

July 20, 1992

EVENING SITTING

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 52 — An Act to amend The Senior Citizens' Heritage Program Act

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I move it be read a third time and passed under its title.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

Bill No. 38 — An Act to amend The Pest Control Products (Saskatchewan) Act

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I move this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

Bill No. 39 — An Act to amend The Pest Control Act and to enact a consequential amendment related to the enactment of this Act

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I move this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

**Consolidated Fund Expenditure
Justice
Vote 3**

The Chair: — I would ask the minister to please introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have with me this evening Darryl Bogdasavich, Q.C., who is the acting deputy minister and is the executive director of the civil law branch; Mr. Ron Hewitt, Q.C., who is the assistant deputy minister; Doug Moen, who is the co-ordinator of legislative services; Twyla Meredith, the director of administrative services; and Betty Ann Pottruff, the director of policy, planning and evaluation.

Item 1

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I welcome the officials and thank the minister for coming tonight. And maybe we can keep this place kind of calm and cool and collected. I'm afraid some of my colleagues figure that when the minister and I stand up here we don't tend to be the type that become very raucous or rambunctious. But there are a number of special questions that we certainly want to raise with the minister and with the department regarding the Justice estimates.

I'm going to begin tonight by some general questions, Mr. Minister, a number of questions that . . . I believe that my colleague laid out general questions for most

departments and I think it was indicated a little earlier on that some of these questions, maybe if we gave them in writing, but we understand that they'd like to have them given verbally. So I will go through the general questions.

First of all, I just want to clarify a couple of points and I have to apologize for the fact that maybe some of the noise was coming from this side of the . . . from my colleagues. I was trying to listen to the minister regarding the introduction of his officials and I'm not sure if I caught the deputy . . . acting deputy minister is Darryl Bogdasavich — is it Bogdasavich?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Yes, I'll be pleased to go through it again, Mr. Chairman. That's Darryl Bogdasavich that's seated beside me. He's the acting deputy minister. His regular job is executive director of the civil law branch. Also accompanying me tonight is Ron Hewitt, Q.C., who is the assistant deputy minister; Doug Moen, the co-ordinator of legislative services; Twyla Meredith, the director of administrative services; and Betty Ann Pottruff, the director of policy, planning, and evaluation.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. First question is, when did Mr. Bogdasavich start acting in the position of assistant deputy minister of the department?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Bogdasavich became the acting deputy minister of Justice on April 26 of this year. He's been an employee in the department for almost 20 years.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I wonder if you could give us a run-down of your own staff, giving us a list of all the persons' names working in your office or otherwise who are directly . . . report directly to you. And, Mr. Minister, if you could give us their titles, their salaries, job descriptions, education and employment history, including their last place of employment. I'd also like to know if any worked or were paid by any other government before being on your payroll or if they had worked for the party. And have any of these members in your staff been reclassified since joining your staff, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chairman, can I ask the member: do you want this verbally or do you want it in writing? It's entirely up to you.

Mr. Toth: — I think if the minister has it handy and it's . . . if he can give it verbally, we can have it both ways. Verbally, I think would be on the record for everyone.

(1915)

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Right. Well the first name is Tanya Byrnes. She is a ministerial assistant C; it's a stenographic job. She was employed from the period April 13, 1992 to May 12, 1992 at a salary of \$2,141. Debra J. Hartung is a ministerial assistant 4. She began employment on January 2, 1992 and her salary is \$4,221 per month. She is presently on maternity leave and will be until the end of this year.

Diane Tremblay is a ministerial assistant E, which is a . . . I

think that's a senior secretary classification. She commenced work in my office on February 1, 1992 at a salary of \$3,344 per month. She had previous government experience beginning in August of 1971 with the Attorney General's department. And then a period in the Executive Council and back to the Attorney General and then the Executive Council. Just a moment . . . Diane Tremblay has worked continuously in the minister's office for something like 18 years or so through changes of government and she continues in that position.

And Sheena Weir has been hired to replace Debra Hartung while she is on maternity leave. She's a temporary employee until Debra returns on January 8, 1992. She's classified as a ministerial assistant 2, and she's paid a salary of \$3,282 per month. She had previously worked in a minister's office in Ontario and her husband got a job in Saskatchewan. And I learned of this and I contacted her and asked her if she would take this temporary position. I actually didn't do it myself, but Debra Hartung contacted her and arranged for her to come into my office on a temporary basis for this period. She's working for me now.

Those are the people in my office who are connected with the Department of Justice there.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, I noticed, . . . I'm not sure, I think a couple more officials joined us. I'm not sure if you'd just like to take a minute and introduce the rest of the officials to the committee?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Murray Brown, Q.C., is the director of appeals, and he is in the Chamber now. Curtis Talbot is the executive assistant to the deputy minister. Dick Till is the executive director of corrections.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, when you're appointing your staff, not having had the privilege of being a minister, I'm just wondering does the minister have direct input or is the staffing of ministers' offices handled directly through Executive Council or what's the process? Do you have involvement in that process, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I selected all of my staff, and I . . . yes, I selected all of my ministerial assistants. In the case of the secretaries, they were selected by Debra Hartung who was my chief assistant — my chief of staff as it were, although we don't use that term — by my ministerial assistant for. She selected the candidates for the secretarial positions and brought them in, and I interviewed them and together we made the decision.

But as far as my ministerial assistant staff, the rest of them were all chosen by me, but in the case of Sheena Weir in the manner that I've just described to the member a few minutes ago.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, when we look at the department, your department, the department that you're responsible for, I wonder if you could give us a list of all positions or job titles that have been eliminated in the department since November 1, 1991, and a job description of each position eliminated.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chairman, and to the member,

the department has . . . We have abolished 83 positions due to fiscal restraint — 83; eight, three. I have a summary, and I'll give you the summary. I also have very detailed information which I am confident you don't want me to read to you but which I can make available to you if you like.

The permanent in-scope positions abolished are 33; the out-of-scope positions are 12; for total permanent positions of 45. Now those were encumbered positions, had somebody in them. You know what I mean by that. There were 24 non-permanent positions abolished and there were 14 vacant positions that were abolished. Eleven of those were in scope and three of those were out of scope. That gives you a total of 83. Now that's the overall summary.

I have a breakdown, branch by branch, position by position, listing of positions that were abolished and it goes to something like five pages. So you probably don't want to take the time of the committee to go through those. But I'm certainly pleased to share the information with you.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I think that would be appropriate to pass the information across to us. I realize it could take a fair bit of time to go through it page by page and at least would give us the opportunity to peruse it ourselves.

In the information you're sending over, Mr. Minister, does it include complete compensation details including salary and expenses, allowances, special payments, and so on?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — No, the document I have gives the position number and the name as well as the branch in which the employee is employed. It gives the classification, which gives you an idea of the salary range and the location of the employment. It also gives the effective date of the abolition. Many of these positions are still in effect. The abolition doesn't take place until September in the case of many of them, but there is no salary information as such on what I'm sending over to you.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I wonder if you could inform the committee with the number of jobs that have been eliminated in the down-sizing of the department? No doubt some of the jobs, or some of the individuals that were working in the department at the time, either had their employment severed or their jobs were terminated, or possibly maybe moved to other areas of other departments in government. I wonder if you could inform the committee how many jobs would have been terminated, whether all the employees were maybe moved to other areas of government? Some jobs probably were terminated on the basis of maybe not having anyone in the position and just eliminating a position that wasn't filled at the time. And maybe in the process you could inform the Assembly about the compensation that was arrived at, say early retirements or some of those positions, when jobs were eliminated.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chairman, to the member, as I

said, there are 83 positions being abolished and 14 of them are vacant, so that 69 actually have people attached to them.

The in-scope employees — and you'll recall there were 33 of those — are all entitled to bumping privileges under their . . . bumping rights under their collective agreement, and they're doing that. And some of these abolitions were effective July 3 and some are effective September 30, to name two dates I can recall. And that process is going on and it's not finished yet, so we don't know how it comes out.

But they are not entitled to severance payments as such.

There are also 24 non-permanent employees, and of course they're not entitled to any severance payment either. And they don't have a right to bump under the provisions of the collective agreement.

There are the 12 out-of-scope employees whose jobs have been abolished, and they are entitled to a severance payment. And six of them have settled to this point, and the total cost of those severances is a little more than \$99,000. They range from a payment of a little over 2,600 to 42,800. And the others have not yet — how will I say? — have not yet pressed for severance or have not yet settled their severance claim. They're still outstanding.

I just, before I sit down, might mention that some of them of course are still working for us because their abolishment date has not yet arrived.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, you mention 33 in-scope positions wherein these positions right now are in the process of bumping and exercising their privileges as in-scope personnel.

The non-permanent positions, though, you mentioned there is no severance package. When you're talking of non-permanent, are these temporary positions that are available? What would be the length of time of employment, say, for a non-permanent position? Or is that a type of position that it comes open, and people just move in and out and . . . or if the jobs were eliminated, was any offer made to at least help compensate, especially if a person has been hired on and they're looking forward to maybe working through or working into the department and then to find their job has been eliminated. Do they find any kind of compensation at all, Mr. Minister?

(1930)

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — These non-permanent employees are temporary employees, and they are supposed to be employed for a maximum period of one year, but some of them have been around the system for longer than that, moving from one position to another.

They're in scope in the formal sense of that term. They are covered by the collective agreement. And as I said earlier, under the collective agreement they have no bumping rights. Temporary employees don't have bumping rights under the collective agreement, and they are not entitled to severance payments. And in those circumstances we

are not able to give them bumping rights nor are we able to give them severance payments. It's all spelled out in the collective agreement, and we simply have followed that. I would point out that they received a minimum of eight weeks notice, so it wasn't a matter of being fired out the door without having an opportunity to sort of get their lives organized and try and find other employment.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, for the 12 out-of-scope employees, I understand they're entitled to severance. What would be a normal severance settlement? And I'm not looking for specifics, but you indicated that to date six have settled in the neighbourhood of some \$96,000. Would it be in the neighbourhood of two months wages in the severance, or in some cases would there be an early retirement that would be available, Mr. Minister? How would these 12 out-of-scope employees be covered? And I realize that I think you indicated some of the employees continue to work until their job termination, their date arrives, and in the process I would imagine they would have been informed about the type of severance that would be available to them. Can you give us in general terms what they would be facing?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Yes. As I said, there are six employees that have settled and the total cost of those settlements were \$99,000. Two of the employees took an early retirement and their severance benefit is low as a result. But the average would be 99 divided by 6, whatever that is, 16,000 or something like that. And the amount of the severance benefits . . . Well let me just give you the . . . I'll give you the amounts without the names, and I think that would be appropriate. The highest was 42,000; 21,000; 16,000; 11,000; 4,000; and 2,600. So that's the range. And the amount depends on a formula that they took into account — years of service, and age, and that kind of thing. I can't give you the exact formula but it was the same one that was applied across the public service generally. So that those are how the numbers came out. And with the others who have not yet completed their negotiations, the same formula will be applied to them.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, could you give us the names of the employees at . . . whose jobs were terminated or whose jobs have been reclassified, specifically the out-of-scope employees and their length of service in the department, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chairman, and to the member, the list that I sent across, the first page and the first name on the second page were the out-of-scope people. They are in the ML (management level) classification. And I am prepared to read the names out if you like, or send the list back to you, if you like. Perhaps you can indicate which one you want; either way is all right with me.

Mr. Toth: — Well if all the information is available, then I just don't happen to have it right in front of me right now. Mr. Minister, we'll certainly accept that, and we can peruse it and get through.

Mr. Minister, the number of jobs that were . . . or the jobs that were terminated, the positions — how many of those positions were reclassified, and how many employees have been rehired under reclassification?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — None.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, does the department have contracts with employees? And if so, I'd like to know where contracts exist, and we'd like to have a copy of the contracts of employees who have contracts with the department.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chairman, and to the member, I have a list of Saskatchewan Justice contract employees and there are 18 of them. And I'll be glad to provide this information which shows their name and their classification and their monthly or hourly rate, depending upon the kind of contract they have.

Now I have no objection to producing the contracts themselves, although I don't have copies of them here, but I can; that's easy. So I'll send that across. And we also have a number of contract consultants who are not employees but are paid for the service that they provide. There are quite a number of these including computer consultants and that sort of thing.

There are also a number who were employed in the constitutional unit for the constitutional negotiations. And I don't know if your interest includes those but they are people that we brought on for the period of negotiations. And for the most part their work is completed depending on what happens on the constitutional front in the next week or two.

But it's that . . . I can provide that information to you. I don't have that in the form that I've just sent across to you but that is something that I could easily provide to you.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, and we certainly would appreciate that information being sent over.

When we're talking about contracts, Mr. Minister, and especially in light of new positions, what I would like to see, and we would like to see, is a copy of the requirements that you were looking for in letting out a contract or applying or laying out notice for a job description. And then, of course, you'd have people apply for it. You'd be looking for . . . asking for a résumé, their educational abilities, and where they had worked before.

What I'd like to know is what information you were looking for and what the contracts . . . of course if you send the contractual information over, we'll know where people come from and the . . . I don't know if that includes the educational background or the requirements of the job, but maybe, Mr. Minister, if you could fill us in.

And certainly regarding the constitutional team, we'd be more than pleased to have that information as we are quite well aware of the fact that the constitution has taken a fair bit of time. And no doubt I don't think it's over. I think we both believe there's some negotiations, some time needed yet to try and reach a final consensus, as we've seen in the news lately. And certainly Mr. Bourassa from Quebec has indicated he's waiting. I think it appears to me he is holding his cards as close to him as he can and just seeing how far we can go. And it might be worth

noting that even though we reach out our hand in peace to him, I'm not sure how you let him know that we've extended our arm as far as we can and it's time he started reaching his arm and extending it this way as well. Maybe if you would pass that information back to us as well, Mr. Minister, it would be appreciated.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I'll provide you with that. I just might say that in the staffing of the constitutional unit, we reached out to people who were available. And I mention that because there was a great demand for constitutional experts this spring right across the country as government staffed up for this intensive period of federal-provincial-aboriginal negotiations.

For our part we were successful in bringing Professor Donna Greschner from the law school at Saskatoon, and Merrilee Rasmussen from a local law firm who has been the clerk of the . . . or at least the legislative Law Clerk here in the past, and Jim MacPherson who had worked here until 1986 and now is the dean of the Osgoode Hall Law School. Those are the names that occurred in the . . .

I might also mention Howard Leeson. We borrowed him from the university for a period of time and then that borrowing expired. That secondment expired and then we had to put him under a consultant contract for the period from June 1 on because of our arrangements with the university. But I can provide the member with details of that.

I might mention — I think I told you this during the constitution committee — that we had a very . . . we had an excellent staff who participated in the working groups to the multilateral ministers' process. It was the second-smallest staff, second only to Prince Edward Island, but they made a tremendous impact on the negotiations. I was very, very proud of them indeed and we were well served by their efforts. That's all by the way. I'll provide you with the information on those contracts and other contracts.

(1945)

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, when I talk about contracts, we're well aware of the fact that the accusations that fly around when governments change and personnel changes, and certainly I think personnel within ministerial offices. I think the public in general expect that there are certain positions and certain individuals whose jobs will be terminated.

And I'm not exactly sure how all the details of whether there are contracts for a number of positions that . . . I'm just going to throw this out as an idea. When it comes to contracts it would appear to me that it might be appropriate in light of the fact that there are certain positions within government where, when governments of different philosophical backgrounds change — that certain positions will be . . . replacements will be made in those positions. It would seem to me that a contract in that position would be appropriate, probably a yearly contract.

That even a government — if a person wasn't quite fulfilling the requirements of the job that they were given

— would have the ability to reassess the position. But also at the contract reading as such that on the due date of an election or two days . . . two weeks following, that contract is null and void, and it then opens the door for an incoming . . . If the government should happen to change, it would open the door for an incoming government not to have this political turmoil you face all the time.

And I just toss that out as a thought that's certainly been on the back of my mind in relationship to the fact that — regardless of whether it happens to be a Conservative government or a Liberal government or an NDP (New Democratic Party) government — we're always going to have that. And it might be something positive so that the general public would realize it's not always a vindictive attitude that takes place when governments change hands.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I believe very, very strongly in a professional public service. I had the honour to be a member of the public service at the federal level for three years, at the international level for one year, and at the provincial level in the 1970s here in Saskatchewan for five years — from 1974 to 1979.

And I came to understand very, very clearly the enormous value of a professional public service, where people who are qualified get jobs on the basis of their merit — not on the basis of their politics, but on the basis of their merit — where they are evaluated and promoted on the basis of their merit and where they look forward to long and secure careers as long as they're doing their job and doing it properly and serving the government that they're employed by.

And I believe that it would be in the best interests of this province, manifestly to the best interest of this province, to build such a public service. I believe that it is entirely wrong to do otherwise.

The problem I have with the idea of having employees under contract that would expire with an election defeat — if I understood your proposal correctly — would be a dreadful mistake because it would mean that you'd have this turnover of the public service after each election. And I really sincerely and passionately believe that this is a mistake and that we would be far better served if we hired on the basis of merit, Mr. Member, if we hired on the basis of merit; if we promoted on the basis of merit; if we provided secure employment; and if we refrained from judging people on the basis of their politics rather than their ability.

Now that's what I believe. I believed it for many years. I saw it in action and I think the system is the only one that's worth having. I think it's a mistake to go to any other. So my response to your question is that I would not favour that kind of an approach at all, that is to say contracting with the public service or even the senior public service. I think rather we should be aiming at long-term employees whose interest is the province of Saskatchewan and serving the Government of Saskatchewan regardless of which political party is in power.

Now I apologize to you in advance if I've misunderstood your question but that's how I did understand it so I

thought I would let you know how I feel about those matters.

Mr. Toth: — Well I thank you, Mr. Minister, and I think maybe we did just have a bit of a misunderstanding there because I certainly am not going to speak out against the public service. I think people serve the public and serve it well.

I'm talking of people directly affected within a ministerial office or direct appointments by government, not the public service. And I apologize too because I may not have been as direct. And on that basis, Mr. Minister, because I believe certainly that if we were to do what I had indicated and just point the number of people and it was a continuous revolving door, there's no doubt turmoil would exist. And really, how could the public or anyone . . . why would they want to get involved in the public service?

So I think it's very important that we make sure people realize that they've chosen a profession in the public service that we treat them as professionals. But certainly within a ministerial office or higher offices where government and cabinet are directly involved, I think that area needs to be open so that we try and work our way around that — the political bickering that certainly is involved on job replacements.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Well I apologize to the member, Mr. Chairman, because I clearly did misunderstand his question. And I agree with the member that the ministerial staff, political staff are just that, and on the fall of a government the staff falls also. And I believe in the last two transitions, there has been a . . . at least the last two, probably longer than that but the last two that I know something about — the last two transitions have seen the political staff, the ministerial staff, being terminated by the outgoing government, leaving the new ministers and the new government free to hire their own political staff. So I think the member and I are of one mind on that.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, my question and my only question relates to something that was raised just a moment ago by the member from Moosomin. I'm wondering about your constitution committee that went to Ottawa. Did anyone fly to Ottawa whose flight was paid for by your department, but who is not in the employ of the Government of Saskatchewan or an official with the constitution committee?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — No, I don't think so. I'd know if there was. The people who went . . . At the first meeting a member of my staff, Debra Hartung, came along with me because we practically had nobody working for us at the time, and we needed some bodies to be able to handle all of the things that were happening in that one- or two-day period. Debra is not employed by the constitutional unit. As I said she is a member of my staff.

But apart from that, I think everybody was either a minister — me — the Premier on a couple of occasions, or a person who was a member of or under contract with the constitutional unit.

Mr. Peacock is an employee of the Department of Justice. He's not in the constitutional unit itself but is in a separate category.

Ms. Haverstock: — I'm just wondering if I heard you correctly then. What you're stating is that there was no one who accompanied you or your officials to Ottawa who was not either there as an official or as an employee of the Government of Saskatchewan. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — That's right, yes. I was just thinking as I sat down, we took a press officer to many of the later meetings because the crush from the press became quite huge, and we needed somebody to manage that. But that's right. If you know otherwise, I'd be pleased to hear. But I think you're quite right. They're employees of the Government of Saskatchewan or people under contract with the Government of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, what I'd like to know at this time is all the space that is leased or owned by the department, and not just here in the city but how many locations around the province where you have offices of Justice or judicial offices, Mr. Minister. How many there are, where they're located, and the space, and whether there's a lease agreement or whether the department owns or who owns the space, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I have a list . . . I have a document in my hand that is probably 20 pages long. It shows the . . . It's a document that is produced by the Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation and it lists the buildings and the addresses and the location of those buildings for all of our office space. And, for example, in Assiniboia we have the court-house, and in Beauval we have a lease on the LCA (local community authority) community hall for purposes of holding court, and in Big River we have a lease on the Legion hall for the same purpose, and so on. It's quite a long list and I've got an extra copy here I'll just send over to the member and you can keep it. It also includes the amount of space, it includes the amount of space in each location. So I'll send this across to the member and you can have it.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, would that material that you're forwarding to the opposition at this time, would it include all the costs associated with the space, rental agreements or leases, the operating and maintenance costs of all space occupied by the department, broken down by whether it's owned or leased or rented space, and as well, Mr. Minister, the names of each principal leasing or renting space to the department?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chairman, to the member, we lease from Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation. As the member knows, SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation) leases from whoever are the building owners. I am advised that this kind of information is simply not provided in this forum that we're in right now. And that being the case, I have given you all the information I can.

Mr. Toth: — Well, Mr. Minister, you're indicating to us that the Department of Justice leases all their space, or rents their space, from the Property Management Corp.

And if I'm not mistaken, some of the debate we had with the minister responsible for Property Management, some of the questions we were asking when we got into specific departments, we were always told to go to the departments to see if we could glean that information. And we're trusting, Mr. Minister, we're taking your word at face value that you're willing to provide us with that information. I know it may take a bit of time. It may. But I think it would be appropriate. We'd certainly be more than happy. We'd like to have that information, Mr. Minister.

(2000)

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chairman, I can give the member totals in a summary way. Let me do that and see if it helps. For the courts, we pay 5 million and a few odd dollars — \$5,061,952. In connection with corrections, we pay \$5,785,855. For the various kinds of registry services that we provide, including the land titles offices, we pay \$918,550. For administration or departmental administration, we pay \$1,423,647. And for all the boards and commissions that we have in our budget, we pay a total of \$919,016 for a total of \$14,109,020. That's how much we pay to SPMC for the space that we lease from them.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, how many courts do we have or court facilities do we have in the province or lease or rent in the province?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chairman, we can work up that information for the member probably as we sit here tonight, but we just don't have the answer off the top of our heads. We're talking about the whole provincial court system as well as the Queen's Bench and Court of Appeal. But we'll try and figure it out as we sit here tonight, and then I'll provide the information to the member when it's ready.

Mr. Toth: — Maybe while you're working at that, Mr. Minister, your officials, maybe the number of correctional centres . . . and I forget the other list. And it probably will have to take a bit to peruse all the information that is available and you're making available as well so that we can feel that we have adequately addressed the questions.

And I know the questions I'm giving you right now are kind of detailed and fairly tedious, but certainly we, as I indicated earlier, have been asked to make them verbally too. And I guess it's for the public record, and I believe we all understand that.

One question before I move on. Going back to this list of terminations, the information you sent over, the effective date, is that the date that the job or that position officially is terminated?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Yes that's right. That's the . . . Just before I take my seat I might mention to the member that the information we're compiling, we're compiling from the list that you already have, showing the names of the buildings here, there, and everywhere in the province. So we'll try and summarize that for you. But you've got it all there in detail.

Mr. Toth: — Well if that's already included in this list here, Mr. Minister, I don't think it's . . . I can go back through the answers and throw the dollar figures in there and figure it out. I didn't realize that.

I want another question, coming back to these employees and these job terminations, these job positions that are being terminated. There's a list of a number of employees here, and it gives the termination date. Would you also have, or could you give to the committee, a position like — I'm just going to pick a name out of the blue — Meadow Lake Camp, Jim Wenzel's job, September 30, '92. What I'd be interested in noting is when these employees were originally hired and how long they've been with the department prior to their termination date. And the dates really vary, as you indicated earlier. They vary considerably. And if you could provide us with that information, it would be appreciated.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — We cannot provide that information tonight. We haven't got that along with us. We'd have to look at the personnel files of the individuals involved. But that's quite doable, and if you have individuals or groups of individuals in respect of whom you want that information, if you let me know I'll get it for you.

Mr. Toth: — Well, Mr. Minister, for your information, the ones I'm specifically interested are the individuals included in this information that you've forwarded to us tonight, specifically the 83 or the 93 positions that have been terminated or reclassified.

Mr. Minister, would you please provide the committee with a list of all the vehicles being paid for by the department either in maintenance costs or actual purchase deals; whether the vehicle is owned by the government or whether it's privately owned; an explanation why the vehicle is being paid for by the department; and the actual costs of the departmental expenditures in relation to each vehicle; and the breakdown of those costs.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I'll give the member the information I have, Mr. Chairman, and then see where that takes us in terms of what further information you require.

The department provides a car for the Lieutenant Governor and for the deputy minister. Those are the two people, two individuals, to whom a car is assigned.

The other 138 vehicles are in the nature of pool vehicles. There are, for example, 94 of them at the various . . . spread across the province at the various correctional centres, and they're used for moving prisoners and for the use of people at the jail having to go somewhere and come back. But the car is not assigned to any individual; they're assigned just generally to the departments' pools.

Let me go through the list of these assignments: administrative services has a car at their disposal; police complaints, one; consumer protection, one; the sheriffs in the province have 17 cars at their disposal. The provincial court judges, and there are I think 43 or 44 of

them, have 16 cars, and they use them when they're on circuit, and they draw a car from the pool when they have to go out to a circuit point. Court services has a car; prosecutions has two cars. As I mentioned, corrections has 94 cars, or vehicles I should say; I mean they're not all cars. The Public Trustee has two; the Human Rights Commission has two; and the Farm Ownership Board have one.

That's a total of 140, and the total dollars spent in '91-92, the past fiscal year, to CVA (central vehicle agency), which would cover the cost of maintenance and servicing and licensing and whatever else you pay for, is \$1,042,368.

Now I hope that answers your question, although it doesn't give you the sort of car-by-car detail that your question suggested, but I think that gives you the general picture.

Mr. Toth: — So I take it, Mr. Minister, that the department actually leases the vehicles. They don't own the vehicles in particular, but they lease from the CVA pool and they cover the costs through operate . . . or reimburse the CVA pool for the cost of those vehicles.

Mr. Minister, would you please provide a list of advertising done by your department since November 1, 1991, including production and distribution of direct mail, pamphlets, any news-letters, print ads, broadcast ads, speaking tours, public displays and exhibitions, promotional items such as pens, key chains, media relations, and all other communications vehicles that may have been used since that time. And I'm actually interested in all news-letters, internal and external, and the names of persons responsible for these news-letters, as well as the other information relating to all communications activities.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I have the numbers for November 1, 1991 to March 31, 1992, and I'll give you those. The total spent was \$7,880.

The print ads for things like tenders, tendering of services, career ads, and notice of public meetings was approximately \$5,120. We made up a pamphlet in connection with the freedom of information Act, and that was \$1,910. And there is a news-letter for employees of the corrections division, and the cost of that news-letter was \$850. That news-letter was . . . the editor was Garth King who works in the corrections branch as the executive assistant to the executive director. And the editorial advisor was the director of communications, Lisa Ann Wood.

The print ads were produced and placed by advertising agencies, and I'll give you those. I think you asked for those. Brown & Associates Advertising was one, and the second was Palmer Jarvis communications. The print media used was the *Leader-Post*, the *Star-Phoenix*, and the *Prince Albert Herald*, as well as major weekly newspapers in each region of the province.

The pamphlets were typeset and printed, tendered, through SPMC. And the printer was Western Litho, and the news-letter was set up and printed by the Queen's

Printer.

There was some internal cost in drafting the initial copy, but I haven't tried to quantify those, and for editing and liaising with the ad agency and proofing the final copies. On the freedom of information pamphlet there was again departmental staff time for drafting it and editing it and then arranging for the tender through SPMC and proofing the final copy. So it's not a very significant amount. But if the member requires further information, I'll be glad to provide it for the period after March 31. There would be some expenses after March 31 — not a great deal — and we could provide those if the member wished. But this is what I've brought with me tonight.

(2015)

Mr. Toth: — Regarding the information, and the media information, the pamphlets that were put out, Mr. Minister, I understand that you did tender, put out a tender, invited a tender from anyone who would be interested in working or placing a tender to provide or do this information for the . . . do these pamphlets for the department. I wonder, Mr. Minister, could you explain the process of the tender, how many companies or corporations would have tendered to provide this work and whether or not the low bid was the tender that was accepted?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — As I mentioned, the tenders were handled by SPMC and I just don't have any of the information that the member requests. We assume that they would award to the low tender but I'll be pleased to follow up on this matter and provide the information to the member, if that's satisfactory. But I just don't have that information tonight.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, we would appreciate it if you would take the time to follow up and follow through the process, as I'm afraid if we get back to your colleague in SPMC we might be asked to come back to you. So I think we'll accept your response and your willingness to bring that information forward. So when you have it available, if you wouldn't mind passing it on, Mr. Minister, we'd appreciate it.

Mr. Minister, has your department conducted any polls or opinion research since November 1, 1991?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — No we have not.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I wonder if you could provide us a list of all trips paid for by your department since November 1991, whether in the province or outside the province, and include the names of all persons on the trip, indicating which persons were paid for by the department and which were not; a breakdown of the costs of each trip by person, including transportation, meals, accommodation, and any other costs; the destinations and dates of and purposes of each trip; method of travel, and name of the travel supplier; name of hotel or other institution that provided accommodation; and the results of each trip, including a copy of any tangible evidence showing a benefit to the taxpayers of Saskatchewan.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I can provide the member with a detailed list of the department officials who have travelled out of province from November 1 of last year until the end of the fiscal year. That's what I have with me tonight — that's March 31, 1992 — and we'd be pleased to update it.

This is quite lengthy and in each case the destination is given, the purpose for the trip is included, the airfare, the travel, the per diem expenses, the lodging, is all included in the list and I'll send that across to the member. You can have this and I will just assume that you want this updated and we'll be providing you that information in due course.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. In light of the questions we've just posed, and certainly an update would be appreciated as well, but I just want to touch a little bit on the constitutional trek that we've had and your involvement over the past number of weeks, if I'm not mistaken. I don't think we can say it's days. Days has turned into weeks. Certainly we'd . . . I'd like to know a list, and I just don't remember if the member from Greystone had asked for a list, but I'd like to know who attended the minister. And maybe if you could just fill us in with the list of names and the time spent in Ottawa or away from the province in discussions with other ministers regarding the constitution.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — It's travel costs that you were concerned with, I think. Travel costs? Yes.

We've calculated it to the end of June. And I'll come back to that because there have been some trips since then, but to the end of June would be the bulk of it.

And the total travel expenses of the constitutional unit to the end of June was \$88,681.02. And we'd be able to provide you with the breakdown of that but tonight I can give you that global number, 88,000. In addition, my own travel costs should be included and those are about 9,300, including plane fare, hotel rooms, meals and the like.

Now since the end of June we have had the premiers' meeting in Toronto on the Friday in early July — 3rd, I think — and then the follow-up meeting in Ottawa for two days the following week. So there'd be three days of travel and there'd be the Premier and I and three or four, five officials, something like that. I think there were three the first time and five the second, so there'd be an additional amount for that. So probably we're up to 110,000 or something like that to this point.

It's been an expensive process. And it was a very, very difficult process as the member knows and yet it was successful. At the end of the day we reached an agreement. And it's that very agreement now that seems to be on shaky ground. And I sincerely hope, and I know the member shares this view, that that agreement is respected and supported fully by all of the actors and that it will, as it was intended to, form the basis for a settlement of the constitutional issues in this country.

Sorry to get away on that other speech, but it's very much in my mind these days. But in answer to the member's

question, I give you these numbers and offer to provide you with a detailed breakdown of them.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, you're indicating that these numbers include the accommodation, meals, and the travel, if I'm not mistaken. And certainly you'll be forgiven if you get off on a little bit of a speech on the constitution because we probably will on this side as well.

And we can certainly go back to the debate that took place in, I believe it was '88 or '89, regarding the Meech Lake question. The constitution is something that I think, as I indicated earlier, is going to be with us for a while. Certainly it is difficult, I believe, in our own province, and I just want to come for a minute to the Constitutional Committee that has been formed in our province, in light of the fact that many people across this province have indicated that they would like to have more of a say and an involvement. And I don't think it's just constitutional questions.

I think there are . . . people themselves would like to be a little more informed and at least have the feeling that they had some involvement and some say. And at the end of the day, who knows whether they'll agree with whether the recommendations placed forward by the Constitutional Committee, or whether it's an agricultural committee, as we'll get into discussion on the GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) question a little later and the implications of the justice system regarding that question. But when it comes to the constitutional question, there's no doubt that there are a number of views out there, and certainly we are well represented in this province by a number of groups.

One of the large groups and involved peoples in our province happens to be the aboriginal community. And as the minister is aware, prior to last fall's election, there was an agreement in principle with the aboriginal community on some land settlements. And in the process in the mean time, we have had . . . and I'm not sure whether there's been some further negotiations or whether the agreement has been changed somewhat. I'd be interested in knowing where that agreement stands at the present time.

And on the constitutional question, certainly we've had . . . As you indicated last Wednesday morning when the Constitutional Committee met that there are a number of complex questions that will be addressed or will need to be addressed and certainly placed before the general public. I believe, Mr. Minister, it would be appropriate if the general public had at least some information of and a bit of a knowledge of the process, not just the process itself, but some of the constitutional . . . the deal that's in the package, so that when the committee does take the time and meet with the public, the public are a little more informed and can maybe come with some very comprehensive ideas that the committee can weigh over so that when they give their report to the Legislative Assembly, it's a report that we can look at.

I think it's going to be very difficult compiling a report by which all parties will be able to really agree on, but certainly I think we need to work at that. I think if people

are going to put forward any ideas at all or feel they've had an opportunity for input, they need to have a little bit of an understanding of where the constitutional process is today.

Certainly I think . . . I was going to say they probably have a fair bit through the media, but sometimes I'm not exactly sure that maybe the media may not have a little bias once in a while and it depends how it's laid out to the general public. On many occasions their interpretation of the process may be somewhat skewed as to what actually has taken place.

So I think it's going to be imperative that we lay out some of the structure and some of what we're looking for, and as well, Mr. Minister, I'm wondering in light of the Constitutional Committee that's been established and set up in this province, if the minister as well has a rough idea of the type of expenses that this committee may incur, what you're anticipating the committee may incur, and how many public meetings you are going to be asking the committee to be involved in.

Mr. Chairman: — Order. The question that the member poses with respect to the committee should not be posed to the minister. We're reviewing the estimates for his department and not estimates for the Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The question of . . . I respect the Chairman's ruling and I am not going to address that part of it. So far as the process of informing the public is concerned, it's a very, very important point. And I must say that I do not know how to do that. We are banking heavily upon the standing committee to find a way to do that, or to advise the government with respect to how it should be done.

The member will know that the meetings of the ministers has been covered extensively by the media, by lengthy briefing sessions at the end of each day's work. And all of that's been carried in the media. So if one were to gather together all of the television clips or all of the newspaper reports over the last few months, you could put together the constitutional document. Because it really has been a very open and frank process.

And it would typically start with Mr. Clark giving a briefing, and then every other minister who was approached by the press would then come up to the microphone and discuss, and discuss, and discuss what had been discussed in the meeting that day. So it was a . . . by the end of all of those interviews, everything that had been said behind closed doors had been reviewed and rehashed and said again in public.

(2030)

But you're right, that doesn't mean that everyone knows what was agreed to. And indeed, nobody knows all of the things that were agreed to because nobody keeps track of these things day by day. *The Globe and Mail* published quite an extensive summary of the agreements that had been reached. But then, who reads *The Globe and Mail*? And having read it, who retains it? So I agree with the member that there is a need to get the information out.

And I frankly don't know how to do that myself. But I think it's a matter that we should discuss at that standing committee. I think it's very, very important that all political parties in this House are able to support the deal that is struck. And I do hope that that will be the end result of the committee's work, and I speak here to all parties, including my own. I think it very important that there be support for this package.

And I believe it is such a package that will attract the support from all sides of the House, and I think that will be important in terms of its acceptance in the province.

A word on the treaty land entitlement negotiations. Those negotiations continue, and we're down to a very fine point or two, as between the parties. Chiefly it's a question of agreement between the federal and provincial government on one or two fine points under the agreement. But it's at a very, very late stage and is practically a done deal, but not yet. It still remains to be done. It is a historic process and an extremely important one, and I think all members of the House would hope that it would be completed very soon and that it could be signed and delivered.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And just for a point of clarification, the . . . I'm not sure the Chairman had mentioned the fact; I don't know if he would. The Chairman was referring to the Constitutional Committee and talking about costs. Is that under a different jurisdiction? I realize . . . I believe the constitution comes under the minister's responsibility, and I think any discussion on the constitution is part of the whole process of Justice estimates here. So just so that I'm clear here.

I believe my colleague from Morse has a few questions regarding the constitutional . . .

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Minister, I have some questions about what we have to expect in the process of time to get the resolution of the Canada agreement. What kind of a time line are we looking at in the province? For example, I know that Quebec has got to have a vote this fall. Are we looking at a time line that is going to give us sufficient time to have all of the legislatures put into place their willingness to participate in the agreement? Or are we going to have a stand-off like we had the last time around where one individual group or one individual province or one interest group is going to have the capacity to deliver what I would call an imbalance in what's going on. And a lot of us agree with what's going on but is there some . . . Can you foresee someone putting a road-block in the way of things that are going to happen, because we have a very narrow time line. And that is itself at risk, or a risk.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Well that is also a very good question. Quebec is working towards a referendum on October 26. We don't yet know the question. It may be a question approving of a package or it may be a question of approving a document as a basis for negotiation or what have you. The Quebec government has control over the question that they ask.

There are also a number of provinces who, by law, must have referenda — British Columbia, Alberta. Premier

Wells has indicated that he plans to have one in Newfoundland. Manitoba has a process spelled out in legislation involving their standing committee, and it is very extensive and very thorough and very time-consuming.

In this province we have the referendum of last October 21 whereby a vote of something like 2:1 the people indicated that they wanted to have a chance to express their view. We have, on the national level, parliament having passed legislation that permits a referendum and conflicting views over time about whether or not they'll actually have one. If they have one on the national level then that may affect the decision to have provincial referenda.

Whether we have one in Saskatchewan is a good question because it sort of depends on the package, I think, and the public reaction to the package and whether the legislature and the standing committee feel that in light of all those circumstances we should actually proceed with a referendum. I'm not saying one way or the other for tonight, but the member will know that it has cost implications and we'll have to size that up at the time to see whether we need one here or not. And if we have a national one then it may not be necessary to have a provincial one, but if there is no national one then what do we do? Anyway, all of that will take some time.

A lot of lessons were learned in the Meech Lake debate and one of the lessons was that too much time is too much time. You've got to get at these questions and get them decided early, or else the ground gets eroded and eaten away and misunderstandings arise. It's the kind of a question that requires some debate but it doesn't have to be debated for ever — it should come to a head sometime.

Now what have I said there? I think we're probably into a process that will occupy us until at least the late spring of next year, by the time all the legislatures have considered the package and done their internal things and voted approval or non-approval. But that's just a guess. I mean they're . . . and no one knows. No one can calculate this. One subject that is discussed by the Prime Minister and the premiers always is a review of what the internal processes will be within a province, and what steps they plan to take, and how long they'll take. Because everybody has their eye on the Meech experience and are determined not to drag it out that long. So it's obviously tricky and I'm sorry I can't be more definite than that.

Mr. Martens: — I appreciate your answer. I know that it is difficult and delicate and there's a lot of concern in each one of those areas.

Between now and the next spring . . . and what makes the time line even more difficult is that the possibility of elections in the process of that time, and that makes it even more difficult to determine what's going to happen. Is Nova Scotia at the point where they would be causing a problem because of that, if you waited till next spring to do that?

And I'm not here to have you do an assessment. I don't know that and that's why I raise that question. Ottawa

itself is running out of mandate time, well not seriously, but they do have a concern there. And I think that that's something that needs to be very carefully considered because I'm not sure whether, if the major players change in the process, that you'll have the same kind of empathy on certain points. And that raises a great deal of concern on our part, and mine in particular as being a Canadian and wanting to have the Canadian opportunity to express ourselves.

So I hope that you can do those things in the time line that are required. How much importance do you place on the role of the vote in Quebec in determining what other provinces will decide to do, and should we have that discussion on our process after the Quebec decision is reached? Would it be better to wait until that period of time or would it be better for us to do it before? I'd like to have some assessment. I'm not sure. I probably have an opinion, but I'm not sure whether that's accurate either. But I'd like to know what yours is because you're leading this province into some very crucial discussions. I think we need to seriously consider those.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Well the Nova Scotia situation is as follows — the most remarkable way for a province to approach these discussions. The Premier represented the province. The number two person in the Nova Scotia delegation was the Leader of the Opposition, and the number three person in the delegation was the leader of the third party, the NDP. And on several occasions, the Premier of Nova Scotia was unable to attend because of the mine disaster in Nova Scotia, and the head of the delegation for Nova Scotia was the Leader of the Liberal Party, the Leader of the Opposition. As a result, I don't think it would matter what would happen in the Nova Scotia election. I think all parties are committed equally to this accord. All of them had a full participation in the discussions, and it's quite a remarkable thing. I'm sure there's no precedent for it in federal-provincial conferences in this country. It's quite fascinating to watch, and it indeed worked very, very well.

So far as parliament is concerned, it will be interesting to watch the debate on the package in parliament. I think that you will find that the Liberal Party and the NDP in parliament will be supportive of the package. We spoke to Mr. Chretien when he was in Saskatchewan recently, and that's the clear impression I had, although he hadn't finished his work on it — it was still a fresh package. But Mr. Clark had stayed in quite close contact with him, and I believe that the NDP will be supportive of the package also, when they finish their work. I think those are certainly the signals that I have so far. So unless something really radical happens in the next federal election in terms of either the Bloc Québécois or the Reform Party emerging as major players in parliament, I think that this package will remain intact.

Now to the Quebec part of your question. This is very, very difficult to predict. They're heading towards a referendum on October 26. We don't know what the question put to the people will be — could be almost anything. Could be a question on the one hand that asks for approval of the package, or otherwise. Could be a question that asks for approval that the package be the basis of further constitutional negotiations — a sort of a

fence-sitting interim procedure not unprecedented in Quebec constitutional history at all. Or it could be an outright separation question, an outright sovereignty question. One doesn't know at this stage.

(2045)

The state of play at the moment is very, very, very delicate, as Quebec reacts to the package, as the Prime Minister deals with it in the way that he has been dealing with it, and as the other provinces try and respond to what we know of the Quebec reaction. And it's a very, very delicate point as we speak tonight, and the next few days are going to be crucial to that.

I think, though, as follows: I think if we can arrive at a final package in this country, say in the next three or four weeks — and I think we must do that — then I believe that our standing committee should begin work right away on the basis that the people have to know what's in the package and have to be able to start thinking about it so that they can react; and not wait for Quebec's answer but just proceed on the basis that it will be acceptable in Quebec, or at least it will be seriously considered, and we must seriously consider it here. I don't think we should wait until we get a reaction. I think we should begin our work at once because there's a lot of it to do.

This question earlier of how you get this package out to the people is a very, very difficult question. It's a complex package. As members know, it's pages long and that's just a description of the text. The legal text itself is likely to be longer than that. And it's going to take a lot of very, very sophisticated communication to be able to put the package to people so that they can properly react to it.

And that leads to the interesting question of how you'd design a referendum question with a package like that. I mean, it's not simply, do you approve of A or not. You know it's not a simple thing. It's do you approve of this package, which goes to 36 pages, or not. And makes it awfully hard to frame a referendum question, either in Saskatchewan, or Alberta, or Newfoundland, or nationally at the level of parliament. But to repeat myself, I think that in this province we should start seriously to work on it as soon as it's in final form. And indeed, the committee has started to work on the subject on the basis of the sort of rolling drafts or summary documents that are available up to this time.

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Minister, in the role of what you're getting back from Quebec at this point, are they dealing with it through Joe Clark? Or are they dealing with it through the Prime Minister's office? Or are they dealing with it as a part of Bourassa negotiating typically like the Premier of Nova Scotia is? Or what is their role now in response to what has happened so far? Can you give us what your impressions are. And if there's a direct fact involved, we wouldn't mind hearing about that too.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — There is contact at different levels. Certainly the Premier of Quebec is talking to the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister's staff. And certainly there is contact with Mr. Clark as well. That would probably be the Premier and the constitutional minister, Mr. Remillard. There is also a lot of contact at the official

level . . . at the officials' level. The Quebec officials are, for the most part, the same officials that were involved in the Meech Lake discussions. And they are expert beyond description. They know this file like no one else knows this file. And they are working with the Ottawa officials and with some contact, we believe, with other provinces. So discussion is taking place at various levels.

There is discussion going on about whether the deal that has been struck achieves the substance of the Meech Lake accord. The member will be familiar with that term. It's often used — the substance of Meech.

We heard over and over again from Mr. Bourassa, the point that he could not return to the constitutional table until the provinces had agreed upon the substance of Meech. We thought, that is the provinces thought, that we had achieved that in these negotiations. Substantially, we accepted the Dobbie-Beaudoin formulation of the distinct-society clause which was different than Meech, but yet in substance was Meech. Similarly, we thought we had arrived at similar conclusions with respect to the spending-power clause and the immigration clause. And we thought we had achieved the substance of Meech and the debate that's going on now is whether that's the case or whether some further adjustment could be made to the formulations of those items that would bring the situation closer to Meech and thereby satisfy the Quebec government on that point.

And when I referred to delicate stage, it's delicate in that area right now. And I have no hesitation though in sharing that with the member and we're watching with great interest over these days and participating as we're asked to, to move that question along.

What does it all mean? The Quebec media and the intelligentsia, if I can use that term, have reacted negatively to the idea of the Triple E Senate. I can tell the member that I spent the better part of a week in Montreal this year and I took advantage of my opportunity there to talk constitution with a lot of people that I just met casually in a restaurant, or a taxi driver, or someone staying in the hotel — whoever I could talk to. And I was as bold as I dared to be in approaching them and asking them what they thought of these discussions. And without my raising it, but only because it was the subject of so much play in the media, I think everyone of these people said to me that the Senate is not a big issue in Quebec. It's not a deal-breaker in Quebec. I get that from the common folk in the city of Montreal, all French-Canadian I think. Yes, all of them were French-Canadian and this was the reaction that they volunteered to me.

So I was a bit surprised when I saw the editorialists, Lise Bissonnette and other people, reacting so powerfully to the idea of an equal Senate and how this is totally unacceptable to Quebecers. And I thought to myself, well, she hasn't talked to the Quebecers I talked to anyway, because they didn't give a darn about the Senate.

So I . . . and I might also say to the member that I don't hear the word Senate in the discussions that are taking place on the telephone across the country now as being something that Quebec is ranting and raving about at the

level of the government and government officials. It is rather now a question of how the essential requirements of Quebec — I refer to them as the Meech items and they're not — but what they are, are the minimum requirements of Quebec to adhere to the Canadian constitutional instruments. They haven't changed their position in 20 years on these points.

There was a formulation of them in Meech that the sizeable portion of the Canadian public reacted to in a negative way, and so different formulations have been sought which would on the one hand meet these requirements, and on the other hand not raise all kinds of problems across the country. And I thought we had arrived at such a package but that's what we're trying to deal with on the telephone these days.

If that can be settled away, then I think a first ministers' conference would follow very quickly at which it would become clear whether the package, as it is, is acceptable to Quebec or whether they would require some further discussion — and we'll take it from there.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Chairman, we'll not be completing the estimates we're now involved in and I ask to move to Rural Affairs.

The Chair: — Why is the member from Saskatoon Wildwood on her feet?

Ms. Lorje: — With leave, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to introduce a guest.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would like to introduce a woman who's sitting in the Speaker's gallery — a woman who is a leader in the women's community in Saskatchewan; a well-known Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix* columnist, and the very patient spouse of our well-travelled constitutional affairs minister. I would like to welcome to the Assembly Ms. Sandra Mitchell.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Consolidated Fund Expenditure Rural Development Vote 43

The Chair: — Would the minister please introduce his officials to the committee.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With me tonight I have Bill Reader, who is the deputy minister; Ernie Anderson, who is the executive director of transportation services; Lloyd Talbot, who is the executive director of revenue, administration, and financial services; John Babcock, who is the director of Crown lands; and Walter Antonio at the back, who is director of transportation planning. Thank you.

(2100)

Item 1

Mr. Goohsen: — Well thank you. It's indeed a pleasure at last to have this opportunity to see this minister in the hot seat that we've been waiting to get him in for so long. Finally at last we may get an answer or two to questions that we've asked many times in this Assembly over the past several months — questions that have been dodged deliberately, totally, and completely.

And now we are intending to be here until we find out the answers. And we have a choice of being here a little while or a long while. I consider a little while until the end of August and a long while till the end of Christmas season. So whichever it takes.

How such an important department in this government could go on this long without answering the questions that rural Saskatchewan is asking is beyond me. In what is supposed to be a free and democratic country and a free and democratic province, it has been a shock and amazement to me — the trickery that has gone on in this department in the past months. So maybe we'll find out some of the answers.

I want to tell you that we're going to be asking you, minister, questions about how, not only the Crop Insurance department runs, but how your department operates — things to do with rural municipalities, all the way from the gravel that's on a road to the kind of cost sharing that's done with every kind of project in rural municipalities.

I want to warn you that we intend on finding out once and for all how your department operates, who operates it, and why the things are done within it.

There are too many secrets in this province. And in this department we intend to ferret out each and every one of them, one at a time for as long as it takes to get to the bottom of everything.

I had a constituent with me today who particularly asked me to ask a few of the questions, and we're going to get to those questions and we're going to find out things. Why the philosophy of this government, for example, has determined that farmers and ranchers can no longer own their own property or buy land that they had transactions begun on. We will be finding out from you how you feel about those kind of things and where you intend on leading this province in the next few years. We're going to find out what makes you tick as well as what makes your department tick.

It is our intention to discuss with you all of the things that have been talked about in Rural Development with regards to cost sharing over the last months. We determined from your department and your statements that there was supposed to be a 7.4 per cent decrease in funding to rural municipalities, when in fact we haven't been able to find one rural municipality in the province that's willing to admit that they had that percentage or anything less — only more. And we want to know from you, and we're going to find out from you, exactly how you do your mathematics.

We have several questions to ask you, but I do want to ask one direct question before I preambule very much longer because I know that you just can't wait to get to your feet to answer this question. In the department you had an employee for a very short duration, named Harold Ellis. Mr. Ellis was very ill and it is my understanding that he was on disability. Is it true that when you had Mr. Ellis fired you had the termination notice delivered to his hospital bed by an agent of the Public Service Commission?

Now I'm told that we have witnesses prepared to swear to dispositions of this fact, and we want to know if you feel it is compassionate to send your agents of employment and how you will justify sending those agents to a hospital to terminate the job of a disabled and very ill man. How can you justify this totally, utterly, disgusting action? What is your reply, minister?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I am glad to be on my feet to answer this and other questions and I'm sure it won't take till the end of September. There's no desire to hide any facts from the opposition, so I'm sure we'll be through this in a very short order.

As regards to the question at hand of Mr. Ellis, yes you are indeed correct. Mr. Ellis was quite sick. The reason the termination was delivered to the hospital was because he had asked for it to be delivered to the hospital. His position was abolished in the reorganization, and he went on permanent disability at that time. He had asked us to deliver the notice to the hospital.

Mr. Goohsen: — Well I sort of wonder how many people believe in the tooth fairy as well.

Mr. Minister, I have another very pointed question that I want to ask you tonight to get this thing set on the right stage. Is it true that Brian Oster, the NDP candidate in the Maple Creek constituency, recently turned back land bank land after receiving a cash monetary consideration for the improvements on that land — money that he has reported to have taken to Alberta and specifically to Medicine Hat to buy a home from which he now resides and commutes to the rest of his farming operation here in Saskatchewan. Is that a fact?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Speaker, or Mr. Chairman, we're not certain who the . . . what particular case the member opposite is referring to. If he would care to give us the name or some information on it, we will certainly dig up the information for him.

Mr. Goohsen: — The name of your candidate was Brian Oster; I already said that, and he formerly lived at Golden Prairie, Saskatchewan. Does that help you, minister?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Speaker, or Mr. Chairman, we are not aware that Mr. Oster had any Crown land, or any deal was for making. But we will certainly . . . we can get that information, as much as is not privileged information that involves individual clients. But we will certainly research that and get you what information we can on that.

Mr. Goohsen: — How soon could we expect to get that information, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — We could have that information probably by tomorrow, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Goohsen: — Well we will determine to keep you here long enough to make sure that the information is delivered, and we will give you till tomorrow to deliver it. And then we will ask you again and again and again, as many times as it takes.

There's so many things on my desk that people have offered me as suggestions for questions, I hardly know where to start.

But I want to start with an article in *The Western Producer* that directly stimulates questions. It says in here that agriculture, of course is . . . the preamble is that agriculture is hit by budget cuts and so on, and then the writer unfortunately is not informed that there is a difference between Rural Development and Agriculture. So I have to pick and choose to try and pick those things that relate to your department rather than the Department of Agriculture. So I'm sure that if I hit some of the ones that don't concern you, you're going to tell me right away so that I can get on with next one that does concern your department.

But in here it says, "The Farm Purchase Program is being eliminated." I'm not sure if that's your jurisdiction or not. My question is, first of all, is it? And why was it eliminated?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chair, the member opposite is correct, that is Agriculture. The farm purchase program was a subsidy of interest rate on purchase of land, subsidizing rates down to 8 per cent which is under the Department of Agriculture.

Mr. Goohsen: — Okay, we'll ask the Minister of Agriculture in more detail on that.

Now we've got . . . it goes on and says:

Interest rates under the Agriculture Credit Corp. of Saskatchewan will be set at a prime plus two percent for livestock cash advances and to cost plus one percent for capital loans.

I would like to know two things here. Why would there be a difference from one type of loan to another? And why would any loan be as much as 1 or 2 per cent above prime when in fact people who joined things like feeder associations can get banks to finance at anywheres from a half — sometimes I understand even less than that — of a per cent over prime?

Now why would these farmers in these categories have to pay up to 2 per cent over prime? Why are they being penalized when other people can get credit a lot less?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, the loans that the member refers to are under ACS (Agricultural Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan) which is a Crown corporation and also under a different minister.

I suspect the answer to the question is that interest rates are varied depending on the security and the risk and the loan and the repayment conditions and so on. And I expect ACS acts much as any other lending institution in determining its rates.

Mr. Goohsen: — I would take serious exception to that, that they should. Obviously they do if they're overcharging people. But you're obviously targeting the people that can afford to pay less than anybody else in this whole province, that's the people that have debt with the government on agricultural lending of any kind.

But I'll go on because I'm going to get to ask that same question of the Minister of Agriculture as you've indicated that that's his domain.

In the department of rural development (it goes on to say) \$241,000 in grants to agricultural and historical societies will be eliminated.

My question right there has to be: how do you expect these societies to continue to operate, and don't you think that they provide a service for rural Saskatchewan? Where's the saving? The grants ranged from several hundreds of dollars for local fairs to \$7,000 for the Canadian Western Agribition. And I'll stop there and let you respond.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, the cutting of these grants of course was one of the tough decisions that we made. I think, as members opposite know, this was a very tough budget. We were facing a basically bankrupt province. We had to make some very tough choices. I believe the ag and hort societies will continue to flourish. They will do it as rural people have always done it, by their own means and will struggle on. We'll create some problems for them but by and large we expect to see these survive.

Mr. Goohsen: — Mr. Minister, the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Rural Development, everything that has to do with agriculture, has either been increased in taxed or cut in grants. My question to you is: what percentage has Agriculture in general been cut in this mad budget as compared to other departments in government?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, of the questions we've had so far, I barely have had one that touches on my department. The spending cuts in Agriculture would be, I think, best addressed to the Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. Goohsen: — Mr. Minister, no use sitting down so quick. Address the question to Rural Development then, exactly, specifically. What percentage of cut in Rural Development as compared to other departments, say Health, Education? You've slashed rural Saskatchewan in every place you can and yet you've come up with a deficit of \$517 million in your budget. You've cut all kinds of programs out of rural Saskatchewan and yet you've got this mammoth amount of deficit on top of 200 millions of dollars of increased money coming in from taxation. Where is all that money going as compared to what

you're cutting out of agriculture?

My point is going to be simply this, that you have treated agriculture unfairly in the guise of an attempt to solve the problem of deficits and you haven't even allocated any dollars towards deficit control or paying off deficits. In fact you're even running a bigger deficit than before. So what percentage of Rural Development cuts as compared to the rest of the province?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chair, the Rural Development budget was cut approximately 15 per cent; about 300,000 of that would apply directly to agriculture, the rest to rural government and so on.

Mr. Goohsen: — Okay you cut by 15 per cent to agriculture, but you didn't answer the question. How does that compare with the cuts to other departments in government like Health or Education or some of those others?

(2115)

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Well, Mr. Chairman, the members opposite have the budget and the overall cuts from each department. And I don't have the Health numbers and the Education numbers with me. I think budgets were cut. I think if you compare to Community Services and other departments of similar structure, they were cut very similar to those, in fact less I think than Community Services. And I would quote numbers . . . I think Education cuts in the order of 3 or 4 per cent. And I don't like to quote numbers on other people's departments that I don't have in my back pocket.

Mr. Goohsen: — Minister, with all due respect, you do sit around the cabinet table, and you have access to every bit of this information. And I challenge you that you have this information, and you know it all too well.

You know it all too well that in this province, your government has attacked agriculture and agricultural people through the Department of Rural Development as well as other places. You've attacked them with mammoth cuts where you haven't done the same thing to other places in the province. We say that your government is treating rural Saskatchewan unfairly. That's my point, and your answers will verify that as we go along. And the people who are watching will be the judge of that.

"The government . . ." it goes on here, and I want to press through these questions so that we can get some answers.

The government has also decided (it says) to move 90 extension agrologists back to the department of agriculture. They had been transferred to rural development in 1988 by the previous Conservative government. Only one full-time job has been eliminated from the department of agriculture, although a number of term positions will disappear.

Thirty-eight full-time jobs will be eliminated from rural development, although 25 are already vacant. The remaining 13 include seven

engineers, whose jobs will become part time . . .

Now my question there is: having transferred all those people, is that an indication to the people that you are in fact following through with your promise at the last SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) convention that you will eliminate the Department of Rural Development, or that your government will, and that it will exist no longer?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, in regards to the whole raft of questions that I think were there, the members opposite seem to think that Rural Development pertains to rural Saskatchewan, and Health and Education pertain to urban Saskatchewan. I would like to remind the members opposite that we also have schools and hospitals in rural Saskatchewan. And so the cuts that were made across were . . . many cuts were made. Community Services cuts which deal with urban governments were cut even larger than rural municipal governments. So I think that, although the members opposite would like to continue to play the rural/urban split that they used to try to get re-elected, I think they should look on the success they had in the last election campaign before they try to pursue that tactic again.

As regards to the extension agrologists, those people have the same mandate as they had before. They are just now under a different department of reorganization. The transfer has very little effect on the performance and the goals that were set out for extension agrologists.

And as to the member's statement of promises that I made, the only promise that I've made to SARM and to rural municipalities is that we will not be forcing any structure on them and they will be consulted in planning. And any changes that they desire, we would certainly help them to carry out those changes.

Mr. Goohsen: — I don't think I heard what I heard. We didn't ask a question about structure. We asked you whether or not this is the first step in eliminating Rural Development as a part of government. I think I'll let you have one more shot at answering that question.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — This was a step which was taken . . . we felt that the extension agrologists belonged in agriculture, never should have been moved. And the division where we had the specialists who were in agriculture and the people who were below them in the Department of Rural Development, was not a very efficient way to run an extension system. And therefore, the reorganization was done.

Mr. Goohsen: — Well you still didn't answer the question. But I'll get back to it later because I think you'll need some time to think about that maybe.

You mentioned that you feel like there's a promotion of a rural/urban split. Several thoughts immediately can run through your mind with a comment like that from a minister. The first one that hit my mind was, if you have no rural people left, how can there be a rural/urban split? And the direction you are taking this government — you and the rest of the ministers in this government — there won't be any rural people left to split with.

If you continue to cut rural services . . . and you say hospitals and education are supplied to rural people. Some of my colleagues immediately echoed, for how long? And that would have had to be my first thought if they hadn't said it first. You've got all kinds of plans to eliminate hospitals in rural Saskatchewan. We've seen the white paper. You've got all kinds of plans to eliminate education out in rural Saskatchewan. We've already seen a report last winter that indicated some of that direction.

So I hardly think that the amount of money that you're spending in the cities on health care will be considered to be equal to that which you are doing to rural Saskatchewan by the rural people who lose a hospital or no longer have a school left. So I think maybe you should guard what you say about this sort of thing because the rural/urban split may in fact be more of a cause and effect of your doings than anybody else. And it's your government now that's responsible for actions, not somebody else's.

I want to go on with just with another little part in here. It says:

(a man named) Lloyd Talbot, executive director of the department of rural development, said the cuts shouldn't have any impact on government services or the quality of life in rural (Saskatchewan).

Can you believe that? Mr. Minister, do you honestly think that cutting 15 per cent out of the budgets of Rural Development to rural Saskatchewan would have no effect?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chair, the member opposite talks about losing rural people. I think if you look back over the past 10 years, we've had a very dramatic loss of rural population. I think if he sticks around and watches us over the next four years, we'll see that trend reversed. And I think we will see we won't go back to the '60s. We'll see a new, vibrant, and flourishing rural Saskatchewan by the time the term of this government is up. And that is the direction that we are clearly going to be going.

Mr. Goohsen: — Could we hold you to that promise that rural Saskatchewan is in fact going to bloom, flourish, and grow in numbers of people during your administration? I think we'd better put a real big red X on the piece of paper beside that comment because, in fact, we are going to hold you to that.

You absolutely are going to be held to task by the people of this province in three years from now, not four any more, three now. It's getting closer to the deadline every day. And they're going to remember that kind of remark — the kind of a remark that says people who take money away from rural Saskatchewan are actually going to help it grow. I see one fellow in the back row over there turn totally white and pale. He must be your back-bencher because he's not ours. We know what's going on; he just discovered it.

I want to press on because we've got a ton of questions, and we don't have till Christmas time really to ask them

all.

I want to ask you on behalf of my constituent who joined me today: what is your position on public ownership as versus the private ownership in the area of leased land, and the deals that were being struck by farmers and ranchers that were buying leased land, some of which were in the process of being negotiated at the time of the election.

And even though the paper work hadn't been completed, even though in all of the applications the i's had been dotted and the t's had been crossed, everything had been done according to the law of the day, even though that had been done and other people had successfully completed their transactions, you cut that program off and you stopped those people because they had got caught up in the legal machinery of our province. Do you have any intentions of correcting that situation for those people who got caught in the mix of the legal things in our province?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, there are, and were, several land programs and sales policies. There's a cash sale policy which continues. There is a rent to own policy which we are reviewing at this time. Justice has some problems with the policy. Anybody who had an appraisal done, we continued with the sale. Anybody who had not yet had an appraisal done, the sales were not carried through with if they were in the initial stages. Anybody that had got as far as having an appraisal done, the sales were completed.

Mr. Goohsen: — Are you saying, Minister, if an individual could prove to you that he had done the right things, and then had not had his transaction completed, that you in fact would reconsider that particular situation and take the appropriate action and allow the transaction to go through?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, if the individual had an appraisal completed then I think we would certainly look at that particular case because that was the policy, to carry through with all the sales that had an appraisal completed on them.

Mr. Goohsen: — I do believe that we have such a case. And just to press that one step further — and I'm taking you on your honour here — you said that you will do the right thing if this individual has done his homework right and gotten the thing to that process, or gotten through the process. So just for his particular case — and there may be a few others; I think there are more than one — you will then, and you're stating this now, you will go ahead and allow those transactions to be completed.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, we are not aware of any appraisals that were completed where the sales were not carried out. So if those cases exist, we would certainly review them.

Mr. Goohsen: — That wasn't my question, sir, that you would just review them. Would you honour them?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Well, Mr. Chairman, we're not going to make commitments without seeing the

details of the case. As I said, if the case is progressed and everything is in order as per policy, we would certainly carry them out if they are indeed to the appraisal stage, and the appraisal is complete and paid for that we would certainly look at honouring those contracts.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I certainly will pass that information along and the people that are involved I think will be in touch with you rather shortly.

I want to go on and ask for my constituent another question that he was concerned about. And that is to do with the increase in lease fees on pastures that has resulted over the past few months from your department. I have reports of as much as either 67 or 68 per cent increases in some cases.

My constituent says that this direction that you are taking, coupled with others, will bankrupt a lot of the people that are on those rather fragile grassy lands that are used for livestock production. He asks the question: would you rather have those farmers off of the land and put on welfare than to see them make their own living?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, the raising fees have been set by a formula for many years. As of '87, I guess with the previous administration, froze those rents and the formula that was used to calculate them would have indicated much higher rents. What we did was move the rents half way to the formula price for those rents.

Mr. Goohsen: — Well, Mr. Minister, on the initial statement like that, it would appear that you have some justification, because you say rents were frozen for a while and therefore in order to keep up with the times and all that sort of thing you would be justified in increasing it.

The reality of the real world, sir . . . and I suspect from your comment that you haven't had to depend on running very many cattle on government-leased land to make your living in the past. The reality of the world is . . . and you can check with your department, people that have worked with counselling and assistance programs, the farm debt process, the review processes — all of those kinds of things — those departments are available to you.

And I think if you take the time to talk to them, you're going to find out that there was a very real reason why those rates were frozen. And that very real reason was the fact that those people weren't making enough of an income to be able to pay any more if they were going to stay in business.

(2130)

If you continued to raise their rents and their taxes, they were bound to go broke. The past administration recognized that, therefore they froze the rates because there was a need for them to be frozen. Because I can show you if you can't find them, places in your departmental records where folks who have dealt with the government in different financial and institutional areas, had run up huge bills for feed during the drought years of the 1980s, and the livestock prices — even though they look attractive to a lot of folks — had never

increased enough to pay off those past debts. They were only enough to continue to function on a debt-free ranch that had no past debts as a result of drought and having to move cattle north or bring in feedstocks.

And the reality of life was that those rates were frozen for that very reason, that the past administration had some sympathy to keeping ranchers out on the land and in the country, rather than to end up having it a barren wasteland with only antelope and deer and a few other wildlife.

And of course that leads me to my next question that my constituent wanted to ask, and that is would you rather try to formulate a program where you eliminate all the ranchers off of the land in order to have the wildlife habitat lands all populated with nothing but deer and antelope?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, I want to point out to members opposite that I have run cattle on government lease, although a very small one. I found the rates to be cheaper than private pastures. I think they still are. I think those rates are based on cattle prices and I think you need some logic in setting prices. If the formula is wrong, then the formula needs to be changed. I think in order to run a government in a logical way, you need to have some sort of formula and follow it, or some policy for setting prices.

I suggest that the reason that the prices were froze was because the members opposite were afraid of the election that was coming and they postponed it like they did a lot of other rate hikes until after the election.

Mr. Goohsen: — Well that, sir, is a comment that's absolute nonsense and you know it. The ranchers in this country don't number enough numbers to affect an election any place. The reality of life is that they are a very small number of our population, and you could quite easily eliminate all of them without affecting very much in terms of poll results at any election except maybe a municipal one in the town of Maple Creek in one or two divisions.

Other than that, in the whole province those people simply are not in a position to carry a clout with the political ballot. They have to depend on a balance of fair play and some of your own words that you just repeated, being used in some degree of fairness.

And I suggest to you that your point of view of what is fair in determining what these folks need is out of balance with the realities of what the livestock industry's all about in this province in the last few years, and especially today.

I think I will let the public judge you for what you said, on what you said, and move into the area of gas-well lease situations which have occurred over the past year. Again, the constituent that I talked to today is concerned about the fact that you have cancelled all of the rents that were paid to the leaseholders of government lease. He's concerned by the fact that you have broken leases by . . . and contracts with the ranchers in that you have . . . And other administrations have done this in the past. They have allowed petroleum companies to come on to land

that farmers and ranchers hold a contract on. The individual that holds that contract — that lease of that land, that's a contract — those individuals, when they are forced to allow petroleum companies on to that land, need to be either compensated or else their contract is broken and their rights are violated. You are not paying for the use of the land only, you are paying for the right to go on to that land and to break that contract with that rancher.

It was seen as wise and true wisdom by the past administration that the loss of the use of the land should also be considered to the farmer. The loss of the privacy to the farmer or rancher should also be considered as a monetary reimbursement to that individual. It was also seen that hazard to his operation, his livestock, his family, those kinds of things, should also be considered as a monetary reimbursement to the individual.

Your administration has decided that a one-year payment is enough and that for all eternity the state should take benefit of all of that land and that those contracts then are, in effect, null and void. That we believe to be unfair and my constituent makes that point. He wonders if you would reconsider that point of view in light of the tough economic conditions that go on in the province today.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, I am very glad the member opposite asked that question. I thought he would probably avoid asking that question. It was indeed a dastardly deed that was done by the previous administration. Those cuts were made in the previous budget. When I came to office as the Minister of Rural Development, one of the first problems I had to deal with was the fact that the oil and gas lease revenues had been cut from 800,000 to 150,000. Nobody had been notified. None of the patrons had been notified. And the people who should have gotten their cheques in April had not got a cheque and had not got any notice.

And certainly I think there should have been . . . there was room for changes to the policy. We were forced into making those changes without proper consultation, without proper notification. And right now we are in a process of reviewing our policy to see how we can in some way alleviate this.

Mr. Goohsen: — I am sure that a lot of folks out in the country are glad that you are reviewing this particular program because it is your government first of all that implemented this program, even though the past administration was looking at it. You are responsible for the action that you took in implementing the program, of cancelling the leases outright. You could have chosen to do otherwise.

As for what past administrations did, I think I've said it before in this House, and I'll say it again. I wasn't here. I don't agree with what was done here. I don't care if the last guy did it or if you did it; it was wrong then, and if it's wrong now, it's wrong at any time.

There is a definite, absolute argument why these people should get this compensation. And some of the people who live on that land have talked to you, and they have told you that they can recognize some of your thinking,

and they are willing to go along with negotiating a compromise. I believe that that's fair ball. And they have indicated that they are willing to look at a graduated system. I think you're aware of what I'm talking about.

And my question of course is — if your parrots can tolerate listening to your answers long enough to be quiet — would you consider going back into a program of an annual payment for those producers?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, I told the member opposite that we do have this under review. He is absolutely right. I consulted with many people, and they make some very good points. I have very few people asking for the reinstatement of the old program in its entirety. All they are asking for is some concessions, and we are now looking at possible reductions in rent or some other means to compensate producers for having oil wells and oil companies on their land.

Mr. Goohsen: — Does your answer, sir, suggest that if all of the people involved were to write you a letter or to phone you up that you would consider giving them back the old program, because you said you've had very little request for it? Does that imply that if they made the request, you would give it to them?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, I think the members opposite have a fairly restricted view of what consultation means. We talk to people and we talk to all the players involved in all the issues, and we listen to their concerns. But as a government we make decisions. We, as you say, are responsible for our actions, and we will in the end make the decisions that are best for the province overall.

I was pointing out, Mr. Chair, that the people that I have talked with are very reasonable. They have some legitimate concerns, and they've been very reasonable in presenting those. And we are now looking at those concerns and how we can alleviate.

Mr. Goohsen: — That's exactly my point, Mr. Minister. They are very reasonable people. They're reasonable enough to understand that when you took the program away from them and came to visit with you at the SARM convention in a private conference, they are reasonable enough to recognize that you said no, they would not get the old program back, so therefore they have been lobbying to try to recover and salvage any part of the program that they could.

Now you have suggested that because nobody has asked for the old program back, that's why you took it away. That's what I heard you say. If that's wrong, say so. If these people can come to you and say that they want it back, *en masse* and they will be listened to, say that, and we'll see to it that they're here.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, the members opposite I think are . . . It must be getting late at night; they're not hearing what I'm saying. I am saying that we did not take this program away in the first place, they took it away. We are looking at not bringing back the program as it was, but in bringing back some measure of fairness to these producers.

Mr. Goohsen: — Once again, Minister, you implemented the program. You said here now that you would reconsider your position. You have suggested that nobody has asked for the old program back, therefore they're not getting it. If they come to you and ask for it, will you reinstate the old program?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, I suspect the reason that they're not asking me for the old program is they suspect it was not a totally fair and reasonable program. Knowing that the budget restraints that this government is under, that it's certainly highly unlikely that the old program would be reinstated. Having seen that the previous administration chopped it completely, I think they will be certainly glad to get anything back.

Mr. Goohsen: — I absolutely agree, they will be glad to get anything back. But that is not the point, Mr. Minister. I didn't ask you what you suspect. I am suggesting to you that these people will come *en masse* and ask for their old program back if you give them any hope at all that it could in fact win the day, and that they could get it back. Will you, if a lot of those people come in and ask, will you reinstate the program?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, I say again, we are reviewing the program. The chances of it being . . . We do not feel that under the financial restraint we're on that it's possible to reinstate the program as it was. Obviously the previous administration chopped it completely, and without notice, and without consultation, and we certainly have at least engaged in consultation with many of these people and we are listening to their concerns and looking to alleviate their problem.

Mr. Goohsen: — Well I'll just correct you in that. The program was not chopped, it was under review. It was under review at the time of the election, and the decision to cancel it was made by your administration and by you, sir, and nobody else. And as you have floated around this question four times now, and I've counted very carefully, I judge that you are not prepared to stick to your word and allow the people to come and ask you for a program, and give it back to them.

You have dodged what you originally set out and said, and I believe that you are retracting your word. You suggested the other morning in question period, or the other afternoon rather in question period, that you consulted with farmers by flying over them. Is this how you consulted with these producers?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, I think that question hardly deserves an answer, but if the previous administration didn't cut this program, maybe he can explain why people who were expecting a cheque in April got absolutely nothing — no notice, no cheque and no consultation from the previous administration.

Mr. Goohsen: — Once again, I will repeat for the minister's benefit. I really don't care who screwed this program up as long as somebody here straightens it out. I didn't agree with what happened before necessarily, even putting it on hold and reviewing it.

The reality though is that I have been assured the letters went out to individuals stating that they in fact would be getting their money. And I have had producers say that they can supply those kinds of letters.

And the point being though that you're the man that's in the driver's seat now. I don't know if you fly the airplane yourself or not, but you're certainly the Minister of Rural Development and the decision of whether or not this money is going to go back to producers is your decision. It has absolutely nothing to do with anybody in the past. It is only you that can make this decision now.

You are the one that is going to be judged for what you do here. And you've rambled around it so many times that I'm not going to give you a chance to answer this specific question right at this point again. You're going to be judged on the statements you've made. And if the parrot in the background wants to listen he can and if doesn't want to he can continue to hum along. I'll just shut my hearing-aid off and forget about him.

I want to know, Minister, about the RM (rural municipality) formula, the one you've dodged all spring. I would like you to tell me exactly how this formula works in cost sharing with rural municipalities.

(2145)

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, there are several formulas for revenue sharing. There's the conditional grants, the unconditional grants, and some of the special grants. If the member opposite will be more specific we could tell him the calculation.

Mr. Goohsen: — All right, Mr. Minister. In lieu of the flippant remarks of your colleagues in the background, I'm going now to ask you for a breakdown of each and every RM in this province, and you have them — 298 of them. I want to know both the conditional and unconditional grants.

I want to know how much they were reduced, how many dollars they received last year, how many dollars they received the year before, and how many dollars they're going to get this year, for each RM under each of those categories, and any other grants or whatever that they get money for through the entire province for every municipality.

Will you supply that information, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, we have the information here if the member opposite would like.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. We will set our mathematicians to work on it. And if by tomorrow we haven't . . . If we haven't determined by tomorrow that this in fact is the answer to the question, we will repeat it. And again, we will repeat it until we get the proper answers.

Mr. Minister, you mentioned a minute ago — and I wanted to go back because this is important for the record — that you consulted with people with regards to the oil and gas well leases. Would you tell this Assembly who

those people were?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, we talked to the stock growers association. We talked to surface rights people. We talked to many individual RMs at the SARM convention and at other times, and individuals who came into the office to talk to us about it.

Mr. Goohsen: — It's nice to hear that you consulted with so many people and talked to so many folks. How many of the SARM district meetings held this summer in Saskatchewan did you personally attend?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, I was unable to attend any of the RM, rural district meetings. The six meetings were six days in a row. Although the members opposite were busy on the golf courses and touring around the province, we had . . . as minister, as you know, was saving the people of Saskatchewan money on a small cabinet. We were also very busy with things like GRIP and blockades, and I was not able to attend any of those meetings.

Mr. Goohsen: — I'm quite sure, Mr. Minister, that you took the time to fly over the blockade while you were investigating all these things that were more important than rural Saskatchewan and SARM meetings, that are the most important part of your portfolio.

Just to correct things for the people who are watching. The meetings were held three one week, three the next week. They were not consecutive. There were three in one week, three in the next week. You were well aware of when they were held. I suggest that you were afraid to go to those meetings for fear of meeting the people of rural Saskatchewan and facing them square on with the actions that you and your government have taken in this province of late . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I believe that is quite a fact.

My colleagues suggest that this is the first time in the history of Saskatchewan that a minister has not attended at least one meeting. Some members of our caucus attended every one, so we were quite aware of the fact that you weren't there.

I suggest to you, sir, that this sets a trend to your answers when you say that you consulted with all of these people. A few minutes ago you told us you consulted with everybody before you came to all of your decisions.

Now you admit that you never went to even one meeting of the six held during this summer, a period of time when this Assembly was not even in session. Everybody was out doing other work and you say you were too busy. You didn't even have to fill your chair here. That wasn't even an excuse you could use and you didn't bother because all you can do is fly over.

Well, Mr. Minister, I think we better delve into some of the specifics so that we can get something on the record at least. Let's start with your own staff, Minister. Would you please give us a list of all the persons working in the minister's office, or otherwise, who report directly to you — each of their titles, their salaries, their job descriptions, their education, and employment history including the

last place of employment.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, we have some of that information. We do not have the employment history and the last place employed. In consulting with the Minister of Justice, if he feels that that information is something we can release, we can add that to the information later.

Mr. Goohsen: — Now once again, Minister, we will peruse the information and we will await the rest of it. If by tomorrow we haven't received it, we will continue to ask you.

Mr. Minister, I would like to know also, each, if any, let's see now, who worked or were paid by any other part of government before being on your payroll?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, Deanna McIntosh who was on that list, was employed in Transportation Services in Rural Development previous to her employment in my office.

Mr. Goohsen: — If there are any additions to that, I will appreciate it if you will make that information available tomorrow as well. It's always possible to forget one, and if you happen to think of something you forgot, I'd appreciate you letting us know so that we won't have to jump all over your hide tomorrow.

Have any of them been reclassified since joining the government?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Nobody has been reclassified since coming to my office.

Mr. Goohsen: — Now to the rest of the department. Please provide a list of all the positions, job titles, that have been eliminated in the department since November 1, 1991.

I take it that list was the answer to my question. Okay, (b) I want a job description of each position eliminated.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, we don't have that here, but we can certainly provide it.

Mr. Goohsen: — (c) We want to know complete compensation details including salary, expenses, allowances, and special payments and so on.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, perhaps the member could clarify his question. For which people and for which list is he asking these details?

Mr. Goohsen: — You'd like to know who I was referring to. Complete compensation details including salary, expenses, allowances, and special payments and so on of all of those people listed in (a) and (b) who were — do you want me to read (a) and (b) to you? — a list of all positions, job titles, that have been eliminated in the department.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — I think we can provide that tomorrow.

Mr. Goohsen: — Okay and if an old employee, the length

of time employed, including the date the person first started work for the department.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chair, we didn't hear all of that question. It's the age and length of employment of the list of jobs that were terminated? Is that the question?

Mr. Goohsen: — It says, if an old employee, the length of time employed including the date the person first started work for the department.

These are questions that I am reading as an earlier request from some of your government people wanting this specifically laid out in terms that they can understand.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, we're not sure of the definition of old, but I think we can endeavour to supply that.

Mr. Goohsen: — I would define an old employee not necessarily one with grey hair but one that had worked with your department prior to the last election. Okay, if a new employee, the employment record including the place of last employment . . .

An Hon. Member: — Including any old guys.

Mr. Goohsen: — If you can get them to be quiet you'll be able to hear better.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, I didn't catch a question.

Mr. Goohsen: — Okay, I'll just repeat it and put it this way. New employees or people who were hired after the election, could you give us the employment record including the place of last employment. If they've been terminated, we want to know why they were terminated and their employment record and so on.

I've already asked the question about people who are employed from the election time and were kept on. Now I'm asking about those that you may have fired who were hired in November and fired since, if there were any . . . just in case you found a dead-beat in the bunch and fired him.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, we have had no hirings in the department since the election.

Mr. Goohsen: — Well you see it wasn't that hard, was it? Now I'm supposed to ask employment qualifications including education. Can you supply that for all those people that I've mentioned so I don't have to spell out each one at a time?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, if he's asking for the particulars of people that we've hired and we didn't hire anybody, I'm not sure how we're going to supply them.

Mr. Goohsen: — I would like to know, Mr. Minister, that question answered with regards to the people who you employed before November, before the election. Obviously somebody hired them and they must have had employment qualifications and they must have had some

degree of education. I'd like to know what that is.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Are you asking for the education of all the employees in the department? Because they were all hired before the election that I know of.

Mr. Goohsen: — Like I said before, Mr. Minister, I really don't care who did what. I'm concerned about getting answers to these questions so we can find out what's going on in this department. I wasn't here before and I want to know. People expect me to come in here and find out what's going on, so I'd like to know for everybody.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, if the member opposite is asking for the information on that list of people who have been released, I believe we can supply it, again with consultation with the Minister of Justice to determine what we can and cannot release about each employee. We will certainly endeavour to do that.

(2200)

Mr. Goohsen: — That's fine, Mr. Minister, and tomorrow we'll check those lists, and those ones that have some kind of security clearance or whatever, if you'd be good enough to indicate that to us, we'd appreciate that very much. I would also like you to provide, where there were contracts that were in existence for people, could you supply us with copies of those contracts.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, we have one contract which again, if we can legally do so, we will get a copy of for the member opposite.

Mr. Goohsen: — I would also like to know, Mr. Minister, where the physical location of these persons' place of employment was, and where they actually did their work.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — We can supply that, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Goohsen: — We'd also like to know, if there were new employees, the names and same details of the person. But obviously you said you didn't employ any, so we will skip over that one to the next one. We'd like to know, if terminated, why this position was terminated as opposed to some other position. What was the process and the resulting rationale for getting rid of this employee or his position?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — We can provide that.

Mr. Goohsen: — I don't know if I asked you how many persons were fired. Did I ask that? Could you tell me anyway?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Ten positions were abolished; the people lost their jobs.

Mr. Goohsen: — Mr. Minister, I indicated to you earlier that I have many, many questions. I'm going to ask you some detailed questions about Bill 27 and the things that relate to SARM. And I want to talk to you about some of the things that concern my constituents with regards to the wildlife habitat program.

It's come to my attention — and I'm sure that you will soon be aware, and I don't think it's any secret — that the ranchers in Saskatchewan who are connected with leased land from your department have become so irate over this particular program, along with all of the other little needles that have been driven in by this government, that they are in fact circulating a piece of paper that, when signed, commits them to withholding hunting rights this fall on their properties.

And I want to discuss with you that whole situation and the ramifications that that will include. And I'm sure you will realize on reflection that that's going to be a very major problem. I believe in all fairness that you should have time to consider that. That's why I'm bringing this up tonight before I plough into it. And I'm letting you know this now because some of my colleagues are so anxious to get at you that I'm going to allow you to deal with their questions for the rest of this evening and ponder these other questions so that you can come up with the answers to them when I address you next. Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Minister, the people in the cattle industry in the province of Saskatchewan have been almost devastated by your government in one way or another, and lands branch has also decided to increase the fees charged. Did you use the traditional formula that you had in place over the last, maybe even 15 years? Did you use that formula in determining the rent increases that you were going to apply against the pastures for lands branch and for community pastures? Did you use those same fee structures in determining what you were going to do?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, the answer is again, as I think I've answered this question — perhaps the member wasn't paying attention — but we used the same formula that's been in effect for 15 years. The previous administration abandoned the formula and did not follow it from '87. If we had used the formula, the rents would have been considerably higher. What we did was we took a place half-way between last year's rent and what the formula would have given had we used the formula to do the calculations.

Mr. Martens: — Well, Mr. Minister, I'm not sure that that's entirely accurate. I know that there were decreases in the component of price for livestock last year. There was a decline in the market. Why didn't that reflect some of the changes in the pasture rents?

And another thing that comes about in this, a concern that was raised a number of times, is that the volume of livestock on the pastures was increased to make the patrons and the lessees more uncomfortable yet with the amount that they had to pay.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, I will explain this one more time. The formula would have gone something like: 1991 the rent would have been 513; 1990 would have been 415; 1989 was 401; 1992 would have been 469. The rent that was being charged was frozen at 366. We moved the rent to 418 which is half-way between the 366 and the 469, which is what the

formula would have given. As to stocking rates, they have not been changed since we've been in power.

Mr. Martens: — Well, Mr. Minister, one of the things that happened in the south-west is that a lot of the pastures were not even able to carry livestock as long as they would traditionally have been, given the fact that it didn't rain. Now the North — visiting with people from North Battleford this evening — it's almost the same condition exists there in the pastures they've got there.

Don't you have any compassion on people? Do you always want to hide behind a formula that dictates that, oh, the formula said that we should do this or that. The decision that you decided to take regarding breeding fees in pastures, there was no formula on that was there? You increased it from 25 to \$35 a cow. The price of the calf never went up. Are you going to hide behind a formula or are you going to give the farmers a break?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, it has never been the policy of lands branch to determine the grazing capacity from year to year. Grazing fees are set on an average carrying capacity. We would not have the staff to go out each year and say, well this year there's lots of grass so we'll increase the fees and this year there's not so much. The fees . . . and again I point out that although certainly in the tough times we're having in the drought and the conditions in rural Saskatchewan, no increase is really palatable. But these rents are still cheaper than comparable private rents would be or for people who own their own land.

Mr. Martens: — Well I think that's an assumption. Compare lease rates in Montana to what traditionally has been in Saskatchewan or Alberta, and in some cases we're paying higher. If you want to go to individuals who have costs on owning their own land and leasing it out, that's a whole different ball game than if you're dealing with what some of these ranchers have been dealing with for four or five generations. And that, Mr. Minister, is what we're dealing with here.

You increased, without asking, without consultation. You didn't consult with anybody when you went out to deal with these pastures and increasing the rates. You didn't ask anybody about the breeding fee. You didn't ask anybody about supplying bulls to the pastures. As a matter of fact we went through that scenario in somewhere out in 1989. In fact the people said over and over again, we don't want to run our own bulls; we want the pastures to buy the bulls. Now you're changing your tune. And I think you're out of step because that's what I hear from the pastures across the province. That's what you're doing now, and I want you to explain why you did it.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, this is another surprising question, and another one that I'm very glad that the members opposite raised. This was another program that was hoisted on us by the previous administration. They cut the money out of the bull-buying program, took it out of the budget, and did not consult with patrons, did not even tell them that there was no money in the budget to purchase bulls with. We went, as a government . . . took over a commitment not to exceed

the already enormous deficit that we were facing and thereby lived within that.

We are in a process right now of consulting with the patrons, and we may go to buying more bulls. We may go to buying less. Some of the patrons would sooner have their own bulls. Some of the patrons would sooner have government bulls, and we are currently in the process of reviewing that and coming up with a policy for the next pasture year.

Mr. Martens: — Well, Mr. Minister, I'm not sure I buy all of that. I don't buy it for one minute actually because I don't believe you're accurate. You've been saying those kinds of things here all evening already and say, well, I'll blame it all on the other government, blame it all on the other government. When are you going to assume some responsibility for the decisions you make on your own? Because those are your decisions; they're not mine. Those are decisions that you've made that you would cut the funding to the pastures in 1992. You decided you were going to do that, not me. You decided that.

You decided that after the election that you were going to systematically say, I don't want to have anything to do with the livestock industry. Who cares about the livestock industry? Who cares about the hogs in this province? Do you? You attack them from every facet of this . . . every corner of this province and then you expect us to believe you when you come in and you say, no, it's not my responsibility; it was those guys that did it all.

And it's time I think, Mr. Minister, that you assume that responsibility because you're sitting in that chair, I'm not. And, Mr. Minister, there are a lot of people in the province that wish I was sitting in that chair to determine what was going on because it would be run a whole lot different.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(2215)

Mr. Martens: — And as far . . . and I won't get into GRIP, but I could sure do a lot of discussion on the GRIP program on top of that.

How many bulls did you buy in 1992?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, certainly we will stand by our decisions. We will stand by our policy with rural Saskatchewan and with the livestock industry. And we have a very tough fight, as the members opposite know, with the deficit that's hanging over our head that they left us, with the decisions that they made to cut the bull-buying program.

The member opposite knows very well that bulls have to be purchased in the fall and winter for the preceding breeding season. That money was cut out of the budget that we took over and was not there. You left us with a very, very tough decision to make, and if you want to see our reaction and our decisions, just watch and we will make decisions where we will see the . . . You will see that we will, with the very limited resources that you've left us to work with in a basically bankrupt province, we will revitalize rural Saskatchewan, we will keep the livestock

industry alive, and I'm sure that all the 10 people that would like to see you here will agree when they see the industry turn around.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — How many bulls did you buy in 1992?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, the breeding season that's on us was . . . The bulls would have had to have been purchased in the '91-92 fiscal year. There was no money in the budget; we didn't buy any bulls. We may still buy some bulls in '92 for the next season — that's still a possibility — or in early '93 for the next breeding season.

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Minister, how many bulls were bought in 1991?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Approximately 200 in 1991. The bull program, as we took it over, was, I think . . . the previous administration was on the way to doing away with government bulls. There was a fewer number of bulls from over the period of years. We were down to about half patron bulls and half government bulls when we took over this government, and moving more towards private bulls all the time over the past number of years.

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister. You just made my point. In 1991, 200 bulls were purchased and 1992 none were purchased. You buy them in the season when they're bought, and they were bought in 1991. They weren't bought from November to February. They're bought in the spring.

And I think you're misleading not only this Assembly but the people in the province of Saskatchewan when you say it was our budget that did it. I want to point out to you that the '90-91 bulls were bought with this administration. If you want to go back, you probably bought 200 bulls for the last five years.

And that, Mr. Minister, is not a change. You changed your mind about what you were going to do, because you didn't want to have any part of the livestock industry in the province of Saskatchewan. Is that not a fact, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, the bull is getting pretty thick here. In 1990 there were 900 government bulls; in '91 there were 850 government bulls; in '92 there is 650 bulls. And that's the trend line that was on the way.

The members opposite certainly should realize the difference between calendar years and fiscal years. And the budget that we took over didn't end till March 31 and that was the year in which there was no money in the bull-buying program because the previous administration had cut it.

Mr. Martens: — Well it's an example, Mr. Minister, of I think your incompetence to lead that department and lands branch.

In extension services, changing the subject a little bit to

extension services, have you provided any opportunity — we were just talking about it earlier today in the pest control Act — are you going to provide any opportunity for extension services to provide a pest control review so that farmers and rural municipalities will be able to have their pest control officers and people in their municipality meet the requirements that you're going to impose on the municipalities and in rural Saskatchewan, across rural Saskatchewan. Are you going to do that?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, we will have some input into that decision but the extension, as I pointed out, is under the Minister of Agriculture, as is The Pest Control Act.

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Minister, are the ag boards under the Department of Agriculture also?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, their liaison through government is through Ag and Food. And they will liaison with the extension people.

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Minister, are you prepared to say to this Assembly that you're not going to provide any initiative to those people you are requiring, in the municipalities, to provide pest control and licensed pest control because they sell warfarin and gopher poison? Are you not prepared to at least extend to those people who are in the municipalities some initiative on that point?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — No, Mr. Chairman, we are not saying that we will not provide extension. I'm saying that the extension agrologists will do it as they did before and they will do it under the Department of Agriculture where they are now housed.

Mr. Martens: — Would you, Mr. Minister, be able to provide us with the information of your duties and responsibilities on the days when the SARM convention was going across the province in the last two weeks of June. I'd like to have your itinerary so we would know where you really were.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, I don't know that that itinerary is available or not, and I may well be able to provide that. I may not.

Mr. Martens: — Well, Mr. Minister, the people of rural Saskatchewan in the municipalities sure wanted to know where you were. I visited with them quite extensively. When it's in your best interests, Mr. Minister, you have the freedom to travel to Swift Current to talk with the president of SARM. When it's inconvenient for you, you'll thumb your nose at that organization. And that, in my view, is absolutely disgusting.

I don't know whether you've ever had anything to do with municipal business before you got involved in government business, but you have one clear . . . you've made one very disappointing jump into the political area in SARM and municipal government. And that one very disappointing thing for all of them was that the minister, whether they agree with him or disagree with him . . . They're honourable people. They are elected just like you are, and you didn't have the courage or the wisdom to go

out there and find out what they were really talking about.

And I would assume from that, Mr. Minister, that you didn't want to know. You didn't want to know. You sent your deputy minister there to defend all of your programs. In parks . . . I was there in Swift Current, and the deputy minister took a lot of heat for you from people in the SARM who were angry and irritated about your program in lands branch, how you dealt with critical wildlife habitat in lands branch and in parks. And that, Mr. Minister, was in my view disgusting.

And SARM is going to tell you that, if they haven't told you already. And they're going to have a letter to the Premier of the province because they said to us, across the board, that you had reneged on your responsibility. That's why, Mr. Minister, I would like to know where you really were those days that you were not in those meetings across the South and across the North.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, I assure the member opposite that we were not out on the golf courses as some of them were while the bells were ringing. We were here and we were working hard.

And I have been to the mini-convention of SARM. I've been to the convention. I met with many, many RMs individually. I meet with RMs in my office and certainly I travelled last fall to a couple of regional meetings, and I do all that I can to liaise with and talk to SARM. We were represented at those meetings. The deputy minister was there. I have a list of the resolutions from all of the meetings which will be responded to. And certainly we have a whole passel of rural MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) who were out there talking to councillors and other rural people. And certainly we are far from being out of touch with SARM.

Mr. Martens: — Well, Mr. Minister, it wasn't until we got the Bill in the House, and just by chance sent the new amendments of the Bill to SARM, that they began to read what was in the new legislation. And that, Mr. Minister, is a fact. We sent the Bill ourselves to SARM. You didn't have the nerve or the courage to go to them and say, here is the Bill and we'll deliver it. They didn't see it until we, the opposition, delivered it to them. And that, Mr. Minister, I think is disgusting.

I worked with a minister of Rural Development for years and I provided some insights into different kinds of areas. And that, Mr. Minister, was a rule that we followed. If there was a change in budget, if there was a change in the amendments, that was one of the things we did. We went there and we consulted first.

And, Mr. Minister, I do not believe that you consulted in pastures. I don't believe you consulted in the areas of the breeding program in lands branch. I don't think you consulted with the stock growers on that at all. As a matter of fact, I think you omitted them deliberately.

Just like the other day, your Premier and your Minister of Agriculture deliberately omitted inviting the western Canada wheat growers to a meeting that could easily have housed them. I honestly believe that, Mr. Minister. And I don't think that you have any excuse for the things

that you did, none at all. I think it's disgusting.

It's disappointing as a matter of fact, because you know what? I used to be a director on that SARM, and I understand what the rural people believe in. And I understand what they are involved with. And you, Mr. Minister, did not provide any of that kind of direction for them.

I was there when Mr. Kaeding was there. I was there when Mr. MacMurchy was there. I was there when Neal Hardy was there, when Bob Pickering was there. And I never saw any one of them do what you did in this last round of meetings that SARM had across the province. I never, ever saw that happen, Mr. Minister. And I think it's totally disgusting. And I think we need to have an explanation from you about that.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, the member opposite refers to the RM Act. That Act was not only reviewed, was basically written by the SARM. It was in response to resolutions passed by them, was consulted by them. They looked at that as he said. It was approved in detail by SARM.

We certainly . . . The only decisions that we made that we did not consult with people on were the decisions that were foisted on us by the previous administration who did not only not consult with them. They did not even tell them that they had cut the bull-breeding program and that they had cut the oil and gas lease sharing with them. So I think certainly if we are not perfect in consultation, we are certainly a large improvement over what we had previously.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 10:30 p.m.