

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise this afternoon and introduce to you and all members of the Assembly, 81 grade 7 students from the schools of St. Alphonsus, St. Paul's and St. Mary's from Yorkton. They're seated in your west gallery, Mr. Speaker, and they are accompanied this afternoon with teachers Mr. Leroy Persick, Mr. Steve Kozicki and Miss Barb Zwirsky, along with chaperons Ms. Janet Varga and bus drivers, Mr. Dave Dubnyk and Mr. Brad Hanson.

This is one of the largest delegations, I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, to the Assembly and I'll be meeting with them shortly for photographs and refreshments. In the interim I wonder, Mr. Speaker, if you could pass the hat in the Assembly to help defray some of the cost of the refreshments.

I ask all members of the Assembly to join with me in welcoming the students from Yorkton.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to the Assembly, I would like to introduce 23 grade 6 students up in your gallery, along with their teacher, Diane Dubé and Annette LeNouail. Diane and Annette make it a regular habit to attend every year and I'm pleased to see them here again.

I would like all the House to welcome them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to introduce some guests in your speaker, Mr. Speaker . . . in your gallery, Mr. Speaker — I'll get that right yet — Rebecca Buckton and Connie Buckton who are small-business people from the town of Elbow who are struggling like many businesses in small town rural Saskatchewan and have come down here to witness proceedings in the House this afternoon.

So I would ask all members to please help me welcome the Bucktons.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Professional Secretaries Day

Mr. Hagel: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today is Professional Secretaries Day. In any office, be it political, business, educational, or service industry,

all work would come to an immediate halt if it were not for the person or persons who keep the operation glued together — the secretary.

Today's high speed, demanding and increasingly technical world, the professional secretary is truly a professional in every sense of the word. For one thing, the technology they use as a matter of course defies the intelligence of an Einstein. I dare say most of us still have fear struck into our hearts by a portable typewriter, a sorting copier, merging computer, or speedy fax machine — all "star wars" equipment that our secretaries use as a matter of course. They are whizzes and we are not, and we would be lost without them.

On top of this of course they bring the human touch to the contact our offices have with constituents or customers. And so to our caucus office and constituency secretaries and constituency assistants, I know I am joined by all members of the Assembly in saying thank you. On this one day we recognize what you do for us all year round. Thank you to our secretaries, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Weyburn Red Wings Win

Mr. Wormsbecker: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday my colleague, the member from Moosomin, offered his congratulations to the Weyburn Red Wings for winning the Anavet Cup which is the tier II junior hockey championship series between Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Some hon. members may have wondered where I was yesterday, Mr. Speaker. Well I was back at home savouring the celebration victory together with the Red Wings.

Today it is my first opportunity in this House to congratulate the players, the co-coaches, Ron Rumball and Dwight McMillan, and the Red Wing organization, including the many volunteers it takes to sponsor a community junior hockey team.

The Red Wings advanced to the national Centennial Cup series commencing Tuesday, April 29, at Olds, Alberta. The Red Wings' victory over the St. Boniface Saints bodes well for them. Ten years ago the Red Wings won the Centennial Cup, having defeated the Saints on their way to victory.

I wish the Wings well and I wish them the best of luck in their final play-offs. It's only fitting for me to conclude my remarks by saying: go, Wings, go. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Increase in Saskatoon Charity Bingo Revenues

Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to inform the House today of some good news for Saskatoon charities. As most of us know, many people in our communities work very hard at bingos, raising

money for worthwhile community activities. And preliminary charity gaming figures for 1993-94 are now available from the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority.

I'm pleased to report that charity revenues from bingo activities in Saskatoon were up by more than \$239,000 in the last year, giving Saskatoon charities nearly \$5 million in bingo revenues. That amounts to a 4.8 per cent increase in charity fund-raising through bingo after expenses and prizes have been taken out. And what it means, of course, is more money for important organizations and programs which serve the people of Saskatoon. These figures do not include charity revenues raised through other licensed gaming activities such as Nevada tickets, raffles, and casinos licensed by the Liquor and Gaming Authority.

These figures are an increase of more than 1.2 million. The charities and exhibition associations received almost 53 million from bingo and other gaming activities. In contrast, the province collected only 10.5 million in licensing fees from these activities. So most of the money goes to charity and sporting organizations.

The Speaker: — The member's time has elapsed.

Tribute and Recognition to the Province's Secretaries

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to join with my colleague across the way, the member from Moose Jaw Palliser, in recognizing that this is a kind of a special day that we set aside to pay tribute to some of our unsung heroes. And I'm certainly not referring to those that do battle in war and so on, but to those folks who work hard and diligently, long hours, nights, evenings, Saturdays, to make sure that the work gets done, and in the end, Mr. Speaker, make the rest of us in this legislature look so good and wonderful and as if we know what we're talking about.

So, Mr. Speaker, I take great pride in also paying tribute and recognition to all of the secretaries throughout the province. But more so, Mr. Speaker, I think I would be remiss if I did not at the same time pay special attention to the highest-paid secretary in our province, the Provincial Secretary. I don't think that we should forget him as well.

But all kidding aside, Mr. Speaker, I want to pay tribute to the secretaries of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

St. Walburg Elks Hall

Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this opportunity to speak about the grand opening of the new St. Walburg Elks hall this past Saturday. The ceremonies in the beautiful new hall were quite entertaining with representation from within the Elks and the Royal Purple on hand from across Saskatchewan.

I want to specifically mention Lady Judy Helperl of the Royal Purple Lodge #201 in St. Walburg and Exalted Ruler Brother Lyle Knight also of St. Walburg. Claude Lalonde was the master of ceremonies and throughout the evening received many accolades as the work he did in raising money was quite remarkable.

The new Elks hall cost about 600,000 with absolutely no government funding. Presently there is only 120,000 of this still outstanding. It is expected that this sum will be paid off within just two years, Mr. Speaker. It is really quite amazing to think that such a small community of St. Walburg has already raised and paid off \$480,000 of the bill with no outside funding.

A few years back the Stabler report on communities named 62 viable communities within Saskatchewan of which 52 were rural and 10 were major cities. St. Walburg was one of the 52 rural communities deemed to be viable. Their facility is one that would be the envy of any major centre, let alone a small town. The community spirit of St. Walburg is obvious and the Stabler's findings were confirmed for me last Saturday.

To all the Elks and the Royal Purple in St. Walburg, my congratulations.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Pork Production in Saskatchewan

Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm pleased to recognize that a new strategy has been put in place that will support the expansion of the pork production industry in Saskatchewan.

The goals of the strategy include helping the industry to attract capital for expansion; increased public awareness; addressing environmental concerns including odour control; and the creation of manpower training and development skills.

In addition an industry task force has been created with the responsibility of setting up a fund through which investments will be made in pork production projects. An office of specially trained staff will be set up in the Saskatoon Rural Service Centre in order to increase awareness and assist related production.

Some other good news, Mr. Speaker, from the pork industry is that a recent study by Ernst & Young has concluded that Saskatchewan has many competitive advantages which make expanding pork production attractive. Included in these advantages were low cost of production, high quality product, very high productivity, and low density of population, which reduces health problems.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan Pork International sells more pork than we produce so the demand is obvious. The expansion of the pork industry supports our government's *Agriculture 2000* strategy in all sectors. It is a fact that this type of expansion creates jobs for rural Saskatchewan and adds value to our basic

agricultural products. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Liquor Franchise Policy

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I direct my question to the minister in charge of the sin bin, the liquor and gaming commission. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, last month Connie and Bill Buckton, who run the Elbow Hotel, were told by your officials that the liquor commission was about to yank their liquor vending licence in an effort to increase liquor sales in that community.

I asked you to check into that matter, and the Minister of Economic Development at the time took notice on your behalf. And even though that occurred many weeks ago, Mr. Minister, we and the Bucktons have heard nothing, have received no answer whatsoever.

The liquor commission, Mr. Minister, is going to pull their licence, a move that is going to certainly destroy their business. And I ask you, Mr. Minister, why is that happening? Why do you want to close down another business in rural Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd be pleased to answer the question of the member from Rosthern. But let me first of all correct some of the background which you put before the House.

The licence was issued on a temporary basis, as you may or may not know, and the people who received the temporary licence were informed that in fact the franchise would be advertised and businesses in that community would have the opportunity to bid on the franchise. That process followed with four applications. The regional manager conducted interviews by the applicants on March 23, and subsequent to that the Liquor and Gaming Authority made a decision with respect to the franchise.

I want to say to the member opposite that franchisees are well aware of the fact that liquor franchises are not for sale in Saskatchewan as they are in Alberta. We examined, based on many different criteria, the franchise viability, the location within the community, the existing operations, and the ability to provide quality service. And that is the basis on which the decisions are made.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You've been quoted, Mr. Minister, as simply saying that you're responding to needs of the community, and I would like to know who in the community of Elbow have you spoken to about this matter. It can't be the 350 people who already signed the petition opposing this move. And that petition has been delivered to your office already, Mr. Minister. It can't be the Elbow

Town Council who keep supporting this franchise or who want the franchise kept in the hotel. Who in the community is asking you to make this move, Mr. Minister?

Mr. Minister, the people of Elbow are telling you they cannot afford to lose another business in this community. Why don't you listen to the people of Elbow instead of taking all of your direction from your cabinet colleagues who simply have dollar signs in their eyes and want more commission on the liquor sales?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well, Mr. Speaker, let me answer that by saying firstly that I have been personally petitioned and have spoken with no one personally. That is the job of the people who work for the Liquor and Gaming Authority. And as I have indicated, the regional manager would see that as being his job and in fact would do that as being his job.

But let me, Mr. Speaker, speak to what we have done as a government with respect to small business. Since we were elected in October of 1991, we have done a dramatic reduction in the small-business tax load. We have eliminated the PST (provincial sales tax) for meals. And I want to say with respect to the hotels industry, we will be injecting in the neighbourhood of \$15 million a year into rural hotels and urban hotels on the video lottery terminal program.

Let me say, in the last week's examination of revenues from VLTs (video lottery terminal), the establishment to which you refer would, over a period of one year, generate \$22,700 in revenues over an annual period. The commissions on franchise in the community of Elbow were something over \$14,500 net.

So to make the argument that the fair process that we have used to determine a franchisee for that community is putting a business out of existence, is simply not correct, based on the facts that I've just shared with you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Mr. Speaker, thank you much. Mr. Minister, for a long time I thought that you were at least a partial businessman who understood how businesses operate. And when the line gets thin, \$14,000 — or whatever it happens to be — is a tremendously big figure between making it and not making it, Mr. Minister.

The Bucktons have been told that the real reason for you pulling their licence is that liquor sales were down. Your officials and you even have a name for that; it's called open-shopping concept — making liquor more accessible in order to increase the sales and the consumption, Mr. Minister.

Would you think . . . let's put it this way, Mr. Speaker. You would think that an NDP (New Democratic Party)

government that professes to promote wellness, declining liquor sales would be looked at favourably. But I guess your government's financial wellness depends so heavily on liquor and gambling that you cannot afford to pay much attention to what's best for the families and for the communities.

Mr. Minister, is it so important for you to suck out every possible dime in liquor revenue out of Saskatchewan that you're prepared to send down the tubes another small business in rural Saskatchewan? Are you prepared to do that?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, let me say one more time to the member opposite that the business to which you refer should generate, and probably will in the next fiscal year, net revenues of around \$22,700 from the video lottery terminal program. And the fact is that the net from the franchise in that community has netted in the neighbourhood of \$14,500.

But let me say this to the member opposite: that I find this line of questioning from him especially difficult to take when in fact you were the government that introduced liquor advertising to this province in the 1980s — the program that you sponsored and supported as a member of the cabinet and as a member of the back-bench in the former administration.

Let me say, Mr. Speaker, that this decision was made based on the criteria that I have put forth to this House. It was done by the Liquor Authority without political interference; and if the member opposite is asking me to make a ministerial decision and politically interfere with a decision made with the selection of this franchise, then I say to him, that that just simply will not happen.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, I would say to you to get involved in this issue because there are many, many inconsistencies here. We're hearing over the news now that there are two petitions going around . . . (inaudible) . . . That one is for and one against, so why should I get involved? That both those petitions, an urban and a rural one, are in favour of leaving the franchise where it is, Mr. Speaker. We've been told by the owners that it was the liquor commission that approached this grocery store for the franchise, not the other way around through advertising. So, Mr. Minister, a lot of inconsistency.

I'm going to ask you a very simple question now, Mr. Minister. Will you commit that you will meet with Connie Buckton today, this afternoon? She made a special trip to Regina to see you. You meet with her. You explain to her why this avenue of support to financially keep her struggling business afloat, why that decision has been made by you to take it away from her. Could you make that commitment, Mr. Minister, to meet with her this afternoon?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, let me say to the member from Rosthern that I would be more than pleased to meet with Mrs. Buckton this afternoon to explain the position as put forth by the Liquor Authority.

But what I will tell her is the same that I will tell you. If you are expecting political interference in the decision-making process, that simply will not happen. The Liquor and Gaming Authority has a set of regulations and criteria by which they select franchises. We don't do these selections in the minister's office as your administration did for the years that you were in power. Those days are over, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Interprovincial Trade

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Economic Development.

Mr. Minister, we seem to be getting some very mixed messages from you when it comes to the matter of dropping interprovincial trade barriers. Back in January you are quoted widely in the press as being all in favour of dropping trade barriers. In fact you said by the end of June that Saskatchewan would be in a much better place. And matter of fact it was one of the few areas that the members of the official opposition congratulated you on in the throne speech.

But now we see you're calling the plan to drop trade barriers naive and saying that those who believe in it probably also believe in the Easter Bunny. Why the change of heart, Mr. Minister? Why are you now blocking the positive effort of other provinces to open up provincial borders to freer interprovincial trade? Why are you doing that?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member clearly, that those of you on the Conservative benches while in government supporting the Free Trade Agreement, as you did with the United States, never taking into consideration the issues that we are now facing with the attempts to cut off exports of durum wheat to the United States, clearly indicate that no matter how hard we try to lower the barriers, which we are doing between provinces, that there will always be areas where we will want to look at and consider existing provisions where some of our workers, for example in northern Saskatchewan, might be protected by the surface leases as it would work in regards to the expanding uranium mines.

When it comes to lowering barriers as it would protect the farm land in Saskatchewan, when it would protect the utilities in Saskatchewan, I say that as we lower barriers there are areas that we will want to protect.

Now I want to be clear that we have taken the position of lowering barriers. We're doing that. There are very,

very few areas of contention between the western provinces. And I say to you, that if you believe that all barriers should be removed or in fact will ever be removed, I say to you that simply isn't a reasonable position to take.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, you are the one that are flip-flopping on the issue. You know full well that if there were no Free Trade Agreement in place today that it would be much more difficult between the Americans and ourselves on a whole host of issues.

Mr. Minister, why are you baulking at this now, after you wholeheartedly endorsed the process? Is it because of the disastrous economic climate that you're creating in this province through labour laws, higher taxation, higher utility rates? Isn't it the fact, Mr. Minister, after you get done wrecking the Saskatchewan economy that you're going to have to practise protectionism in this province because you have priced Saskatchewan out of the market-place. Isn't that the reason, Mr. Minister, that you're now balking at the very ideas that you were leading the charge on earlier this year? Isn't that the reason, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, at every meeting that I have attended dealing with trade barriers, and I know the deputy leader of our government has attended meetings, we take the same position — that we are in favour of lowering barriers between provinces. But obviously there are areas of concern where we will want to protect, I say again for example, the opportunity to have affirmative action for working people in northern Saskatchewan. And I must say that the ministers at the meetings I have attended are totally in support of the position that Saskatchewan has taken.

I want to say to the member opposite that when he talks about the climate in Saskatchewan and talks about the climate in Alberta, it seems to me that the members of the Conservative caucus are attempting to follow along the lines of Ralph Klein in taking over the Reform Party position in an attempt to salvage what's left of that rump party over there.

But I tell you, Mr. Member, it simply isn't working because a Conservative is a Conservative is a Conservative and you will have a difficult time explaining what your trade policy was on which you lost the last election in 1991.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the minister doesn't have to stand in this House and explain about his love of travel and his wont to go to meetings all over the place — we all know about that.

The simple fact is, Mr. Minister, as you go to these meetings you, on one hand, endorse the concept of dropping interprovincial trade barriers, now you're saying that people that believe in that are compared to the Easter Bunny. Yesterday your Premier was comparing business people in this province to Chicken Little.

The fact is, Mr. Minister, that this province has a very serious economic problem on its hands. You've got over 81,000 people on welfare, you're minus 12,000 jobs; the only way you're going to rectify that, Mr. Minister, is to get on with reality and get on with dropping interprovincial trade barriers so that people in this province have some hope.

And, Mr. Minister, clearly I think it's important for you to stand in this House today and unequivocally say that you support the process and that you will stop denigrating those provinces in Canada who are not NDP who are pushing this process forward. Will you do that, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that the member gets up and talks about all the trade barriers but never mentions which ones he's talking about. Is he talking about the affirmative action program, which requires 40 per cent of the employment created at the mine expansions in the uranium area in northern Saskatchewan to be done away with? Is that what he's saying?

Now if that is the case, and if the Leader of the Liberal Party takes that position, because I know she has strong opinions about lowering trade barriers, if what you're saying is that you want the surface leases or the agreement with the uranium mines changed that would not require 40 per cent local employment or northern employment, tell us about that.

But I want to say that you can't have it both ways. You can't say get rid of all the barriers but we want to hire Northerners as part of our economic strategy.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Crown Land Leases

Ms. Haverstock: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture this afternoon.

Mr. Minister, yesterday I posed some questions to you about the way your department discriminates against farmers on the basis of age. One farmer lost his bid to lease Crown land by only two rating points, and we contacted your department again. And the Department of Agriculture said to us that they couldn't give us any information because you told them not to, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Minister, all we wanted was further factual information. And I want to know if this is your idea of open, honest, and accountable government.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Speaker, I think I outlined quite clearly what our policy is on land allocation yesterday. Age is indeed one of the three criteria that we use in selecting applicants. We defend that. I think we have a problem in this province where the average age of farmers is something like 60 years old. And if the Liberal leader is suggesting that we don't encourage young farmers, I would like to hear that.

We do not give out information on individual clients, if that's what she was asking for, but the policy is very clear. One of the criteria we use is age selection, and somebody has complained to the Human Rights Commission about that. And it's a policy that's been around for 50 years or so, like right from Liberals to Conservatives and NDP have always used age as a criteria. And we believe that's good public policy and we intend to keep using it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, you know full well that the request for information had nothing to do with a specific individual. I have with me a copy of the new agricultural Crown land application-for-lease form, and that's been made available to farmers this year, Mr. Minister. On its first page it asks for farmers' date of birth.

I also have with me a copy of the lease application form from 1989, Mr. Minister, and nowhere on the entire application does it require an applicant to state their age and date of birth.

Mr. Minister, I want to know exactly when this policy started and how many farmers have lost leases due to the age component on this policy.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Speaker, as I have stated earlier, to my knowledge, going back to Ross Thatcher days, that has been a criteria and continues to be so. We do not eliminate people on the basis of age, but age is one of the criteria that we use in selection. So we use distance, resource base, and age in some combination.

We have changed the form — that's true — we have changed the criteria somewhat. And as I pointed out yesterday, we have given the local RMs (rural municipality) the authority to weight those factors differently if they so choose in order to suit the local area. But age has been a criterion and will continue to be a criterion.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I pointed out to you yesterday, Mr. Minister, that one of the farmers you've discriminated against has taken his case to the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission. The commission wisely set aside the matter so that it could first rule on an application by your very department. Your department wants an exemption from the Human Rights Code.

Outside the House yesterday you said you didn't even know that an application had been made. Now someone in your department, Mr. Minister, recognizes that the leasing policy of your department is in direct violation of the Saskatchewan Human Rights Code, because last week the Human Rights Commission had a hearing on your request for an exemption.

Mr. Minister, who exactly applied to the commission and on whose authority?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Speaker, there indeed has been a complaint to the Human Rights Commission. I think a complaint does not necessarily mean there's a violation. And the Human Rights Commission has not ruled on it. If there is a violation and we are ordered not to pursue our policy, then we will obviously have to abide by the rulings of the Human Rights Commission. In the meantime we are strongly defending our public policy, which is to help young farmers get established.

If the Liberal leader is opposed to that policy, say so, but do not denigrate the civil servants who are acting in good faith and are defending our public policy and which we do not hide from. We think that there is very good merit in having young farmers established in this province and we will tend to continue that until we're ordered to do otherwise.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now just help me out with what you just said, Mr. Minister. In this House yesterday you made it clear that you support the policy of age discrimination. And you said, and I quote: "We do not believe that that violates the Human Rights Code." But your Department of Agriculture, Mr. Minister, has applied to the Human Rights Commission as of March 7 for an exemption, for special permission to violate the code.

So on the one hand, you don't think that it violates the code, but on the other hand you've gone out of your way to get special consideration to break the code. So which one is it, Mr. Minister? Because you can't have it both ways. If you don't think the policy violates the Human Rights Code, why then are you asking for an exemption?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Speaker, I thought I was fairly clear. We support very strongly putting young farmers on the land. We think it is very good public policy to help young . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — There has been a complaint to the Human Rights Commission, which does not necessarily mean there's been a violation. We are doing whatever we can to convince the Human Rights Commission to allow us to continue with our policy, which we think is good policy.

Where does the Liberal Party stand with respect to young farmers? Are you saying that we should not help young farmers get started?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Cameco Board Remuneration

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the minister responsible for the Crown Investments Corporation. Mr. Minister, in preparation for the annual shareholders' meeting for the Cameco Corporation being held tomorrow, the company has distributed a management proxy circular. That document outlines the fact that one of your government's appointments to the board, Mr. Allan Blakeney, is receiving \$15,000 a year retainer plus a thousand dollars for every meeting of the board he attends.

The document also states that Mr. Blakeney is receiving special compensation in the amount of \$36,000 a year for special corporate governance. Mr. Minister, can you tell this Assembly what Mr. Blakeney does for an extra \$36,000 a year and what precisely is special corporate governance?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Penner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think as the member well knows, that Cameco is a private corporation, that the government has the opportunity to appoint some board members to this corporation, and we have chosen to nominate Mr. Blakeney, and he was accepted by the other shareholders as one of the board members of Cameco.

What Mr. Blakeney gets paid is not a concern of this government; it is up to Cameco Corporation to decide what their directors get paid. And we think that if the member's numbers are right, I would certainly consider those numbers to be valid and maybe even modest in light of what some other people get when they contract out to some people in my city.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Minister, we yesterday or the day before found out who the little dipper is, now we're finding out who the big dipper is.

Mr. Blakeney is receiving one of the richest tax-funded pensions in this province, Mr. Minister. You have also appointed him to the board of the Saskatchewan Insurance Corporation and now he is appointed to the Cameco board with an additional, with an additional \$36,000 added to his regular salary as a board member. The province owns 40 per cent of Cameco; the federal government, 9 per cent. What we're doing today is asking you to protect the taxpayers from these gross injustices to the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Minister, is the euphemism for a lobbyist; does Mr. Blakeney lobby your government in this position or in any other position?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Penner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I see that the Tories are up to their usual tricks of trying to do some character assassination on some very well-known and highly respected people in this province. And I just don't think that that's going to fly very well with the people of Saskatchewan.

I want to simply reiterate again, Mr. Speaker, that Mr. Blakeney was a nominee of our government; was accepted by the other shareholders of Cameco to be a board member. He is doing an exceptionally good job. He is keeping us well informed as to what's happening at Cameco, which is what our board members are expected to do. And we believe that he is a credible, valuable board member to Cameco.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Martens: — Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Minister, we are simply wanting to know this: what does special corporate governance mean in relation to a \$36,000 extra stipend for Mr. Blakeney?

Hon. Mr. Penner: — Mr. Speaker, I think I indicated earlier that this is a private company and that question should be directed to the Cameco management because they'd be able to answer that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, order. Would the member from Humboldt please come to order.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 59 — An Act to repeal The Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan Reorganization Act and to enact certain consequential provisions resulting from the repeal of that Act

Hon. Mr. Penner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to make a few remarks about The Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan Reorganization Repeal Act. At the end of my comments I'll be moving second reading of this legislation.

The Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan Reorganization Act was passed in 1989. After privatization of PCS (Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan), the taxpayers of Saskatchewan remained liable for over \$70 million in guarantees issued to PCS in the early 1980s.

Upon the change of administration in 1991, we undertook to remove the taxpayers' exposure to this contingent liability. In 1993 PCS removed almost 40 million of this lease guarantees, leaving taxpayers still liable for about \$32 million in guarantees.

This legislation is very simple. Section 2 repeals The Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan Reorganization Act including restrictions on share ownership. Section 3 provides a clear definition of what constitutes PCS's head office. It stipulates that this head office with these functions and jobs will remain in Saskatchewan, a clear definition of what a head office of PCS is to consist of and what functions are to be performed there. By specifying that these functions must remain in Saskatchewan, we created specific and concrete protection for Saskatchewan jobs.

Second, PCS has agreed to remove the remaining \$32 million in debt that is guaranteed by the Saskatchewan taxpayers. This contingent liability will be removed from our books, and this is good news for the people of Saskatchewan and will also be looked upon favourably by the credit rating agencies of Canada and the United States.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of The Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan Reorganization Repeal Act.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to just make a few comments regarding Bill No. 59 and the minister's statement. I'd like to commend the government for the ongoing efforts they have continued due to the Bill of 1989 and continuing the efforts to open up the Potash Corporation. We would like to support this Bill and offer to the government our wholehearted support for their moves in this direction.

Mr. Speaker, as the House is well aware it was our government that began the privatization of PCS and the minister alluded to that. It was and is our firm contention that the government had no more place owning a primary industry in this province than it would have running the farms and ranches of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we felt that a private potash corporation would be more efficient and productive enterprise, would employ more people, and on the whole would be a stronger and more viable economic force than any Crown corporation could hope to be. We are happy to see that the government has come onside in realizing the benefits of privatization to the economy of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, at the time that the privatization was introduced we felt that we had to listen to the concerns of a few people opposed to the initiative. So in spite of our own inclinations, we introduced the share trading restrictions to give these people some level of comfort with what was going on.

Happily times have changed now and PCS can begin to operate fully as a productive and responsible corporate citizen. Between the benefits that PCS will gain from this legislation and the benefit the provincial budget will accrue from the write-downs, this legislation represents the best deal possible for

PCS, the government, and the people of Saskatchewan as a whole.

We would again like to congratulate the government on this move. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

(1415)

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Motions for Interim Supply

The Chair: — Order. At this time, I would ask the Minister of Finance to introduce the officials who have joined us here today and to make any remarks you may want to make before moving the resolutions.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to introduce the deputy minister of Finance, John Wright, who is on my right. Sitting behind me is Bill Jones, the associate deputy minister of Finance. And sitting next to Bill Jones is Larry Spannier, the executive director of the Treasury Board branch.

Before we begin I'd like to make a few comments about the process that we're engaging in today. One of the most important principles in any democracy is the idea that only elected officials can decide how tax dollars are spent. That's why we bring the budget before the legislature and require a debate on a line-by-line basis through estimates of the budget and how the money is being spent.

This year the budget was brought in on a very timely basis. It was introduced February 17 with the idea being that if the opposition so wished, it would be possible to pass the budget by year end, which was March 31, 1994. Because the budget is still being debated in a detailed way through the estimates process, we require interim supply because there are agencies out there such as educational institutions, health care institutions, social organizations, which require money in the interim. So the process is just to give to these organizations the money they require to tide them over until the budget is actually formally passed by the legislature.

With that introduction, Mr. Chairman, I now:

Resolve that a sum not exceeding \$716,845,000 be granted to Her Majesty on account for the 12 months ending March 31, 1995.

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, as I see the information that you've brought here is a one-twelfth interim supply again to be voted, as I see it, would you give me any indication, Madam Minister, where there is anything more than the total of two-twelfths being voted as of the end of May for interim supply. Is there anything more than the two-twelfths allocated?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yes, to the member opposite, it is all straight two-twelfths; there is no area in which there is in excess of two-twelfths.

Mr. Martens: — Madam Minister, you made some observations that were somewhat interesting in that you had said that the budget was early enough this year to provide us an opportunity to pass it early enough. I would say that under normal circumstances that is not usually the case.

However, I want to point out to you that we have not had any opportunity, nor have we taken opportunity to ask you, not only about the expenditures, but the revenue. The revenue is just as an important part of the opportunities in this Assembly to speak to you, to speak to the Minister of Finance as she collects revenue for the province of Saskatchewan, and we need to talk about that. We need to talk a lot about that. And so far, Madam Minister, we have not been able to do that.

Nor have we taken the opportunity to do that in any of the other interim supply Bills. And I want to just say to you that we are giving you the opportunity to have the interim supply done today with the caveat on it that we would have an opportunity to discuss revenues and the opportunity in revenues at your earliest possible convenience. And that in my view would be later this week, early next week.

And that opportunity is, Madam Minister, what we need to talk about. We can talk significantly about the expenditures but the people in this province are interested in the revenue side, and the opportunities for us to speak out on their behalf in relation to those revenues is something that we want to talk about.

And I'm not going to ask you any of those questions today if we have some commitment by you that we will, at the earliest Monday, begin to talk about the revenue side through the Department of Finance and the Committee of Finance. And that, Madam Minister, is what we're interested in.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite, I have no problem with the basic point being raised. I have some commitments in Saskatoon later on this week, but from our point of view, as soon as the House business allows the Department of Finance to be in here, we will of course answer all of your questions on revenue. And if you want to submit some written questions before to speed up the process, that is fine as well.

Mr. Martens: — There's one other area that I think we want to have a lot of discussion about, and that is on the view that the Department of Finance has in relation to some of the offloading taking place by the federal government.

And we want to have some projections that you would like to give to us and the people of the province about the Social Services side or the things that Mr. Axworthy is talking about — all of those dynamics.

We want to have some of that information given to this Assembly and to the taxpayers in this province as well so that we have a clear understanding about that.

I just raise that now as an opportunity for you and the department to think about in order to relate that to us at the beginning of next week when you come forward with your Committee of Finance estimates and then we will talk about it then.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite, again that's a point well made. We will try to prepare ourself to come, when we come with our estimates, with information about things like Unemployment Insurance offloading and the cost of that to the province. And so we will take notice of that.

And as I said before, if you want to let me know beforehand in written form or other form what you would like, we can be sure that we have the information here when we do appear in estimates.

Mr. Martens: — There are a number of issues that have been raised by myself on other occasions, but I will point them out because we're in the context of discussing this in this format.

I'm also going to raise questions about the . . . in the area of the federal government taking and reducing its exemptions in various areas. I'll use as an example the hundred thousand dollar tax credit. All of these tax credits, what the implication is for Saskatchewan, what the revenue return to the people of the . . . the Department of Finance is going to be in this context.

And in those areas there is at least probably 10 or 11 areas where the federal government has said, we will reduce the volume of deductions that individuals will be able to take. And we'll be asking you what revenue benefit the province of Saskatchewan will have in each of those cases. And it deals with basically a letter written to the . . . written by Peat Marwick and it deals with the federal budget 1994.

And I have outlined quite a number of those individual matters, and they deal with UIC (Unemployment Insurance Commission) and they deal with meals and entertainment, debt forgiveness, all of those issues. And I'm going to be asking you questions on what the revenue impact in the Department of Finance is going to be in relation to those decisions made by the federal government.

I'm also going to be asking you, Madam Minister, to substantiate the volume of dollars and provide for us the role that CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) has in relation to the budget, the volume of dollars that are going to be generated by the increases in utility rates. And I want to provide you with the opportunity to get them for us so that we can deal with that in a very precise kind of a way.

And I want to just outline those for you briefly, Madam Minister, and I will allow the procedure to go on as it relates to the board of internal supply for the second month of the fiscal year.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, I:

Resolved that towards making good the supply granted to Her Majesty on account of certain expenses of the public service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 1995, the sum of \$716,845,000 be granted out of the General Revenue Fund.

Motion agreed to.

The committee reported progress.

(1430)

FIRST AND SECOND READING OF RESOLUTIONS

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — I move that the resolutions be read the first and second time.

Motion agreed to and the resolutions read a first and second time.

APPROPRIATION BILL

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move:

That Bill No. 60, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of Money for the Public Service for the Fiscal Year ending on March 31, 1995, be now introduced and read the first time.

Motion agreed to and the Bill read a first time.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. By leave of the Assembly and under Rule 51(2), I move that the Bill be now read a second and third time.

Motion agreed to and, by leave of the Assembly, the Bill read a second and third time and passed under its title.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Public Service Commission Vote 33

Item 1

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to welcome your officials, Minister, and I'm glad to see you all back again. And we have received a summary of a March 15 . . . answers to several of our questions and want to thank you for those. We will be wanting to refer to that in some detail in a few minutes.

But first of all, Minister, I want to ask you some questions with regards to the reclassification of dental health educators. Now the recent PSC (Public Service Commission) reclassifications of dental health educators is a contentious issue with at least one group and that is the public health nurses. Now we

have been receiving letters and calls on this matter, Minister, so we thought it only appropriate that we delve into it just a little bit to see what's going on.

Dental health educators classification no. 605210 were reclassified to health educators 2, classification no. 108082. The job description under which dental health educators now fall is not applicable from what I can see. We have an attached letter that I've been reading. And I think I'll just run over the job description for you so that you can get your mind set on where we're coming from.

(1) the incumbent will possess a university degree or extensive experience in journalism, public relations, advertising, or related fields of communications; (2) incumbent will possess broad general knowledge of the problems related to diet, communicable disease control, immunization, cancer, tuberculosis, and sex education; (3) that they will stimulate, coordinate, plan, and organize all health education activities under the direction of the regional medical health officer; (4) that they may supervise the work of professional and clerical employees performing duties related to the public health education program.

Now I can understand why public health nurses are concerned, Minister. I don't see how the dental health educators fit into this job description. I believe they attend SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) for a year or two, whereas public health nurses must attend university for four years. And you can correct me if I'm wrong. And from what I can see, this job description gives them the power to supervise the nurses. Is this true, Minister?

I guess I should let you answer that before I ask more questions.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The first thing that I would like to say, Mr. Chair, to the member, is that these positions will not be supervising any nurses, so I can relieve the member's mind on that score.

The class specification for health education 2 allows for education and experience other than the university degree to be considered. These employees have been specifically trained to provide dental health education as a result of post-secondary education in dental therapy, inclusive of preventive education, and all have such experience. So that that's the basis on which it was approached.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Minister. Will the dental health nurses be teaching our children about sex education, cancer, etc., as is stated in their job description? No offence, but, Mr. Minister, they are dental educators and not health educators and perhaps the PSC went too far in this reclassification, would you think?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — No, these are dental health educators. The class itself is a health educator class, which includes many different kinds of educators, some of which I presume the member has correctly identified. But these people are concerned with dental

education.

Mr. Goohsen: — Minister, I understand that the reclassification is retroactive as well. I don't understand why that would be. Maybe you can explain to us why it would be retroactive. And as well, how many people were affected by this reclassification, if you don't mind telling us that? And what is the total cost of this reclassification, including the retroactive pay portion?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The first thing I'd like to do, Mr. Chair, is explain the way in which these reclassifications work so far as adjustments are concerned. The request comes to the Public Service Commission for a consideration of a . . . well it's a request for reclassification and the commission then considers it in accordance with their procedures.

If there is a reclassification, it is retroactive to the first day of the month following the request. And so if your request went in today and there was an adjustment on account of a reclassification, it would be effective on May 1.

We don't know how many people were concerned. The Department of Health would know that. They employ these people; the commission doesn't. So we don't know how many were affected. We guess it's about a hundred but we don't know, nor do we know the cost; that would be included in the Department of Health appropriations.

Mr. Goohsen: — So what you're telling me is that you have the power in your department to reclassify people to a position that is very much more lucrative and yet you don't have to pay the bill, so there is no accountability in the budgetary process whatever then; and the Minister of Health must somehow find the money in her budget to pay for your decision. Is that what you're saying?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I don't think, Mr. Chair, that the member puts it fairly. The fact is that the Public Service Commission has the responsibility within government to classify positions. And requests for reclassification are not as a result of the commission going out and searching for opportunities to do this work. These arise as a result of requests that are made to the commission, and it is the commission's responsibility under statute to respond in those situations by reviewing the classification and determining whether any change should be made or whether the previous classification is appropriate.

The commission, when these requests are received, needs certain information. It needs a job description of the job being performed and a statement of the duties that are actually being performed by the people who are in the positions. The commission, as part of its work, will interview the managers of the program involved to corroborate exactly what it is that the people do.

Then the information has to be assessed in the context of the classification plan, and if people are doing work

that entitles them to reclassification, then they are entitled to do that. It's not a question, as far as the commission is concerned, of cost; the commission doesn't approach it from whether or not it will cost more money or how much more money. That's a management problem for the department itself, or the Department of Health in this case, and it's a budgetary problem for that same department.

But that's not the commission's business. The commission merely tries to ensure that people are in the appropriate class considering the duties that they perform and that the integrity of the classification plan is maintained. Those are the responsibilities of the commission and these responsibilities come into play each and every time there is a request for reclassification.

(1445)

Mr. Goohsen: — Well, Minister, this is rather puzzling. Here you have a reclassification of people in the health field that is going to cost probably thousands of dollars. Maybe I can go to tens of thousands; I might even be able to go to hundreds of thousands. I don't know, you haven't given us any figures of any kind. You don't have to pay for it. The Minister of Health does. You don't have to consult with her. You obviously haven't because you don't know anything.

What you've reclassified is people that the public health nurses say are getting the same pay now as what they get for four years of university training. But you say that's okay because these people aren't going to be doing the public health nurses' work anyway, but you're going to pay them the same standard. The public shouldn't worry because these folks won't be doing anything more than what they were doing before, so there's no worry to the public except that they're having to pick up the bills. And the taxpayer here looks to me like should be just as concerned as the public health nurses are.

You've got, by your own admission, maybe a hundred people now who are only dental assistants. They're not doing sex education and they're not doing any of the other jobs that the public health nurses do, but they're going to get paid the same as the public health nurses.

Now that seems really strange to me. Why you would do that? In fact, I'd have to start to wonder if you couldn't have reinstated the entire school dental program for the kind of money that you're putting into this. And if it's going to cost that kind of money, we should know about it.

So I wonder if you would do a couple of things for me, Minister. Undertake first of all to find out how much the cost is going to be; tell us how much the old dental program used to cost; and show us that what you're doing is fair and reasonable for the taxpayers as well as for the public health nurses, who of course are feeling offended because of their need to have a certain level of education to get a certain level of pay.

This doesn't look fair to me at all. And we want to know where this money is going and why we haven't looked at the possibility of having this money spent in a more positive direction, like perhaps doing more than just handing out toothbrushes and teaching people that you stroke up and down instead of sideways.

Now I guess another question I may as well throw in at this time, Minister, is why is the Public Service Commission the body that does this reclassification when it is the Department of Health that pays the bills? Maybe you could consult with the ministers of Health there and see what's going on here.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, I don't know what the member had for breakfast this morning to make him so provocative in his line of questioning. Presumably we can deal with these pressing matters of public interest without being personally offensive, as I found the member's remarks to be.

But I will say this, and say it again, and this time I'll say it more slowly and more clearly so that the member will understand. It is part of the mandate of the Public Service Commission of the province of Saskatchewan to consider questions of classification and reclassification. That has been the case, Mr. Chair, and Mr. Member, since the Public Service Commission was formed in this province, which I think probably is 50, 60 years ago.

It is the Public Service Commission which is the only body in the government which has the mandate or the authority to classify and reclassify positions. The question of classification is not for the Department of Health or the Department of Justice or any other department. The question of classification is for the Public Service Commission. I have explained to the member in very general terms how that process works. It is not any part of the mandate and function of the Public Service Commission to deal with budgetary questions.

The commission simply classifies and reclassifies according to standards which are applied here and have been applied for years and years and years, including during the 1980s, the period to which the member has probably a particular emotional attachment. Also which are the same criteria as are applied by public service commissions the length and breadth of this country. And that is the function of the Public Service Commission.

Now we have a Department of Finance who is concerned about the preparation of a budget, and the Department of Health which employs people and pays salaries to them. All we do is tell them where in the classification plans their employees fit. That's all. That's all.

Now if the member thinks we should have a wider mandate in the Public Service Commission, we would have to haul up that Act and consider it for amendment. And maybe then I would have to answer

some of the questions that the member put forward as to the cost of this matter to the Department of Health.

I can't do that now. I don't know that. The member will have an opportunity to ask those questions of the Health ministers when they are in front of this legislature in the presentation of their estimates. No doubt he already did that when they were here the other night.

Now I can get that information for the member if he is too shy to stand up and ask the Health minister how many costs are involved here. I'll do that if I have to to preserve the good relationship that we've always had. But I won't be criticized for coming in here not knowing something which is none of my business as the minister responsible for the Public Service Commission.

Mr. Goohsen: — Well, Minister, I can see we're going to get right off on the wrong foot to start with because it is your business. You're a taxpayer if nothing else. Now you're a minister of the Crown and it's your responsibility to know what's going on, especially when you make decisions that are going to cost hundred of thousands of dollars to the taxpayers of this province. You have no business being a minister in this government without taking that responsibility square on the chin because it's yours, and nobody else's. So don't pass it off that I'm asking foolish questions, because I expect you to do your job.

Now I'm not asking these questions for myself. I'm asking these questions for the public health nurses who have written to us and asked us these very, very direct questions. They say that you haven't consulted with them.

What consultation did you have with them before you made this decision to reclassify people that they say are getting money that they don't deserve? What consultation did you have with the Department of Health about the budgetary process? Did you have any? Minister, we are in times of economic restraint. Everybody in our society is forced to pay higher taxes and higher utility bills to fund your government's activities. And each one of those people in our province is learning to live with less in order to finance the whims of your government.

Now that seems to have one exception and that happens to be the civil service, where you can arbitrarily increase their wages to whatever numbers happens to suit you; and you don't feel that you are responsible to explain to us, you don't feel that you are responsible to give figures to us. Who is responsible for this government? Who is responsible to the taxpayers?

You've made a decision that's going to cost hundreds of thousands of dollars to classify people to do a job that they don't have to do because they're going to be doing the same job they always did before; and instead of doing it right and putting it back into the schools to do some actual work with the teeth of these children, you've got them running around with a

toothbrush and their instructions are to teach the kids how to use a toothbrush and that's about the extent of their job. And I'm saying to you that that's wrong unless we have some explanations of what's going on here.

So on behalf of the public health nurses of this province, I put it to you, minister, what is going on here? Is this a done deal or can you go back to the drawing board and correct this mess?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Well I'll just try and calm the atmosphere here a bit. It is clearly obvious to all of the members of this legislature and I'm sure to anyone who happens to be watching on TV how far out of line the member's questions have been in the outburst that we've just heard.

We have before this legislature the estimates of the Public Service Commission and in connection with that the member has raised a perfectly legitimate question about the reclassification of a particular employment category in the Government of Saskatchewan.

I have explained to the member in some detail the mandate of the Public Service Commission as it relates to requests for reclassification. I can go into further detail as to what is taken into account as those reclassification requests are being considered. I want to tell the member very plainly though that these requests are judged on their own merit. Now I hope that those words are clear enough — each request is judged on its own merit.

It is no part of the mandate of this Public Service Commission or any other to go around the public service to check out with all the other job classifications whether they would have any objection to a particular reclassification. This is not some kind of a public relations or a political exercise.

This is a highly technical, highly professional review of job duties to determine whether their existing classification is appropriate or not appropriate. These requests come in all the time. They're dealt with all the time. Sometimes they affect a few employees. Sometimes they affect many employees. It depends upon how many people are employed in that particular occupation.

So it is just not possible. It's not part of the system and ought not to be that the commission should have to go around or should be expected to make any inquiries at all of other occupational groups to see whether they would have any problem with a particular job being reclassified.

Nor, Mr. Chair, and Mr. Member, is it any part of the Public Service Commission's mandate to get into the budget question. This is not some kind of a balancing act that the commission goes through. This is not some kind of government-wide exercise where the cabinet sits around and determines whether a job should be reclassified.

This a highly technical, highly professional function that has been delivered by this Public Service Commission to this government since the commission was founded. And it is exactly the same function as is performed by public service commissions in every other jurisdiction the length and breadth of this country. And in each of these jurisdictions, the process of reclassification is done in exactly the same way. And it is not any part of the commission's function to sort of phone up the deputy minister of Finance and say if we reclassify this job — as we should on the merits — will that throw your budget out of whack? Because if it will, then we won't reclassify it.

What kind of a Public Service Commission would that be? We would all protest to that because the highly technical, highly professional function that is being performed ought not to be influenced or contaminated by these considerations that are outside the mandate of the Public Service Commission.

Now if we as a government find that our costs have increased to the point where we can't afford to have this many dental health people, then we're going to have to make the appropriate adjustments. And if indeed the public health nurses have got a case for reclassification, they know the processes and their union knows the processes by which this is done.

And these requests for reclassification come in all the time. And the commission's responsibility, laid down by statute, is to deal with those requests. And they have to deal with them within the four corners of the statute. And it is simply not fair for the member to suggest that the commission should consult the Department of Finance and the Department of Health about whether they could afford a particular classification. That would no longer be professional. That would be some kind of a political exercise or a negotiating exercise or a balancing exercise, which is no part of the commission's function.

We would have to change their legislation and change it rather dramatically before we could expect the commission to conduct that kind of an inquiry. And, Mr. Chair, and Mr. Member, we're not going to do that. We're not going to do it because we think it is important that there be an objective and professional system within this government for classifying positions.

The classification of a position ought not to depend upon budgetary considerations or political considerations. It ought to depend upon the duties that are being performed by that employee and how those duties fit into the overall classification plan.

(1500)

I don't know how more clearly I could explain that function, but I do invite the member to calm down here and cool the rhetoric and let's just try and exchange as much information as we can about some of these very important issues.

Mr. Goohsen: — Well, Minister, that line was nothing but pure bunk. And you know it. We've set out to try to find out what's going on here. We ask you for facts and figures and you say, cut the rhetoric and let's get down to some exchanging of facts.

Well, you're the minister; you're supposed to have the facts. So start feeding us some information. You're the one that's throwing around rhetoric about how you don't have a mandate to be responsible, how you don't have a mandate to consult with people. And quite frankly I think there are going to be some people that are going to be offended by this.

If you don't have a mandate to consult with the public health nurses, if you don't have a mandate to consult with the Minister of Health, if you don't have a mandate to consult with the Minister of Finance, then there's something desperately wrong here, and no matter for how many years it's been going on, it ought to come to an end.

And quite frankly, sir, I'm of the understanding that this particular request for reclassification is nothing new; that it has happened many times before over the years and that these people were always turned down. Only this administration has decided to increase this classification to cost extra hundreds of thousands of dollars in classifying. And I'll remind you, classifying people who have an education to know how to deal with dental procedures in a very superficial manner of instruction, now being classified into the realms of pay scales where they are to know things about diet, communicable diseases, immunization, cancer, tuberculosis, sex education. They are to be able to stimulate and coordinate plans and organize all health education activities under the direction of the regional medical health officer. I mean these are the classifications of the job description that you've just placed these people into.

And you say nobody should worry; the taxpayers should be happy. Well this taxpayer's not happy. The public health nurses are not happy. And I don't think that anybody else is going to be happy when you tell them that you don't have a mandate to consult with people before you do a reclassification.

And quite frankly, I think you've made a mistake here, Minister. And if I could have encouraged you in a nice way to change this, I'd have tried that, but I've done that other days and it doesn't work. And quite frankly, the gloves are off and we're coming after you because you're not doing your job right.

Now under the department budget, Mr. Minister, there's a nasty rumour going around this town about government departments. And the rumour is that if a department hasn't spent their total budget near or close to the end of their budgetary year, that the departments are to make sure that they spend the money quickly so that there's nothing left in the kitty.

Is there any truth to this rumour, Minister? Has the Public Service Commission ever come in under budget? And what is the history of this department? I'd

like to know what the historical comparison is to the way you're administrating it and the way it was done in the past.

And are these budgets consistently bang on, or are you off with surpluses or deficits? We'd like to know that. We'd like to know whether you're overbudgeting or underbudgeting. And when in the fiscal year do most of your expenditures take place?

Now that's quite a few questions, so I may have to repeat some of them.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Well, Mr. Chair, if the member is coming after me, then I welcome it and I think I'll be able to stand the test.

I want to say that most of the commission's expenditures are salary, salary-related expenditures, and so the pattern is consistent across the year. There is no burst of spending at the end of the year, which seemed to be what the member was concerned about, and I think that so far as the commission is concerned, the rumour that was bothering the member is false.

Mr. Goohsen: — Minister, let's talk about some individual problems. I have a note here on a Ms. Darlene Eckstein. I'll spell that for you: E-c-k-s-t-e-i-n. Now we picked this up in the documents that you have supplied us with here in the general departmental agency report and we thank you for that report. Now we find some inconsistencies in this report that we would like you to explain and I'm sure you will be able to do that.

Now this young lady, a junior secretary, does not appear on the new employees' list for either this year or last year. Can you explain when she was hired and what her pay was last year as compared to this year?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Darlene Eckstein is a junior secretary in my office. She began work on June 28, 1993 on a temporary basis to cover the job of another secretary who began maternity leave and she continued to work as a temporary at the rate of \$2,141 per month to the end of 1993. She was made permanent on a job-sharing basis as of January 1, 1994 and she continues to be employed as a junior secretary on a job-sharing basis at the base salary of \$2,141.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Minister, intermediate secretary Tanya Byrnes, I think it would be pronounced — and I'll spell it so that you get the right name; it's B-y-r-n-e-s — received a 12 per cent salary increase over last year. Can you explain this large increase and if she took on any further duties in order to earn that increase? Can you give us any details on this particular individual and her employment?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, and to the member, Tanya Byrnes commenced employment on October 1, 1992 in the C category at the rate of \$2,141 per month. She was temporarily reclassified to the D category in October 1992 to December 1, 1993 on

account of performing higher duties, as I recall. It was a temporary reclassification in recognition of that.

She reverted to her home position and base salary of \$2,141 per month on December 1, 1993 and was temporarily reclassified to the intermediate secretary range at the first step in the range on December 1, 1993. And that was the time when the 12.3 per cent increase came into effect, which brought her salary to \$2,785 per month.

And I'm not clear how that occurred. That was not any decision made by me. It was at the time that the ranges were put into effect in Executive Council with respect to people employed in the ministers' offices. And I believe that in the case of Tanya she had to go to that level in order to fit into the bottom of the first step in the range.

In any event, she continues to be employed. She's an intermediate secretary now as compared to her employment when she started out, and she is now permanently employed as an intermediate secretary at the first step in the range, the bottom of the range, at the rate of \$2,785 per month.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, Minister, I appreciate your giving us this information. But when you say things like you don't really know what's going on in your department because you didn't really have anything to do with that, and somebody else did something about it and then carry on with the rest of, well she got a couple of thousand here and something there, if the general public's watching this, they are going to have the impression that you are far more incompetent than you are, and I give you credit for being very competent. And I know you can do better than that.

So I think it would be better for everyone in this province if you would not approach the answers in that fashion. Because even if I'm not bright enough to know what you're talking about, people out there watching television, they know what's going on here. So I suggest that you be a little more forthright with your approach to the answers of these questions.

Linda Dickson, ministerial assistant C, was hired last year as a permanent employee, yet this year she was laid off with the explanation, work assignment completed. Now this seems like the kind of explanation one would use for terminating a temporary, not a permanent employee. Was she in fact a temporary or on-contract employee, and if so why was she listed as temporary since her designation, ministerial assistant C, indicates that she was a secretary? Can you tell us just what her work assignment was and in what way was it deemed to be complete?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I'm going to have to get back to the member on that. Linda was in my office and left, and I can't recall as I stand here, what the circumstances were of her leaving. So with the member's permission, Mr. Chair, I'll get back to him on that when I've consulted with my staff and I recall.

We here in this House are not able to answer the particular question that the member put.

Linda was certainly in my office as a junior secretary, as I recall, and did a fine job, but I just can't recall the circumstances under which she left. I think as I stand here speaking that she went to another job, but I want to be precise about that so I'll get back to the member.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Minister, we will take you at your word that you will supply us with that information.

Just in passing, how many people did you say work in your office?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — There are six positions, but one of the positions is job-shared by two individuals, so that would be five full-time and two part-time people.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, Minister, I'm sure that's a really tough job to keep track of — seven people in an office. So not knowing where they went or what they did might be natural. I don't know.

I've worked with that many people and I never thought it was all that complicated to know who was there and who wasn't and why they were being hired or fired. You know, even a farmer has a tendency to be able to keep track of those kind of things, and here you are, the Minister of Justice, and you don't know what's going on.

But I guess that's your job and you've got to do it the best you can. Maybe you could hire somebody to sort this out for you. I could maybe give you some suggestions.

Now anyway, we'll have to go on I guess, seeing as how you don't know what's happening.

Details of all expenses paid to ministerial staff in the past year — could you provide that for us, Minister?

(1515)

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The expenditures consisted of the salaries of five people. I don't know whether the members want me to give those salaries in the House, but the total salaries were \$91,834.48 paid to those five people. Some of them were there for only part of the year, as the member will know from my previous answer.

By the way, I should know what happened to Linda, but I just don't recall. I have people in my staff who handle those sorts of things for me. And I know that she wasn't fired. But I'm not able to recall just the circumstances under which she left. Whether it was a question of leaving the workforce or going to another job, I just can't say. And I apologize to the member for that.

Also \$605.51 of my business expenses was charged to the Public Service Commission. And the grand total

then was \$92,439.99.

Mr. Goohsen: — Well thanks, Minister. Maybe Linda Dickson will phone in and let us know what happened to her. I hope she isn't lost.

Could you please also give us then, Minister, the details of travel undertaken by your ministerial staff, including the total amounts, the cost per staff member, and the destinations and purposes of the trips?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, and to the member, I'm delighted to say that I have just been handed a note indicating that Linda Dickson left my office to take other employment, and actually went to a better job. So the story has a happy ending. And I remember that now that I get the note. I even remember what the other job was.

There was . . . I think the question was travel, travel expenses? And during the '93-94 fiscal year there was \$813 worth of travel charged by my office to the department. They were for a long-service recognition supper in Saskatoon that I attended to congratulate the long service employees and to hand out gifts to them on the completion of their term of service with the Government of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Goohsen: — That brings a couple of questions. Now I think, Minister, that what you have given me is an \$813 figure for travel. And it sounds to me like that was for yourself as a minister, going to a meeting. And I was also wondering if you could give us the cost of travel undertaken by your staff, if there would have been any of that kind of cost. And if there was, we'd like to know some of the details about how much per member and their destinations and what the purposes of their trips might have been.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I had one of my staff with me on that occasion, so the charge covers both of our travel, air fare I think, that is involved here. And there was just the one trip to Saskatoon.

Mr. Goohsen: — You mentioned, Minister, that you go to these things to give out gifts for long-time service, I think was one of the terms you might have used. If I'm wrong, would you correct me. And who got the gifts and what they were for and what kind of gifts would they be and how much would they cost?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The long-service recognition suppers have been going on since about 1980, which would mean that they've been going on for the last 15 years. They recognize 25 years of service and 35 years of service. The costs of the gift in recognition of those years of service are borne by the departments from which the employees come. So I don't know what the total would be.

But I can tell the member, having spoken at a number of these banquets and mingled with the employees who have given their careers over to working for the Government of Saskatchewan, that they are very solemn ceremonies and they are much appreciated by the employees involved. They are emotional events,

and I think it to the credit of the government, including the past government, that we recognize the occasion of people having so dedicated themselves to the Government of Saskatchewan and the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Minister, for clarifying that. I'm sure that the taxpayers of the province would join with me in a very serious congratulations to those employees who have received those acknowledgements for their lifetimes of work. And even though the member from Saskatoon doesn't think it's important for people to know what's going on, it does explain to me why these expenditures didn't show up in the budget.

It may actually be comforting to the taxpayers to know that somebody took a look to find out that these things weren't mentioned. And now we know that they were paid by their departments, that's why we didn't find them. So we're happy that you went and we hope that everyone enjoyed the evening.

Now, Minister, you only hired one more person as an out-of-scope, temporary employee, yet you spent \$45,000 or 39 per cent more on this class of employees. Can you explain this?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I'm afraid, Mr. Chair, that the member's going to have give us some more detail so we can understand what he's talking about.

Mr. Goohsen: — Well from my notes here, as I went through this document here that I scratched out, indicated that we discovered here that there was one person who's classified as an out-of-scope, temporary employee listed in here, and it says you spent \$45,000 or — I don't know if my calculator is right or not — but 39 per cent more on this class of employees. Now that's just a class of employees where the price went up.

Now I think what we did was compare that to last year's and it went up by \$45,000 from last year for this type of employee in your department. I guess that's about as good as I can explain it.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I'm sorry to have to ask, would the member identify whether that was in the material that was recently supplied? Or is it in the *Public Accounts* or the budget documents or . . . and is there a name attached or a position number or a page number or anything like that that we could help to . . . I'd like to answer the question, but I just don't have a . . . I'm not able to without some more information.

Mr. Goohsen: — It was out of the information that we acquired from you but I don't have the page down, so what I'll do is I'll go back to my office, get into my notes and find exactly where I've pulled this information from, and then we'll deliver the answer to you.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Yes, I'll undertake to give the member's question a full answer just as soon as I get some particulars from him.

Mr. Goohsen: — Certainly, we'll supply that right away.

Now we also noted in going through this material, Minister, that you had some rather impressive cuts the previous year in your department. But now you are spending even more on permanent out-of-scope employees than in 1992. Now that's permanent out-of-scope employees I'm talking about.

You hired one more such employee, yet your costs are up \$240,000 or 8 per cent. Can you explain this drastic change in the figures?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I want to say first of all, Mr. Chair, and to the member, that there has been no economic adjustment for out-of-scope personnel during the term of this government up to this point. They're all making the same money that they made previously. I'm not aware of any reclassifications in the out-of-scope area, so that everybody's . . . the job rate is still the same.

It is quite likely that the difference that the member noted in expenditure levels — and he's talking about past years — would be a matter of positions being vacant in one year and being filled in the other. And if the position is vacant, of course the money's not spent; and when they're filled, the salary attaches and is paid. And that's likely where the difference comes from.

(1530)

Mr. Goohsen: — Minister, perhaps it is a typographical error or something like that, but I remember when we went through this, we noted that there had been one more person hired. So that would account for some of the money. And yet the figures seem to show that there was a \$240,000 increase in the cost in that category. That would seem to be an awful lot to be paying one employee.

So unless I've done some mathematical error there or perhaps there's a printing error, the figures didn't jibe, so I wanted to ask about it. And maybe it's my problem, maybe it's not yours, but certainly there is a problem in the numbers I've got here and I have to figure out what's going on.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — There of course is nobody in the Public Service Commission that earns anything like \$240,000. That's enough to pay more than three, perhaps four, employees. So there is some explanation there and it is most likely that in one reporting period, in one fiscal year, there were vacant positions during that year which were not vacant in the following year, and that makes up the 8 per cent.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Minister. Well I think what we'll do here is ask you to commit to researching this a little more, and I will also do the same. And perhaps I can, you know, find out what's going on; and if you can, you can do the same and we'll get it sorted out.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Yes, I'd be glad to do that. The member get in touch with me and I'll get the answers back to him promptly.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thanks, Minister. I have a couple of more questions along that same line which I'm not going to bother asking you just now because we're going to run into the same problems, I'm quite sure. So we will research this whole area, the both of us, and we'll let the general public know what's going on, I'm sure.

On to the next section there under the heading of secondments, can you tell us who were involved in the various secondments both to and from the department, and the reasons for them?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, and to the member, this is the information the member requested in general terms. During the 1993-94 year there were during the course of the year, four secondments from the Public Service Commission and there were two secondments to the Public Service Commission. These are past expenditures so we don't have the briefing material on what happened last year to that extent, but we'd be glad to provide that.

I can provide some of it. One employee was seconded to the Department of Social Service, a second to the Department of Justice. So those are two of the four secondments from. And then secondments to, one employee was seconded to the commission from the Department of Education. But the rest, I'll have to get the information together and send it across.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thanks, Minister, I will appreciate getting that information. Maybe we'll find out that Linda Dickson went to the Department of Justice or something. You never know what we might find. But anyway, we'll await that.

And computers seem to be an item in your department, of considerable cost and interest. It seems like, Minister, your department continues to be a big spender in the area of computers and this year by my calculations, we figure there might be in the neighbourhood of something like \$284,000 on new computer equipment and software. Perhaps you could study through those figures and tell us if I'm getting close or where I'm wrong here. Now it looks like this is on the heels of a half a million dollars in similar spending last year.

Now if this is true and all this money went into computers, we'd have to ask on behalf of the taxpayers, when is this kind of spending going to stop? Just how often do you really need to replace your computers in your office, and your software? This looks like a pretty hefty expenditure for anybody's office into the computer system, especially when a few minutes ago you mentioned that you have five permanent people and two that split a job. So five people running \$750,000 worth of computers sound pretty rich.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, I thank the member for the question. I don't think that we overspend on computers at all. You will know that the Public Service Commission maintains all of the personnel records of all of the departments and agencies of government so that the computer needs within the commission are quite large as a result.

And it is a sensible way to do it because it is much more economical and efficient to do in that way than it would be to have similar computer equipment in each department to keep track of or to house all of the computerized information that has to be kept with respect to the employees of government.

Another thing is that the expenditures include the ongoing repair and maintenance and the cartridges, and whatever else you use in maintaining the equipment, as well as the servicing of it. So I think all told, although the numbers are large, they are understandable when put within that context. We have deliberately tried not to get fancy at all with the equipment but keep it down to the basic minimum that we have to have in order to do the job.

Mr. Goohsen: — Well thank you, Minister. Maybe we'd better pursue these computers just a little bit more in view of your last statement about how you don't feel that you're overexpended or have too big of equipment or anything. It seems like that . . . For example, we have here on one line item you specify that you purchased high-speed computers for programers, yet it appears that every single computer that you purchased is a 486 DX-66.

Now I'm no computer expert, Minister, be assured of that, so I've had to depend on talking to some people that at least think they know something about it, because I wouldn't know for sure if that was fast or slow. But most of the people that we talked to consider these to be very high-speed computers.

Now the question has to be asked, if you've got that kind of high-speed equipment, the folks I talked to said, well why would they not be able to for example use some 486 SX-25 computers or something like that? It seems like the people that I've talked to feel that you're overpowered in computers and that you've overexpended in the area for what you need. One person made the comment that the entire Second World War was fought with less computer equipment than what one of these high-speed 486 DX-66's could perform. Now I don't know if that's fair or not, but obviously these are pretty powerful, big equipment pieces that can do a lot of work and store a lot of material.

So how do you explain the fact that people that know about computers feel that you're far, far over your heads in needs as well as costs?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, the member and I walk into interesting territory in this subject. I recall reading that a computer in the '50s which would require a large room to house can now be carried around in the palm of your hand; the same kind of

computing power. And it's probably a long bow to compare it to the Second World War but certainly we are here in a field of very, very rapid change as anyone who has explored this area will know.

The 486's are standard equipment now; even in home computers it becomes so. The difference between a 486 and 386 is a single chip that is a matter of a couple hundred dollars, something like that. You know, it's not a big deal. It is certainly better than the 286's or the 186; you know, much, much faster, much more powerful. And most of the programs that . . . the sophisticated programs that . . . software programs require at least a 386 in order to run them, and in many cases require 486's. And my staff are of the view that if we didn't have something like that, at least the 386 level, you couldn't keep up with the kinds of demands that are placed upon the Public Service Commission by the government-wide system that they run.

So I don't think that's a major cause of concern. I think that we are well within the bounds of prudent management in using the kind of equipment that we have.

(1545)

Mr. Goohsen: — Mr. Minister, I think some folks might share with me the view that you are an extravagant spendthrift in the area of computers because, as you said yourself, you can upgrade for a couple of hundred dollars. But you don't seem to stop there, you seem to just throw them out and buy new ones, by the kind of money you're spending — 200-and-some thousand dollars this year, half a million last year.

Folks are going to start to wonder if you shouldn't have a chat with the Minister of Labour over there and maybe he could tell you about how, if you used a little bit smaller equipment, you could employ another 100 people for that \$240,000 and at least give some of the people in the Commerce department at the university a job for the summer or something like that and at least, even if you're not doing any better job, at least you'd help some kids to get some money to go back to school for the next year.

Now I know that the third party wants to get into this question period, and so I'm going to turn it over to her now.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, welcome to your officials this afternoon.

Thank you, Mr. Minister, for sending us the information that we requested in our previous encounters in this House and we appreciate the volume of materials that your officials compiled. And while I will not be asking you further questions today regarding the contents of those materials, the information you provided will be most useful in asking questions of other departments.

I also thank you for providing us with the answers to

the written questions that were submitted to you by the official opposition.

I have just one more question with a couple of parts to ask you in your capacity as minister in charge of the Public Service Commission. Number one, as part of this question is, what measures are you as minister and your department officials undertaking to ensure that politically-influenced appointments are not made to the professional civil service? And number two, what measures are you taking to ensure that politically-influenced firings of professional civil servants are halted?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, and to the member, I took some time before answering to try and give a comprehensive answer. We've done a lot of things I think. Our objective is to restore the integrity of the Public Service Commission's processes, which are set out in the Act, because we believe very strongly that hiring and firing should not be on a political basis so far as the Public Service Commission appointments are concerned.

We have had some grave concerns about that in the past and we're determined that that will not be the case under our government. We have ensured that all of the competitions are open competitions for the Public Service Commission appointments. We advertise weekly in all the newspapers — the member has seen the ad — and we advertise internally as well.

The hirings of all of the appointments of the commission are done by competition and they are, as I said, open competitions. And the panel operates in the way that the member knows about to select people. They certify somewhere between one and three people in any competition.

If it is an in-scope competition and there are existing public servants who are certified, then the most senior employee gets the job in practically all circumstances. If there is no question of seniority involved, in other words there's not a person entitled to rely upon the seniority provisions, then the decision is made by the Public Service Commission as to who it is who is appointed. No minister is involved in any of these processes.

With respect to the out-of-scope positions, they operate the same way. Only when you get into orders-in-council appointments is it a cabinet decision. Even with respect to some of the order-in-council positions, to many of them there is an open advertisement and a competition run, and the commission assists in that process. Although for order-in-council positions they are, at the end of the day, decisions of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, which is the cabinet. That's on the hiring side. I think we're doing pretty well.

On the firing side, the orders in council are one thing; I think the member will recognize that. But so far as, if I may say the regular public service, the classified public service, there are two mechanisms. First of all, there is the collective agreement and the grievance

procedure within the collective agreement, which is an effective way of guarding against any kind of inappropriate firing, including firing without cause or firing for political reasons.

So the in-scope people are protected by their collective agreements. So far as the out-of-scope people are concerned, they have access to the appeal procedures within the Act, The Public Service Act, and those procedures are available to anyone who doesn't have access through a collective agreement to a grievance procedure. So I think we're in pretty good shape. But our objective is — I want to make it clear — is to remove the politics from hiring and firing within the public service of the province.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you for that answer, Mr. Minister. Just as an additional note to that, within the House and in the media and in general, we speak a lot of patronage these days. And I wondered if I might be able to get your definition of what a patronage appointment would be. Or patronage in itself, what is that?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Well I don't hold myself out as a particular expert on the subject. My own background includes a time in the public service of Canada and this province, and I have great respect for the role of the Public Service Commission. And I understand, as you will, that patronage has its place, and we've all seen examples of that. Even at the federal level there is patronage suggestions being made with respect to the appointment of the Lieutenant Governor. And anybody with a political background is vulnerable to that kind of a charge.

Yet I think it plain that we ought not to exclude from the public life of this country people who happen to have taken the time and exerted the effort to participate in public affairs and participate in the public issues of the day through political parties.

I think that clearly the question of political patronage is open to abuse. And we will all recall incidents of that in the history of this province, and I don't need to go into any detail there. But I do make the point that you can't just exclude people from participation in public affairs simply because they have taken the time and made the sacrifice — and we know what kind of sacrifices these are — to participate in the political process.

Where would our democracy be without a political process? Public issues are here; they're all around us. They need debate; they need resolution. And many of those issues must be dealt with by governments and that requires the political process to work and to work properly.

I would really be sad if we were to exclude from the public life of this country people who have had some background in political life. Certainly I think that patronage ought never to result in unqualified people being appointed to public positions. It can't be used as some sort of trough.

And yet at the same time, there are obvious cases where patronage ought not to be raised. For example, the former premier, Mr. Blakeney. That question arose during question period today — his appointment by the government as naming to the board of directors of Cameco; one of Canada's leading citizens appointed to a board of a corporation which is very important in Saskatchewan; entirely appropriate that he should serve on that board, entirely appropriate, qualified beyond question, and is an enormously important member of that board, according to officials of Cameco.

Yet in this House, it is suggested there is something wrong with that appointment, that it is a case of political patronage and that for that reason it deserves criticism.

And I don't accept that. I think that Mr. Blakeney's participation in the public affairs of this province and this country has been enormous; it's been extremely important, most productive, and we're all the better for it. And you know, there's no reason why he would just stop his participation in public affairs because he had that background. Indeed he is qualified beyond any of us to do the kind of work that he's doing today.

Now that's kind of a lot of answer for a short, simple question, but it is an important question. We ourselves on this side of the House, have been subject to this kind of criticism from time to time when we appoint former members of this House or former candidates for public office to public boards. We do that because we know that they have a great deal to contribute, and we're not prepared to rule them out, to rule them out from playing a role in the public affairs of this province simply because they made the sacrifices, the personal sacrifices, and took the interest that they did in becoming involved in the public policy issues of their day.

So without exception, we are pleased and proud to have made those appointments. Not one person has been appointed to a job for which they were not qualified or which they could not do and that, in my view, is at the end of the day the crucial test.

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, for your extended comments on the issue of patronage and I thank you for your answers today.

Item 1 agreed to.

Items 2 to 4 inclusive agreed to.

Vote 33 agreed to.

(1600)

The Chair: — That concludes consideration of estimates for the Public Service Commission. If the minister wishes to thank the officials for attending here with us today?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Yes I do, Mr. Chair. The people in the Public Service Commission of this province are

doing an excellent job and no more so than in their preparation of me for these estimates. They are a small staff doing a big job and we have required more and more of them as time goes on, and they have without fail delivered on all of the expectations that we have of them.

So on behalf of the members of the legislature, Mr. Chair, I'd like to thank them for coming and assisting the committee in its work today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

General Revenue Fund Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat Vote 25

Item 1

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, and your guests this afternoon . . . officials, we thank you and look forward to a dialogue on Indian and Metis Affairs. I'm not going to spend a lot of time, if any really, discussing the whole role of land jurisdiction and we went through a fair discussion I think on a couple of occasions already. We've spent a fair bit of time on that.

One question I'd like to start off with though, Mr. Minister, and I'm going back . . . I'm looking at the *Public Accounts* from, actually '92-93; and then in the *Estimates* for '94-95. And I noticed in '92-93 there was a budget in '93 of \$4.2 million and actual expenditures of 17.4 million in that year.

Then I notice for this year, we have for Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat the forecast is showing 13.3 or almost 13.4 million; and the estimate for '94-95 is 23.4.

I'm trying to figure out — number one, why the actual expenditure in '93 is almost four times more than what was budgeted in '93 and yet in your *Estimates* this year that were just handed out, where the actual is 17.4, you're only saying 13.394 million was spent? And I'm just wondering if you could give us an explanation of the difference in the dollar figures there and dollar values.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Yes, Mr. Chair, and to the member. The difference in the overexpenditure that the member has pointed out was because that was the year in which the Treaty Land Entitlement Agreement required us to make our first payment. We did not disclose that figure in the budget because we were in negotiations at the time and we didn't want to present the budget figure and thereby disclose our intentions in the negotiation.

As it turned out we probably could have but it seemed prudent at the time to hold the information back and not put it out in your written documents. Now that resulted in the \$17.3 million expenditure that year.

Now as the member has observed, that amount is dropped. And the reason for the drop is that the grant programs, the economic development grant programs

that used to be in the secretariat have now been moved elsewhere. So it doesn't show as an expenditure for SIMAS (Saskatchewan Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat).

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I have a few questions based around the global questions that I've received from your office, and I appreciate the responses.

In the global questions, I gather that there are no MAs (ministerial assistant) or other staff in your office currently being paid out of Indian and Metis Affairs. Is that true?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — No, none are.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, there must be a person in your office that basically then has the responsibility of dealing with Indian and Metis Affairs, and I'm wondering who that individual is, what duties do they perform, and how are they in fact paid or receive their funding.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — It's Marian Morrison, the intermediate ministerial assistant. And she is paid out of the Public Service Commission budget. She does the duties that you'd normally expect, the liaison between my office and the department, and the kind of normal duties that an assistant does. She divides her time between SIMAS and the Public Service Commission.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, I would take it then that most of, if not all of, your office staff are then being paid out of the Public Service Commission.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Some are also paid out of the Department of Justice.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, did any members of your staff incur any expenses while working on behalf of this department, and could you provide us with any details, like extra duties or work for the department of Indian and Metis Affairs that we wouldn't have laid out before us in the information?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — No, Mr. Chair. No.

Mr. Toth: — And would that also mean that none of your staff in your office did any travel on behalf of the department?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Can I just ask the member, is it '93-94 we're talking about, or '94-95?

Mr. Toth: — Yes, '93-94. Pardon me, Mr. Minister, I would think that when we're looking at the staff numbers, we'd be looking at '93-94 because '94-95 is the budget year we're presently in.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I don't think there was any. Certainly there was nothing out of province. We're just searching because there may have been a staff member who accompanied me on one of my trips in the province but I don't think so.

Okay, sorry. We're educating me on the fly here. In June of '93 Ms. Morrison accompanied me on a trip to Saskatoon and Prince Albert and return, in connection with my duties as the minister of this secretariat.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, could you just give us a breakdown of the costs? And I guess the reason she went was accompanying you as your staff person on those trips. What were the purposes of the meetings, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The cost was a share of the air cost and was \$343. As I recall, the purpose of the trip to Prince Albert was a meeting of the Prince Albert Tribal Council. I try to meet with them at least once a year. I met with them just last week as a matter of fact — the week before last. But this was the only time that my office staff accompanied me.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I'm going to give you about four fairly . . . probably short questions, but the answers may be a little longer than what the questions would imply.

Number one, I would take it that your salary, or ministerial salary would probably come out of the Department of Justice. Does any come out of Indian and Metis Affairs or any reimbursement?

And then in this past year of course there's been a fair bit of discussion taking place — debate, meetings, I'm sure that were in fact quite . . . would acknowledge that there's been a fair bit of debate has taken place over the treaty land entitlements. You've probably been out of the province on numerous occasions, maybe dealing with your counterparts in other provinces. So I'm wondering what other areas — travel, where you've travelled, what kind of costs have been incurred, and the purpose . . . the destinations and purposes of any trips, even over and above the treaty land entitlements, but anything that would have dealt with Indian and Native Affairs Secretariat.

(1615)

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — If the member has no objection, I can provide that in writing. I have some information but I don't have the purpose of the trip. I just have the fact that the trip was made.

So far as my salary is concerned, I think that that is an Executive Council item. If it's not, it's Department of Justice. It's certainly not the secretariat.

So I will write to the member almost immediately and give the information that he's requested.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I noticed in some of the global questions that we had responses to, there were some variations that I'd like to bring to your attention and ask for your explanation.

Regarding in-scope permanent employees, I notice that these went up from 1 to 1.3 employees, and yet the salaries of these employees, if I understand

correctly, have gone from 17,398 to 43,000, which was basically 140 per cent. I'm wondering how we explain this type of a sizeable increase when we've only added .3 of an employee to that position.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The position is ...there were 15 person-months of work done in that in-scope permanent position. You'll notice the number is 1.3 — 1.3 person-years. And the reason for the discrepancy between the two years was that it was only partially encumbered in the previous year that had the \$17,000 figure that the member mentioned. It was encumbered I think by more than one person, but the total paid in that respect was only 17,000. There have been no salary increases or reclassifications involved. It simply is a question of the amount of time that the position was encumbered.

Mr. Toth: — I'm not sure if I totally followed it, Mr. Minister, but I was just looking over the report from May 10 of '93 where it talked about the personnel report, the summary that you had given us last year. And I looked at the end of ...March 31, 1992. You had one in-scope person at a salary of 25,872; and then for March 31, '93 that one person is then down to 17,398; and then of course this year we're up to 43,000.

And you're telling me that all of those funds weren't disbursed in that calendar year and that's why we have the discrepancy? We've got ...I'm not exactly sure why we would have had the decrease and then all of a sudden the major increase again. I guess that's the question we're trying to find out.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The answer is we had different people in the job for different lengths of time. And so in one of the years the job was vacant more — for longer periods than in other years, if the member follows that. You don't have to pay the salary if there's nobody doing the job. And that's the reason why there is a varying amount for different years.

Mr. Toth: — So I guess one would have to ask, was that a contractual type of service then, if a person was hired on that basis?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — No.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, as well we look at and notice in the out-of-scope permanent employees, these increased from 13 to 13.1, and again we see a discrepancy from 702 to \$780,000 expenditures for the 13 employees, an increase of 11 per cent. And I guess one could say, or could certainly latch onto the words that Barb Byers had indicated: I don't think there are any out-of-scope civil servants' kids going hungry tonight.

And I'm wondering how we justify that type of an increase based on the fact that it's just .1 of an increase in the number of employees.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Again it was a question of different numbers of employees working in the out-of-scope permanent jobs. There were vacancies

in one year that were not there in the other year. Nobody got a salary increase; nobody got a reclassification. It was simply an underexpenditure in one year because the positions weren't filled for all of that year, whereas in the following year they were filled for longer periods, and so the numbers turn out to be different.

Mr. Toth: — I guess the question begs ...is one wonders how come we've got such a discrepancy where you've got positions that are filled for just a part of the year. Why are employees leaving? Because that's like I indicated earlier, one would think that they must be on a contractual basis if you've got an employee hired for five months and then ...Are they just released or is it employees moving on to other occupations, and then at the time you don't really need someone in that position so then you don't hire until the position needs a permanent staff person? Is that what's been taking place, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Yes. For example, well there are people moving in the public service all the time. They get better jobs and they go to another job within the public service, or in the case of one person I can think of just offhand, they got a better job outside the public service, so they went. That leaves the position vacant.

You then go through the staffing process. And we try in this department, as the member will know, to staff with aboriginal people. It's very appropriate obviously, and sometimes that takes us longer than would normally be the case. I know for example that in recruiting for the assistant deputy minister on the Metis Affairs side, we had a very long competition process and we had to run it more than once, as I recall, before we finally came up with a suitable candidate. So for that reason positions can go vacant and you get the kind of numbers that the member has referred to.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, in the area of contract employees. Number one, what sorts of contracts are we talking about and what do these people do? And then I also notice in the last two years we really haven't had a number down for the number of contract employees. There just hasn't been a number there, but there's an expenditure of salary in the '93 fiscal year of \$36,140 and now this year we're up to \$86,000 with 2.8 contracts employed.

So I wonder if you could explain why the increase and if there were contracts or agreements? There must have been somebody working at the time or at least some employees employed in the last fiscal year because there was a dollar figure expenditure for salary. What's the difference or how do you explain those numbers?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, and to the member. I think the member is referring to the information we sent across and the contract employees under the heading, general departmental agency report, personnel report no. 4 — is that ...Okay, I'll deal with each of those cases.

In the case of Margaret Eagle, this was the person that I mentioned was hired as the assistant deputy minister of Metis Affairs. She was appointed to that job on October 1, 1993 permanently. We had her on contract from July 1 to the end of September, as she took a look at the job and we took a look at her — sort of a pre-employment period. And that is, I think, all I need say about her.

In the case of Kim Johnston, that was a contract for a period of three months at \$100 a day. She participated in an inventory process where we inventoried aboriginal people who would be eligible for employment.

(1630)

Wayne McKenzie worked for a period of one month at \$250 a day before his permanent employment.

Jennifer Shaw is employed casually at the rate of \$20 an hour, and comes and goes according to our needs for her particular service.

And Wes Stevenson worked for a period of one month before his permanent employment. And Wes is one of those who has now gone on to a new opportunity — a better job — and is no longer with the department.

Mr. Toth: — So that basically is explaining the difference that we see in contractual agreements on the first part of that report, or page of that report, where we see 2.8 employees at 86,000. Last year we had 36,000 expenditure but we really didn't have a list of employees.

So what you're indicating to us then is the dollar figure just reflects the number of days a person may have been employed under that contract before either they left the department or received permanent employment.

Mr. Minister, I also note that there is some \$19,000 increase in travel by the department, somewhere around a 30 per cent increase. And I'm wondering if you can explain the increase, what kind of travel, where to, and what was the travel for.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Perhaps we can send that information to the member. It's quite detailed and I won't take the time of the House now. I'll send it over quickly.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, a couple more questions before I . . . then some of the other MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) would like to ask a few questions.

One thing that my staff brought to my attention as they're looking over the global questions from all the other departments, they give this department an A plus for their computer spending. I think it works out to something like \$300 per employee, whereas most of the other departments earn \$2,000 per employee for computer expenditures. So they just wanted to

acknowledge that — and have us bring it to your attention — considering the fact that you're dealing with a budget that is including expenditures under native land entitlement, that I'm sure gets complicated at times when you look at the different reserves and the different entitlements and how all the dollar figures break out.

And in line with that, or in view of that, Mr. Minister, in the *Estimates*, page 71, I notice that we have expenditures for treaty land entitlements. And I am anticipating that this is an estimate. Last year it indicates that expenditures were probably around 11 million; this year you're talking in the neighbourhood of almost \$20.5 million. Is that a reflection upon what you anticipate the number of settlements that you will be facing this year in the province regarding treaty land entitlement, or land entitlements?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Under the framework agreement, our annual contribution over the 12-year period is \$11 million-and-change. In '94-95, there is another feature of the treaty land entitlement that kicks in, and that is the other 19 per cent above 30 per cent. And that 19 per cent is calculated on the basis of the savings to the province as a result of some of the northern communities achieving reserve status. The very complex part of the Treaty Land Entitlement Framework Agreement.

But just to somewhat repeat myself, it is contemplated in the agreement that there will be communities in the North which will convert from the municipal status they have now to become part of the reserve. That, for example, happens in a number of communities in the Peter Ballantyne Band area.

And that will result in savings to the province, which we have to factor in under the agreement, which we have to in effect pay to the federal government because they have to pick up the increased costs for the reserve — their social welfare and education costs.

And that amount is about 9.5 million. I've got the exact number here but . . . And that's the reason for the difference between those two figures.

Mr. Toth: — One other question, Mr. Minister, before I defer to some of my other colleagues. We've had a lot of discussion and debate in this Assembly regarding welfare recipients and the fact that the federal government have, I believe as the minister has indicated, offloaded some of their responsibility regarding natives in the province and the province picking up the extra tab.

I'm wondering, is there any money in Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat that goes towards any of the welfare rolls or the welfare recipients in the province?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — No. None.

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I have one area of some concern to certain people within our province relating

to your portfolio. And what twiggged me on to it was a March 17 Canadian Press story which was talking about the Saskatchewan provincial government wants, and I quote actually: Wants to ease its parks system into one that emphasizes wilderness protection over recreation, unquote. And quite frankly I think that that is an admirable objective to have.

Yet five days later we found out that your provincial government is negotiating to sell a fairly large tract of land to the Thunderchild Indian Band, and I refer to that section in the province that's known as the Bronson forest. And we're having a little bit of difficulty, because how does a move like that, in your opinion, emphasize this wilderness protection that your government has been advocating? I'd like your reaction to that, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, and to the member, this is a matter of considerable sensitivity, because as we speak the Thunderchild Band and the people who have an interest in the Bronson forest for a number of reasons are in the process of trying to work this out.

The background, the member will know, is that in 1980 the Thunderchild Band claimed the Bronson forest and the minister of the day committed the government to making the transfer, although it was never consummated. But the claim has been made again and our general policy is that we make Crown land available. There isn't enough Crown land to go around to satisfy all of the unsatisfied land claims, and it is our obligation, as the member will know, under legislation, under the Natural Resources Transfer Act, to make land available. And so we try to do it whenever we can.

The policy is clear, and that is that third-party interests have to be taken into account, and we're trying to do that. There are outfitters and trappers who are using parts of the Bronson forest and their interests have to be protected in this situation.

There are a number of other people who use the Bronson forest for recreational purposes who don't fall within the definition legally of a third-party interest. And it is in respect of them in particular that efforts are being made now to work out a clear understanding of how this might work. The secretariat is involved as well as the Department of Energy, or at least Environment and Resource Management, to try to mediate between the various persons who are interested in this question. And that's why I characterize it as a matter of some sensitivity because we are trying hard, as is the band, as are the people involved, to try and resolve this matter in a way that everybody can live with. And hopefully they'll be able to do that.

Mr. Neudorf: — Mr. Minister, that is exactly the reason why I'm asking the questions. I want to pursue it with you because of the sensitivity of the area and because there are a number of parties involved that have vested interests in what happens in that area.

What assurance can you give me that those interests will be protected? For example, the area that is being proposed as being on the selling block, what's going to happen to that area? What are the uses for that area going to be? Is it going to become an oil drilling place because there's oil in the area? Will there be logging allowed in that area? Because it has been a protected area up until this point.

So what can you do or what can you tell me today that will ensure that the Bronson forest will remain as a protected area within this province?

(1645)

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, there are various ideas being discussed, including particularly a co-management arrangement with respect to the area. The idea would involve the band and the provincial government, and the third parties who would be the users of the forest. So that's one idea that is being discussed and there are some precedents for that around the province. And I think the discussions are being carried on within that context.

I emphasize that the third-party interests that are there, the permits and the leases of course have to be respected, and that is a common feature to all of the land to which the entitlement process applies.

As far as the specific questions about the development of the land's resources, oil and logging, this just has to be worked out in one way or another. There are no regulations or laws that I'm aware of that apply, and that's very much the area where the people involved are going to have to work out a solution that they can all live with, whatever that is. We are in there trying to help in the sense that we are trying to get the discussions going and continuing on a high level. And the communications are as good as they can be, and we are confident that reasonable people discussing a problem can come to some mutually satisfactory solution.

Mr. Neudorf: — Well, Mr. Minister, from your answer it's obvious that you have some knowledge of the area and that you have been well briefed on it . . . well briefed on it just now, okay. I was going to give you an extra bit of a compliment there, but like usual it's the officials that keep us looking good.

Mr. Minister, seriously, the local residents are getting back to us and they are saying that they are worried about the sensitive landscapes and the many lakes in this area and how they may be affected. And you're telling me that there might be the ability of having a co-management team working on it. And that will include all the third parties that you're talking about. But unfortunately, Mr. Minister, in a situation like that there are bound to be disagreements and there are bound to be disputes.

And I guess it's that dispute-settling mechanism that I'm wondering about, how that will be handled and, ultimately, what use will be put to that land? Because originally this Bronson forest was put under the

umbrella of the parks system so that it would be protected. And that was reasonable and that's where it should be because then it would fall under the regulations of the park system. So the protection was there.

But if this land is now sold, then I just wonder exactly what concrete assurances we have that indeed that land will be continued to be treated in that protective state.

The selling of this land goes against . . . and I'm going to do a little bit of quoting here. It goes directly against the goal that your Resource minister has been talking about, of keeping 12 per cent of our surface in its natural state. And I'm going to quote. He said that his government is committed, with other countries around the world, to help to establish that 12 or 13 per cent of the earth's surface in its natural state, so that our biodiversity on which all life is based can be maintained. That was a commitment that your colleague, the fellow from Rosetown, made a commitment to.

And just the other day we had a debate in this House dealing with endangered spaces. And I say endangered spaces, not species in this case. And this is our government, the province's commitment to maintaining that.

And I guess what I'd like you to react to is that the parks system has been going in southern Saskatchewan and buying up surrounding land, surrounding existing parks and then putting that on the endangered list, as it were, to increase our commitment to protected land.

So on the one hand, Mr. Minister, I find it somewhat ironic that you're going out, buying up private land now, putting them into our parks system, and then going over here and selling some land that is already protected. Would you comment on that, please?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I appreciate, Mr. Chair, the member's concern and I appreciate that there are worried people who are themselves very concerned.

We are optimistic about this process resulting in an agreement that will be satisfactory to everyone. The Thunderchild Band is interested in this area because it has traditional and cultural and spiritual significance, as far the band is concerned, and has had from time immemorial, since they first occupied that area.

And the band has recognized that people in the area have used the area for recreational purposes for hunting and fishing and hiking and skiing, and the chief has said that he has no intention of restricting access or preventing these activities, has no intention of establishing a commercial fishery, has no intention of moving onto the land or establishing a physical presence there.

So enough has been said that there are the elements of an agreement present. And I think that if we can keep these people talking together and dealing directly

with each other and trying in good faith to reach an agreement, we will be able to arrive at such an agreement. That would be very desirable.

The people who value the land for its recreational purposes and for its use, as has been the case while it's been a protected area, should be able to have their fears met. And at the same time, the Thunderchild Band can become the owner of land that is as important to them as the Bronson forest is.

We think we'll be able to facilitate an agreement between them. Now if it doesn't work, it doesn't work, and some hard judgements are going to have to be made down the line. But at the moment we would like to encourage that process of discussion, try and mediate and facilitate wherever we can, with a view to having the people involved make a deal that they can all live with and be happy with and live together as neighbours. They're all going to live in the same area for a very, very long period of time, and they should be able to resolve their own problems and set a basis for a long-term future relationship.

Mr. Neudorf: — You were talking about all the commitments that the chief was making. I take it for granted then that these will all be part and parcel of the final agreement that is signed with all of those commitments put down in writing.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Well I would think so. I would think for example that these undertakings . . . I'm quoting from a news release that the chief of the Thunderchild Band issued on March 30. And all of the things that I've quoted come straight out of this press release. So I know that they would be pleased to incorporate those into a co-management agreement, those assurances. As I say . . .

An Hon. Member: — Whose press releases?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — This is the Thunderchild Band's press release. And this should go a long way towards forming the basis for a co-management agreement for the area. So we're really quite optimistic, you know.

Mr. Neudorf: — Mr. Minister, would you admit that what you're doing here is setting a precedent, number one; and secondly, that this potentially is putting at risk all other so-called Saskatchewan parks lands that are existing now for the benefit of all of the people of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The Bronson forest is in a different category because, as I mentioned earlier, there had been an earlier claim placed against it and the province committed itself, and this puts it in a different category than other park land.

I'm not the minister to speak to the question of parks, but I think this is a special case and that that would not be the case in relation to other parks. That's a bit of a sweeping generalization and I'm not the one to make it and I may be contradicted tomorrow by somebody else, but Bronson is in a different category, I think.

Mr. Neudorf: — Well talking about sweeping, I just want to make sure that nothing here is swept under the carpet of leaves in the Bronson forest area. So I want to take a look at section 407. You must be quite familiar with section 407 of the land treaty settlement . . . agreement, pardon me.

And that section of the land treaty agreement states:

Provincial parks, protected areas, recreation sites, historic sites, and park land reserves will only be sold in exceptional circumstances.

So I will give you the opportunity to put it on the Table as to what those exceptional circumstances are that have prompted the potential sale of that land.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Yes, the exceptional circumstances here I've already related to the member, and that is the case.

Mr. Neudorf: — You mentioned 1980. My information is that something occurred in 1981 and I'd like you to describe for me those exceptional circumstances and the commitment that was made at that time. Who made the commitment? Who was the minister that made the commitment at that particular time?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — It could have been 1981 or 1980. It was minister Bowerman in the Blakeney government who agreed, who committed the land, and did so on behalf of the province.

Mr. Neudorf: — The minister of parks says we have a commitment to historic sites and recreational parks and camp grounds and many other forms of park activity in Saskatchewan, including wilderness parks. Now I'm just wondering, Mr. Minister, if you are prepared to sacrifice on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan their park system for a commitment made by your former friend and colleague, the NDP Minister Bowerman, back in 1981.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The Minister Bowerman, who was a candidate for the National Party in their most recent federal election, was at the time one of the ministers of the Crown in Saskatchewan, made the commitment on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan. And I think in good faith to the first nation involved, we have no choice but to honour the commitment.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 5:02 p.m.