

EVENING SITTING

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure
Urban Affairs
Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 24

Item 1 (continued)

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Minister, can you tell me whether your department has paid for any polling or any similar kind of research in the fiscal year last?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — No.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you. Do you have provisions in the budget we're now considering to pay for any polling?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — We don't plan to do any.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you. Mr. Minister, I don't know whether you have it with you. If you do, just pass it over and it'll save time. And if you don't, if you would give me an undertaking that you will provide it for me later. But does your department hire any consultants or architects to do work on behalf of the department? And if it does, can you provide me with a list of those that did some work for you in the last year?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — There was some consulting work done with regards to conducting investigations in, I believe, two or three municipalities. I will provide that information to you as soon as I can, but that was all that was done.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — You don't have it with you at the present time?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — I have some information here, but I want to check it before I pass . . . It's the first time I've seen it. So that I will pass it to you. It may not come tonight, but it will come to you as quickly as I can get it to you.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — I find that . . . That's quite adequate. Can you at the same time provide, when you provide that information, the amount that was paid for the contract that these people did for you?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Whatever information is appropriate to pass, I will certainly provide that to you.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — I don't think there would be anything inappropriate in giving us information on how much a consultant would have been paid. It'll certainly be public knowledge in the public accounts, so basically what I'm asking for: give me the name of the consultants or architects; the work that was done; and the amount that they were paid. Those are the three items and if you can give me a commitment to do that within the next few days, I will be satisfied.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — I thought I had already given you a commitment to provide you with whatever information I

can that is deemed appropriate. This is the first time that I have seen this particular information. I want to review it myself. I have a couple of questions that I want to ask about it and I will provide you whatever I can as soon as I can.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Okay. I will take you at your word, Mr. Minister, and I will await it. I wanted to ask another question, and that is: can you tell me what advertising your department has done in the last fiscal year and the amount that was expended for advertising purposes?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — What year were you asking about? I already read to the member, one of your colleagues, the '86-87 information. Now were you asking for that again?

Mr. Tchorzewski: — I will get that from him. What I'm wondering is: can you provide me, and if you don't have it handy here right now, at least give me an undertaking that you'll provide it for me some time next week, a list of all the advertising that your department paid for in the last year, and who the agencies were that got paid, and the amount that they were paid in the last fiscal year.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — I will provide the member opposite with whatever information is appropriate. I don't have anything in typed-up form here. This is the first time that I've seen some of last year's figures. I wasn't minister last year, as you know, so I will review this information and I will provide it to you, and give you the indication that I will do that.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Minister, I let you go on the first one, but I can't let you go on this one.

What do you mean, what's appropriate? You either spent some taxpayers' money on purposes of advertising by your department or you didn't. There's nothing that's inappropriate. If you spend \$2 of the taxpayers' money, the taxpayer has a right to know.

Now I'm asking you to give me a list, now, of all of the advertising that your department paid for. There obviously is nothing to hide. If you thought it was worth doing, you shouldn't want to hide it. So will you give me now the advertising your department paid for, who did the advertising, and what were they paid?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — As I indicated to the member opposite, I will certainly provide him with whatever is appropriate to be provided. And I haven't had an opportunity to review any of the data pertaining to advertising. Certainly that which would naturally be made public, I am more than willing to make public, and I will provide that to the member opposite.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Minister, two minutes ago you said you had that information on your desk. It's on the record. Now you're telling me you don't want to provide it because you think that some of it might not be appropriate. Well I want to tell you that if you think that something in your advertising budget that you spent last year is not appropriate, you shouldn't have done it. It would be highly irresponsible of your government to spend money on advertising that you now are holding

from the public. I'm asking you: I want, and this House wants you to give us the list of advertising that you did in the last fiscal year, who did it for you, and how much did you spend.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Mr. Chairman, I indicated to the member opposite that the information that was just provided to me was in written form. I have some questions that I want to ask of my staff about that particular information. Whatever is money that has been spent on advertising will naturally be provided to the member opposite. And I certainly would give him that commitment. Whatever information will naturally be provided in a public fashion later on in public accounts, there's no reason why that information shouldn't be made public to the member opposite, and I would give him that commitment that I would do that for him.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Minister, on the first day of the consideration of your estimates one week ago, I gave you notice of a number of questions which I and my colleagues were going to ask you. We did it out of courtesy, and we did it so that you and your officials could be prepared to provide those answers. The second question that I said I would be asking you, when I gave you that list of nine questions, was the one dealing with advertising. Are you telling this House that even though we gave you notice a week ago, this is the first time you see those figures and you did not take the time to prepare yourself to provide us with those answers?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Well, the member opposite doesn't need to get excited. I indicated to him that the information which would naturally be made public later in public accounts, that I would provide that to him. We've covered a lot of ground during the last few days here in the Assembly, and if he wants to be very critical of the fact that there is not typed information available for him this particular moment, I suppose he can choose to be critical if he wants to do that. I've indicated to him that I will be providing the information at the earliest possible moment, and if he wants to continue being critical, he certainly is free to do that.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Minister, that's not co-operating; that's stonewalling and that's hiding the facts. That is a government that is hiding information and in its big majority, arrogant way is not prepared to tell the public where it's spending its money.

Let me tell you, Mr. Minister, and Mr. Chairman, in question period this afternoon a question was asked of the Minister of Supply and Services about a patronage appointment of an ex-Tory organizer who worked for Dick Collver and worked for the Conservative Party so that he is going to be paid \$85,000 of taxpayers' money to distribute literature to stores and malls and everywhere else across the province. I think that is enough evidence to indicate that this government has an obligation to answer straight and simple and rudimentary questions such as the ones dealing with advertising, particularly when we gave you notice a week ago. If you're saying you don't want to answer the question, then you are saying your government refuses to provide the answers. You refuse to tell the public where you spend their money, because you know, Mr. Minister, that the money you

spent in your department on advertising has been spent on straight political patronage to your friends — on straight political patronage. If it hasn't been, you show me the advertising. You show me where you spent it. Mr. Minister, you say you will give it to us when you find what you think is appropriate. I want you to tell me and this House what you think will be appropriate information when you provide the information that we ask for.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Well, the member opposite is making an accusation about purely political advertising. I wonder what the senior citizens of this province would say when they hear about a seniors' heritage grant program, which provides our lower-income seniors with the most generous benefits that I know of anywhere, and that advertising provides them with information about that particular kind of program, how they can access it and so on. I wonder what they have to say about that particular accusation. And I will have more to say later on about the seniors' heritage grant program.

But I find it most unfortunate that you would make that particular kind of an accusation. Certainly, the seniors in our province deserve better attention from the NDP opposition than you seem to be suggesting.

As I indicated, I will be providing the member opposite with information on advertising as soon as I am able to do that. I have given him that commitment. If he wants to continue to be very critical, he can choose to do that. Certainly I've given him that commitment. And I think that's a very appropriate thing for a minister to do. And I'm pleased that I am able to give him that commitment.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Minister, even your Minister of Health, and he is the master of not providing information, provided that information to us when we asked him in his estimates. And we never even as much as gave him notice that we would be asking him that question. We gave you notice a week ago, even though I know that in the preparation of such a briefing book for the minister, your officials have it in front of them in their briefing books and they've given it to you. I ask you: what is it that you think might not be appropriate, that you would want to delete so that you cannot give us that information now?

(1915)

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Well any moneys that were spent on advertising would be made public during public accounts and I indicated that that information I will make public to the member opposite, and I will do that as soon as I can. The information that I have before me is not in the appropriate form to present. It may not have the sufficient detail that I think it should have for your purposes. So I will be providing that for you as soon as I can.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Minister, you've had a week to prepare the detail. I'm quite prepared to sit here and take notes while you read to the House whatever it is you want to give us. So if you're quite prepared to do that, I will sit down. I will have my pad here and my pencil and you can read to us who the advertising firms were, what it is you paid advertising for, and how much you spent.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — I indicated to the member opposite I

will provide him with that information as soon as I can, and if wants to continue to make the same statements hour after hour in the House here tonight I suppose he's free to use the House time that way. I have given him the commitment that I will provide him with that information and it will be forthcoming to him. Just as the Minister of Health made the commitment, I will be providing the information to the member opposite.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Well, Mr. Minister, the Minister of Health didn't give a commitment; he gave us the information right on the spot. We appreciated that. Can you tell us when you will provide it?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — We may very well be able to provide it to the minister — or the member — tomorrow. If it's not available tomorrow, likely first part of next week.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Well I will accept that, Mr. Minister, because obviously you refuse to provide it tonight. We will be able to raise it again, Mr. Minister. I will go to another question and then I may come back to this.

I want to ask you to give me a list of the travelling that was done and paid for by the minister, whether it was you or the previous minister, paid for by the Department of Urban Affairs, the destination of the trips made by the minister, the purpose of those trips, the cost that was involved, and the passengers that went along with the minister.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — I'll certainly provide the member opposite at the earliest possible time with the information concerning travel as it relates to destination and number of trips and number of passengers and total cost. I believe that's the same information that the Minister of Health was going to provide.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Minister, did you include in that the passengers that went along with you on those trips, or the previous minister? I missed that. Did you, in your response, include the passengers who went along on your ministerial trips, and the names of the passengers who went on those trips?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — I indicated I would provide the member with the destinations, and the number of trips, and the number of passengers, and the total costs involved, which I believe is the tradition of the Assembly.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Why would you not provide the names of the passengers involved in that? That is included in the manifest and your department will have the information. I know it does. Every department does. Why would you not include the names of the passengers?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — As I indicated, we will be following the traditions of the House, which your particular administration followed. And we will follow the same traditions and provide that similar information.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Well, Mr. Minister, I think it's clear to everybody in this House, and the public, in the concluding hours of, or maybe hours of your estimates — particularly in the last few minutes — how inept you have been. I mean, I have asked you now this evening in the

last 20 minutes several questions which I asked you and served you notice of a week ago. You knew the questions that were going to be asked. There is no conceivable reason why you could not answer them here today unless you deliberately, on behalf of your government, have something to hide.

It is clear to the taxpayers of this province that you have shown here today that in your department, as was the case in the Department of Health, and as will be the case in other departments, your government is covering up in every case some things that you don't want the public to know. Because if you are not covering up, Mr. Minister, you would have been providing the straightforward answers to the straightforward questions of which you were served notice a week ago.

We have examples, Mr. Minister, of orders in council that were ordered three years ago by this Assembly, not by the opposition. They were asked by the opposition but ordered by this Assembly, which means your members voted for it, which your ministers have not yet provided answers to. And you're continuing that same kind of patterns in these estimates.

I asked you about the advertising your department did in 1985-86, the amount you paid for the advertising. You refused to answer. Now I know you said you'll provide it later, but you've refused to answer today even though you know you've got the answer because you were asked a week ago. We're asking you about minister's travel. You're only going to give a partial answer. I gave you notice a week ago and I had asked you about the list of consultants who were hired by your department. That was a week ago. Today the best you can do is come in here and say that you will give it to us in due course because you don't have it.

All that we can conclude, and all that the taxpayers of this province can conclude, is that you're covering something up. You don't want to discuss it in the House under your estimates. You want to provide it; if you do provide it — I'm not longer convinced you will, even though you say so, because your word is as good as mud — but if you do provide it, you want to provide it on an occasion where we can't debate it in your estimates again.

Now why would you want to do that? What is it that your government, on the eve of an election, is trying to hide so desperately? Is it trying to hide so desperately because we're finding day after day out of the Department of Supply and Services, blatant political patronage being handed out to relatives of officials in some departments; being handed out to former Tory organizers — thousands of dollars and hundreds of thousands of dollars of taxpayers' money to pay off your friends. And I say to you . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, the member from Regina North, now the candidate in Regina South, says, "millions." Well he knows better than I, and it probably is millions. It probably is millions.

There are people who are getting fat at the public trough at the expense of the taxpayers simply because they are friends of the member from Prince Albert-Duck Lake. That's the member who is speaking from his seat, yelling and hollering so that we can't even carry on a debate in

here and ask normal questions.

Now, Mr. Minister, I will not pursue this any more because you have clearly said you will not provide the answers in this House. Now that's okay; it's not okay with men, but I don't have any choice. If you refuse to provide the answers, I'm sure that the chairman would rule that is your right. But I'm telling you now that someone will make a judgement on that, and that's going to be the voter. And whether that comes in the next month or within the next couple of weeks, or within the next year as you continue to run and try to hide, I can't predict that.

But there will be a day of reckoning, not only in the province — all around the province — but in your constituency as well, because your constituents are going to know that you were part of this stonewalling and you were part of this refusal to provide the information to this House.

I regret that, because until now, although we've had some fairly hectic debates on your estimates, I have considered that you were going to be an honourable minister and provide these kinds of answers. I regret that you have not been, and that's the conclusion I have to draw.

Now, Mr. Minister, unless one of my colleagues has further questions, I will not pursue that any more, simply to say that we can proceed with this subvote by subvote, and we'll ask questions as we go along, on an itemized basis.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Well as I indicated to the member opposite, I certainly would be providing him with information on the number of trips, and the destination, and the number of passengers, and the total cost. I would simply remind the member to consider the April 24th Hansard, 1986, page 847, at which point in time the present Minister of Health . . .

An Hon. Member: — What page?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Page 847. The present Minister of Health quoted the comments of your former cabinet minister, at that time the Hon. Mr. Robbins, when he was asked questions concerning the names of individuals that accompanied him on a flight. The response by the Hon. Mr. Robbins at that time was, "No, that's not government policy. It's just the number recorded on the flight."

So in keeping with the tradition of this House, I will certainly provide the member opposite with the same information that was provided by the former members, which is the appropriate information in keeping with the Assembly.

I do want to draw to the attention of members here tonight the fact that there is a very significant program in the Department of Urban Affairs, and I believe members here will be interested in this. Perhaps the opposition members ignored this particular program, and maybe they did want to bring some questions up later, I don't know.

But I do think it's important for members to realize before they vote on these particular estimates, that this year we have included in our estimates a very significant program

for the senior citizens of the province of Saskatchewan. And I'm referring of course to the new senior citizens' heritage grant program, introduced for the first time this year in the province of Saskatchewan to assist our seniors who have provided so much in the way of a heritage that is near and dear to all of us in the province, those who have worked hard to pass on to us that heritage, those individuals who deserve to be provided with appropriate income in the province of Saskatchewan. And as a consequence, the Progressive Conservative government under the leadership of Grant Devine is providing approximately 65,000 seniors in the province of Saskatchewan this year with the seniors' heritage grant.

(1930)

Now it may be that there are one or two seniors watching tonight who are not familiar with this particular program, and I certainly would want them, along with all members of the Assembly, to be aware of the details of this particular heritage grant program.

If you are a senior couple and your income is less than \$25,000 a year — and we know that there are many, many seniors who have less than that income in the province of Saskatchewan — they would be eligible for a grant of \$700. And I do believe that many seniors have already filled out an application form and have sent it into us.

If we do have a seniors couple, and their income is between \$25,000 and \$30,000, then they would be eligible for half of that amount. If we have a single senior whose income was less than \$25,000, then they would be eligible for a \$500 grant, and a single senior between the income of \$25,000 and \$30,000 would be eligible for half of that.

As I indicated, applications have been sent out to all senior citizens in the province, and we have already received back literally thousands of those applications. And I understand that well over 20,000 applications have been responded to, and cheques have been sent out to those seniors.

I think as members consider the estimates today as to whether or not these are appropriate estimates to vote in favour of, that they will want to know some of the comments that I have received back from senior citizens here across the province. And I would only relate to the members tonight just a few of those particular comments. We don't have time to read all of them, but I'm sure that members would want to know what the seniors in Saskatchewan are saying.

Here is a letter that comes to us from Quinton, Saskatchewan. A couple happily married for 45 years, and they say as follows:

Dear Sir: Just to thank you for the cheque we received from you yesterday. I wish there was a better word than thank you, but this is the best we can do. It's better than not hearing from us at all.

Once again, thank you so very, very much. May God bless you.

Here's a letter from a senior in Regina.

I received my cheque for \$200 today and I just want to say thank you. I've been in Regina since 1912 and I feel that we as senior citizens are very well treated. I thank the government very much for helping to make our declining years just a little bit happier.

Then we have a letter sent that says the following:

Thank you to you and your government for the \$700 grant received from you yesterday. I have always been proud to be from Saskatchewan and I am proud to think that our government has honoured all of our senior citizens. Thank you again.

Here is a letter coming from seniors in Saskatoon:

Dear Sir: I just received your cheque for the senior citizens' heritage program in the mail and I am so grateful for it. As it has come on a son's birthday, I shall talk with him long distance as a special pleasure today, on my son's birthday. Again thank you so very much.

Just a few more for the members' edification. This one coming from Saskatoon:

I would like to thank the Saskatchewan government for the \$200 cheque I received from the heritage program. I am 75 years of age without a family of any sort and it came just in time for me to get my new spectacles.

So there's a senior certainly appreciative of the assistance being received. Here's another one from a town in Saskatchewan:

Please accept my thanks for the \$500 cheque. You have no idea how this has helped me. You are the only ones that ever did anything for me. I will remember. Thank you again.

I'm certain that the members will want to consider that. Here's a final letter:

Dear Sir: I just had to write a word or two to thank you for the money you sent to my wife and I. (They say the following.) To receive a cheque of \$700 is overwhelming. We thank you very much. Now we can buy a little bit extra for ourselves. (And they say) P.S. there's a lot of citizens who will certainly know how to vote next time as seniors because they appreciate a government that is concerned about the needs of seniors.

And I'm sure all members opposite will want to consider those fine comments, representative I'm sure of the feelings of many senior citizens here in the province of Saskatchewan. With those words, I think we will want to move on and begin to vote on the particular subvotes here in these estimates before us this evening.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Minister, I'm sure that you're

overjoyed to know that there will be six senior citizens who will be voting for you in the next election. But under this program I want to ask you some questions, because I asked them of the minister, your predecessor, who had the Bill in here, at which time we debated this, and he gave me some undertaking which I wonder whether you can now keep up, or uphold.

And the main one is this. I asked the then minister, when the legislation was here, whether this grant would be taxable. Mr. Minister, the former minister then undertook to provide that information to us when we got into the consideration of the estimates. Can you tell us now whether this grant that senior citizens are going to get is going to be income taxable?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — We have received confirmation from federal officials that it will not be taxable. Those discussions are matters between Finance departments, obviously, and you may want to address your question to the Minister of Finance during his estimates.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Minister, in what form did you receive that confirmation — telephone call, letter, exchange of letters between ministers? What form was that confirmation provided?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Well we have received that information from Department of Finance officials. Just exactly how they received that communication from Ottawa, I'm not sure. So you can provide that . . . you can ask that question to the Minister of Finance. They undoubtedly received verbal assurance. Whether or not they have received their written assurance, which I understand was to be forthcoming, you'd have to ask that to the Minister of Finance.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Here we go, Mr. Minister — the most unprepared minister. The former minister made an undertaking, gave us an undertaking, that he was going to send . . . write to the federal government when the legislation was passed. The legislation was passed on December 13, 1985. I assume that the former minister carried out his promise to this legislature and that there was a reply.

The least you could have done is listen to what your officials told you and be prepared to have that information here. Maybe the response came to the Minister of Finance, but you're the minister in charge of this program. And it's fine for you to stand up and make a speech about it, and I'm sure that the senior citizens are appreciative of the money they're getting — nobody will question that. But you have the responsibility to provide the answers under the program which you administer.

Now can you tell me, Mr. Minister, what kind of confirmation was provided by the federal government? Verbal isn't good enough because you and I know, and the Minister of Finance certainly knows, that a verbal confirmation is not adequate. In order for the appropriate taxation changes to be made at the federal level, you have to do some formal communication. I'm asking you what kind of formal communication has taken place which will assure the senior citizens that this program will not be income taxable for this year?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Well I don't know what else I can tell the member except to repeat what I just said: that Department of Finance officials here in Saskatchewan have informed Department of Urban Affairs officials here in Saskatchewan that Department of Finance officials in Ottawa have said that it will not be taxable. Now, that's about as plain as you can get it. And if you want to ask the Minister of Finance in his estimates exactly what the form of communication took and when the communication took place, you're certainly free to do that of course. But I indicated to you that we have received a commitment that it will not be taxable.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Well, Mr. Minister, it may be plain but it's not reliable. Unless we get firm evidence from your government, we will know that anything you say is not reliable.

And I submit to you, and if you refuse to give the answers, I'm not going to take all night here trying to ask the same question over and over simply to have you say no, which is what you've been doing. I submit to you that the reason you're not providing it is because in case you happen to get up the courage, or your Premier does, to call an election, you want to make sure that the Minister of Finance is one of the last estimates that we do so that he will never have to answer these questions, because you know that there has not been — and I'm telling you . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . well, the member from Meadow Lake is interrupting here. I'm sure the minister can't hear me.

I'm telling you, Mr. Minister, that you know as well as I know, that you do not have that assurance from the federal government. This program will be taxable, and the senior citizens of Saskatchewan need to know that, and many of them know that. They used to get a property improvement grant; they used to get a grant for the rebate of school taxes — that was not taxable. This rebate that you're now giving to senior citizens is going to be taxable. And unless you're prepared to stand up here — because you know we'll never hear from the Minister of Finance because he's never going to show up in his estimates before an election — unless you're prepared to stand up here and provide proof that you've got this confirmation from the federal government, we can only conclude that it is going to be taxable; and the senior citizens who are getting these grants, when they fill out their income tax next year, are going to have to shell out some money to pay a tax which they owe.

Now, Mr. Minister, a straightforward question — it's got nothing to do with the Minister of Finance — will any senior citizen who turns 65 years of age in 1985 be eligible for this grant?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Mr. Chairman, the member opposite would attempt to scare senior citizens. I have given him the commitment that we have received from the federal Department of Finance officials . . . it could not be clearer. And when the federal officials and the Prime Minister say, we are going to do this for Saskatchewan, then they do it. They have delivered in spades for agriculture here in this province. They committed themselves and they delivered.

We committed ourselves to provide seniors with assistance, and some questioned and said, well I'm not so sure they're going to do it. Well it seems to me that the six letters I quoted tonight are ample evidence of the commitment of this government to follow through on the kinds of promises that it makes. So we promised to get rid of the gas tax, and we did. We promised to take the tax of clothing, and we have done so. We promised to provide seniors with assistance, and we have.

You would attempt to throw a scare tactic in front of the senior. I remember once when your party attempted to scare the seniors that somehow medicare was threatened and was going to be taken away. And a lot of seniors, I think, during the last three or four years, have come to understand that they have a government today that they can trust, that is interested in seniors, that cares for seniors.

And if the member is interested in having me recite the kinds of things that we have done for senior citizens to show how much we care about them, then I certainly would be more than willing to take the time to do that — more than willing. Whether it's nursing homes for seniors, whether it's the senior citizens' home repair program, whether it's establishing a seniors' bureau for seniors — never ever done before — whether it was holding a seniors' forum here in the province of Saskatchewan and inviting seniors from across the province to meet with senior cabinet ministers and government officials to talk about the needs of seniors — never ever done before under your administration — whether it's providing a chiropody program for seniors, something they were asking for for years but never were able to receive — this government is certainly doing a lot for seniors.

(1945)

And I think the seniors' heritage grant program under the Department of Urban Affairs is a primary example of our commitment to help seniors, rather than to threaten them or scare them as the members opposite did. Certainly, as I indicated, the federal Finance department has communicated with our Finance officials that this grant will not be taxable. Now that's as black and white as you can get it. Those are the facts.

The 20,000 seniors who have already received their assistance, I'm sure are pleased that they have it today. The 45,000 others who have sent in their applications or have yet to do so can be assured that their particular assistance will be coming to them within the next month. Certainly this government follows through on its commitments to seniors, and I think the letters that I read tonight from seniors are ample evidence that seniors know that they have a government today that truly cares about seniors and listens to their concerns.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Now that you have your speech out of the way, Mr. Minister, will you answer the question? Will anyone who turned 65 years of age in 1985 be eligible for the heritage grant?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Yes.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — If that's the case, why are some senior citizens being informed by your department when they phone that because they turned 65 in 1985 they will not be eligible? And I don't know whether there's a misunderstanding or not. If there is, I would like to be able to correct them, and will you please assist us in doing that.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Any senior who meets the income requirements and who turns 65 would be eligible.

An Hon. Member: — In 1985.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Exactly. Would be eligible.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — I'll accept that because the reason I asked that is because a number of seniors have indeed been confused because they're getting conflicting information.

And I would just ask you to please check with the people who are administering the program and make sure that everybody is giving the same information. I'm not saying that in the critical sense. It could be that some of the people who are making the calls are misunderstanding what the message is.

So I appreciate your clarifying it because it will assist me, and I will now be able to say to them . . . In fact, I can send them a copy of the Hansard because then they'll understand that if they turn, if they had a birthday in 1985 and turned 65 they are eligible for the grant — of course, within the income restrictions — and that's quite all right.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Yes, I'm pleased that we were able to clarify that particular issue, if the member did have some concerns. I'm sure that because it is a new program that there may have been some seniors who did not understand entirely that they were eligible for the senior citizens' heritage grant program.

And to all seniors who may be watching tonight or who may hear about the debate, certainly if they turned 65 in 1985, they would be eligible for the program.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — One other question. Mr. Minister, can you tell us and the House how much money your department will be paying to InfoCentre Network for the distribution of certain literature about the department's programs in this fiscal year.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — I'm informed that this department is not involved with that particular organization.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Okay, Mr. Minister. We'll be pursuing that later in another forum, but I just wanted to have your response to it. I have it now. Thank you very much.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — If I just might add as well for any senior who may be watching tonight, the question was: if they turn 65 in 1985, are they eligible? And yes, they are.

They're also eligible if they turn 65 in 1986. And there were some that had asked me questions about that. They may have asked some other MLAs about that, and I simply

wanted that information to be clarified as well.

Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Minister, is this an ongoing program? Is this a commitment which this government has made to senior citizens for an indefinite period of time, or is it a program for this year only?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — This government is committed to this particular program as long as we are government.

And I'm sure that the senior citizens of this province will certainly remember that it was this government that provided this particular program to the seniors, that showed the kind of interest and concern for seniors that is deserving of the commitment that they have shown to Saskatchewan over the years.

So certainly there is an ongoing commitment on the part of government.

Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Minister, the question I want to ask is with respect to the senior citizens' supplement. Have there been discussions with Health and Welfare Canada to determine whether or not this \$700 is included in income for the purposes of the supplement? And has the Minister of Urban Affairs had discussions with the Minister of Social Services with respect to whether or not this \$700 is taken into account for purposes of determining the senior citizens' provincial pension income?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Yes, I have had those discussions with myself. And the income under the seniors' heritage program will have no negative impact whatsoever on supplement payments. They would be excluded from the definition of income under the Old Age Security Act.

Mr. Shillington: — I want just a question on the follow-up to what was asked by my learned friend a moment ago. The memorandum from Otto Cutts . . . My colleague. The memorandum from Otto Cutts referred to by the member from Shaunavon today in question period, in which he . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes? Massive cuts, says the member from Prince Albert. In the letter from the Deputy Minister's office, Otto Cutts, to a number of people, of which the Urban Affairs is stated to be one, this particular public servant introduces the concept of info centre and states that he's going to be serving a number of departments, of which Urban Affairs are one. And I ask you again, did you receive the memorandum from Otto Cutts dated April 29th '86, and did you respond?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — I haven't received any such memo. My department officials are not aware at this particular point in time of having received such a memo. It may have come. It may be in the mail. I don't know. It may be a very worthwhile program to use. I have no idea. But at this particular point in time, as I indicated, I'm not aware of any utilization of that particular service, although I certainly do support the concept of providing information to individuals where they can access it most readily.

Certainly we have provided information, for example, to seniors in many of the senior citizens' activity centres around the province. I think that's a very worthwhile principle to follow, to try and assist people wherever they

are in order that they can access that information most readily. But as I indicated, at this particular point in time, I'm not aware of our utilization of that service. Nor am I aware of any communication with that particular program that you've talked about.

Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Minister, the memorandum reads: "The attached appendix "B" is a list of 31 departments and crown corporations that will be utilizing the distribution service . . . " of which Urban Affairs is stated to be one; Social Services is stated to be another.

I wonder if you might consult with the Minister of Social Services to find out if he has any knowledge of any such service.

The memorandum from the Deputy Minister of Supply and Services is crystal clear. They're acting on behalf of Urban Affairs. You stated categorically that you had no association with them. I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, are you saying that this memorandum was written without proper authorization or as I suspect, have you simply not been informed on this issue as you have not been on so many others that have come before this Assembly?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I certainly don't authorize the memos that deputy ministers may write for departments that I have no responsibility. So I'm not acquainted with the circumstances surrounding the penning of that particular memo. As I indicated, I have not received any communication directly from that particular deputy minister concerning this program. It may be in the mail; it may be coming yet. I don't know what the date of that particular memo is.

As I indicate, the principle of providing the public with ready access to information on government programs right out there in the market-place, so to speak, is a sound principle. And I think the public would be appreciative of having information at hand rather than having to constantly travel down town, for example, to a particular government office to get information.

Whether or not this particular program will be utilized by Urban Affairs or by Social Services or by any other department for that matter, I certainly don't know the answer to that.

Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Minister, this sounds remarkably like a serious error made by the federal Liberals when they set up Information Canada, called Prop Canada, I think, by many federal members. This looks remarkably like that, an attempt to have the public service do the political work of the government in office. So in my experience that doesn't work very well. Public servants don't see that as their job, nor is it. And in my experience it's often been counter-productive.

Mr. Minister, unless this memorandum was written wholly without authority and is a work of fiction, you are setting up in this province a provincial version of Information Canada, PropCan. I think, Mr. Minister, that this is going to be just about as successful as the federal Liberal program was. I think it's going to cause you all the same problems.

I cannot imagine as you walk up to a check-out counter, seeing the *National Enquirer*, the *Reader's Digest*, the pamphlets from Department of Urban Affairs, *Mechanics Illustrated* — I just can't see that line-up. And if it is, Mr. Minister, I can't see your pamphlets being taken.

One of the problems with putting this in Safeway at the check-out counter, is there is a very large number of pamphlets printed by any government. For good purposes, for the best of reasons, governments often print pamphlets which explain a program. There are, I would estimate, thousands of pamphlets in circulation by this provincial government at any time. There were before too. To attempt to put such a number of pamphlets in a shelf in Safeway, to state the proposition is to refute it. It's just simply impossible to do. Either you are going to be putting in the Safeway selected pamphlets which do more to tout the Conservative Party than it does the government, or you're going to make complete asses out of yourself attempting to market commercially pamphlets which have a very limited interest and which are often esoteric in their nature and esoteric in their appeal.

An Hon. Member: — What does that mean? I don't know what that means, even.

Mr. Shillington: — Well the members don't know what that means.

An Hon. Member: — That's a big word. Tell us what it means.

Mr. Shillington: — The . . . Well I see the members think my use of the word "ass," which is a donkey, is unparliamentary. Well I can tell by the braying of the donkeys opposite that they might have trouble with some of the language that's used in a parliament. So I will . . .

Mr. Minister, if I could get on to another program which is administered by your department but which is not included within the estimates of Urban Affairs strictly — it is the capital side of your department. There are three subvotes — 19, 20, 21 — included within the employment development agency which are . . . Well now the asses are really braying, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman: — Order. I think the member from Regina Centre is playing on words and using language which is not becoming parliamentary speakers, and I would ask you to refrain.

An Hon. Member: — That's a biblical word.

An Hon. Member: — That's a silly ruling — silly.

An Hon. Member: — Challenge the Chair.

Mr. Shillington: — I'm not going to challenge the Chair. Suffice it to say, the word is used in the Bible. If it's good enough for the Holy Scriptures, I ought have thought it might be good enough for this Assembly. But I'll take your superior view on that, Mr. Chairman.

(2000)

Mr. Minister, I want to get to the area of capital grants.

One of the areas that I want to deal with is subvote 21 of the employment development agency, its grant to the city of Regina for rail relocation assistance. I note, Mr. Minister, that this subvote has been decreased from 1.5 million to 500,000, by one-third. I also note comments by the city of Regina which suggest that this project — with a Conservative government in Ottawa and a Conservative government in Regina — I note comments by officials of the city of Regina that with that mix of stars in the heavens this project has gotten permanently, seemingly, mired in the mud.

I'd like to know, Mr. Minister, where you think the rail relocation is going, because I suspect by the fact that the subvote has dropped to one-third of what it was last year that you don't have any more hope that the officials from the city of Regina do that this project is going to go ahead.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — We are budgeting this particular year the same amount of money that was actually spent last year. There's no sense including in your budget an estimate for more money than you expect you will spend. So we have used last year's actual expenditure which was in the magnitude of around 500,000, I believe, and we are estimating a similar expenditure this year.

As for which particular track rail relocation is running down these days, I suspect that's something which will be decided by the people down East, whenever they decide to hold their particular hearings.

Having said that, I wonder if the member opposite would be so kind as to clarify for me if he was quoting from the King James version of the Bible, or the new international version?

Mr. Shillington: — It was the socialist international, or is my learned friend not familiar with that version?

Mr. Minister, may I ask you where you think rail relocation is going? I recall when this government first assumed office, and the now Minister of the Environment was minister of Urban Affairs, we had some very serious questions to put to him at that time with respect to rail relocation and the multimodal station. We had a signed agreement in 1982 to foresee. It was at that point in time this government, operating under the general theory of paralysis by analysis, that everything must be re-examined and the wheel must be reinvented — all four of them — on every vehicle. You people stalled the program. In effect you broke the agreement, and now I gather the federal government is stalling on the project.

I want to know, Mr. Minister, where you think the rail relocation project is going, and how soon do you think that you might be able to get this project on the rails again?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — The issue of course is going to be decided ultimately in the CTC hearings, so it's very difficult to predict exactly where the project is going because I understand the railways are committed to fighting the particular issue at the hearings. And this may be a very long, drawn out process, but certainly you see our commitment in the estimates of this particular year. However it is, as I indicated, difficult to determine where

it is going, and certainly in the final analysis the whole issue is going to come down to dollars and the cost that's going to be involved I suppose, and whether or not the railways will be successful in changing the entire picture as it relates to rail relocation. We won't know the answers to those questions. It will likely be some time before we find out what the answers to those questions are.

Mr. Shillington: — In this province the intervening in the court challenge to the project, if I may phrase it that loosely.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Well, we're sharing in the legal costs, of course. There's no need for us, as far as we're concerned, to directly intervene. The city people have sufficient legal counsel to certainly present their particular side of this issue. Our support for the project has been obvious from the budget commitments in the past, and this year again.

Mr. Shillington: — Well, it is my understanding that the province would have the jurisdiction to intervene in the decision before the federal court. I am wondering, Mr. Minister, why the province doesn't do that if you support the project. Surely the province has an interest in the project proceeding, and the province has a particular point of view with respect to the constitutionality of the decision that was being challenged.

So I ask you, Mr. Minister, why the province doesn't seek leave to intervene in the decision before the federal court. If you support it, why don't you bring your point of view and the prestige and authority of the province to bear on the court when they're making the decision. The court has the right to know, it seems to me, the wishes of the province. The court has the right to hear this government describe what is in the best interests of the province. So I think, Mr. Minister, the court is in . . . If the decision is to be made properly and intelligibly, the court has the right — and should have — the position of this province before it when it makes a decision.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Well, there is nothing to intervene for in terms of a constitutional question. That whole issue has been put to rest some time back, and it's now simply a matter of CTC finding out whether or not the province is supporting the application, and the application is being supported, and is proceeding as one would expect it would. So our support for the project has been manifest and we really don't know where it's going to end up of course, once the hearings commence later this year.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — When did the federal court hand down it's decision, if you've got that decision?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — I understand it was fairly recent. I don't know the exact date or month, but my officials indicate to me that it was fairly recent.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — And what was the decision then?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — The railroads lost their case. The hearing is proceeding.

Mr. Shillington: — So the matter now comes again before the CRTC. When do you expect the CRTC to hear the

matter?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — I don't expect the CRTC will ever hear this matter. This is not the Canadian radio and television commission we're talking about.

Mr. Shillington: — I'm sorry for the slip of the tongue. When do you expect the Canadian Transport Commission . . . Ah, that's very clever. When do you expect the Canadian Transport Commission will hear it?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — I believe September of this year.

Mr. Shillington: — And will the province be making the presentation to the CTC?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — No. There's no need for us to.

Mr. Shillington: — Well I think the same argument applies, Mr. Minister. The Canadian Transport Commission has a right and should have the views of the province, Mr. Minister. If the province feels, as I hope you do, that the project is in the best interests of the people of Saskatchewan, then the Canadian Transport Commission, whose responsibility extends into transport policy as well as merely technical matters — the Canadian Transport Commission it seems to me should have the views of the province. And if you're in favour of it, for the life of me I don't understand why you're not intervening and why you're not placing the position of the province before the Canadian Transport Commission.

I suspect, Mr. Minister, that there's a bit of truth in what the former leader of the Liberal party, Mr. Steuart, used to say. He used to say that in this country there were two railways, the government owned . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Senator Steuart . . . in this country there are two railways — the government owns one and the other one owns the government. It seems to me, Mr. Minister, that that is coming back into play again.,

If you are in favour of the project, why aren't you before the Canadian Transport Commission making that point of view, opposing the railways in what is, I suggest, a self-centred approach for the railways which is in their best interest and no one else's. Why aren't you there adding your authority and your weight to the cities, both?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — We have already provided our written support and approval as part of Regina's application. This is required by CTC as part of this whole process. So in fact we have intervened on behalf of the city in this particular project, and there is no need for any further intervention to take place. It is now before CTC this fall, and the process will proceed as it normally does in these particular cases.

Mr. Shillington: — To put it mildly, Mr. Minister, your support is a little less than vigorous.

Mr. Minister, the grants under the provincial capital fund program have gone from 17 million down to 16 million. Mr. Minister, why have you decreased the funding under this program?

The member from Moosomin is giving us so much

assistance on this issue, as he has on so many others, that I have no wonder you didn't hear the question. The question relates to subvote 19, under the Employment Development Agency grants and the provincial capital fund program — 17 million last year, 16 million this year. I wonder, Mr. Minister, why that figure has gone down.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — In the last fiscal year, last fiscal year '85-86, the take-up for this particular program was lower than originally anticipated, with expenditures totalling about 12.8 million. This year we are budgeting about 16 million; and so it's anticipated that the '86-87 claims submitted to the department will be higher than last year's actuals, which is why our estimate is higher than the actual spent last year.

Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Minister, it seems to me that this is a matter that the municipalities have complained about. I refer you again to the resolutions at the SUMA convention — resolution number 12, grants. While the resolution is long and is not as clear as perhaps I might have liked it . . .

An Hon. Member: — Read it into the record.

Mr. Shillington: — Well, since by popular demand, I will read it into the record then:

Whereas municipalities are under increasing pressure from the public to provide new additional capital services, maintain . . . existing infrastructure, and replace outdated infrastructures; and

Whereas senior government capital grants provide in excess of 26 per cent of all funding from municipalities and over half of this funding is from (the) conditional grants which reduce the flexibility of municipalities to respond to its citizens' demands; and

Whereas unconditional capital grants give more autonomy to municipal governments and provide more effective and efficient use of capital funding resource that can be used on the highest local priority items; and

Whereas unconditional capital grants maximize employment opportunities in municipalities because existing conditional grant eligibility criteria do not always allow municipalities to undertake labour intensive capital work, if they so desire; and

Whereas minimal provincial resources are required to administer unconditional grants versus the bureaucracy required to administer, issue, follow up, and process claims for conditional grants; and

Whereas the Province has started to increase the level of unconditional . . . grants but has reduced total capital grant funding to many municipalities.

Therefore be it resolved that the Province make capital grants unconditional and that these grants be continued at the level of capital grant funding

provided in 1984 after being adjusted for inflation and population.

(2015)

Mr. Minister, again I ask you: why you don't respond to this, which I think directs itself to the PCC (provincial community capital) fund?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Well I'm not so sure if I want to thank the member for reading that into the record. I'm well aware of the resolution. I have a copy of the resolutions here.

I would simply remind the member that we have increased the provincial capital funding from \$20 to \$25 unconditional money. That's a fairly healthy 25 per cent increase to municipalities on the capital side of things. As I indicated the funds actually taken up under this program in '85-86 were lower than originally anticipated, something in the order of 12.8 million. Even though we had budgeted 17 million, only 12.8 million was taken up, and of course the municipalities can chose to access the program if they want to.

This year we are budgeting 16 million which is well in excess of the take-up from last year. So as I've indicated many times during these estimates, I'm sure that municipalities would like to have more money. I have yet to come across an individual or an organization that did not wish they had more funds. Unfortunately, there never are enough funds to adequately meet all of the needs that people perceive to be out there; however, I think the response level that we have given to municipalities in terms of capital funding and revenue sharing and so on is certainly adequate, given the times in which we live.

Mr. Shillington: — Well, Mr. Minister, this is a case once again where the funding is lower now than it was when you took office. The first year you were in office, you provided 17 million; this year you're providing 16 million. Once again, Mr. Minister, you are solving your financial mess by trying to pass it on . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, I'm sure you will.

The minister says he will respond. I'm sure he'll respond to me with the usual speech. But, Mr. Minister, what it seems to me this government has not done is to respond to the need of the municipalities. And of course capital grants and operating grants, to some extent, are part of the same problem. If you starve the municipalities in their revenue sharing, then, Mr. Minister, they're not going to have the money to take this up. If they are hard pressed, and they are, I think largely because of the lack of funding that they get from you, then, Mr. Minister, they're going to have difficulty taking up these programs as well.

A suggestion, Mr. Minister: if you're having trouble with municipalities picking these funds up, then the reason for that I suggest lies in the fact that the municipalities are cash starved because of this government's parsimonious funding.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Well I certainly have difficulty accept indeed. I could not accept the premise from the member opposite that somehow the municipalities are

being starved. They received under the last year of your administration 65 million, and this year we expect 89.9 almost \$90 million. If that's starvation, I'm not so sure how you really define the word. So, there's been a substantial increase in the amount of money provided to municipalities.

And I guess the member can choose to disagree with that if he wishes to, but as I indicated the amount of money that we are spending, giving to municipalities, I think is indicative of our serious and solid commitment to provide urban government with adequate dollars here to help them provide people of Saskatchewan with the kinds of services that are very necessary in this province.

Mr. Shillington: — But you are, Mr. Minister, providing them with less money now than you were when you took office. That's true, both with respect to operating grants, and we see it's now true with respect to capital grants.

You're spending less. You are giving them less money to hire policemen, and you're giving them less money to build sewage and water works. And one problem impacts on the other.

I'm sure that municipalities are having difficulty proceeding with capital projects. If, as we saw earlier, their grants have not kept pace with inflation, and indeed, have been static during a period of . . . during a period in which inflation has been 27 per cent, then naturally they're going to run short of money, and one can understand why the difficulty taking up these grants. So I suggest, Mr. Minister, that if they're having difficulty they can get the grants, then that is because they're short of money. The primary reason they're short of money is because the funding from this government hasn't kept pace.

I wonder, Mr. Minister, how you can have the cheek to put this — to put these moneys in the Employment Development Agency when the amount spent is going down. Seems to me if you're spending less on municipal infrastructure rather than more, then, Mr. Minister, you're not creating employment, you're creating unemployment.

Mr. Minister, I don't want to belabour the point unduly, but I say that with respect to capital grants you're doing the same as you are with respect to operating grants — you're spending less now than you were when you come into office. And I say what I said when we began six days ago, that the services provided with municipalities are starting to show.

We can visibly see the streets and their deterioration under even more severe pressure from the Department of Highways, but, Mr. Minister, we can also see it here. If they're not taking it up then, Mr. Minister, I think the reason for that is because they simply are not able to do it; not able to do it because you're not providing them with the funds.

So, Mr. Minister, we see here in capital what we've seen in operating — municipalities are short of money, and the primary blame for that lays at your door.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I guess we'll simply have to agree to disagree in this case.

I certainly have presented statistics which would indicate that there is a very substantial commitment on the part of this government to urban Saskatchewan, and I certainly would stand by those comments.

Item 1 agreed to.

Item 2

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, I notice here that there is an increase in allocation of expenditure money but there is a decrease in staff. Can you tell me first of all, what is the decrease in staff and what is the increase in money?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — There was a deletion of one vacancy and there were some costs pertaining to down-town feasibility studies and computer services costs.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — What was the nature of the vacancy? What was the position?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — A vacant admin officer position.

Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Minister, we'll ask a general question here with respect to staff. Permanent staff has been decreased by 13 positions. I want to ask with respect to those 13 positions: were they all vacancies? If not, what arrangements were made with respect to anyone who might have been laid off?

I'm looking at page 102, Urban Affairs, summary of person-years. Permanent appears to have gone from 116 to 103.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — There were no lay-offs. There were some vacancies that obviously will have been deleted and there were some transfers to Rural Development, and Environment, as I understand it.

Mr. Shillington: — I noted the transfer to the Environment, at least, of the EMO (Emergency Measures Organization) but that was only three positions. Mr. Minister, the number of non-permanent has increased by 10 positions. Thus, while the permanent positions went down . . . I want to go through the mathematics here because it suggests that you are converting permanent to non-permanent.

Your permanent positions went down 13, but three of those presumably went with EMO to Environment. Your non-permanents have gone up, so that leaves a net of 10. Your non-permanent has gone up by 10. One is left with the impression, Mr. Minister, that you are converting permanent to non-permanent. And that is not in the best interests of the employees, to put it mildly, nor is it in the best interest of the government. The public of Saskatchewan are best served by a permanent public service with stable employment. And if there's some explanation for this, I would be interested in hearing it. If you are converting permanent to non-permanent so you can play games with the numbers in the so-called blue book, then we are opposed to it, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Is the member listening? Yes . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I'm glad to hear that. You'll be happy to know that your particular analysis and your fears are not borne out; that in fact there were six permanent positions which were transferred, three of them to the EMO and three of them to one of the other departments. Then there were vacancy deletions, an increase in temporary as a consequence of personnel required for the senior citizens' heritage grant program.

Mr. Shillington: — Well, you told me that was a permanent program, Mr. Minister, and that as long as the sun should rise in the east and set in the . . . that program would be here. Well, all right then. What you're doing is converting permanent staff to non-permanent staff, and that is a very poor way to run a government. You may indeed, Mr. Minister, be solving a cosmetic problem with the blue book, but the public are best served by permanent employees.

What you've just said, Mr. Minister, I think confirms what I suspected, and that is that you got rid of six permanent employees, you hired six temporary employees or seven temporary employees to administer a program that you told us earlier in the day was permanent. I say, Mr. Minister, you've confirmed my worst suspicion, and that is that you are converting permanent to non-permanent.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Well I say to you that you have confirmed my worst suspicions about why your government was so lax in its administration of the civil service here in the province. For your information, the senior citizens' heritage grant program takes about four months of time to administer. Now what you have just told me is that you want to see permanent positions for 12 months of the year to administer work that is only required for four months of the year.

Now that may be your approach to running government. I wouldn't be surprised if it was. That is not the approach of this government. We believe in the efficient administration of programs, the wise use of taxpayers' dollars, and if it is not necessary to employ a large number of people for an entire year to administer programs, then we certainly won't do that. We will employ them for the necessary period of time, and that is what we are doing.

Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Minister, the applications continue to come in throughout the entire year. While they do . . . while they may bunch up in spring, there are applications coming in through the entire year. And I suspect that you have people there throughout the entire year dealing with these applications. Mr. Minister, do you not expect to have anyone around full-time to deal with this? Are you going to have . . . How long do you intend to keep these temporary people on staff to deal with this seasonal program of yours?

(2030)

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — There are six permanent people that deal with this particular program. Then there are temporaries who deal with the peaks, in terms of applications that need to be processed and information that needs to be clarified with seniors, and telephone calls

that may have to be made, and so on. So I think that would amply answer the concerns of the member opposite.

Item 2 agreed to.

Item 3

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, I see here again there is a reduction in staff of roughly five positions. Can you tell me what positions they are? What was their function? Or have they been transferred to some other branch?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Two deletions of vacant positions and three transfers to Rural Development.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — What positions were they? The two that were deleted, what positions were they? What was their function?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Clerk typist 2 and 3.

Item 3 agreed to.

Item 4

Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much. Mr. Minister, the staff employed remains at one. But personal services has increased by some 23 per cent, roughly, from 45,000 to 55,000. I wonder what the explanation for that is.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — An increase in honorarium costs due to an increase in the number of members serving on the board.

Mr. Shillington: — Was the honorarium itself increased?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — No.

Item 4 agreed to.

Item 5

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Minister, earlier we had some discussion about the proposed new independent assessment agency. Can you tell me what will happen to this assessment appeal board when that new concept is introduced? The reason I ask is I notice there is an increase in position here, of one. I expect the load has become heavier because of the concerns out there.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — It will remain and perform the same functions as it does.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — In other words, there will be an independent appeal agency, but if there is concern about some of the judgements or rulings it makes, you will have a mechanism to which a citizen will be able to appeal. Is that what you will do?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Yes. There will be the independent assessment agency and then there will be an appeal mechanism as well.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Am I to understand that the increase of one position is because there is an increase in the

number of appeals that have been coming forward in the last year or two?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Yes.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — What kind of a backlog is there, and what are some of the longest waiting ones?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — I don't have that information with me. It may very well depend on the complexity of the particular cases. I have information here on the number of sittings and the communities, the number of appeals received, how many were sustained and dismissed and withdrawn, and so on. If the member is interested in that, I can give that to them. I don't know what the backlog is or what the time frame is. It may take a while to find that out.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Okay. Then I can assume that you will provide that to me in writing or some other form some time next week.

An Hon. Member: — Yes.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Okay. The minister has said yes.

Item 5 agreed to.

Item 6 agreed to.

Item 7

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Minister, to what do you attribute the reduction in this subvote in such a significant manner? It seems to me that northern municipal services should be a pretty high priority. There are new municipalities there up in the North being created all the time. They have unique kinds of problems up there that we in the South do not experience. I really think it's unusual to see such a substantial cut in northern municipal services in your budget for this fiscal year.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — There were some vacancies that were deleted and there evidently will be some changes in travel arrangements as well.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Minister, this is a 15 per cent cut in services for northern municipal services. That's a very, very significant cut. Well you can figure it out. I'm sure it would be close to 15, or somewhere in there. . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well, do a little calculation then . . . (inaudible) . . . Well you had \$893,150 in 1985-86. In 1986-87 you're going to spend \$763,330. Are you telling me that's not a cut? That is a cut. That is a cut in services.

Now I can understand where your government wants to cut in some services in some areas. You keep talking about that. But surely this is not an area — an area of the province that probably faces greater problems economically and otherwise than any other part of Saskatchewan — this is not an area that should receive less priority from your government in this particular year.

And I know you may have decided that the North has no priority for you, electorally or otherwise, but out of fairness to the people who live up there, one would think that you would consider at least doing as much as used to

be done before. Now wouldn't you agree that this kind of a cut will reduce services in the North for municipal services?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — These are vacant positions, for the member opposite. These are vacant positions. And if you have a vacant position, that means that there is no one in that particular position, and it's been that way for some time. So if there's no one in that particular position, obviously there's no particular service there.

Now you're talking about you want to see an increase in services. Then perhaps you should mount a different argument. But if in fact you have the same number of people today who are delivering the service in the North as were delivering it a month ago, as well deliver it a month hence, then to talk about a reduction in services is of course erroneous. And I think the member is intelligent enough to realize that.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Minister, I'm quite intelligent enough to figure out what is happening here. The reason the positions are vacant is because you didn't fill them. And because you didn't fill them, the services provided in the North have been reduced. Northern people are saying that; northern municipalities are saying that; northern municipal councils are saying that. They're saying it, not only verbally, but they're saying it in letter and other communication.

Now, Mr. Minister, you have reduced the municipal services in northern Saskatchewan. I say to you, as has both of my colleagues from the North, that there is concern up there. You have reduced the services. Simply to say that just because the positions were vacant because you didn't both to fill them, does not mean that somehow you're not reducing services. You reduced the services already; you didn't fill the position; now you're cutting out the money.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Just for the member's interest, in the North there are 36 communities which are served by five municipal advisers. In the South there are 500 communities served by four municipal advisers. So we have five municipal advisers in the North serving 36 communities; we have four municipal advisers in the South adequately serving the 500 communities here in the South. Now I think we are quite responsibly providing municipal services to the people in the North.

Now if you want to see more, then that's fine. You can stand up of course and say that you want to see more. But I think that the level of service that we are providing is reasonable, and we will continue to ensure that that kind of necessary and appropriate service is provided to the people of northern Saskatchewan and also to the people of the South.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Simply one point, Mr. Minister. Surely you cannot compare the municipalities in the North, many of which are new developing municipalities to the well-established municipalities in the South. I mean, that's not a fair comparison. That's like apples and oranges, and you know it.

You may want to make that point. I have not suggested

because I have no way of knowing — and my two colleagues from the North will know better than I — that there be an increase. I'm just simply saying, you should have at least maintained the same kind of services that you allotted for in the budget of 1985 and 1986, and we can leave it at that.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Well I'll be very happy to leave that in a minute. But if the member knows anything about ratios — and I don't know what grade level of math he taught — but if you've got 36 communities in the North, which we all agree do require a rather intensive quality of service, and we provide five municipal advisers for those 36 communities in the North, then certainly when you compare that to four municipal advisers to 500 communities in the South, then I think that we are very adequately responding to the needs that are peculiar and distinctive to the people of the North. And the member opposite, I think he understands that now.

Mr. Shillington: — I just want to add my voice of complaint to what . . . to my colleague from Regina North East with respect to what you are doing in northern Saskatchewan. I note with respect to grants the only two subvotes which are down are the grants for northern Saskatchewan.

Now the minister can make an argument for reducing the grant to the town of Uranium City. It may be the population is less. But I don't know what the argument is for reducing the grant to the northern capital grants. You'll no doubt have some song and dance. But I say, Mr. Minister, when we come to an item for northern Saskatchewan, you can almost bet that this government is going to be making a poorer effort than it did last year.

Each year you have cut the services to northern Saskatchewan. And I know that it's a waste land for you, and I know that you crassly take a look at this thing and say, there's no way it's in our political interest so we're going to write them off, and you do. You forget there are a large number of human beings live up there who need intensive assistance in a way that the South doesn't.

I just want to add my voice, Mr. Minister, to my colleague, my seat mate from Cumberland, my colleagues from Athabasca and North East who complain of the shoddy treatment that you people have meted out to the people of northern Saskatchewan. They really have been very poorly treated by this government. And we see it here as we see it throughout the entire length and breadth of this government's spending and this government's programs.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — For the member opposite, we write no seat off. None. And had the election lasted one week longer in 1982, I suspect we would have taken all 64 seats in the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(2045)

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — And I understand that some of the northern candidates are running a little scared these days over on your side of the House.

I wish the member opposite would show a little courtesy — a little courtesy. The member opposite was talking about the grants, northern municipal services. For his information and perhaps the watching public did not adequately hear, the population of Uranium City has been reduced from 2,700 to 150 to date. And that is what accounts for the reduction in the money going to northern Saskatchewan. There is no other reason. That very simple, rational, logical reason.

And I would remind the member opposite that capital grants provided to northern Saskatchewan under this administration are double per capita for the North to what they are for the South.

Item 7 agreed to.

Item 8 agreed to.

Item 9

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Minister, can you tell me whether any more than 25,000 was spent last year? I know that under this subvote traditionally there's a token amount of money put in. And in case . . . in the event that there may be the need for money to be spent in the year, was there any more spent besides the \$25,000.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Just a touch over \$25,000 was spent. Just a mite over, \$25,436.

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Where was the money spent? Was it any particular community?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — A grant to the town of Coronach. And there's some kind of an agreement on a declining amount of revenue going to the town over time.

Item 9 agreed to.

Item 10 to 17 inclusive agreed to.

Item 18

Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Minister, did you . . . what did you actually spend on northern capital grants last year?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Four hundred and fifty thousand.

Mr. Shillington: — Have you reduced the formula? Why is it that you budgeted less this year? How do you plan on making that fit?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Do you recall our discussion about Uranium City just a few minutes ago?

Mr. Shillington: — Uranium City is a separate grant. Do I take it that Uranium City also shares in northern capital grants in addition to getting the operating grant under 21?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — That's right.

Item 18 agreed to.

Item 19 agreed to.

Item 20

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, I note that you indicate that urban revenue sharing, there was an increase of 3 per cent. But in northern revenue sharing, there's only an increase of 1.8 per cent. Can you explain that, please?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — It's 3 per cent for everybody in the North. Once again, it's the Uranium City dropping population phenomena that impacts the amount of money that is actually seen in the overall budget. But the individual municipalities in the North are each getting the 3 per cent increase.

Item 20 agreed to.

Item 21

Mr. Shillington: — I'll do the work if the member from Meadow Lake, since he's too timid to raise the issue. Mr. Minister, I note this program went from 700,000 in '84-85, to 500,000. I take it this project has run itself out?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Yes, the people of Meadow Lake are very appreciative of the service that they have been able to receive under this particular grant for infrastructure development. I think it's a manifestation of this government's commitment to the community of Meadow Lake.

Item 21 agreed to.

Item 22 agreed to.

Vote 24 agreed to.

Consolidated Fund Loans, Advances and Investments Urban Affairs Vote 162

Item 1

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Just one question. Can you tell me, or if you don't have it here just so that I can have it for myself, can you provide me, in the next day or so, a list of municipalities or the municipality that this may have applied to?

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — It just applies to Prince Albert.

Item 1 agreed to.

Vote 162 agreed to.

Supplementary Estimates 1986 Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure Urban Affairs Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 24

Item 1 agreed to.

Item 2

Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Minister, this over expenditure was fairly sizeable. I wonder if you'd give us an

explanation for it.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — This sum covers pay increases. It covers moneys required for the administration of the senior citizens' heritage rebate program and the senior citizens' heritage grant program that previously were not budgeted.

Item 2 agreed to.

Items 3 to 6 inclusive agreed to.

Item 7 — Statutory.

Vote 24 agreed to.

**Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure
Employment Development Agency — Urban Affairs
Employment Development Fund — Vote 65**

Items 19 to 21 inclusive agreed to.

(2100)

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to say that it has been a privilege for me to participate in the estimates for Urban Affairs. It certainly has been a privilege to serve as minister in this particular portfolio for some period of months now. I've been very impressed with the professionalism and competence of the senior officials who work in the Department of Urban Affairs. And I certainly want to take this opportunity to publicly thank the individuals who have very competently assisted me during the estimates that we have been engaged in here during the past week.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Chairman, I would like to also, in my concluding remarks, first of all express our appreciation to the Chair for once again allowing us, as has become the pattern, to ask pretty well all of our questions in subvote 1. A few years ago that wasn't the tradition of the House — that's quite a few years ago — but I think it's a good practice, and it gives us an opportunity to do the debate and cover all of the items and then get through with the subvotes.

I want to also join with the minister in thanking his officials for the assistance that they provided to him and in turn provided to us. I know some of the people — some I don't know, because I have not had an opportunity to meet them — and I certainly know that they are capable individuals, and the minister is fortunate to have such people working with him. And for the assistance they've been to us, thank you.

Hon. Mr. Dirks: — A special word of recognition to all of those folks who happen to be watching on TV tonight. I know there were some special individuals watching and I would just like to say hi to them.

**Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure
Tourism and Small Business
Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 45**

Item 1

Hon. Mr. Schoenhals: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to introduce to you and the committee the officials from the Department of Tourism and Small Business. On my immediate right is Dale Folstad, the deputy minister. Directly behind Dale is Ken McNabb, the assistant deputy minister, and on the extreme right is Harvey Murchinson, special adviser to the deputy. And on my left is the executive director of tourism, Mr. Karl Crosby.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to take a few moments at the beginning and try to focus the discussion by reviewing very quickly some of the things that have been happening in the Department of Tourism and Small Business, particularly things that apply to the budget that was brought down recently by my colleague, the Minister of Finance.

The Department of Tourism and Small Business, as most members of the committee will know, has been in existence for three years now and has in fact accomplished a great deal in that time. This department has introduced programs based on consultation with the members of our small-business community and these are programs which are answering the needs that the members of the business community identified.

Simply stated, those needs were for a positive and a stable business climate; for less interference from government in day-to-day business operations; and for better information on which to make sound investment decisions.

By meeting these needs we've helped unleash a new and vigorous entrepreneurial spirit in the province — a spirit that's encouraged the creation, Mr. Chairman, the creation of nearly 4,000 small businesses since 1982, and of course along with that the creation of tens of thousands of new jobs. And like the Finance minister, I believe that the entrepreneurial spirit will be further encouraged, and in fact encouraged greatly, thanks to the initiatives that were contained in the recent budget.

In reviewing our programs, I'd like to start with our business resource centres. This new method of delivering much-needed operational and management information has proved immensely popular with members of Saskatchewan's small-business community.

As members of the committee are well aware, our business resource centres are information storehouses for our small-business community. Located for the most part in high traffic areas, our resource centres contain a wealth of up-to-date business information. Departmental staff are also on hand to help business people locate and interpret the information.

Business resource centers are now open in North Battleford, Prince Albert, Saskatoon, Estevan, Yorkton, and Swift Current. And our regional office in Regina has been functioning as a de facto business resource centre, but we plan to open a street-front centre in this city in the very near future.

Introduction of the centres has resulted in a more than 300 per cent increase in activity levels over previous years. In the past 12 months, Mr. Chairman, we've responded to over 22,000 serious business inquiries.

A key reference source in our centres and, I dare say, the offices of many business people, is our publication, *Starting a Business in Saskatchewan*. Nearly 30,000 copies of that book have been distributed since September 1984, and the reaction to the book from our small-business community has been overwhelmingly enthusiastic. I might indicate as well, Mr. Chairman, that that publication is now being used in a couple, at least, that I'm aware of, post-high-school institutions in their business courses.

In this fiscal year we plan to further improve upon our network of business resource centres with the transfer of positions from our northern business development branch to our regional services branch. We'll be able to bring the resource centre concept in that way to La Ronge, Buffalo Narrows, and Creighton. And we're also outfitting specially equipped vans to bring those same services to outlying communities across the province. And I believe that those two steps will be met with a considerable amount of enthusiasm by the people.

And Mr. Chairman, possibly just for the enlightenment of our critic, I would send this copy of *Starting a Business in Saskatchewan* over to the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg. He may find some interesting information, and it may lead to some questions that he'd like to . . . later in the process.

Business resource centres are the responsibility of my department's regional services branch. We're further enhancing the capacity of this branch to help Saskatchewan businesses by establishing special business development officer positions in Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, and La Ronge.

Business development officers will have a somewhat different role than their business consultant colleagues who staff the resource centres. Rather than deal with the broad gamut of business concerns and problems, these new employees will do as their title implies, work exclusively to encourage new businesses and provide all the consultative assistance they can on various special projects.

Another initiative we're bringing in this year was first mentioned again by my colleague, the Minister of Finance, in his recent budget address — the entrepreneur training program. And once this program is developed it will be a useful addition to the other business programs that I've talked about.

The entrepreneur training program is designed to respond to the individual needs of people planning to start their own businesses. It's structured format will expose would-be entrepreneurs to the type of training that they require. And despite the fact that that has been only referred to once or twice, we are getting any number of calls — I know I've had several personally — from people who are interested in the details of this program.

The training that they will receive will include such activities as group workshops, pre-business workshops on business planning, co-ordination of small business training available from various agencies, one-on-one business consulting, assistance in preparing business plans, help in securing private sources of assistance, and the holding of special entrepreneurial conferences. I'll have more to say about this program once it's developed and is in place.

And I'd like to say a word or two on a topical item. This week we announced details of the 1986 women and business conference. Last year my department undertook a major new initiative relating to women in business. The 1985 conference, which was the first in the province, attracted about 330 women, and was extremely well received by everyone in attendance. Many of the women attending were planning to start a business and received very valuable information and encouragement to proceed, to say nothing of the contacts that they made that would be useful later on.

In 1986 a second conference is being planned with the theme, "Taking the next step." This theme builds on the start made last year, and it is our objective to provide more "how to" assistance for starting and operating a small business. We're anticipating in excess of 350 people.

And of course, as was announced this week, that conference, which my department puts on in conjunction with the Women's Secretariat and the Federal Business Development Bank, will take place on May 26, 27, here at the Hotel Saskatchewan.

A couple of words about a program of ours that continues to be popular with the small-business community, is our management assistance program, or more commonly known as MAP. The program gives business people an opportunity to use private sector consulting firms to upgrade their management skills. They get management advice and information that helps them to see their complete operational picture, to go after new markets, and to run their companies more effectively.

As my esteemed friend and colleague, the member from Regina North, soon to be the member from Regina South, noted last year in these estimates, the program has a twofold purpose. While assisting business to upgrade management skills the department is also developing competent management consulting firms which may not have had the opportunity to explore this market area — in fact, in the past, were not very common in the province. With each community added to the program, new teams of consultants are being developed. Since the program was introduced in the fall of 1983, more than 1,100 businesses have been assisted in 52 different communities.

A special management assistance program has also been delivered to members of the Northern Saskatchewan Outfitters Association. And, Mr. Chairman, in my travels around the province in the first six weeks that I was the minister, when we stopped and visited in 30 different communities, whenever the management assistance program was mentioned the most commonly asked

question was: when can we get it back again? And it appears to have been a very widely accepted program, and I know the member from Assiniboia will know that the merchants in Assiniboia were very pleased with that program and are, in fact, looking to have another session this summer.

The fiscal year 1986-87 will be another year of consolidation for the community economic development program which was introduced several years ago to enable Saskatchewan's smaller communities to share in this province's economic growth. The program provides development training to volunteers in communities of between 700 and 5,000 population and helps them form economic development committees to attract new businesses and new industry. So far, Mr. Chairman, as a direct result of these committees, 53 communities have taken the program and their efforts have led to 116 new businesses locating in these communities already. And we anticipate obviously a great many more.

Mr. Chairman, I've had very positive news to pass on on our venture capital program. As the members know, the program was introduced two years ago to redress the problem of an insufficient supply of formal investment capital in the province. Our venture capital program was a little slow to develop primarily because of that inactive and undeveloped infrastructure for investment. The program gained a lot of momentum in the last fiscal year, however, as the venture capital idea began to take hold. To date, and I'm referring to the end of calendar '85, 52 venture capital corporations have been registered with the province with a total capitalization of more than \$33 million. Of that amount, over 15 million has already been invested in 24 eligible small-business opportunities, and a further 16 projects and considerable amount of money are in the process of being approved at this time.

My officials anticipate a capitalization of 35 to \$50 million in fiscal '86-87. They also predict that the total amount of grants and tax credits, tax credits of course being the carrot that is held out to investors, will be between \$10 and \$15 million. We predict that interest in venture capital financing will be further heightened this year by some of the initiatives mentioned in the budget address.

(2115)

Retail and service industries in communities having populations of up to 20,000 are now eligible for VCC (venture capital corporation) investment, and of course, as most members of the committee will know, the previous limit was 5,000. Investments in agricultural facilities and equipment will be more actively encouraged, and the provision for labour-sponsored venture capital corporations, a new concept in the province, will give union members a whole new way to participate in Saskatchewan's economy.

Mr. Chairman, members of this House are all vitally concerned with northern development, with expanding the range of business opportunities that are available to Northerners, and with reducing unemployment levels that are traditionally much higher than those in southern Saskatchewan. I'm happy to report that we have a very

effective instrument for encouraging new businesses in northern Saskatchewan, and that vehicle is the northern Saskatchewan economic development revolving fund. The fund has been in existence since 1974. For a number of years, though, it suffered from poor management. Loans were made which shouldn't have been made. The record of collections was poor, and there was an abnormally high level of write-offs. By instituting better management and tightening loan approval and collection policies, we've turned the performance of that fund around. I want to repeat that, Mr. Chairman: by tightening the loan approval and collection policies and improving the management, it's been turned around.

In 1985-86 there was a record number of loans out of the fund — a record number despite the fact that things had tightened up a little. Ninety-three loans were made for a total of \$4.2 million. Those loans created 520 person-years of employment in northern Saskatchewan. Accumulative collection figures for 1985-86 are also very positive. We collected \$2.8 million last fiscal year — nearly double the figure for '84-85 and nearly four times the figure for '83-84. A total of 105 loans were repaid in full in 1985-86. Obviously, Mr. Chairman, those figures speak for themselves and indicate that the projects that had been undertaken by the revolving fund, lately, have been very successful.

Mr. Chairman, in the throne speech and budget address that were delivered earlier this year there was a theme of opportunity and protection. The small business interest reduction program which was introduced a year ago was a good example of how we're protecting small-business men and women and giving them a climate in which to pursue new opportunities. As we all know interest costs on loans can be a real threat to a business's security, not only because of the level of those rates, but because of uncertainty over what the level will be one, two, or even three years down the road. We accordingly brought in a program to provide a measure of relief from that problem and to write down interest rates on loans to small businesses to as low as nine and five-eighths per cent.

Over 6,000 businesses have registered for the program since it became effective on May 1st of last year, and nearly \$1.5 million in benefits have been paid out to over 5,500 applicants. We expect even more take up on the program this year because of the improvements that we have announced in it. The base rate for the calculation of interest reduction benefits will no longer be nine and five-eighths per cent, Mr. Chairman, but 8 per cent.

The limit on the loan amounts to be covered increase to \$100,000 from \$50,000, and the aggregate loan ceiling of \$250,000 has been waived for car and farm equipment dealerships, and of course prior to the changes, car and farm equipment dealerships did not gain any advantage from this program. So the changes that I've introduced, I believe everyone will agree, have been very positive. To make the expanded increase in applicants as a result of these changes, our department has budgeted \$15.8 million for the small business interest reduction program in 1986-87.

I'd like to turn to another area now for just a moment or two where we've increased our budget, and of course that

is in tourism promotion. We've added an extra \$500,000 for out-of-province advertising and \$347,000 for promotional support to the Saskatchewan presence at Expo '86. And, Mr. Chairman, while I'm on the topic of Expo '86, I'd just like to make a couple of references. Of course last weekend, as most members are aware, we had the Saskatchewan reunion at the Expo site. In all, somewhere around 13,000 people attended the reunion — a record for organized reunions that will appear in the book of records.

While in Vancouver the people that have come back indicated that the Saskatchewan pavilion is a major topic of conversation all around Vancouver. It is accepted to be one of the top three pavilions on the site. The location is excellent. The core cast that I had the pleasure of seeing off at the Saskatoon airport a couple of weeks ago have made their presence felt. They are extremely enthusiastic, extremely competent. They are making a very real presence felt at the Expo site, and with Expo opening tomorrow, the Saskatchewan pavilion will become one of the real highlights during this summer. And I believe that by the end of the summer North America's best kept secret will no longer be a secret, and many, many people, possibly as high as 2 and 3 million people, will view our pavilion, take it in, and I'm sure it will leave them something to remember.

I'm sure that all members of this House appreciate what a significant industry Saskatchewan has in tourism. It's a billion dollar-a-year industry. It is, in fact, our fifth largest industry. It's also highly labour intensive, employing directly and indirectly in excess of 31,000 of our residents.

Our programming over the last four years has been directed at making a strong industry even stronger and in raising the awareness across the country and in the United States of our province's tourism attractions. We've developed publications and advertisements which paint a bright, colourful picture of Saskatchewan. We've attended more sport shows and travel market-places and undertaken more sales blitzes than ever before. And we've encouraged development of new tourism destinations by the private sector here in the province.

One of our objectives has been to help the private sector take the lead role in directing Saskatchewan's tourism future. I'm very pleased to note that the private sector has given every indication that it's prepared to assume that role. Representatives of the industry are organizing the Tourism Industry Association of Saskatchewan which will represent all tourism operators across the province. TISASK has just hired an executive director and will be undertaking programming such as hospitality training for the industry in Saskatchewan.

Our new advertising moneys for 1986-87 will allow us to do more television advertising in the very important Minnesota market. We will expand a list of customer magazines used for advertising, and we will run business reply cards adjacent to our magazine ads. And throughout the course of these estimates we would be very pleased to show the members of the opposition, the members of the committee some of the examples of the ads that we are running.

The Expo moneys that I mentioned earlier will be used to staff the information centre at our Saskatchewan pavilion, to produce special support material for use at the world's fair, and to allow for additional quantities of our existing travel literature in anticipation of the traffic we're going to get, both at the pavilion, and in the increased numbers of vacationers driving through the province.

I should note that this May we'll be opening three new visitor reception centres. They'll be strategically located at Fleming and Langenburg near the Manitoba border, and at Maple Creek near the Alberta border. These modern buildings will do much to enhance the image of Saskatchewan as a place which is serious about tourism and the hospitality that we're prepared to afford our visitors.

In closing, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to comment on our total budget and our staff complement for 1986-87. First of all with the total budget, or excuse me with our staff complement, the complement has decreased from 159 to 146. The lost positions, however, were vacancies, and no one in the department is out of a job as a result of our elimination of those vacant positions.

Members will also note that we have done away with our northern business development branch, but this is a result of an internal reorganization. Again, no one has lost his or her job, nor is our program delivery in northern Saskatchewan compromised in any way. In fact, Mr. Chairman, I think it will be greatly enhanced. Some of those employees were transferred to administrative positions with the northern revolving fund, which I've already discussed. The majority are now members of the regional services branch. And we thought it made more sense from a management standpoint to include our program delivery services for northern Saskatchewan in a branch which handles those services for the rest of the province, rather than continuing to administratively hive off the North.

Looking at our budget for '86-87, members may say that we've dropped \$100,000 from the year before. Our budget for this fiscal year under vote 45 is \$13.8 million as opposed to \$13.9 million last year, but one must examine the total picture. We're getting \$15.8 million from the employment development fund for the small business interest reduction program. That figure compares to \$9 million last year. Add a million dollars from the Tourism subagreement, and we have an effective Tourism and Small Business budget of \$30.6 million, compared with \$23.9 million for 1985-86.

Members should also consider some of the other government initiatives which don't fall under my department; initiatives such as the two-year corporate tax holiday for new small businesses, the corporate tax holiday on manufacturing and processing and the introduction of community development corporations.

I think it's clear from these initiatives, and those which I've outlined today, that this government is doing more for small business than has ever been done before, and we'll continue to meet our commitments to small business in the future. We'll continue to meet our commitments to a

sector that is one of the corner-stones of Saskatchewan's economy. Indeed, it's a corner-stone to our entire way of life.

And I have heard it estimated that in the next decade, small business in Canada will provide at least 80 per cent of the new jobs that are created. Consequently, I think the initiatives we've taken to strengthen that sector in this province are certainly important.

And I'll apologize slightly for the length of that, but I thought it was important that we cover some of the things that we are doing and attempt as much as possible to focus the discussion.

And if there should be any questions at all, I would be prepared to attempt to answer them. Thank you.

Mr. Engel: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. I appreciate your remarks. Thank you for admitting they were rather boring. The minister was a little bit obvious . . . I don't know if we have a chairman in the House or not, but I like it when there's only one person speaking at a time.

One thing I want to compliment . . . I don't know if my colleague's drunk or what, but if he can't keep quiet, Mr. Chairman, somebody should . . .

Mr. Chairman: — Order, order. I would hope, first of all, that you would refrain from making certain comments about members in this House, and at the same time I would ask you to retract and apologize to the member for that statement.

Mr. Engel: — Mr. Chairman, the way the member from whatever party he's representing now . . .

Mr. Chairman: — Order. Order. That is not what the Chair requested. Please be seated. Please be seated. While the chairman is on his feet, please be seated. I've already indicated that I will not tolerate that type of verbiage in this House. I would ask you to retract that statement and apologize.

Mr. Engel: — I retract that statement, Mr. Chairman. I will continue by remarks. Mr. Minister, it's obvious from the beginning of your remarks . . .

Mr. Chairman: — Order. I ask the other point. It's not to be debated at all in this House, and you know that very well. I ask you to retract the statement and apologize to the member.

Mr. Engel: — What statement are you asking me to retract now?

Mr. Chairman: — I am not here to play verbal or mental gymnastics. I asked you to retract the statement that you made and apologize to the member.

An Hon. Member: — Your statement that your colleague from Regina North was drunk.

Mr. Engel: — He isn't my colleague. I apologize for saying that the member is drunk. He sounded like it, but it

maybe isn't . . .

Mr. Chairman: — Order. Order. One last time. I will ask you to apologize and retract, and do not make further statements that he sounded inebriated; and then continue on with your questions . . . (inaudible interjection) . . .

(2130)

Mr. Engel: — Mr. Chairman, the member that is making all the noise beside me will have a full apology from me. I apologized for saying he sounds drunk. And that's what I said; and I will apologize and retract that statement. But if the member can be quiet and listen, we could carry on with the business of this House.

Mr. Minister, as I started saying about your statement, I appreciate your remarks and I think that . . . (inaudible interjection) . . .

Mr. Chairman: — Order, order! I think we've gotten control of the House. The member has apologized and retracted the statement. I only think in all fairness that the member from Regina North West now maintain his silence so that the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg can ask his questions . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . There is no point of order. If you wish to challenge what I've just said, you may call back the Speaker. I've already indicated that the member from Assiniboia-Gravelbourg is asking his question and he may go ahead with it . . . (inaudible interjection) . . .

Order! Now this is becoming . . . now this is becoming a game of silliness. Now the member . . . (inaudible interjection) . . .

Order! Now the member from Regina North West will not only apologize to the member, he will apologize to the whole House for putting aspirations on to the House, that the House is full of drunks. And you will apologize and retract that statement.

Mr. Sveinsson: — I certainly apologize for the statement. I will indicate that this member, on no grounds at all, suggested that I had been drinking — and I don't drink . . . (inaudible interjection) . . .

Mr. Chairman: — Order! You will not challenge the ruling of the Chair. The Chair has already obtained a full apology to you as the member of North West. The member has already offered you a full retraction. the argument over who is or is not in total sobriety in this House is over.

Mr. Engel: — Mr. Chairman, if you can obtain some order, we could get on to some very important discussions tonight. I appreciated that the member began — and I think we're going to have a session if we could get some order in the House — that we could discuss one of the most important industries, next to agriculture, in Saskatchewan.

The business of trying to compete with the member that I wrongly accused, but who sounds as though he wants to get involved in the debate . . . some time he might. He will have his chance. We never stood in the way of anybody

asking questions in this House. And I wish you would accord me the same courtesy that I could ask my questions tonight, Mr. Chairman.

But as I was saying before I started, Mr. Minister, the former minister that just took his seat took this opportunity to prove that he was grandstanding. He said, hello mom and all the friends back home and you could tell that the whole game was around a TV act and a performance.

Tonight I want to assure you that I'm interested in getting down to what your department is all about, and I suppose as a first question, Mr. Minister, I would ask: what do you consider your major qualifications to holding down a serious portfolio like this, like Tourism and Small Business.

I enjoyed the debate I used to have with the minister from Regina North or South as you described him. That member met a payroll; he knew what red tape was all about in filling government forms; he was in business and he sounded like a business man and had the respect of a lot of business people across Saskatchewan. Now I was wondering on what basis — and I think it's a fair question to say that you assume this portfolio: what are your strengths in that area; what is your experience and background; and what do you think is your major point that would give the business community some confidence in your ability?

Hon. Mr. Schoenhals: — Mr. Chairman, I think . . . I don't think that's at all an unreasonable question. I think if I had to identify one strength only that would cause the business community to have confidence in me, it would be the gentlemen who surround me here that I introduced recently and the other fine people who work in the Department of Tourism and Small Business.

And I think the previous minister, who you mentioned, obviously had a great deal more small-business experience than I do. I bring very little. I have taken . . . spent a good deal of time in the first two months of the portfolio meeting with the business community around the province. We went on an extended tour, talked in over 30 communities. I would hope that those people are satisfied that I, in fact, learned a considerable amount about the problems that they face.

I would suggest to you that the budget that was brought down would suggest that, in the time that I've had the portfolio, we have managed to make small business a priority — and not to indicate in any way that it wasn't before. I think the budget has been referred to by neutral observers, certainly in the press, as a small-business budget.

And so, in answer to your question, though, what is the greatest strength I have, I think it's the people that help me.

Mr. Engel: — Well, we're getting off to a real good start. And I appreciate your sincerity and your honesty in this, Mr. Minister, because I feel that. I feel very strongly that, to get the confidence of the business community, a business man has that ability because they trust a fellow

business man and know that he understands their problems. And I have confidence in the people in your department. And I think just that degree of sensitivity is the kind of answer that's going to make this a nice, short session, and one we can deal with.

Now, as far the other area that you didn't talk about, and I was wondering about, and I was worried. And I thought maybe that you were going to say that you represent a party that stands up and speaks for business men and is business-oriented, like the PC party sometimes pretends to be. And I'm glad you didn't refer to that as one of the strengths, because I feel that is the greatest weakness that is hitting Saskatchewan today — that the business community across the province is very quickly, very quickly losing confidence in your party. And so when you talk about your officials and the people around you, I like that because they're going to be there after the next election to pick up the tab, and whoever gets the job is going to be able to handle that.

But as far as confidence is concerned, I think the story about business in Saskatchewan — and I have a great deal of confidence in what Saskatchewan businesses can do — the dynamics, the creativeness, the innovativeness of business people in Saskatchewan is second to none in the world. It provides the goods and services for our people in all our communities, particularly small and rural communities in rural Saskatchewan.

I think, Mr. Minister, and I'm convinced, that if all of the 30,000 business men in Saskatchewan, the small businesses in Saskatchewan, would create just one job each, it would take care of the unemployment situation in Saskatchewan. It would take care of that problem where the Department of Social Services is supporting people that should be working, and would rather be working, and would love to work. I have confidence in the work-force of our province, but I have more confidence in the business community. And those people will hire, will hire and will go to work if the climate is there — if the climate is there.

But when you take a look at what's happened in Saskatchewan — and let me just take a minute to inform the loud member from Moosomin — let me just take a minute to inform him what's happened in my riding during your term, your four years in government.

You can remember what it was like over the 11 years prior to you getting elected and what was happening in Saskatchewan. But, Mr. Minister, during the last four years in my home town do you know, do you know, Mr. Minister, that I've only one co-op lumberyard left in my whole constituency. Do you know that that happened during the last four years, that we lost four co-op lumberyards and two private lumberyards in the last four years in my riding. What's that an indication of? Why would lumberyards be closing down? And I can tell you the answer is straightforward. And it's getting awful noisy in here, and I'm going to lose my voice trying to compete with all the noise. I can't see why you can't keep order and attention in this House, Mr. Chairman. I very much doubt your ability to keep order and attention in this House, Mr. Chairman. I very much doubt your ability to keep order. I can doubt your ability . . .

Mr. Chairman: — Order. Would the member please be seated? As long as I'm sitting in this Chair as chairman, that is my responsibility to keep order, and not yours. Continue on with your questions.

Mr. Engel: — Mr. Member, I was trying to remind you of your responsibility. I've got my responsibility; you've got yours. Let's both do our job and get this thing rolling. I don't want to compete with all those noisy yahoos across the way.

Mr. Chairman: — Order. We don't want to get into this. I'm convinced that you would rather be asking questions of the minister than asking questions of the chairman.

An Hon. Member: — In some degree of silence.

Mr. Chairman: — We have it right now. Okay, continue.

Mr. Engel: — That's what I was trying for, Mr. Minister, and I succeeded at least in getting those guys to shut up for a while and listen. They don't like to hear that, in the four years they've been in office, they've succeeded in shutting down lumberyards. That's why our party came up with a housing program that's going to work — because we know that you have lost your innovative ideas, your creativeness. You started with a bang; you started with a loud clatter and a lot of noise of hammers and saws, and it was going great. And I would like to compliment the minister of small business that got things going, but he lost touch so quickly. You lost touch so quickly. And the lumberyards shut down and moved out of rural Saskatchewan. The carpenters hung up their hammers.

I was in Moose Jaw to pick up a saw that was sharpened and I saw the word "Bud Smith" on a saw — and hung up a saw on the wall. And I wonder if that's the same one. It's a very common name, Mr. Chairman. And I asked the saw sharpener down there on Caribou Street, who does that saw belong to? And he says, I think you know. And I says, you know, are you busy? And he had lots of time. He sharpened my saw the day I needed it when I wanted it because he wasn't busy. and you know, people right across the piece are telling me that wherever I go. How come there's nothing happening? How come there's no enthusiasm? And, Mr. Minister, you as one who said they're willing to learn, you'll likely have another year before your Premier gets up his nerve to call an election. You'll likely have a whole year.

And so, during that year I would plead with you and challenge you to implement and introduce some programs that will stimulate the economy. Let's get things rolling again. You have all the clichés. You have the right words and you're saying the right lingo. But, Mr. Minister, the actual fact is . . . the actual fact is, nothing's happening. Nothing's happening.

And I'd like to know from you, and I listened for a half an hour, 35 minutes, to you reading that speech of yours. And I can't believe that there was no new ideas or no innovative ideas there to get the economy rolling, to give the business men some enthusiasm and some hope for the future. And saying that on this strength we'll hire some

people, on the strength of these programs we'll go ahead. What have you got that is going to stimulate the economy and get things rolling?

Hon. Mr. Schoenhals: — Mr. Chairman, several comments, I suppose. We can do this one of two ways. We can do the usual lengthy and irrelevant preamble and I will respond to the preamble and the question, or we can get on to the questions — whichever he wishes to do.

He started by some disparaging remarks about our party and its relationship to business. A couple of comments. As he may or may not know, their party has nominated 64 candidates for the next election. Four of those 64, in fact, haven't had any type of business background. And I think that's an important number for people in small businesses to remember.

(2145)

As I indicated in my previous answer, one of the first things I did when I became minister was to tour the province. And we got two very distinctive messages. One was that since this government took office — and again I compliment my colleague, the member for Regina North — small business people had become rather used to having the small business minister come around and visit. In fact, many people told us that when I met the 30 communities it was probably more meetings with small-business people than the NDP had had in the 11 years that they were in government.

Mr. Chairman, one other interesting thing; a story that I was told by a business man. I don't believe it was in your seat, but it was in the south-west part of the province. He indicated that business people as a group are very concerned about even the remote possibility that the NDP might return to govern this province. He indicated that, to use my sports background and to make an analogy, it was very difficult to do business when you not only had to worry about the opposition — as you do in a football game — but you had to worry about the possibility of being gang-tackled by the referees. And I think that's the attitude that business people in this province have toward the party opposite. And I think the concept of suggesting that your party may somehow have better contact with the business community than ours does really doesn't make a lot of sense.

The member indicated that a saw-mill had closed in his . . . or a lumberyard had closed in his seat. A couple of things that he should know, and I notice he has chosen not to pay attention any more, but on one day in November, last November, on one day in Assiniboia-Gravelbourg the previous minister of Tourism and Small Business opened six new businesses. And as the member may also be aware, on the day that he and his colleague from Shaunavon were in Swift Current agitating the farmers, that the minister of small business was opening another four or five businesses in his constituency. So to suggest that his constituency has somehow been neglected and has not been successful is really not accurate.

On a provincial basis in the last four years there have been over 4,000 new businesses start, which is a growth increase of about 13 per cent.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Schoenhals: — I think, Mr. Chairman, to suggest that there's no excitement, that there's no growth, is simply very misleading. I'm not sure that it's intentional. I'll give the member the benefit of the doubt but 4,000 new businesses, a 13 per cent growth rate, I think is an excellent record and, I think, indicates the type of growth and excitement that we're experiencing, that we're seeing across this province in the small-business sector.

Mr. Engel: — I think an article, a political commentary that you've likely seen on the back page of a recent publication, is quite contrary to what you're trying to tell the people tonight. And let me just read a few excerpts from this. "Election Fever Blakeney Tonic: is the heading on this article on politics and commentary for the May 1986 edition. And it says here:

"(It's) amazing the number of people who want to see me again," the New Democratic Party leader reflected to some advisers following yet another meeting with (the) business men. Blakeney knows the oil company executives and others who have popped into his second floor (legislative) office . . . they came to hear from him personally . . . When the polls showed the NDP ahead last fall and the government floundering with no clear direction, it was like a green light for some private, rather large business interests . . . He (listens) . . .

It says. And I could go on to read the entire article to the member, but I want to tell you — I want to tell you — in the last couple of years things have changed immensely. Things have changed immensely.

And I like what I read in the papers nowadays, and I don't like headlines like "Bankruptcies jump 13 per cent." "Saskatchewan has a seven per cent rise to 81 failures . . ." And let me list the rest of Canada. Alberta had a worse record, with the number of failures climbing to 314 from 218. Manitoba's failure rate went to 78, but Saskatchewan's are 81 with a smaller population. Ontario's rose by 22 per cent to 687, and Quebec had 749 failures compared to 709 a year ago. Saskatchewan's increase was one of the highest in bankruptcies.

That's a measure of where people think you're at. And small-business communities across . . . We could go through headlines after headlines, Mr. Minister, and see what the press is saying about the recognition your party has in the business community.

And, like I started my comment, your party talks loudly like it's reported in this article here. The Tories scream — the Tories will scream at you until they are blue in the face that they haven't changed at all.

Well, you can do all the screaming you want, Mr. Minister, but nobody's listening to you any more. They have given up on you. And those people that you talk about that are coming — that are coming in this mass of support to you — I don't see that, Mr. Minister. I don't see that, Mr. Minister.

You have a few friends. You have a few friends. You're open for big business. And just in the last little while, let me mention a few.

Manalta Coal thinks you're great. Manalta Coal, and you give away the coal mine in my constituency. That's great for business, but that's not small business, Mr. Minister. That's not small business.

Weyerhaeuser thinks you're the best guys in the world. They got a mill for a song. And they don't have to pay for it if they don't make any profit. They think you're great. They think you're great.

George Hill thinks you're the greatest thing since home-made bread. He thinks you're great. And so does Peter Pocklington. They think you're great. There's a lot of people around. The big oil companies love you.

I listened to an oil executive on the radio. I listened to an oil executive on the radio this morning, Mr. Minister. I listened to him this morning, and he's arguing — and he's arguing that the recent announcement . . . New announcements of your big give-aways to the oil companies that affects the big oil companies, not the small ones. You're not holding up your end of the stick.

Now as the former member of the cabinet and involved in energy, you should know the small oil companies. You should be interested and concerned with all the lay-offs that have happened in the oil industry.

And the oil people — you know what they're telling us, Mr. Minister? Those oil people that are lining up — those oil people that are lining up on the second floor, across from the library, Mr. Minister — you know what those guys are telling us? You know when they come, Mr. Minister, you know what they tell us? The way you heated up the oil industry was to their detriment. You spend a half a million bucks on a well that we then have to shut down and not pump. That costs us money. *Saskatchewan Business Report*, that reported on you people, is indicating loud and clear — this is where this back page story came from that's about election fever and a commentary on politics. You guys should read stuff like that. You guys should keep yourself informed, and you wouldn't be in the kind of trouble you are in today.

But I want to tell you that the mismanagement that your party's been involved in, the deficit you've created, the fiascos that have arisen since your friends have been in government, Mr. Chairman, is a disgrace. To call yourself a party of business men — it's a disgrace to think of creating losses in Crown corporations like you have. The Pioneer Trust fiasco, deficits like you've piled up. Is that business management? Is that good business management? Is that the kind of climate we want for our small-business men?

When every one of those 30,000 business men thinks about their role and the amount that their share of the \$2 billion deficit, they just shudder in their bones. They just shudder and say: what have these guys got us into?

You talk about the four or five business men that Mr.

Member from Regina North or South visited down home. You know, they laughed about it. They said that we were given a road show to contend with, or else. But how much money did we get? What kind of grants? What kind of help did we get? What happened to Main Street? What happened to the main street improvement program? What happened to the program that put money . . . How come it's a blank? You draw a blank. No explanation — nothing — just a blank. Main street improvement program, three dots — nothing. Main street improvement was very, very attractive. The people across my constituency in Willow Bunch love to remodel. Somebody doesn't like what I'm saying, Mr. Chairman, because they're getting awful noisy here. I guess I have to do your job and quiet this place down myself.

The main street improvement program in Willow Bunch was a major success. Main Street in Will Bunch looks great. They have gone overboard in fixing up their main street. It looks great. Gravelbourg improved their store-fronts right down the whole street. They loved it. How come you got a big goose egg in there for main street improvement? Why quit on a program that was working so good when there's some other communities that would love to get involved?

And I think this government shows that they have a few friends they're going to cater to. There's a few friends that you're going to cater to like I mentioned earlier, like Weyerhaeuser, Peter Pocklington, and George Hill. There's a few of those guys that are going to do very well, thank you. But the rest of the businesses, the 30,000 representing the business men that count — the guys that can make Saskatchewan tick, the guys that can make Saskatchewan prosper — those are the people you have forgotten about. And all across Saskatchewan, small-business men are experiencing difficulties exactly like they did in 1971.

I could go into a story and the former attorney general, the Minister of Finance knows . . . he served on a committee that I was chairman of back in 1971. Him and Don MacDonald isn't around any more. Henry Baker isn't around any more. He was on the committee. We had different members on the committee, and we toured across Saskatchewan.

And do you want to know something, Mr. Minister? One of the programs that came out of that was the regional business reps around Saskatchewan. We implemented that program because there was business men who were telling us. They said that the farmer has ag reps, and the farmer has access to ag reps. We put business reps out there, and what have you done with the business reps? You look at your budget. What have you done? You've moved them into some major centres and have beefed them up, but you haven't done anything for the guy serving rural Saskatchewan, Small Town, Saskatchewan.

I'm concerned with the moneys that should be in industrial technical assistance, for example. Let's look at that one. Farmers that are going into business to manufacture something used to be able to get some technical service. I have here the *Public Accounts* for 1984-85, and if you look at the budget for industrial technical assistance, amount budgeted: \$175,000

according to public accounts.

How much did you spend? \$70,000. \$100,000 less. Not even 50 per cent.

You know, if you'd be back teaching school you know what you do with that department, and I guess that's why the little minister flunked. Maybe that's why he's from North or South, and we don't know where he's going. Because that program totally failed. The technical service that you had budgeted and were planning on giving was a total flop. \$100,000 you didn't spend. And you're talking about providing a service.

The only one — the only one in the whole estimates from this year's public accounts, Mr. Minister, the only section in the entire estimates that you spent was on your communications. The only one you spent was on your communications.

And I think the minister has a lot of explaining to do as we get into the details of this.

And these are some of the things I want you to do, to look up overnight. As you go about your evening assignments, I have a page here that I'd like you to bring along tomorrow: the salaries for your personal staff and the amount of increase they got over last year; advertising by your department through an agency or through the department itself; and did you conduct any surveys? What was the agency who conducted them? and so on.

We're interested in yours and your executive — your own and your executive travel, the destination, the purpose of the trip, the cost, and who went with you, and so on.

I think one of the reasons why we want to know who went along is because of the news story that the little minister from Regina North or South when he went down to Hollywood and took that whole crowd with him, and then they really had a big time.

We're interested if you're gone on those kind of expeditions as well with a good . . . (inaudible) . . . And, then, I think the other area of concern I'd like you to think about overnight and get some numbers for us for tomorrow, is: list the consultants that have been hired on a contractual arrangement that your department entered into, what plans they've drawn up and so and so; how much have you spent on consultants? If we can get those five areas in some specifics, I'd be very happy.

Hon. Mr. Schoenhals: — Mr. Chairman, I have all that information with me. I could give it tonight; since he asked for it tomorrow. I'll deliver it first thing. When we get started tomorrow, I'll send it across.

I have to make a few comments after that tremendous amount of diatribe, and I'm not really sure where to start. I think he started first of all quoting something that indicated that a whole lot of people were somehow coming to them for a lot of information. I suppose it was an attempt to indicate that they are in fact an open, responsive party.

I happen to have in my hand an advertisement that

appeared in *The Potashville Miner-Journal*, which is the Esterhazy paper, this week, and it advertises a meeting that in fact is taking place this evening in Esterhazy, and it says — and there are two very interesting lines, Mr. Chairman — its says, “New Democrats, meet Allan Blakeney.” The indication is clearly that if you’re not a New Democrat, Allan Blakeney’s not real interested in talking to you. And I can understand that.

And the second thing that it says is: “Members and invited guests welcome.” In other words, you’re not going to get a chance to meet Allan Blakeney unless you’ve already taken the course.

A couple of brief comments and I’ll try, Mr. Chairman, to keep this relatively short. As is the wont of the party opposite, he reeled off a lot of statistics on bankruptcy, Mr. Chairman.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 10:03 p.m.