

The Assembly met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on Friday next ask the government the following question:

Regarding the Department of Justice, February 22, 1994, Andrea Seale received salary increase from \$3,950 per month to \$4,454 per month: (a) why was Andrea Seale given this salary increase; (b) why was Ms. Seale's salary increase retroactive approximately one and a half years to September 1, '92; (c) what is the total amount of retroactive pay that Ms. Seale will receive; (d) where is Ms. Seale located and what is the title of the position; and (e) what are Ms. Seale's qualifications for this position?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to introduce to you and all members of the Legislative Assembly the general secretary for the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, Mr. Fred Herron. I would like to welcome Fred to the legislature and hope he enjoys this afternoon's proceedings.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

High School Curriculum

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to be able to bring forward the first question in the third series of questions phoned or faxed or written into us by the general public. We've had a very good response to this, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the Premier comes from Gary Hyland of Moose Jaw. Mr. Premier, I want to know if it is the intention of the Department of Education to follow the recommendations of the High School Review Advisory Committee to slash high school English credit requirements by 33 per cent against the advice of the province's English teachers and at a time when illiteracy is becoming a costly and burdensome problem for society.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for raising Mr. Hyland's question in the legislature. As all members will know the High School Review Committee has just tabled its report with the minister, and it was released about two weeks ago, indicating the high school review's position on what a high school curriculum should look like in the province of Saskatchewan going into the next century.

We have indicated to the public that we will be responding to the high school review by the end of March and we will respond in a forthright manner because our curriculum has not been changed in high school for some 20 years. So I want to assure Mr. Hyland that we will obviously take into consideration the recommendations of the High School Advisory Committee, but obviously we are interested in what other members of the public have to say about that report.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Health Boards' Expenses

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is also a question from a constituent out in rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this question comes from Claude Peel of Brownlee. Mr. Premier, I want to know who set the rate of pay for those people handed jobs on the new health boards. These people are paid \$155 per day and the chairman is paid \$235 per day. You're supposed to be saving money with your cuts but these appointments don't much look like that. I've sat on boards and committees in my day and we did it for our community.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Minister of Health I'll take notice of that question.

Saskatchewan Pension Plan Elimination

Mr. Britton: — Mr. Speaker, I too have a question from one of our constituents and this is from Prince Albert. This comes from a man by the name of Clifford Swenson.

Mr. Premier, I want to know why you took the pension plan away from mothers who choose to stay at home to raise their families. These people do not demand assistance from the government for child care and hence are not a burden to the taxpayer. On the other hand you have introduced gambling into the province. Mr. Premier, where are your priorities? How can you do this to us?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, in answer to the member's question, I think as a member of the former administration who for 10 years watched the unbridled expansion of gaming and at the same time did little to control internal government expenditures, built year after year deficits that were unparalleled not only in this province but I suggest, Mr. Speaker, in this country, the member should know full well why this government has had to restrain the costs and its expenditures.

So I suggest that the member look at what he did in the

past 10 years and in that regard he will be able to send to Mr. Swenson an answer as to why the debt was incurred, why this administration has cut back on expenditures, and why we are trying to achieve a balanced budget, Mr. Speaker.

Alcohol Advertising

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question to the Premier comes from Alvin Vinge from Outlook, who asks: Mr. Premier, I want to know when the current government will reverse the authorization for beer and wine advertising implemented by the official opposition — that's us — when they were in power. And will the official opposition be requested to support such a move?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, in the letter that the members of the opposition will send in response to this question, they want to apologize for the mistake that they made.

Mr. Speaker, I want to suggest that there is no way you can put boundaries around this province at a time when trade barriers are coming down, when communications are expanding. American television is prevalent within this province; it carries liquor and wine advertisements. I think it would be foolhardy to suggest that we can stop the advertisement of alcohol products in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Federal Budget Effects on Farmers

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On another vein, I wish to bring information to the Assembly this afternoon which, if confirmed, will have dire consequences, Mr. Speaker, for farm families and small businesses in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, our federal government brought down a budget which had very little if anything to do with agriculture, at least so it seems. What was not announced, Mr. Speaker, was a tiny little change which is outlined in a document called **Tax Measures: Supplementary Information**. That change outlines the way the federal government handles any debt write-offs that farmers and small businesses may be able to negotiate with their banker.

Mr. Speaker, just when farmers are given a hand up by agreement with their banker or FCC (Farm Credit Corporation) or ACS (Agricultural Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan), I understand that the federal government intends to consider that write-off as taxable income.

My question is either to the Minister of Finance or the Minister of Agriculture, and I sincerely hope that both of them are aware of this information. Can you tell us how many Saskatchewan farmers are in a position to be affected by this new tax? And what submissions in opposition to this grab have you brought to the federal

government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what the members opposite are saying to us is of great concern to us, not entirely surprising. One thing that did surprise me about the Liberals' budget was farmers were simply not mentioned in it. And it was surprising because Atlantic fishermen were mentioned, quite rightly, in the budget. So we share your concern. We can get you the numbers as to what exactly would occur and who would be affected.

But I have also said outside this House, if you look at the wording of the federal Liberal minister's statement, I do not believe that the capital gains exemption for farmers is secure. It is to be reviewed. So there is another issue which we will have to cooperate on to force the Liberal government to leave the capital gains exemption intact.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — I'm getting a distinct feeling here, Mr. Speaker, that although I agree with some of her comments, that the minister probably does not know exactly what I am talking about. So perhaps the Minister of Agriculture would be able to pick up.

Mr. Minister, on page 37 of that document it states that section 80 of the federal income tax will be changed so that debt write-off will effectively become taxable. That affects forgiven loans from banks, credit unions, Farm Credit, Saskatchewan ACS, and so on.

This change, I submit to you, represents a significant blow to the families in Saskatchewan and just when they are going to be restructuring their debt, just as they're getting back on their feet.

On behalf of those families, Mr. Minister, and on behalf of all people in Saskatchewan who depend on a strong agricultural industry for their livelihoods, I ask you to immediately investigate this matter and report to this House how many farms will be affected, Madam Minister, how many small businesses will be affected, and how much federal tax will be generated; and what you are prepared to do to counter this blatant and backward tax grab by the federal Liberal government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the hon. member for raising that issue. We certainly will be investigating. As I understand the tax Act — and I'm not the tax expert and certainly don't have all the numbers with me here today; we can get those numbers — this has always been taxable. They have to, as have we as a provincial government, passed orders in council in order to rebate those taxes, which we have done to a good number.

Now if there's changes to that which makes it even tougher on our farmers, we certainly will be protesting

that. I think they will collect little money. I think it would be very detrimental to farmers who go through and into our six-year leaseback and other programs who certainly do not have any cash left over to pay taxes with, and it could be the final blow if indeed this has made it any more detrimental than it already was.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Mr. Speaker, one initial question. How much is the provincial government going to be gaining by this tax grab? Are you going to gain your . . . and grab your 55 per cent on this as well? That's one question, Mr. Minister.

But to clarify for you, Mr. Minister, if a farmer or a businessman owes \$100,000, the banking institution forgives 50,000, that means that there's \$50,000 now potentially as taxable income after the capital allowance deductions have occurred. I grant you that, and that could vary from place to place.

So, Mr. Minister, that's what we're talking about here. Saskatchewan families cannot stand another hit like this. They've been getting hit by the provincial government, by you folks, for too long, and now they have the federal government joining in on the fray. Neither can small business take a hit like this along with farmers.

Now it's my understanding that these changes will also affect write-offs in businesses — all the businesses across the province — at a time when job creation and economic development is at an all-time low, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the Minister of Economic Development and the Premier to lend their voices in opposition to this tax and to report to this Assembly what effect it will have, not only on farmers but on small business in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Speaker, I understand what the member opposite is saying, but what I want to say to the member opposite is: let's first of all find out the facts. When we were advised of changes in the budget, we were not advised of any changes in terms of the income tax status of write-offs.

An Hon. Member: — It's in the supplementary.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Okay, but we were advised of any changes which would affect Saskatchewan and this was not in the information given to us. So we will first of all establish the facts. Did they just omit to tell us, or is there a problem with the information coming from that side? So we will establish the facts.

If there is something that is done that is prejudicial to the interests of farmers, we will be very vocal in ensuring that we can do what is possible to get that changed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Health Services in Climax

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this question is for the Minister of Health, or Associate Minister of Health. The Rural Health Coalition recently came to an agreement with your Department of Health. Both groups agree on a common goal of ensuring a safe level of quality care throughout the province. They agreed that provision of essential emergency services is a priority concern for residents of rural Saskatchewan and these services should be provided by professionals 24 hours a day. They also agreed to provide stabilization facilities including labs and X-ray, as well as observation and assessment beds, and long-term care services.

To the minister: will you confirm you agree with the statement of principles arrived at by your department and the Rural Health Coalition?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I'll take notice of that question and get an answer for him tomorrow.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Supplementary question to the Health minister or nearest relative. Mr. Speaker, whether the minister agrees or not — she signed the agreement, so we can only assume that she does support this — a meeting in Climax last night was filled to capacity with only one day's notice. Those attending wanted their health care services replaced. To the minister: how do you justify cutting funding to this unique area when the people only wish to have their health care services upheld as per your own statement of principles you agreed to with other communities in rural Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, while taking notice of the previous question, we'll also get an answer for that.

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Speaker, the minister opposite who is not attempting to answer the questions is very familiar . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. I think that the member knows full well the minister took notice of the question and he's not to comment on it. If he's got another question, he can ask it.

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite does know that area very well . . .

The Speaker: — Order. If the member has a question, he can ask his question.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Health: the people of Climax get a tax allowance from the federal government for living in an isolated community. It is just like the northern tax allowance provided for those in isolated communities in the North.

To the minister: if the federal government recognizes that this is a unique community, why can't you, and stop risking the lives of its residents by taking away

essential health care services in their area.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I'll take notice of that as well.

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Speaker, if there is a clear message I bring you today from the people of Climax, it is they need to have their health care services restored.

Madam Minister, I have here several pages of names requesting that you do so, and I would like to table them now. I will provide you with them if you'd . . .

Will you now admit you were wrong, acted without compassion, and replace the health care services these people require to live in this unique community?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I'll take notice of that question as well. In noticing the member has them all written out, if he would send me the written questions I would . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. The minister has taken notice.

SaskPower Office Closures

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the minister responsible for SaskPower. Mr. Minister, we just learned that your government has struck another blow against rural Saskatchewan. You and your department will be eliminating a number of SaskPower district offices and closing a number of customer service centres on March 31.

Mr. Minister, how many offices will be closed, and how many jobs will be lost in rural Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that SaskPower is working on a program of reorganization of the Power Corporation in rural Saskatchewan. I want to make it clear to the member opposite, who was not around while the previous administration started out on the rural underground program which meant burying hundreds of miles of power lines, which means you need fewer people in rural Saskatchewan to take care of power lines, this strategy was worked out by the previous members, the member from Thunder Creek and other constituencies, while they sat at the cabinet table. The number of jobs that will be directly affected when you exclude early retirement, I believe, are 23.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister. Among the 18 districts you are eliminating are: Avonlea, Foam Lake, Herbert, Ponteix, Hodgeville, Lake Alma, Ogema, Lampman, Montmartre, Norquay, Rockglen, Wawota, and Uranium City.

Mr. Minister, are there any other district offices that you plan to eliminate? Which other offices will be closed? Are there any more job losses directly

associated with this? What is being done in rural communities to replace the hundreds of jobs that have been lost due to this and other destructive policies of your government?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, just to correct the member who tends to exaggerate drastically, there are not hundreds of jobs. I mentioned 23. But I want to say to him that the reorganization that is going on and under consideration by SaskPower at this point in time is not complete. As the program is fully fleshed out, there will be appropriate announcements made. At this point in time I can tell you that the reorganization is taking place. There is consultation going on with communities and the full dimension of the reorganization will be announced in due course.

MLA Travel Expenses

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently the official opposition submitted a written question regarding the travels of three government back-bench MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly). And the Government House Leader decided to forward those questions to the place where answers go to die, in other words returns (debatable). So I would put this question directly to the Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. Minister, the 1992-93 *Public Accounts* document reports that, and, Mr. Speaker, I quote: under minister's travel, Ron Harper, \$1,274; Eric Upshall, \$259; and Grant Whitmore, \$783.

Mr. Minister, please provide details with respect to the date of travel, the destination, the mode of transportation and accommodation, the purpose of the trips including itineraries and meetings scheduled, and a reason why you were unable to serve these functions.

To that end, I would ask you to provide information with respect to that type of question. And, Mr. Minister, unlike your House Leader, will you provide that information for us today?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, obviously the answers will be forthcoming. These are obvious questions for estimates.

But I would like to say this to the member opposite. When it comes to MLAs travelling at government expense, the member from Thunder Creek who went to Hong Kong at taxpayers' expense while an MLA — not as a cabinet minister but as an MLA — travelling to Hong Kong, to which many people in the province were very, very suspicious as to what he was doing there, it's hardly the role of that group of people in opposition to be questioning members of this government who travel to rural communities to do government business.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Mr. Speaker, any government that wants to be forthright and open and honest with the public, as you claim to be, would answer that

question very readily. Because there was nothing untoward in our asking and wanting to know why these people were paid the money. And we expected you to answer that forthrightly when the opportunity arose.

You decided that you were going to hide that, not come forward with the information. So we're asking you now, either you answer the question the way we're asking it or you answer to the media and to the public. You have it your way.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I say again, obviously we will be answering the questions, but obviously these questions about a hundred dollars here or a hundred dollars there are appropriately answered in estimates, and they will be answered. I've made a commitment to answer it.

But I can tell you one thing, that the thousands and thousands of dollars that were spent by MLAs of the Conservative government to travel out of country, i.e., the member from Thunder Creek, should be very careful in the kind of questions he asks, and not to be so sanctimonious about members of a government who travel in rural Saskatchewan to work with farmers in rural communities.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

No-Fault Insurance

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the minister responsible for SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance). Mr. Minister, there's a great deal of speculation lately that SGI is considering implementing no-fault insurance.

Mr. Minister, could you tell us, is it your intention to introduce no-fault insurance to Saskatchewan and if so, how exactly will your system of no-fault insurance work?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — I'd like to respond to the member. No decision has been made at this time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, is it your intention to create a system where the right to take legal action is taken away by the government just like you did with GRIP (gross revenue insurance program)? If so, how can you justify taking away one of the most fundamental rights in our society, access to our court system?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — In case the member didn't hear last time, we'll make it very clear the decision has not been made yet.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, can you at least give some assurance to the people of Saskatchewan that that will not take place? Otherwise they are going to assume that it is indeed going to be

the effect.

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Well one of the things I can assure you is this. When you were in government you spent about a million dollars on privatization. We wouldn't be spending that type of money.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, if you take away the right to go to court as the final recourse in settling insurance disputes, you will be turning the fate of many Saskatchewan residents over to you and your army of SGI bureaucrats.

And that's a pretty disturbing thought, Mr. Minister, when you look at the way you and your bureaucrats handled the issue I raised yesterday concerning Mr. Vern Klein. The minister referred that issue to the assistant vice-president; the assistant vice-president referred it to the communications director; and the communications director was unavailable for comment.

Mr. Minister, when are you going to start taking some responsibility for the Crown corporation you are supposed to be the minister of? And how can Saskatchewan people have any faith at all in the ability of SGI adjusters to provide a fair and final . . . fair resolution of insurance claims, when the minister himself doesn't seem to have a clue what's going on in SGI?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — For the third and final time, no decision has been made. But I might say again that you spent a million dollars in regards to the privatization strategy, and all we got was a little symbol, you know, out of it. It was a symbol of big expenditures by the government of the day at that time and it didn't amount to anything.

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Ruling on a Point of Order

The Speaker: — Before orders of the day, I have a statement to make in regards to a point of order that was raised on February 28th. On February 28, 1994 a point of order was raised by the Opposition House Leader respecting the form of petitions and the grounds on which they can be found to be irregular.

The right of petitioning parliament for the redress of grievances is an ancient right and has been part of our rules and practice since the beginning of representative institutions in the province. Petitions in this Legislative Assembly are governed by rule 11 in our *Rules and Procedures* and by the practice of this Assembly and by that of the House of Commons of Canada.

The basic requirements for a petition are: that it be addressed to the Legislative Assembly; that it express the subject matter of the request in temperate

language; and that it conclude with a prayer. The wording of the form of petition is formal.

(1430)

The member from Rosthern had concerns about how the public was to know what the requirements are for a proper petition. The rules respecting petitions and information on obtaining a copy of the form of petition are advertised monthly in the *Saskatchewan Gazette*. Copies of the form of the petition are also available on request from the Clerk's office. For the information of members and their constituents, I have asked that copies of the form of petition be distributed to each member and to constituency offices.

The petitions which gave rise to the point of order were reviewed in accordance with rule 11(7) and were found to be irregular because the petition was not addressed to the Legislative Assembly, did not contain a prayer and further, was not the original document but a photocopy.

Should members continue to have concerns about the formality of the rules and practices regarding petitions, this matter could be raised for consideration by the Special Committee on Rules and Procedures.

Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like leave before orders of the day to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, to you and through you, I'd like to introduce a gentlemen in the Speaker's gallery, a former member of this Assembly who served from 1964 to 1965 in the Ross Thatcher government. Mr. Tom Weatherald served the constituency of Souris-Cannington and I'd like to ask . . . or Cannington, I guess it was, of the day. I'd like to ask members to greet the member.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, by leave I would like to move a motion that would allow for a member to travel out of the province.

Leave granted.

MOTIONS

Leave of Absence to Attend Seminar at Westminster

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the members opposite giving leave for a member to travel out of province, but I would move that by leave:

That leave of absence be granted to the hon. member from Humboldt from Monday, March 7, 1994 to Friday, March 18, 1994 to attend the 43rd seminar on parliamentary practice and

procedures at Westminster on behalf of this Assembly.

I so move, seconded by the member for Regina Churchill Downs.

The Speaker: — Order. Would the member for Saskatoon Wildwood please come to order.

The division bells rang from 2:33 p.m. until 2:42 p.m.

The Speaker: — Order. Members should be in their place by now when the division vote is taken. I want to just remind — and this does not pertain to all members, but certain members just don't seem to have acquired the knowledge of the rules that you, yourselves, have adopted in this Assembly — that when we are awaiting the vote to be taken on division, decorum should still be maintained in this House, not to the same extent as we do when we carry on the business, but we really would appreciate that if some members had a little more respect for the rules that you yourselves have set for this Assembly. So I ask members to please keep this in mind in the future.

Motion agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 48

Van Mulligen	Trew
Thompson	Draper
Wiens	Serby
Lingenfelter	Sonntag
Shillington	Flavel
Koskie	Roy
Teichrob	Cline
Johnson	Scott
Goulet	Crofford
Atkinson	Wormsbecker
Kowalsky	Stanger
Carson	Kluz
Mitchell	Knezacek
MacKinnon	Harper
Cunningham	Keeping
Upshall	Jess
Hagel	Langford
Bradley	Swenson
Koenker	Neudorf
Lorje	Boyd
Pringle	Toth
Lautermilch	Britton
Renaud	D'Autremont
Murray	Goohsen

Nays — Nil

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 18 — An Act to amend The Meewasin Valley Authority Act

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of Bill 18, which is to amend The Meewasin Valley Authority Act. This Bill implements a number of budget-related decisions arising from the 1993-94 statutory funding reductions and establishes a 1994-95 statutory funding level for the Authority.

As a result of budget constraints, the Meewasin Valley Authority Board has requested that their Act be amended by reducing the number of statutory committees. They have asked that two of their statutory committees be consolidated and replaced. The planning and development and the engineering advisory committees are to be replaced by a single development review committee. This will reduce operational costs and streamline the Authority's review process.

This Bill also establishes the statutory funding for the Meewasin Valley Authority. The city of Saskatoon, the University of Saskatchewan, and the province all contribute to the Authority's budget. For 1994-95 this funding will be maintained at the 1993-94 level. This amendment suspends the statutory formula for another year. This should not have a significant impact on the operations of the Authority.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of this Bill.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, as we have done in the past and would like to continue the process of reviewing the Bill after it's fully introduced and the second reading has been given by the minister, as he's just indicated to us, and we'd like to take the time to do some research and follow up with any third-party interest groups that are out there who might be directly affected or concerned regarding this Bill, and therefore at this time I would move adjournment of debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 19 — An Act to amend The Wascana Centre Act

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of a Bill, The Wascana Centre Act, 1994.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill maintains the statutory funding for the 1994-1995 fiscal year at the same level as that of the last fiscal year; that is, there will be no reduction from the funding that was available for the centre last year.

The Government of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, remains committed to the Wascana Centre. We have all taken great pride in the centre over the years. It has attracted people of all ages for a variety of reasons, from Regina and all over the province and from other areas of Canada.

Some are the naturalists, the environmentalists who enjoy bird-watching, the royal museum, etc., while others are seeking recreational pursuits such as tennis,

canoeing, and skating. There are historians and students who find their interest in the Legislative Building and the Diefenbaker homestead. Other students are particularly enthused with the science centre.

The Wascana Centre has also been host to a number of family activities. July 1, Buffalo Days, now the Chinese dragon boat races, and other events. In addition, there are people employed and educated within the centre. On almost any given day, you can see the whole range of people enjoying the centre harmoniously.

Wascana Centre has truly been a success. It offers something for everyone and is an idea which is the envy of many other cities across Canada. This was evidenced recently at a conference of capital cities of Canada which took place in Ottawa. The purpose of their meeting was to seek solutions to the specific problems facing capital cities. They concluded that the key element required is cooperation between the provincial and municipal governments as well as other agencies involved in the capital.

Once again, Saskatchewan leads the way. We have an excellent model of cooperation in the Wascana Centre Authority. Much interest was expressed in the Authority and its operation. In fact the next meeting of this group will occur here in Regina.

The Wascana Centre is important, not only to the residents of Regina but to all people of Saskatchewan, because it is the seat of government. It is with a sense of pride and the realization of the value of the programs and services that we continue to support the purpose and role of the Wascana Centre Authority.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to working with my colleagues in partnership — the city, the university and the Authority. Much has been accomplished over the past 32 years and we look forward to an exciting future.

Mr. Speaker, it is with that in mind that I move second reading of the Bill.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I respond and make a short response to the Bill that's been laid before this Assembly by the Government House Leader, I guess there's a couple things of interest. And number one, I think both the Meewasin Valley Authority and the Wascana Centre Authority are pleased that their funding hasn't been reduced any more. We're both more than pleased to have it at the '93-94 levels, although it would seem to me they would, like everyone else, would feel that it would have been appropriate to have some increases, and it's quite possible that Meewasin Valley may even see some increases as they look at other means of finding funding to run the Meewasin Valley Authority.

I think the major concern that we have here is the fact that Wascana Centre, even though it sits in the city of Regina, it surrounds this Legislative Assembly, certainly people across this province come and take

advantage of it. The citizens of Regina certainly enjoy the beautiful scenery around this Wascana Centre Authority.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, with the daylight that we have such as today and as we get closer to spring and the grass starts to grow, we'll see families and men and women of all ages, children, taking advantage of the beautiful weather, picnicking in Wascana Centre.

But I think the major concern when you look at the two centres is the fact that Wascana Centre receives a significant amount of money from the provincial government that Meewasin Valley Centre Authority doesn't receive. I think if there's a concern between the two groups, it's the fact that there is more money and I would think the members from Saskatoon will be arguing for a little more money into their facility as well, because of the fact that they are facilities that are utilized by people from all parts of the province.

For that fact, Mr. Speaker, I believe that it would be appropriate at this time, as well, to just review the Bill a little more in depth and therefore I move adjournment of debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 20 — An Act to amend The Urban Municipality Act, 1984

Hon. Ms. Carson: — At the end of my remarks, I would like to move second reading of Bill No. 20, An Act to amend The Urban Municipality Act, 1984.

The urban Act is a major piece of legislation setting out the powers and duties of cities, towns, villages and resort villages. Each year, there are numerous requests for amendments from municipalities, interest groups, and the public.

Updating the Act ensures that it meets the needs of all interested people. I would like to comment on the key provisions of the Bill. The main areas dealt with are: parking enforcement, petitions, assessment, and the administrative updating.

An amendment in this Bill responds to a SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) task force request to improve ways of enforcing parking fines. Each year, cities lose significant sums of revenue because parking tickets are not paid. This Bill includes measures that encourage payment of tickets. It provides that a vehicle with multiple ticketing offences registered against it may be impounded by the municipality until the owner pays the fines required. This amendment provides an effective and less costly means of enforcing outstanding parking fines. The need for a more effective enforcement was reaffirmed at the 1994 SUMA convention.

A further amendment dealing with parking will allow municipalities to, by by-law, provide for the removal of vehicles parked without authorization on private property. Currently there is only authority to ticket such illegally parked vehicles. This will allow a

municipality to have such vehicles towed if the council chooses to pass an appropriate by-law.

Several provisions clarify the rules and procedures for petitions to councils and binding votes on by-laws. This includes criteria for evaluating when petitions are valid. Clearer rules for establishing the validity of petitions had been requested by municipal administrators and clerks. A new provision will provide that a plebiscite need not be held on a matter provided the council passes a by-law as requested by the petition. This Bill also allows a council to amend or repeal a by-law that was petitioned for after a period of three years.

A few amendments deal with assessment and the appeal process in particular. One provision responds to a request from cities and the Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency to limit the use of a particular appraisal method, the income approach, for assessment appeals until they are able to prepare for its use. This provision applies for a limited period of time. Some municipalities would prefer to see this appraisal approach eliminated entirely by rewriting property assessment rules. This would have a permanent impact on the business community, which the government is not willing to support.

Other assessment provisions include the following: allowing an extra week's notice to appellants of their hearings before the Assessment Appeals Committee of the Saskatchewan Municipal Board; allowing for notice of outstanding assessment appeals to be placed on tax certificates; clarifying that the Assessment Appeals Committee of the Saskatchewan Municipal Board can raise as well as reduce or retain the assessment value of a property after it has heard an appeal.

Administrative updating provisions in the Bill were requested by municipal administrators. The Act is updated in several places to accommodate electronic financial transactions such as electronic transfer of funds. Currently the Act has some requirements that cannot be met if transactions are done by computer.

Other administrative amendments include no longer prescribing the manner in which signatures on cheques are reproduced, allowing municipal clerks to enter into agreements on behalf of councils for routine administrative matters, and no longer requiring the minister's approval of the format for urban municipalities' bank deposits. As indicated, the provisions in this Bill respond to a number of requests from SUMA, municipalities, and the public.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all members to support me in this Bill; take steps to make urban governments in this province more effective. Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of a Bill to amend The Urban Municipality Act, 1984.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as the minister indicated, the Act is updating the current Act and bringing it in line with some of the requests that have been coming from, the minister indicated,

towns and villages and cities across this province.

When I hear the minister talking about parking enforcement, it would sound to me like that was an issue that is more pertinent to large centres like the Saskatoons and the Reginas and, I'm not sure, maybe some of the smaller centres.

What I see in it, inasmuch as the cities are looking at a way of trying to curb the ongoing problem of trying to follow up with people on outstanding traffic violations, especially parking violations, at the same time I can see that it in a lot of cases will be a significant revenue generator to most cities. And I think the taxpayers of the cities, although they're looking for a more efficient way of following up and making sure that people are paying their fines, probably on the other hand would also like to see that maybe if we're cutting down on some of the other services or the need for some of those services, that that should be passed on to us.

(1500)

There was another thing about parking in the automatic tow-away. I think there should be . . . one of the things that should be very clear in that is that there is very clear signage. Because I think for people who are not familiar with most of our two larger cities or don't spend a lot of time and are . . . can drive in and are just looking for some place to park for, say, a 10- or 15-minute stop, and quickly pull up and may not read the signage very clearly, it could be very frustrating to have to run into a store and then come out and find that their vehicle's been towed away.

So I think it should be . . . there should be something that is clear, that has clear signage, so that it just doesn't allow tow-away of vehicles simply because they have infringed on a no-parking area or overstayed their time in a parking area.

I think as well there should be sufficient notice sent out regarding assessment and be very clear on that. That's another area. And the minister laid out some guidelines that they are bringing forward, and I think the cities have brought forward, as suggestions regarding assessments and appeal of assessment notices.

And those are some of the questions, Mr. Minister, that I think will and have been raised with us and through us. And we want to do a little more research on them before we get into further discussion on the Bill before us as well as getting into committee. And some of those questions certainly we look forward to raising with the minister as we get into committee.

However at this time I would move adjournment of debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 21 — An Act to Amend The Rural Municipality Act, 1989

Hon. Ms. Carson: — Mr. Speaker, at the end of my remarks I will be moving second reading of Bill No. 21, An Act to amend The Rural Municipality Act, 1989.

The rural Act, Mr. Speaker, is a major piece of legislation governing Saskatchewan's 299 rural municipalities. This statute is sometimes referred to as a constitution of rural municipal government. Traditionally it is amended every year or two to keep pace with changing times and requests from rural councils and the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities.

This year's amendments, Mr. Speaker, are not as wide-ranging as was in the case of 1989 when the statute had a major overhaul. Nevertheless this Bill contains some important advances to assist elected rural councils and the rural residents of Saskatchewan. Let me mention a few of the key amendments.

First are provisions adjusting the relationship between organized hamlets and the rural municipality. This is done by giving organized hamlets of a certain size the option of becoming a division within the rural municipality with its own representation on the RM (rural municipality) council.

Hamlets in the rural councils are given more flexibility in negotiating hamlet financial arrangements. For example, the council and the hamlet board may be able to negotiate agreements whereby an organized hamlet may be able to deliver limited services to its own residents.

We feel this reform will give rural residents, particularly those in resort areas, a more attractive option to remain part of rural municipalities, yet preserving their community's identity and purpose. It provides an entirely voluntary alternative to the proliferation of small villages, particularly resort villages, which may not be viable in the long haul. It will also make it easier for small villages which are not viable to move back into rural municipalities. Generally, this Act broadens a range of options for rural residents in terms of the type of governance they want for their own small communities.

A second key provision in this Bill permits rural public utility boards to borrow funds to establish water distribution systems for rural residents who are not now served by running water. These utility boards are voluntary associations of rural people who are using water network technology to supply much-needed water to often widely dispersed farms. The only practical way they can finance their operation is to borrow initially and recoup the cost of the work over a period of time. We have included financial checks and balances in this Bill, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that borrowing by public utility boards is done in the most responsible manner possible.

A third key feature of this Bill is the new authority for rural municipalities to provide fire protection and emergency response services. These amendments are

needed to complement the new Fire Prevention Act that was passed two years ago. They permit municipalities to issue fire prevention orders and to supply emergency response services. They also make it easier for RMs to enter into cooperative arrangements with urban municipalities and Indian reserves to provide joint fire protection. Similar amendments have already been made in The Urban Municipality Act.

In addition, in this Bill conflict of interest provisions have been clarified and strengthened. Assessment appeal procedures have been updated and more authority has been provided to rural municipalities to collect taxes owing on buildings situated on property owned by another person.

This Bill contains the government's commitment to foster effective rural local government. It has been reviewed in detail with SARM's (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) board of directors before its introduction in this legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill No. 21, A Bill to amend The Rural Municipalities Act.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I certainly don't want to belabour the issue as the member from Churchill Downs is asking me. But I would suggest that as an opposition member it's certainly the responsibility of opposition members to at least take some time to review the Bills. And I've listened very carefully to what the minister has mentioned to some of the changes and it would sound to me that some of the changes and recommendations that are coming forward in this Bill are certainly a number of the concerns that were with council and raised on council when I was on council, and one of the areas is fire prevention.

I know it's difficult at times for RMs and towns and different municipalities and hamlets trying to come to a consensus as to how they provide and especially provide the funding and the different formats. And as we look into the Bill we'll get a better understanding.

But it appears to me that there are formats that are being brought forward in this Bill that will make it a little more easier for the towns, local towns and RMs, to find ways and means of arriving at workable agreements and solutions to some of the areas where they work together and cooperate. And so we appreciate that.

And before I just stand here and say we're going to move through committee and pass the Bill later this day, Mr. Speaker, I think maybe we should take the time to review it a little closer and so therefore I move adjournment of debate.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 9

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Cunningham that Bill No. 9 — An Act to repeal The Agriculture Development Fund Act be now read a second time.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is nice to be able to rise to discuss such an important issue with the members opposite and to once again have an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to try to convince the Minister of Agriculture just how important these programs have been in the past and how important it would have been for him to keep this program either in place or to bring about some new vehicle to provide the same kinds of services to the agricultural community that we are seeing lost by this Bill taking out the agricultural diversification fund.

The fund, Mr. Speaker, was so important to agriculture because it provided that very nucleus of activity that the government now espouses to want to have as its number one priority in agriculture, and that being diversification.

I put simply the question this way, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Agriculture: how do you plan to diversify agriculture if you have nobody working on the research and the development and the planning of new ideas?

When a farmer or an industrialist or a marketer comes up with an idea, who would finance that idea? Who possibly could have the money or the ability to go out and find scientists to develop a program in the agricultural community.

There are no farmers that have that kind of money available, Mr. Speaker. And of course I'm sure that somebody will find some rich farmer that inherited some money or won a 649 just to prove me wrong. But there would be an exception, I'm quite sure. But in general practice, farmers simply don't have that kind of cash around, and while they have the innovative ability to see projects that can be done and need to be done, they don't often have what it takes to put those into practice.

And that's what we're losing with this Agriculture Development Fund being lost. We're losing that ability to have that building block there in place, where a person with a good idea can go to that office and say, here's my idea, help me to develop it. I want to grow a new kind of potatoes, or I think I can invent a new kind of fish tank that will keep oxygen in the water without expensive pumps, or something new and totally innovative.

So, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture needs to consider this. He needs to consider what he is throwing away when he dissolves this important program.

And then there's the question, Mr. Speaker, that was brought to my attention by some of my constituents. The question of where did the allocated money from

last year go and why did \$10 million seem to have disappeared? We want to know why that money didn't go into agricultural programs, and because it didn't show up that it went into agricultural programs, then where is it? What was it used for? Whose pocket got lined? That's what one guy out there asked me. And that's the kind of impression that we get when money disappears from an account and has not an obvious place where it has showed up.

So, Mr. Speaker, I put it to the Minister of Agriculture, that for the sake of all people involved in the political process, show the public where you put these monies, show the public what you've done with your program, and bring back some kind of a building program so that in fact we can truly see diversification in agriculture become a reality, a reality that is necessary.

There's absolutely no one involved in our industry that will deny the fact that we have to diversify; that we have to do that by going out into the world to find markets. We have to find things that people want to have out in the market-place and then we have to come back to the drawing table and learn how to produce or how to build it or how to manufacture and supply that good or product.

If we don't do it that way, if we don't go out and find markets for what we think we have ideas for, then there's no object in making it. What object would there be, Mr. Speaker, for me to go back to the old buggy-whip story? What object would there be for me to make a warehouse full of buggy whips in this day and age, if I didn't know somebody that had some horses that they wanted to whip around?

And I say the same thing with agricultural diversification. There's no object in us going into the production of some kind of new spices or herbs if we don't have a market for them. And so we need this vehicle, or something like it, and I'm asking the minister if he would reconsider his position and go back to the drawing board.

And having said all of those things, Mr. Speaker, I think my colleagues have indicated that they want to throw something into this argument and this debate, and as soon as they get their notes in order I'm going to let them take over.

In the meantime, they did want me to explain how people manage to end up growing fish in granaries in Saskatchewan through the agricultural diversification fund. It's quite a story, Mr. Speaker, but it is a real fact of life. It has happened and it did work reasonably well, and of course the obvious answer was that they put tanks in the granaries; the granaries were used for shelter.

An innovative farmer discovered that when he put fish into his dugout, the birds of prey decided to eat all of his fish. The mink and animals of prey decided they wanted to have lunch off of the fish. Everything in nature seemed to go against this fellow. And then it got hot in July, the oxygen level went down in the water,

and of course the fish died there as well. So, he thought, there's got to be a way around this. If we can put the fish in a tank in a granary, then we can stop the birds of prey from coming in from the air, the animals won't be able to get through the walls, and we can control the temperature and the oxygen by putting pumps into the tanks and we won't have to have all of these things that nature does to my new crop, and have those fish lost and lose my new crop and my new profit-motive innovation.

And so he moved the tanks into the granary and started with the fish. I'll carry on with the story just a little bit more because there are some things, in case people are thinking this is the way to go to get rich quick, because there are some pitfalls. Simple things, like washing your hands before you check the water — very important. This individual found through the test of hard knocks that if you play around with your field sprayer and you get chemicals on your hands and then walk into the granary and check the temperature of that water, the fish will all die. And that's a lesson to be learned, not to go into this kind of a project without some research and without knowing exactly what you're doing.

All the more reason why a program like agricultural diversification fund should be kept into place and continue to work. So I just wanted to let you folks know that the program of growing fish in a granary can work; it is possible. But it needs some more research and so do a lot of other things.

(1515)

And so having said all those things, Mr. Speaker, I want to let my colleagues take over and explain their ideas of why ADF (Agriculture Development Fund) shouldn't be cancelled.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to rise and debate the issue of the end of the ADF funding program, which we believe would be a mistake, Mr. Speaker, to end this particular program. This program has had quite a number of benefits for Saskatchewan and for Saskatchewan farmers. And it's ironic, Mr. Speaker, that the government would try to eliminate the ADF corporation when at the same time they are presenting new legislation to this Assembly to bring forward another Crown corporation which would provide a similar type of programing; in a different area but still the same mainframe ideas.

And, Mr. Speaker, that deals with the Crown corporation dealing with university foundations. University foundation legislation will allow individuals or corporations to put assets, either money or property, whatever they may have, into the foundation to be used for research and for programs at the university.

And, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what the ADF fund does. It provides for monies for research, research in agriculture, whereas the university foundation could be research in whatever areas that the university may

choose. But it is nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, research to develop new ideas and new programs, new projects, new businesses in Saskatchewan. And what the government is taking away with one hand, they are giving back to another sector of their choosing, Mr. Speaker, in this province.

And we've seen in the last couple of years with this government that anything, good or bad or indifferent, that had to do with the previous administration is to be dismantled and destroyed. It's irrelevant to the government opposite whether that program is good or not; if it was brought in from 1982 to 1991, then it has to go. We saw that example with the Co-op upgrader, Mr. Speaker, where the government tried to destroy that program simply because it was done by the previous administration.

The Agriculture Development Fund, Mr. Speaker, was a fairly broad-ranging program that was established in 1985 to coordinate and facilitate agricultural research, development, and demonstration projects in Saskatchewan. When you tour rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, if you have the opportunity to do so during the growing season, you will see signs around this province, green signs with white borders that say ADF program on it. This particular plot of land is an ADF program that is studying something important to the farm economy of Saskatchewan. And if you stop and look at it, it'll have a little explanation on what they're doing there, Mr. Speaker. You can find out about canola growing or forages or brush control, whatever the case may be, Mr. Speaker. It's going on across this province.

Canola is a good example. Canola traditionally has been grown north of the Yellowhead Highway. But in the last 10 years or so, canola has spread south. Even to the Maple Creek area, Mr. Speaker, they're now growing canola.

But that just didn't happen by accident, Mr. Speaker. That happened because somebody . . . and that somebody was part of the ADF program that moved canola south. They grew it in the Yorkton area, then they grew it in the Langenburg area, then they grew it in the Moosomin area, and Carlyle, down to the border. And the same thing down the west side of the province, Mr. Speaker. People have run test plots on the various crops across this province using ADF funding, and there has been a substantial benefit to the Saskatchewan economy.

If you look last year across this province at the amount of canola that was grown, it was very significant, Mr. Speaker, and I would suggest that in the coming crop year it will be even more significant. And the ability to grow canola in areas that are hotter and drier than what you find across the grain belt of northern Saskatchewan came about because of research both at the universities and through ADF funding. And that is what this government is trying to eliminate, Mr. Speaker. And we think it's wrong. The people of rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, think it's wrong.

The object of ADF is to support the diversification of

Saskatchewan agriculture and food sector. The results are put to the test through ADF demonstrations and development programs. These programs display, test, and evaluate new technologies and innovations with the goal of helping Saskatchewan farmers be competitive in global markets.

Well, Mr. Speaker, you could almost pull that whole paragraph out of there and stick it in the minister's *Agriculture 2000* pamphlet and it would fit right in. Because that's what the Minister of Agriculture is talking about in his program, is diversification, Mr. Speaker. And that is what ADF funding provides for. It provides for diversification in Saskatchewan in various crops.

Traditionally Saskatchewan has been a wheat-growing province. It goes right back to the British Empire, Mr. Speaker, where Canada was assigned the task of providing foodstuffs for the British Empire, in particular, wheat. South-east Asia had tea; Canada had wheat.

We did a very good job, Mr. Speaker, of growing wheat. A very good job. But a good many other places across the world, Mr. Speaker, are now doing also a very good job of growing wheat, and we need to expand ourselves. That's what diversification on the farm is all about — growing different crops, growing different crops for better markets.

Mr. Speaker, this program was established in 1985 and then turned into a corporate body in 1989. And since it was established, almost 3,000 applications have been received and over half have been approved for a funding of over \$62 million. Another \$48 million has gone to irrigation projects around the province.

The ADF has assisted in making successful a broad range of initiatives related to crops and forage, irrigation, soils, livestock, land improvement engineering, economics extension, marketing, and new product development and food processing.

Now on food processing is an interesting thing, Mr. Speaker. Across this province we have not traditionally done anything with our raw products. We load our wheat on boxcars and send it out some place else. We cultivate our potatoes and we haul a few of them to town and sell to our neighbours. But we traditionally have not processed our own products. And that was one of the areas in which ADF funding was working.

We look up north at Delisle; I believe that there is a food processing plant in place there. And I don't know whether or not they had any ADF funding for that particular program, but ADF funding was the route that started us exploring more and better avenues of food processing.

Mr. Speaker, there are a good many projects that have taken place around this province, projects that need to be examined in this House so that the people and the government can see the benefit that this program provided for us. And since the government is trying to

bring in another foundation which provides for research, I would suggest, Mr. Speaker, that the government allow this particular corporation to remain in place and carry out its mandate. Thank you.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the ADF fund has been important in a number of areas in Saskatchewan, and I would just like to touch on it for a few moments and give some, I guess, personal testimony to the benefit and the . . . that it had to rural Saskatchewan.

In our area, Mr. Speaker, of the Kindersley constituency, particularly from the area that I'm from in the Eston area, the ADF fund has had involvement in a tremendous number of demonstration projects, particularly relative to soil conservation, tree planting, marketing clubs, crop clubs, things of that nature. And I'm very proud, Mr. Speaker, of my association with the ADF fund over the years.

I had prior to my political life, I guess you would say, involvement in a number of soil conservation initiatives in Saskatchewan and had experience with the ADF fund. And I found it extremely valuable, the demonstration-type projects that they helped organize and helped put on, Mr. Speaker. In fact I think what we're seeing in Saskatchewan today, with things like marketing clubs, crop clubs, tree planting clubs, are a direct result of the ADF fund providing a small amount of funding towards these types of projects.

And the one I'm most familiar with was the Eston Crop Club. It was essentially started, Mr. Speaker, by a number of interested farmers, particularly interested in things of the soil conservation nature, Mr. Speaker. It started with that focus. It's broadened its focus substantially from that time, Mr. Speaker. And I think there was tremendous value and tremendous experience gained in soil conservation in west-central Saskatchewan that has spread throughout southern Saskatchewan as a result of the projects and the initiatives that the ADF fund helped promote and helped bring into being.

Particularly when you look at things like zero tillage, conservation tillage, things of that nature, chemical fallow tillage, Mr. Speaker, were helped. The ADF fund helped fund them initially. It's given rise to a tremendous interest in those types of soil conservation measures. And, Mr. Speaker, it's of great benefit.

I was very proud, Mr. Speaker, to be the president of the Eston Crop Club and have the opportunity to go around and see a number of the ADF-funded projects throughout Saskatchewan. We were very fortunate in our small, little group out there, to win the Saskatchewan Soil Conservation Award group award, the very first inaugural award that they gave out, Mr. Speaker. And it was through our association with the ADF fund that that came about.

It funded, Mr. Speaker, you might be interested to know, it funded a whole host of demonstration projects from crop variety trials right through to

grassing saline areas to grassing water runs to a whole bunch of particularly soil conservation related projects.

Which, when you look at the area that I'm from, soil conservation is an extreme concern to the people out there. It's an area that's highly productive, Mr. Speaker, but unfortunately from time to time we see significant soil erosion problems that result from over-tillage, generally speaking, and inadequate crop cover.

And I think that what we saw, Mr. Speaker, through the ADF fund, was the fund allowed people to try a new project, to try a new, innovative type of cropping technique or a new type of machinery or anything of that nature. I remember, Mr. Speaker, our crop club, for example, brought in one of the very, very first zero-tillage pieces of equipment into Saskatchewan.

And we bought it, I believe it was out of North Dakota, a piece of equipment that has been used for a few years down there and we brought it into Saskatchewan. And from there, I dare say, Mr. Speaker, that the revolution that we are now witnessing in Saskatchewan with respect to soil conservation and zero-tillage started from, Mr. Speaker.

It was a tremendous interest to the farmers in the area, Mr. Speaker. I recall the first demonstration sites and the few people that would come out to them, Mr. Speaker. There'd maybe be 15 or 20 interested people. Farmers would come to these demonstration sites. And it grew from there to literally hundreds of people turning up at demonstration sites.

There was one just this past summer out in the Moose Jaw area, Mr. Speaker. It's my understanding there were something like 1,200 Saskatchewan farmers, which represents 1,200 Saskatchewan farm families, a significant portion of the 60,000 farm families of Saskatchewan, turned up at a one-day seminar to look at the various pieces of equipment that were available for conservation tillage at that time.

And, Mr. Speaker, the ADF fund has had a tremendous impact on that kind of thing. It allowed producers to come together and to share the common experiences with respect to soil conservation. From there we also saw the formation of the Saskatchewan Soil Conservation Association which is essentially a group, again, a voluntary group of farmers who have come together to share their experiences and pool their resources and to deal with the problems with soil conservation.

(1530)

Now we see throughout Saskatchewan, sponsored by the ADF fund, projects all over the place from virtually in every area of the province. The Saskatchewan Soil Conservation Association has representation from . . . completely non-political, completely self-funding, as far as the soil conservation association I believe now is concerned. It started initially with some seed money I

believe, from the ADF fund.

And, Mr. Speaker, what it has done, it has given an opportunity for farmers to try new techniques, to witness new techniques, to go and see the new kinds of innovative ideas that are out there. We see, I think, a real revolution developed as a result of the Agriculture Development Fund and the Saskatchewan Soil Conservation Association.

The Soil Conservation Association started out with virtually a very small group of people interested in it and since then has grown to be a very, very large group of interested producers. Funding from the ADF was extremely important for that reason.

Mr. Speaker, another project that is of interest to me and I think out of all of the farm families of Saskatchewan, that started as a direct result was, I recall in our area a farmer who received some funding from the ADF fund in which he started an evaluation of spices and alternative crops for Saskatchewan.

And from that, in conjunction with the crop development centre in Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Al Slinkard, who I congratulate for his fine, fine work on behalf of Saskatchewan farmers, has evaluated a number of crops — oh, it's in the hundreds I understand, Mr. Speaker — from all over the world to try and see whether they can be adapted to Saskatchewan conditions and become economically viable, an economically viable alternative to the wheat-based economy in agriculture in Saskatchewan today.

From that, Mr. Speaker, from that simple project which started out with just . . . I believe it was just a very, very small project, something in the order of a quarter of an acre, Mr. Speaker. But they evaluated a number of spices and they found from there that there was some potential for those crops in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, particularly the crops of coriander and caraway, which are both used primarily as spices, Mr. Speaker, in the process food market.

And I think it's opened the door to a whole new industry in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. From that single farmer's experience, Mr. Speaker, we now see that there's a Saskatchewan spice association is set up — a number of interested producers. I don't know what the total acreage of those two particular crops are. It's not that large yet; I would guess it's probably only a few thousand acres. But what it has done, it has opened up the opportunity for another alternative crop to come into Saskatchewan.

In Canada we imported up till then, 100 per cent of the needs with respect to caraway, coriander, and other spices like that. So we were bringing in from other countries around the world — California, I understand, primarily as well the middle eastern countries of Europe. They were sending their products over here, exporting them into Saskatchewan and Canada. And this has given an opportunity for Saskatchewan farmers to have an alternative crop. And it's a crop that has become important; important

to a number of farmers in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

And it has opened the door for some processing now in the community that I'm from, Mr. Speaker. Right as we speak, farmers are putting together their money and pooling it into a . . . forming a processing plant in Eston. They are planning on processing a number of crops, Mr. Speaker. Chick-peas is one of them, caraway, coriander, a number of other spices, fenugreek, anise seed, I believe it's called.

Mr. Speaker, I think these are probably crops that a lot of people in Saskatchewan have never even heard of, and yet I think what we have seen though the ADF fund is those very kinds of initiatives being started and we see the opportunity for crops to develop. And if we think back in the history of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, we look at crops like canaryseed, which represents now several hundred thousands of acres of very, very good alternative crop, a very viable alternative crop in Saskatchewan. But started, particularly canaryseed and lentil, Mr. Speaker, started exactly the same way. Although they haven't had the boost forward that these spices and other alternative crops have as a result of the help that the ADF fund and the crop development centre in Saskatoon has been able to help them along with.

There's been a number of other initiatives started. When we look at game farming, Mr. Speaker, has given rise to . . . been given help by the ADF fund. I know of a farmer in our area. It's really quite an experience, Mr. Speaker, to go to his farm. He had a small grove of trees and he had that grove of trees fenced off, and go up and look into his barn and it was amazing. It certainly wasn't filled with the traditional livestock that you would be expecting, cattle and horses and things of that nature.

This barn was filled with elk, Mr. Speaker, and it was really quite an experience to see that kind of initiative that this farmer had taken in an area in probably one of the driest areas of south-western Saskatchewan, in an area that you wouldn't normally associate with that kind of livestock being raised. But it has given that kind of opportunity.

I can think of other producers in our area. When you look at the Brock Shelterbelt Group, they are farmers that have got together and are putting trees into their fields, Mr. Speaker, to alleviate the problem with wind erosion. And I believe they're planting something in the neighbourhood of 4 or 500 miles of trees over the last number of years. And it's not only visually enhancing the area, Mr. Speaker, it's giving opportunity for things like more game in the area and better aesthetic values to the overall area, Mr. Speaker.

We see as well other crops that are coming up, Mr. Speaker. We see the production of things like fruits and berries as a result of the ADF fund. I only have to think as far as a relative of mine, Mr. Speaker, that has got into the Saskatoon berry production with help from the ADF fund and their expertise.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have a whole number of areas of concern with respect to this Bill. I think I've only highlighted a very, very few of them, Mr. Speaker. We do however believe that we'd like to move on to the business of other things this afternoon, and therefore we would ask that this Bill now be allowed to move through to the committee stage. At that point we'll be asking the minister further questions.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to rise and address this matter. I've listened quite carefully to opposition members advocating that there be no changes in ADF. And I'm curious how it is that opposition members can be advocating that we continue to spend dollars largely on bureaucracy, largely on government-driven programs, as opposed to listening to farmers who are saying to me, and I'm sure to many of my colleagues, don't make farmers dependent on government.

And that's what this is all about, is not making farmers dependent on government. We are listening to the farmers and helping them in their economic development, but taking their lead. Mr. Speaker, I don't know how it is that the member for Kindersley — who I didn't heckle at all during his speech — doesn't have the courtesy to listen to my speech.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know how it is that opposition members can expect to garner reform votes when they are so vehemently anti-reform; when anything that farmers tell us it's time we got on with and tried to make more workable, they're dug in. And they say no, no, we've got to do everything as it was in the past.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it's 1994 and the year 2000 is fast approaching. I know that the Minister of Agriculture and government members — particularly my hat goes off to rural government members — have been looking very diligently at the matter. We are looking at helping farmers meet the challenges, not just of the remainder of the 1990s but into the next century or millennium or whatever other term it is you want to do. And I'm just again really puzzled how it is that opposition members could ever expect to garner any reform vote when they are so clearly anti-reform.

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

Bill No. 15

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. MacKinnon that Bill No. 15 — An Act respecting Certified General Accountants be now read a second time.

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

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Public Service Commission

Vote 33

The Chair: — At this time I would ask the minister to please introduce the officials who have joined us here today.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I thank you, Mr. Chair. I have the pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of the committee, Ms. Shiela Bailey, seated to my left, who is the chair of the Public Service Commission; Mr. Rick McKillop who is the executive director of the employee relations division; and behind me, Ms. Elizabeth Smith, who is the director of administrative and information services.

Item 1

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a few questions that we would like to ask. Being the Public Service Commission has come up today, we've done a little research to find out exactly what's going on with the Public Service Commission. And just for the general public, I want to read the first note that I've got here that tells me what I'm supposed to be doing and it says:

The mandate of the (Public Service) Commission (PSC) is to provide Executive Government with human resource management programs, policies and standards which improve the quality of services to the public, while enhancing productivity and employee well-being.

I'd like to know, Mr. Minister, I suppose I'm asking for a bit of an overview of just which government departments are provided with these human resources and how it all works and where the public's money is going and how it's being spent in such a good way.

(1545)

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, and to the member, you are correct that the mandate of the Public Service Commission is to be the central human resource agency for executive government in accordance with The Public Service Act and it does in fact perform this function in the broad sense of the term for all of what we refer to as executive government. That of course does not include Crown corporations, who have their own human resource functions within their organizations.

The commission is responsible for a broad range of activities, as the member will know, which includes the negotiation and the administration of collective agreements, the staffing for the human resource needs of executive government, and for a broad range of related human and personnel services that are designed to meet the needs of the people of Saskatchewan, of the Government of Saskatchewan, and for the people who are employed by the Government of Saskatchewan.

The idea is to provide as high a quality of public

service as we are able to deliver to the people of this province. These have been exceptionally difficult times in the last while. The member will know that. This has resulted in the downsizing of government over three successive budgets now. And I believe that to have been the case prior to the last election as well.

This has created a new and challenging demand for the Public Service Commission. And I think that we can all look with some satisfaction at the way in which this bundle of problems, this basket of problems, has been handled by our professional staff within the Public Service Commission.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Minister, as I started to do my research and reviewed this arm of government, the thought came to my mind that if we're going to eliminate programs like the agricultural diversification fund, which actually goes out and tries to create jobs and create new diversification in an entire industry, and we're going to listen to the minister tell us that he justifies that because we need to save money in our province, and we've got to do all these good and great and glorious things, the first thought that I came to when I started to study this department was: what a grand way to save a pile of money if we just eliminated this whole process.

So I think what I'm going to say to you here is that in the next minutes, hours, days, weeks — whatever it takes — I hope that you can convince me of the need for this whole department and that it has some value to the Saskatchewan taxpayer. Because as someone who is relatively new at looking at this whole process, the first impression I had was exactly that, that it looks like it's a paper-pushing, computer-punching operation that basically wastes an awful lot of time and money for the taxpayer.

So that's probably not true, and I suspect you're going to illustrate to me how wrong I am. Remember that you're not just educating me in this process. You will be educating the Saskatchewan people, because most of the folks that I talked to in the last little while about the Public Service Commission knew absolutely nothing about what this commission does or what its purpose is or even that it existed, to be quite honest with you.

And so let's go through this process with that in mind, that the people of Saskatchewan want these days for people in politics to prove that there's a need before the money is spent. And so let's go into it on that basis.

My first question, I guess then, will go on to: does the Public Service Commission staff government departments? And you have said I think yes, but I want you to qualify that for sure. And then go on to, which departments does the PSC (Public Service Commission) staff?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I want to answer the member's question, Mr. Chair, generally and then specifically with respect to the question that he asked.

In general terms, let me say this, Mr. Chair. The

government will . . . no matter how you organize yourself with respect to these human relations matters, there are some things that government is going to have to do. One of them is that the government will from time to time hire people and will be advertising to the public for applications from people who may wish to apply for those jobs. You could organize it in such a way that each department did that themselves.

Similarly, a government is bound by law to negotiate collective agreements. I'll just repeat that. Similarly the government is bound by law to negotiate collective agreements with the trade union that is certified to represent employees. There's no if, and's or but's about that. You simply have to do it.

You have to renegotiate those agreements periodically as they expire and you have to have professional staff to conduct those negotiations. Because as the member will appreciate, collective bargaining is a highly specialized activity that requires a good deal of expertise.

Now that function also could be performed by the departments involved. But if the member were to look at that and the other related matters that are encompassed in this idea of the management of human relations and the management of personnel, you would find that if we did it on a department-by-department basis we would be talking about a very much larger number of staff than is now the case.

This has been examined in the past and it's very clear that if you can take all those functions and exercise them in one central agency, you can do it much more efficiently than if you try and get each department to do the same thing. If you asked each department to organize themselves to perform these functions you would find yourself with some large multiple more . . . large multiple of employees more than are now employed in the Public Service Commission. With a very small, centralized service here, we're able to serve the human resource needs of quite a large government.

Now that comes now to the member's specific question as to what departments we relate to in performing the functions of the commission. I believe there are 15 and I will just go over them: Agriculture and Food; Economic Development; Education, Training and Employment; Energy and Mines; Environment and Resource Management; Finance; Health; Highways and Transportation; Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat; Justice; Labour; Municipal Government; Provincial Secretary; Public Service Commission — ourselves; Saskatchewan Municipal Board; Social Services; and the Women's Secretariat.

Those are the departments that the Public Service Commission serves as the central agency responsible for human resource management.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Minister, for that list. So we can now

determine more specifically which departments are represented.

The main collective bargaining that you do through your Public Service Commission, is that Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union exclusively that you deal with or do you have other unions that you deal with as well?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The main one is the Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union. But we also bargain with CUPE 600, Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 600, with respect to a number of facilities in Saskatchewan, including for example, the Valley View Centre at Moose Jaw and a couple of others — the Saskatchewan Hospital. But the bulk of the employees are represented by SGEU.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Minister, in any case, does the Saskatchewan Public Service Commission work in conjunction with human resources staff in other departments? If so, do the duties overlap in any way? Could you please inform the Assembly as to what exactly the Public Service Commission human resource role is for the government of Saskatchewan? And I think you've done a lot of that already, but I want some of the detail.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The question is difficult to answer. There are, of course, people on the ground in each department — I think in each department — who are responsible for the day-to-day management of personnel-related matters, human resource-related matters.

When they get to the question of a recruitment, and when you get to the question of the policy and the guidelines with respect to things like recruitment, these will be laid down by the Public Service Commission, and all of the competitions are run by the Public Service Commission. There are, however, personnel people in each department to take care of the day-to-day administrative and other personnel questions that might arise within the department.

We also, the Public Service Commission, that is, establishes, as I say, all of the policy and the guidelines which affect the entire government human resource operation. We don't . . . we have no overlap, in effect. That's the point I'm trying to come to. We're very careful about that.

(1600)

The commission also is responsible for the classification plans of government and the development of those plans, and keeping them up to date. And of course the entire question of compensation plans and the administration of those plans is done under the control of, or the supervision of, the Public Service Commission.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Minister, I'm glad that there is, in your opinion, no overlap. But I'm sure there will be somebody that will argue about that. I have a little footnote here that in fact some

people think there is some overlap and some problem with waste and mismanagement, I suppose is the term they would use. And I'm sure that you will look into that.

In the area of Crown corporations, you've already said that you don't provide any service for them. Could we be saving any money if we did in fact do some of this work for the Crown corporation? Should we be looking at that perhaps from a different angle and expanding the role of this operation instead of eliminating it?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — This, Mr. Chair, and to the member, is a very good question, if I may say so, and not the first time that it's been asked in the history of this province and I suppose every other province, every other jurisdiction.

In a general and very quick sort of way you can say yes, there would be savings if all of the work were done by the Public Service Commission for the Crowns that is now being done for executive government. It's not that simple, though, because you have the . . . you're faced with the legal reality that Crown corporations are a separate corporate body from government. They have boards of directors and a statutory mandate and those sorts of things. And because they're set up as separate corporate entities in that sense, they have always had their own personnel functions, and it's a function that is seen to be important in relation to the concept of an independent operation.

You know, there are arguments around that have been made for as long as any of us can remember, that Crown corporations should be part of government. I think that the opposition, that the member's party were sort of implying that in connection with the budget. And anything is possible of course in the organization of government, but we have chosen in this province for a long, long time to perform certain functions through these separate corporations. And because they are separate, they have always exercised their own personnel functions and they continue to do that.

I'm dancing around this question because of course there are sensitivities here. And it wouldn't be appropriate for me to stand up, as the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission, and start staking out a claim for the commission to start representing the Crown corporations.

I can say though — and this is repetitious to some extent — it is a question that has arisen from time to time and been reviewed from time to time. It is not currently under review but it has been looked at in the past and the decision, when all is said and done, has been that they should continue to exercise their own personnel functions. And that's the state of play right now.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, Minister, it's probably better that you dance than to sit on the fence and get splinters. I wonder though, just

from your comments, SGEU (Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union) probably represents most of the workers in the Crown corporations. An awful lot of the work of this whole body seems to be in labour relations.

In view of that and in view that you are looking at mostly dealing with the same union and the same kind of work in a lot of cases, probably — at least I think our union friends would argue that they try hard to have contracts that give equal pay for equal work and all those kind of things and try to job classify and have related results — probably it could work to some advantage.

I want to go into some other questions, and you can allude to this if you want, but I don't want to take up the whole day on that one issue. And I want to go into something more specific in terms of the staff parking privileges here in the city. I understand the PSC staff receive subsidized or free parking downtown, here in the city and perhaps even in Saskatoon. Is this true?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, and to the member, just briefly with respect to the Crown corporations, the SGEU doesn't represent any of the employees in the Crown corporations, in the CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) Crowns.

They are represented by the Communications, Energy & Paperworkers Union, the office and professional employees union, the Amalgamated Transit Union, the international woodworkers union, and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. So I think those are the five unions that are representing Crown corporation employees, but SGEU doesn't represent anybody in that part of government.

Now on the question of staff parking, I'll describe the situation that pertains. With the lease of the premises that we occupy in Regina, the landlord provides 41 parking spots in Regina, and there are four such spots with the lease in Saskatoon. There are 62 employees in Regina who are parking — 62 cars for those 41 spots.

And what the employees all do is this: the employees all chip in \$28 a month each, the people who drive those 62 cars, and they get enough money from that to lease enough additional parking spots in the building so that all 62 cars can park in the building. And each employee apparently antes up 28 bucks a month and they all get to park that way. I think that's responsive to the member's question.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Minister, that's responsive, but it somewhat contradicts some of the information we have, so I want to just lead this question a little bit further. The thought came to mind that perhaps they all had Japanese cars and they were able to squeeze them all in, but obviously not; they're renting some other space.

We have some information that staff members receive \$95 parking spots for free, and you have alluded to the fact that they all contribute so that they can buy extra

spaces. But what about the 41 original spots? How many of those are provided free of charge as free parking — any or all? They do contribute \$28 each to rent the extra 21 parking places from some place else, but the original 41 — who pays for those?

How much was spent last year on employee parking? How much is allotted for parking for the 1994-95 year? And is parking provided because of a union agreement? And from which budget would this parking allowance come from if, in fact, it does happen?

And I guess I'll leave it at that, and I'm going to turn the questioning over to the Leader of the Liberal Party after this question. I'll come back at you after a while.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Well, what I've tried to convey, Mr. Chair, to the member is that the 41 parking spots in Regina come with the lease. So we're not shelling out any extra money for parking spots or anything like that. We're not providing parking in addition to the lease arrangements.

So as far as we're concerned, there is no free parking. There is the arrangement that I described that I won't repeat, but there it is not a question at all of the commission running out and buying or renting \$95 parking spots and providing them for anybody. Everybody chips in their \$28 a month and 62 cars are parked as a result of that. But there's no other extra subsidization or any extra arrangement that seems to be of the type that the member's question is suggesting.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It's my pleasure to be able to talk with you about the Public Service Commission this afternoon, Mr. Minister, and I do welcome all of your officials.

Could you please review for me the changes that have occurred in the subvotes of your department? In the 1993-94 *Estimates* you had five categories of subvote and they were: administration; second, accommodation and central services; third, staffing and employee development; fourth, employee relations and compensation; and fifth, job classification.

In this year's *Estimates*, there are four categories of subvote. First, administration; second, accommodation and central services; third, staffing and development; and fourth, employee relations.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, and to the member, the changes that you've noted are as a result of a reorganization within the commission in which employee relations and job classification were merged, brought together into one unit, and resulted in some efficiencies. And it explains why it's being presented in a different way.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, can you tell me where the issue of employee compensation is now handled?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, it is in this unit that we're talking about. It's in this unit that we're talking about, the employee relations unit.

Ms. Haverstock: — Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, and where is the issue of job reclassification now handled? Is that in employee relations as well?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Yes, the same unit.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you. Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, I have some very specific questions regarding the functions of the Public Service Commission. How many employees have been hired for government departments and agencies through the Public Service Commission?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, can the member just say in what period of time we're talking about. I think we have numbers for the last complete year which would be up to the end of March '93, but then this year we've been operating . . . we're not quite to the end of the fiscal year. So could the member just specify what time period we're talking about.

Ms. Haverstock: — Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, I'm most interested of course in the period up to and including this time if you have that available.

(1615)

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I can come fairly close. I've got the statistics for this fiscal year up to January 31 which is up to a month ago. Let me just summarize these numbers. First of all, with respect to in-scope appointments, there were 688 competitions held from April 1, 1993 to January 31, 1994. Out of scope, there were 190 appointments made and the total of those two, therefore, is 878 appointments made in the 10-month period that we're talking about.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. I understand that you have committed to the official opposition to answer some statistical questions that they asked earlier regarding your department, but I do want some clarification with some of the things I'll be posing.

How many employees have been transferred from in scope to out of scope in this period of time to which you've been referring? I would very much prefer that I be provided with a list of those transfers including employee name, department, old classification or title, new classification or title, and salary change, if any. And I, of course, agree that you can provide me with these details outside of the House, but would prefer very much if you would attempt to answer the original question here today.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Could I just ask the member, Mr. Chair, for some clarification? Are we interested in jobs that have been moved from in-scope status to out-of-scope status? Or are we talking about individuals who have in one way or another find themselves in an out-of-scope position that used to be in an in-scope position, and I assume that took place in

this last 10-month period?

Ms. Haverstock: — Yes, Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, I'm talking about employees, not jobs.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Yes, we can provide that information, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Haverstock: — Do you in fact have some of that information available for us today, or is that too specific?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, we haven't developed that information so I can't give any of it to the member today, but it is available and we can dig it out.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you. Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, how many employees have been reclassified government-wide in the past year through the Public Service Commission's reclassification process? And for my information and for the information of the House, could you please briefly outline the process, the process through which an employee or a department must submit in order to have a position reclassified? And that would include such things as the forms used, the interviews with employee and supervisors, that kind of thing.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, I apologize for taking a few minutes to acquaint myself with the details of the reclassification procedure, and I'll come to that in a moment.

But first with respect to the question of the reclassifications that have taken place, I have those numbers in the 10 months that we talked about up until the end of January this year. There were a total of 1,028 transactions during that period. These reclassification transactions can occur and do occur as a result of requests from employees who feel that their position is not properly classified, or from departments who may feel that a position does not bear the proper classification.

In a situation like we've experienced so often lately with merging departments or parts of departments, we'll often have, in effect, a new job that appears as a result of combining duties formerly done by two positions and that would be a department request for reclassification. So they come to the commission in two ways, either from the employee or from the department.

In this period now, going back to the period in question, there were — I'll deal with them in two classifications — there were encumbered positions where there was somebody there and then there were vacant positions that form a second category. In the encumbered positions, as a result of the review of the classification, there were 473 upgrades, 54 downgrades, and 262 no changes. Now in the second category, the vacant positions, there were 96 upgrades, 124 downgrades, and 19 no changes.

Now that is a total of 1,028 transactions. And if you

add those together the upgrades were 569, the downgrades were 178, and the no changes were 281.

I also have the numbers for the preceding year, 12 months, and they're similar. And if the member nods, I'll go through those. Or I can send them over, whatever — I'll send them over to you, fine.

Now I want to spend a moment talking about the procedure. We have a classifications unit within the Public Service Commission. It reports to Mr. McKillop. There are eight classification officers whose job it is to deal with these reclassification requests as well as other related duties.

The request is received either from the employee or from the department. It must be accompanied by a job description showing the job that the employee actually performs. We also require an organization chart from the department.

The classification officer who is put in charge of the case thereafter interviews the employee to confirm the work that's being done in the job. And the officer then interviews the supervisor of that employee and often the manager of that unit, the person to whom the supervisor reports, or ultimately reports.

The purpose of those interviews is to confirm the job that is actually being done. And then the classification officer evaluates the job in relation to or up against the job evaluation standards that have been developed within the commission, and that will lead to a classification decision. And it'll be one of the three kinds that we talked about, either an upgrade or a downgrade or no change.

There is of course an appeal mechanism. It's different for in-scope jobs than for out-of-scope jobs, but there is a mechanism by which the employee or the department can appeal the decision of the classification officer.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Earlier I asked about employees and now I'm going to ask about positions. Could you commit to provide me with a list of all positions that have been reclassified by the Public Service Commission in the same period of time. And I ask that in each case that I be provided with the position number, the employee name, the department, the old classification or title, the new classification or title, and salary change, if any.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Yes, I'll undertake to provide that information to the member.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you. Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, in a letter to the editor of the *Leader-Post*, Mr. Garry Aldridge, the chief of staff to the Premier wrote, and I quote:

The 16 staff referred to in your article are employees in Executive Council who received promotions to new jobs last year, or had their jobs reclassified because they involve greater responsibility.

Can you confirm for me that those reclassifications were reviewed by the Public Service Commission and went through the entire process, as you have just described in my previous question to you.

(1630)

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Could I clarify again what 16 positions we're talking about? I probably read Mr. Aldridge's letter but I don't recall it. And are we talking about ministerial assistants or are we talking about other people employed? The member's nodding, indicating that these are ministerial assistants? Okay. I will just take a moment, Mr. Chair, and then answer the question.

The classification of ministerial assistant is excluded from The Public Service Act, or a lot of positions in the public service that are excluded from the Act, you know, and these are among them.

And with respect to excluded positions, the commission isn't involved either in the staffing action or in the salary administration for these positions, nor in the . . . included in that we're not involved in the classification of those positions. They do not follow the route that I have described to the member.

So we did not deal with any reclassifications within the classification of ministerial assistant.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and Mr. Minister. Specifically can you tell me what interviews were conducted, job descriptions completed, and other procedures undertaken by the Public Service Commission with the following 17 individuals from the Department of Executive Council.

First, Sandra Loden; (2) Lynn Gidluck; (3) Yvonne Gray; (4) Sharon Husnik; (5) Sharon Lyons; (6) Lindy McIntyre; (7) Jacqueline Pitre; (8) Chandra Prasad; (9) Bill Rybotycki; (10) Monica Sanchez; (11) Lorena Sawchuk; (12) Susan Shoulak; (13) Barbara Storer; (14) Margaret Tustin; (15) Wendy Ward; (16) Sheena Weir; and (17) Virginia Wilkinson.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I'm not familiar with most of the names on that list. I'm familiar with some of them. Would it be a satisfactory way to deal with this if the member sent over the list and we'll provide her with that information when we check it out?

Ms. Haverstock: — Yes, Mr. Chair, I will indeed. In fact I will do that now.

Mr. Minister, in last year's Committee of Finance for the Department of Executive Council, the Premier was asked about reclassifications of employees in ministers' offices. And his written response was given to me as stating the following, and I quote:

Generic job descriptions for ministerial assistants do not exist. Job duties and responsibilities are delegated to staff members by each individual minister.

How many government employees for which the Public Service Commission is responsible enjoy this level of autonomy and freedom from rules by which all other thousands of bona fide public civil servants must abide? And in other words, is it commonplace for individuals to earn in the 40 to \$60,000 pay range without any documentation regarding their duties when they are bona fide public servants?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, speaking as the minister responsible for the Commission, the unclassified service are not under our wing. We're not responsible in the human resources sense, so we do not know whether job descriptions exist or not in any formal way. The unclassified service would include all of the order in council employees of government.

For example in my Department of Justice, the lawyers are appointed by order in council. And I must say I don't know as I stand here whether we have formal job descriptions or not. I expect we have, but I don't know, and I certainly don't know as the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission. So I'm just not able to answer the question that the member presents. It is in effect not within our reach, as a Public Service Commission.

Ms. Haverstock: — Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, I think perhaps my preamble may have had you not focus on my specific question to you. I'm wondering how many government employees for which the Public Service Commission is responsible enjoy that kind of level of autonomy and freedom from rules, as far as job descriptions and other things are concerned.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — For those employees for whom the Public Service Commission is responsible, every position has a job description.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I thought that that would be the answer. Is it common practice for the Public Service Commission to advertise vacant positions, and under what circumstances do you not advertise competitions, and is that policy under review?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, all permanent positions are advertised in the broad sense of the term. Sometimes the advertising will be in the newspapers, sometimes it will be in the internal bulletin. Where the job is a promotional opportunity or in scope, the movement will be from within the public service and you're not recruiting outside, so you do it internally.

There is an exception. We don't advertise when we know of someone who is on a re-employment list who's coming back to do the job, bidding back in. There is no purpose in advertising that because the employee has a right to the job, so we don't do it there. But the general answer is that all permanent positions are advertised.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. So just for my own understanding of this, what you're saying is that all vacant positions, all competitions are in fact

advertised in some way? Thank you.

I'll ask one more question of you and your officials and then turn it over to the member from Souris-Cannington, and I hope we have an opportunity to meet again soon to have further discussions on this.

In your own ministerial office, as minister in charge of the Public Service Commission, how do you recruit and did you recruit your own staff? Did you conduct any form of open competition to the general public, for example?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I assume that the minister does not mean the senior management of the commission but rather refers to my personal staff in my office. There's been some turnover over the two and a half years, but in no case was there public advertising for those positions. I think the member will appreciate that.

In the case of two of my ministerial assistants, they are people that I knew from my previous life, if I can use that term, and who I did not approach personally but one of my other staff approached on my behalf to indicate whether there was any interest. And then sometimes there was and sometimes there wasn't, you know.

If there was, then it was followed by interviews basically with my staff to determine whether that person would be a fit in the office. Very important, as you will appreciate, that people be able to get along in a workplace.

When the comfort level was high enough — and it wasn't always high enough — then we would make an offer. Just as I recall, that was the case with I think all of my ministerial assistants.

As I indicated, there would be some turnover. Debbie Hartung, who the member will know, was my first chief of staff, as it were, the lead ministerial assistant. She did, in effect, the recruiting pursuant to my suggestions, in the case of the ministerial assistants.

In the case of the secretaries in my office, I didn't have any direct hand in that. I didn't know the people who we hired until they came to work for us. That work was all done by my ministerial assistants and the other secretaries who were working there. And I think they all participated in interviews, trying again to find a fit and the kind of skill level that you'd want to have.

But again, I want to say to the member quite plainly, there was no advertising or bulletining or anything like that. I think we were deluged with résumés, and there's a steady flow of résumés. And I think that likely all of the people were picked out from that source, although I couldn't tell you just as I stand here.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister, and Mr. Chair, and your officials. I do want you to know that I did publicly advertise for every position in my offices, and I look forward to having the

opportunity to question you further. Thank you very much.

(1645)

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Minister, having given you a little time to reconsider your answers earlier this afternoon, I'd like to go back to this problem that I'm having figuring out who's getting what for free in the area of parking.

Now your explanation to me was that you have 62 cars to park in 62 lots, of which you've had to rent 21 by the employees, who all contributed \$28 each. However, the 41 were supplied by the government through its lease from the landlord. And that means that the government is now paying the landlord more money for the building, the offices, plus the parking lot. In other words, it is a perk to 41 people with free parking. And even though they're contributing themselves to alleviate the problem of the rest of the people that are working there, this becomes a subsidy and a perk.

Was this a negotiated perk as a result of collective bargaining with the union in charge, or is this something that just sort of accidentally happened? And I have some other questions; I'll let you answer this one first.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, the lease in question is in the Bank of Montreal Building in downtown Regina on the corner of Scarth Street and 11th Avenue. And that lease was entered into on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan by SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation). It was entered into in 1988, and the provisions that I speak of for the provision of the 41 parking spaces were a part of that lease. That is a 10-year lease and there it is.

My understanding, my advice is that it was provided on the basis of a government policy that is approximately a decade old, as I understand it, that two parking spaces will be provided for every five employees; two spots for every five employees. Now I don't personally know that, but I'm told that that was the policy and remains the policy and has been the policy for about the last decade.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, Minister, I wonder if you would take the time to check that policy out and find out for us exactly what the policy is and report back to us because there seems to be some disgruntled workers that are passing us questions about this particular matter. So knowing that, I think that should be a red flag for everybody involved and obviously while some of these little things are little things, they do seem to fester and grow as time goes by.

So my question that follows then has to be: do other government workers get the same kind of break? And I don't know if you know that yet or if you'll have to report back. But it's key I guess to the question being asked, is: are other government workers in other

departments — for example the very people that these folks employ for other departments — are they getting those kind of perks through some negotiation of the unions or union contracts or are they excluded from this kind of perk?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The policy in question is not a Public Service Commission policy of course. I think the member knows that. The policy that I referred to was and is a government-wide policy, and those spaces are allocated to a department and how the department deals with those spaces and how they allocate them is up to the management of the department itself.

I have described the way in which the Public Service Commission has dealt with its allocation, with the 62 spaces and the \$28 a month for parking in Regina, so I'm not able to answer any further than the Public Service Commission itself. I don't know what the situation is in other departments as to how they allocate the spaces that have been allotted to them pursuant to the policy.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you. Well, Minister, I guess this leads me to ask the question: should the government be providing these types of perks in this kind of economic climate? What message does this send out to other workers in the downtown core of Regina, for example — people, for example, that work in places like Eaton's and maybe The Bay or some place like that? It sends them a message that workers of equal rating, in many ways, if you have a government job, are allowed to have just that much better lifestyle and things provided for them. And so it gives a kind of a negative connotation to the whole of the way we treat people in our society. As soon as you work in the public sector, you automatically get extra breaks.

I want to go on to the subject of computers, Minister, and if you want to comment on this, you can certainly do that as you think about the computer question. Last year we received as part of the PSC estimate package, a 10-page list of computer purchases, which I have attached here. Do you have a total for those purchases for '92-93? And I know that we will be receiving another itemized list for the 1993-94 fiscal year, and I appreciate the minister's cooperation in this regard.

However, I am curious about the total. Do you have a total on what was spent on computers for the last fiscal year?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I think the member has the information for the purchases for '92-93 that total \$334,189. And the estimate for '93-94, which is the year ending the end of this month, is \$138,000. And I just remind the member that those costs are to support a system of data that includes all of the employees of executive government, all 10,000 of them. So I just ask the member to keep that in mind when he's assessing the information I have given to him in light of similar information from other departments.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank

you, Minister. Obviously you have twigged onto the need for the public to be able to see that the money spent on all of this technical equipment is reasonable and fair. Certainly for almost \$500,000 worth of computers in two years' time is an awful pile of money to be spent on equipment. It's a lot of tax dollars. And most people, knowing that they can buy a personal computer of their own for 2 or \$3,000 at the very most, even with programs, would have a hard time realizing that half a million dollars needs to be spent unless you put it into the perspective of 10,000 people.

I guess one of the unfortunate things that comes to mind is that it seems like in many of the jobs the job description seems to have boiled down to which party you have a card with in Saskatchewan, and a lot of folks worry about that. They worry about the fact that patronage seems to be served more than other criteria.

Last year, Minister, we sent you a package of questions — we call them our generic questions. They seemed to take in all of the sort of little what you might almost call nit-picky types of things that we do need to have answered. And I was wondering, sir, if you would comply with that same package, or should we reprint it and have it sent over again this year? Or could we have you just use the same package of questions and answer them for this year the same as we did last year?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Well I certainly have no objection to that, Mr. Chair. Last year, as I recall it, the arrangements were worked out with the . . . involving more than one department. I think all departments answered the same questions, and I assume that you're in touch with our House leadership to try and deal with it in that way. I have no objection to it. Speaking on behalf of the commission, we'd be prepared to respond to the same questions as last year. But it is a larger question of course, and the member may want his House leadership and our House leadership to work together on this same question.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Minister. Of course if that's the process we want to do we will initiate that immediately, and most certainly we will want to pursue that. Because it did work very well and I think it saved us a lot of time in committee. And that, I think, is important so that we can get on to some of the more important issues that the public want to hear about.

In the area of employment, I'm not sure if you've gone into individual hirings, but there are some people concerned about certain positions and I want to take up one with you as an example here of what people are concerned about.

Now it says as the minister responsible for PSC you are supposed to ensure that people are treated fairly when applying for jobs. Your government also promises to make sure the jobs were not filled with patronage. Patronage appointments were not going to be made. How is it possible then that you are allowing individuals like Virginia Wilkinson, an NDP partisan member of your cabinet press office, to walk into a

position in info services?

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 5 p.m.