

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a couple of petitions here to present.

To the Honourable Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan in Legislature Assembled:

The petition of the undersigned citizens of the province of Saskatchewan humbly sheweth:

That Saskatchewan Producers are undergoing extremely trying financial times due to drought, grain prices and international trade wars and that they are being pressed further financially by the NDP government's decision to eliminate the Farm Fuel Rebate program and its coloured fuel policy; and, that to implement the government's fuel policy will cost Co-ops and small independent fuel service stations thousands of dollars, leading to the loss of jobs and businesses in rural Saskatchewan.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Honourable Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to reverse its decision to eliminate the Farm Fuel Rebate program and that they cancel the coloured fuel program.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

I would like to present these petitions, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have as well some petitions that relate to the same matter about the fuel concerns and the costs associated with it, and I would like to present these to the Assembly today. They come from the east side of the province.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have as well petitions with respect to the farm fuel rebate program. These petitions come from the Eston, Tyner, Lacadena, Kindersley, Smiley, Kerrobert, Luseland area, Mr. Speaker. I'll present those now.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have some petitions on the gas rebate. I would like therefore read the prayer, and I'll leave out the preamble.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Honourable Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to reverse its decision to eliminate the Farm Fuel Rebate program and that they cancel the coloured fuel program.

As in duty bound, your petitioners humbly pray.

This is from up in my area, Mr. Speaker — Dodsland, Plenty, Kerrobert, and many others. And at this time I would like to lay this on the Table. Thank you very much.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have petitions today in the same vein, and we'll just read the prayer portion of the petition.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Honourable Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to reverse its decision to eliminate the Farm Fuel Rebate program and that they cancel the coloured fuel program.

And today, Mr. Speaker, I have people from the communities of Dodsland, Plenty, Kelfield — mostly it looks like, Mr. Speaker, people from the community of Dodsland today.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly a constituent of mine and good friend, Dale Stephens, who is up in the Speaker's gallery today.

Dale is the manager of the credit union in Hazlet and is in town taking care of credit union business. We'd like to welcome him and his family — his wife Karen will be with him in a little while and we hope that they will enjoy their stay in the city. Dale is also on town council down at Hazlet and is known to be at part-time, the best dressed garbage man in Hazlet, but only in relief when other people aren't around. But a very public and community spirited individual. And please help me to welcome him to Regina.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to members of the House three guests of mine that are seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. It's my wife Carol who's accompanied today with some of our friends and neighbours from our home community, Paul and Anne Semeschuk.

Paul is down here in Regina today for a medical appointment, and Paul has quite a long history of serving his community. Paul has served 10 years as councillor for the R.M. (rural municipality) of Clayton, and now on his twelfth year as reeve for the R.M. of Clayton. And during his 22 years in local government, he served a number of different boards.

And I think a commitment as Paul has made to his community is quite an achievement, Mr. Speaker, and I'm going to ask all the members in the House to offer him a warm welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know all members will want to join with me in welcoming in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, a number of representatives of the construction trade unions who are here to watch the proceedings, but probably also as well

to hear first reading of the construction and labour relations Act. I know all members want to join me in welcoming them here.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Changes to GRIP

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Agriculture. Mr. Minister, it's not just the crops that died last night. People's hopes died as well in rural Saskatchewan, and they are more discouraged, more desperate now that spring and summer have come and gone and the reality of your decisions have sunken in.

Mr. Minister, your announcement that you will be striking yet another committee to look at changes to GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) before the next crop year, is little consolation to farmers whose crops have been devastated. Mr. Minister, what use is your promise to revise GRIP yet again to farmers who have very little or no crop to sell?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Chairman, the income crisis in the farms of Saskatchewan is well known. That income crisis is the result of years of short crops and trade wars and inadequate support. Farmers have at this point continued to suffer the difficulties of these times without adequate support. The issue of the new program has not even come to pass yet. Farmers can't pay their bills now. I speak to them every day. And they're having difficulty paying their bills now because the programs that are in place are inadequate.

That's why the review committee has been put in place. The review committee is going to say GRIP is a failure. GRIP, old GRIP, new GRIP — it was based on a false premise; it was based on inadequate support. And farmers need to identify what kind of a support program really meets their needs and then we need to sell it to the federal government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, it's ironic that the day that you finally get changes to GRIP that you so eagerly wanted is the very same day that thousands of farm families saw their dreams for this season put on ice. And I've spoken to people who designed your GRIP. They have admitted to me that '92 GRIP will not help farmers in crop failure. And that's what we're facing and that's what you should have anticipated. That's your job. That's what's supposed to be within your control. That's what they had to end up taking to the bank and getting nothing for it.

Now you've admitted your mistake in FeedGAP (feed grain adjustment program). You've admitted your mistake as far as blacktop being put to gravel and now back to blacktop again. Your government's admitted its mistake with Saskatchewan Pension Plan . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Does the member have a question? Put her question.

Ms. Haverstock: — Mr. Minister, will you now admit to the people of our province that you are the one who made a serious, serious mistake with GRIP '92?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Chairman, I think the contentions of the members opposite with respect to adjustments to programs need to be clarified. Saskatchewan is in no better budgetary position to fund livestock programs, to fund pension plans, to fund highway systems today than the day we brought down our budget.

What we've done is shifted resources internally in order to try to meet the immediate concerns in order that we can do some better long-term planning, because it's well known that with the timing of the election and the first budget, that the schedule was tight; that we can further consult in order to create the kind of balance that people want in their program.

But there is no more money. The member opposite knows that. The member opposite, if she were to be honest about it, would recognize the difficulty with respect to the budgeting in the province.

Now with respect to the program, the program support under old GRIP was decreasing this year. The program support under the new program, designed according to the wishes of the farm groups that participated in the review and in response to the materials they heard, provides support at 80 per cent of the long-term individual yield. That's the lowest level of support a farmer can get, at 80 per cent of their long-term individual production. Now in any normal environment . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Next question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, I know that all of the ministers have gone in the back room and come up with the statement that all the monies have just merely been juggled in a different way and we've got this kind of bottom line. People know that the problems of Saskatchewan in terms of economy are pretty bad. But you are the people who have all the resources at your end in terms of expertise. You should have been able to anticipate the problems that would have happened with the cancellation of FeedGAP, not wait until after the fact. And similarly you should have been able to do so with GRIP.

Now you tell us what it is that you're going to do for the people who call me — and the difference between '91 and '92 GRIP is whether they have no income or some little income or whether they can put food on their table. And I've shown the Minister of Social Services some examples of this. I want you to provide an answer today. And if you can't provide it, then there's the wrong Minister of Agriculture in place.

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Chairman, if the member from Saskatoon Greystone has shown examples of Social Services' cases for farmers to the Minister of Social Services, it's because they have a present income

shortfall, a present income shortfall that results from program design that is by definition flawed. Seven thousand farmers came out in Regina; 4,000 farmers came out in Weyburn; 4,000 farmers came out in Rosetown to say that the program design was inadequate. Those are the income difficulties that farmers are living with.

And within that context, within a context of an inadequate program that is too expensive and provides too little support, the Saskatchewan group of representatives on the committee designed a program that corrected some major flaws in the old program. The contention that that delivers no support is absolutely false. The support under the new program provides the difference for the farmers' long-term individual yields between the market price and a target price that's \$4.07 for wheat. That's one piece of given support.

The other piece of given support is up to the market price. The farmers have protection against crop loss up to 80 per cent. I want to say that until 19 . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Next question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Agriculture. Nearly 4,000 farmers, rural residents, and city folk gathered yesterday to voice their utter disgust and mistrust of your NDP (New Democratic Party) government opposite. They yelled at the Minister of Agriculture, calling him a dictator for the way he went about designing changes to the GRIP program.

The Agriculture minister has maintained from the outset that his process was democratic and involved consultation through his advisory committee. That was his only defence. Today, Mr. Minister, even that excuse is crumbling. Your fraud has been revealed.

My question to the Minister of Agriculture is this: is it not true that you've manipulated and coerced your own advisory committee into developing a GRIP program which suited you and your Premier's warped political agenda?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — No.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Well, Mr. Minister, a radio report this morning said that members of your GRIP advisory committee are saying that you and your department manipulated their proceedings from the very outset. They accused your government of putting too much pressure on them, and dictated and directed their work to your own purpose.

Mr. Minister, this kind of fraud is what we suspected all along. Why don't you come clean for us this afternoon and admit . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. I'd just like to caution the

member. Beauchesne's again makes it very clear on using the word fraud in the Legislative Assembly. And so I just caution the member from using language which does not help to keep order in the House.

Mr. Martens: — Why don't you come clean with us this afternoon and admit that you and your Premier's fingerprints are all over this GRIP legislation and that you are the one that has provided the disaster for the province of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite ought to be aware that the GRIP process, the GRIP review process followed . . .

The Speaker: — Order. I'll just keep interrupting until the members have some respect in here when the minister gets up or when the questioner asks a question.

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, while members opposite play political games with statements that have no truth in them, farmers in Saskatchewan continue to suffer income shortfalls; income shortfalls that are the result of the poorly designed set of programs by the members opposite that are the result of the federal government with whom they work, missing their opportunity to pay farmers what they deserved over the years of 1990 and 1991. By anyone's estimate, the measure of support for Saskatchewan Agriculture is \$900 million short for 1990 and 1991.

Do you blame farmers for being angry? Do you blame farmers for hurting? That's a very difficult dilemma into which to place a review committee.

Now the members opposite can stand there and make contentions about a review committee that they put into place with officials who have served this department well, by your statements here in the House, and who continue to serve the department well and who can make statements, Mr. Speaker, with . . . where the members opposite make statements that have absolutely no truth, that where the committee worked together and presented to us a report, according to a legislation the members opposite created, if the members opposite have no better to say . . .

The Speaker: — Next question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Minister, you are denying the very fact — and I'll give you a quote that I heard on the radio today that I heard from Mr. Gil Pedersen: Some of the bureaucrats in the department, I always had a feeling that they had their own agendas that they were marching to. They figured out what they figured should be good for farmers and they are supplying material and in some cases doing some background lobbying to the members of the committee to get the committee to come up with the conclusions that they felt were the best.

That's a direct quote from Gil Pedersen. This is a stinging indictment of political manipulation, Mr. Minister, and

an exploitation for your own selfish agenda. Given this direction from the member of your own advisory committee, will you admit that this entire GRIP process has been a political misrepresentation by you from the very beginning?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, the answer again is no. And I would say to the member opposite that the member whom he was quoting was appointed by me. He was one of the new people to the committee, representing an organization that the members opposite repeatedly refused to put on such committees. He was a member who is free to speak the truth as he wants to speak it now. He is a member who wrote and signed a minority report attached to the main report. And the contention of the minority report, like the majority report, suggests splitting crop insurance and revenue insurance as two separate programs.

This farmer is free to speak on his own and has spoken on his own and I tell you, submitted a minority report with one other member of the committee that said the program should be split. It is that contention that you're arguing about in the program. It's the 80 per cent crop insurance coverage the members opposite . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Next question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — In the report this afternoon at noon on CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) radio, other committee members said that there were no public hearings as they suggested. They claim that pressure from your department compelled them to forego any meaningful, grass roots input. Mr. Minister . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. I'd like to call the member from Saskatoon Broadway to order please.

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Minister, the advisory committee process that you started was a fraud — a sham. Sorry, Mr. Speaker. How can you use this kind of consultation as defence for your own bungling?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, I take responsibility for the process of the GRIP review from the day that we took office in fall last year. I would hope the members opposite would take responsibility for the design of the program which was so badly flawed that it continues to trouble farmers and continues to leave them an inadequate income situation.

The fact is that the members opposite wrote the legislation. The members opposite called the election. The members opposite established the time frame within which the report had to be due — February 15. The committee when it began its work had that deadline to work against and none other.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Perhaps I should give you another quote. Nettie Wiebe said this morning on the radio that they had personnel at the committee who periodically backed up various suggestions with data and they certainly were active proponents of certain program re-designs and very active critics of other re-designs.

Mr. Minister, you got caught with your hand in the cookie jar. These admissions from your advisory committee members tell us of routine manipulation and direct intervention from your government in a process you have claimed to be independent and unfettered. This is simply unacceptable.

Why didn't you tell the farmers at the rally there yesterday that that's what you had done? Why didn't you tell them that? We have told you over and over again and you wouldn't tell those farmers there yesterday that you had put your hand in the cookie jar. Why didn't you tell them that there yesterday?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Because — if the member opposite has any respect for the truth — because it's not true. Nettie Wiebe is the other member . . . Nettie Wiebe is the other member who participated in the minority report. Nettie Wiebe may disagree with the officials. I want to say that the members opposite have frequently complimented the officials of the department — the same officials that were there in their administration — who have a responsibility to provide the professional support for the committee, who did it in a professional fashion without direction. If the member opposite wants to make other contentions on that, he is free to do that. But he does challenge the professionalism of departmental staff when he suggests that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Minister, we're not challenging your department. We're not challenging the committee. We're challenging you for the statements you made in this House. Your advisory committee said they really didn't know what they were doing. Gil Pedersen said, we're spending money and not knowing whether it's hitting the bull's eye, whether it's hitting half-way out on the target, or not even coming in the same direction as the target.

Well, Mr. Minister, you heard yesterday in spades that your bungling policies are not near where adequate. You won't listen to this side of the House. You won't listen to farm families. You won't listen to your own advisory committee. But you sure jump when the Premier said, this is the way it's going to be done. And then you say, we'll get around it somehow.

Mr. Minister, you're a disgrace to the industry, no friend of the farm families. Now do the honourable thing. Submit your resignation, sir, and then treat the farmers to all a treat in the province of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite plays his political games in a fashion that is absolutely

despicable, with respect to the people who are on the committee and with respect to the people who are professionals in the department.

I will take my political heat. I'll answer to what we've done as a department. The member opposite ought to be aware that as a government and as ministers, we would love to be able to say we have \$20 million or we have \$50 million. But I ask the member opposite, in the aftermath of the destruction they've wrought on this province, from where will we find the money that says here is \$50 million or here is \$20 million? Do the members opposite believe that the Saskatchewan farmers who have expressed their concern and their anger about their income situation have an opportunity to put money forward for that?

Do the members opposite believe the province that is bankrupted by their own actions should somehow find the money from nowhere? Or should it be the people of Canada, who are not hurt by the prices in Saskatchewan, who do benefit from our contribution to international trade, that make these payments to farmers and that help farmers out?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Well, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, farmers need help. They pointed that out to you yesterday. You're not giving it to them. Somebody has to. There are severe drought problems in the north-east. Yesterday we had frost all the way across the West. We've had drought in the north-west and snow damage. Farm families are hurting. They told you that yesterday but you didn't listen. You didn't listen.

Can you tell this Assembly what effect your decision to cut crop insurance coverage from 100 per cent coverage of their average yield to 80 per cent is going to cost farm families today in the province of Saskatchewan? Can you tell us that?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, the members opposite continue to play politics when farmers are hurting out there. Farmers are hurting now. You tell me what the basis of their present hurt is. Tell me, members opposite, what is the basis of their present hurt?

They haven't begun to see the benefits or otherwise of the '92 GRIP that you've talked so much about. They are living now on the outcome of the farm support programs that were in place last year. There has been no payment yet for '92 GRIP. The first payment will be in November. Farmers are broke now. Tell me what the root of that income shortfall is.

And you sit there self-righteously and suggest that somehow farmers are hurting for some other reason. Not only have you created the dilemma that's caused farmers to be broke across the province, when we've suggested that the federal government has a responsibility here, a responsibility that the members opposite participated in in negotiating presumably, then the members opposite said, say, no. No to the Saskatchewan taxpayers — the four per cent of Canadian taxpayers that provide 50 per

cent of the Canadian grain trade, Canadian export grain trade. They should pay.

Well I ask the members opposite whether that's fair, whether it should be the Saskatchewan people or it should be the people across Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Minister, yesterday you were very busy. While you were occupied with defending your destruction of rural Saskatchewan to 4,000 farmers, members of your caucus were lining up for the Agriculture minister's seat which you will soon be vacating.

While you, on CBC radio today, while you were defending cutting crop insurance from 100 per cent to 80, your back-benchers were guaranteeing farmers that the changes will be brought back up to 100 per cent. And that was on CBC radio today.

Can you confirm that this is a policy change that you are pursuing, or is it a cabinet change that your back-benchers are pursuing?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, the members opposite act as though they've been living in a vacuum, and maybe they have been. I don't know.

The fact is they ought to be aware that the Premier of Saskatchewan, at the Farm Progress Show, proposed a disaster relief program for Saskatchewan on the basis that there was drought in Saskatchewan and on the basis that there was the threat of frost because of late crop, proposed this to the federal government, to say that the federal government, who was prepared to spend another \$150 million in Saskatchewan for a program so seriously flawed that the committee had to suggest major changes, but somehow they wouldn't spend it in another circumstance.

Well we put forward the proposal that the federal government ought to be able to support that, to pay that \$150 million for farmers when we had made changes to the program, as easily as they would have before.

Now I ask the members opposite whether that was an act in the interest of farmers or whether that was not. I ask the members opposite whether they were aware of that or whether they were not. And I ask the members opposite whether they want to continue to play politics or whether they want to help farmers.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Minister, *Agriweek* has a statement here and I want to read it:

No provincial regime in memory has pulled as many farm-policy blunders in as short a time. What the NDP failed to grasp about GRIP is that many farmers, probably the majority, see it as a source of additional crop income, not mere insurance. Cutting such support could be tough and unpopular even if it were done right.

Mr. Minister, can you tell us on the GRIP, how much the loss was on the 20 per cent that the farmers across the North now and across the West are going to lose because of frost, drought, and snow? Can you tell us that?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, the members opposite say that they are concerned about farmers, and I would like to believe they were. The federal government says they are concerned about farmers, and I would like to believe they were. And there is no doubt that the 55 members here are concerned about farmers.

The question that surely comes to mind is, if farmers are hurting to the extent that they are, and if farmers are suffering still an income shortfall of \$900 million from several years ago, who should make that payment? Do you think that the farmers themselves and the other taxpayers of the province who are virtually all bankrupt as a result of the actions of the members opposite, do you think that they should pay for 50 per cent of the cost of an international trade war? Do the members opposite really believe that?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Minister, you have no idea at all of the volume of hurt that you're dealing to those farmers on the west side and the north of this province. In fact I want to point out in a paper that I got today called, Canadian Political Rating Service, said that if the government . . . And I quote: If the government is to regain ground in the agriculture sector, Wiens should go. And it is doubtful that moving him into another portfolio would be acceptable since the Premier knows literally nothing about agriculture and rural issues, he is probably unaware of the damage the minister has inflicted on his government.

They gave you an F minus rating, a failure, but they don't have very much more to say about the rest of the front benchers either.

The Speaker: — Order. I'd like to call the member from Regina Rosemont to order please. Order.

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, and, Mr. Minister, my question is this. You can still cause your cabinet colleagues to reject this Bill by not proclaiming this Act. You can do that, Mr. Minister. The question is: have you the courage and have you the intestinal fortitude to tell those members that you're going to do irreparable damage to the people of the province of Saskatchewan to put food on their tables? Are you going to do that to convince them that it's necessary that they reject that Bill?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Speaker, does the member opposite have the honesty to admit that since the day of the implementation of this program last spring that any contention by him and his friends that somehow a '91 program could be implemented is absolute folly? Is the member opposite honest enough to admit that? Their games that are played by the members opposite are ludicrous to say the least.

Does the member opposite have the honesty, does the member opposite have the honesty to identify who the organization is that wrote these things the member is quoting? Does the member opposite have the integrity to recognize what the farmers in Melfort yesterday were really saying?

And let me read the presentation. Let me read what the members in Melfort were asking . . .

The Speaker: — Order.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 93 — An Act respecting Labour Relations in the Construction Industry

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I move first reading of a Bill respecting Labour Relations in the Construction Industry.

Motion agreed to and, by leave of the Assembly, the Bill ordered to be read a second time later this day.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 93 — An Act respecting Labour Relations in the Construction Industry

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I want to say a few words in explanation for the Bill which is currently before the House, Mr. Speaker. Not part of my prepared remarks, but something I want to add to these comments, is that I suppose, Mr. Speaker, this represents a model of how government should operate.

Both the construction industry and the trade unions had their own idea of how this ought to be structured. In the end result they were able to agree upon this piece of legislation which each would admit represents a significant improvement for them, although both would claim that it's not all they wanted.

So in some ways I think, Mr. Speaker, this particular piece of legislation represents a model of how government should operate in a democratic society.

This Act is a product of extensive consultations which began almost eight months ago to review the state of labour relations in the provincial construction industry. There was a committee set up, Mr. Speaker, composed of representatives from the building trade unions and unionized contractors. The committee reported to the Minister of Labour in May 1992 with recommendations for legislation.

While the Act includes many of the committee's recommendations, many other provisions have resulted from consultations this summer with the Saskatchewan Construction Association, the Saskatchewan Labour Relations Council, the Saskatchewan Provincial Building & Construction Trades Council, the Canadian Federation

of Independent Business, and representatives from other organizations affecting the committee's recommendations.

The provisions in this Bill reflect a workable compromise for both the construction unions and employers. The Act will ensure that fairness, stability, and a measure of prosperity will be restored to the construction industry in Saskatchewan.

The construction labour relations legislation was first passed in 1979 by the then Blakeney government. It furnished a framework for labour relations in the provincial construction industry which operated successfully until its repeal by the Conservative government in 1983. That repeal spelled the end of meaningful collective bargaining in the construction industry in Saskatchewan.

I strongly believe that the construction industry employer and employee alike are best served through an orderly system of collective market bargaining. This ensures that the interests are all taken into account in a balanced and co-operative manner. Furthermore, members of the government benches are convinced that orderly collective bargaining, when viewed in all its aspects, is in the best interests of the people of this province.

The Act preserves the basic principles contained in the 1979 construction labour relations Act with some important changes and additions. The Act creates a framework for province-wide collective bargaining by which an employer's organization and a trade union negotiate a collective agreement applicable to all unionized employers and employees in a trade. It establishes a mandatory conciliation process for collective bargaining before a strike or lock-out can occur. It adopts The Trade Union Act provisions which require 48 hours notice of a strike or lock-out.

It precludes unionized contractors from operating through a non-union, spin-off company to avoid certification orders or to avoid adhering to the terms of a collective bargaining agreement. It applies to spin-off companies which commence activities after coming into force of this Act. Employees of companies currently operating on a non-union basis will not be affected; those employees continue, however, to have the right to unionize if they so choose.

It accommodates the practice of reverse spin-off by allowing Labour Relations Board, in exercising its discretion to make a declaration under the anti-spin-off provisions, to recognize the industry practice by which non-union contractors voluntarily recognize the union and do work on a unionized basis through a subsidiary.

It creates a mechanism for the settlement of jurisdictional disputes between the trade unions by enabling regulations to create a jurisdictional assignment plan to determine which trade is to perform the various parts of the work on a job site, creates a contract administration fee payable to employers and employees, to representative employers' organizations and trade unions, to offset administrative costs to promote unionized construction in the province, creates

enforcement mechanisms parallel to those in The Trade Union Act by empowering Labour Relations Board to determine if there has been a violation of the Act and to issue a compliance order that is enforceable as an order of the court, establishes transitional rules which will be in effect until province-wide agreements are negotiated under a new framework.

The Act demonstrates the government's commitment to sound, progressive legislation that will modernize and stabilize labour relations in the construction industry. The Act will establish fair rules for construction industry labour relations, which will result in just treatment for construction workers, the development of a skilled work force, and a stable supply of tradespeople in our province.

Mr. Speaker, I think members of this Assembly will forgive me for mentioning the absence of a member. The Minister of Labour had hoped to be here personally to present the second reading. I'm informed he will be back for Committee of the Whole, so the questions which members have will be answered by the minister directly.

With those words, Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to move a second reading of An Act respecting Labour Relations in the Construction Industry.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Bill that's presently going through the second-reading stage is certainly new in its introduction to this Assembly. But it is certainly not new to the people who have been watching the progress of the drafting of this Bill throughout last winter and in fact even prior to that, it began last fall.

We of the opposition are happy that the draft Bill that we presented in this Assembly and tabled to this Assembly has seen considerable amount more work done on it than was first indicated might happen. We are happy with the role that we were able to play as an official opposition in bringing together the parties who were concerned with the end result of this Bill. The one-sided, hand-picked committee that the government originally started with certainly had made recommendations. And certainly the government was prepared, it appeared, to follow those recommendations.

If that had happened, a major portion of our society would have been left out of the negotiations, not only the non-unionized contractors, but in fact the workers themselves would have been left out of the input that was necessary in order to come up with a practical Bill that in fact would assist them with their everyday lives and the necessities of the work-place as it affects workers.

So we are happy, Mr. Speaker, that this consultation process finally did get improved on. It finally did in fact occur. The meetings started to happen. And we are of the understanding, from the various people that we've talked to, that most of the . . . as the minister who read the Bill, most of the problem areas have been compromised on. As he pointed out, neither side appears to be totally happy with the result. And I guess that's what compromise is all about. You try to find some middle ground that you can

live with even though you're not totally happy and not totally convinced that you're getting your complete, whole . . . your own way.

But the compromise is the important part, and that appears to have been achieved. And if we find in our questioning through committee that we have in fact achieved that middle ground and that the folks involved and, in particular, the province of Saskatchewan will not be seriously hampered or hard done by by this Bill, we will be allowing it to continue and to become law without an overwhelming amount of further resistance.

However of course if we find in committee that the government has not been totally forthright with us and there are other things in there that we don't expect, we certainly then will raise those objections and the battle of course will be on and the fur will fly.

So we caution the government not to try to pull a fast one here. And we want to pass that on into the future because we do understand that there will be further legislation in this area coming in perhaps the next sitting of this Assembly. If that happens, we caution the government that they must have the same type of consultation process that we ended up with this last round. If they go back to their original premise to appoint hand-picked committees to try to do a snow job on the workers of the province and the rest of the people of this province, they will run into the same kind of resistance that they have had this past time.

(1445)

With that, we can understand the minister's anxiety on the other side to not have the past put forward to him in a warning of what he can expect. But he will just have to be tolerant for another minute because we are going to allow this to go to committee, but he will have to hear us out for a minute or so. It's natural that they will be impatient because they've made this promise in the election to bring this legislation through, and they of course are now doing that.

We hope though, in all sincerity, Mr. Speaker, that when this final Bill is studied through, that it will in fact do what it was originally designed to do and that is to help the workers of the province. And we're not particularly concerned about union leaders being satisfied or happy. We want the workers of this province to be satisfied and happy. And with that, we'll allow it to continue, Mr. Speaker.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

Bill No. 92 — An Act to amend The Education Act (No. 2)

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, this Bill has a clear-cut purpose, putting in place a francophone component for Saskatchewan's kindergarten to grade 12 school system. There have been years of delay in the form of court cases, studies, agreements in principle, public meetings, and still more studies. After all this Bill 92 will finally allow Saskatchewan francophones to manage and control their own schools.

This Bill has its origin in section 23 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Section 23 gives linguistic minorities in any province the right to have their children educated in either of Canada's official languages. Section 23 is not a special privilege available only to French-speaking Canadians. It protects the rights of both French- and English-speaking Canadians, guaranteeing them the right to education in the official language of their choice.

It also grants the right to have that education provided in publicly funded schools under the control and management of the linguistic minority where there is a large enough population.

In Saskatchewan section 23 gives francophone parents the right to have their children educated in French. It also confers the right to have education provided in francophone schools which are under the jurisdiction of a francophone education authority.

These rights have been upheld in the courts. A 1988 court decision in Saskatchewan, commonly known as the Wimmer decision, found that our existing legislation violated the Constitution of Canada. This was the case because no provision was made, Mr. Speaker, for francophone governance of schools as guaranteed by section 23.

Following this decision, a consultation process was set up which led to establishment of a task force to work towards meeting the requirements of section 23, including drafting of the required legislation. The task force was re-implemented in February of this year so that I might have the benefit of their advice on how best to proceed. The end result of this consultation process is the Bill before you today.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill is long overdue. We have a clear legal responsibility and an outstanding constitutional obligation to Saskatchewan francophones, which we are meeting today. Until this Bill is passed, we are not fulfilling our legal obligations under section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. If we fail to act, Mr. Speaker, we are risking the loss of considerable federal funding. These are funds the federal government had agreed to provide for the specific purpose of implementing francophone control of schools. It is money that would not otherwise be available to Saskatchewan. Our government is ready to meet its legal obligations. The additional costs will be covered by federal funding.

I'd like now to deal with some of the key points in the Bill itself. This Bill incorporates the structure for francophone governance recommended by the 1989 Gallant report. This consists of a two-tiered approach.

The legislation allows establishment of francophone education areas roughly equal to school divisions. Each area will contain a francophone school under the management and control of a conseil scolaire, an elected francophone board of education. We expect that eventually there will be eight to ten such boards in the province.

I should point out that only a small number of students and school boards in Saskatchewan will be affected at all. Schools for francophone students are already in operation under existing boards in all of the affected communities.

Mr. Speaker, what we're dealing with here is essentially a change in administrative procedure, with modest costs and minimal impact on the remainder of the school system. Along with the local boards there will be a provincial co-ordinating body known as the conseil général. This council will be made up of representatives from the local boards. It will review all proposals for the establishment of boards and ultimately decide if in fact they are warranted.

This council will also arrange specialized services on a shared basis. In addition, it will co-ordinate services for francophones in areas where a board has not yet been established or in fact establishment is simply not practical.

Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize that what we are putting in place is enabling legislation. Under this Bill, implementation of francophone governance must come from the ground up. In any given community, francophone parents are free to decide whether they are interested in establishing a board.

If there is no interest, the existing arrangements remain in place. Francophone students simply continue to attend their public school. Nothing changes until people at the local level clearly indicate their desire for change. If a sufficient number of francophone parents want to establish a board, then this Bill defines a clear path to follow.

I want to turn now to the question of funding. This government has said all along, Mr. Speaker, that francophone schools will not mean an additional drain on the provincial treasury because the start-up costs would be fully funded by the federal government. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to confirm today that this is in fact the case.

The 1988 federal agreement will provide \$15 million over the next five years. This will be used to meet the operating and capital costs for francophone schools. Another \$12 million has been promised to make the program even more comprehensive. We will be pressing the federal government to ensure that they live up to this further commitment.

The francophone boards will not have the authority to levy taxes. As a result, adjustments will be made to the foundation grant to accommodate their access to federal funds.

Mr. Speaker, we have worked closely with the task force in drafting this Bill. All major educational organizations as well as the francophone community were represented on the task force. As in any major undertaking of this kind, compromises were made, but they were made in a positive atmosphere.

I think everyone came to the realization that they were in

the process of building something important. The end result of this process was consensus; a Bill which all of the major players can accept because it effectively balances their needs and concerns.

I indicated, Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of my remarks that the overriding purpose of this Bill is to make The Education Act consistent with the requirements of Canada's Constitution and the charter of rights. Passage of this Bill will mean we are meeting the requirement of section 23 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It will mean, Mr. Speaker, that Saskatchewan is obeying the law of the land.

Bill 92 represents a made-in-Saskatchewan solution to the question of minority language rights. Its corner-stones are co-operation and consensus — the corner-stones upon which so much has been built in this province. We are now working to build much more.

I am therefore pleased, Mr. Speaker, to move that Bill No. 92, An Act to amend The Education Act, 1992 (No. 2) be now read a second time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to be able to rise to speak on this issue. It's an important issue in Saskatchewan and it's been in play for a good many years now. I believe it's been about 12 years since the issue first came to a head, and it's taken this long to finally reach the floor of the House.

Negotiations have been ongoing for quite a period of time now, but I have to wonder why the minister has chosen this particular time to bring it forward. The reason I'm thinking of this particular time, and I have talked to the minister about this, is because of the constitutional implications that could be bound up in this whole matter.

We think back to the problems that happened in Meech Lake with the constitutional issues. We seem to have a constitutional package now in play, Mr. Speaker. And if this becomes a positive vehicle, then it is a benefit to Saskatchewan. But if it becomes a negative vehicle, then it could harm the whole constitutional affairs that are taking place in this country at the present time. And we have some concerns about that, Mr. Speaker.

The matter of funding, ever since this came . . . the discussion of a third French school board came into play, there has been a great amount of fear in the general public about the tax base. The minister says that there will be no tax implications, that the new French school boards will not have the power to tax.

Mr. Speaker, there's a great fear of the unknown out there in the general public concerning this. Because if there is a tax implication there it will impact on the local municipalities and the local school divisions. And so the people out there in the local areas that will have to deal with the implementation of a third French school board in their area, need to have the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to look at the Bill to get an understanding of it, to get a feeling of how it will operate and what impacts it will have in their immediate area and what impacts it will

have within the French community. My own constituency already has a K to 12 French school.

And so the people in the area, Mr. Speaker, need to have the opportunity to have a look at how this Bill will impact on the local communities and what impact this new Bill will have across the country.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad that the minister has brought the Bill forward, and that the general public will now have the opportunity to have a look at it and to get a feel of it and to try and understand all that is involved in this new Bill, this amendment to The Education Act which is dealing with the establishment of a third French school board.

So at this time, Mr. Speaker, I would like to move that we adjourn debate on this matter.

Debate adjourned.

(1500)

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Consolidated Fund Expenditure

Labour

Vote 20

The Chair: — I would ask the minister to please introduce the officials who are with him here today.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have with me today, the deputy minister, Merran Proctor; the assistant deputy minister, Ron Kruzeniski; the assistant deputy minister, Janis Rathwell; and the assistant executive director of support services, Pat Moore.

Item 1

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to welcome the officials and the minister.

And first of all I have been doing a little bit of checking on the package that you've presented, so I've written up a couple of questions that I'll first of all just read them to you and let you respond. And then after that we'll get into some of the more general things that need to be done in order to educate myself about your department.

Mr. Minister, we want to thank you for the forthcoming answers you provided in response to our written request. I've only a few follow-up questions, and I expect we will be through here quite quickly.

To start with, your department states that the category of time off called earned days off and special days off are earned by employees working longer hours. I want this very clear for the public. If this is true, assuming that an employee is expected to work 40 hours per week, then in two-week period in which an EDO (earned day off) would be earned, an employee would be expected to work 80 hours. Such a two week period would total 9 working days, accounting for the EDO.

So you are telling me that your departmental employees are working approximately nine hours per day to earn the

day off. Is that correct, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chairman and to the member, we're having a discussion here trying to remember how these earned days off came into existence in the Saskatchewan public service. I can say to the member that this has been around since about 1976. And what happened back then is that the employees who had been working a work-week of I think 36 point-some hours, thirty six and a half hours a week, worked longer hours each day, and over a two-week period had done in nine days what they used to do in ten working days, so they would get a day off, and that was usually every second Friday.

And that system has remained intact through successive governments since about mid-term for the Blakeney government, and it continues in effect today. And in the material that you have, that's what that day is all about.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Well, Mr. Minister, however you total it up, I've had a great deal of experience with public union employees, and I suggest that they are not logging the extra hours. Are these so-called extra hours logged on a time sheet?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Yes, Mr. Chairman, the hours are logged on time sheets, and I can say to the member from all of my own personal experience as a deputy minister years ago and as a minister now, that these employees in this department are working longer hours than that. They are really pulling their full fair shares.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, considering the policy of the government is now stated that the employees must work extra hours to earn the EDOs and the SDOs (scheduled day off), will you agree to ask the Provincial Auditor to undertake a review to investigate whether or not this policy is in fact being followed, and that the hours paid are in fact hours worked according to policy? My understanding is that we are talking somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$80 million in EDOs, so this is not a trivial matter.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chairman, I'll be glad to pick up on the member's suggestion and have this system looked at by whatever means is appropriate. I'm not certain that the means is the Auditor General, but . . . or the Provincial Auditor. But whoever it is we certainly have no objection to evaluating the program after these many years.

Mr. Goohsen: — Could you let us know the results of that evaluation?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. In response to question 32, you respond that the only manuals you use in the department come from the PSC (Public Service Commission). I want you to confirm on the record that there are no internal policy procedures or administrative manuals dealing with such matters as handling union certifications, workers' complaints, occupational health and safety matters, or whatever. Just confirm that any manual we find that sets out policy or procedure specific

to the Department of Labour is a fraudulent document since your department has no such manual. On the other hand, if your department — like most departments — does in fact have such manuals, would you please provide a copy of each such manual to us?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I suspect from the member's question that we interpreted the question too narrowly. There are of course procedural documents, procedural manuals, in some of the individual programs and the member has mentioned occupational health and that is one of them.

In addition there are manuals in respect of the labour standards program, to mention two. But I can say to the hon. member that we will be pleased to provide copies of those manuals to him and indeed any other procedural manuals, as he has requested, that may exist in the department. And I apologize to the member for obviously construing the question too narrowly.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. We'll look forward to receiving those manuals and if we don't happen to get them, we'll be letting you know.

Mr. Minister, on a different subject, recently the construction association, yourself as minister, and the official opposition engaged in a consultation process regarding the proposal for a new construction labour relations Act. I think it's appropriate to indicate that in the end result and pending final consultation on the actual draft Bill, we have arrived at an agreement. Of course that Bill introduced here today is presently under the scrutiny of several pairs of eyes, I can assure you. So we will have the result of that very shortly.

In the case of this particular issue, we have two important lessons. The first is how not to consult on labour legislation and the second is how compromise can be achieved. I want to reiterate the strong objections of the opposition and the industry itself had to the committee that the minister appointed. It was a sham that included no representation from the non-union sector of the industry and it was mandated without legitimate input from all of those who had their livelihoods at stake. That was the wrong way, and I hope the minister will take that lesson as one well learned.

After the opposition put forward its resistance in the House and the industry and the business community made it clear that it would not stand by while their basic rights were attacked, the government finally undertook honest consultation, and for that, Mr. Minister, we would like to commend you personally because I think it was your personal intervention that helped to save the day in this instance. And we do appreciate that.

I want to . . . I guess perhaps I should let you respond to that before I go on to the next question.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Well I appreciate that a satisfactory result has emerged from the process. I think the member and I could get into quite a debate about whether there was ever anything wrong with the consultation process in this case. But I suggest we have that at another time.

I do want to say that from the beginning, my approach and that of my staff, was a bona fide, open, direct approach and nobody was trying to slip anything by anybody. I believe that it is correct. I know it is correct that the first employer representative that I met with after assuming this office was Jim Chase of the Saskatchewan Construction Association. And at that meeting we discussed the concept of a construction industry Act and the process that I hope to put in place to review the subject. And indeed there were discussions with Mr. Chase prior to the structuring of the committee.

Now I know that he's been critical of that committee since, and I just don't think that the world would be advanced by reviewing . . . I don't think the subject would be advanced by reviewing the course of these matters in any detail.

I think that we're better off if I skip right to the end, and say to the hon. member that I appreciate his remarks, that my view is that labour legislation must be the subject of intense consultation because, after all when we in this legislature are finished with a particular piece of labour legislation, we don't have to live with it after that. It is the working people and the employers and the trade unions of this province who have to live with the legislation. And so it is only appropriate that all of them be consulted in a very intensive way with respect to the contents of any Bill that anyone brings to this House. And that will be the case as long as I'm the minister, and I appreciate what the member had to say with respect to this Bill.

(1515)

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I think I agree that the debate could go quite a while about how the process worked, and nothing would be served by that except for you and I to get it off our chests, and I think we can do that out in the wind. The important thing is that we have a resolution to the situation that seems, on the surface at least, to be workable. And we are happy that that is going to be the conclusion.

We of course are going to have some questions about the thing in committee yet, and so I'm going to leave that part of the discussion for that time. I for example have some questions for you about how these companies are set up and how they will work now in the future and that sort of thing, so you can just put your thought process into that for that future date.

I want to get to the actual estimates. And being new to this area myself, I want to just go through it kind of briefly, section by section, to kind of educate myself and perhaps the public along with me. I'm suspecting I'm probably not the only one in Saskatchewan that doesn't really understand where the money in the Labour department is really spent. And taking that presumption, maybe too much of a poetic licence but I'm going to take it anyway, and go through it and ask you to explain to me things like for example to start with, the administrative services. What does that entail? And could you briefly explain to me and to the people of Saskatchewan where that \$1,029,300 along with other expenses of \$325,000 really goes to.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chairman and to the member, I'm pleased to do that. This is the central management of the department and the support services to the central management of the department. It includes the office of the deputy minister and the human resources department, the personnel department if you wish, and the financial and management support system for the entire department — the administrative officers of various sorts and clerical officers in connection with keeping track of the department and how it works and managing its money, ensuring that it is within budget and that everything is being done in accordance with the department's mandates and the limitations imposed by this legislature upon the exercise of that mandate. And it also would include the communications area.

But to sum up as I began, this is the core of the department's management and its support services for various managerial functions.

Mr. Goohsen: — Okay. Besides ourselves in estimates checking out where these monies go, who polices the spending of that department? And I guess I'll let you answer that first.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — It is the responsibility of the deputy minister to ensure that the department is behaving in an appropriate way within its mandate and is functioning within its budget. And in that connection, there's a wide range of decisions made every day, and in larger chunks as the member can appreciate as the year develops and as adjustments have to be made during the year to ensure that the department is doing what the department should be doing.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Under the second item, no. 2, you have the title Labour Relations. Could you explain that to us?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — This is in many respects the high profile part of the department. This is where the conciliation officers are housed, whose responsibility it is to enter collective bargaining and negotiations when they reach crucial critical stages and attempt to help the parties reach a settlement.

It also is the part of the department where the Workers' Advocate program is located, which is a program that is offered to injured workers who are wanting help in dealing with the Workers' Compensation Board.

We have also in this branch a small research and policy unit, and their focus mainly is statistical information which is used by the parties to collective bargaining, by employers and by trade unions in helping them with their negotiations.

Mr. Goohsen: — Mr. Minister, you mention the Workers' Compensation area as falling under the Workers' Advocate section. I guess if there's one area of labour problems that comes to mind more often than any others, it would be Worker's Compensation. People seem to chronically have problems with the compensation boards and the amounts of dollars that they get.

Do you anticipate doing any reviews of the Workers'

Compensation structure and how it operates and how its insurance process will deal with people? I've had some complaints about this whole area.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Yes, Mr. Chairman. There actually has been a review going on for some time now which was set up by the Hon. Grant Schmidt when he was the minister of Labour, and that review has continued under this government. And as a matter of fact we expect a report from that committee within the next week. We received an interim report from them some two months ago and that will be followed by their final report.

As the member knows, under The Workers' Compensation Act this review happens every four years and happens automatically. I agree with the member. I agree with the member that this is an area where we are having problems. And that's nobody's fault, I think, except Saskatchewan led the way in moving Workers' Compensation towards an income-replacement system. And there have been some bugs in the system.

And I know that they've been on the member's desk as they've been on mine from time to time as we encounter the idea of deeming, for example. The deeming provisions are a constant source of irritation and I've had many letters from members of the opposition in connection with cases where the deeming provisions have caused problems for their constituents, as it has I think to all members of the House. And similarly, the relationship between previously existing conditions, previous disabilities and new injuries, and I know that's a problem too.

So we expect that a lot of these are going to be cleared up when the results of this review land in my desk in about a week's time.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, on the next area in your votes here, it has employment opportunities. And I notice that there is a drop in the amount of money that's being allocated globally in this area. And I want you to explain exactly what you have going on there.

But given the fact that we have seen a significant downturn in the labour market in this province, vis-a-vis a year ago, I believe the figures are about 18,000 less jobs.

The fact that we have significant drops in the area of youth employment and also in the agricultural sector, I believe it's about 2,000 jobs related. I'm wondering, given those kind of overall numbers, say I believe the figures were July to July from '91 to '92, why we would see an area that obviously has a lot of pressure on it decreased in your budget allocations here, and what you exactly have in mind under this area.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Well, Mr. Chairman, the drop in the budget allocation for this branch is mainly as a result of an adjustment agreement for older workers that was carried forward in the last fiscal year, that involved an expenditure of something over \$230,000. And that was a program that has happened already, and so it is not an item in this budget; that program having, as I said, been completed.

Now in this branch we do a number of things. The immigration policy of the government, for example, the negotiation of the immigration agreement which has been ongoing for the past several months, is done from this branch.

The branch also has an employment equity unit whose mandate it is to encourage the employment of women and aboriginals and handicapped people within the Government of Saskatchewan.

There's a third area where I think you could call that an employment policy and it is concerned with labour market adjustment programs of which the older worker program at Simpson Timber in the last fiscal year is an example, and where attempts are made to develop appropriate policy around those kind of situations where people have been displaced because of technological change or mass lay-offs or indeed any kind of lay-offs where retraining may be necessary or some kind of program is required in order to help those people who have been faced with the disaster of losing their job and helping them to resume work, resume an employment career. Those are the main branches.

This is not the focus of job creation within the government although we do participate in committees that are concerned with that. But those are headed by other departments of government and that particular responsibility has not been placed on the Department of Labour.

(1530)

Mr. Swenson: — Well I would think, Mr. Minister, with projects such as Millar Western, Saskferco, the upgrader at Lloydminster, several large construction projects in some of our cities, this type of thing, that some of the thrust that would go forward with equal opportunity hiring in the area of native employment . . . certainly Millar Western I know there was periphery hirings there that were based on that fact.

With all of these large-type endeavours from the previous administration now all coming to an end at once, that your government must be concerned about its ability to hire some of the more disadvantaged groups in the province without anything to sort of come along and replace those. And that this unit is going to have a difficult indeed job if it's looking at being sort of a direction or a direction giver from government in this area; that you must be really scratching these days to try and find areas where you can go equal opportunity hiring, where you can involve native employment because there isn't sort of anything building on the horizon.

And I wonder if you could give me some indication of the areas, the projects, the possibilities for this unit to use its expertise in order to provide employment opportunities for people that maybe aren't involved in a trade union or in some of the mainstream involvement.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I'm advised, Mr. Chairman, that the department has not been the . . . has not had as its function the actual going out and working with private

sector employers in attempting to introduce employment equity programs into those work places; rather we have been participating within government and in the — as I mentioned in my previous answer — in respect of job creation policies.

I think we're all concerned in this province with the employment situation. Everyone is concerned with economic development and job creation, and it is and remains a very, very high priority of our government. We, as I mentioned to the member, have been participating in interdepartmental committees along those lines ever since I became the minister, and we will continue to do that. Because as I also told the member, this is not the department whose responsibility it is to encourage economic development and job creation.

Mr. Swenson: — Well, Mr. Minister, I don't want to belabour the fact that there is a large drop in employment in the province. And I know that your department is not charged with that; that is the minister responsible for Economic Development and Trade, and we'll discuss this very topic with him at a later date.

But I know, Mr. Minister, that your department has been involved in areas such as the co-op programming, for instance, initiatives done through the various SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) campuses which have formed a relationship with the private sector then, where you have people — single parents, the native community, others — that through working through your various educational facilities have been able to touch base with some of the employment opportunities. The campus at Prince Albert has been able to successfully do that. I know the Moose Jaw one has done it through instrumentation and that type of thing.

And I would think this is the kind of area that your department would be concerned about, that these various groupings of people that are having a difficult time finding employment in our province, that your department would want to co-ordinate with others throughout government that would give some initiative to other areas to use some of their dollars in a wise way. And certainly the co-op programming that has been done through SIAST has been one of those and has had a relationship with your department over the years.

And I would think you would want to sort of tell me whether that's going to be ongoing or if you've sort of struck out on some new initiative for this particular unit that has been involved in the past.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The focus of our employment equity people has been internal in the last several months. By internal, I mean internal to government.

As the member will know because of his attachment to the Indian and Metis Affairs program, for example, the representation of Indian and Metis people in the government is a problem. They're grossly underrepresented. And we have been, in the last several months, taking an inventory of that situation and trying to get things moving so that we can begin to hire more and more Indian and Metis people within government

departments and within the Crown corporations. And our department is taking an active lead in that, and I think that's a good piece of work. I think that's a very desirable program and it certainly has my full support.

Externally we will do what we can. As you will know from the numbers, this is not a very large branch and in these budgetary times it's not likely to get much larger. But you can do a lot with a small number of people if you've got enough motivation, and I think we're on a good track there.

I think you can also appreciate that we really have to have our own house in order before we can throw our weight around with the private sector and try and move them into employment equity programs. First of all, we should have a solid one ourselves.

Mr. Swenson: — Well I appreciate that statement about having your house in order, Mr. Minister. But time is a moving on and we are just about through another summer, which is our prime employment season, and we haven't seen a whole lot on the horizon.

I know you have a small unit, that it is limited. And I guess if we're going to . . . if your direction is to sort of look after government with some of the more disadvantaged groups, our aboriginal community and others, that we're still going to want to make sure that the individuals hired have the qualifications. I don't expect the taxpayers in this province want us to go out and hire single moms or aboriginals or anyone else just because . . . or someone of a different ethnic background simply because they are thus. That the qualifications, the educational background will be there to provide the taxpayer with their ultimate kick.

And I would think that this unit is a prime example of one that probably can be a little more aggressive, avant-garde, has some opportunities to take a small budget but still interact with a lot of people. And I know the educational system is one that always needs change and it sometimes needs a little bit of a push from another area. And I would think that this unit would be one that could perhaps do that pushing.

You don't have to comment if you want, and I'm going to let one of my other colleagues ask a question.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Well I just might say that I agree with the member's point. These programs can't be a matter of bringing people into jobs that they can't do and never can do because they're not trained or educated to do them. On the other hand, as the member will know from past experience, there are many jobs around, for bureaucratic reasons, have educational requirements that aren't necessary for the job — sort of overwritten in order to earn a certain salary range, or some such reason that is important within the administration of public pay scales, but yet don't make any sense in relation to the job.

These barriers of course have to be re-examined and ensure that they're not artificial barriers that prevent, say, aboriginal people from getting jobs which they may be perfectly capable of doing. So we're trying to approach it with quite a broad-minded framework of analysis.

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a number of questions on Workers' Compensation Board. First of all, can you give me the estimate of reserves in Workers' Compensation Board that there are there?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I apologize for that delay, Mr. Chairman. And I'd like to introduce to members of the legislature Mr. Jack McLean, who is the acting chair of the Workers' Compensation Board who came into the House when that question was asked, in order to help me with the answer.

I am looking at the annual report of the Workers' Compensation Board for 1991 and let me answer it this way. The board has, as of the end of 1991, a balance — I was going to say a cash balance, that's not quite correct — but it's a credit balance of \$52 million. Now there's a lot more money than that around that is committed to particular injuries, you know, where the reserve has been set aside in respect of that injury. And so that reserve has been committed in respect of a particular injury to ensure that that claim remains funded. And the balance that I'm talking about is over and above all of those committed reserve funds. And that balance that I mention is \$52 million.

Mr. Martens: — What is the total of the committed . . . and would you be able to tell me if there are investments in that volume of dollars too, that we could put a total figure together on the volume that there is that they have to pay out yet, what you told me, the 52 million plus any additional investments that they have in the process.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chairman, the total assets of the board, all in, are 473 million-plus. And on the other side of the balance sheet is the 52 million that I just mentioned plus 421 million that has to be included in the mix here in trying to understand.

There is compensation payable. The funds dedicated to the compensation payable is in excess of \$382 million. And there is an annuity fund reserve of in excess of \$21 million. And then add in the 52 million that I talked about earlier gives you the 473 million that balances the assets, gives you the balanced sheet. I think in all that is the answer to the member's question, although not presented in exactly the way that you'd asked it.

(1545)

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Chairman, I have a question on the volume of those assets is in real estate in drawing income for the Labour Relations Board.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The answer is on page 29 of the board's annual report, and it shows that among the . . . In the investment portfolio of the board is mortgages and real estate, about \$33.3 million. There'd be very little mortgage in that and most if not all of it in real estate — 33.3 million. And that is out of a . . . that is of a total of 392 million.

Mr. Martens: — An observation I want to make, Mr. Minister, is this: that I know that I've had . . . of the problems that I've had in dealing with constituents, that

the largest single concern that has been raised by individuals is the access to what they believe is rightfully theirs because they've paid into the Workers' Compensation Board for many years.

And there are various kinds of injuries that are far more serious than others. But it seems like the ones that wear people down over a period of time, where there's no single incident that they can attract a focus to on receiving compensation for that item, are the most difficult probably for the board to address and also for the individual to address. And in that whole mix you've got to throw in reasonableness in the arguments made by the individuals who are looking for compensation.

And that leads me to the point I want to make, Mr. Minister, and that is that we have one rehabilitation centre in the city of Regina here, and in my view most of these kinds of rehabilitation functions travel through — at least from my constituency — they travel through the rehab centre in Regina here. And because of the investment opportunity that you take and put this money into investments — and we did the same and I'm not disqualifying that either — put this money into investments that will give you a return, that perhaps we should be thinking about setting up facilities like Wascana in other parts of the province where access could be far more readily made available to individuals who do have serious injuries and would be able to deal with them in a practical kind of way.

I know that travel for many people is significant, and they have to be here. But this rehabilitation centre isn't only for Workers' Compensation people; it's also for people who are being rehabilitated from accidents of other sorts too.

So I guess because Workers' Compensation . . . and accidents occur and people get injured, there is a reason to believe that there should be some more facilities made available for these people in other parts of the province, and I'd like to have you respond to that because these kinds of facilities aren't cheap. And they deal with it in a practical sense in a relation to the compensation, not in the payment side but in the rehabilitation in showing these people how they could perhaps become involved in society when they have serious back problems and they need to change their vocations.

Maybe it needs to be hooked together to an institution that will provide them retraining and all of those kinds of things, and I'd just like to have some observations from you on that.

Mr. Trew: — With leave, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce some guests.

The Chair — Is leave granted?

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Trew: — Mr. Chairman, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to welcome in the Speaker's gallery some old friends. Janice McKnight actually went to school with my wife, Lorna. Janice and Lorna have maintained a

friendship over the years. With Janice is her husband, Dennis, and three children, Sean, Christy, and Spencer. I ask all hon. members to join me in welcoming the McKnights to the Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Consolidated Fund Expenditure Labour Vote 20

Item 1 (continued)

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chairman, the board has invested in the Wascana facility about \$13 million and has an annual expenditure of about \$3 million in connection with its use of that facility. The arrangements were that the board would have access for about a thousand people per year to use that facility, and that has not been the experience. They've never used as much as half of that. And it's not because it's not needed; but it's because of the reluctance of people to leave their homes and come down to Regina and, for many of them, live in a motel. And we know that's a problem and it's a perplexing one.

These are expensive little facilities, you know. They take . . . as the member observed, it takes some gear, it takes a lot of equipment, and it takes some very skilled people to assist injured people in their rehabilitation. So it's an ongoing problem and all the more so because it is located in Regina, as the member says, and it's awkward for people from outside to come here. I mention that because it is on our minds and we're reaching around for solutions to it.

But I want to just expand on that point for a moment. A lot has been learned about rehabilitation in recent years. A lot has been learned. And surprisingly — or maybe not surprisingly — a lot of it has been learned in respect of athletes, and sports medicine has really taught people a lot about the human body and how it recovers. And if it's challenged early enough and severely enough it can make a faster recovery than if it is allowed to recover sort of in a more sedentary way. And the board is conscious of these developments also.

There's no question that there are dramatic advances in rehab and it's so important to the administration of our program because a rehabilitated worker wants of course to be rehabilitated, wants to go back to work. And if that happens, of course, it is . . . it contributes to the efficiency of the operation of the whole program. So we're interested and the member raises a good point.

Mr. Martens: — I would just make a further observation, Mr. Minister, that I believe Saskatoon, where we have a learning institution as well as a hospital together . . . I would make this observation about that, that we could probably utilize some of the learning component of this kind of medicine in relation to the academic of medicine in a place like in Saskatoon. And I think that some of the facilities would lend themselves to it.

There's the other side to it too, in that there is a lot of people learn a lot about people's recovery from those people who suffer from strokes and heart attacks in the same sense. And I think that we're always going to be learning about the capacity of individuals to recover and the determination that they have to recover.

We have some of those similar sorts of things. And I'll just use as an analogy, dialysis machines that are located in Regina. People from Swift Current have to drive in 150, 200 miles just to have that done twice a week. And I know that that is a stress on them just from the very fact that they have to do that. And it's no different for Workers' Compensation people. And having had some personal experience in this sort of thing and understanding it from a personal perspective, I think that we need to have more of that in other locations in the province. And I just make that as a point for you to consider.

And I believe that this is the area that Workers' Compensation money should be dedicated towards, to provide those facilities for individuals to have access to them.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Well I take the point, and without wanting to take up any of the member's time, there's certainly potential for a lot of development here. And we're in a fortunate position as a result of 50 years anyway, of good, sound, sensible administration of that plan in the sense that it has never been allowed to sink into a deficit position. It's always been financially strong. It is presently financially strong. And that provides us with more options and more flexibility than many other jurisdictions.

So we'll study the member's remarks.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I want to jump over to the next page in the *Estimates* down to the Saskatchewan Partnerships '92. I don't want to suggest that it's more important than a lot of the other programs in between, but I do want to deal with that program because it affects so many young people in our province and their ability to get jobs.

And I want to ask of you if you could give us a little brief run-down on how the program is working. I had noted in the past months some people suggesting that the program had been reduced, that there were less dollars available. And yet the estimates from '91-92 and then '92-93 seem to appear to be the same. So I'm wondering if you could clarify that for us and give us a little run-down on the program.

(1600)

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The program, as the member observed, had the same amount of dollars in it and all of that money was committed. Indeed more than that was committed, although it won't come out that way at the end of the day. There's always some slippage in these programs so that we will be within the budgeted amount.

We had almost twice as many requests as we could accommodate. We had over 4,000 jobs requested and 2,300 jobs committed. The returns on that are just starting

to trickle in now. We've had I think 51 applications for compensation under the program which had been paid out. We've got a lot of work left in front of us.

But it was obviously a popular program and was almost doubly subscribed, not just fully subscribed, but twice as much demand as we could accommodate.

The member will know that the program was expanded somewhat over the previous year. It's substantially the same program, though, but it now covers non-profit organizations and regional parks as well as agriculture.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you for that clarification, Mr. Minister. In view of the tremendous demand for this program . . . I guess first of all I would hope that that demand reflects a genuine usage by those that use the program, and I believe probably that that in fact is correct. And in view of the fact then that if it's a program that works well, that is not being abused in any way, and if there is double the amount of requests to what you can supply results to, have you any anticipation of expanding the program in the future?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Well, Mr. Chairman, and to the member, I would like to expand this program. I think that this ought to be a priority area, and that's certainly going to be my representation in the next budgetary process. We've got to give the kids work. They use the money to go to school. What better use can they make of it? I'm on all fours with . . . I agree entirely with the member.

Mr. Goohsen: — I appreciate that answer, Mr. Minister, because certainly our future lies with our youth, and education is very expensive. And certainly there can be nothing better that we can do, in my opinion, and I think you agree, than to help our young people to achieve that goal of getting better educations and to have that feeling of self-worth that they've been able to have a job and contribute to their own educational process by working even though it has to be supplemented in order to encourage employers to provide those jobs.

Perhaps some day our economy will pick up to the extent that that won't be necessary although it would seem that these kinds of incentives seem to be necessary even in good times as well as poor times. But I really do agree that it's a good program and that I hope that you are successful in your arguments to have this program expanded in the future. There might even be some other areas that you could expand it into, and certainly I'm sure that you will be investigating that.

I wanted to ask you a question about the payments to the Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation. Where do those monies get paid for or what properties are we basically talking about?

An Hon. Member: — The minister's personal discretionary fund.

Mr. Goohsen: — No, I rather doubt that the minister uses that as his personal discretionary funds, as the deputy minister of Finance is suggesting. I know the integrity of the minister better than that.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — With the document I have in my hand, I can tell the member that the total that we're paying to Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation is \$843,500. And of that, 710,000 is for rent, 129,500 for postage, 2,000 for record management, and 2,000 for photo services, to give us a total of \$843,500.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I had a couple of . . . three different situations that I wanted to touch on with you, constituent concerns with respect to . . . Two of them are on maintenance and enforcement, and the other one is with respect to workmen's compensation. The two . . . well we'll deal with them all separately I guess.

The first one is a lady by the name of Paula Jones from Kindersley. She had called me some time ago with a concern with respect to maintenance and enforcement. Apparently she's dealing with her husband's situation who has failed to make maintenance payments and she's wanting to deal with that situation a little bit with your . . . apparently your department has had a change in policy with respect to that. The people can't phone in updates on maintenance and enforcement cases. She thinks that's ludicrous to say the least.

I understand from your department folks that I've talked with about this situation, that the policy change was as a result of situations where people were phoning in almost daily and in some cases several times a day, basically abusing the privilege. And I think she's sort of wondering why it can't be done on a little more casual basis, I guess you would say, a basis of merit perhaps where if people who have been abusing the privilege maybe they should be dealt with a little differently than other people. I'm not sure whether that's possible or not but perhaps you would like to comment on it.

And I'd appreciate it if you could look into this situation yourself and provide me with an update on that particular situation. I'll let you respond to that one and then we'll deal with the other two.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I'll be glad to look into this for the member. The member is quite right, Mr. Chairman, in his description of some of the problems that occurred there. I can sum it up this way. The unit was being just simply swamped with telephone calls to the point where far too much of their time was being spent just answering the telephone rather than trying to actually enforce maintenance orders.

And I realize that the present policy is causing some problems. And if we can find out a way to separate the real inquiries from the . . .

An Hon. Member: — Cranks.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — From the cranks. That's not a word I would have thought of, of course, standing here in my place. But if we can find a way of sorting those out, we sure want to get right onto it.

In the mean time it's just impossible for this unit to answer the phone even though the staff of the unit has been substantially increased and everybody's working flat out.

In part that's an economically driven problem also, as the maintenance payments start to fall into arrears. But I'll look into the case of Ms. Jones and perhaps you could give me the other case too and I'll look into that.

I might mention just before I sit down that those are Department of Justice programs but I'm always glad to answer the member's question.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, on that. I recognized that after we had dealt with it basically. The other one that you could just look in for and get an update on is Mr. Walter Brown of Kindersley as well.

The one that does apparently deal with the circumstances this afternoon is the workmen's compensation. I think it's appropriate to ask the questions on that one here. This has been an ongoing difficulty with a gentleman with respect to workmen's compensation dating back to the . . . I think back to the . . . the first injury was in the early '80s and it's been an ongoing saga sort of thing — Mr. Alfred Deitz of Kindersley as well. Mr. Deitz has asked me to . . . And I've dealt with your department on this one for quite some time and we've actually got along quite well on this.

The problem has been, though, he received basically a lump sum update payment on his past workmen's compensation claim and he receives a pension right now, a claim on his back injury right now. Now the problem with it is, though, Mr. Minister, it is woefully inadequate. I think it's something in the neighbourhood of \$197 per month that he's receiving right now.

I know the gentleman. I've had occasion to meet him. He's come into my office. I've spoken with his employer, part-time employer that he works with in Kindersley and I don't think there's any question in anybody's mind that he is certainly undergoing a great deal of pain with his back.

And I think the situation basically is that he does not feel that he is capable of — and I think his doctors agree — that he is capable of managing anything but very light work. And he asked me in estimates if I would appeal on his behalf one more time to yourself and to your department to review his situation with respect to his claim.

And I would appreciate it if you would undertake that and give your commitment that we would have the situation looked at and hopefully, hopefully rectified.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chairman, neither Mr. McLean, the board chairman, or I can recall the particular facts of Mr. Deitz's situation. But we'll look into it, we'll review it, and hopefully rectify it. We'll be back to the hon. member on the case.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, Mr. Minister, you've heard some of the concerns that my colleagues have with some of the areas in your department, and we take it at face value that you will be good on your word and take care of these matters and do the work that needs to be done. Other than those specific concerns, those are the only ones that our constituents have basically brought to our attention for the moment

and for the time being.

I would like one more commitment from you though, in that those things that we find, if we go through the package of information that you've delivered to us, those things that we find deficient, if you could be good enough to commit to us that you would assist us to get the information that we require where those deficiencies might happen to occur. Not to suggest that they absolutely will occur, but there may be some things that we will find that have been missed or deleted and that we would need. If you would give us a commitment to provide us with those informations along with the others that you've committed to we'd be prepared to consider moving on.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Yes, Mr. Chairman, I'm glad to give that commitment.

Mr. Goohsen: — With that assurance, Mr. Chairman, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the minister for his co-operation. And I'd like to thank his assistants today for assisting him in his answering the questions. We appreciate the forthright manner. We appreciate the dedication to attempting to help Saskatchewan people through this department. We feel that you are doing a reasonably good job and we want to compliment you so far. And we look forward to seeing you the next time around.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Well I want to thank the member for those very gracious remarks and I do hope we can do the things that are necessary to fulfil our mandate, and in so doing continue to attract the support of the critic who has been doing quite a good job in this area from our point of view. I invite the member to feel free to contact my office or the office of the deputy minister in the event you need any information in respect of any of the work that you're called upon to do as the critic.

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Chairman, and in advance of approving the various items, I'd also like to thank the members of my department for coming today and helping the House in the consideration of these estimates.

Item 1 agreed to.

Items 2 to 11 inclusive agreed to.

Vote 20 agreed to.

(1615)

**Supplementary Estimates 1992
Consolidated Fund Expenditure
Human Resources, Labour and Employment
Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 20**

Items 1 to 11 inclusive agreed to.

Vote 20 agreed to.

**Supplementary Estimates 1991
Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure
Human Resources, Labour and Employment
Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 20**

Item 1 agreed to.

Vote 20 agreed to.

The Chair: — That concludes the estimates for Labour, Human Resources, Labour and Employment. And I understand that next we'll be turning to the Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat.

While the minister is bringing in the officials, I would like to make this statement. Yesterday a point of order was raised during consideration of Executive Council estimates regarding officials who are permitted to be in the Chamber with the minister. I have now had the opportunity to review our past practice.

Here I might add that our precedents in this area are not very extensive. It appears that most discussions and decisions on this question have occurred through the usual channels and have not been raised or dealt with on the record.

I have been unable to find in either *Hansard* or the *Journals* the example offered by the member for Thunder Creek. A review of *Hansard*, on the contrary, shows several instances where the principal secretary, which I understand was the equivalent to the current chief of staff, was present in the Chamber with the Premier during the review of Executive Council estimates.

I refer members to the following references in the *Debates and Proceedings*, June 23, 1988, page 2,471; May 4, 1983, page 1,784; and March 8, 1983, page 2,605. As I understand it, the officials who are permitted to be in the Chamber are here at the pleasure of the committee only, and there is no right as such for the minister to have them here. Officials are present to expedite the business of the committee by providing timely information to the minister and to provide assistance in answering questions from members.

As I indicated yesterday, the normal practice is for the minister to be assisted by line department staff, not the minister's personal staff such as ministerial or executive assistants.

The important principle here is that ministers who are responsible for their department's activities be assisted in answering questions on those activities by staff who have administrative and policy-making responsibilities for which they, as staff, are held accountable. From the way in which the Premier's office and the Department of Executive Council is currently organized, it is clear that the chief of staff co-ordinates the normal ministerial office functions — the so-called political functions.

But this position also appears to have administrative responsibilities that go beyond the management of the Premier's office. For example, the chief of staff holds a senior position and has responsibilities for the communications procurement and co-ordination office, the House business office, and media services, all of which are functions which provide services to government beyond the Premier's office. Moreover, these and the other functions of the position involve substantial

expenditures that may be the subject of questioning during estimates review.

It must be remembered also that the Premier's responsibilities are broader than those of any other minister of a particular department. And this is reflected in the responsibilities of the senior staff.

In view of all this, I find the particular point of order not well taken. I suggest, however, that this is an area that might appropriately be considered in the Rules and Procedures Committee to provide further guidance to the Chair.

**Consolidated Fund Expenditure
Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat
Vote 25**

The Chair: — Order. I would ask the minister to please introduce the officials who are here with him.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to introduce to the House Mr. Marv Hendrickson, who's the deputy minister; Mr. Vic Taylor, the assistant deputy minister; and Mr. John Reid, who is the executive director of administration and strategic planning in the secretariat.

Item 1

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I first of all want to compliment your staff on providing the answers that we had asked earlier, the generic questions. I will have very few questions as pertains to those generic questions. They are well laid out, and are very self-explanatory. And I commend your officials for providing that to us.

There are a few policy areas I think, Mr. Minister, that we should touch on in your estimates today before I get down to a few specifics, and understanding some of the restraints that we're under, we'll try and be brief, Mr. Minister. I'm wondering if you could give us a short run-down of exactly where the treaty land entitlement process is at today; and if there are any major hurdles that you see in the near future to implementation of that particular agreement.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Yes, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the question because it has been such a dramatic development and the previous government played a very significant role in bringing that matter along towards a conclusion. After the change in government we picked it up and, as the member can appreciate, there was a . . . it was a complex matter to review and to get control of, get an understanding of, but we've overcome . . . at least, we've got all those problems and hurdles behind us.

The present status is that we have completed our negotiations with the federal government. The negotiating teams have initialled an agreement with respect to the framework part of the discussions and that agreement is now before the Treasury Board and the cabinet for consideration and approval. And that's the current status of it.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I appreciate

the . . . and I think all status Indians in the province of Saskatchewan probably appreciate the effort that has gone on to solving the problem. I know it's something that has been a long time coming and it's something that I think all of us in the province can take some pride in; that we perhaps are leading the way with new-found solutions to an age-old problem.

We have another area, Mr. Minister, that doesn't appear to be quite so smooth, and in fact at present, I believe, we still have an ongoing blockade in north-west Saskatchewan involving Metis and non-status Indians. And that particular situation unfortunately is hindering some economic development in the province.

It certainly doesn't bode well for some of the communities that are near by. The Meadow Lake Tribal Council are not happy. And I think it's a situation that obviously needs some work on it and I wonder if you could update the Assembly as to where that process is at and then perhaps we can discuss if the Metis people in particular are looking for a deal similar to what the status Indians have achieved, or what we need to achieve in this province so that we don't see an ongoing situation evolving that causes us no end of concern in this province.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Well that certainly is one of the more intractable of the problems that we're facing in this area.

It seems to me that the problem in the north-west is that there's not enough forest available for all the people who would like to claim the benefit of the forests. That's a generalization, but if you look carefully at the situation involving the communities up the west side and the Indian bands and the Meadow Lake Tribal Council and the activities surrounding the saw mill and the Millar Western pulp mill and the demand for pulp, you get a lot of competing demands for the available resource.

Complicating all of that of course and overlaying it is the question of land and aboriginal land entitlement and treaty land entitlement and impending self-government arrangements for communities and bands on that side of the province. And they all seem to come together. All those strands come together on that road leading to that particular part of the forest, and it is proving to be a very difficult question to resolve.

(1630)

At the present time we have discussions going. They have in various forms been ongoing from the very beginning. But these discussions look quite productive, involving the communities on the north-west side and the Metis society and the Meadow Lake Tribal Council, and from time to time the blockaders. The member can appreciate the interplay of all those forces and we're trying to come to an agreement.

In my view, the area of agreement in the final analysis is a co-management structure with respect to the forest resources and the land resources in that part of the province. Now that's a very complex idea and of course the details are extremely complex. But in the final

analysis the people in the north-west have got to come to an agreement as to how these matters will be sorted out and how they will each relate to the forest resources and to the land in that area. And we're trying to facilitate that process in every way we can. We're not trying to provide the solution; we're trying to help the stakeholders over there come to a solution themselves that they can all live with.

Mr. Swenson: — Mr. Minister, I can appreciate the situation that you find yourself in. But the latest news reports have the blockaders building cabins so that they can sustain themselves through the winter months. And as you and I both know, that that is a prime time to conduct logging activities because a lot of the softer terrain is frozen, and you can get about the various tracks more easily. And I suspect that both the Meadow Lake Tribal Council through their arrangements with Millar Western, and others, are going to have to move some timber over these winter months.

And if this looks like a protracted situation, I don't think either the players up there or you can wait until we have all aspects of native self-government, for instance, in place. You and I may be old and grey before we sort of sort out all of the various aspects that aboriginal self-government entail. And as you know from the constitutional round, that is a topic that first ministers have on their plate right now in a fairly major way and are trying to come to some kind of accommodation.

The simple fact is we have a problem there that no one wants to see the police involved in, that no one wants to see physical harm occur to anyone. And yet we have some economic realities — people that have borrowed money, people that have undertaken to invest large amounts of money in the north-west part of the province. And they simply can't shut down for the winter because someone has decided to build a cabin and block the road.

And I think it's incumbent, Mr. Minister, without sort of giving away all of your secrets about how you're going to handle this situation, that we be reassured that you have a game plan, an action plan, and that there are individuals involved right now in solving that. And perhaps you could tell us who those individuals are, that if you have someone on special assignment, if your deputy minister is in a daily situation. Exactly lay out where we're going with this situation so that everyone feels comfortable with the process.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chairman, this is a situation that we've been following and involved in closely right from the very beginning. And prior to the blockade we had been paying considerable attention to that area because of what we could see as a potentially difficult situation where there were competing interests so far as the forest resource was concerned.

Much of our early work concerned the Green Lake community which is concerned about a supply of lumber for their saw mill. And their concern about the continuing availability of timber for that saw mill having regard to the lease agreement that the tribal council has that takes land right in the vicinity of the Green Lake community.

That is obviously . . . it was obvious to us at an early date that that was a potential trouble spot, so we had people working in that community trying to work something out. And we thought and we continue to think that it is clearly possible to work out the Green Lake situation with the tribal council. At least it's clear to me; I'm not certain that it's clear to everybody else.

But let me tell you what I mean by that. The Green Lake saw mill requires lumber of a certain dimension, pretty big logs, bigger than is required at the pulp mill or in the saw mill of the tribal council. So they're after different lumber. And if you could find a way for them to sort out the lumber as it's coming down or as it lies having been cut and peel off part of it to Green Lake for their saw mill and the rest going in the direction of Meadow Lake, then you've got a big part of the problem resolved. You still don't deal with the harvesting practices and that sort of thing, but you've got at the basic economic problem.

And whether or not that forms the basis of a final resolution of this, I'm not sure because the problem has sort of grown with the blockade. And the member will remember in the early days of the blockade, the blockaders had a very limited agenda. And with all due respect to them, they kept moving the goal posts on us as other people joined the blockade and as some people with causes — if I may use that term — made the cause of the blockade their own in pursuit of whatever agenda it was that they were pursuing, all of which is to say that it got very, very complex and it remains very complex.

But at the root of it it is as I said, a question of trying to divide up the forest and to create a management system with respect to the forest and the land that everybody up there can live with. And this is taking a good deal of time.

But I want to assure the member that we have people on site regularly. Bonita Beatty of the secretariat is the individual who is responsible. She is well known in the area and is up there a lot and contacting everyone, including the people on the blockade.

Mr. Hendrickson also is well known to everyone in that part of the province and he is in regular touch with all of the people involved, and especially with the Meadow Lake Tribal Council and the communities in the north-west.

And we're trying everything we can think of to make the process work. And I just say again to the member that what has to happen in the end is that the people involved in the north-west will negotiate their way to a satisfactory resolution of this and we're trying everything we can to help them get to that negotiated agreement.

Mr. Swenson: — I appreciate your endeavour, Mr. Minister, but my question was, we're going to get into a situation here where some permanence is going to take place. You don't build log cabins on the road without anticipating a fairly lengthy situation. And as you said, we have other folks who are against the Free Trade Agreement and some that are against cutting down rain forests, and we have all sorts of people now involved in this thing. But the simple fact is, Mr. Minister, that saw mills can't run and employ people unless they have logs

coming in to them, and paper mills can't run unless they've got logs coming in to them. And we have mechanisms as you well know in labour in this province, and you as Labour minister can come in and bring in binding arbitration.

There are ways to sort of get the parties to the table and say this is sort of where we're at. We've got to cool down here and get on with life. And life right now is not well there. So I'm wondering if you would be prepared, as a minister responsible, to say it's time to get down to the table. Here's the solution. It may not be perfect, but let's sort of all go back to work for a while and then see what happens. And I'm thinking that we have a deadline coming up of freezeup when the logging really has to get on with it. And I'm wondering if you're prepared to move into that situation and say it's time to stop for a while.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Well, Mr. Chairman, the situation has to be resolved; the member's right. And the secretariat has got responsibilities in that area, and I tell the member that we will do everything we can to make this thing happen.

The other department up there is Natural Resources who have been trying to take a lead role and have been doing a lot of very, very good work but no resolution has yet come. We haven't given any consideration at all to anything like compulsory arbitration. We very much want all of the people up there to resolve the problem themselves because they're going to live with the solution for a very, very long time. And there are many, many forces at play as the member will well know from his days as minister.

I'm saying to him, Mr. Chairman, that I and the secretariat will continue to do everything we can to create pressure and to otherwise induce the parties involved to get this thing resolved. So that, as he says, the pulp mill can do what it does and the saw mills do what they do and the people up there live in harmony with each other with respect to the forest and its use and its conservation and all the other issues that are involved in this blockade.

Mr. Swenson: — Well just one final point on this, Mr. Minister. I understand the delicacy of the situation, and having been in the portfolio, I fully understand a lot of the people that play in this business. But I also know that we cannot solve some age-old problems in a few months. And I would like you to suggest a date somewhere along here that is reasonable.

The bush is going to start to freeze up there about November 1 and you and I both know that there are certain activities that are going to have to be ready to go. And I would think that you've given a time line to your officials to sort of work some things out or there's something else going to give here.

We may not meet in this legislature again until next spring. And I think it's reasonable in your estimates that you would have some time lines kind of laid out, of where we're going with this thing, and that you could maybe — and you don't have to give me the exact day, but you can ballpark it a little, of when this action plan is going to come to some kind of fruition.

(1645)

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — That's a tough one. I don't have a date at the moment and there is not one within the department. We've been coming at it from the other end of trying to facilitate the process and trying to get people involved in it and committed to it and work towards a solution. So we haven't sort of come at it from the point of view of creating the deadline and then creating that kind of pressure, although it's not a bad idea.

The Minister of Natural Resources was up there yesterday and I haven't yet had a chance to talk to him about what happened up there yesterday. But let me deal with it this way, Mr. Chairman. We'll give some consideration to the creation of a deadline, or the creation of some kind of time lines at least, and see if that makes any contribution to this very difficult situation.

In the mean time, I just repeat my assurance that we want this thing settled, and settled soon, and we're doing our best to make it happen.

Mr. Swenson: — I appreciate that, Mr. Minister. Sometimes when people have time lines to work within, they tend to get busy.

I've got a couple of questions from your estimates here. I notice that on the grants to Indian and Metis organizations that there's been a substantial increase from last year to this year. Could you just . . . there's about oh, 250, 60-odd-thousand here increase. Can you tell me exactly where that's going?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The increase in funding in that area consists of the following. The Metis Society of Saskatchewan will receive \$165,000 in respect of the funding of that organization. And in addition we're committing funds to the development of what we internally refer to as public authorities. Let me describe to the member what we mean when we say that term.

We are entering into agreements with the Metis Society and with FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations) with respect to the delivery of a number of programs that have heretofore been delivered by the government. It was an initiative on the way to a greater measure of self-government. And if you think about it as a two-stage process, you will see what I mean.

On the way to self-government are the public authorities which will be jointly administered by the government and by the aboriginal group. And that joint mechanism will employ the staff and deliver the program. In that way it is, as you can see, a step along the road to evolving the program to the aboriginal group and it is a half-way point in that sense. And it builds capacity within the Indian community and the Metis community with respect to that program so that in due course they can take over the program and run it themselves.

And we are planning to spend \$125,000 in pursuit of that program. That will be roughly in the following divisions: about a third of it with respect to Metis programming, and a

third of it with respect to Indian programming, and a third of it with respect to northern communities which are in a little different category, as the member will know.

Now in addition to that of course is the funds from the program that is being devolved. And I think that's sufficient answer for the member's question.

Mr. Swenson: — So those are the principal changes that are involved in that funding increase. Everything else is basically the way it was last year?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Yes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Swenson: — Does this in any way make up for the termination of the Indian heritage trust fund?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The answer is no, Mr. Chairman. That concept has been the subject of some considerable and ongoing discussion with Chief Crowe and the other vice-chiefs of the FSIN. We are, all of us, looking forward to self-government. And it is certain that the bands of Saskatchewan and the FSIN are going to move in quite significant ways towards self-government, which will include as a matter of necessity, arrangements with respect to the financing of Indian government by the federal and by the provincial governments. And the approach that we plan to take in this connection is to meld all this together and find appropriate ways of financing Indian government within the context of self-government negotiations.

And so the Indian heritage trust fund kind of flows into that and we plan to make no contribution to that trust fund in this year's budget. And that's the reason why it doesn't appear in the estimates as an item.

Mr. Swenson: — Well I can appreciate a new initiative, Mr. Minister. Unfortunately, I guess, when one sort of analyses the divvying of the pie here, that the usual solution has been taken to sort of treat everybody equally rather than perhaps those that are closer to self-government getting a little more than those that are not quite . . . I understand how these things work in this regard, but it sometimes maybe isn't the best use of scarce dollars.

I would like to ask you about another item here on your native career development program, training employment projects. I notice we have a drop in budget numbers, and we talked about this a little bit earlier in your Labour estimates.

If anything is critical to aboriginal development in this province, it obviously has to do with some educational opportunities that exist in conjunction with other entities in our province. And I'm wondering if this is the appropriate time to have those kinds of cut-backs in place.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chairman, there is a reduction of funding here and the pressure is on this program, as on all programs, to reduce expenditures in these difficult times. We have tried to tailor our approach to this situation and try and even increase our impact on the problem by focussing on the existing federal training and employment initiatives that exist, and try and bring those

in closer contact with the Indian community and the Metis community so that we will in effect be promoting agreements between the employers in Saskatchewan and the federal programming and the Indian-Metis community, and try using other people's money, as it were, to increase employment of Indian and Metis people in Saskatchewan. Now I think that's a clever approach, if I may say so, or at least it's one that we're quite pleased with.

And there's a lot of potential there without spending any great amount of provincial dollars, to actually go some distance in resolving this problem. So we're quite hopeful that even though the amount spent is less, we're going to be able to have a good result.

And I'm not comparing that to the previous administration or anything. I mean I'm just not into that today. But I think that we will produce a result that people will look at and say, that's a pretty good job. We're sure going to devote a lot of attention to it anyway.

Mr. Swenson: — Well I appreciate you trying to make it work, Mr. Minister. A lot of those programs have been around a while and my experience with the feds is that they, you know, it's the old quid pro quo sort of thing. I'll put a buck or two up, but I want a little bit. And unless you've solved something that I never saw as far as making that work, there's still the need for provincial dollars involved in most of these schemes.

And I'll leave it at that, and give you lots of rope here to see how it goes. But it's an area that we'll be watching very carefully to see how it goes.

Now I just have one area here that . . . I believe it was attachment no. 3 and the answers that you gave back. You've had a fair number of people come to work for you in the last little while on short-term contract for various things. You've mentioned one today a Bonita Beatty who was May 11 to July 31 at \$190 a day. You now say that she's still working on the Meadow Lake situation. Is she under a new contract, the same per diem, or have you brought her on in some other capacity beyond this initial contract?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — As the member will know from the material we provided, Ms. Beatty was contracted for the period May 11 to July 31 of this year. And we extended her contract until the end of September. And in the mean time we are posting the position and there will be a competition for the position that she is presently occupying to take effect when her contract ends.

At this point we have no idea whether she would be a candidate for that position or not. She's a wonderfully qualified person but she hasn't told us and we don't know whether she would be a candidate or not.

Mr. Swenson: — The other one that I am curious about is Mr. Wayne McKenzie from July 2 to August 31 at \$250 a day. I notice by the contract that's about \$10,000. And I suspect that all got used up. Is this in relationship to the REDA (Regina Economic Development Authority) organization in Regina or are we on a different game plan than the one I was familiar with last year?

(1700)

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Wayne has been focusing on two things, and one is REDA. And I think the member knows the work that we're trying to do there to get involved in those projects at an early date to try and encourage the participation of Indian and Metis people on new developments that occur from the REDA. The main focus of his work though is on the employment equity side, trying to do as the name indicates to encourage the employment of Indian and Metis people.

We had him employed in the Department of Labour prior to that, doing exactly the same things. He did a lot of work that I described earlier to the member on the inventorying the situation with respect to departments and corporations and trying to encourage those departments and Crown corporations to get with it and to get their employment equity programs dusted off and active and actually start to employ people.

I think that the member knows Wayne and knows his abilities. And he's brought all of that enthusiasm to the job. And we're quite pleased with the work that he's done at this point. As to his future, I can't say, but he's doing just fine up to this point.

Mr. Swenson: — I'm quite sure, Mr. Minister, that he'll look after his future quite nicely. Would you be prepared to share this study with the public, with the Assembly at a fairly short time so that we can sort of see what direction we're going in?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The study is not as such in the sense that he produced a report, but it has led to the development of a cabinet decision item, a cabinet submission with respect to employment equity programs in the departments and the Crowns. And I'm reluctant to share that with the member because of the nature of the document, and I can't do it.

But let me tell you that we're satisfied with the work. And it's the basis for the decision that we're going to ask cabinet to make with respect to employment equity programs.

Mr. Swenson: — Now there must be something, Mr. Minister, that he has done in regard to the REDA portion of the thing, that surely can't be classified as a cabinet document. And I would just like to see . . . at some point in here there must be something that for 10,000 bucks, that the taxpayer can have as some sort of assurance that the goods are there. And I think that's a fairly large amount of money on an issue that is very pertinent to particularly the Regina community. There must be something there that you could share with us in a public way.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Yes, there's certainly information we can share. And there probably are some documents we can share that would be sort of file memos or notes to show the kinds of things we've been doing and sorts of agreements that we've been trying to get developed. And perhaps we could leave it, Mr. Chairman, on the basis that I'll provide the member with information in that area, either in the form of a memo or a letter with documents

attached as I indicated earlier. And if that's satisfactory, I'll undertake to do that.

Item 1 agreed to.

Items 2 to 7 inclusive agreed to.

Vote 25 agreed to.

**Supplementary Estimates 1992
Consolidated Fund Expenditure
Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat
Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 25**

Items 1 to 6 inclusive agreed to.

Vote 25 agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Before we get to the estimates of the Ombudsman, I'd like to thank the officials of the secretariat for coming today and assisting the legislature in the consideration of these estimates. These are very hard-working people, and I really appreciate the support that they've given to me.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I also would like to thank the officials for coming today and the answers that they have provided for the minister. As I said, they were very concise and we appreciate it. I do look forward, Mr. Minister, to some of those documents.

**Consolidated Fund Expenditure
Legislation
Ombudsman
Vote 21**

Item 13 agreed to.

**Supplementary Estimates 1992
Consolidated Fund Expenditure
Legislation
Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 21**

Item 4 agreed to.

**Supplementary Estimates 1991
Consolidated Fund Budgetary Expenditure
Legislation
Ordinary Expenditure — Vote 21**

Item 1 agreed to.

Vote 21 agreed to.

**Consolidated Fund Expenditure
Legislation
Freedom of Information and Privacy
Vote 21**

Item 14 agreed to.

The Assembly recessed until 7 p.m.