

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

April 18 1984

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

HON. MR. McLAREN: — Mr. Speaker, it's a great deal of pleasure for me to introduce to you, and through you to the members of this Assembly, some 40 students from the Yorkdale regional school in my constituency of Yorkton. They are grade 8 students, and through their social study classes they are studying the role of the MLA, the Premier, the Lieutenant Governor, and the opposition. They are located in the Speaker's gallery, and they are accompanied today by their teacher, Mr. Dennis Pomeroy. I welcome the students here. I hope you enjoy the legislative process and the question period that you're going to see today, and I look forward to meeting with you after question period in the rotunda for pictures. So I'd ask all members to welcome these students in the usual manner.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. LUSNEY: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the member from Yorkton in welcoming the students from the Yorkdale regional high school; and I would also like to introduce to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the Assembly, a group of students from Calder School. They are seven grade 8 students, accompanied by their teacher and principal, Erv Henderson, and I would like to wish them a pleasant journey to Regina, and an enjoyable and interesting visit to the legislature. I'll be looking forward to meeting with you for a few minutes after the question period, and I would like to have all members join me in welcoming these students to the legislature, and wish them a safe journey home.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MRS. CASWELL: — I would like to introduce to you, and through you to the House, members of the provincial Catholic Women's League, the CWL. They are seated in the gallery here. Mrs. Mildred Young, Mrs. Senses, Mrs. Vonda Kosloski, and Mrs. Nina Macnac. For the last year they have been working on projects of bringing traditional values and academic excellence back into the school system, and we certainly appreciate the work of this organization.

I would ask the members to join with me in welcoming the four ladies, and if they would stand so that we can recognize them.

HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Contract for Conducting Auction Sale

MR. ENGEL: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the absence of the Minister of Supply and Services, I would like to direct a question to the Premier. My question has to do with your minister failing to supply details on his department's action regarding awarding the contract for conducting the auction sale to Brown's equipment.

Your minister refused to answer questions that we were asking of him, and it smacks of a cover-up. I would like to ask you, Mr. Premier, why, because the public are concerned, the unsuccessful bidders, the auctioneers are concerned, why are you not giving us the details of how you selected Brown's Auction rooms to conduct a sale of this magnitude?

HON. MR. DEVINE: — Mr. Speaker, I answered that question in detail yesterday – complete detail. So I can go through it again in complete detail. It's already been asked, and it's already been answered.

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Speaker, a new question. One of the auctioneers said, "There were so many irregularities in the bidding, it was a complete and total farce." . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Mr. Bleau, Mr. Bleau, referring to Brown's Auction's successful tender. Another auctioneer, Mr. Campbell, said, "this tender is almost like a joke. Something happened." If there are no irregularities in the tendering process, why will you not tell us what commission they're getting? Why will you not tell us? Why will you not tell us some of the details of the tender? What have you got to hide?

HON. MR. DEVINE: — Mr. Speaker, we're operating the tender system exactly the way that it's been operated in the past, and exactly the way that it's operated in other jurisdictions. When people submit their bids, we tell everybody we will keep them confidential. If they want to come in, one at a time, and find out why they weren't successful, we'll do that. If any one of those individuals want to come in here and talk to us, we'll tell them why they weren't successful, and they can do so if they're sincerely interested. If they want to play games with the opposition and say whatever else is going on, they're not very serious. If they want to walk into my office, they'll find out.

MR. ENGEL: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. These people were not responding to the opposition. They were not responding to the opposition. The opposition never wrote this article that was found in the *Leader-Post*: "Irregularities charged in the auction tendering." They were responding to the press. They were responding to the press, and if there are no irregularities in the tender, from contacting former deputy ministers, I was assured that tenders . . . the percentage was always revealed when an auctioneer was hired with the government services in the past.

You have started a new practice of telling him before, "And we're going to keep it confidential." Did you do that because you knew there was something irregular about this tender? Is that why you did that?

HON. MR. DEVINE: — Mr. Speaker, we've already been through this several times. If there are criteria set up . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Mr. Speaker, the hon. member will get lots of attention in the next election and he knows it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. DEVINE: — Mr. Speaker, any individual that participated in the proposal call – any individual at all – can come in and see the minister, and he can get all the information he wants as to why he wasn't successful. And he will be told all that information. But each person that tendered wanted to have his own information kept confidential because years and years of experience go into each one of those tenders, and they don't want it spread all over the place. We said we agree.

Only one can win. If the others want to find out why they failed, they can, one at a time, but not in public.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — If you advise that the auctioneers knew of your proposals and knew the way the particular selection was going to be made, can you then account for the fact that these auctioneers, knowing what your proposals were, now say publicly that there were so many irregularities the thing was a total farce, the tender is almost a joke? Or here the president of the Saskatchewan Auctioneering Association saying, "Well, it wasn't up to us to judge who should have it or not, but that doesn't mean that all our members are pleased with the way the

government handled the tenders. I know there's dissatisfaction. I've got some thoughts on it myself."

How do you account for public statements like that if, as you say, all the auctioneers were perfectly happy with the way you conducted it, and all of them understood your arrangements and, therefore, all of them ought to be reasonably satisfied, at least, with the procedure. They manifestly are not. How do you account for that?

HON. MR. DEVINE: — Mr. Speaker, I can only reiterate that the head of the association, or any one of those members can come forward and ask specific details. Clearly, if there's 47 people applying and only one winner, there's 46 that are disappointed. And they would not likely want to admit that maybe they didn't do quite as well as somebody else, and that would be natural. Every time you have a tender and a proposal call, there are 47 or 46 or whatever, the total minus one, that are somewhat disappointed. They can come in one at a time, and they can go through the thing in detail.

Sale of Former SGI Head Office

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to direct a question to the minister in charge of SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance), and my question has to do with the decision to sell the former SGI head office building on 11th Avenue at downtown Regina, for only \$575,000.

Mr. Speaker, the minister will know that SGI received at least three expressions of interest: \$750,000 from the Lovell group, \$600,000 from the Bulych group, and \$575,000 from the Silver Holdings group. And you will know that you accepted the \$575,000 figure. I trust, Mr. Minister, you do not deny that Lovell quoted the \$750,000 figure to your facilities manager, Gary Miller, well before you accepted the Silver Holdings bid. You say that Miller was not doing the negotiating, but that one Larry Fogg was. I ask you, Mr. Minister, have you made inquiries to assure yourself that all of these dealings between Miller and Lovell, including the quote of \$750,000, was passed on to Fogg, or to whoever was negotiating on your behalf?

HON. MR. ROUSSEAU: — Well first of all, Mr. Speaker, I certainly will deny that there was an offer of \$750,000 as the hon. member indicated — an alleged offer. Mr. Speaker, I have been asked this question on numerous times, and I think it would only be fair for everyone concerned if I were to go through every piece of correspondence that I've had on this, so that it is all in the open, if you like, Mr. Speaker, so that the hon. members opposite will know exactly how this transaction was handled.

I'm beginning back in May of last year. Mr. Speaker, I received this letter — Mr. Lovell:

Dear Mr. Rousseau: While I am sure this does not fall within your day-to-day function, I thought I might bring this dilemma to your attention. I have been interested in looking at the possibility of developing the old SGI annex, and possibly creating a restaurant-night club facility. I have contacted our mutual friend, Chuck Davison, who, as I am led to believe, has contacted someone several times with no success.

It is my opinion that ultimately, if you want to develop that building, one has to start somewhere, and this might be just what it takes to create some interest.

I would appreciate you getting back to me as to who I might contact. I am prepared to work with anyone in that department in the possible further development of that building.

Thank you once again.

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On July 4, this letter was sent to Mr. Lovell:

On behalf of the Hon. Paul Rousseau, thank you for your letter of May 5, regarding creating a restaurant and night club facility at the Saskatchewan Government Insurance former head office building. Please accept my sincere apologies for the delay in responding.

I have taken the liberty of forwarding your letter to Don Black, president of the Saskatchewan Government Insurance, for his consideration.

Thank you for your letter.

July 11, this letter, a memo, was sent to Mr. Black:

Re; Sydco Management

I contacted Mr. Lovell as per your instructions. He will call me Wednesday, July 13, to have a tour of the buildings. Advise him that if he has a genuine interest in either the annex or the old head office building, we would make our various studies on the property available to him.

August 2, letter from Mr. Lovell to Mr. Larry Fogg, SGI. And I want the hon. member to note who these letters are addressed to.

Dear Larry: I hope this letter finds you well rested after your vacation. I want to take this opportunity, also, to thank you for your efforts and the efforts of your staff in showing me the old SGI building.

After the careful inspection, I acknowledge that the annex would not be of interest to us, and it would be in your interest to demolish that building and perhaps build a service elevator and double staircase along that west wall and gutting most of the building and make way for prime commercial space.

Some, some of the report, which is enclosed, I disagree with. But far be it for me to judge this seemingly complete report by top-notch professionals. Should there be people interested in some type of development, I hope that you might remember me, and perhaps put them in touch with me.

Mr. Speaker, on August 29, this letter was sent to Mr. Cohen in Calgary:

As per your request of August 18, 1983, I have attached a package of information that we provided to Mr. Lovell. If you have any further questions on this material, or require any further information, please contact Mr. Gary Miller.

August 18. So this letter should have been before the last one.

Dear Mr. Fogg: (And this is from Mr. Cohen in Calgary, and again, please note, it's addressed to Mr. Fogg – Larry Fogg – that's right) I was in Regina with Mr. Syd Lovell last week, and we went through one of the buildings which Mr. Lovell said you were interested in selling. Our development group in Calgary would be very interested in having a look at the package you gave to Mr. Lovell some weeks back. I'd appreciate it if you would send the package to me at the above address.

Mr. Speaker, last week I tabled, in this legislation, the documents, the option to purchase that piece of property, which was dated – I want the member opposite to note that it was dated

October 17, 1983.

On October 25 . . . October 20, before I get to the 25th, a letter sent from Mr. Bulych to Mr. Gary Miller, SGI:

Mr. Miller: Re: Old SGI office building at 2215 – 11th Avenue

Further to our recent discussions the following is an outline of a proposal to SGI for the purchase of the office building on 11th Avenue. After taking both the cost of renovations and the ability to market the space at a competitive price into consideration, we would be prepared to offer \$600,000 . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: — That's another one.

HON. MR. ROUSSEAU: — No. That's the one you referred to . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . That's right. But you referred . . . You referred to it, sir, in your question. That's right. And that's one of them. Right? Okay. As long as we understand we're talking about the same thing, Mr. Leader of the Opposition.

. . . for the property in question, subject to the following conditions: . . .

Now, you referred to that one as being a better offer than the \$575,000 offer, and I want you to listen to this, sir:

1. (These are the conditions) Payment of \$100,000 within 90 days of accepted offer. (Okay?)
2. An additional payment of \$300,000 upon completion of the renovations. (No interest, but just \$300,000 – who knows when?)
3. An agreement for payment of final \$200,000 over a five-year term at current interest rates. (Okay? In five years time. Five years. Current interest rates. Agreed.)
4. The title to be transferred to ourselves with a first position maintained by SGI for the amount owed.
5. Postponement of position in favour of the financing company.

If the hon. member believes, truly believes, that this is a better offer after hearing this one, Mr. Speaker, then I would not like to negotiate with the hon. member.

6. A lease commitment by SGI, or any other government agency, for a period of five years (plus five years) for the amount of \$15 per square foot, triple net, for occupying two of the five upper floors.

Mr. Speaker, I want to note at this point that that space presently is being leased at \$10.75 and \$11 a square foot to the private sector, not to the government.

Now, on October 25, from Mr. Gary Miller:

Pursuant to a recent conversation in your letter of October 20, we'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for your proposal submission for the purchase of the old head office building. As discussed, SGI have currently executed an option for purchase with another party.

It was October 20 that he wrote to us. We replied on October 25. It was on October 17 that we

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signed an option with Mr. Silver.

Now, April 6 of this year, Mr. Lovell writes to me:

I was not surprised to recently hear that the old SGI building had been sold.

I believe you have a copy of that letter. Am I not accurate in that? Or would you like me to read that? . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Fine.

AN HON. MEMBER: — And you just quoted it wrongly. He was surprised. Read it again — “I was surprised.”

HON. MR. ROUSSEAU: — “I was not surprised.”

Dear Mr. Rousseau: I was not surprised to recently hear (that’s what it says) . . .

MR. SPEAKER: — Order, please. Order, please. I believe, if the information has been tabled, and the member has it in hand, there is very little purpose in reading further. That’s an extremely long answer.

HON. MR. ROUSSEAU: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I . . . (inaudible) . . . and bow to your ruling. I want to indicate to the hon. member, Mr. Speaker, that at no time — at no time — were there any improprieties by the staff of SGI. We accepted a bona fide offer on October 17 of last year — a bona fide offer that was cash, that had no conditions attached to it. At no time did we receive an offer by Mr. Lovell. We received an indication of interest — which he quickly dropped, which he quickly dropped, Mr. Speaker — in writing. We had no further contact with Mr. Lovell until April of this year, long after the building had been sold.

So, Mr. Speaker, the hon. members opposite have been attacking the integrity of the management of SGI, and I think it’s unfortunate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Supplementary, Mr. Speaker. And by way of preliminary, all that material about Bulych, all that material about the conditions, is totally irrelevant to the question I asked, and which I’ll ask again.

Do you deny, sir, do you deny that Mr. Lovell, in speaking with Gary Miller in September or early October, well before you accepted the Silver Holdings offer — do you deny that Lovell had a conversation with Miller and mentioned the figure of \$750,000? Do you deny that?

HON. MR. ROUSSEAU: — No, Mr. Speaker, I do not deny that. I do not deny that they had conversations in August, September, early October, and I can’t remember when it was. There was indication, and I want to explain it all to the hon. member. While they were the government in 19 . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I’m giving you . . . That certainly is relevant, and I’m giving you your answer, sir.

You had an appraisal done on the property in 1980, and an appraisal of \$890,000 approximately, Mr. Speaker. When Mr. Miller discussed the \$750,000 with Mr. Lovell, he indicated, as he should — as he should as a responsible employee of SGI who is trying to get the best dollar he can for what they had appraised at \$890,000 — indicated that it wasn’t enough money. Any good realtor or real estate salesman will do that. That’s his responsibility.

So Mr. Lovell, at that point, could have done one of two things: increased his offer . . . one of three things: increased the offer; made an offer for whatever figure he wanted to make, in writing; or drop out altogether. He chose to drop out.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, supplementary. And once again, none of the conditions quoted by the hon. member about net or lease – Mr. Lovell never talked about leasing, never, to the SGI. That was Bulych and somebody else.

But my question to you, sir, is this: do you deny, do you deny, firstly, that Miller was reporting to Fogg, who was negotiating the sale . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes.

Two, that Miller received from Lovell an expression of interest of \$750,000 in late September or early October; (3) that Miller had a duty to report that to Fogg to see whether they could get that kind of money out of Lovell; and (4) within days of that incident, your company accepted an offer of \$575,000, and Miller raised no objection; and, next, that the day that you sold that to Miller holdings, Miller left your employ and went into the employ of Silver Holdings. Do you deny any one of those facts?

HON. MR. ROUSSEAU: — Well, there were five points. I didn't . . . I lost my pen here somewhere along the line. Reporting to Fogg: of course he was reporting to Fogg. That was his. . . that's who the management of SGI, and I've indicated that in this House before, that they were handling, they were negotiating – the management, not Miller. Miller was showing. And you agree and admit that that is correct.

I deny an offer, absolutely. There was no offer. I admit that there was a discussion of price – admit that – but no offer. An offer is when you put some money in where your mouth is, and you put it in writing. In writing. As I've indicated to you before, it was a verbal offer – not worth the paper it's written on, to be very frank.

As for the sale, the sale was negotiated and completed – not completed – negotiated and optioned on October 17th. It was beyond January 20 that Mr. Miller went to work for Mr. Silver. And I find it difficult to understand why you would object to an individual working for the government going to work for someone in the private sector. I find that hard to understand, that you'd object to that.

I don't remember what your other two points were.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — My simple supplementary to the minister is this: have you investigated to find out whether Miller reported this expression of interest at a figure of \$750,000 to his superior, Fogg, whose obligation it was to secure that price if he could?

HON. MR. ROUSSEAU: — Well, if I recall correctly, that was in the correspondence. The correspondence which I'm referring to management indicates the amount of \$750,000 – the letter that I received from Mr. Lovell. And management gets copies of this. I send it on to them. So certainly it was looked into.

HON. MR. BLAKENEY: — Mr. Speaker, I am asking the minister whether he has investigated to find out whether Miller reported this expression of interest – if he doesn't like the word offer – of \$750,000 to his superior, or whether he withheld that information from his superior. That is the question I ask you: have you investigated this? Have you ascertained what happened?

HON. MR. ROUSSEAU: — Mr. Speaker, I think what the member is asking me was, I believe, the question simply put: was management aware of the expressed desire or interest in the amount of \$750,000 at that time? Was management aware of it? And my answer is yes.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MOTIONS FOR RETURNS (Not Debatable)

Return No. 129

AN HON. MEMBER: — I'm sorry. Was return no. 129 called – a motion for return (not debatable)? That will be returned.

MR. SPEAKER: — The House Leader . . . There seemed to be a confusion in the opposition of what happened to return no. 129. You said it would be returned – the information. It was accepted.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 49 – An Act to provide Counselling Assistance and Loan Guarantees to Farmers

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Speaker, it is indeed an honour and a pleasure to rise in debate on this bill today and move second reading on An Act to provide Counselling Assistance and Loan Guarantees to Farmers. When my colleague, the Hon. Minister of Finance, presented, just this past March 21, what I think has become to be known as the finest budget in the history of this province, he made reference to the program which will be created by this act. He said, and I quote:

A \$4 million fund will be established to assist financially troubled farmers with viable operations who need temporary assistance. This will be government funded, but farmer-run program.

Today I would like to tell you and the farmers of Saskatchewan how this \$4 million fund will operate, who it will help farmers with viable operations, but who are experiencing temporary cash-flow problems. How farmers, not government officials, will run the program. The \$4 million will create and operate the counselling and assistance for farmers program.

Like the farm purchase program and the Agricultural Credit corporation of Saskatchewan, which this government introduced, the counselling and assistance program will serve Saskatchewan farmers well.

Mr. Speaker, just to put the current bill into perspective, I'd like to review the record of the farm purchase program and the Agricultural Credit corporation. When we were elected nearly two years ago today, the single biggest problem facing Saskatchewan farmers was interest rates.

Interest rates were affecting land purchases. Interest rates were affecting the intergenerational transfer of farmland. Interest rates were jeopardizing the family farm concept. Interest rates were jeopardizing the eternal flame of Saskatchewan heritage. That candle, that flame that has always glowed brightly, was in danger of being snuffed out.

To help farmers through that situation, we introduced the farm purchase program which provides interest rate relief for land purchases. Several times in this Assembly, sometimes it seems like almost daily, Mr. Speaker, I've had to remind the members opposite of this program. So I won't do it again, except to say that to date that farm purchase program has helped some 2,500 farmers to buy land, to buy the family farm – an enviable record compared to the dismal failure of the land bank.

And then there's the Agricultural Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan, which we created. The corporation provides reduced interest rate on loans to farmers who want to expand into more intensive operations — livestock or irrigation. And its program has been expanded to allow the corporation more flexibility in meeting farmers' needs for intermediate term credit.

There you have it, Mr. Speaker. The farm purchase program providing interest rate relief for land transactions. The Agricultural Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan providing interest rate relief for intensive operations. And now, Mr. Speaker, the counselling and assistance program to provide assistance for farmers to obtain operating loans.

Mr. Speaker, I suggest to the members opposite that this now puts in place a complete range of financial program to help Saskatchewan farmers. And, Mr. Speaker, I must say that that's a remarkable achievement for a government that's less than two years old, and I congratulate all my government colleagues on this record.

We recognize problems, and we deal with them. But more importantly, we deal with them in a responsible fashion, we deal with them with compassion and with understanding.

And now for the details of the counselling and assistance for farmers program. This program will provide both counselling assistance and operating loan guarantees to farmers in financial difficulties. It will be targeted, at least initially, at farmers whose financial situation has deteriorated to a level where his primary lending institution has declined the request for additional operating loans.

A farmer who feels he's facing a terminal case of cost price squeeze – he will be our first priority – crisis medicine, if you like. But it will be more than that. These panels we set up will be able to offer advice to other farmers – preventative medicine, if you like.

Through this system of farmer panels, applicants will be able to present their situation for an independent review, a second opinion by their peers. The panels will be made up of farmers with proven financial, managerial, and production skills. The farmer panels may recommend changes in production and management techniques which would improve the returns of a farm. They may also encourage improved communications between the applicant and his lender if a breakdown in communications is contributing to the problem.

For those operations which have the potential to be viable, but are unable to secure adequate operating credit, the panels may direct the program chairman to provide a provincial government guarantee for an operating loan. The maximum loan guarantee is \$100,000.

The loan may cover the following: all expenses associated with farm operations as outlined in the farm plan submitted to the panel; normally scheduled principal and interests on term loans; interest on arrears and interest on outstanding operating loans; capital purchases up to 5 per cent of the approved loan; and a living allowance.

Applicants for the program must have a net worth not exceeding \$500,000. Mr. Speaker, this is somewhat higher than the limits used by the farm purchase program and the Agricultural Credit corporation of Saskatchewan. And these two programs are aimed mainly at the beginning farmer. This program can accommodate both the beginning and the established farmer who may have fallen on tough times.

The increased limit is necessary so the program can benefit both groups, I would suggest – accommodate both groups, yet be responsive and, at the same time, responsible.

Farmers with a net worth greater than 500,000, I think all members will agree, have other options available to them which would allow them to continue operating.

The other criterion related to eligibility are: the applicant's net worth must be less than 50 per cent of total assets; the principal occupation of the applicant must be farming; and the applicant must be a Saskatchewan resident.

To take advantage of the program, eligible farmers must complete and forward an application to

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the program chairman. The program chairman will select three or more appropriate members, including a chairman, to serve on a panel. Once an application is verified, it will be sent to the panel chairman. The applicant will be requested to provide the panel chairman with a viable farm plan, a strategy for a solution.

The panel members will review the application and the farm plan. They will then meet with the applicant, may meet with the designated representative of the applicant's lending institution, and possibly meet with both the applicant and the lending institution together. The panels may even draw on other expertise if they feel this is necessary.

Following this review, the panel will prepare a confidential report – and I underline the word “confidential,” Mr. Speaker – a confidential report of the panels' recommendations, which may include guaranteeing an operating loan, the government guaranteeing an operating loan for that farmer.

Mr. Speaker, the counselling and assistance program for farmers is an indication, I believe, of a responsive, responsible, and understanding government. And while the fund is \$4 million, the amount of assistance available to farmers, I expect, will be far more.

By guaranteeing the loans, and having faith in farmers, and knowing full well that not all will default, this \$4 million can potentially translate into many more millions. For farmers with viable operations and who truly need assistance, that's a very significant amount of help, I would suggest.

As I've said before, it's not how much money you have, it's how you use it that counts. This program clearly puts the money to good use. It supports farmers with viable farms who happened, often for reasons out of their own control, to be caught in a tight cash-flow situation, whether that be floods or drought or hail or grasshoppers or wheat midge, falling prices, rising inputs, or any combination.

Here is a safety net. We've talked often in this House, Mr. Speaker, in past debates, whether we relate it to the Crow or a cost-price squeeze, about a government providing a safety net. And once again, we have not let Saskatchewan farmers down, especially those who are facing a difficult time today. Here, in fact, is another safety net. It's farmers sitting down, and discussing a problem together, and developing a plan for the future.

And I ask you, Mr. Speaker, and I ask all members of this House: who better to work out these situations than farmers, farmers who understand the complexities of living off the land? They will recognize who is up on the high wire and has stumbled and needs the net, the safety net, in place. And they will recognize who is up on the high wire who has stumbled and who no net can save.

Already, Mr. Speaker, we are receiving applications for assistance under this program, and applications are available to be sent out, to be asked for, and will be available at all ag rep offices in the very near future.

Next week, I expect, Mr. Speaker, that these panels will be in full swing, helping out farmers caught in the cost-price squeeze. But the counselling and assistance program in place, viable Saskatchewan farms will continue to be viable. They will be here today, and they'll be here tomorrow, and they'll continue to be a dynamic force in our provincial economy.

Mr. Speaker, as I've said in my budget speech here some two or three weeks ago, as a government, as the Minister of Agriculture, I could have stood up here, I could have stood up here and pointed to statistics. I could have pointed to statistics that suggest that, in Saskatchewan, bankruptcies are much less here on a per-farmer basis than they are in Manitoba, and that net realizable farm income is expected to be up in Saskatchewan, and down in

Manitoba, and reduced everywhere else in the country.

I could have stood up here and pointed to statistics and, in fact, to things as recently as an article in the April 10, '84, *Star-Phoenix* where a bank official is quoted as saying:

Saskatchewan farmers are better equipped to handle economic adversity than their counterparts in other parts of Canada, due mainly to their average high equity-to-debt ratios.

I could have pointed to statistics that suggest that in Saskatchewan, a full third of farmers are virtually debt free.

I could have pointed to those statistics, Mr. Speaker, and said, "For Saskatchewan farmers, all is well." Or, Mr. Speaker, I could have thrown up my hands, and said, "I have no control over what farmers receive for their wheat, or their canola, or their cattle, or any of their commodities." I could have thrown up my hands and said, "It's out of my hands. It's a global situation. It's a North American market. What can I do?"

But, Mr. Speaker, this government chose not to point to statistics and say all is well. This government chose not to throw up its hands and say it's out of our control. This government chose to act, act as we have before, and we are acting again today.

And, Mr. Speaker, before I close and move second reading of this bill, I would like to offer my congratulations and thanks to a number of individuals who have worked feverishly since budget night at getting this program up and running, getting the legislation in place, in, I think what you will have to agree is a very, very short time frame.

I would first like to congratulate and thank the dozens of farmers, recently retired, some active, with a proven track record, who came in on very short notice and met with some of my officials to get an outline of what the government was looking at in terms of this program, and to see if they might not be prepared to sit on these panels.

And as I stood before them and made a few brief remarks to them, Mr. Speaker, I was extremely heartened, as the Minister of Agriculture, to be able to stand before so many people, in a room full of farmers that represented such a vast knowledge of experience and management expertise. And I could only think how well that spirit of community has served us so well in this province for so many years. And I think Mr. Speaker, it goes back and perhaps had its roots in the days that have come long before us, the days of our fathers and our grandchildren, when people banded together to help each other. And so I can only say I thank very much and congratulate those farmers who have agreed to act as panellists.

And as well, I must thank Barry Andrew, a respected farmer who has agreed to act as program chairman. He brings with him much experience and expertise.

And as well, Mr. Speaker, I must thank the lending institutions for their co-operation. We've had more than one meeting with them, looking at the program outline, working out forms in details, and they, too, have been most co-operative. And I can only think that when you get all the players in this game co-operating and working together in the best interests of Saskatchewan farmers, who find themselves in difficult situations that were not their own doing. I only can come to one conclusion, and that conclusion is that the farmers of Saskatchewan be served well.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to, as well, pay tribute and offer my thanks, publicly and in this legislature, to my office staff and my entire department, who literally have worked from sunrise till midnight getting this program up and running. And not only do we have the legislation here in the House today, we have the panellists ready to go. We have a program chairman in place. We have toll free numbers in place. We have applications printed. I only can

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thank them from the bottom of my heart, literally, for the effort that they've put into getting this program up and running.

And because of that, Mr. Speaker, and I think because this bill is so important to the farmers of Saskatchewan, that I would ask that all members of this legislature offer their heartiest support to this bill. And with that, Mr. Speaker, I would move second reading of Bill No. 49, an Act to provide Counselling Assistance and Loan Guarantees to Farmers.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. ENGEL: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I suppose if the opposition gets in and speaks on this bill today and doesn't let it get passed, we'll be accused like we were in the dairy workers' strike where it took three hours to pass a bill, and we were called, "obstructing it and costing the farmers money." That is the minister's idea of coming up with — on day 38 — with his proposed legislation.

I know he stands up, and he says that he could have said that, and he could've did this. Why did he? Why did he? . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Now the minister's getting very defensive. I like what he said in his very first line when he stood up. And I'm going to take some time to review his words very carefully. But he said, "This is the finest budget in the history of the province." Well, the farmers are telling me it is a fine budget. You drew a very fine line, Mr. Minister, so fine, one time the story was spread around about technology, and there was a little competition between some Japanese people and some American engineers, and they were asked to make the finest wire they could. And then some German engineers drilled a hole through it.

You know, and I think this is as fine as your budget is, it's drawn so fine that the farmer looking at it with a magnifying glass can't see anything in it for him. And I'm wondering, I am wondering, I'm wondering where this party gets their ideas.

You know, the Attorney General and the former premier, Mr. Speaker, are the only ones in here that have been around longer than I have, and I guess that gives me a little permission, in spite of my age, to reminisce a little bit, Mr. Speaker. And I can reminisce a little bit before I started school in the dirty thirties, and I can remember, very distinctly, the kind of programs the Anderson government had in place. I could remember the kind of programs the Anderson government had in place, and they had their key people, they had their key people all over the province, all over the province. And do you know the story . . . And the person that was influential in getting me into politics, I guess originally, and old Doc . . . (inaudible) . . . at Gravelbourg said that if you were a good old Tory, you could get enough seed oats to feed your cattle. That was his expression, and that was very catchy in the Gravelbourg area.

Here we have another situation where the government is introducing . . . And I believe there's some excellent expertise out in the country amongst some farmers. Just ask them how to put a program together and they'll tell you how to put a program together. I have no argument with consulting with farmers, none whatever, and we encourage that. We did that when we implemented new programs. But now a government that bulks together ministerial trips with all kinds of EAs so they won't release the numbers and, Mr. Minister, I want you to read the record last night.

I want you to read the record last night what Is aid about you.

AN HON. MEMBER: —I'll read it.

MR. ENGEL: — I wish you would. And I want you to read that record because I know you're forthright and honest and sincere, and don't need to lump your expenses together. But here is a government that refuse to give us information, because it might . . .

MR. SPEAKER: — Order, please. I'm having great difficulty in relating what the member is talking about when he talks about last night's debate and the question that's before the Assembly. Would you come back to the bill that's before us, please.

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Speaker, what I was trying to demonstrate is the principle of this bill in setting up a farm team with a captain — a farm team with a captain and with some . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . just hold your horses, Mr. Member from Saskatoon, being if you've got any. Just hang on, hang on, and I will tell you where it's at.

This member who refuses to give us information because it might jeopardize the contractors . . . (inaudible) . . . auctioneers ability to function is asking the farmer — and this is how I want to tie it in, Mr. Speaker . . . A farmer is asked to bring his financial statements, and all his financial affairs before an entire committee and have them revealed — all his assets and all his liabilities and all the problems — to a committee! Expose it all, as though that isn't going to insult the dignity of the farm community. As though that isn't going to insult the dignity of my nephew and my sons — to go to a Mr. Conservative in the community, that's going to be selected as a chairman, to not only tell us how much oats we can get to seed, so his buddies can get enough for their feed. Not only that kind of . . . (inaudible) . . . but the very best . . . (inaudible) . . . farmer is going to be in the hands of that Tory committee, that Tory committee. And he would say, "I've got it. That's where it's at."

That's where the member from Maple Creek are going to decide who is going to farm, and who is not going to farm, because she's going to say in Maple Creek, "Mr. So and So, the PC, is going to decide — is going to decide." And, Mr. Speaker, that is very serious business. That is very serious.

Why would the philosophical difference of that party be so far removed from where it's at? Why would those free enterprisers be so far removed that if a farmer is in trouble he's supposed to share his financial estate and his secrets, that only his banker knows, with the entire community, with the committee. I think this is a farce. You have carried this pretty far.

Mr. Speaker, when I spoke on a piece, the very first piece of legislation, when the minister that is travelling down in Saudi Arabia today introduced . . . When he introduced the very first piece of legislation, I said, "In Alberta, the Tories designed farm programs with a fence around it. They make that fence very small that nobody can get in, and then you go to your local PC and he'll get you in." This is the exact same kind of program that is blatantly political, when the farmers are in trouble, when the farmers are strapped, when the farmers are hung by a rope that's held by a Tory, Mr. Speaker. They have to crawl to your committee member and decide whether they're going to farm or not. If you call this a good piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, if members opposite think that that's the way the farmers want to go, just keep thinking it.

Now why couldn't they make it easy? If they really are sincere, and if they really want to help, why couldn't they have made it easy? Why couldn't they have made it easy? In Manitoba, Manitoba has a program; Manitoba has a program that's in place. Just because it's operated by a Tory . . . by an NDP government, just because it's operated by an NDP government, they refuse to co-operate.

All a farmer in Manitoba has to do is, he has to fill out his application form. He goes to his bank or his credit union. The bank or the credit union decides whether he qualifies under the terms of it. They send it in and they get an endorsement from the government, whether they're going to back that loan or not.

Why do you have to have your Tory friends out there deciding who gets the loan? Why can't the banks decide that? Why can't the credit unions decide it? Why do you have to make a program so difficult, I'd like to know? A farmer has to review his own affairs, not only with his lending institution, but he has to sit down with a farmer committee that will not only mean

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delays, but it will make his local problems public. And I think this is serious, Mr. Speaker. I think we're not trying to help farmers; we're going to try and decide who stays in farming and who doesn't, with this government. This government is going to decide who's staying in and who isn't.

Mr. Speaker, I'm anxious to review the details of the plan. I kind of hope the minister will send me a copy of the application that the farmer is going — if he's going to be good enough to give me a copy of it — and if he does, we'll review it and then we'll be discussing it very shortly.

I beg leave to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

CONSOLIDATED FUND BUDGETARY EXPENDITURE

AGRICULTURE

Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 1

Item 1

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Would the minister introduce his officials?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Seated to my right is my deputy minister, Jack Drew; to his right, Henry Zilm, assistant deputy; and behind me, Wes Mazer, director of administration.

MR. ENGEL: — Did the minister have a question before I get started? Mr. Chairman, I think, before we get into Agriculture estimates and some of the programs that your department is introducing to help the farmers along with a bill you introduced today, Mr. Minister, I'll wait until the member from Moosomin is through visiting with him, so he can hear what I'm saying.

And I would like to ask the minister . . . He was saying earlier today, when we discussed the legislation that was before him, that there's thing she could have said about the condition of farmers and how he basically felt that, because the position of farmers is better than that of those in our neighbouring provinces, that maybe in general things aren't so bad.

I had somebody from Swift Current radio station ask me today and said: well really, what's so bad? What's so bad with admitting the fact of life that there are certain number of — and I'll use the minister's words to describe this now — there are certain a number of farmers that were walking a tightrope or a high wire, I think he used. And for some of them he's going to come up with a safety net, and for the others we'll just have to admit, look fella, you're out of the circus.

And I'm just wondering, Mr. Minister, in light of some of the statements you've made, in light of the statements you made last year when you introduced the Saskatchewan credit corporation, what do you really feel is the plight of the average young farmer, those farmers that — and I'll call them young farmers because he could even be 55 years old if he happened to have his farm grow in the last few years. I think the people I'm talking about are basically those that have expanded or begun their operations in the last 8 or 10 years. What do you feel is the plight of these farmers? What kind of financial state, how will you generally sum them up? Are these people that are on the high wire that lost their balance rod and slipped, or did they get a hold of it with one hand? Are they still hanging on it? Where do you really feel they're at? Just give us a little overview as to who are you representing as Minister of Agriculture. What is the general economy of the farmers? I think we should take a minute to lay some ground work as to what

kind of condition these farmers are in.

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, I'd, first of all, like to thank you for your reasonable and polite questions and will endeavour throughout this afternoon to do the same on this side of the House, so we can get the kind of information you want to you as reasonably, and as quickly as possible.

In so far as what is my read of the plight of Saskatchewan farmers out there, as I said just moments ago in the House, I think I could have stood before this House today and said, "All is well out there." I could have pointed to statistics, and they're in great abundance from bankers, from economists, StatsCanada, which show that things in Saskatchewan, comparatively speaking, are perhaps much better than in other provinces.

And I could point to those statistics and say, "All is well." Or I could stand up here and say that there's a global depression out there as it relates to most of the commodities Saskatchewan produces, whether it's livestock or the grain sector, and say, "But what can I do about the North American market, or what can I do about global markets? What can I do?"

I could have stood up here and said that. But we've chosen to act. And so, to answer your question directly as to what is the plight of the Saskatchewan farmer today, whether he's a beginning farmer or an establishing farmer or an established farmer, I would suggest to you that it's just several thousand per cent better than they would ever have been, had the NDP continued to be in power.

Because what we had there was a government buying up their land, spending millions of dollars. I think, in fact, the last year, the last budget year when you were in power, I think you had budgeted for \$40 million to buy the farm—not help them farm, to buy their farms, government-owned farms.

And what have we done, and why is the plight so much better than it was? Well, we've established a farm purchase program that's helping 2,500 people. You compare that to the land bank, the dismal failure that it was. 151 owners . . . It keeps — 151 young farmers became owners of their own land over a 10-year period. We've helped more in 14 months, we've helped more in 14 weeks than you helped in 10 years.

And as well, I can point to the programs like the Agricultural Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan, interest rate relief for other young farmers looking at livestock, irrigation development. We could point to the rural natural gas programs. We could point to the tax relief through the \$11 million that will go back to Saskatchewan farmers, the rural communities, by the virtual elimination of their school taxes on the home quarter.

And I could go on and on, Mr. Chairman. But I want to tell you that the plight of Saskatchewan farmers today is immeasurably, immeasurably better than had the out-of-touch, outmoded, outdated ideas of the NDP been allowed to continue in this province. And that is a fact, Mr. Chairman.

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Minister, I'm impressed with your forked tongue. You stand up and you compliment me for a polite little question, and you come back with your little answer there. I'll ignore it this time, and I won't even comment on the 1,000 per cent better. I would like you to stand up in this House and read one letter from one farmer that says it's 1,000 per cent better.

Your government, your government, you, Mr. Minister, have been here the whole time, have cost me my power bills. If I'm intensive farming my costs have gone up by 18 to 20 per cent. You, as minister, have cost me the purple gas advantage I had. I lost \$65 million as a farmer because you took away —you decided to take away — something that Ross Thatcher gave us that long ago it was back in '64.

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In 1964 the farmers got an advantage that they bought their fuel for 35 to 40 per cent cheaper than anybody else, and you took that away on them. Today, Reimer from Reimer motor express, who I'm going to be sitting at with a meeting next Monday, he brags how he saves \$12,000 to \$15,000 a truck since you're here. At my expense – at my expense. You've heard that story before. You've taken away that. You brag about the natural gas. Your program can't touch what we would have done in the first year we would have implemented that program.

You talk about tax relief. You talk about tax relief, Mr. Minister. And you give tax breaks to the guys that are paying huge amounts of income tax, but you have nothing for the guy that's not paying any income tax.

Mr. Minister, if you say it's 1,000 per cent better, better for who? Which class of farmers? You named three classifications of farmers. You said those young fellows that are just starting, the medium guy that's been around, and those that have their bills paid. Who's the 1,000 per cent better, Mr. Minister? What farmer? What class of farmers?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. members, I suppose one of the most notable groups that received help in the last budget would be the group of flying farmers who had received no increase in their aviation fuel. I'm sure that's a group that the hon. Member's interested in.

Well, to be even more serious than that, Mr. Chairman, we have helped virtually every group out there, whether they be the beginning farmer, the young farmer who's trying to get established, or even the established farmers. We've helped those who are trying to get into land-intensive operations, those in feedlots, those in livestock, those in irrigation, whatever.

We, by our actions in this House today, have put in another mechanism to help those that are facing the cost-price squeeze. As I said in my remarks earlier today, all the bases are covered.

The hon. member, Mr. Chairman, mentioned power bills. What is our track record on power bills? I'll review it for him.

The first year – froze the rates. Froze them. Zero. Zero. Does the hon. member understand that? A zero per cent increase. But we did more than that, we put in place a Public Utilities Review commission to adjudicate, and be sure that the rates were fair in the public's best interest. That was year one.

And what did we just do this past budget, Mr. Chairman? We took the 5 per cent E & H tax off farm electricity bills. But we went further than that, Mr. Chairman. We went further than that. Because we recognize that the curling rinks and the swimming pools and the recreational complexes out there are very much a part of the rural fibre in this province, important to the community, to the farm community – we wiped the sales tax off electricity bills there as well.

And he has the audacity, Mr. Chairman, to ask what about power bills. And then he raised the issue of purple gas – took away his advantage. What he really meant to say, Mr. Chairman, is: we gave the advantage of no gas tax in this province to everybody. Everybody. Everybody who drives in this province. And if, in fact – and the hon. member from Quill Lakes who, I hope, and the hon. member from Quill Lakes who I hope will screw up his courage and stand in the House and ask some questions, says: no help for the farmers. I would suggest to him that \$120 million in revenue that the sales tax represented . . . I would suggest probably half of that benefit accrues to the rural community – to the rural community.

I would suggest \$50 million, perhaps of that, might accrue to the rural community, and that accrues to the rural community every year; every year since we took power, every year. Money for them to spend, money for them to spend on fertilizers, other farm inputs, chemicals, to be

productive. Not a retrogressive tax.

And now, I hope that the hon. member isn't suggesting, but if he is, make it clear, make it clear to all the people of Saskatchewan . . . It sounds to me like you're in favour of putting the sales tax back on gasoline, and I'm sure the people of Saskatchewan will be interested to hear that.

So, Mr. Chairman, I think you can see, whether the issue be farmers beginning, establishing, facing a cost-price squeeze, whether it be power bills, their gas bill – we've helped in all the areas.

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Minister. You, Mr. Chairman, you've been listening to the questions, and you've listened to the responses. I'd like to suggest to you that I've asked a reasonable question the first time. The second time around I just asked him to define what he meant by his 1,000 per cent increase. Who is 1,000 per cent better off than they were before? You aren't, and you aren't. I'm in worse shape than I've ever been this spring, financially. And if a farmer that is established and has been around for a long time isn't feeling the pinch a little bit, what must a young guy be feeling?

So he said they're 1,000 per cent better off. And all I heard coming from that minister's desk is some braying. You know what animal brays, eh? So I'll go at it nice and easy.

Mr. Minister, if you're going to answer some questions (and if you don't know the answers, please don't generalize), don't say farmers are 1,000 per cent better off, because there's not one farmer, there's not one farmer in Saskatchewan, be he farming 70 quarters of land or 7, that is as good off as he was in 1981 when you took over – not one, not one – in '82. There's not one farmer around. And ask your officials if there is one farmer that's as good as he was in 1982. Ask your officials that one.

You said they are 1,000 per cent better off. Come on, let's get off the . . . (inaudible) . . . I'm not going to use the word. You know what I'm saying – the stuff that comes from the back end of a bull. Let's get away from that, Mr. Minister, because 1,000 per cent – that's what it is. You know, Mr. Minister, let's cut all the garbage, and let's get down to the basics. And my first question was: how bad off are farmers; which group is the worst off; and how many people are sitting on that guy wire you were talking about, where you're putting a safety net under? How many people are involved? That's all I wanted to know. Simple, straightforward. Don't tell me of the people that are 1,000 per cent better off.

We're not questioning whether you won the election or lost it. That's not for debate today. We'll accept the facts of life. And you're the Minister of Agriculture. This is the 30-someth day of the session, the 18th of April. The farmers want to start seeding. Things are tough on the farm. I want to know how many it's tough for. I want to know how many it's tough for. That's . . . Just a general statement is, which farmers' got some problems? Which guy is falling off that wire that you talked about providing a safety net for him? How many are there? You have some expert people that have been around a long time that have been keeping some pretty good records.

I compliment you on bringing some good staff along. And you mention Henry Zilm. I read his columns, and this is the first time, I think, I've seen him. But we get the records and the stats from him all the time. He knows what's going on. If you don't, ask him. But let's get some numbers here today; and let's cut all the rhetoric, and the garbage, and the clichés, and the slogans. We're down to estimates.

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Well, I agree, Mr. Chairman, we should cut out the slogans and the . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, Mr. Chairman, I'm not about to pursue the back end of a bull, as the hon. member talked about in his very serious question there. I'm not about to pursue that, although I do think I might have a treatment for what ails him. But I'm not about to pursue it.

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And I will reiterate: Saskatchewan farmers today are 1,000 per cent better off than they'd have been if your government remained in power. They believe that. I believe that. And they know it.

And secondly, I will give you one example, and I'm sure my officials could provide me with several more of why Saskatchewan farmers are better off today. And this one didn't require one iota of government funds. What it required is an understanding of what the family farm, and what the family ranch really is out there in rural Saskatchewan. It's an understanding that you have never had, and I think Mr. Laxer probably is the only one in your party who has identified the fact that you don't have that understanding.

But we have had on more than one occasion, and I have visited – and I won't give out names because it's personal – we have had more than one person here, ranchers, who want to retire with dignity, sell their deeded land, transfer the lease land with it. Your policies precluded it. Family ranches were being broken up. Family farms were being broken up. Farmer, on one hand, couldn't retire with dignity; on the other hand, young farmers and young ranchers out there who wanted to take and make that operation go, couldn't do it.

We changed the rules. We acknowledged what exists out there in Saskatchewan, whether it be in the ranch sector or the farm sector, because we, on this side of the House, believe very much in the family farm and family ranch, because that's part of the heritage of this province. And I would hope that you . . . I would hope that the lights would click on over there and you will see that, and acknowledge that. But the best part about something like that is, Mr. Chairman, is that it doesn't require one iota of government funds. All it requires is something.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Minister, during my term since '71 we changed the rules on lease land; and why do you suppose those rules were changed? What was happening? What was happening in the lease land, in the area of lease land that the rules were changed, and that a point system was developed? Why was that put into place?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Whatever you did in terms of changing the rules was no adequate. What I saw happening, to be quite honest with you, was, first of all, the things I talked about, family farms and ranches were not being able to be passed on in terms of an intergenerational context.

But worse than that, what was happening with your policies that were in place, farmers and ranchers were, because of the one-section limit, what did they do? It wasn't a viable operation that way. The first thing that rolled out there was those big four-wheel drive tractors, the big four-wheel drive tractors, and they ripped up that grazing land, ripped it up. And it's blowing away today probably. That's what your policies did.

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Minister, you know and you're afraid to admit, and you don't admit, that lease land, if it was attached to a little parcel of deeded land, the parcel of deeded land could be picked up by a large operator, and that lease went into the holding, went along with it. And what was happening is holdings were getting larger and larger and larger, and we were actually eliminating farms. We were eliminating farms. So the theory there . . . don't go back. If it was overdone, and it didn't keep up with the times; you could have adjusted it. But the theory there was that I met with approval of the cattleman's association. We had meetings with the lease committee of different groups, and sat down and talked to them and came up with a system. I sat on that agriculture committee, and so did my colleague from Pelly.

Mr. Minister, we were in the program to try and preserve those lease units that existed. And you could never point and say that that system, that farm was broke up, and it wanted to be transferred to a son. That interfamily wasn't tied up. But I'm not worried, I'm not concerned about your policy regarding lease land. I'm concerned with your policy that you say

you now have the magic solution for intergenerational transfer of farm land.

When you look at the agricultural economy that exist, what would you say, what would you say is the average selling price? How many quarters of land can you buy under your program? How large a unit can you transfer from one generation to another? With your program, the Farm Purchase Plan, how big a unit will that accommodate if the assessment is, at average, \$33,000 a quarter?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — The — and I'm working from memory, but I can get the more exact figures if the hon. member wishes them — but, Mr. Chairman, my understanding is, for example, the farm purchase program, the average size transaction, at least that we rebate, is something in the range of \$110,000. Whether that's ranch land or cultivated land, as the hon. member will understand, that would . . . They all trade at different values and, in fact, in different areas and for different classes. But the bottom line, Mr. Chairman, is that that intergenerational transfer is happening out there.

And secondly, because of the manner in which that program is set up, we don't encourage them to get in over their head. We give them the leeway, if necessary. We don't encourage them to get in over their head. And I think that's called responsible government.

They haven't gone, even though the program limit is up to \$350,000. As I've said before, the average is around 110 or 120,000, something in that range. It seems to me that we've got a lot of responsible young farmers out there who are trying to get started and are doing a good job, and they're getting started because we put some 8 per cent money in place.

And quite frankly, the only criticism I've heard of that program, the only criticism I've heard did this: why wasn't it put in place sooner? That is the saddest part of all, Mr. Chairman. Why wasn't it put in sooner? They say to me, the young farmers out there say to me: why wasn't a program like this put in place in '78, '79, when interest rates shot up? And that's the tragedy. That was the tragedy out there.

MR. ENGEL: — I suppose, if you're going to talk about why wasn't it in place sooner, I'd just like to share with the minister that I sat at a barber-shop last Saturday with a farmer from my constituency. He lives in my constituency and farms in the Shaunavon constituency, so you might even guess who it is. And he told me that he never paid more than \$15,000 a quarter for any of his 45 quarters of land. Never paid more than 15,000 for any of his 45 quarters.

Now I could say to him, I could say to myself, "Boy, I wish I would have had the chance to go farming when I was this person's age, that I could have bought my land for \$15,000 a quarter. I wish I could have done that, because then I could have a unit that I could afford to operate."

And you know, if you're going to go back an wish and why, let's go back a long way. But you are saying that the average size unit you set up is about \$110,000. He's got \$8,800 worth of payments on interest. He's got \$8,800 worth of payments on interest.

I kind of tried to get a number, s size of unit from you on that. You're talking, and you're calling this the saviour of the intergenerational transfer of land. This is the salvation to the farmer that wants to retire. His son's going to buy his farm. How big a farm will you transfer with \$110,000? How large a farm? How big a farmer can get out of farming? What are you going to do for the average-sized farm in Saskatchewan?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Well, Mr. Speaker, given that we were using public funds, it seemed sensible to concentrate on those who should have the help, and who, I think, the taxpayers out there would support in terms of having help. So we focused that money on the beginning farmers, the guys just getting started, and on those who maybe had some smallholdings but wanted to expand and make it into something more of a viable operation.

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As well, of course, we wanted to help the . . . assist on the intergenerational transfer. The \$100,000 or \$110,000 – in so far as how much that buys, it depends on what kind of farmland you're looking at. And of course that might not be the total note, but the important thing is it was what they wanted; it was how much they wanted. Some of them maybe did not want to buy 10 sections or whatever; it was how much they wanted. We didn't interfere with that important determination in terms of servicing that debt because we don't believe in getting people in over their heads.

And I would suggest it's working. First of all, we've had 2,500; secondly, something in the range of 50 per cent, or perhaps more, are, in fact, within the family transactions. And something in the same range in terms of percentage are first time owners of farmland. So on every count I think it's working.

If you're asking me why we didn't put that in place for all the established farmers and the big farmers out there, the answer is quite simple, I think if you'd have just thrown money at that problem and given everybody 8 per cent money, I think there is some good reason to expect that probably what would have happened is all we would have done is elevate land prices out there – much like the land bank was doing when they were out there with the biggest wallet in the country, the \$40 million wallet. They were just pushing the market for all it was worth. And young farmers who were bidding against the government wallet became very discouraged and frustrated, because every time they went to bid for a quarter of land there was the government wallet just jamming them.

We didn't want to cause a benefit in terms of 8 per cent money to just be lost in increased capitalization of land values. And I think on every measure we've done that. In fact, we haven't pushed land prices up out there, and that's why we didn't put that money in the hands of the big farmers, if you like, out there. We wanted to do it sensibly and not distort the market, not distort the market like you did with the land bank, where you drove up land prices 700 per cent over the tenure . . . In fact, I think it might even be higher than that – 700 per cent.

And I filed the last land bank report in this Assembly just the other day – the last land bank annual report – and I'll tell you, they almost wanted to declare a national holiday in Saskatchewan. That's a great day, to file the last annual report of that dismal exercise in backwardness, that last report in the state control of farming in this province. It was a great, day and it was with a great feeling of pride that I tabled the last annual report for the land bank.

Getting back to the farm purchase program, it's accomplished everything we set it out to be. It's been a program that's been so successful they write about it in Alberta. Ontario goes further than that. They copied it. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

MR. ENGEL: — Don't 'we have to . . . Isn't the process of estimates asking questions and getting answers? You know, are we starting a new precedent here? I asked you a simple question. I'm waiting for an answer.

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — If I didn't answer you question . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I'll ask you to ask it again, then.

MR. ENGEL: — I'll ask you one simple time. I asked a short question. I got a seven-minute lecture about everything except the question. He said his farm purchase program is the answer, is the solution, is the bandage, is the package – you can call it what you want – but it's the vehicle to create an intergenerational transfer of land.

All I want to know is: how large a parcel of land is transferred with \$110,000? How large a unit, or how small a farmer do you have to be to retire, to be able to use this vehicle for an intergenerational transfer?

You get small farmers. The member for Pelly, and even Quill Lakes, says too many big ones. But in Pelly there are more farmers that might fit. But there are very, very few in my constituency – very few. I don't think 1 per cent of the farmers would settle for an intergenerational transfer for \$110,000.

I want to know how many quarters of land, roughly, on the average, when you divide in \$110,000 into the 2,500 guys you gave loans to, it come to \$110,000. When you divide the quarters of land that they purchased, how many quarters of land do you come up with? What is the average?

If you can't give me that, Minister, we'll just take a little time till we get that.

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — My best advice is that on the average it's 250 to 300 acres. But I can only repeat that the range is broad because of the fact that in some cases \$100,000 might buy a lot more pasture land than it would cultivated land that's assessed very, very high.

I only repeat again, Mr. Chairman, for the hon. member's benefit, the important thing is it allowed them to buy what they wanted to buy. And that's a very important feature.

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Minister, where in Saskatchewan, under your farming practices, can a young farmer starting out, live on, support a family, make his payments, pay his fuel, pay his purchase or rental on equipment – he's not going to buy any, so his rental on his equipment – and still pay \$88 an acre interest to your program, and make a go?

Tell me! And get your expert in the statistics field to come up with that solution, because with 200 acres of land, that 8,800 bucks is \$44. You seed half; you seed half. That's \$88 an acre interest – no principal, no farming costs, no living costs – and you tell me this is a successful program. Mr. Minister, wake up! This is 1984. This is 1984. Tell me who can make a living and pay you and your program \$88 an acre on 200 acres of land, and make a go. I want to meet that young fellow. I'm going to hire him to run my farm. I'll hire him to run my farm, and I'll pay him \$88 an acre to do it.

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, the hon. member asked me who could farm. Well perhaps he'd like me to read into the record two letters that I received from two who obviously think they can farm. And I won't give out their last names, but the letters go something like this:

Today I received a cheque, \$5,038.63, as part of your government's policy to reduce the interest on my loan with FCC to purchase land. Even though my payment is not due till spring, it was a great help. Thank you. I did have some concern about the way the rebate would be operated. It appeared I would have to make the total payment, then apply for a rebate. In the spring, with other costs, the waiting period for the processing would really hurt. You and your fellow colleagues must be commended for this foresight. It is like a breath of fresh air not to have a number of papers to fill out as other administration s do.

Well there is one person. You asked. A second one:

On behalf of my husband, Walter, and myself, we would like to extend a sincere thank you. We were recently in receipt of our first interest rebate grant payment from the Farm Credit Corporation. It is most welcome, as we young farmers need to meet our spring payment. This money will collect interest in our bank account until our payment is due May 1, '84. It certainly has put a smile on our faces, and we'd just like you to know we appreciate it.

Those are the kinds of young farmers that we're helping out there.

MR. ENGEL: — Well, what do you say? You ask a minister a question, and he reads some flowery . . . (inaudible) . . . I wasn't talking about the farmer that had a son that wanted to get in farming with him, and use this interest reduction program to expand their unit. I'm not talking about those. You said, and I heard you very distinctly, that you have the solution to intergenerational land transfers; and I'm saying that's a bunch of hog-wash, because the only solution you've got, the only solution you've got, is to a young fellow that's my age, he's got a couple of boys that want to get into farming. They can get up to \$350,000 to expand their unit to involve the boys on their farm. They can get \$350,000 to expand their unit because old pop will put up the collateral, and they can get some cheap interest money to buy some land. That, I'll say, works. That, I'll say, works.

When you changed it over, you didn't hear too many complaints from me, when you broadened it to go to the credit union and get your money from the credit union, because that avoided a lot of red tape.

I was asking you: have you a program in place for the farmer that's 70 years old? He's farming five quarters of land. I'll give you his name if you want it. His land's worth half a million dollars. His land's worth half a million dollars. That's all he's got to retire, and that's a pretty fair retirement package, because if he gets his half a million dollars he can come to Regina, or Saskatoon, or Medicine Hat, or wherever he wants to go, buy himself a house for \$100,000 and he still has a nice little nest-egg that he feels comfortable about, that he can live on. That's all he's got. Make an auction sale and get another 30 or 40,000, 50,000 bucks – 60,000 if he doesn't have Brown sell it for him. I'm asking you, where does that guy go to get an intergenerational transfer of funds, where does he go to get money to have a young fellow come and start farming that farm? Where does he go with your program?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Well the 70-year-old farmer who wants to retire is exactly one-half of the players in the land transaction. He wants to retire and sell-out, and through the farm purchase program the young fellow can, in fact, buy that land, and he can do it a lot easier, I would suggest, at 8 per cent, rather than at 20 per cent; and I think the record speaks for itself on that. Rather than put the money in the hands of that farmer, and frankly the 70-year-old farmer I don't know what you would have in mind, but it seems to me that you want to assist the beginning farmer, the young farmer, so he can purchase, in fact, that land from that older generation, whether it be a dad, an uncle, or just the fellow across the road who is 70 years old, who does not have any family, but yet wants to sell-out to some younger guy or an establishing farmer. What can I say except that that's what the program's in place for. I think the statistics I trotted out here earlier to you would suggest that that's happening. The program, by every measure, is a success.

MR. ENGEL: — Could you have one of your officials write out that scenario for me? The farmer is 70 years old. He's got five quarters of land that's assessed at above \$3,000 a quarter – closer to 4,000 than to 3. That's the average. In our country that land is selling for 125 to 130, or \$140,000 a quarter. Say he'll sell it for 100,000 a quarter. He told me he'd sell it for \$100,000 a quarter. He says, "My land's for sale for half a million dollars. I'm looking for a young fellow to come and farm it." He is exactly like you mentioned – he doesn't have any children; his daughter is married to an undertaker; he wants to sell those five quarters of land.

Will you detail for me what he should do, and how much money he'll need to get this person out of risk so he doesn't have any responsibility? He doesn't want to worry who's buying that farm. He doesn't want to lose night's sleep to see if the price of fuel is going to go up still higher under your administration; he doesn't want to wait to see if, after the five years are over, is he going to get his money when the interest jumps to 12 per cent.

But write out a little scenario for me: how much does the down payment have to be; what are his interest payments going to be ; and how much can you get under your 5 per cent program? Have your people figure that one out for me and send it over to me. I've got time. I don't need

that answer right now before I go on to the next one.

But what I suggest to you, Mr. Minister, is you don't have a program; you don't have a program for intergenerational transfer. And every time I ask you any kind of question, you sometimes get up on the defensive and you jump up and you start ranting and raving about the land bank. Why are you doing that, Mr. Minister? Why is that on the tip of your tongue? Why is it every time you turn around you rant and rave about the land bank? Why were you setting aside a Saskatchewan holiday when you tabled the last report? Why is this such a wonderful feature?

And I ask the people of Saskatchewan to consider that and think about it. Why is this Minister of Agriculture, this free enterpriser, so anxious to condemn a program? You deceived this House and misled the people of this House by saying only 151 people qualified under that program. I don't believe you, because I want to read into the record just a few notes. I want to read into the record just a few notes, and I'm going to wait with this one until the member from Moosomin is back in the House, because I think he should hear that one – it comes from his riding.

But I'll start with a letter that I got from . . . and I'm just going to take a second and ask my colleague what constituency that's from.

I've got a letter from the Kinistino constituency. I wasn't sure just what riding that would fit into. It doesn't say the constituency on it. It just gives the name of the town, and I'm not going to give you that. This gentleman writes and says:

I note with pleasure your commitment to readdressing the injustices done to land bank tenants. Security of tenure is certainly essential to a successful land bank system. It is not, however, the only essential. Neither does it constitute the only injustice done to land bank tenants.

As you know, the present government has seen fit to change the rental formula which was agreed to by each of us individually. And this was an integral part of our leases.

I'm going to skip a little bit because I don't want to take the time to read the whole paragraph. But I'll go down here to say that:

Security of tenure is meaningless if our rent can be changed at the whim of the minister. We were assured that no succeeding government would dare tamper with our leases. Experience has taught us otherwise. It has become apparent that you cannot, and, on reflection should not, expect to put in place a system which is unchangeable through the political process.

Therefore, I think the long-term solution is to develop a land banking system that recognizes the aspirations of Saskatchewan farmers with regard to land ownership, and tries to avoid becoming a target of any political party on ideological grounds . . . (inaudible interjection) . . .

Just listen, Mr. Attorney General.

The board of directors of the Saskatchewan Land Bank Tenants Association is preparing a submission to all the political parties containing some ideas about how this might be accomplished. I hope it merits your careful study and I would be pleased to hear your reactions. Thank you again for your concern.

Now, my question is, Mr. Minister: did these 2,700 farmers, through their representation, give you some idea of a kind of a land banking system that they think would solve an

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intergenerational problem? Did you discuss that with them when you were up at their annual meeting? And after you're through telling me that, would you apologize to this House and tell us if there are only 151 members of that association or if there are, in fact, 2,700 members? Be truthful.

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Number one, I was not at the land bank tenants association annual meeting. And number two, if the hon. member would listen, what I have said relative to the 151 is that in 10 years of land bank, only 151 farmers ever became owners of any of that land. I have said that time and time again, and you can check the record of this House. I'd ask you to do that.

Now I'll attach one caveat, because I've used those numbers and there may have been three or four more transactions that took place that were in this last annual report that I may not have acknowledged. So I'll give you that much. But if it's 154, it's still no doodah — 154 in 10 years. And if you want to talk about the number of lessees, 2,750 or 2,800 or whatever the number is — something in that range — it's still a dismal record, dismal. 2,800 in 10 years? And how many have we helped?

I ask the hon. members around me: how many have we helped in a little over a year? Have we helped 150? No. Have we helped 1,500? No — 2,500, and the number is going up by the week. Now you tell me which is a success. And stand up in this House and don't hide under the protection of reading letters into the record. Stand up in this House and tell the farmers of Saskatchewan you still believe in land bank; stand up in this House and tell them.

And in so far as security of tenure, Mr. Chairman, and hon. member, what I hear from land bank tenants is that now they have the best of all worlds. Number one is, they have security of their lease. The lease agreement is intact and it's going to be honoured and it has been honoured and it will be honoured. But, as well, they have an option that if they want to buy it, they can buy it. Not only that, they can buy it through a Crown sales policy which gives them preferred terms. So they have the best of both worlds.

And not only that, as it comes to the point of rent and lease that you mentioned, what have they been faced with there? Well, last year their rents — absolute dollars that they paid in rent — did not increase. And this year, as you will know, taken in general across the province, Crown land leases come down 3 per cent. I think they have the best of both worlds, of all worlds.

AN HON. MEMBER: — Tell us one of your favourite land bank.

MR. ENGEL: — I will tell you that right now, Mr. Member from Saskatoon Eastview. I have a letter here that says:

I, like many other farmers, voted PC in the last election for various reasons, but I want to assure you that the NDP will again be receiving my vote next election. I am sorely disappointed in Mr. Devine and look forward to the return of Mr. Blakeney.

And he talks here about some others. This is the typical letter I'm getting. Others write. Here's one from the Minister of Finance's constituency. He talks here about . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Mr. Chairman, can I read this letter? This person writes from the Kindersley constituency:

I have been very concerned with what has happened to the land bank since the change of government . . .

And he goes on to pass on a few flowers and kudos that I'm not going to read, but then he says:

I feel this would put more farmers back on the land than any existing program (than any existing program) this government has in place now, because the original idea was to help young farmers take over their father's land. With the high price of land

now, it is impossible to do so. when the next government is formed and the land bank is restored, I hope that . . .

And that's how they go on to write. Another one writes: "Dear Allen:" and this is from . . . I can't say the town. I'm not going to say the town because he'll get into his papers and cancel the guy's land bank lease.

We are in full agreement with your caucus with regards to what Devine and his cohorts have done to the province of Saskatchewan, but the average person really hasn't had enough of what the Tories can do to the economy. It seems that the people really have to suffer before they learn. After the next election and the NDP are back in power, some of the things I would like to see are, number one . . . number two . . .

And he lists four things here. And this person is concerned, and he's assured of what's going to happen. Another person writes. Oh, this is from the Attorney General's riding.

We are totally in agreement with your views and are terribly disappointed by the present government's indiscriminate methods of governing our province.

And then he put another little kudo in there I'm not going to read.

One reason this government is succeeding in destroying the land bank so easily. . .

And listen to this, Mr. Minister. This comes from a family – one, two, three, four, five, there's six signatures on here, -Mr. Minister. And they write:

One of the reasons the land bank is so easily destroyed perhaps is an indication of the program's uncertainty.

If Mr. Attorney General will listen to this, this is from your riding.

If the Saskatchewan land bank had consisted of 5 million acres, rather than 1 million acres, public outcry would now assure our protection, our security, and the continuity of the program.

That's what the farmers are asking for. The demand for participation was far greater than the program could afford, or even hop to provide. The Blakeney government maintained it was not interested in entering land bank into such a large scale. However, if it had been sold, the Saskatchewan land bank position would now be indestructible like medicare, and like Manitoba's Auto-pak was. The demands justified the program's expansion. The Saskatchewan land bank was, without doubt, the greatest program to come in North America, if not in the world, in this century, for transforming farm from one generation to the next. Never before, never before had young farmers had an opportunity to start farming without having to put up a large down payment.

I'll read on.

If the program had been as unpopular as the Devine government makes itself believe it was, why would a guy always run across a local Tory, free enterpriser, lined up with the rest at the land bank regional office every time land was advertised for leasing? It may just take the free enterprisers the remainder of their term in office to come up with an answer to that one. We are behind you all the way, and look forward to having you back in office after the next election.

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Signed by 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 people – 8 people from the Attorney General's riding.

Another one. And I'm just going to read a small sampling to give an approach of what people are really writing about.

I was really disappointed about the way the Conservative government handled the Crow rate. They didn't do anything, and I think there are going to be some sad farmer a few years down the road.

There are going to be some sad farmers a few years down the road. Now, I wanted to read this one when the member from Moosomin was present, but would you show him *Hansard*, because this person is from the Moosomin riding, and I really think that the Minister of Agriculture should have read this to the member because he got the copy of it.

I have just received and read Dr. Hepworth's letter. I'm going to try to remain calm. I really thought the Conservatives were down to earth people who had some concerns for the farming community.

Some concerns for the farming community, and then he goes on . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . This hand writing looks very good. I wish I could write this nice. I wish I could write this nice. This person goes on to say:

Mr. Birkbeck sat at my table and preached to me for half an hour, telling me how good your operation was going to be for farmers when elected. I should have known he was twisting the truth. Your government hasn't done a thing good for me except cause me heartaches. Mr. Berntson has my letter concerning FarmStart.

I'll go on to the next page.

Your government had no intentions of refinancing, but are just trying to make it look good for the media.

He goes on:

I guess I should just apply for welfare, since your government doesn't want to help in any way. I don't think I've been unreasonable in my request, but no one seems to be paying any attention. My father has gone the second mile for me, but his resources are exhausted.

And he closes this letter:

Isn't there anything that can be done to help farmers like myself? I really felt from your letters that you were sincere, but I need more than a good luck wish, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Chairman, these people introduce their major plank for saving the family farm, and they want to let it pass through the House in a half an hour. They don't want the opposition to take an overnight breather to see what's in the legislation. Is that what I'm hearing from them? Is your legislation so shaky, and is the farm community so bad that they can't wait till tomorrow morning? Is this what you're telling me, Mr. Lawyer from Saskatoon? Is this what you're telling me? Is this what the member is telling me?

I've got another letter here. I want to read one more letter here to let those people know where they had nominations in their constituencies and had thousands of people out, showing that you guys are going down the tube.

He wrote this letter to me:

Dear Allen: I feel your party will be forming the next government by a comfortable majority.

My question is this: do you want the land bank back in the hands of the family farm? That's the question they're asking. That's the question the farmers are asking. That's the question they're asking.

One more letter, and this one is from . . . (inaudible) . . . my neighbour constituency, the curler from Bengough-Milestone. This beautiful typewritten letter . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . No, sir, I have never met this person. He is not . . . as you read you will see he is not politically involved. As I read this to you, this is not an NDP person who write this letter. And he says:

As I sit with my neighbours on coffee row in the morning, and hear the talk of drought, bugs in the grain, wheat prices, grasshoppers, cattle prices, machinery prices, taxes, etc., etc., one wonders, what is so great about being a farmer?

What's so great about being a farmer?

That as one sits on the tractor tilling the soil, raising crops, it's a life compared with no other. I grew up on the farm and when I left home I worked as a machinist . . . (inaudible) . . . and Weyburn, Meadow Lake, and Moosomin, until the spring of 1975 my uncle rented his land to me. I bought the home quarter with the buildings in 1975 for \$20,000. If a man had foresight . . .

And this is what the Minister of Agriculture and I were talking about earlier . . .

. . . If a man had foresight like hindsight, I would have bought the six quarters at the same time that I rented.

He goes on to say:

My uncle and myself sat down and tried to figure it all out. Should he buy this land or shouldn't he. At \$30,000 . . .

At \$30,000 a quarter his uncle was going to give him a genuinely good deal. And you know, in your riding, \$30,000 for cultivated land – you maybe know already what we're talking about. At \$30,000, that is a good deal, Mr. Minister. I was trying to get you to tell me what price of land this \$110,000 . . . (inaudible) . . .

. . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Listen. Listen to this, just be still and listen and you'll hear the whole story.

But at \$30,000 a quarter I couldn't pay for it. The following year as he reached the age of 69, and was wanting to sell before he reached 70 of annuities, he didn't sell. He missed out on the annuities because in January '82 budget he missed it all. He blew it.

We had just discussed the land bank and thought it was a good remedy for our trouble. In this area there is quite a lot of land bank land, and there's been good uses of it as well as abuses of it. In my own case my father wasn't ready to quite farming, and I have younger brothers whom I'd want to eventually farm. And land bank was

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the only way I could start farming.

The only way he could start farming.

I am sitting here now. It's March 1984. I'm trying to plan what to seed, and I don't have any idea of what my rent will be. I've been hearing rumours, and I hope that it's all they are, of the Saskatchewan government selling off the land bank to try and square the deficit. It scares the (blank) out of me . . . (and I'm not going to read this one into the record) . . . and quite a few other farmers down here, to say the least.

In other matters, farm fuel. I sat down the other night and went through my books from 1975 to the present, and this is what it read like . . .

Mrs. Member from Maple Creek, in 1975 his total fuel bill was \$1,575.

. . . total fuel bill, including my car, and it's another example, a 25 gallon barrel of Esso 56 oil . . .

. . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Mr. Chairman, Mr. Chairman . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Order! Order! Allow the member to make his comments.

MR. ENGEL: — The members are quite sensitive because I'm reading a letter I got, a concerned letter that just wrote a couple of weeks ago. In 1975 his fuel bill was \$1,575. A 25-gallon barrel of Esso oil cost \$54. In 1982 he looked in his books – his fuel, excluding his car, \$8,900. From \$1,500 in '75 to \$8,900 in '82. A 25-gallon barrel of the same oil, \$54, \$159.

Farm fuel is one of my major bills and it really hurts; it really hurts. Something should be done to lower the price of farm fuel.

One other thing before I close, and it's the old Crow rate. I appreciate the stand your party took before the last election. They were ahead of their times. They were ahead of their time.

In closing (I will try to get this mimeographed and send it along and I'll read that to you too), it is probably old news to you, but it brings back memories to me of marching outside the parliament buildings when the overfed Mr. Berntson read this.

I support the NDP party, and by the time the next election, I hope that people will have their eyes open to the great hole the Devine government has run us all into. Yours truly.

And you know, the thing that he mimeographed and sent along is the letter that the then minister of agriculture read outside, and that made these land bank tenants so sick:

In legislation itself are very explicit guarantees for your security of tenure of your land you are now leasing.

And he's got a big question mark there. The other part he underlined. He says;

Having the legislation assembly write into the law, this is protection. . .

Another question mark. The bottom line is:

This is a government you can trust. This is not a government that will let you down.

And I can't read into the record what he wrote beside that line, Mr. Chairman.

People from across the province are saying that you took away the only vehicle that was able to be an intergenerational transfer of land. And I'll ask you, one more time, with all the rhetoric aside: of the 1,500, how many were intergenerational transfers where the seller could quite farming and the young mechanic could come back home and start farming? Name one with \$110,000.

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, I just would thank the hon. member for his question. I appreciate him getting to the point as directly as he did.

In so far as naming one, I'm not about to read in the record the correspondence I've received and the names of those people. But as I indicated before, something in the range of 50 per cent — in fact it could even be closer to 60; my officials can tell me if I'm wrong — of the farm purchase program, the people who are getting those rebates are, in fact, first time owners of the farmland.

So while we are faced with bankruptcy statistics that suggest there was 45 farm bankruptcies here last year, the other statistic I think that's even more noteworthy is the fact that of 2,500 young farmers out there, something in the range of 1,250 or 1,300 are, in fact, farmers that we have started. They are first-time owners of farmland. I'll put that number up against the number of bankruptcies any day. So not only have we started just one farmer, we've got 1,200 or 1,300 new farmers in Saskatchewan today because of that program.

MR. ENGEL: — Here's a nice, short, crisp question. I'm talking about intergenerational land transfers. That's why I read 10 letters into the record.

What record has your program got, applying to the program, to a farmer that wants to retire, that you can arrange and orchestrate an intergenerational transfer? How small a farmer can you accommodate, or how large a farmer? How many have you accommodated under that program that actually are intergenerational transfers?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, the limit that we place is on the size of the loan; it's a maximum of \$350,000. That's what we are prepared to rebate. Generally . . . not generally, we just plain do not interfere with the negotiations between the seller and the buyer. Nor do we interfere with the serviceability determination at the lending institutions.

But of course there's nothing to preclude that young farmer from buying \$1 million of land if he wants. All we're saying is that we're prepared to rebate up to \$350,000 of that, and quite frankly, I think we'd be open to some criticism from the thinking people out there if, in fact, we did use the public purse to subsidize purchases of \$1 million worth of farmland. I think thinking would be that if somebody has the resources to purchase \$1 million worth of farmland, he probably doesn't need assistance via the public purse. And so I think the thinking person would, in fact, agree with the program.

MR. ENGEL: — Can we take the statements you say at face value? Can we take the statements . . . and I'm looking at your staff for some response. Will your program work as part of a package that's worth \$1 million? A \$1 million sale?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Yes, as long as his net worth is less than \$300,000, he could go to a maximum of \$350,000 on the bare land.

MR. ENGEL: — Would you run that by me? I'm a little bit slow in comprehending this. There's now from that five quarter land deal that you're going to send me across some time — I kind of hoped I would have gotten it by now. But where you put a finance package together, this is how much he borrows; this is how much interest rates are; here's where he makes his payments; and this is how he can work a \$500,000 deal. Now you're telling me that he can go up to \$1 million. I

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don't quite understand how this is going to work.

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Well what we have said is we are prepared, as a government, to help. And we're prepared to help to a maximum of \$350,000, provided he meets eligibility criteria amongst those of which are things like net worth. But the package that he could look at if he, in fact, meets the other criteria and eligibility criteria, could be much larger than the \$350,000. All we're saying is: as a government, we're only prepared to rebate up to a total, a maximum, of \$350,000.

MR. ENGEL: — Are you saying that a farmer can go to a lending institution — Bank of Commerce, Royal Bank, credit union, whatever; I'll tell you, you can't from Farm Credit Corporation — and he can put a million dollar purchase package together, and that \$350,000 of this will qualify out of your program, will get 8 per cent money, and on the balance of the loan, the other \$750,000; on the balance of that loan, 650; on the balance of that loan, he'll be paying full interest? Is this what you're telling me?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Yes, to be quite succinct about it. However, I would add the caveat that I would think there might be some lenders who would have difficulty with the serviceability aspect of that kind of note, given that for him to qualify for the rebate, his net worth would have to be under 300,000. And there may be instances where their net worth is under 300,000, but they could purchase up to \$1 million.

MR. ENGEL: — As part of the 2,500, how many of the contracts were for more than . . . Let's see. You said the average was \$110,000 a loan that you're supplying a subsidy on. Is that subsidy limited to \$110,000 because of the net worth criteria? I'll wait . . . (inaudible) . . .

Is that subsidy and that \$110,000 limit there because of his net worth criteria cutting out the subsidy factor? You know how it works because, as you're worth more, for every dollar, 2.50 you're worth more, you get a dollar less or something, or is it the other way around? I don't have that in my head. But is that why it's the \$110,000 limit then is actually more money borrowed than that?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — The \$110,000 figure I gave you is a rough average of . . . It's just that. It's an average of what the rebate of transactions are coming in at. And I will endeavour to get for you from my officials here very shortly if, in fact, we have those number is so far as what the average total transaction is, given that only part of it might have been rebated.

And of course some of those transactions might include buildings, or they might have included equipment or whatever else in that deal. But of course we are prepared, at least the farm purchase program, to assist in the bare land aspect. And of course, as you well know, Ag Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan has preferred interest rates in terms for livestock and/ or irrigation development programs.

MR. ENGEL: — Could you have your staff prepare . . . And I realize that they wouldn't have it, and if they have something in that I could change the numbers and the outside limits. But could you have your staff prepare a sheet that would say: from zero to \$100,000 is so many; from 100,000 to 200,000 is so many. And do it in, say, four or five steps up to the million dollar one, and tell us how many loans there were in each category, and about what the average loan would be. Because I've seen break-out sheets like that on land bank statistics.

When land bank reports were in, they would break it out and say: there are so many people rented this much land and had so much on the side; so many were all on land bank land; and so on, down the line. And you had some breakout. So you'd know what kind of farmers you're talking about when you're talking about these 25. Could you endeavour to have some of your staff provide me with that kind of information, please?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — I will endeavour to break-out the statistics that you wish, given that they're relatively readily available. There's a program computer in there, and we'll certainly give you what we can off of it.

MR. THOMPSON: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, I have quite a bit of farmland up there.

Mr. Minister, I'd like to ask you a few questions about the government farms that I believe are under your jurisdiction in northern Saskatchewan. And the farms that I want to ask a few questions about are the Central farm at Green Lake, the Silver farm at Green Lake and the Ile-a-la-Crosse farm. Could you indicate if they are under your jurisdiction at this time?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, yes they are.

MR. THOMPSON: — The questions I want to ask is: do you plan on maintaining or retaining the Central farm at Green Lake? I know that farm was set up many years ago as a training centre and has now expanded into a much larger scope than just training. And you now have two farms in that area – the Silver Lake farm and the Central farm at Green Lake.

Could you indicate if your plans call for maintaining the two farms in Green Lake, and if so, just what your plans are? Are you going to continue to raise hogs and cattle?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — We do plan on maintaining them. And in so far as future programs – our plans, if you like for those farms, are improving the cattle quality and herd size via a standardized breeding program; purchase of feeders; purchase of heifers; plans under way to reduce livestock feed costs through improved forage practices; and salvaging some of the straw and chaff, for example, for livestock feed.

So a short answer would be: yes, we plan on maintaining those farms and, in fact, increasing productivity there.

MR. THOMPSON: — You indicate that your plans call for improving the quality of the herds on the Silver lake farm, I assume. And also you indicate that you want to expand the size of them herds. Could you indicate how many cattle you now are running on the Silver Lake farm?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — I'm sorry, I can't provide that number, and my officials don't have it, but we could undertake to get it for you if you wish. I suspect that given that it's calving season the number is changing on a daily basis, but at the same time I appreciate that you may be looking for the size of the brood cow herd, and I don't have that number.

But I can tell you that late last summer I had the opportunity to go and visit each one of the farms, and assess for myself, if you like, an off-the-top-of-the-fence look at the various farming operations and accept that there is a great deal of potential there. I thin this is very consistent with our plans there, not only to make better use of some of the latest technology is so far as forage is concerned, but also apply some standardized breeding techniques with the introduction of what I consider a good breeding program; and as well, better access, or better use of the land resource there is terms of putting feeders on; and as well, looking at a program for expanding the heifer base.

MR. THOMPSON: — As you know, Mr. Minister, the three farms that we have up on the west side of the province are fairly important projects as far as providing full-time employment to individuals in a depressed area, such as the Green Lake and Ile-a-la-Crosse area. And what you are saying is that your plans are to increase the size of the herds, and to increase the quality. Dos that mean, and can I indicate to my constituents and the individuals who are working there, that their jobs will not be in jeopardy, that the full-time jobs that they have now will remain, and there's a possibility of taking on more staff?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, what I can tell you is the staff complement for 1984-85 is unchanged from '83-84. But at the same time we are, and will be, implementing efficiency measures related to, for example, the livestock winter feeding procedures which would, in effect, reduce labour costs over the winter period; put systems in place that would enable three people to do the work of eight. So although the staff complement is unchanged, that's not stopping us from becoming more efficient.

MR. THOMPSON: — On the Ile-a-la-Crosse farm are your plans to continue to operate that unit as a cow-calf operation, or have you got any other plans for that individual farm?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — My best and latest information is that it will continue to operate as a cow-calf.

MR. THOMPSON: — You indicate that your plans are to increase the size of the herds. Could you indicate then, if your plans are to purchase more land — as you're going to need more feed to handle the excess cattle? Could you indicate if you are going to purchase more land in that area or clear more land, and if so, how much more land do you intend to purchase?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Well, I think our view at this point in time would be to make better use of the existing land resource, and I would suspect that that would mean some cleaning up of some of the pastures, for example. As I recall on my visit up there, there was some clearing that had gone in the years past. It hadn't been piled. It hadn't been cleared properly — not the best of situations. It had been allowed to deteriorate.

But I think there is a resource there, and I think if we use it and use it efficiently, and as well introduce some forages . . . As you will know, we've done some experimental crop evaluations with some forages that we've brought over and grew some of them at those latitudes with some relatively good results, although we're still assessing that. So it's a combination of making better use of what we've had and, in fact, perhaps putting in place some forage problems that give us a better return than what we've had in the past.

MR. THOMPSON: — One final question regarding the Green lake farms. I sent you a letter approximately two or three weeks ago, regarding a problem that existed in the Green Lake farm. Could you indicate if you are going to be taking any action on that letter? I don't want what action you are going to take, but could you indicate if you will be taking action on the letter that I wrote you about three weeks ago?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — I can't recall the details of that letter, and if I haven't got back to you, I will be getting back very shortly to you on that and can address your concerns in my reply to you. But I don't have it here, quite frankly, but I have no doubt that my reply is on the way.

MR. THOMPSON: — Well, for your own information, Mr. Minister, it was a letter regarding the sale of grains on the farm, that individuals on the farm sometimes sell grain to other individuals and there's been . . . Employees have been handling money, and there was a problem that came out of that, and I'm just wondering if you are going to be taking action on that.

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — If we're talking about the same situation, it may have been over meat sales rather than grain sales, but we may not be on the same wavelength on this one, and I'm advised that that particular issue I'm thinking of, in fact, has been addressed.

MR. THOMPSON: — Okay, I want to turn to another area that I believe is under your department now, and that is the wild rice in northern Saskatchewan. Is that right that wild rice harvesting and growing of wild rice has been transferred to the Department of Agriculture?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Well, we consider it an agricultural concern, so we acknowledge it

like we acknowledge any commodity in agriculture, yes.

MR. THOMPSON: — Could you indicate how much staff you now have in La Ronge that is involved directly with the wild rice?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman and hon. member, one agrologist, I believe.

MR. THOMPSON: — Well, Mr. Minister, I want to indicate to the House, and to you, that I feel that the wild rice, the possibilities of growing wild rice and making it an economical crop in northern Saskatchewan, is something that should be enhanced by your department.

I know you have your other member there from Kelvington-Wadena, who got up and gave a long spiel as being the expert on growing of wild rice, and I think that some of the information that he gave to the House was not correct, that the type of wild rice that we were growing in northern Saskatchewan most certainly is not the type of rice that the member from Kelvington-Wadena is growing on his sloughs on his farm. And I just want to indicate that there is quite a difference between wild rice and commercial rice that he was espousing in the House to be an expert on.

But I think it's an important part of the development of northern Saskatchewan and as a cash crop for individuals who are trappers and fishermen and tourist operators, because I feel that one complements the other. They plant the wild rice in areas where they trap their muskrats and it has a tendency to bring more rats into that area and, as a result, it's beneficial in two or three ways to the Northerners.

I would just ask you, Mr. Minister, to continue to provide the type of technical services that individuals who are getting involved in wild rice need. And over the past three or four years that they have started growing wild rice up there — I, not being a farmer myself, but knowing a lot of farmers — it seems to me that when you are growing wild rice, you have to become a farmer there. There's so many different things there. The crops can freeze on them, the water gets too high, or the cultivation of the bottom of the lake beds, there's just so much that they should learn. And I think that it can only come from your department because to me it's just like farming, and it's something that any individual who is getting involved in rice has a lot to learn, the same as any farmer starting out growing grains. And I would ask you to comment on that, and also to provide the type of expertise that individuals who are getting into the rice industry should have available to the, the same as any farmer in the south who has the type of expertise available to them.

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, I thank the hon. member for his comments and questions, and they're well taken. And, in fact, I think we are very much on the same wavelength. I think this government's commitment to the wild rice industry, and its acknowledgement as part of farming and part of agriculture, was amply demonstrated when I, along with my colleague from Kelvington-Wadena, was able to attend the first annual meeting of the wild rice growers association, and it was particularly encouraging for myself, as Minister of Agriculture, as it was I'm sure for my colleague, to be at that meeting with, as I recall, something in around the range of 50, 300 people there.

And it wasn't only that it was a crowd. They were enthusiastic, they were excited. You could sort of feel the dynamism of the moment there. First annual meeting — a very exciting and energetic crowd. And I think, as well, our government's commitment, and I can only congratulate everyone who is involved, whether they be growers or our extension staff, agrologists, there's many, many fine people involved in that whole wild rice area; and I think it's typified by the high quality of ad that appeared in *showcase USA, the Magazine of American Export*, inside front page cover: "Wild Rice from Saskatchewan, Canada."

And this is literally an international magazine. It's first-rate. Talks about the . . . World-class in

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terms of quality, and I agree with the hon. member about the quality of wild rice in northern Saskatchewan, and of course you'll know that, in fact, the Premier and other of my colleagues were at the opening of the plant up there. I've described it as perhaps the cinderella crop of the '80s. If canola was the cinderella crop of the '70s, then perhaps wild rice will be the cinderella crop of the '80s. I think it has that kind of potential. And I guess what I like most is that it's the people that are making it happen. It's not happening because of government. We, obviously, are prepared to offer extension services and work with them, and we have done that, and we've got some just fine people up there working with that. I think even other farmers recognize exactly what you're saying, that it is farming, and I suppose that was no better . . . no better example could I provide for you than that the farmer-run agricultural research fund, in fact, approved projects relative to wild rice harvesting. And, in fact, I was able to make that announcement when I was at the wild rice growers' meeting. And as well, I'm advised that we're in the throes of negotiating with the federal government a Northlands agreement, and wild rice is very much a part of that.

So I, for the most part, concur totally with you. I think this ad, this first-class, world-class, quality kind of advertising that's going across the world, as part of the Saskatchewan Indian Agricultural Program Inc., is letting everybody else know about that world-class product, along with the many other world-class products that we grow and raise in Saskatchewan – this being just another one of them.

MR. THOMPSON: — Well, Mr. Minister, I fully agree that it could be a cinderella crop, but I just want . . . What I was asking you was: would you make available the type of expertise that they are going to need to be able to harvest the amount of acres that they have planted?

If one goes and takes a look at the leases that are planted up in northern Saskatchewan now, you will find that there are thousands and thousands of acres that have been planted and yet all these here individuals who are rushing to get leases and to plant these crops just don't know how to handle it. They don't know how to harvest it. I have seen many of them this fall – this last fall – when the harvesting took place, had individuals out there because they didn't have the type of equipment they needed. But they would send individuals out there to try and take this crop off. It was green and, you know, they were banging it into a canoe, and it just didn't work.

There is so much to learn. It most certainly is not harvested like a crop in the South. It has to be harvested every third day and it has to be harvested three times in successive days. All these things, they have to be learned. There were some real good crops that were lost because they didn't know when it was ripe. Didn't really know how to harvest it.

And this is why, Mr. Minister, I feel it's so important for your department to provide the type of expertise – and I agree that you have some people up there, but I think you're going to have to put more people into the field because it's such a large area and it's scattered all over – to make sure that they recover as much of that crop as possible.

I just think that it is important, as you indicated, but I would ask you to make sure that they have enough individuals up there to make sure that they learn how to plant and how to harvest and everything that goes with getting that crop in to the refinery where it finally goes out to sale.

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Yes, I'll give you that assurance that we'll endeavour to do our utmost in making sure that they do have access to the expertise they need, and your points regarding harvesting, the timing, given that recovery rates are relatively low, and wind storms and all those kind of things can affect it. And, of course, I can only say once again, that's why I suspect that was the thinking behind the agriculture research board who administers that fund in terms of advancing moneys for research relative to harvesting.

And I want to tell you, as well, and assure you, as well, that we have a lot of support in the

government benches for that industry. It's broad-based support. I think everybody recognizes the importance of that industry. I myself have had a chance first hand to view wild rice and its growing and where it grows. And certainly I will give you that assurance that we'll do everything we can to see that production and harvesting expertise, in terms of extension services, is made available.

MR. THOMPSON: — One final question, Mr. Minister. I wonder if you would get your department to look at the possibility of setting up an office in the Buffalo Narrows area because that is where the thrust is now, on that west side. There is a tremendous amount of wild rice that has been planted in that area, and I think that this is where we need to have that expertise right in the field. And I wonder if you would take a look at setting up an office in Buffalo Narrows or in that central area to provide the expertise that's needed right in that west side?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, and hon. member, yes, we could prepare to take a look at that suggestion. And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Chairman, I would, too, like to introduce other officials that have joined us: Carl Folk, sitting at the back here, director of personnel; and Jim Webster, director of farm purchase program, down beside me here – additional officials that have joined us here.

MR. ENGEL: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before I get back into trying to get a couple of answers from you, Mr. Minister, there's something that's been concerning me, and that is lack of getting response and information in the orders we have in here.

Last night we spent three hours trying to get some question that was six months old. On the order paper, on page 2, Mr. Minister, my colleague from Shaunavon is asking the Assembly for a copy of a study submitted to the Government of Saskatchewan by Dr. Andrew Schmitz on the future of cattle feeding in Saskatchewan. Has this study been completed, or is a copy of this available? Why do we have to go to such detail? And as members of the Legislative Assembly, we can't get a copy of this, and we go to the order forms and everything else?

And yet, Mr. Minister, if you listen, I want to show you something. An ordinary person wrote a letter and got a copy in the mail. He got a copy in the mail. One of our staff got a copy. And here we've had it on the order paper, and we just can't get you people to answer questions. Why should the public be able to pick up and write a letter and get information in the mail, because this has been made public and there's been news reports and stuff about this?

And we've been wanting . . . And through these motions for returns (not debatable), the other question about your trips were on there. And last night, Mr. Minister, last night the Attorney General grouped you with the high rollers in your cabinet. I stood up in your defence, and I say the member, formerly from my constituency, has a better reputation than that. And I'm sure when you travel outside of the province that you wouldn't be afraid to disclose what you spent on miscellaneous items that were in there.

And maybe I should ask you, and we can get some information here. We can't get it in question period, but can . . . Does it take that long to get the information that we asked for six months ago? Does it take that long? Have you travelled that many times out of the province, that we can't get that information from you? How many trips have you made outside of the province in the period that was indicated there from . . . (inaudible interjection) . . .

Never mind, I'm asking the minister: how many times have you represented the farmers outside of Saskatchewan between April 1 and December 7? Is that a difficult question? How many trips have you had outside the province in that time?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman . . . (inaudible interjection) . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Order, order. Order! Allow the Minister of Agriculture to answer the question.

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HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, as you will know, in answer to your first question, the Schmitz-Rosaasen report was, in fact, just hot off the press. I think it was last week. And I have no difficulty in providing you with a copy of that today. I have no problem in providing that with anyone who would want a copy of it. I think it's an extremely well done report. Not only is it a summary of the constraints as they see them, but more importantly, offers up some solutions.

In so far as the questions as it relates to what's on the order paper, we'll work through them all in due course and provide whatever answers are required of us.

MR. ENGEL: — The simple question was: why do you feel that it's easier to answer the questions six or seven months later than it is now? I had a research person write for this and give his home address. He got the book. When our colleagues who officially represent the people of Saskatchewan put an order on the question, we're still getting adjournments and adjournments, and we can't get the material. Something is the matter with this system when we can't get the information in this House, but the public can get it and have it available. Something is the matter with your system. Something is desperately the matter.

So the simple question I asked is: how many trips did you make outside of the province between April 1 and December 7 of last year? How many trips did you make outside of the province?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — First of all, as it relates to you not getting a copy because of a question on the blues, I suspect it's strictly a mechanical thing in our office, as far as getting the reports one day and answering all the requests that we had in abeyance. And to accommodate you, at least on that one, I'll ask one of the pages to take your own personalized copy of the Schmitz-Rosaasen report over to you.

In so far as the number of trips and whatever other relevant information that you may want, we'll provide that in due course. But quite frankly, right off the top of my head right now, I couldn't give you that answer. But my officials are prepared to work it up, certainly.

MR. ENGEL: — Well the question was on the order paper since December 7th last year. You've had two weeks less than a half a year. What, in your terminology, would be "due course"? You haven't had the experience of sitting in opposition so I can forgive you for part of it. And I'll use the member for Swift Current techniques and say, maybe you need a little lesson. Maybe we should have a little lesson, or use a formula.

But I'd like to ask the minister: what would you consider would be "due course"? The question has been on the order paper for six . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . That's not true.

The question I have first off: what would you consider is a good minister of agriculture representing an open government? What would you consider is due course? What kind of time lag are we looking at?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — When it's ready; whatever has been House tradition; I've got nothing to hide. When it's ready we'll give it to you.

MR. ENGEL: — If you get yesterday's *Hansard* — and they're not in here yet; I imagine they're around — and I could read what I said in the record. And I think I can repeat it pretty close.

I said that the Minister of Agriculture doesn't have anything to hide. I think it's a disgrace to put you in the same kettle of fish as people that have been around the world three and four times in two years. I think your travels have been ones that have been missions on behalf of farmers to: (a) try and save the Crow rate; (b) try and get us a better price for our grain; (c) look for some markets for our cattle, or whatever you've done.

We as farmers want you to get out and be a super salesman for Saskatchewan. And we'd like to know about how many times have you left the province in that time period from April 1 to December 7th, or as it is in the blues here. The question has been around for two weeks less than six months – five months and two weeks – and you say you can get us this answer in “due course”. What would you consider is “due course”? I'll keep asking that question till you can think of an answer.

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — “Due course” means exactly just that: in due course; when it's available; when it's ready.

In so far as where I've been – and I can't recall all the places I've been, but they've been few outside the province. Because quite frankly, my theory as Minister of Agriculture (and I think certainly the colleagues on this side of the House) is that my first obligation is to get around and talk to the farmers of Saskatchewan. I think we've had some success at that.

In fact, when your honourable seat mate there was up on his feet, I indicated at that time that I and others of my colleagues have been into Ile-a-la-Crosse and Cumberland House, into Meadow Lake and up to the farms north of Meadow Lake. I've been in Crestwynd. I've been in Lumsden. I've been in North Battleford. I've been in many, many . . . And last night I was in Wood Mountain – to a capacity crowd, I might add. And they were particularly thrilled . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: — They came there just to hear you. No other reason.

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Yes, the hon. member is quite right. They did come there to hear me tell them about the Livestock Investment Tax Credit, which is very high on their minds out there and something that they did want to know more about. And it, frankly, was well received, and my only regret is that I couldn't have spent longer there. I'll go on at no greater length about their local MLA.

But my theory and my practice, quite frankly, has been to get around in Saskatchewan as much as possible, and my trips have been very infrequent outside of the province. But I'll be happy to detail them for you as soon as possible – in due course.

But, I mean, I can think of an occasional trip to Ottawa, relative to national red meat talks. I think one trip into Alberta, but certainly they've been far and few between. But we'll certainly get that to you in due course.

MR. ENGEL: — Yes, it's remarkable that it would take six months to catalogue two or three trips the minister has made. As your critic, I tend to watch what you're doing.

I'm not into a special category that I can keep track exactly all the time, but when you're travelling abroad, when you're travelling outside of the province, are you concerned with indicating and making public what you would spend on entertainment, say? Would that be of concern to you, the money you use from the public purse that you spend on entertainment? Would that create a problem for you to expose that amount?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — I'm always concerned, whether it's on what I'm doing or what my department is doing, on how we spend public funds. We are always concerned about that. And my view is always to get the biggest bang for our dollars.

And quite frankly, I think the hon. member if he — and he alluded to it earlier – if he even kept a little notebook and put some check marks in it. I think you mentioned there's been 38 sitting days in this most recent session. I would ask you how many days have I not been in this House to answer your questions in question period? How many days? How many days have I been away?

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My best recollection is, I think I've missed one. I think I missed one. So what that would tell me – and I think what it should tell him – well I'm certainly not jetting around the world spending public funds willy-nilly. I'm either serving the farmers of Saskatchewan in this House or I'm out there listening to what they have to say. And I would think that, that I would like to ask you that: how many days have I not been in this House to answer your questions, as irrelevant as they may be?

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Minister, I don't mind reversing the load, and I'll say, none. Last night I made public, and I said, as far as the Minister of Agriculture is concerned, he's reputable and above board. I'd give you my credit card to go on a trip on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. And I wouldn't be afraid that that could be, every dollar could be accounted for. That's as accountable as you are.

Do you know that last night in this House the Attorney General amended your question that was about you, to group it into a global budget as though you had something to hide. I asked you a straightforward question. Are you ashamed of the expense accounts you've been turning in that relate to entertainment? And I'll answer that question for you. You're not, because you're an hon. minister. I agree with it. I suggest you haven't made one trip at the expense of the taxpayer that wasn't a worthwhile trip. I'm suggesting that. And if you were in the House for every question period, that's bad news for the farmers because you should be out selling Saskatchewan. I'm not arguing that. I'm not arguing that.

And what I'm asking you is: last night on your behalf, for a question I asked about you, the Attorney General decided you had something to hide, and he grouped all your travel expense into one global figure, along with all the staff that worked with you, because he said you have something to hide. He said you weren't willing to disclose.

I will tell this House that you are willing to disclose. You and I, either one of us, are not ashamed to photocopy an expense allowance and pass it out, and say: when we're living off the public purse, this is what we're doing.

And the point I was trying to make, I asked the question about four ministers. Two, I suggested – you and the minister in charge of crop insurance – wouldn't be afraid to disclose it. But because there are some ministers that are afraid to disclose it, they group you in the kettle with the rest of them. And I think that's bad news for you, Mr. Minister, because you have a better reputation out in Saskatchewan than that. And that's why I asked these questions – not because I think you're hiding something, because I know you're not. You are . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Order. Order. The member is certainly allowed to ask the minister for any expenses incurred in travelling outside of the province, but he's not allowed to bring into this debate any debate previous in this House on the blues.

MR. ENGEL: — Are you saying that in estimates from now on, if I raised that in a question period earlier, I can't raise it in question period?

MR. CHAIRMAN: — You can ask the minister for his expenses for travelling out of the province or in province – any travelling expenses for the minister – but he can't reflect back onto past debates.

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Chairman, I appreciate your ruling and I will abide by that. But if you were telling me, if you were telling me that we, in estimates, all of a sudden can't raise an issue that's been raised in this House in some other area, that's pretty tough. That is some new rules and we're breaking some new ground and I don't want to move on that as though I've accepted that kind of ruling. Am I misreading your ruling?

MR. CHAIRMAN: — You can certainly raise the issues, but you can't reflect on the debate –

previous debate.

MR. ENGEL: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will not reflect on any debate that we had earlier in this House. Mr. Minister, there's only about three or four trips we're talking about. Is it impossible for you to . . .

AN HON. MEMBER: — Will you? Will he?

MR. ENGEL: — Okay, I'll start all over again. Will you not tell us how many trips you've had outside of this province in the time frame April 1 to December 7? Is that that big a job? Can the minister not tell us? Six, seven, two, five, one, three – what is the number?

MR. KATZMAN: — Mr. Speaker, I understand that anything that is on the blues is not normally answered in the House if it's been put on the blues. Am I incorrect or . . .

MR. CHAIRMAN: — The member's point of order is not well taken. They're allowed to ask questions on what the minister . . . where the minister has spent in estimates. Mr. Minister of Agriculture.

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Hon. member, I will provide that information in due course and as the House wishes, and obviously the House wished to do it a certain way last night, and I was not here. But as you've said and I've said, I'm not ashamed. Probably the trips I gave you off the top of my head do, in fact, represent my total out-of-province travel, but I don't 'have that. But I will comply with the wishes of the House and in the normal manner desired, and I will, in fact, I'll even wait on my feet while the hon. member from Quill Lakes coaches me on what the next question should be relative to this subject. Because I consider it irrelevant. You consider it irrelevant. I'm not ashamed. You're not ashamed. Let's get onto something that's heavy and high on the minds of farmers out there.

MR. ENGEL: — Mr. Minister, I will ask you point-blank. I want your officials to provide me before we get off of vote 1: the number of trips you've had outside of Saskatchewan, what members of your staff or department went with you, how much you paid on their behalf regarding . . . how much the expense accounts showed that each individual spent for the following items – and I will check my notes here to reflect on each individual's – airfares, hotels, meals, taxis, gifts, gratuities, entertainment, expenses, and miscellaneous. Under those categories, I would like that answer. And we'll stay on vote 1 until we get it.

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, it will be provided in due course as the House wishes.

MR. KOSKIE: — What we would like from you, Mr. Minister, you're saying that you're prepared to provide the information as requested on your trips. So what we are asking you is to give us the number of trips that you have taken out of province, and I want you to provide for us in each case the dates over which the trip was made, the destination . . . (inaudible interjection) . . .

Just a moment. I'm dealing with this. Just a moment.

AN HON. MEMBER: — Point of order.

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — I believe you just gave a ruling a minute or two regarding the blues. And I see the member opposite reading directly from them. I think we should abide by your ruling and get on with the issues facing agriculture, as my colleague said.

MR. KOSKIE: — Yes, I want to speak to the point of order. Your ruling had nothing to do with what the Minister of Health is alluding to. You made a ruling in respect to the nature of the debate and the comments of the debate and the allegations in respect to conduct of other members.

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What I am asking here has nothing to do with the blues. I may have the blues in my hand. But what I am simply asking the minister is to provide a specific type of information, and that is all I am doing. And surely, on estimates, it's up to the minister, because what are they trying to hide? All I am asking for is particular information. And I'd like your ruling on that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: — The point of order isn't well taken.

The whole management of a department may be discussed in a general way when the committee is considering the first item of the Estimates of that department, which reads as follows: "Vote 1 – Administration", but the discussion must not be extended to any particular item mentioned in the Estimates of that department. If, however, the words "General Administration" cover all expenses to be incurred during the year by that department, it is relevant to discuss every phase of the department totally or in detail.

MR. KATZMAN: — On page 9 of Tuesday, April 17, 1984, the whites of what was voted on last night, the House instructed the minister to answer a question in a specific way. And that was passed and agreed to in the House. Are you now suggesting that he's supposed to change that again?

MR. CHAIRMAN: — Order. I've already ruled that you cannot refer to the debate from last night, and the questions are in order.

MR. KOSKIE: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What I would like the Minister of Agriculture, since he indicated he had obviously nothing to hide, is to provide for us – since he has been appointed Minister of Agriculture . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . that's right – up till now, I'd like him to provide to us the number of out-of-province trips made by the Minister of Agriculture. I'd like him to provide in each case the dates over which the trip was made, the destination of the trip, the purpose of the trip, the name of each person who accompanied the Minister of Agriculture.

And I want you to provide, thirdly, in each case, the total cost of the trip, separated according to each of the following categories for each individual: air fares, hotels, meals, taxi, gifts, gratuities, entertainment, expenses, and any other miscellaneous expenses.

Will the minister who say she has nothing to hide, and it's important that we know the detail rather than the global, and we have made that point so evidently clear previously, will the minister provide that detail of information?

HON. MR. HEPWORTH: — Mr. Chairman, hon. member, I've sat here and I've listened to this petty politics. Quite frankly, I am extremely disappointed. I came here today in good faith to discuss the 1984-85 estimates of the budget of the Department of Agriculture – the '84-85 estimates. Your questions are, for the most part, irrelevant. I have stood in this House and said that I will give those answers as the House wishes and in due course, and that continues to be my position. I would suggest to you that let's get on with the issues facing Saskatchewan farmers today, as they relate to the 1984-85 estimates. I'm quite frankly very disappointed.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The committee reported progress.

MOTIONS

Hours of Sitting

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — By leave of the Assembly, I move, seconded by the Hon. Mr. McLaren, the member from Yorkton:

That notwithstanding rule 3, this Assembly shall, on Thursday, April 19, 1984, meet at 10 o'clock a.m. until 1 p.m.

Motion agreed to.

House Adjournment

HON. MR. TAYLOR: — Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. member from Yorkton, Mr. McLaren, by leave of the Assembly:

That when this Assembly adjourns on Thursday, April 19, 1984, it do stand adjourned until Tuesday, April 24, 1984.

Motion agreed to.

That Assembly adjourned at 5:04 p.m.