a section here, and I hope we sell a section there. Otherwise, we wouldn't have brought the program in. What do you think we are, for God's sake? The program is here to sell Crown land, and if the Crown land is deemed to be critical to wildlife, if it's deemed to be fragile environmentally, it's not going to be sold. If my friends in Tourism and Parks, or whatever, decide that it shouldn't be sold, it won't be sold. I don't know what more I can tell you.

But I'll tell you one thing that won't happen. When I, as I did here about four years ago, raised in this House the incidence of about a \$240,000 capital gain in three months, when a land bank tenant bought his land, and before he even had the ink dry on the transfer, resold it to some West Germans, using land bank as his bank, so to speak, rolling over this terrific capital gain, well, I can tell you, Mr. Chairman, that those kinds of things won't happen under our program.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Minister, we must be touching a sensitive area because the minister seems to be looking for some dirt to dig up and rile the waters with some fiction — rile the waters with some fiction.

The minister said that I said 'a section here and a section there.' Every time I talked about selling that section of Crown land, I was doing a little pitch and saying, 'if that section is part of a larger parcel,' and that's the only question I'm asking. Of the vast area, I don't think there's another place in Saskatchewan — maybe the Primrose weapons range — but outside of those areas and the area in the North, the general half of the province that hasn't been subdivided — you know, there's land there — but the general Crown land that's leased out around the province . . . There are areas in the province, and I pointed out on Friday, between my and my colleague's ridings there, that are large tracts of land, and all I'm asking you is: are you placing in policy a vague statement that nobody can hang their hat on, or will you come out with a definite policy saying the

larger tracts of land aren't for sale, not even a little parcel of it? That's all I'm asking.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Well, Mr. Chairman, our policy has been written. I will send copies — I thought I already had — to the hon. member's office and he may, if he likes, write to me and offer some suggestions to that policy and I'll respond to him and I'll tell you whether we will accept those changes or at least hear his arguments, and I'm prepared to go that far, but our policy is written and unless I hear some competing arguments as to why it should be changed, it won't be changed.

MR. ENGEL: — To end this note on selling Crown land: you will be selling parcels of land out of the Shaunavon riding or the Assiniboia-Gravelbourg riding, or Maple Creek area, that are adjoining larger parcels of land. You will be selling some parcels of land from areas that are adjoining larger parcels.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — I'm going to be selling parcels of Crown land that, whether it be in Shaunavon, or Assiniboia-Gravelbourg, or Meadow Lake, or Souris-Cannington. I know of one quarter in Souris-Cannington that will be sold, that in fact touches a large tract of land: at least we consider it large — it's four and a half sections — and I own it, and somebody else will be buying this quarter section of land. But, yeah, I mean, everything is relative — right? — and the land is for sale except as I have described. I don't know what else I can tell you.

MR. ENGEL: — That fits the description you made — simply gives the minister the power to decide which parcel of land he wants to sell and which he doesn't. It's very vague, you know, 'environmentally sensitive.' It's pretty hard to define and say that this section is environmentally sensitive and that one isn't. That's a pretty difficult job, and if you would spell it out according to the size of that parcel, and so on, you'd have yourself a program in place that we'd know that south country is going to stay the same. If you don't, in the next two and a half years that you have left you'll be eroding and doing some damage down there that can't be reversed — that will be impossible to be reversed, Mr. Minister — and I think you should be aware of what's happening there, and I think you should be aware of the concerns that natural history society people, Ducks Unlimited, and there's different groups, that there should maybe be some kind of a censor or appeal board, or some kind of a overseeing group that involves the people of Saskatchewan. If you're a government that says you listen to people, why not listen and let them decide what should happen to those large tracts because those tracts don't belong to the people that have been leasing them. They belong to all the people of Saskatchewan. I think all the people of Saskatchewan should have a say on that. The land you're talking about in Souris-Cannington or in Meadow Lake or anywhere else in the province isn't that sensitive. I'll show you there's some areas that are sensitive there as well, but not all of it is that sensitive to the wilderness, short grass area that I'm trying to preserve.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Well, again . . . The member opposite says it's difficult to determine whether a piece of land is environmentally fragile or not. And as I just indicated, Mr. Chairman, the Department of Parks and Renewable Resources has in fact virtually completed cataloguing it, and so those lands will be soon identified and those lands will not be for sale. You obviously don't have confidence in the people that are out there making that assessment; I do. You obviously don't have confidence in the stewardship of the ranchers in your area; I do. I think they will look after the land, whether they are tenants or owners. And you know, I don't know what I can do to change your mind as it relates to the development of the policy. It wasn't done in isolation. We

talked with the ranchers, we talked with the farmers who had leased land, we talked with the wildlife federation, we talked with a great number of these organizations and agricultural groups . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yeah, we listened to the folks, they helped us develop this policy.

MR. ENGEL: — Are you going to be making this map public once they delineate which areas are not for sale?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Well, I can't speak for the minister responsible, but send me a legal description of anything you're querying about and I'll give you the answer.

MR. ENGEL: — Well, basically what you're saying then that you're not going to be mapping a particular portion in the province that you feel is sensitive, that won't be for sale.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — I am not. It could well be that Parks and Renewable Resources is. I have trouble with that department. It could well be that they are mapping it. I don't know if they're mapping it in the literal sense, but they're certainly cataloguing it through legal description.

MR. ENGEL: — Will a catalogue like that be available to perusal or something, so we can tell what areas you're delineating as not being for sale?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Again, I can't speak for the minister responsible for that department, but if you have any particular area, phone me, write me, come and visit me, with the legal description and I'll tell you whether it's on the catalogue or not.

MR. ENGEL: — I've had some concerned ranchers call me over the week-end and they are definitely concerned whether that would be up for sale or not. I think some of that land is best held in the Crown and I feel that if you're going to decide which area is going to be for sale or which isn't, I'd appreciate knowing, particularly in my riding, which area that is.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Well, bring in the legals and I'll tell you.

MR. LUSNEY: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I'd like to ask you a few questions on land bank land and some of the lessees that apparently have had their land out on tender this past spring. Now I imagine it would be because they haven't paid their rent. But some of this land was tendered. How much of that land that was out on tender has been purchased and did you have any of it that wasn't purchased?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — I think this is the answer to your question. There were 69 quarters sold by tender. Okay? And there were 14 agreements involving 3,257 acres sold to lessees by land bank prior to March 31st.

MR. LUSNEY: — Was all the land that was tendered sold then? None of it was held back for whatever reason there may have been. Was any of that land not sold?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Without a great degree of precision, about 50 per cent of the land that was tendered was in fact sold. The balance was held back because for the most part the bids didn't meet the reserve bid that was calculated through the formula in the policy.

MR. LUSNEY: — So all of this land then, Mr. Minister, had a reserve bid on it when it was tendered. Is this what you're saying?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Okay. The reserve bid was not established in advance. The reserve bid comes out of a formula of which one of the factors is the appraised value. Another factor is the bids that come in. And through the formula the reserve bid is established. If when the bids come in none of them meet the reserve as established through this formula the land is not sold.

MR. LUSNEY: — Could we get that formula that you use in establishing the reserve on some of this land?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — For obvious reasons, we won't commit ourselves to giving you the formula, number one. And number two, we won't, nor can we, give you in advance what a reserve bid might be, because the tendering process is part of the factors in the formula.

MR. LUSNEY: — Well, Mr. Minister, again we're getting into an area where, as you were telling my colleague before, that policy is developed and that somehow the department operates under that policy. It's quite open to everybody here. You're telling us now that you're using some kind of formula to establish a reserve on land that you are tending. And you're saying that we are not able to get that formula as to how you arrive at a reserve on that land. So could you give us some idea of how you arrive? Use a hypothetical case of how would we arrive at a price for a reserve on a given parcel of land.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Sure, I could use a hypothetical case and give you a hypothetical for instance as a perhaps, maybe, or it might be nice. But the fact is that's just like giving you the formula and we're not going to give you the formula because it would detract from the whole legitimacy of the process, and we're simply not going to do that. I know that the member from Quill Lakes doesn't understand that kind of thing but that's the reality of the situation.

MR. LUSNEY: — Well, Mr. Minister, you say it would detract from the process. If you are saying that somehow it is maybe going to allow the individuals bidding on that land to know what the price might be, then you are not being very honest with them, because you either tender it out and you sell it to the highest bidder or you should state to them that we have a reserve on this land and if you're going to get it you've got to go above that reserve. That's what you're saying to them: there is a reserve on that land and if somebody goes above that reserve they get it, if not 50 per cent of them don't qualify and it is below the reserve that you have. Now, if you're going to establish that reserve, surely you can come up with a hypothetical case. Take any parcel of land that's assessed at a given amount and tell us what your reserve would be on that parcel of land.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — When any land is put up for tender, Mr. Chairman, included in the advertisement is that any bid not necessarily accepted. So, you know, when you're bidding on it, just because you may or may not meet this arbitrary, however variable line might be set as the reserve, doesn't mean you're going to get it. The formula is there for a reason and it's deemed to be in the public good that the formula isn't public and we're therefore not going to make it public. And to deal with any hypothesis relating to the formula is just the same as giving the formula so we're not going to do it.

MR. LUSNEY: — Mr. Minister, you say this is being done for the public's good. Could you explain how the public is going to benefit from you having a formula which sets a reserve price on some land that is being tendered? What is the benefit to the public of that formula?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — I'll tell you what the benefit to the public is. There were 1,200,000 acres of this land bought with taxpayers' money by your administration when they were on this side of the House. One of the factors in that formula is the bid figure, however many come in. If it becomes known how that formula functions, obviously people could find a way to work around the formula and get land for less than they would otherwise. We are responsible as trustees for the taxpayers' money, for the disaster that you guys got us into in the land bank program. And we're going to get back the best deal we can for the taxpayers of the province and we, therefore, are not going to give you the formula that you're asking for.

MR. LUSNEY: — Well, Mr. Minister, that may all sound very well, but what you are saying is that you are trying to get as much out of the public as you possibly can even if that . . . And you have said yourself that that land should not be sold for more than it was purchased, and if it was bought 10 years ago, that that land if it was bought or purchased at that time for \$20,000 a quarter, that's what it should be sold back to the individual that's leasing it for.

Now, Mr. Minister, you are saying that you would like to get as much as possible for that land. And you're only doing it because you want a little more revenue in your budget. You want a little more revenue to balance your books as a government, or to try and balance them, or bring that deficit down a little. So what you're really saying is that you are no longer interested in assisting those farmers and giving them as good a deal as possible in the tendering process, but what you are saying is that if they don't tender high enough, they're not going to get it. What opportunity do these lessees have in getting that land for a fair price if they feel that it's worth so much, they tendered that amount for it, and you're saying that if they don't pay what you want for it, they're not going to get it?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — I don't know if I ever said that it shouldn't sell for more than the government paid for it; I don't believe I ever said that. I've always said . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Nonsense, I've always said that it should sell for a fair market value. That's always been my position . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I did, always. But more importantly, I don't think they should be selling it at all because I don't think they should have ever owned it.

Now, as it relates to the formula, we've had, Mr. Chairman, bids all the way from 25 per cent of appraised value to 105 or 106 per cent of appraised value. Now, if one bid came in, and it was at the 25 per cent level, are you telling us that we would be responsible trustees of the taxpayers of this province's money by letting that land go to that one bid of 25 per cent of appraised value? I think not. Therefore, we came up with a formula that would establish a reserve bid, and the formula is not going to be made public, and as far as I'm concerned, that's the long and short of it.

MR. LUSNEY: — I find some difficulty in understanding how that formula, using your example, would work. If you have one bid on it, and if it's lower than what you figure it should be, how are you going to decide using that bid as to what the price of that land

should be? You must have a formula that really doesn't require any bids at all then, if you can formula or assess that land — appraise it at a certain value and decide what the amount is that you want out of it. Because if you only get one bidder, the way you had just said, and he's low enough, then that means that you know what you want for that land. So why don't you say how you determine the amount or price of that land, and what you expect to get out of it? Do you expect to get what it was valued at when it was purchased? Do you expect to get current market value out of it or what? Say there is only one bid. How were you going to establish that formula?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — For lessees, Mr. Chairman, there is no formula. We set a price and if they want it, they buy it, because that's the way it works for the tenant for unoccupied land that is put out for tender, and you obviously didn't understand what I said earlier. In the absence of any formula, if one bid came in that was 25 per cent of fair market value — appraised value — I don't think we would be responsible trustees of the taxpayers' dollar if we sold it. Thus, we have set a formula that establishes a reserve.

Now you said yourself that you had a great deal of difficulty figuring out the formula. Well I hope so, because we don't want the other guys to figure it out either, or they will somehow work around the system and get us in the position where we are not responsible trustees of the taxpayers' dollars. And so we're not going to give you the formula and that's the long and the short of it.

MR. KOSKIE: — Mr. Minister, you indicated that you have established a formula. Surely the basis of what you set the value of that land at, with your formula, is reasonable. And surely that is meeting, being responsible as you indicate, in respect to the taxpayer, so what on earth is wrong with individuals who are bidding when you in fact, by your very formula, indicate that that is being responsible?

AN HON. MEMBER: — You have a reserve bid.

MR. KOSKIE: — The reserve bid . . . You know, you're just not making a lot of sense here. And so what I want to know is: what factors go into your formula?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — I've already said that. I've already . . . It's a matter of record, but I'll go through it again. The formula has factors in the formula: the appraised value . . . Are you listening? . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . You can fool some of the people but you can't fool us. The factors in the formula are a relationship between the top tenders and the appraised value, fair market value, and I'm not going to give you how the formula functions. Those are the factors in the formula.

MR. KOSKIE: — In the instance where it's not up for public tender, where a father has sold land to the land bank and the right of the son to purchase back, I want to ask you whether you use the same basic approach in setting the amount that is required. Now if you're being reasonable and you're looking after the welfare of the taxpayers, it seems to me that you've got to be reasonable in the same way. In other words, those who are tendering should have a similar right to get the land, based on your formula, at a reasonable price, as should the individual, the son whose father has sold to the land bank. What is the differentiation between the two?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Our policy, Mr. Chairman, is that the tenant always has the right to buy and you have to set a price. Now if you want to open up a tendering process so that the folks outside can compete with the tenant for the land that we have given him first right on, you can argue that, but we don't see it that way. We think that the

tenant should have first right to buy the land or keep the lease, whichever he chooses, and the land will be sold at fair market value. And the appraisal is done the same way as the appraisal would be done for any other Crown land.

MR. KOSKIE: — What factors go in the formula where it's a son purchasing back land that has been sold . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . You've got to have a way of setting the value. How do you set the value that you ask of the tenant?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Now, I'm going to take you through this slowly. When a tenant is buying Crown land, he's the only one in the game because he has the choice. He can either buy or lease. So we do an appraisal. An appraisal is done on the basis of comparables in the area. Okay? That's the end of it. We set the price on the basis of that appraisal. He says, 'Yes, I will take it,' or 'No, I won't. I will continue to lease.' Now we go to the guy who was bidding on Crown land or unoccupied Crown or whatever, but going through the tendering process. We will do the appraisal the same way. And it becomes one of the factors in the formula. In addition to the top tenders, they become one of the factors in the formula, and those factors in that formula set to reserve bids for tendered land. But they have nothing to do with occupied land currently held by a tenant or a lease-holder.

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Minister, I have a copy of a form letter here before me where it says:

The following is the commission's evaluation of your leased land at the time you applied to purchase and the balance owing of any improvements of purchase agreement.

And you have the prices set out in the quarters of land. Are you saying that these prices were taken as a basis of the land that was sold in that area?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — I don't know. I haven't got the letter and I don't know the land. But what the procedure is in the department . . . The appraisal is done on the basis of comparables in the area.

MR. ENGEL: — How large an area do you take into . . . Do you consider the province the area? How large an area do you go?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — You know, I'm not an appraiser and we have lots of appraisers in the province and in the department, and they're professionals in what they do. I suppose it would depend to a large extent how many sales have taken place in the area, and if they can get a good read on the next three quarter sections of land, probably they wouldn't look beyond that. If it takes six or eight or a township to get a read as to what the activity is doing in that particular area, I suppose they would go for a township or an RM or whatever. I simply don't know, and the staff that are sitting beside me aren't appraisers.

MR. ENGEL: — I don't know if the minister wants me to dig out the *Hansard* from when we began the estimates on Friday. But if you'd allow me to quote you back — and it won't be verbatim; it'll be paraphrased.

You suggested that the land in your area, or in northern Saskatchewan, or . . . You named Gravelbourg or Assiniboia, some place in my area, and you named about four places, would all be different values. So do you take that into account when your staff are — co-ordinator of appraisal services or whoever is signing it — do you take that into

account when you make an appraisal?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Well, of course. If there was an appraisal being done on a quarter section in Gravelbourg, they certainly wouldn't be interested in a quarter section at Carievale. It is in the immediate area that they do their comparables. And if land in your country at 2,500 or \$3,000 assessment is moving at \$60,000, \$70,000 for agricultural purposes, where down in my corner the same kind of land is moving for \$50,000. They're not interested in that; they're interested in the immediate area. And, you know, I'm not an appraiser, but that's how I understand it works.

MR. ENGEL: — This is the point I'm trying to make, Mr. Minister. Does it in fact work like that? This is why I was asking how large a district or how far out will you go to make that assessment. Because the complaints that I've received . . . And one of them was from my neighbour to the east of me, the minister of rural affairs' riding, and this is one from a piece north of my place. And the complaints are that they feel that those assessments were maybe down in my area, and they're drawing it to my attention. I have copies here of documents of his appraisal he did in '72; I have copies of documents of the tax notices that were in his assessment and the valuation day plus his farm records, and he documents fairly succinctly that you maybe took too large an area into account when you did that appraisal.

The next step, I suppose, Mr. Minister, would be about what multiple of the formula have you been using in the various districts. Have you established that you'd go so many times the assessment, or how do you determine what the appraisal will be?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — I've just described it to you. Now this is either the third or the fourth time. It is based on comparables in as close an area as possible. If there's no activity in the area, and I don't know if there's any area in the province like that, they would have to go to some other method. But to my knowledge, it's all done based on comparables of activity in the immediate area.

MR. ENGEL: — Well, I can tell the minister that in my area, credit union loans officers, and different ones I've contacted over the week-end, tell me that land sells for as high as 45, 48, 49 times the assessment. Now I know that if you go into Pelly, for example, in the Pelly riding, I'm sure land wouldn't sell anywhere near that times assessment; 22, 23 times might be the going rate. So in a situation like I have before me here, would you say that in an area where land normally sells for 20 times the assessment, that that in general average would be a good ball-park figure that the person could use if he's planning on buying land from . . . Crown land from the government. Could he use average figures like that?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — If it sells for 20 times the assessment in Pelly, that has absolutely no bearing on what it's going to sell for in Gravelbourg or Shaunavon — none whatsoever. If it's selling for 20 times the assessment in Pelly, and that is established on this comparable basis we're talking about, that's exactly what the assessor will come up with: on a comparable basis, this land should sell for 20 times the assessment, or whatever. Other comparables . . . you know, no one is infallible, not even me. No one is infallible, and from time to time there may be an oversight in the immediate area when the appraisal is done as it relates to comparables. So, if you have knowledge of a parcel that they have moved that may alter the comparable, you know, just bring it in and they will take another look at it.

In addition to that, it's my understanding that no appraisal over 90 days old will be used. So, you know, any new activity, or up and down in the market, can't properly be reflected in an old appraisal. So any appraisal over 90 days old won't be used.

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Minister, this person here, whose form I have before me, argues that there hasn't been any land turned hands in their RM, and from some surrounding ones where he's been checking it, he's never found one that went over 20 times the assessment and yet his numbers here are all well into the \$90,000 a quarter range. And this just happens to be one from close to that area up there where normally land was selling for less. So this is why I was trying to get you to say that.

I appreciate that concern, because the arguments I have are saying that if this were down in Gravelbourg, it'd be fine — 95,000 or 96,000 and 91,000 a quarter is about what you could expect to get for a quarter of land down in our area today, because land has dropped considerably in price. But when you take that 300, 400 miles from there, I think what you're saying is really true, and that's another story and place. So, if what you're saying is true — that they can come back in and request another appraisal, you would have some people reappraise that . . .

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — I'm sure you don't want to debate the specifics of this case here. If you want to drop it into my office or bring it up and visit with me on it, if there is some concern on this particular case, I don't mind following it through and getting to the bottom of it.

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Minister, do you still have staff around that you call land bank managers and land bank people? Do you still call them that?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — As of April 1st it was stricken from our vocabulary.

MR. ENGEL: — This comes off a quote, March 28th is close to it. It says, 'Please contact your land bank district manager should you require further information.' He received the letter April 3rd and he wondered where he should go with this paper and he brought it to me because the land bank people weren't there any more so I thought I'd raise that one. It was postmarked March 28th.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — I think if you'll check with him you'll find that he also got a letter saying that as of April 1st any land bank queries would be handled by lands branch.

MR. KOSKIE: — When an individual lessee is wanting to purchase land, you indicated that you used the appraised value of it, the comparable selling price in the area. What I want to know is whether or not, if the individual is not satisfied with the price set, is there a formal method of appeal whereby he can actually proceed with an appeal?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — There is no appeal process as such but if he can show where comparables in the area weren't used in the appraisal that may have an influence on the appraised value, we would be pleased to take a look at it.

MR. KOSKIE: — Why wouldn't you set up, as a safety net, an appeal procedure in a formal way? Rather than having to run to you and depending on his political leanings . . . I suppose whether he'll get a hearing or not a hearing depends on whether he's a Tory or a New Democrat. And as a consequence what I'm saying is that a normal, proper way of dealing with it is to set up a formal structure. You're always indicating that you're

going to be protecting the public as much as possible and so I ask you why you don't set up a formal mechanism whereby an individual who wishes to purchase back some land bank land can in fact have a formal procedure.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Well, the only comparables not used in setting the appraised value are those that might be father to son or non-arm's-length transactions. And you understand that. And as it relates to the appeal process that you talk about, surely we've got to have confidence in the professionals, who are a self-policing body, a self . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Oh well, we don't have confidence in the lawyers so we go to the Saskatchewan bar and say, 'Look, we don't think this guy looked after us properly and the Saskatchewan bar will discipline him. If we don't have confidence in the appraisers we go to the institute of Canadian appraisers, or whatever they call themselves, and they'll place them. But, aside from all that, aside from all that, if anyone can come in and show me that on this particular appraisal — and I don't care if he's Joe Stalin's nephew, as my colleague said — at least we're prepared to take a look at them. I can remember beatin' on the former minister's door til the cows come home, and couldn't even get an answer.

MR. KOSKIE: — I'm sure that the minister will have good intentions of looking at these, but you know, to get to the really basic structure of society, precisely what he says is the opposite, in fact, in society. I mean, that's the very reason we have courts of appeal. We know we have respect for lawyers representing us — and why shouldn't we? — and we have respect for lawyers representing us — and why shouldn't we? — and we have respect in the judges, but we still have the right of appeal. And certainly here where an individual . . . There can be a considerable amount of fluctuation in land prices, and it just seems to me that the minister should really consider setting up a formal appeal method for the individual has a process, because the way . . . What you're saying is that you just have to depend upon . . . In fact, what if anyone that I have who is intending to buy farmland and gets a price, and he's not satisfied, you know, what is your recommendation? What should he do if he's not satisfied? You're saying he has no formal right of appeal, so then he's therefore, up to the argument with you, rather than anyone independent.

Obviously you have fixed it, or your professional staff have fixed it, and I'm going to come in and plead with that professional staff which you say never makes an error, and which we should depend upon, and I've got to come in and convince them that they're wrong and they have to admit to me that they're wrong. I mean, this is what you're saying.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I chuckle when I listen to this argument because it's exactly how it was handled under the previous administration, when it was not for sale. You had no appeal board for sales, and if you think you did, you're loonier than a March hare. I have considered your proposal and I have rejected it. If, for instance, I was buying a quarter of land from you, and you had an appraisal, and I said, 'Well, that's a way too high,' I have a choice; I don't have to buy it. Likewise here — they have a choice; they don't have to buy it, and they have the additional luxury of being able to continue to lease, for it goes up to age 65 with the option of transferring to their kin or their next of kin. So, I don't share the same kind of concern. In addition, if it's wildly out of line, and if they don't trust me or my professionals that you've cast aspersions on — or the professionals that you've cast aspersions on — they can get an independent appraisal and bring that in to me.

MR. KOSKIE: — You know, I think that in respect to the land bank land and the lessees, there's a significant difference. They certainly had a contract under the land bank which

was honoured by the previous government. And I want to say that under this government that I don't think that that contract would be honoured. In fact, you repealed it and you did away with any legal rights that they had pursuant to that contract.

And I want to say that the second thing that you're going to be doing is upping the rent and forcing them into purchasing, and at the same time no appeal. So there's a sizeable difference in respect to the way in which the operation was previously, and the need for the appeal, as compared with the present administration.

The other thing is that when there are tenders . . . I want to come back to, Mr. Minister, and I find a very unique situation because you indicate that if a piece of land is tendered, then apparently what you do is open up the tenders and decide if the right fellow is at the top and whether you're going to amend your formula in order to allow that particular person . . . because obviously you won't make public what the format is. And it just seems to me that it leads to a lot of abuses in selectivity of who's going to get that parcel of land.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Okay, the bids come to a post-office box. They are taken from the post-office box to a lawyer's office — those reputable lawyers of which the hon. member is a member of that honourable profession — at which time they are opened and the bids recorded.

MR. KOSKIE: — I would like to ask also, is when it's taken to this . . . Are you still looking for an answer? You must be. You indicate that these tenders are taken to a law firm and opened. I want to know whether or not the individuals can be present when the tenders are opened.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Our man, Mr. Webster, who's responsible for the program, insisted that staff from the department be present when they're opened, and I really don't know how to tell you this, but that reputable firm that handles this particular transaction is the noted firm of Griffin Beke & Thorson.

MR. KOSKIE: — I have a lot more faith now but I'm still not convinced of the procedure. What I would like to ask you is, under the normal tendering basis, those who put in the tender are normally able to attend at the opening of the tenders. I ask you, why have you departed from that practice?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — I guess it's simply logistics, and we're dealing with hundreds and hundreds of people in these tenders . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . How many bid on each one? I don't know, but that's a short answer. It's simply one of logistics, and again, I have confidence in the staff and have confidence in the legal firm, and you don't know how hard it is for me to say that, but there you have it.

MR. KOSKIE: — After this honourable law firm opens the tenders, and you have some staff there that record them, what is the procedure that is followed thereafter in determining whether the tender is accepted?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Okay. At the opening in this law office the formula is applied and determination is made then whether to accept or reject any bid. The only variance from that particular procedure would be in the event of a tie bid, or in the event of — as has happened. I understand — a mix-up in the legal description of the land.

MR. KOSKIE: — What happens when there's a tie bid?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — The tied bids were given a chance to resubmit a new bid, and the highest of the two got the land.

MR. KOSKIE: — Is all of this work in determination of who is the successful tender completed at the law firm? Or is it the tenders merely opened and recorded and then taken back to the due process to apply the formula?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Okay. The last instance, the lawyer came to the office of Mr. Webster with the tenders, at which time they were opened and recorded and the formula applied. And the final result was then returned to the lawyer's office, as I understand it. He was advised of the final result. Well, I'm pleased.

MR. LUSNEY: — Mr. Minister, it's quite obvious from some of the answers we've been getting that the minister makes the final decision eventually on some of that land if he feels that he wants to make that decision. He leaves it quite open, because we don't have a formula that they use. They open the bids, they look at them, and then decide who's going to get them and at what price.

Out of the land that has been sold, Mr. Minister, could you provide me with the description of the land, the number of tenders that were submitted or bids that were submitted on that land, who received the land, who eventually purchased that land, and at what price?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — My friend and colleague from Morse constituency just answered the question. I'm not prepared to give you that information because . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . well, because I'm not sure that those who submitted the tender would want me to give it to you. But if you want to get it, you can go to the land titles office and get it and if you're hurting, I'll give you the 50 cents if it's that important to you.

MR. LUSNEY: — Mr. Minister, there are 69 parcels that have been sold. This is public land at this point. The public had paid for it. Surely you are not saying that the public does not have the right to ask what they received for that land at this time.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — I told you previously that the average price across the province was in the neighbourhood of \$350 an acre and you bet the public has a right to know, and I just told you how to get the information. You get it from the land titles office.

MR. LUSNEY: — Well, Mr. Minister, we are here in agricultural estimates dealing with land bank land. You are the minister responsible. You are the one that is selling that land. You mean to say that you are telling me that if I want to find out how much the public received for the land that you have sold, I have to go and search land titles to find out what it was sold for, who bought it, and how many tenders there were? You, as a government, are putting out this land for tender. You have the responsibility to provide us with that information. Why don't you provide us with that information?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — I sense we're going to go around this a few times before it finally registers. But what I said was: I'm not sure that the folks who bid on the land want me to tell you what they bid on the land. And if you want . . . (inaudible interjection) . . .

Not true. Every parcel was sold. I'll give you that. I'm not giving you the . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: — Every parcel that was bought, was it public knowledge as well?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Well, you know, we've got the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg telling us that every parcel that was bought was public knowledge as well. I think likely it was. The legal description was published in the annual report, and I went down to the land titles office and paid my 50 cents to find out how much it was sold for. And that's exactly how it was. And you can't find me an annual report that tells what the land sold for, parcel by parcel. I challenge you to find it. And we're prepared to give you the information as to what land is sold and if you want to search it out, fill your boots.

MR. LUSNEY: — Okay, Mr. Minister, I'd like you to provide me with the description of the parcels that were sold, how many tenders there were on those parcels, and I know you won't give me the prices of them or the figures, so at least give me the number of tenders on each parcel. The price, would you provide us with . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, you won't provide us. You said you won't provide us with the final price, selling price, right? It seems a little unreasonable that we have to go and search for the price of that land, but will you at least assure us that you will provide us with the legal description of the land and how many tenders or how many bids there were on each parcel?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Okay, can I provide you with the legals of each parcel, the number of bids, tomorrow?

AN HON. MEMBER: — In writing in the future. We don't need that tonight.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Okay . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No, you can get that from land titles.

MR. ENGEL: — If I could just have a follow-up on that as well. Can you tell me, in each case, did the highest bidder get the land?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — In every instance where the land was sold, it was sold to the highest bidder.

MR. LUSNEY: — Mr. Minister, of the parcels that you say were not sold — there is some 50 per cent of the tendered parcels that were not sold apparently, from your statement here just a short while ago — what happens to those parcels of land? If they were parcels that lessees had been on and for whatever reason they have been tendered, who is going to work them for the year 1983?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Okay. They're permitted for one year, and then they'll be reposted for the following year.

MR. LUSNEY: — Could you also provide me with the legal description of the lands that were refused this year, that have not been sold?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — No problem . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . If it's important to you, we'll give you the number of tenders and the legals for all land that was not sold.

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Minister, according to the figures I have from the information I was

reading from earlier, the suggestion was made that you don't have a realistic approach to what land is selling for in some areas, and the price of land is coming down in some places. I think the department isn't in tune with the squeeze, like I quoted from the article that was written by the vice-president of Sask Wheat Pool. The pressure is on these farmers and some of them really feel a pinch and in some areas it's worse than others, so they were likely bidding quite a bit cheaper than your staff or your appraisers maybe felt it should be going. So I think it's important to know how many people bid on each parcel of land that was refused, and could you possibly have put an aggregate price in there saying that so much an acre was a minimum that you would have accepted in each case, and what the bids were?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — No, I won't tell you what I would have accepted because I might as well give you the formula. I've already told you you're not getting that. But just for the member's information, statistics show that on average in Saskatchewan the price of land went up last year. The average price of land went up. There are areas, no doubt, where it's gone down and it's gone down considerably, and there are other areas where it's gone up. But I'm sure that the department people are staying abreast of it to a great extent, and any of those — as we've talked about — that you feel are out of line and can show different comparables, we're prepared to look at them.

MR. ENGEL: — Just one further comment on that, Mr. Minister, if you're saying that the price of land went up, possibly in the areas where land was still selling, but the land likely where they were asking for more just wasn't moving and they were offering less, so consequently it's pretty hard to determine just where the price of land is if it isn't selling. I know some repossessed land in my area that originally sold for 230,000. The fellow this year was asking 180 and couldn't get it and it was repossessed from the year before at 230. So it's an indication that it was too high at 230 or it wouldn't have been up for sale again the following year. But I think a review of that would be quite revealing.

Can the minister tell me . . . On the *Estimates*, on page 122, you indicate that there's about \$20,600,000 is going to be coming in on agricultural lands, revenue of land sales, and land leases from lands branch. Can you tell me what you did to arrive at those numbers? There's no estimates there for '81 or '82. They're blank in both cases. Can you superinject a number into those two years, what the total revenue would have been from land that's out for lease from both land bank and Crown land, so we could determine how that \$7 million, for example, compares with the previous years? Do you follow what I'm saying?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Okay, the 13 million you're looking at there, without . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Okay, just an approximation — it would have been about 4 million in '82-'83. Okay?

MR. ENGEL: — In '81?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Don't have it.

MR. ENGEL: — No way of guessing?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — I won't guess. I'll get it for you. They expect it'd be in that neighbourhood as well. Land . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The next one is 7 million, would be about the same in the previous year. That's lease payments on Crown land.

MR. ENGEL: — By a statement you've made, the lease will stay the same.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Approximately the same in the previous year.

MR. ENGEL: — That is quite revealing, Mr. Minister. It would be nice to get that number fairly accurately. If you could add up how money you received out of the lands branch last year, plus how much you received from land bank, and give me that number, I wouldn't mind being fairly accurate on the '82-83 year. Rather than an approximation, I'd like it within a couple of hundred thousand, one way or the other.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — WE just closed the books on April 1, and we haven't got the actuals. But if you'll be patient, the moment we get them we'll give them to you.

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Minister, the point I'm trying to make is that you had very little faith in your new program, and if the number was the same from the year before, that meant you didn't sell a heck of a lot of land or Crown land. If you expect the same revenue on leasing for this year as you had for last year. I was wondering how you went about estimating what that 7.3 million was. If you're taking the exact same numbers you had last year, that means you have as much land out for rent as you had the year before. So, I was just wondering what percentage less, and how much more you sold. Because you raised the sales by 9 million, so \$9 million less land should give you quite a lot less revenue.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Firstly, that's just lands branch. We're not talking about land bank or what was administered under land bank.

MR. ENGEL: — Can the minister tell me how much Crown land was actually sold, or how much you estimate to be sold to arrive at that \$13 million?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — We can do it through a calculation of the average of 350 an acre, into this total. But, if you want to be more precise than that, we'll have to send it to you.

MR. ENGEL: — Okay. I think if the minister would send me some of these answers, I'd appreciate having it fairly accurate, because I don't believe . . . The average might be \$350 an acre for Crown land, but a lot of the land is worth a lot less than that.

Now, there's another number there on page 137 — proceeds from the sale of agricultural land. How come that's a different category? That's be the land I'd expect would sell for \$350 an acre — if it's an agricultural land. Whereas land sales over here, for 13 million, might be Crown land. I'm not sure.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Okay, anything that comes in from the sales of Crown land — land bank land that is — it goes to two places. One, to repay the loan, and the balance goes into revenue. And 3.6 is repayment of the loan.

MR. ENGEL: — You'll give me some documentation of how many acres you sold or how many quarter sections or parcels. That'll be the same question as the member from Pelly asked, so you'll include all three areas so we know roughly how much is involved, and the revenue received from it.

Another topic that I wish to pursue, Mr. Minister, and we've raised this a number of times in the question period: would the government consider a program similar to what

they had in Alberta — pull ahead with Alberta purple? And since 1974 a benefit for Alberta farmers — 1974, 5 cents a gallon; 1975, 8 cents; 1978, 12 cents; 1982, 31.8 cents a gallon.

Mr. Minister, do you realize what kind of a shot in the arm . . . If you talk about wanting to help farmers . . . You were telling how that your budget is up by 20-some per cent — 20.9 to be exact. And we kind of pointed out, in the first day we were together here, that all that money is set up for programs where the farmers are asked to borrow more money and expected to dig in a little deeper to spend to get some involvement in that program. Here's a program where the farmers will get back 31.8 cents a gallon. Have you considered a program like that in light of the cost-price squeeze the farmers are facing today? Has your government looked at something like this that would really help, like your colleagues are doing in Alberta?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — We've given it a lot of thought, Mr. Chairman, and, quite frankly, I'm a little puzzled as to why the members opposite would be heaping so much praise on those nasty Tories to the west, because I can remember when we were sitting over there urging you to do similar things, you weren't . . . they weren't, those suggestions weren't that well received and I understand now part of the reason as to why those suggestions weren't so well received and it has to do, I think, primarily with some of the programs that were implemented by the previous administration that are costing us considerably. One example is, Mr. Chairman, your land bank program. Your land bank program is generating about \$12.8 million in lease revenue this year and there is about 19.8 million in interest payments due on that land. So I guess what I am saying, Mr. Speaker, is the previous administration got into some rather costly programs and not very effective programs that have limited our flexibility as it relates to bringing in new programs.

Sure, I guess part of the problem is I don't have that much clout in cabinet and when I go in and argue for these things, I lose out to Health and Social Services and other programs that we have to have in place.

I will continue to argue for them and if and when we can find the money, we will give the farming community every possible break we can.

MR. ENGEL: — You gave them one big break when you took away the \$68 million advantage they had and you in your wisdom saw fit to give the purple gas to truckers. And I've gone through that truckers story with you before. A trucking firm doesn't consider . . . An international trucking firm — CP for example, is one of the largest. They don't consider their trucks to be an efficient operation unless they make 200,000 miles a year. Now it doesn't take you very long to determine how much money that truck is saving his company with the gas break you gave, you sought to give to the truckers. Now when you passed your fuel rebate bill in this legislature, we urged you: well, okay, if you want to make it for the general taxpayer of Saskatchewan, fine, but at least leave the international truckers out of it. Why give CP \$12,000 or \$15,000 for every truck they own and are running in Saskatchewan? You had lots of money for them. You have money for CPR and their trucking subsidiary to give them \$12,000 a truck and deny that you've done that since you're in office — deny that you've done that, Mr. Minister.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — I'm sure that there's not a farmer in Saskatchewan that would ask us to put the gas tax back on. That was imposed by the previous government and you know, the logic of my friend from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg is escaping, I am sure, most people because when the truckers save, as you say, \$12,000 a year, that's

reflected in the rates when they are hauling the grain for the farmer, when they are hauling repairs out to the farmer, when they're bringing produce in and out, and there are a lot of truckers out there that do haul grain . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Oh, can I.

AN HON. MEMBER: — That was done before you got the job.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — No it wasn't. We've got lots of commercial truckers on the highways that make their living hauling grain. We've got lots of commercial truckers on the highway that make their living taking parts to rural Saskatchewan. And you can advance the argument one more time, if you like. It doesn't bother me at all. The fact it, you had a tax — a road tax, a sales tax, call it what you like — on gasoline. We removed it. I can honestly tell you I haven't had one farmer come in and ask me to put it back on, because he sees some benefit from it however little it might be. In a very special case I would argue in cabinet that if you want us to put it back on for you, for you individually, I will go and argue your case for you.

MR. ENGEL: — Well, thank you, Mr. Minister, but why not try it with CPR? I don't know how many hundred trucks they have running in Saskatchewan. But I know that they save \$12,000 a truck for every truck that's on the road. And you're trying to make an argument there. You could have reduced and left the gas tax off of farm trucks and trucks that are hauling farm commodities. But you are standing up in the House and purporting that you're the great saviour of agriculture in Saskatchewan.

You've cost the Saskatchewan farmers a \$68 million advantage. You took that advantage away from them. They are now paying exactly the same for their fuel to farm their land as I pay for construction equipment fuel if I'm running a construction job that's building roads, or if I'm hauling for CP Express and I can save \$12,000 a year. But the farmer's fuel bill is up to \$1,200 a quarter of land and you can slice it how you want. In a straight grain-farming operation you have not helped them at all. His farm fuel bill is up there, and to a price where it's one of the major contributors to farmers having trouble staying in business because of not having this program in place.

And my concern is that you would consider this program because of the members that were making that kind of commitment during the election campaign. I've shown literature in this House where the member, the minister of rural affairs run half-page ads saying that they're going to introduce a purple gas or a tax rebate program for the farm fuels. When you were out campaigning and saying that farmers are going to save 40 cents a gallon, they thought that applied to their diesel tractors — they really did. And they are disappointed that you don't have in a program . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Because Alberta has a program in place. When you talk 30-some cents, that's exactly what Alberta is giving their farmers back. And they thought they were going to get the same thing in Saskatchewan.

So I would urge on you one more time: is it costing you too much or have you considered modifying the program or what are you planning on doing?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Well, we've argued and argued and argued with the feds to try and remove their sales tax on energy and any primary production area. We've done that, not without a great deal of success, but we're still working at it, and I suppose the member opposite is arguing that Alberta should put a road tax on for their truckers to haul parts to the farmers, and parts to the livestock producers, etc., etc. . . . (inaudible)

interjection) . . .

And you know, the Wood River School Division, the school buses save through the elimination of the gas tax. The farmer saves through the elimination of the gas tax. The consumers save through the elimination of the gas tax, and as I said earlier, I would love to implement a program similar to Alberta's and we've given it some serious consideration. It is not in the budget for this year, and unfortunately, it will not be in the budget for this year.

MR. ENGEL: — Well, I appreciate the minister saying he's going to give some serious consideration to it. If you're moving on that one, I'm sure the farmers will appreciate some help there. Last day when we got into the estimates, the original question and the initial question I was asking you, and I looked at your budget documents that indicated the net farm income and I suggested that's a number your staff should have. Have you come up with a number in projection what the net farm income might be for this coming year?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Total net farm income for 1982 is projected to be — was estimated at 1,275,100,000; '81, 1.668.

MR. ENGEL: — Have your agricultural economists taken a look at the projected prices for grain in this coming year, and quota deliveries and average crop yields, and come up with a projection of what it might be for this coming year?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — I don't know if they've done it or not. If they have, we'll get it to you from the stats section. The only thing we would be projecting, of course, is what the market might do, because it's difficult to project yield, except on an average basis over 10 years or five years or whatever. But I don't know if the calculation has been done, and if it has we'll forward it to you.

MR. ENGEL: — When you're forwarding that and looking at it, you might take into account what an economist advises me, and he suggested it could be as low as \$500 million. And I was wondering if that's close to accurate or . . . With the profit margin as close as it was, then the announcement slashing the price of grain by just a little bit makes the difference whether our farmers will break even or lose some money. I was just wondering if that's a fairly accurate assessment that it's possible it could be as low as \$500 million net this coming year.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Gross income is projected to be down 160 million for '83. And there are a lot of things that could play with the margins, including commodity price, including the outcome of Crow, and a whole bunch of those variables. So, it's very difficult to come up with a projection for net at this time with all the volatility going on in Ottawa.

MR. ENGEL: — The '83 figure, even if Pepin gets his way and changes the Crow, will only affect from July down, and the bulk of the sales will be what were made from January to July, so that that will have about the same impact as the reduction in the price of grain would. But will the minister concede that the increase, the 22 or 28 per cent increase in the cost of farmers' fuels — repairs gone up, new equipment gone up — will you concede that if your gross is down by 160 million it's conceivable that his costs will be up at least by 22 or 23 per cent?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — These figures that I'm giving you are StatsCanada figures,

okay? And they are predicting a slight decrease in operating and appreciation charges, so by their speculation, at least, they're a little more optimistic than you and I are.

MR. ENGEL: — I personally hope they're right, but I feel that things back on the farm look fairly tough. And I was just wondering if you have some program in the back of your mind. I listened with regret to our Prime Minister's statement last night in Calgary, a news report of it, that Crow . . . Pepin's bill is going to go the way he has it. Tonight even on my way in, the little bit of radio that I could catch — and you're aware that we shouldn't be listening to a lot of commercial radio when you're flying — but on the way first reading and if they're starting that . . . (inaudible) . . . Have you any hope at all, that we might salvage something out of the Pepin plan as it stands now, or do you feel they'll go with it as is?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — I have no idea what might happen. They have announced, I understand, tonight, the closure will come. I believe on Thursday, on second reading, which will put it into committee. Okay, this afternoon (and I'll be making a ministerial statement on this tomorrow, if it's still deemed to be necessary), but, this afternoon I sent a letter to Ottawa asking them to get me and some officials on the agenda at the committee stage to pursue the battle and advance Saskatchewan's argument. And, I will, at this time, invite the hon. member to join me there, and in addition, it is my intention to take a representative group of the agricultural community to Ottawa, as well.

MR. ENGEL: — I think that's a good idea. Maybe there can be some changes made in committee. It's too bad if we can't stop that bill, but if they're going to exercise closure, do you see some other method of blocking it or something that could happen that a person could frustrate the bill to prevent it from passing, so it takes effect this year?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — I don't at this point. I don't, of course, claim to understand all the procedural nuances of the federal House. So, you know, I can't help you in that regard, but we are determined to continue the fight, to argue for the best possible deal we can get, recognizing that at this point, at least, based on the utterances of the Prime Minister, they're determined to proceed with the legislation.

MR. ENGEL: — Basically, the minister is conceding that maybe we had a valid point when our caucus was urging you and trying to get you off the fence, way back last year already, and saying, 'Let's prevent this thing from happening.' Now, I hate to sound like we were a prophet of gloom and doom, but, by looking at Pepin's proposal, you've had copies available that indicated even before Gilson was hired as to what was going to be in the Gilson report, and Gilson came out exactly like he was instructed to do. Pepin's bill is still in the same track, and basically they're all set to give their railways a sweetheart deal at the price of western Canada. And, I think the minister should make an apology to the people of Saskatchewan for waiting and promising he'd go to the wall and still sneaking a little speech over her and there and saying, 'Maybe the farmers are prepared to pay a little more.' And I think you made a grave error in judgement, Mr. Minister, and you should have been on top of this thing since last February. Because I feel that now all we've got is a couple of weeks on our hands and we'll see something happening as drastically as the bill is. If you've got some magic solution in your pocket, you'd better pull it out now, because I'm afraid your chances are gone.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Well, Mr. Chairman I'll make no apology for the efforts of this government to advance the arguments on behalf of the producers of Saskatchewan.

And anything that has been done to date, Mr. Chairman, anything that has been done to date to delay or try and reason, or get some sanity to prevail in Ottawa, has been done by this government. And we've worked hard to do that. And I make no apology, Mr. Chairman, for the efforts of this government on behalf of the agricultural community in Saskatchewan. And we intend to continue that fight. We intend to continue that fight with everything we've got.

We are at this very moment, as I've told you earlier, got a letter off to Ottawa by air express or whatever, to get on the committee agenda. With closure, that's the only vehicle left to us now, is committee. We intend to pursue it with everything we've got, and I've just invited the hon. member to attend with me, and I hope that he doesn't give me cause to pull the invitation.

MR. ENGEL: — Well, you can threaten me or use whatever cause you want, Mr. Minister, but all I'm saying is that when the thing was in the embryo stage, and when Pepin was making the initial announcements, the first announcement he came up and he said the only two organizations in Saskatchewan that are against the plan — and I read this to you from an original cabinet document — and it was said was the Government of Saskatchewan and the farmer's union. The next document that went to cabinet was all we had left to fight in Saskatchewan was the farmers union. They're the only ones that are vigorous. The government is talking a little story, but they're really not a big obstacle in the way. And so in the dying moments of the battle, you came on strong, and that was okay. I liked your ad. It was good; it was good. It got the payment to go to the railways, maybe, instead of the farmers. But that's all that's changed. That's all that's changed.

And I feel if you would have taken the same stance as you promised the electorate of Saskatchewan before the April election; we'll stand shoulder to shoulder with the NDP. Well, your shoulder was way down there for a long time. It took you from April right down till this past harvest till you finally got off your fanny and did something and run an ad. That isn't doing an awful lot for the farmers in Saskatchewan. And I'm afraid, Mr. Minister, they're going to remember that. They're going to remember that.

Now I'm saying, pull all the stops between now and when the election's done. I urged you that when the bill was first introduced. I urge you to pull the stops and go. And I wonder — besides the letter, that's great. You send them a letter and you ask to appear before the committee. But there hasn't been an awful lot of noise made publicly by you or your staff or your people from Transport Saskatchewan, from the transportation agency, to really put up a battle like they should. And I think from that point of view, their costs are going to go up and the farmers are in . . . That vice that Garf Stevenson was talking about is tightening up a little tighter on the farmers. And if they lose the Crow battle, like your colleague from Morse mentioned, it's another item we'll have to add to that list of what the net farm income is going to be.

But it's not as bad this year. This year isn't going to be that severe. But I hate to think what's going to happen when it's 10 times Crow. I hate to think what's going to happen to my young nephews that are out trying to make a go of it, or the young fellows around the country. I'll be able to survive; I'm quite sure I will. But I don't know what'll happen to the younger ones. And if I don't survive and you don't survive there's going to be a very few farmers in Saskatchewan.

Then maybe the Premier will be right on the prediction he made 20 or 15 years ago that

20 per cent of the farmers can do it in Saskatchewan. They're not going to be able to 'can', they'll have to do it, because I'm afraid they're in big trouble. If this is all you've got for a program in agriculture, where the guys are supposed to borrow more and spend more to get any help from that 20 per cent increase . . . I haven't seen a program yet. You don't want to help them with their costs, which is the greatest one is the farm fuel. You don't want to help them with anything that's money in their pocket. You say that will happen if they spend more. All you're going to do is trap them into an early retirement if they're going to borrow and spend still more money, Mr. Minister.

I can't see any programs in here. And I've got pages of questions, but I can't see any programs in here that indicate that there's going to be some immediate help from your government in this serious time.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I wasn't going to get into this kind of debate, but since the hon. member has led with his chin I'll try to accommodate him.

You see, Mr. Speaker, this Crow debate wouldn't even be going on now had him and his bed partners in Ottawa — his colleagues, the Broadbent red rump of the Liberal Party — had they not joined forces with the Liberal Party to tear down a government that was truly representative of Canada and that had as its minister of transportation the best minister of transportation in the history of Canada, Don Mazankowski. But I can't speak for Don Mazankowski, but if I could I would tell you that he would be opposing this bill with every fibre in his body. But I'm not speaking for him. I'll let him tell you that himself.

But what I'm telling you, Mr. Chairman, is that if — if — we lose this Crow battle it should properly hang on the shoulders of members opposite, along with their colleagues in Ottawa, when they crawled into bed with the federal Liberals and ripped that truly national government out of Ottawa. And to that, Mr. Speaker, they should, indeed, hang their heads in shame.

Now, for all of the rhetoric of the member opposite, I still won't withdraw the invitation. You can come down, you can advance your arguments. I hope you do. I hope you do because I think . . .

But I do want to go back to one comment that you raised about the last campaign, when you said that we promised the people of Saskatchewan that we would walk shoulder to shoulder with the NDP. I don't think anybody in Saskatchewan would believe I ever said that, because at no time, at no time would I ever stand shoulder to shoulder with the NDP. I'm inviting you to come and stand shoulder to shoulder with me . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, because you'll make me look good. I appreciate that.

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Minister, do you want to get into numbers of who's voting with who in Ottawa? Is that the debate you're really looking for? How many times in this session have the Conservatives voted with the Liberals in Ottawa? Where were 36 members of the Conservative Party when they lost the vote by 24 this last time around on the Crow issue? We could have even voted against having the thing introduced; in fact we could have had an election right now on the Crow issue. And I'm not so sure where Don Mazankowski stands on this Crow debate. We've been asking you about that. And you done your homework as far as getting some support in Ottawa to defeat the bill, or is this just a bunch of rhetoric?

You've been talking an awful long time about your little leader in Ottawa that was down

there with a minority and came out with a budget. When we were out with our rules committee, and we were out to visit Ottawa . . . I was in the finance committee when Mr. Bouey presented that original notion that they were going to change the interest rate to floating interest. And we talked about the members on the committee, and the majority that the Tory government had, and yet they were in a minority government. And just the way he governed, he tied the rope around his own neck, Mr. Minister. And you know, a few NDPers can't affect the electorate. If Clark was that good, and if that administration was so good, please tell this House once and for all, and let's lay this thing to rest, how come he didn't win the next election? How come he didn't win the next election? It wasn't our fault that he lost the election. We gave him a chance to get himself a majority. We thought he was going to get himself a 300-400 seat majority, and what happened? He got beat entirely.

So I think, Mr. Minister, some of the arguments you're advancing over the Crow, when your people were using exactly the same officials Pepin has now . . . They are putting into place a piece of legislation that your people in Ottawa are kind of hoping is out of the way before the next election so they won't have to deal with it. And that's the crux of the matter. I think if you could convince your colleagues, like I did mine . . . My colleagues are there fighting and pitching to try and prevent this bill from happening, and they'll fight it every line of the way, but they need the support of your colleagues. I'm saying this is one issue where we can stand up together shoulder to shoulder on. I don't mind standing beside you, even if it is bad news. But I don't mind standing beside you on the Crow debate. I've taken time to go with the member for Weyburn to meetings, and we've had some dandy meetings around the country and our one aim was: we can't let the Crow rate go. And I think on that note — on that note — let's hope we can get some results.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — I just wondered if you were ever going to wind down. I'm sorry. Obviously, you don't understand how Ottawa works. There's a thing called a majority government down there, and as I read that chronicle of truth and wisdom, the *Leader-Post*, it tells us that the reason the vote took place when it did was because it wouldn't have been sooner because the Liberals didn't have the numbers in the House to assure themselves a victory. So it wouldn't have mattered if there were 10 or 20 or 30 or 1,000 in opposition, the vote wasn't going to be called until the Liberals had their people there. That's point number one.

Point number two, if you've done such a terrific job in convincing your colleagues that they should be down there with every fibre of their bodies defending the Crow, can you explain to me why your colleague in Ottawa, the MP for Melville-Yorkton, was not there for the vote? And I don't mind; he may even have an excuse, and I'm sure that several of the members of the Tory opposition had legitimate excuses. And, you know, so you get up and you make a lot of noise, and you try and score a political point, and that's fine — do it if you will.

In any event, while I'm on my feet, I want to provide the member with an answer to a question he raised on Friday. And the question was: how many first-time farmers have been helped by the farm purchase program? And the answer: out of the first 849 farmers approved under the farm purchase program, 442, or 52 per cent, did not own land prior to their loan.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — There are now over 1,500 farmers under the program, and if

we can apply the same percentage, it gives us a figure of 780 first-time farmers assisted under the program to . . . (inaudible) . . . first-time land-owners . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Less than 1 per cent, we told you the other day, didn't we? Or maybe one-and-a-half — less than 2 per cent were land bank guys. So that's to May 6, 1983. Okay. What was the distribution of farm purchase program enrolment by FCC district? There are six districts, and out of the first 1,475 enrolments the distribution is as follows: Regina, 298; Swift Current, 325; Yorkton, 275; Saskatoon, 202; Prince Albert, 155; North Battleford, 220. And if it'll make it easier for you, I'll send this across.

MR. ENGEL: — I'm not ready to follow up on these numbers yet, but it seems to me that there are more large farmers in the Regina, Swift Current, and North Battleford district than there are in P.A. but I might be wrong there. You know, where there should be more land bank, you know, more farm purchase plan recipients, the reverse is true. And our fears were that it's a good program for a large farmer.

But I had another topic, and I'll just follow my notes here. I had another topic. I was going to go, and our time is fast going and I have quite a few questions I want to raise here tonight yet . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . In a few minutes. I have a few specific questions that I've prepared in advance and I'd like to get into some of these tonight.

One of the things that are pressuring farmers in a general theme is that the farmers are facing a squeeze. And one of the things that they're asking me about is, and particularly before we had this last shot of moisture — I'm not sure what that'll do to the grasshoppers; I hope it'll drown the little guys or freeze them out, one or the other — but the grasshopper infestation was pretty serious. And the predictions in some of the areas of the province, as I noted on a map, a pocket just north-east of Regina here is having some severe grasshopper infestation that I don't think ever had grasshoppers even in the '30s. And I see there's places all over the province where they're expecting to have some grasshoppers. Is the magnitude of this prediction still valid, or what are your people saying?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — There's no question that the projections are for pretty serious infestations but, having said that, my belief is that the latest snow certainly wouldn't have done the little devils any good. And, you know, we haven't gone back for a projection of infestation since that, but we will get to it, I suppose. And in addition we have inventories of chemical that we supply at cost and still distribute it through the pool system as it always has been.

MR. ENGEL: — This was my follow-up. Have you any special activities in place to take care of this increased infestation? And my fears were almost opposite down in our country. If their health and well-being isn't so good because of the cold weather, I'm not sure just what's that going to do. I'm not an expert on it. I talked to a couple of my ag reps this morning, and they're saying that a real late, delayed seeding would bring the crop at two inches instead of six when the multitude of grasshoppers are hatching, which could just contribute to the seriousness of the program.

So have you material on hand? Has the government done its homework to make sure that sufficient chemicals are around that should this infestation take place, we'll have chemicals available to control them?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Yes, we have one million dollars worth of inventory on hand.

That's estimated to be two years supply. I understand that that's been traditional levels maintained on hand.

MR. ENGEL: — There's one other concern that I have and I don't know how you can accept the responsibility of that as Minister of Agriculture, but . . . Normally, I've had more complaints from people farming alongside a fairly large road-allowance-type highway, and the Department of Highways were slow at spraying the grasshoppers in that area. Are you correlating your activities with the departments that those kind of right of ways, and CPR and CNR right of ways as well, would be controlled? Because the farmers can do a lot of spraying along the edge there, and if they keep moving in off that 150-foot-wide strip of grass, it makes for some frustrated farmers around. I was wondering if you can correlate your program with the other departments.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — My understanding is that it is the RMs' responsibility and if — and we're talking about roads now — they are the RMs' responsibility. And in addition, farmland privately held that is not properly taken care of, relative to the grasshopper problem, can be sprayed by the RM and billed to him.

MR. ENGEL: — I'm aware of the program where you're able to do the RM road allowances and the farmer's land that's left vacant. What I was concerned about would be land that's held by the government, i.e. Department of Highways is the first question. I have several areas here I want to look at.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Okay. I can't speak for Highways. But I understand that with prior permission, the RMS spray the Highways property and are then reimbursed by Highways. But that's only as I understand it, and may not be 100 per cent accurate.

MR. ENGEL: — Well, I know from past experience that that has been a sore spot, and I was kind of hoping that maybe you could put that one together. I know that's the case with charging the railways, but to collect from them has been a long, drawn-out process. And they're arguing when should you spray, and who should have sprayed, and so on. So I think you should tighten up, in light of what they're doing to us with the Crow rate especially. I think you should tighten up there.

And in the other areas, what about your lands branch . . . (inaudible) . . . land — your community pastures and the PFRA pastures and so on? Is there a program in place that you are not going to be a breeding spawn in those areas for grasshoppers?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — That's done by the department and we're all geared up and ready to go, and if there is a grasshopper problem, we'll be right on top of it.

MR. ENGEL: — There's one other area there, that I understand from the vote for '83-84 in grain car corporation will no longer pay interest on its loan from the heritage fund, or make its payments . . . (inaudible) . . . principal as this was done previously. Is this correct — grain car corporation?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Yes, it seemed to us that the reason that it was put in there in the first place was to inflate the size of Agriculture's budget. And we took the view that what was good for agricultural Saskatchewan was good for Saskatchewan. A public dollar is a public dollar, and taking it out of the left pocket to put it in the right pocket really served no useful purpose. So in the case of the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation, we have said that the \$9 million, or thereabouts, would not be paid to CIC this year, or for some foreseeable time.

MR. ENGEL: — What financial arrangement are you going to make with the grain car corporation? Are they going to be collecting some revenue? Is it anticipated that you'll be collecting \$9 million additional revenue, or what other financial arrangements are you going to be making with that? I think it's beyond a little rhetoric here, Mr. Minister. Let's get some answers.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Okay. The grain car corporation was a loan from the heritage fund to the grain car corporation. That payment came out of the Consolidated Fund back to the heritage fund. So, a public dollar. We took that view as it relates to the grain car corporation, and decided not to continue that way.

MR. ENGEL: — Well, is the heritage fund just going to show that much of a loss? Or how is that number going to be settled — \$500-plus million?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — We've simply the original terms of the loan were set by cabinet back in your day, and we as a cabinet revised the terms of that loan, and we've relaxed the repayment schedules so it doesn't show up in the blue book as a payment this year.

MR. ENGEL: — The financial arrangements are such that you've rewritten the loan for a couple of skipped payments, or is this what you're saying?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Okay, the loan is no longer interest bearing in the interest of agricultural Saskatchewan, and the principal is due on year 30.

MR. ENGEL: — Boy that's a fancy new way of bookkeeping. I wish my banker would decide that; I'd buy some land, maybe even some Crown land if it's available for sale. You can write off a 30-year loan just like that, and is it some manipulation to save showing that you have \$10 million less deficit? Is this what the minister is doing? Are you cooking the books? I can't understand that kind of financing, personally.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — We can. It was similar to the kind of financing you guys used to buy the potash mines. We've simply said that with in the interests of agricultural Saskatchewan, the loan to the grain car corporation is going to be interest free, and . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, because I'm arguing for agriculture, and I won this one, and that's number one. And number two, the principal payment will be due in year 30.

MR. ENGEL: — I think the minister is showing his true colours in arguing for the railway companies and he maybe considers that a joke. Those cars, and the minister knows full well, the agreement was that if the Crow rate goes, the railways want to use those cars, they pay some mileage on them, and they pay usage because they're getting money to haul the farmers' grain. Why should they pay for hauling the grain and give them the cars besides? So the formula was set up that you could raise some income off that. Now are you saying you're not only going to allow Pepin to charge the farmers more freight, but you're going to give them the cars interest free besides? Is this what the minister is telling me?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — You really do surprise me. I thought you had broken all the new ground there was to be broke, but quite simply, Mr. . . . I sure don't want to interrupt anything over there. Quite simply, Mr. Chairman, there has been no change in the agreement between grain car corporation, Canadian Wheat Board, and the railroads.

That contract is intact, and will be. The only change has been as it relates to the repayment schedule between grain car corporation, which in reality is the Consolidated Fund, and the heritage fund.

AN HON. MEMBER: — And what change is that now?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Well, what we've said was that the loan is now non-interest bearing; it's interest free, and the payment principal will become due on year 30.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister, the effect of that is that the heritage fund will lose the annual interest payments that it might otherwise have, and the heritage fund will lose the annual repayments that it might otherwise have. And, accordingly, the heritage fund will lose that money, and the Consolidated Fund will save the money, and it will be a way of cutting down your spending, and your deficit of course, and short-changing the heritage fund, at least to the extent that that money might be saved for future use.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — You could argue that. I would argue that what we've done is enhance the position of Agriculture in Saskatchewan, because now Agriculture doesn't include in its budget the payment to the heritage fund. And, you know, other Crowns under a previous administration had received interest-free loans from heritage fund, so I don't see how you could logically argue that an agricultural Crown couldn't have an interest-free loan.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Do you . . . The other Crowns that are receiving interest-free loans from the heritage fund, including Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan and Saskatchewan Mining Development Corporation, Saskoil, and CIC — all, at least potentially, can pay a dividend, and the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan, of course, has paid a dividend. Do you anticipate that the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan will pay a dividend to the heritage fund? Do you anticipate that the grain car corporation will pay a dividend to the heritage fund?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — . . . (inaudible) . . . not. Under the terms of the contract with grain car corporation, wheat board, and the railroads, if the Crow rate changes the cars can be withdrawn from service and put to work elsewhere. I suppose if the Crow rate changes, which heaven forbid should happen, there is some potential for the grain car corporation to pay a dividend. If the Crow rate doesn't change, it's very unlikely that that dividend will be paid. And I make no apology for that in the interests of agricultural Saskatchewan.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Isn't that a little unusual to advance equity where you don't expect to get any possibility of dividends, where certainly that wasn't the case with, let's say, the Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan, which has done reasonably well with respect to dividends, and a remarkable number of other corporations have . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Pardon? I missed the comment from the member for Maple Creek. I will let that pass. I will not give any more assistance to my colleague from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg on farm matters.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Under the previous administration, the way it was structured is the heritage fund would have been repaid in total by the taxpayers of Saskatchewan. Okay, we're saying that the heritage fund is now making a contribution to agriculture in Saskatchewan by foregoing the interest on the loan, number one; and number two,

foregoing any principal payment for 30 years. They're making a contribution to agriculture in Saskatchewan by doing that.

MR. ENGEL: — My colleague, the member from Elphinstone, has much better background information on that, but my political assessment of this situation was that when time this budget was drawn up, the Minister of Agriculture in consultation with Mr. Pepin knew what was going to happen and knew that there will be a dividend from the cars and decided to presuppose that and thought we maybe wouldn't catch that one.

But aside from that, let's quickly touch . . . Let's quickly touch on another sore spot amongst quite a few farmers in Saskatchewan, and that's the one about the beef stabilization plan. In the 1982 budget, the first one that came out, there was \$8,657,000 for beef stabilization. In your November budget you cut that back to 6.8 million, and in your March budget you're back still further to 6.5 million. Why is this vote being cut back like that in a time when beef producers require that extra help?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — I don't know where you're getting the numbers. I'm looking in the blue book on page 20, and in '82-83 the number for stabilization was 8.4 million and '83-84 the number is 10.3 million.

MR. ENGEL: — I think the numbers you just read off were administration. All I'm talking about the subsidy aspect of that number . . .

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Well, that was the total number I read off, and almost the bulk of it, like, the vast, vast majority of it is premiums, in both cases. About 400,000 each year would be administration.

MR. ENGEL: — Just to touch lightly on the hog marketing commission, Mr. Minister. At some of the SHARP program local meetings, discussion took place that suggested: the downward adjustment of the insurance level, increase of the maximum from 1,500 hogs a year to 1,500 hogs per quarter, and a change from permanent contracting to rolling contracts. Can the minister suggest what the results would be from these meetings? I'm referring to a *Western Producer* report from the 5th day of the 5th month.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Okay, '83-84 over '82-83, the premium is up — 2.1 million up to 3.7 million.

MR. ENGEL: — My question was: have you considered changes that some of these people at the local meetings were discussing? Downward adjustments of the insurance level — you suggest the premium is up. I was just wondering what you're . . . you're usually talking about reading the public view and listening to the farmers on this, and at their local meetings they suggested some of these changes and the *Western Producer* reported them. And I was just wondering what your department's position is on some of these changes.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — None of those suggestions have yet made it to the cabinet level. They may well be running around the agricultural committee of caucus and in my head, but as of yet we haven't made a presentation to cabinet and it requires cabinet to make those changes.

MR. ENGEL: — Just to touch on a few more points. You suggested a 20.9 or so per cent increase, and over the week-end I was looking at and I find just quite the opposite is

true. Subvote 11, for example, why is the planned industry branch vote cut back from 2.6 to 1.5? It's almost . . . (inaudible) . . . — subvote 11.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Well, okay, that's the deficit in the branch account because of the drought program, and that's where it was administered.

MR. ENGEL: — A concern I have is, we discussed this a little bit in Crown corporations, but Agdevco was cut back by close to \$128,000. Why is that?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — It's been a steady reduction over some years, I understand, to bring Agdevco into a self-sufficient organization, to put to rest some of the concerns of those in the private sector who compete, in some arenas with Agdevco commercially. And the criticism was that Agdevco was out there in the big wide commercial world with all kinds of government money into it, and that can no longer be said because Agdevco is doing an excellent job and is, indeed, self-sufficient and doesn't need our money any more.

MR. ENGEL: — I think that one is a fairly lame excuse, Mr. Minister, because Agdevco's role was one that is surely going to cost us some money to keep them abreast of development in doing international sales and shows, and so on, and even helping us sell bulls. I think there's a broad range there that they can't do without some money. They need some money there.

After subvote 23, why is the government dropping its grants for construction of seed-cleaning plants? After subvote 31, there's no number there, and you're dropping the grant completely to seed-cleaning plants. Do you feel the seed's good enough?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Yeah, there is no question that there should be far more seed-cleaning plants in the province, and under the previous government's program, the take-up was not good. And, in fact, last fall there were no applications, and so the program was dropped and we are currently trying to develop a new program where there will be some take-up to get the seed-cleaning plants that we need out there in rural Saskatchewan.

MR. ENGEL: — How many seed-cleaning plants are operational in Saskatchewan today?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Under this program?

MR. ENGEL: — Total.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — The program has existed since 1975. A total of seven plants came in under the program.

MR. ENGEL: — How many commercial plants are strewn throughout the province to date, then?

AN HON. MEMBER: — I don't know.

MR. ENGEL: — You have no record of that?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — I can find out for you. The feds normally keep those kinds of records. I'm sure we've got them some place. But we're not responsible for keeping

track of the private commercial operators in agriculture. And we can find out, I suppose, and get it to you.

MR. ENGEL: — It's fairly difficult to develop and promote a program if you don't even know how many are out there, or how many more we need. I know if I want to haul my grain to a commercial cleaner, I'd have to go about 26, 28 miles, and I think it wouldn't be a bad idea to get one in the vicinity. And I just never got around to organizing either a community co-op cleaning plant, or whatever. So consequently it makes for a lot of hauling to seed good seed. And I think you realize it's important. So I wouldn't mind knowing how many commercial operators there are around, and just determine what kind of job they're doing.

You talk about new thrusts, and new expenditures, and a lot of talk was heard prior to the April election about getting involved in irrigation. How much have you done after a year in office to spruce this up and really improve on the irrigation project? What's happening?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Okay. The programs that existed in the past are continuing. In addition to that, we are putting together a water utility. Under this water utility, it is our hope to provide a single window for all water-related issues, whether it be municipal water, irrigation, flood control, whatever. And we are currently setting that water utility up and hope that it will be functioning very, very soon.

MR. ENGEL: — I suppose that the question I was asking, what new thrusts you have . . . How many projects were initiated during this past year? And what have you forecast for this coming year? Because drought is definitely a problem. And if we wouldn't have got this last snow, it looked like we were in for a good one. Because I couldn't find my track. I've seeded some, and it was so dry that you couldn't hardly even see the track where you were seeding on top. And I think irrigation was in the back of one's mind, saying, 'Boy, if I had some water, and could water this stuff down, it would pay to seed it.' But you talked a lot about irrigation, and we expect some new thrust. How many projects were initiated during the past year? And what have you got planned for this year?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — I can give you a couple of examples: '83-84, Bradwell project (it's near Blackstrap Lake — a new irrigation project put together by local farmers), 3,000 to 4,000 acres, \$500,000; Macrorie project, \$100,000; Chesterfield project, \$100,000. Pike Lake is about 800 acres.

AN HON. MEMBER: — Is the same program in place? Like so much an acre like there was before — \$36 an acre or \$39, whatever it was. Is that still in there or what's the grants on some of these?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — I'll get it for you in a minute. Another one is Lloydminster project at about 1,400 acres.

AN HON. MEMBER: — Can you tell me how much the grant was on that one?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — \$64,000.

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Chairman, I'm not sure if the minister is looking for an answer. But if you can give me that in writing: about, Mr. Minister, how many projects were initiated and about how much the grants were and how much they would come to per acre. I

think that would be a good calculation for farmers to know.

Have you looked at any research? I was getting some prices for a deep well in my area, and you hate to stick your neck out for a \$100,000-plus well, if you don't know what kind of water's there and so on. Have you looked at some pilot projects or some research into using water from underground systems . . . That seismic crews and oil well tests have indicated that there's some water there? But how should a farmer know if it's any good and if it is, can he use it? Have you looked at that kind of a thing for our area where we're far from lakes and yet have some land that would be good to irrigate?

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Yeah, the Sask Research Council keeps an ongoing record of water and water quality that come in from the sources you've just touched on. I would suggest that in your particular area if you . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Okay. Beyond that the services that previously existed under the family farm improvement still exist.

MR. ENGEL: — When you consider Alberta has a fantastic program for irrigating out of wells and using groundwater for developing projects, plus the foothill country lended itself nicely to damming up fairly decent quantities of water around the area for irrigation, where we in Saskatchewan don't have that same kind of advantage. But would you . . . Have you considered . . . Is your department looking at doing some pilot projects around to determine just what kind of water . . . I think they'd call it . . . pilot projects around to determine just what kind of water . . . I think they'd call it . . . (inaudible) . . . and Old Wives. There's different formations that have water 1,000-plus feet deep in our area. For example, some places . . . I know of a Hutterite colony that dug one about 900 feet deep, and so on. There's some water around, but that should be proved up and determined whether it's possible to irrigate from that . . . And I think might make some suitable small cash operators that normally can't get involved and yet could use some decent land — old lake-bottom land, stuff in our area that would make dandy irrigation land.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — I can remember when I was sitting in the same chair that you're sitting in, I used to talk about the same things and wondering why those things weren't done. And, yeah, I'm still of the same view and I think that those are the types of things that can be looked at, and that kind of data gathered, and those kinds of projects under way under this water utility that we're talking about. I would hope that when the water utilities is in place those kinds of things can indeed be looked at.

MR. ENGEL: — You just answered my question. I was going to say that would be a decent assignment for that new water corporation, or board, or whatever you're going to call it, to review the potential we have for underground water. The ball is in your court, Mr. Minister. You got to do a little more than talk about it now because you've only got two and a half years time, and you'll be back over here looking in maybe, if you can hold your seat. So I'd suggest that you look at some of the things you talked about and maybe start acting on them.

And if I could wind this up by saying my basic concern in the entire Department of Agriculture really is with your fumbling with the selling of Crown land. I think you should have a fixed policy in place that would assure that the province maintains that heritage the federal government gave to Saskatchewan when your predecessors were in power 50 years ago. It will likely be 150 years till you get back in if you fumble on this one, because it's a major concern to all the people of Saskatchewan and I wish the minister would take serious note of that.

And if I may, while I'm up here, if you could just go through by numbers . . . I went through the topics that I wished to raise under subvotes and while I'm standing, I'll even thank the minister's officials for their fine job of answering the questions and his co-operation tonight. Thank you.

Item 1 agreed to.

Items 2 to 20 inclusive agreed to.

Item 21

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — I humbly apologize for inadvertently misleading the hon. member earlier this evening. Some of the annual reports, at least the one in 1981, did in fact have sales — land bank sales — included in the report, and I just wanted to make that clear. And since we no longer have an annual report for land bank, I would advise you to check with land titles office.

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Minister, you tried to tell us, and the record will indicate, that that information was public. I think that if you're selling Crown land, and you're going into this high volume sales of Crown land to cover up your deficit, I think you should do the honourable thing and include it in the list you're sending over to us. Even if you're not making it public, at least tell us. You don't even need to give us the name of who bought it, just like the annual report there didn't either. At least tell us how many bids you had, the range of the bids, and what the highest bidder got it for. I think that's only fair to the people of Saskatchewan, because you're selling away their heritage.

If I'd sell my land . . . It's bad enough . . . Farmers like Garf Stevenson said, are borrowing money — are borrowing money against their land. That's bad enough. But if they'd sell their land to pay their debts, they're not going to be farmers very long. You're selling off Saskatchewan's birthright. You're selling that land that was part of the mosaic of Saskatchewan. I think the least you should do is advertise and tell us what you're getting for it.

HON. MR. BERNTSON: — Mr. Chairman, the argument that I advanced earlier still applies, and if the hon. member wants that purchase price he can get it from land titles office.

Item 21 agreed to.

Items 22 to 40 inclusive agreed to.

Vote 1 agreed to.

CONSOLIDATED FUND BUDGETARY EXPENDITURE

AGRICULTURE

Capital Expenditure — Vote 2

Items 1 to 7 inclusive agreed to.

Vote 2 agreed to.

CONSOLIDATED FUND LOANS, ADVANCES AND INVESTMENTS

AGRICULTURE — Vote 46 — Statutory

SASKATCHEWAN HERITAGE FUND BUDGETARY EXPENDITURE

RESOURCES DIVISION

AGRICULTURE

Provincial Development Expenditure — Vote 2

Item 1 agreed to.

Vote 2 agreed to.

SASKATCHEWAN HERITAGE FUND BUDGETARY EXPENDITURE

AGRICULTURE DIVISION

AGRICULTURE

Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 50

Items 1 and 2 inclusive agreed to.

Vote 50 agreed to.

CONSOLIDATED FUND LOANS, ADVANCES AND INVESTMENTS

THE SASKATCHEWAN LAND BANK COMMISSION — Statutory

CONSOLIDATED FUND LOANS, ADVANCES AND INVESTMENTS

FARMSTART — Vote 47 — Statutory

MR. CHAIRMAN: — I'd like to thank the minister and his officials.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 10:12 p.m.