

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
March 1, 1995

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present, on behalf of people from the Maple Creek area of my constituency and as well a few people from Medicine Hat and Redcliff, a petition today. And I'll read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to allocate adequate funding dedicated towards the double-laning of Highway No. 1; and further, that the Government of Saskatchewan direct any monies available from the federal infrastructure program towards double-laning Highway No. 1, rather than allocating these funds towards capital construction projections in the province.

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

And I'd be happy to table these at this time, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition today from members of south-west Saskatchewan. The prayer is as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to oppose changes to present legislation regarding firearm ownership, and instead urge the federal government to deal with the criminal use of firearms by imposing stiffer penalties on abusers.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, most of these are from the Assiniboia-Gravelbourg-Limerick area.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, I as well wish to present petitions to the Assembly. I'd like to read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to allocate adequate funding dedicated toward the double-laning of Highway No. 1; and further, that the Government of Saskatchewan direct any monies available from the federal infrastructure program toward double-laning Highway No. 1, rather than allocating these funds towards capital construction projects in the province.

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

And these petitions are signed by individuals from Maple Creek, Nikaneet, Gleichen. I so present them. Thank you.

Mr. Keeping: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have

a petition that I want to present today on behalf of Wheat Pool members in my area of the province, and I'll read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that the Hon. Assembly may be pleased to require the directors of the Pool to seek approval of the members of the Pool by a vote before the proposed changes are enacted by the Legislative Assembly.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed, and pursuant to rule 11(7) they are hereby read and received.

Of member shareholders of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool petitioning the Assembly to require the directors of the Pool to seek the approval of the Pool membership by a vote before the proposed changes to The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool Act are enacted by the Legislative Assembly.

And of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to oppose changes to federal legislation regarding firearm ownership.

And of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to allocate adequate funding dedicated toward the double-laning of Highway No. 1.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure on behalf of my seat mate, the member from Thunder Creek, to introduce to you and through you to members of the Legislative Assembly a group of 13 grade 8 students and their teacher, Mr. Matheson, from Pense, Saskatchewan.

And I want to welcome these students here and I want you to also know that Pense is actually more known throughout the world than you may be aware of.

I was about your age when I first heard about Pense, Saskatchewan and it was in my geography book where there was a picture of Pense as an illustration of some good old rich farming land, the best that there was in the world, I think was the caption at the time.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I say to the students and teacher, I look forward to meeting with you later on in the Speaker's boardroom. I hope you have an enjoyable and informative afternoon and I'd be only too pleased to answer any questions that you may have. Thank you.

And I ask all members to help me welcome these students and teacher.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Saskatchewan's Jurassic Park

Ms. Bradley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We all know 1994 was another strong year for tourism in Saskatchewan and there is great anticipation for 1995. Technology will play its part this year as the information highway draws tourists to Saskatchewan's version of Jurassic Park.

I am referring to the Tyrannosaurus rex fossil at Eastend. A computer file about the town of Eastend and the dinosaur dig is now available on the Internet. It is estimated that the information can be accessed by as many as 60 million users from around the globe.

One of the big tourism draws last summer was this dinosaur fossil. Visitors to this site numbered 6,000 by the time the season closed. The economic impact on the province's south-west region has been estimated as high as \$800,000.

Now that information about this very important tourism attraction is available on the Internet. The potential for visitors to the region known as the Valley of Hidden Secrets is enormous.

Mr. Speaker, this is another example of how these technological advances are being used to our advantage to attract tourists and help bolster the economy at the same time.

This summer the Eastend region will be attracting people worldwide — people who will want to see the fossilized skeleton of the most ferocious predator to walk the earth.

And yes, Mr. Speaker, . . . or I should say no, Mr. Speaker, I'm not talking about the federal Finance minister, but the T-Rex at Eastend.

Thank you.

St. David's Day

Mr. Draper: — Borw da, Mr. Speaker, sir. I wish to remind members that today, March 1, is the feast day of St. David, the patron saint of Wales.

This worthy man was born about 520 A.D., apparently the result of the rape of his mother, St. Non, by the chieftain Sant. Perhaps we have a saint here for the protection of victims of indecent assault.

David was educated at Henfynyw, Cardigan, and was successful in suppressing the Pelagian heresy in Britain at Synods Llanddewi-Brefi and later at Caerleon-on-Usk. He moved the seat of ecclesiastical government from Caerleon to Mynyw, which has later been renamed Ty-Dewi, or in English, St. David's, in honour of him.

He founded numerous churches and more than 50 are dedicated

to him in Wales today. His shrine at St. David's is a notable place of pilgrimage and the site of the National University of Wales.

I ask members to join with me in celebrating a less well-known but equally important compatriot of Patrick — David, patron saint of the land that we call Cymru; Wales being the enemy Saxons' name for gwlad y gan, the land of song. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Closing of Regina Weather Office

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, my statement today concerns the weather. In today's paper, I find out that the Regina weather office will be closing in a few years. This I find out on one of the coldest days of our winter; so if there are any weather warnings, blizzard warnings, and so on, we'll have to rely on Saskatoon to inform us.

We all know there are highs and lows on the weather map when we watch the weather forecasters on TV, but today there aren't any highs, just two lows. Combine the wind with the low and you have a low blow.

The first low blow is the announcement that the weather office will be closed. The second low blow was when I heard that our senators in Ottawa will be getting another pay raise. I am speaking about the parliamentary ones, Mr. Speaker, not the hockey ones — not that it makes much difference, neither group has distinguished itself lately.

Now I understand the staff at the weather office are given the option of an early retirement package if they are over 50 years of age. Could the same principle apply to the senators? Give them an early retirement package for the ones over the age of 50?

When those newly retired senators decide to come back to Saskatchewan and want to find out what the weather will be like, they will find out like the rest of us: please don't phone Regina, please don't phone Prince Albert, you'll have to phone Saskatoon, and if the line is busy, don't worry, there'll be more weather tomorrow — if you can get through.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Crow Benefit Compensation

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions this afternoon are for the Premier. Mr. Premier, I've just spent the last few days in rural Saskatchewan, and people are not happy. They're not happy with the Liberals for taking away the Crow benefit, but they're not happy with your government either. Because once again, Mr. Premier, you're only telling half the story.

It was you, Mr. Premier, who conspired with the Wheat Pool and your buddy, Garf Stevenson, to ensure the \$7 billion offered by the PC (Progressive Conservative) government in Ottawa was not paid to producers. You and Garf Stevenson, Mr. Premier, left \$7 billion on the table, and now it's gone.

Mr. Premier, why don't you tell farmers the entire story? Why don't you tell them it was your political agenda that blocked \$7 billion of Crow benefit to be paid to Saskatchewan farmers?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday we had the Liberal leader taking a run at the president of the Wheat Pool; today we have the Tory leader doing it.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask the member opposite to table this said offer that was supposedly on the table. Certainly I never saw it. And, Mr. Speaker, if you go back to the '60s when I first remember talking about the Crow benefit, we had the federal Liberals who were talking about changing the Crow benefit. When they changed, what they did was they reduced it. We went from the Crow rate to the Crow benefit. We took a major hit in western Canada on that benefit. We had the federal Tories talking about changing the Crow benefit. And they didn't give us \$7 billion. What they did do was cut 10 per cent and then cut another 10 per cent.

We now have a federal Liberal government who has been talking about changing the Crow benefit, come and talk about changing the Crow benefit. And what did they do? They eliminated it — completely eliminated it.

And, Mr. Speaker, whether it's a federal Liberal government or a federal Tory government, that has been the game and the goal of the last 20 years, is to get rid of this benefit. And it's finally gone and now the members opposite are saying: oh, well, we're onside; we're sorry we lost it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, you know very well you opposed pay-the-producer since day one. There was \$7.2 billion on the table a number of years ago. Former Agriculture minister Charlie Mayer confirmed that, and it was also confirmed by the United Grain Growers and the Western Canadian Wheat Growers. They also confirmed it today, Mr. Minister, and you know that.

You blocked the offer. Your government is responsible for this, along with your buddy, Garf Stevenson, the same guy that you gave \$500 a day last year for that phoney commission that went around the province to study health care in this province. It's your government that we can lay the blame squarely at the feet of, as well as the Wheat Pools across western Canada. It is you people who are responsible for it, and farmers across this province know that.

How can you pretend to stand up for farm families in this

province when first of all you strip them of their GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) premiums and then strip them of their GRIP program, as well as now strip them of the Crow benefit, Mr. Minister. You take responsibility for . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. The member must ask a question some time.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There may not have been a question there. I think that's not surprising.

Mr. Speaker, it's strange that the members opposite defend a defeated Tory cabinet minister. If they have those documents, I would like to see them tabled here. I never saw any offer of \$7.2 billion. I think the people of western Canada quite clearly passed judgement on Charlie Mayer's Crow policy in the last federal election, Mr. Speaker. I think they told your party exactly what they thought of your policies on the Crow rate in the last federal election. And if you have documents to prove your statements, I would like to see them tabled here.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There isn't a farm group in Saskatchewan that will not confirm that. The Western Canadian Wheat Growers have confirmed it; United Grain Growers and Ted Allen have confirmed it.

Are you saying, Mr. Minister, that Ted Allen of the United Grain Growers is misleading the people of this province — misleading farmers across this province? Because I think it is you that is misleading the farmers of this province. They know, Mr. Minister, that it is you and your government, along with the Wheat Pools across this western Canada, that conspired against farmers with regard to the Crow benefit.

Who's agenda are you on, Mr. Minister? Is it the farm agenda for the people of this province or is it the NDP (New Democratic Party) agenda of ruining rural Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Speaker, we are on the agenda of the Saskatchewan farmers. Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan farmers very clearly said — not only to farm groups but in public hearings — they very clearly said to Charlie Mayer, we want to keep the Crow payment and we want to keep it being paid to the railways. That was a clear message that was sent.

Mr. Speaker, if Charlie Mayer made an offer to the Western Canadian Wheat Growers, he may well have done. Leroy Larsen says that there was no offer; I saw no offer. I think, Mr. Speaker, if there was an offer, let the member opposite table it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, you're not only dishonest; you're a coward.

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Order. I ask the Leader of the Opposition to categorically withdraw that statement.

Mr. Boyd: — I withdraw that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Minister, you are not being straight with the farmers of this province and you know it. There was an offer on the table and everyone, every farm group across this province, knows that, Mr. Minister. It was well-known by farm groups across this province.

And farmers are seeing right through your phoney little act, Mr. Minister. They know what you've done to them, and they know that it's too late to start acting like you're on their side now, Mr. Minister, because they know you've never been on their side.

You took away millions of dollars of provincial GRIP premiums. You left federal dollars on the table in terms of GRIP all along, Mr. Minister. You stripped their GRIP contract from them and now you've stripped their Crow benefit as well from them. All because your political agenda was more important than farm families across this province.

Mr. Minister, when are you going to own up to your own actions in regard to this and be responsible for the people in this province, the farm families across this province, and speak up and be in favour of a payment of \$7.2 billion that was on the table? And you know it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Speaker, again we have rather strange occurrences happening in the House in the past two days. Mr. Speaker, those two parties opposite supported destroying the Crow benefit for the last 20 years. The Liberal leader supported it right up until Monday night when the people of the province . . . when Leroy Larsen and Sinc Harrison and Murray Westby and the Premier and everybody else in this province was saying we are being treated unfairly; now they're saying, well we're onside, it's your fault.

Mr. Speaker, this is ludicrous. Both these parties have supported Charlie Mayer and his cuts to the Crow, they supported Ralph Goodale and his cuts to the Crow, and now they're saying, well it's your fault.

Mr. Speaker, we certainly welcome them being on our side and hope they will . . . having changed their view and hope will now fight with us to get some more money. But I think you're a little late.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. Before I take the next question, I think we just have to tone it down a bit. I've got a tough time hearing the questions and I certainly couldn't hear the answers because there's just too much help given by members. So please just tone it down a bit, allow the member to ask his question, and allow the minister to answer it.

Welfare Fraud

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I have a couple of questions to the Minister of Social Services. Mr. Minister, we have been contacted by many people around the province with concerns over rampant welfare fraud. Recently we received correspondence from an individual on the James Smith Reserve, who alleges that members from the band are abusing the welfare system by placing SaskPower bills in the name of a child or an individual within the household that is receiving social assistance. And so by doing, Mr. Minister, the members with jobs and income are able to have their SaskPower bills paid by the welfare system.

Now I realize that the welfare on Indian reserves is a federal responsibility, Mr. Minister, but this does involve SaskPower, and in the end, Mr. Minister, tax dollars come from the same source. Would you endeavour to investigate this unacceptable situation, Mr. Minister, or are you still maintaining that all is well within the welfare system?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Well, Mr. Speaker, certainly if the member would be kind enough to send the information, we will do what we can. As he acknowledged, certainly the fact that this is on the reserve is a federal responsibility. And to the extent that we can cooperate — in fact we're doing that already — we'd be happy to do that.

I'm sorry that he felt the need to take a shot though generally, because I think that we have demonstrated continued improvement in the accountability measures on a social assistance program to the point where the Provincial Auditor is satisfied with the accounting. And we've made many major improvements since then.

So I think it's important that your leader and you quit promoting the image out there that people on welfare, who are unfortunate enough to be unemployed, and young people — you're promoting the image that they're all not trustworthy, except the ones that you happen to refer to me where you want more money for them. You can't have it both ways.

Now that, as a critic, you've got a responsibility to promote the fact, to promote positive images towards people who are unemployed, and to be part of the solution. So get us the information and I'll be very happy to see what we can do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Minister, what I have been saying to you is if you clean up the mismanagement part you could have the extra money we're asking for for those people who need it.

Now, Mr. Minister, the individual who contacted us is one of many concerned citizens who feel the system is not working, not just one. He sent 27 pages of information, including copies of SaskPower bills, biographies of 22 households on the reserve that are abusing the system, averaging \$4,000 a month. Now

that's a considerable amount of money. And on-reserve social assistance recipients need only to make one phone call informing SaskPower of the name of the individual that will be responsible for the bill — no checks, no balances, nothing else, just a phone call.

Mr. Minister, is it not time for you to act, not just in this case, but on the welfare abuse and fraud so that those who really and truly need it will get the assistance? That's all we're asking.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I mean this member has not called me about any of this. Is he really interested in sorting this out or is he interested in grandstanding? I released today ... (inaudible interjection) ... if I can answer the question.

I released today two pages of verification accountability measures to BBS (Baton Broadcasting Services) so that once and for all we can put to rest this bashing of low income, unemployed people. That's very irresponsible of you. Those accountability measures are better and more effective than any province in Canada. Now those are public; I released them publicly today. I'll release them to the member, which I actually did last year except for the two or three new ones.

But we're accountable because we're trying to preserve precious tax dollars. We're not trying to bring these measures in place, Mr. Speaker, to be punitive, which is exactly what Ralph Klein and their people are doing. They were so decimated in the last election, Mr. Speaker, they're looking around for models. They got Klein as a model and the scapegoat are unemployed youth and poor people and you should be ashamed of yourself.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Crow Benefit Elimination

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday we heard the Minister of Agriculture tell us that his Finance minister had met with Paul Martin, that the Premier had met with the Prime Minister, and that he personally has met several times with Mr. Goodale, but none of them has told us what proposals they went with. We have no evidence that they made any kind of credible case for farmers at all, Mr. Speaker, because we've never seen any evidence of what proposals were made to the federal government by the province of Saskatchewan.

My question is to the Minister of Agriculture. From your comments, Mr. Minister, we assume the Saskatchewan government made a formal presentation to Ottawa for a \$7 billion pay-out of the Crow. Will you table today the actual proposal so that farm families can see what the terms were, including which farm groups endorsed your proposal and the date that it was formally presented.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, at meetings and more

importantly public, our government has taken the position that we were in favour of the status quo, leaving the Crow benefit in place. And that is well documented both publicly and in meetings. So that was our position that we took to the meetings.

What is more interesting here, Mr. Speaker, is what position that member took when she met with Ralph Goodale before the budget. Because when the budget was read she said that the budget was regionally fair; which leads us to believe and the farmers to believe that her proposal was the payment that came out in the budget. And then realizing that it wasn't working, she flip-flopped and now says it isn't enough.

But the more important issue is, what is your position that you're taking to Mr. Goodale this weekend. We know what it was before the budget; you agreed with him. But now that you've flip-flopped, what is your position going into the meeting that you've promised to go to this weekend? What are you asking for when you meet with the Minister of Agriculture from Ottawa?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The NDP were the first to cut agriculture spending in their budget, and this came on the heels of an exodus of 18,300 jobs from rural Saskatchewan. Breaking the GRIP contract was a betrayal of farm families and yesterday the Minister of Agriculture told us that he met personally several times with Mr. Goodale to discuss the status of the WGT (Western Grain Transportation) subsidy.

My question again to the Minister of Agriculture, who seems to require either the Finance minister or the Economic Development minister to respond: were you or your colleagues ever told to expect a \$7 billion pay-out by Mr. Goodale?

And, sir, will you table today exactly the proposal that you went with so that people in this province can see the terms, including the date that you formally presented that proposal?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite again, that her position is clear. That when it comes to dealing with her counterparts in Ottawa before the federal budget came down, she was in favour of the cuts. Absolutely in favour; it's absolutely clear. In fact on budget night, budget day, she said that farmers who expected \$7 billion were dreaming in technicolor — that's what she said, that they were dreaming in technicolor. No support for farmers, but just telling them that she would not support them, until the point came when there was pressure from farm groups.

She then did two things. One, she flip-flopped, but more importantly and I think something that speaks to the individual who said it, is quoted outside of the Assembly yesterday, and I want to quote. She said about the farm groups and organizations that met to take on the federal government: what we don't like is the way in which they, the government, are using groups who are needing legislation right at this time to

make themselves in position of having to support the government's view and so forth. We think that in essence there's a lot of people across the province who won't buy into that kind of thing.

Worse than your flip-flop is the accusation that SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) and SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) and the Wheat Pool are playing to some political agenda and not out to fight for farmers. I ask you, Madam Member, when are you going to stand up for the farmers? And we hope this weekend you take a position to Mr. Goodale that's different than the one that you took before the federal budget.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this minister who has been in government ad nauseam — decades, in fact — isn't naïve enough to think that I would know what is going to be in the federal budget any more than he would know what is in the federal budget.

Mr. Speaker, times do change and the world trading order is changing, as will the face of agriculture in this province.

This NDP government, and especially the Premier, opposed changing the method of payment and they said so today. The GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) negotiations caused the end to the payment, and we all knew this was going to happen. Even the Premier is cited in June of 1994, stating it was going to happen.

Instead of fighting for the farmers of this province, this government admits to fighting for the status quo. Mr. Speaker, the NDP has always wanted the money to remain in the hands of the railways. GATT deemed this a direct export subsidy and stated it had to be changed.

My question once again to the Minister of Agriculture: why, sir, were you spinning your wheels, trying to maintain the status quo, when you knew that you should be fighting to ensure that Saskatchewan farm families would receive the best that they possibly could, given the inevitable changes?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite, if she understood history, would know that the Crow benefit is a historic right of farmers of Saskatchewan. Just as the Indian people of the province have rights, the people of Quebec have rights, I say the farmers of Saskatchewan, in the huge giveaways that were given to the railway companies, were given the Crow benefit.

And I say to you, Madam Member, that if you had any understanding, you would be on your feet defending the Crow benefit in total to the farmers of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, what is incredible

here is the flip-flop of the member opposite. In today's *Leader-Post*, I quote:

Liberal leader Lynda Haverstock said \$1.6 billion is not enough compensation and voted in favor of the motion, despite having told reporters moments earlier the budget is "regionally fair."

Now where are you coming from? What I say to that member opposite, she is no different than Otto Lang, Jean-Luc Pepin, Trudeau. And the Mr. Goodale who worked for those people back in the '60s and '70s when that change was being made by the Liberals is now implementing that Liberal plan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Welfare 1-800 Line

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of supplementary questions for the Minister of Social Services.

Mr. Minister, your government's record on welfare is abysmal, both in terms of the growing number of people needing assistance and a growing number of people abusing the system. We have brought forward several initiatives designed to mitigate these growing numbers, but it appears that your government would rather keep its head in the sand on this issue.

My colleague from Wilkie has brought forward another example of how average citizens are fed up and willing to assist, willing to assist in the fight against welfare abuse. The government needs to encourage their willingness to help.

Mr. Minister, will you implement a 1-800 tip line which will allow Saskatchewan people to fight against individuals who are taking taxpayers' money — and abusing it — from the welfare system, taking it from the people who truly need it in that welfare system. Will you act, Mr. Minister, instead of just talking.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Well, Mr. Speaker, first of all there's a bit of hypocrisy here. He has voted against, as has the Liberal leader, every initiative of the last three years that were designed to help low income people — every single one of them. So, Mr. Speaker, I suggest the member do his research. Have you contacted Manitoba to find out how their dial-a-cheat number has worked? Have you done that? Have you done that?

The result is that it cost them \$650,000 to put dial-a-cheat signs up all over Manitoba. They've recovered \$230,000. That is true. That is true. Quebec's experience is the very same. Well it's fine to start bashing people and categorizing people on assistance as cheats, but the reality is that your information is incorrect. It's not based on fact. Quebec abandoned that approach.

Your process . . . the processes you had in place in 1989, you

didn't pick this up. There was a person receiving assistance in Swift Current, Medicine Hat. You didn't pick that up for two years. We picked that up, that duplicate assistance, because your systems didn't work. The member to your right spent \$650,000 on the fraud squad; they recovered \$250,000. Put that money to day care.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, let's talk about the situation in Manitoba. Manitoba implemented the 1-800 tip line in Winnipeg and the results . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. I didn't want to call individual members but the member from Rosetown-Elrose has been going on throughout this whole question period interrupting. And he simply will not stop until I point him out singularly. And that's what I'm doing right now. I'm asking him to please, please quit interrupting.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you. The results are in from Manitoba, Mr. Minister. In less than eight months of operation the Winnipeg line has received 2,600 calls, resulting in corrective action on 263 welfare cases.

The line has resulted in an annual savings of \$1.3 million; 1.3 million, Mr. Minister. Manitoba has now announced that they're expanding the program to include the entire province of Manitoba.

Mr. Minister, will you consider that? Will you implement the proposal immediately and recognize the savings potential? Perhaps you could explain to the Assembly why it is so unfair to ensure that welfare abuse is curbed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — I'll let the public of Saskatchewan decide. Where the Provincial Auditor says he's satisfied with our control measures, I'll let the public of Saskatchewan decide who he believes, you or me, who they believe.

The reality is the information I have from the University of Manitoba — I'll give you the source — the research they've done is they have not recovered half of the cost of those cheat lines. What do you think they're going to tell you? That was an independent research I'm drawing on.

If you had used the same scrutiny in your government before, for 10 years, used the same scrutiny for all those people who were lining up for those megaproject dollars, we wouldn't have a \$15 billion debt.

If you've got names of people who you think are cheating on welfare, give them to me. We'll look into it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 25 — An Act to amend The Farm Financial Stability Act

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill to amend The Farm Financial Stability Act.

Motion agreed to and the Bill ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, as it relates to questions 44 to 47, I move they be converted to motions for return (debatable).

The Speaker: — 44, 45, 46, and 47, motions for return (debate).

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 23 — An Act to establish The Agri-Food Innovation Fund

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at the end of my remarks I will move second reading of The Agri-Food Innovation Act, 1995. Mr. Speaker, the future of Saskatchewan's agriculture and food sector lies in the new, emerging agricultural sectors and further processing of our primary products. This government has laid out this vision in the *Agriculture 2000* strategy.

Currently the province's agriculture and food sector has achieved remarkable strides in diversification. Despite some very difficult times in the agricultural sector during the last few years, the agri-food industry has demonstrated that it is looking forward towards the future, and will be very much a part of the growth in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, diversification has taken place throughout the agri-food industry, in crops, livestock production, and in food processing. In recent years, Saskatchewan producers have intensified their efforts in crop and livestock diversification.

Mr. Speaker, for the first time in Saskatchewan's history, Saskatchewan farmers planted almost as many acres to diversified crops as they did to wheat. Mr. Speaker, with the remarkable record of 1994's crop production, Saskatchewan farmers have proved they are diversifying.

Mr. Speaker, I feel we can say that Saskatchewan is no longer a one-crop economy. Producers are planting diversified crops such as peas, lentils, beans, mustard, herbs, and spices — to name just a few — which give them a larger financial return than wheat. The effect on farm income is remarkable. Saskatchewan farmers have proved they intend to change

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Saskatchewan's agricultural economy so that it can be successful when the price of wheat declines so that they and their families are not dependent on the price of wheat or government support.

Mr. Speaker, this government admires the initiative of Saskatchewan farmers and wishes to support that initiative. Mr. Speaker, at the same time the livestock sector of the agricultural economy continues to diversify. We have seen an increase in specialized livestock and exotic livestock. As well production of cattle, hogs, and sheep also show steady growth.

The number of beef cows and replacement heifers is up 6 per cent from a year ago, at 1.275 million, the largest inventory since 1977. The number of hogs is up 2 per cent from a year ago to 906,000 head, the largest inventory since 1973. Mr. Speaker, the increase in these numbers is due again to the initiative of Saskatchewan producers who wish to diversify the agricultural economy.

Mr. Speaker, this government admires and supports the efforts of Saskatchewan farmers to diversify the sources of their income. Two roadblocks have prevented this province from capturing the full potential of agriculture diversification opportunities. These include traditionally based commodity support programs and the lack of research and development funding.

This government has replaced the old GRIP and tripartite programs which favoured traditional commodities with a new, whole-farm income support. This new program encourages farmers to make production decisions based on the market and not on government programs. The benefit of this was clearly demonstrated in the previous crop year.

The second roadblock has been a lack of research and development funding for the emerging agriculture and value added sectors. The success of Saskatchewan agriculture, and wheat in particular, has been the support governments and producers' check-offs have provided to the various research institutions and infrastructure facilities. These emerging sectors however, do not have research programs, development facilities, or check-off funding in place to provide the support which is critical during the formative stages.

The Government of Saskatchewan wants to support these types of initiatives through the agri-food innovation fund. Mr. Speaker, we often forget about the opportunities that exist within our primary production. The areas of agricultural biotechnology, crop processing, food and non-food processing, play an important role in the health of our agriculture sector and the province's overall economy.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak briefly about two of these sectors: agricultural biotechnology and food processing. Mr. Speaker, this province's agricultural biotechnology centre in Saskatoon is recognized as being a leader in North America. Starting with one firm in 1982, there are now over 20 companies involved in this field. These firms work

cooperatively with research institutions such as the University of Saskatchewan, the POS (protein/oil/starch) pilot plant, the plant biotechnology institute, the crop development centre, and VIDO (Veterinary Infectious Disease Organization) just to name a few.

The benefit to our farmers can be seen through new oil-seed varieties, vaccines, new crops, and other input products. For example there has been a tremendous growth in the food processing sector of the agri-food industry. Saskatchewan's food processing industry has enjoyed many successes in the last few years. There are more Saskatchewan-produced foods on grocery store shelves across Canada than at any time before in the history of food production in this province.

Mr. Speaker, there is a larger variety of Saskatchewan-processed food products being exported beyond Canada's border than ever before. I'm happy to report that there are 270 food processors in Saskatchewan, and of these, 234 are small businesses with fewer than 20 employees. The majority of these companies, Mr. Speaker, are located in rural Saskatchewan. The food processing companies create jobs for about 6,300 Saskatchewan residents. Projections estimate that the payroll is about \$189 million.

(1415)

Of the 270 food processing companies in Saskatchewan, 50 export their food products outside of Canada. Mr. Speaker, what is particularly encouraging about these statistics is that it's mostly the smaller companies, the companies which have fewer than 20 employees, that are exporting outside of Canada.

And even more encouraging is the fact that of the 50 companies which export to foreign companies, 32 are food processors located in rural Saskatchewan. We have learned that by adding value to our primary products we can create more wealth.

This is positive news. The food processing industry has shown us that it can create and maintain food processing businesses in rural Saskatchewan, can create jobs, and can create wealth in rural Saskatchewan. These value added sectors, much like the agricultural commodity sectors, require research and development assistance to overcome technological, regulatory, and other development hurdles.

Mr. Speaker, the agri-food innovation fund will, among other things, provide support for the continued growth and development of biotechnology, crop processing, food processing, and processing of agriculture products for other commercial uses.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of Saskatchewan has worked in cooperation with the Saskatchewan agriculture and food industry to focus on diversification. Together, industry and government have developed a strategic direction for the future. Important components of this strategic direction are diversification, research and development, and the cooperation of all agricultural organizations in working together for

development in economic expansion.

Towards these objectives, Mr. Speaker, the Government of Saskatchewan has provided from its GRIP surplus a total of \$18 million to establish the agri-food innovation fund. An additional 9 million has been provided in the '95-96 budget recently presented in this Legislative Assembly.

The agri-food innovation fund provides for federal government participation through a federal-provincial agreement and is part of a strategy developed with industry consultation. The agri-food innovation fund will be used to enhance diversification of the agri-food industry through support to research and development initiatives for these new and emerging value added sectors.

Mr. Speaker, the agri-food innovation fund will support endeavours such as biotechnology infrastructure in Saskatchewan.

We will support activities such as the commercial development of technologies for the processing of agricultural products for food and non-food uses. It will promote sustainable agricultural development.

The new fund will support new primary production alternatives and skills within the agricultural community. The agri-food innovation fund will also support the development of skills that will assist agricultural producers in adapting to changing agri-food industry. The fund will expand employment opportunities and economic activity in rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the agri-food innovation fund will be established through the proposed Agri-Food Innovation Act. The Act outlines the method whereby the fund will be operated. There are provisions for a board of directors and committees drawn from industry and government to manage the fund and set priorities.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the agri-food innovation fund will greatly assist the growth and diversification of the agri-food industry in Saskatchewan. I believe the agri-food innovation fund will help to achieve the goals that Saskatchewan agri-food industry has set for itself as the 21st century approaches.

Mr. Speaker, and members of the Legislative Assembly, I encourage you to adopt The Agri-Food Innovation Act. Therefore I move that The Agri-Food Innovation Act be read a second time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make a few comments before I move to adjourn the debate at this time on the Act to establish the agri-food innovation fund.

There's no question, Mr. Speaker, that over the past number of years and certainly through the 1980s there was a real move to try and diversify the agricultural economy in this province. The

farmers themselves began to see and even governments began to recognize that wheat was not the only alternative or should not be maintained as the only alternative to crop production in the province of Saskatchewan, that we shouldn't hang our hats on wheat, but we should look at other avenues available to producers.

And the recent announcement in the federal budget about the dismantling of the Crow benefit brings it out even more clearly every day, the importance for this province to look at alternatives and the way of marketing its product, not only in the raw form, which we've traditionally been able to do or we've continued to do, but also looking at processed forms and putting our product to market by creating the jobs here, manufacturing and processing the crops that are so widely grown now across the province in such a diversified avenue.

Mr. Speaker, I've been at a number of meetings and heard people talk on the pork industry, and the suggestion is there that in Saskatchewan we could actually produce and we should be able to produce and market 3 million hogs out of the province of Saskatchewan. Right now we're marketing about 1 million hogs. Now for the hog producer who is out there who's facing some prices that don't seem to be very competitive, you might argue well, we really don't want to expand the business.

But the industry that is talking about expanding the hog business and expanding hog production is talking about the fact that they don't want to ship hogs live to the market-place. They want to ship hogs in a processed form.

And we certainly see in the Far East, in Japan and in China, that there are avenues opening. And as we've already seen in Mexico and other parts of the world, that there are avenues open for us to market the product that we are so able to produce at a very competitive rate in the province of Saskatchewan. Now the establishment of the agri-food innovation fund, as the minister has indicated, I trust will indeed enhance this process of . . . the process of processing and manufacturing and marketing of the many products.

Mr. Speaker, what we have seen across our province . . . not only do we see wheat and durum continue to be grown in the province, but the last couple of years it's taken a substantial reduction with a significant growth in canola production. And now we have sunola on the market, we have flax, and beyond that, we have peas and beans that have become a major avenue of income to farmers in this province as they have expanded from the oil-seeds . . . from the wheats, first of all, the bread wheats to the oil-seeds and now into the lentil and the peas and bean market.

And even in our area, they're even expanding beyond that into other forms of oils such as coriander and caraway, and the possibility of an oil crushing plant being set up in Kipling is very real.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's very obvious that we need to look at ways in which we can innovatively come up with new technology,

new marketing avenues in which to aid the Saskatchewan agriculture producer, whether they're in the livestock business or whether they're in the grain sector or the oil-seed sector, whatever sector they're involved in.

And we trust that at the end of the day, as we get into the meat of this Bill, that we will find that the Bill put some real dollars and some real emphasis on avenues that are really open, that are marketable in the province rather than possibly establishing a fund that may not do a lot for producers. And I trust that, as the minister had indicated, that this is going to indeed create an avenue and a sphere whereby producers can find ways of not only processing but marketing their product.

It's unfortunate though, Mr. Minister . . . or Mr. Speaker, that the minister has gone to the \$8 million GRIP surplus, the funds that should have been available to agriculture producers in a time of grave difficulty, taken that money and put it into the agri-food sector.

Now I guess on the one hand, while the minister's taking it from the producers, on the other hand, through the agri-food innovation fund, he's looking at a way of maybe putting it back into the hands of producers, and in that respect, we can give him credit for that.

Mr. Speaker, it seems that there are many other avenues and certainly a fair bit of debate that we will get into further as we continue the debate on this Bill and as we get into committee. And I look forward to that time. However at this time I would move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Environment and Resource Management Vote 26

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

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Yes, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to introduce on my right the deputy minister of Environment and Resource Management, Michael Shaw; on my left, the associate deputy, Bob Blackwell; behind me the associate deputy, Les Cooke; Ross MacLennan, assistant deputy minister of operations; and Donna Kellsey, director of financial and administrative services on my left and behind me; and at the back, Don Macaulay, director of parks and facilities and then . . . (inaudible) . . . and my room-mate, Mr. Maynard Sonntag.

The Chair: — I don't want to get into that one at all, except to say that in referring to members, let's do it by their constituency.

Item 1

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. No, I wouldn't want to make any comments on that particular issue either.

I'd like to thank you for coming in today, Mr. Minister, and I'd like to welcome your officials here today. I believe that the environment is a very important aspect of Saskatchewan's life and a continuation of our society as we know it. So I think it's very important that things be done right and properly in this area.

Before the chairman allowed us to start this questioning, Mr. Minister, you were commenting on the Crow. Now for those people who don't know in Saskatchewan, and I doubt that there are any, but that's talking about the Crow rate adjustment, the historical Crow rate for hauling grain.

An Hon. Member: — It has nothing to do with hunting.

Mr. D'Autremont: — And that's right. As my colleague says, it has nothing to do with hunting; it's not shooting those black guys that fly through the sky. In my country here last fall, Mr. Minister, we had over five miles of crows, sitting on every fence post for over five miles. It was quite the sight.

An Hon. Member: — They must have known it was going.

(1430)

Mr. D'Autremont: — They were heading south; they knew what was coming in the budgets.

Mr. Minister, but what happens now that the federal government has eliminated the Crow rate benefit? There are going to be massive changes in agriculture in Saskatchewan, and nobody is sure exactly what direction that's going to go; whether it's going to mean more extensive livestock operations; whether it's going to mean a shift from our cereal grain base to some of the pulse crops, to the oil-seeds, the more exotic crops; whether it means that farmers are going to try to get more production out of the land that they are currently farming in the crops that they're currently using, out of the cereal grains in particular.

Are farmers going to get into the situation where they're mining the land with their crops? Are they going to get into a situation where they're breaking up more marginal lands to try and get more dollars out of those lands? Or are they going to turn around and seed those lands back to grasses, to develop a more intensive livestock operation? Nobody knows what's going to happen in this area yet, Mr. Minister.

But if we go to a more intensive farm operation, if we start breaking up more of our marginal lands, we're going to get into a serious problem of soil erosion. And I believe, Mr. Minister, that is an area in which the Environment department must be a participant, in controlling soil erosion.

We have the Saskatchewan Soil Conservation Association in

Saskatchewan, which tries to deal with farmers and educate farmers and teach them the new techniques that are available to protect their land — to stop wind erosion, to stop water erosion.

And, Mr. Minister, that's a very important organization because they try out the new techniques and then they disseminate that information throughout their membership, which in a lot of cases, Mr. Minister, are the more progressive farmers in every community. Not always, but in a lot of cases they are.

When their neighbours see the actions that those farmers are taking towards soil conservation, they judge the results: whether they're working or not working, how intensive do you have to operate, how little do you have to operate — how many times do you have to go over your land or how few times do you have to go over your land.

So, Mr. Minister, I think it's very important that the Environment department participate with the Saskatchewan Soil Conservation Association. What works do you do with them currently and how intensively are you involved within the Saskatchewan soil conservation?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I'm pleased that the member opposite has raised the issue of the Crow, because endangered species are a matter for consideration by our branch. And I'm mortified and devastated by the fact that just a couple of days ago the federal government has made this Crow extinct.

It's a shame that this basis for Saskatchewan's economic structure, which began heavily in agriculture and has been diversified more more recently, with farmers diversifying and the economy generally taking hold in response to good management strategies by government, that the federal government would be so insensitive as to undermine such an important piece of Canada's infrastructure with no plan for the future, with no respect to the history on which it's based, with no provision for a strategy for transportation for holding Canada together, even though they with one swipe of the pen killed one of the most important bases for the prairie economy and the prairie culture.

But to move away from that act of devastation and erosion of what is Saskatchewan, the question of what will farmers do in response? Well I can say one thing; knowing farmers, is that they will act responsibly. They will struggle and they will fight and they will look for ways in which they can respond, but I know they will not respond irresponsibly.

One of the bases for the operations of our department is to work in a consensual fashion with all stakeholders.

And one of our strongest partners in good environmental management are farmers. As you indicated, the strong work they are doing in the Saskatchewan Soil Conservation Association, which is a leading exercise in not only managing soil in Saskatchewan but making a major contribution to the greenhouse gas issue in Saskatchewan and Canada, is a tribute

to the work that Saskatchewan farmers do.

While that program is administered under the Department of Agriculture and you can discuss it at greater length with my colleague, the Minister of Agriculture, when his estimates come up, I'm proud to say that it does also make a significant contribution to the good environmental stewardship of Saskatchewan.

And that is really quite appropriate. We cannot look in government any more and as a society at issues in a narrow, tunnel vision sort of fashion. We have to each make a contribution to the well-being of society. And I just want to talk a little bit about the contribution that the soil conservation efforts make to the well-being of the Saskatchewan environment and the Canadian and the international environment.

One of the very largest single contributors to the reduction of greenhouse gases is the move by Saskatchewan farmers to direct seeding. In the new strategies and the new no-till, minimum-till systems that farmers are adopting in Saskatchewan — and that, by the way, has led to a world-leading industry in the manufacture of implements — one of the single largest contributors to the reduction of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, in actually keeping the carbon in a pool in the soil, is the change in seeding practices.

Twenty-three per cent of Saskatchewan farmers in the last several years have shifted to direct seeding technologies. And as a result, it results in better wildlife management. It results in the organic matter staying in the soil and on top of the soil, both helping to keep the soil stable and reducing the amount of carbon dioxide going into the atmosphere.

So I say that I know farmers will not respond irresponsibly because I know that through struggles of the past they have taken into consideration the well-being of not only Saskatchewan society but the world society.

There are a couple of initiatives that we are doing in government. The clean air task force has been at work. It's not given me its final report yet, but it has given me an interim report. And I know they are commenting on the issue of soil erosion relative to the air quality in Saskatchewan.

We are working with stakeholders on developing a wetlands policy, very much affected by soil management practices across the province. The *Conservation Strategy for Sustainable Development in Saskatchewan*, which was tabled in 1992 and from which our department is taking a great deal of leading, has a great amount of information and advice on where we should proceed with respect to the management of soils in Saskatchewan.

All I can say to the member opposite in appreciation for his question is that we continue to intend to work with all the stakeholders in Saskatchewan, one of the key ones being farmers, to ensure a sustainable agriculture for Saskatchewan

that can contribute to the well-being of the world in which we live.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. You've covered a number of areas in your reply. You expanded a lot further than I had gone on my questions.

You mentioned direct seeding. I'd just like you to know that in my new constituency, one of those new manufacturers for direct seeding equipment, Seedhawk, will be located in that area, and quite an impressive unit that they have, also.

The book that you just held up, Mr. Minister, I wonder if you could mind repeating the name of that for me, please.

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — This is the *Conservation Strategy for Sustainable Development in Saskatchewan*.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. That is one of a number of various reports and studies that have come down since you formed government. Another one of those was the report of the Standing Committee on the Environment from this very legislature.

I believe that committee forwarded to your department a number of very good recommendations. I'm not sure what your department thinks about those recommendations, but the committee felt that those were good recommendations.

So, Mr. Minister, are you including those recommendations as part of your considerations when you are bringing forward new proposals, new ideas? When you talk about the clean air task force, or the wetlands policy, are you including the recommendations from the Standing Committee on the Environment in your policy discussions?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — I would like to say to the member opposite that we take all submissions to us seriously and I want to thank the member opposite for the good work that he did and the members of the opposition benches did with us in the review of the standing committee work.

I don't have at the top of my head the direct recommendations that the member refers to, but it is my recollection that many of them had to do with the public's interest in being more involved in the process of deciding where we go with environmental management in Saskatchewan.

And I can tell the member opposite that I get teased about one of my favourite little documents, called *Building Consensus for a Sustainable Future*, affectionately called my colouring book from time to time by people to whom I give it, which talks about strategies for involving the public in decision making.

I can tell you that the department recently had a workshop in Saskatoon with all its senior employees, to look at that very question of involving the public fully as a partner in decision making. This is part of a new era of government, that the public has a right and an expectation to be involved. They know what

the issues are. We need to find better mechanisms for involving them.

And I can tell you that I appreciate the advice that your group gave us and that we also independently have headed in the direction of involving the public to the maximum degree possible in setting the course for a sustainable future.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. The recommendations from the standing committee were not only . . . dealt just with recommendations for input from the public, but covered the whole, broad spectrum of the environment and dealing with government, Mr. Minister.

The members of the committee look forward to something more substantial coming out of the government, based on that report. The original context in which we carried out our committee work was dealing with a particular piece of legislation dealing with environmental management. That legislation was dropped but nothing new came in to take its place.

Mr. Minister, are you looking at any new pieces of legislation dealing with the areas that the committee studied which were included in that original piece of legislation?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Thank you again for that question. The particular piece of legislation that was being reviewed by the standing committee had to do with the right of the public to be protected and the right of the public to participate and to have a voice when they were concerned about any exposure they might have to an environmental hazard.

One of the requirements in good environment management is the regulatory regime that underpins good environmental management. But we have come from an era where that was virtually the major involvement, through government legislation and regulation on the public's behalf. We have, since the '70s, entered an era where the public has a much greater interest in full participation in the development of policies and in having a voice in the implementation of policies so that by policy, rather than by legislation, they are involved and they have a voice and they will be responded to when they have a voice.

So it has been again, with the same intent in mind as some of the proposals that came from the standing committee, it has been the department's direction in the time that I have been their minister to set in place processes that maximally give access to the public and give voice to the public, whether those be about specific concerns on matters of public health or safety, or whether they be on matters of writing new forest management licence agreements.

From the big picture to the small, whether we're talking about setting aside processes for protected areas in the province, whether we're talking about questions of wildlife management issues, whether we're talking about mining regulations, whether we're talking about environmental assessment processes, the direction that we've taken is that the public has an interest.

We depend on the public's interest to work with us to do the best protection of the environment. One cannot legislate that there will be a safe place on this earth for all of us. Until we believe and adapt our own behaviour to fit in with our concern for the well-being of the environment which nurtures us, there is no achieving of a sustainable future for any of us.

Government cannot independently, of its own wisdom, create a healthy environment. We can set regulations, but if I as an individual continue to act in a way that harms the environment, there is not enough money on earth to give government the regulatory or the policing capability to adjust all of our personal behaviour.

We need to come to understand that; we need to come to believe it. The strength of Saskatchewan society, as I said in my earlier answer, is that whether we are farmers or whether we are working people in another area, or whether we are businesses, there is a tremendous understanding and response to the need for all of us to do our part to provide a safe future here for our children. And the direction we've taken in our department is to open up the processes of our environmental management, so that the public can help contribute to our policies to achieve that goal that we commonly have.

(1445)

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. You're right indeed when you say that not all of society's ills can be cured simply by legislation; it has to come from within whatever the people desire. If they want to have a clean land, then it's because of their desire, not because of legislation.

This carries over into other areas, Mr. Minister. Perhaps that kind of an explanation should be given to Mr. Rock concerning his firearms legislation, because again legislation will not solve the problem that he's looking at.

Mr. Minister, the report of the Standing Committee on the Environment dealt not only with people's access to the environment and environmental information and input into policy, but it also dealt with the rights of employees and employers, the rights of business versus the rights of those who have concerns with what's going on in business.

What has your department done to address those concerns and the balance that the Standing Committee on the Environment recommended in their report?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Chairman, I thank the member opposite for his comments again. And to say . . . again, to be specific about the questions that he's asking with respect to one of the contentions in the originally proposed legislation, was whistle-blower protection, that somebody who was in a workplace who wanted to alert someone to a practice that was unsafe or inappropriate would be protected.

The advice that the committee gave me, as I recall, is that those sort of legislated provisions should be very much an end point

in a process, rather than a beginning point. They suggested that there really should be processes whereby people who are in disagreement about issues like that come to a place where those issues can be raised. And if people don't then act in a responsible fashion that there would be, at the end of the day, some legislative measures that might be taken.

We are, in our department, working on the assumption that the attitudes of both employees and employers is very different today than it was five or ten years ago. In fact I have not had, in my recollection as minister, in two and a half years, one concern expressed by an employee that there was a concern in a workplace which they were not free to raise with their employer to deal with. Now there may be those concerns come to my department, or they may not been passed on to me, I'm not aware of that. I've not been made aware of any. But I think it suggests that those issues are being dealt with at an acceptable level within the present attitudes of the business and industry and consumers in the province.

If in fact that is not true, then I would like . . . again, we would certainly further consider that kind of legislation. But I appreciate the work that the committee did in suggesting that the very intrusive measures that were suggested originally in the Bill were probably not the best starting point. We've been working on the assumption that we want to work on the other elements of it, and I think we're making good progress. But certainly if there are problems with that in our industry and in our communities, I would like to know about it so we could consider other measures.

Mr. D'Autremont: — One of the other areas that the committee discussed, Mr. Minister, was the idea of legislation impacting on existing industries. That the industry is meeting the current regulation, but then as legislation changes, all of a sudden they are now behind the times and have to take some form of corrective measures.

At some point in time, that corrective measure is perhaps too onerous on the industry to be maintained, and so the industry either goes out of business or moves away to some other location. And the committee was concerned that perhaps if the government was benefiting in some manner from the existence of that industry, that perhaps the government should bear some of the cost, or allow a longer time period for the upgrading of that establishment.

Mr. Minister, what are you doing along the line of those recommendations that were in the report?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — The general management of environmental matters and in the regulatory field is done with an eye to partnership, with responsible partners. Clearly, if business or industry is blatantly denying their responsibility or if they are blatantly ignoring commitments or if they are blatantly rejecting change that's occurred, there are measures available to our department to ensure that proper steps are taken for the protection of the environment and the public.

But generally that's not the case. Generally, when business or industry finds out that there is a new challenge that they are faced with respect to their environmental management, they come to our department and look for advice.

And I get phone calls personally from communities where that sort of thing is going on. They sometimes worry that they don't want to have a hammer brought down on their heads because they're identifying something to you, and therefore they come to me and say, we want you to know about this but we don't want to get hurt. And our response is that it is our objective to work with industry to achieve their goals and ours with respect to environmental management.

I could list a number of examples where we have worked with communities where . . . or with industry, where there's been an important environmental challenge and we have asked them to set out a plan in order to achieve a new standard or to meet a new challenge they're aware of. And I can tell you that it's a credit to Saskatchewan industry, it's a credit to the Saskatchewan spirit, that I know of no incident that comes to the top of my mind right now where they were not fully cooperative in setting out with us some firm time lines and some firm circumstances under which they would achieve our common objectives in order to protect the public interest in the environment.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. It's one of the concerns of the members of the Standing Committee on the Environment that a number of the recommendations that were put forward in our report have seemed to have disappeared and nothing seems to be happening with it.

And some of the committee members have asked me to bring this forward to you because they're wondering what is happening with the recommendations that they had done. How thoroughly were they being included in the deliberations of the department when new policy was coming forward and when various items were being decided by the department? And so that was the reason that I have brought these concerns forward.

Mr. Minister, we'd like the assurance from you that the recommendations will be given the thorough study and consideration that they deserve because the people across this province — not the committee members — but the people across this province came out to our meetings that we held and expressed their opinions and were genuinely concerned from forestry to garbage dumps. And they believed that their input was going to have an impact on the environment in Saskatchewan and they felt that that was a very important issue.

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Chairman. Thank the member opposite again. I can tell the member opposite that while I don't have the direct recommendations of the committee in front of me, as I recall the nature of their input, it has been very strongly accepted as advice because there is a common sense nature to Saskatchewan people and there was a common sense nature to the report that you brought back.

And when you mention from forestry to garbage dumps, it just brings up the opportunity to just say how much of an influence this in fact had because, since your report, we now have a new, integrated forest resource management strategy which will soon be tabled in the form of a White Paper in the House, as a new Act that reflects those sorts of values, that deals with an ecosystem approach to forest management.

I can tell you that with respect to garbage dumps, as you are aware, we have established some regional pilot projects for new ways of looking at landfilling. I can tell you that we are constantly working with business and industry to implement ways of reducing waste from the waste stream.

As you know again, we've tabled in this House a Bill that effectively facilitates industry setting up a collection system for used oil; 37 million litres of used oil will find a system to be collected, removing that from the waste stream and into a reuse of a resource. All of that means that there is less problems in either improper dumping or dumping properly and consuming space.

I can tell you that the SARCAN system is looking at expanding the products its handling, all of which removes materials from the waste stream. I can tell you that in the little town of Outlook just on the edge of my constituency — and I'm sure there are a number of good examples like this across the province, but I know that one well because I participated in the opening of their recycling centre — the town established a recycling centre. They're one of the few places in Saskatchewan where they're collecting household plastics and profitably recycling them and a number of other product streams.

Used newsprint has now become a profitable thing that people have set up these recycling centres. I can say that the advice that you gave us is common sense advice that's being implemented. Thank you very much.

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister . . . or Mr. Chairman. The minister, you outlined some of the aspects of the policy that you're going to implement and use in recycling old oil. Can you give us kind of an overview of what that will be and an overview of, number one, the areas that likely will have opportunity for this?

What we also need to know is what kind of permits you're allowing to have or using to implement these facilities that recycle these used oils and all of the things that are in that used oil and how you're going to deal with the leads and mercuries, if there are any, in all of these oils. Could you outline some of those details for us so that we have an idea of what's going on?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Chairman, I thank the hon. member for the question. I will respond, and if I get slightly off base I'll ask somebody to pull my leg and draw me to order, and then I'll give you a correct version of anything I might be incorrect on.

But I want to say that one of the things that is very exciting to me is the nature of this process that's being put in place in

Saskatchewan. I think it is probably a leading initiative in Canada, although the provinces of Manitoba and Alberta are very interested in implementing it on the same time frame as we are. I think the initiative which industry has taken in Saskatchewan as a result of about a year and a half of meetings with industry and government and municipal officials and, at the final meeting, the consumers' association and the environmental community, that one of the most important principles in modern-day environmental management is being led by this group, which is the idea that the person or the group that sells a product is responsible for its life cycle.

What industry has advised me to do, with the cooperation of these other groups I mentioned, including ADD (agriculture development and diversification district) boards, what they've advised me to do is to alter the legislation so that we can require anyone who sells oil in Saskatchewan — that is, at the manufacturer's level — to participate in a recycling system.

They've agreed to do this outside of government. They've agreed to set up an agency collectively which will then put the resources together in order to plan a system and to implement the system for used oil, for oil filters, and for oil containers. The details of that will be worked out in consultation with the other stakeholders who are at the table and advising us and with our department, with respect to the location and the nature of the centres where these materials will be collected.

(1500)

It is safe to say that the intention of this system is to provide a network throughout Saskatchewan. We do probably have about one-third of our used oil collected now across the province because through . . . where there are larger quantities of it, in urban centres. And I had somebody wrote me a letter the other day, expressing concern about what happened to the environmental fees that are being charged on oil. And I can tell you, there are no provincial environment fees being charged on oil. I think some service stations are because it costs them to have a member of this present ad hoc . . . somebody that's just participating in present ad hoc used oil collection system collect their oil. They charge an extra few dollars for an oil change, so they can provide this system on their own for that. And this sort of collection system probably exists in most larger towns and cities, but it is not getting to the smaller businesses in the province and it's not getting to the farms, where probably between one-third and one-half of the oil is located.

And I'm getting increasing numbers of phone calls and letters and conversations with farmers who are saying, I've got X number of barrels of used oil collected on my farm. I don't want to dispose of it improperly, what can I do with it? And they're very pleased that the system's going to be set into place.

There will either be a collection centre at a convenient location or the one possibility is that there could even be on-farm collection depending on how the system works out and what farmers prefer as well. Those details are going to be worked out between the department and the industries who are setting up

the task . . . or designing the system and will be paying for the system.

But suffice it to say that at locations convenient, intended to be accessible by every Saskatchewan resident, there will be places and opportunities to collect this oil.

With respect to the contaminants you mentioned that are often a concern and what makes used oil a hazardous substance — I have farmers also asking me, aren't you going a bit overboard defining this as a hazardous substance. And there are contaminants, like ethylene glycol and lead and other metals that can be dangerous in used oil if they were ingested or improperly taken into the body. So there is a hazard to the product and that is known in how that oil is disposed of.

Presently oil is used as a dust control agent or a sealing agent in some potash mines, but it is also re-refined in a number of situations. Used oil is an excellent resource for re-refining because you can make a barrel of new lube oil out of about a barrel and a quarter of used oil, where you only get about 3 to 8 per cent lube oil out of a barrel of crude oil. So it's an excellent renewable resource.

And with respect to the disposal of the sludge if oil were re-refined, that would be part of the existing regulated landfilling system where there are special sites created for disposing of materials in a safe way so that they don't get back into the environment.

Mr. Martens: — Let's go into the area of the upgrading of this oil. Are you going to license individual groups or individuals who are going to do this in a processing fashion? How are you going to do that? Have you had some already apply to the Department of Environment for a study or a licence or whatever it takes to make this happen?

I know that just north of Gull Lake they have already established a facility that upgrades oil that is used in the oilfields, to take the contaminants out of that. What are you doing in relation to this, so that it can be recycled back into a product as usable again?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Chairman, that's a good question and I appreciate the opportunity to answer it. The system will be largely a market-driven system as it is presently working within appropriate government regulations.

The industry group that will manage this exercise will manage it in a manner similar to the present chemical can system where the industry contracts to the crushers and collectors certain tasks. And so people will be contracted to do it, but contracted within appropriate environmental regulations. So if you're handling a hazardous substance, to the extent that that can be a hazard, then the way in which that activity is done has to be within the context of transportation regulations in the province or whatever piece of business that would be.

If somebody were setting up a re-refining facility — and I know

of at least one in the province that has already undergone environmental impact assessment — then those rules of environmental management would apply, where the proponent would have to apply for environmental impact assessment. They'd have to do environmental impact statement which would describe what impacts this business would have on the environment, and how those impacts would be mitigated by the plans of the proponent who is designing one of those systems.

So the regular environmental assessment procedures would apply. Any regulatory measures with respect to air quality or the dumping of sludges or the transportation of goods would be according to the hazardous goods transportation regulations. So wherever an existing regulation in the net of environmental regulations applies, they would apply to these sorts of ventures. But in a broad way the system would be operating entirely in an open market-place.

Mr. Martens: — So if I have an idea here from what you said that . . . how the process would begin to work, you would have to apply to the department for . . . with an environmental assessment based on the technology that you're going to use in relation to that upgrade.

Then what happens? Does the department then look at other things that need to be done, or what's the dynamic of what we're looking at here?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Chairman, that's a good question. After the environmental impact statement is done and the environmental approval is given, assuming that the technology meets approvals, it may meet it with certain conditions. And if there are . . . there might be certain operating conditions set and continuing tests that need to be met.

But beyond that condition of operation that's given as a result of the environmental approval, the business is free to operate again with the understanding that regulatory personnel will come and check up on the operating conditions of the plant so that it continues to meet the regular testing requirements. So that whether it's the air or the soil or the water of the province that needs to be protected, those conditions will apply to any effluent or dumping provisions that a plant would want.

The basic rule with respect to environmental assessment is that the process as described, if it is adequate, will be approved and the conditions will then need to be followed and monitored.

Mr. Martens: — There's two aspects to this, Mr. Minister. One is the oil and the re-upgrade or whatever you want to call it, re-establishment of its usefulness. But then you turn around and you've got to get rid of some of the impurities that are in there, or the things that are not wanted in the oil.

You mentioned earlier as to something about setting up sludge areas that would be holding tanks or whatever. In a general sense, is this the way to do it, or was I incorrect in assessing what you said? How are they going to do that? How are they going to control and manage the things that are in the oil that

shouldn't be there and disposing of them in a way that is good waste management?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Chairman, the reason this took a little time is because my understanding of what we are doing and what I'm told we are doing are different. So I will give you the officials' version of what's happening with respect to landfilling.

It was my view that we have landfill provisions at landfill sites for some special hazardous materials that need to be landfilled. And I will be very surprised if I can't find a briefing note that says that, because I've read it.

But the officials tell me that with respect to used oil, that the intent is to re-refine and that the only residual product should be a very small quantity and that quantity would then be disposed of at a site like Swan Hills, and hopefully there would be no residual left at the end of the day.

And when I find out what happens to the lead in the used oil, I'll tell you how that gets disposed of out of Swan Hills, but I don't know the answer to that question right now.

Mr. Martens: — So what I gather then is it will be disposed of to some other agency that will use it in refining some other product — for example, lead in batteries. Antifreeze will go back to its raw product. All of those things.

Can you give me . . . surely you must know what some of the products that are going to be by-products in this used oil refinery? Can you give me a list of them? I'd like to know what they are.

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Certainly the member is correct, Mr. Chairman, in saying that the ideal is to recapture every piece and reuse it in the product stream. The major products of used oil refining is either diesel or lube oil.

But to the extent that there may be other potential products, I'll take notice of the question and have the department get back to you on any additional details on what other more minute quantities of other things might be recovered from this stream.

(1515)

Mr. Martens: — If you don't mind, I'd like to have that by the time we have some estimates on this again. You mentioned earlier that sellers are going to be responsible for the whole life cycle and oil would be one of those. Is it in your mind the only person responsible for this the seller, or is the consumer also a part of the process. And should he be, in some way, responsible not for necessarily cleaning up the whole bill but his portion of value of . . . or the decrease in value of that product is as a result of his use of it?

And when he bought the product, did he only pay for the use of it or did he pay to buy the product?

And lots of people in today's society talk about well, I bought it, so therefore the guy that sold it to me is the guy that's the culprit. And really, in my opinion, the consumer is the person who should be not only buying the product to use it, but also giving it back to society in a way that's somewhat reasonable. Can you outline your position in those two areas?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Yes, I want to say first of all that we're all responsible. I want to clarify, in case anybody misunderstood my original comments, because there is a nuance to the question of who the seller is with respect to who we're holding responsible and who have asked us to hold them responsible. They have been . . . in fact the manufacturers who have said this is an appropriate time to do this kind of thing, even though it's going to cost us money because they believe that's the responsible thing to do.

Our system is based on the manufacturers/wholesalers that sell into the province participating in providing a system. Now they could do it independently, but they had already by the time they made this proposal to me collectively designed a system in their own minds of what it would look like.

So they gave me both the request that we provide the legislative authority that would require them to do it, and they also outlined the system that would be done. That's a very different approach than having the retailers do it, because it gets quite complex and more difficult for retailers to do it.

So I'm really pleased with the attitude of the manufacturers and the wholesalers that they have taken on that responsibility and I'm really pleased to say that they had the full support of an environmental group representative and the Consumers' Association of Canada, Saskatchewan branch, at the meeting when the final discussion was held, saying this was the right thing to do.

The principle of product stewardship is that the owners do do the full life cycle of the product. The consumers are responsible because at the end of the day the consumers pay a price for a product.

And the example I've used before with respect to this issue is that having the full life cycle costs of every product included in the product is a great tool for environmental management, because when I go to buy a tube of toothpaste, it's awfully hard for me to determine what all the pieces of the toothpaste are and whether there's an appropriate environmental management in each of the pieces and the cap and the tube and the box it's contained in.

But if I know that each producer of a part of that stream has had to meet their own product stewardship guidelines, I know then that whatever product I buy, if it meets my needs as a consumer and they're all meeting the same environmental test, that I'm making the best decision for the environment and for me when I buy the product that has the right price for me.

So the notion between products in the whole business of

product stewardship is that if somebody is required to handle their product in its full life cycle, then the appropriate advice for doing that properly would be included in the price, and I as a consumer therefore bear that cost when I buy a product.

Mr. Martens: — Well let's get into something that is a little beyond the toothpaste life cycle and let's talk about oil and products like oil because there are a lot of people who inadvertently will drain their oil in a drain and it goes into the sewage and down the sewage and into somebody's lagoon, and usually an urban centre lagoon. And that could be oil. And that inadvertently happens because people will wash their driveways off and clean it off, and it could have antifreeze on it; could have oil on it. And that life cycle then takes on a life cycle of its own.

And the consumer needs to be a little bit more aware of his responsibility in giving that back to the manufacturer in a way that is somewhat . . . or reasonably closely resembles what he took out of his vehicle or what he purchased.

And so that's an important part of the whole life cycle and whether the manufacturers are responsible for that too. And I'd like to have you respond to that.

The other thing that . . . Well you respond and then I'll ask another question.

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the remarks of the hon. member, and I agree with the issues the member is raising.

As I said earlier in response to one of your colleagues, good environmental management needs to come from good understanding and a feeling of responsibility. And I think we've just made tremendous strides in the last few years with the public taking on the protection of the environment as a personal objective.

Well in any polling that goes on, environment is never one of the top 20 any more, where it was 10 years ago. I don't think that indicates any diminishment of public interest in the environment; I think it indicates that the public has a personal feeling of responsibility to it and they believe that governments and industry have taken a great deal of responsibility in that regard.

So what we have had is a great change in attitude with respect to what our role is, recognizing that an earth on which our children cannot live is of no benefit to any of us. Our children have often challenged us to change our beliefs and to change what we do. And I think while we all have a lot to learn yet, I think everybody has come to see the environment as an important goal in their personal lives.

And so the questions of the spills and the accidental dumping of things into way-streams continues to be an issue of concern and we need to continue to work at that. And I can tell you that there are a number of groups doing that. There was a group of

young environmentalists in my office this summer who were painting yellow fish on the drains on the roads and near the sidewalks in the city here and on the legislative grounds to indicate . . . to remind people that whatever goes down that drain ends up being something that a fish has to swim in and that could contaminate living systems. So there are many ways in which we need to continue to remind ourselves to be more and more careful.

I know I was listening to David Suzuki recently talking about their own struggles as a family. I think they had made a commitment that they would not have more than one bag of garbage a month, or something, going out of their house, and that if they were only going for certain distances they would either walk or take a bike, and him being personally challenged by the inconvenience this caused in his life but recognizing that the goal was important in his own life and for the life of his children.

So the development of attitudes that cause us each to look more stringently at each element of our own behaviour so that the environment is protected, is a continuing challenge to us all. And I suspect when you and I pass on to another life we will still be exercising a few habits that were not as responsible as they should be. But it is a challenge that both of us can continue to work on.

But what we're trying to do with these sorts of strategies, with used oil, is at least to provide an opportunity for people who . . . for people to participate and to manage in a way that they feel to be sound. And we have a great distance to go. This is a first step on one product.

We certainly have had an excellent record of success in Saskatchewan with SARCAN. I give credit to your government for that initiative in both its providing of employment for people with disabilities and for its effectiveness in recycling in Saskatchewan. It has grown to be an excellent tool, and we need to look at other initiatives.

We need to look at what to do with tires and what to do with batteries. And certainly one of the great challenges in Saskatchewan and across Canada is packaging for groceries, overall, and we're meeting with grocery retailers and wholesalers to try to get everybody into that system.

But we have other success stories. We have IPSCO in Saskatchewan, which is the greatest recycler, in terms of volume, of anybody in Saskatchewan — I think 135,000 tonnes of steel they recycle every year.

And they have cooperated with tin recycling. Tin cans happen to be one of the little problems we haven't figured out how to deal with yet because the tin is a contaminant in steel and so just dumping it into a vat with other iron and steel materials is possible but only in limited quantities. So IPSCO has been a cooperator in trying to help community groups who have decided to recycle tin cans.

But we, at the end of the day, need to work on every product we use. We need to work to minimize the packaging originally. We need to look for ways of reusing materials first of all before we recycle. If there's no way of reusing, we need to be able to recycle.

And then we need to, at the end of the day, hope we can divert everything from the waste stream. At the end of the day, the ideal will be if every one of our waste products is a reusable product. And that we provide . . . at the end of the day, we need to do no landfilling and not use land in that extent. But that's a dream that we all aspire to which we need to work towards, but we will not achieve immediately.

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Minister. One of the things that leads me to ask these questions in this vein is that I live along one of those streams that has been used to flush out lagoons and different way of managing the effluent environment of urban centres. And so it has been drawn to my attention rather forcefully all my life.

One of the things that really is of a concern and it concerns — it has nothing to do with politics — concerns about how we deal with those waste matters that enter into those holding areas that urban centres have, and how do we manage them?

We have in Swift Current a two-tier lagoon system. They just built another one. And I'm not sure how many feet of sludge there is on the bottom containing all of these contaminants that we've just talked about that come from oil inadvertently going down the sewer, antifreeze going down the sewer, and a whole bunch of other detergents going into that holding area that will, in the long run, have to be cleaned up at some point in time. Like it is slowly building up over the years.

And what has happened in that case is we have finally gotten to the place where we have an agreement with the city that will control that effluent spill. But we have lots of urban centres in this province and in other provinces who have no way of controlling that sort of problem.

And I think about Calgary, I think about . . . if I take a look at the cities upstream from me along the South Saskatchewan River, we've got Calgary, we've got Lethbridge, we've got Medicine Hat. And that's only the small tip of the iceberg when you talk about all of the volumes of water that go down the river system. And in each of those cases the consumer is using a very cheap method of disposing or moving his problem to become a part of another man's problem.

And when you talked about the fish around that drain in Wascana Park, that led me to think about what happened in the Swift Current Creek. For example, you have fish in the creek up to Swift Current, but you have no fish below the city of Swift Current.

My friend, the member from Maple Creek, goes from his farm straight south to the Swift Current Creek and can go fishing there; while I live beside the creek — and I've lived there for 50

years — and I can't fish. And that's not the problem, but the fish have the . . .

An Hon. Member: — It's all in the wrist action.

(1530)

Mr. Martens: — Just for the member from Elphinstone . . . or the member from Regina here, Regina Churchill Downs, he may know something about computers but he knows nothing about fishing. And it's not how you put the bait on, it's how you wiggle the bait.

Mr. Minister, those are the problems that we need to address. And when the consumer who is inadvertently letting those things come into the system, it's not that each one is a large amount, it's when you add them all together in one large area that it would cause a concern to individuals like myself and the rest of society. Because we are asked to carry the load for the environment and the misuse of environment by some other individual. And that's why I raise the concern from this oil perspective as a way of cleaning it up.

You mentioned something about the rural area having disposable containers and places to take it. TransCanada Pipelines just redid a bunch of pipeline just north of my place about five miles. And in order for them to reach an agreement with the municipalities — and it was in two municipalities — they said that they would put oil on the road that went past farm sites. Now we've got oil on roads all over this province. Some of it's thicker and some of it's thinner. Some of it is for dust control and some of it is for driving on smooth roads. But there are limits as to what we can do with this oil.

You mentioned dust control in potash mines. Well now they're starting to have dust control on roads and on grid roads. When is this going to be considered an environmental hazard if that same farmer asks to have it put down on his road. And if he went and put his own oil on the road, it would be an environmental problem.

And I could give you at least five locations in the roads that I drive just getting to my ranch that that is what's happening. If the farmer went and did it, it would be considered a hazard to the environment. If TransCanada Pipelines comes along and the municipality consents to it, it becomes a way of controlling the environment.

And so that double standard is what a lot of people are concerned about. And you need to be concerned about it as well because people will say, that's a licence for me to do anything I want with it. And I'm not condoning it; I'm just saying to you that that's a problem. And I'd like to have you respond to that.

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — First of all, Mr. Chairman, I'd like to say I have an awful time learning how to use that fly rod as well, and I've never been able to catch a fish at home either. So even though others have gone to this dam that PFRA (Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration) built on my father's property in

1937, caught provincial record trouts out of there, I just can't get one of those suckers out of there. So you and I both need to go to fishing school, I think.

I want to say seriously that when there is an impact on water quality that would affect anything living in the water, this is a serious consideration for our fisheries branch, and they would immediately take it up with any polluting agency.

And I know the creek that you speak of has been tested a number of times in recent years because of the fact that Swift Current had not yet upgraded their lagoon. I'd like to congratulate Swift Current and all of you around who've worked with them to achieve the upgrading, in upgrading the quality of the effluent before it's discharged.

But I can say that during the times when we reluctantly granted permits for discharge from the lagoon when it was not as adequate as it is now, that testing was regularly done on the stream to make sure that there was no risk to the environment and to the public. And the reports that came to me suggested that the water quality remained good throughout those periods. So I think knowing that the lagoon is now being upgraded will give everybody a greater sense of comfort in that regard and I appreciate the issue being raised.

With respect to . . . you mentioned sludges and things. There have been practices carried out over a number of years which we are now in the process of cleaning up the . . . To some extent, we continue to create collections of waste materials in landfills and we do have industrial landfill sites where materials are stored. And we will continue to, as a human society, until we find ideal solutions, create future challenges. Hopefully, having contained them now, we are in a process where we can begin to clean up things for the future.

All we can say in that regard is as we . . . And this has been one of the areas where industry has been very cooperative. As they've revealed to our department their collection of sites that are contaminated from previous activity, and some of them run into the millions of dollars for clean up, they have worked out plans with us to deal with those very issues you raise about sludges they've dumped and pools they've created. And they are in the process of creating strategies for cleaning those up. And it is our intention to continue to work cooperatively with people who see their responsibilities in this regard.

Now I forgot to note the last point you raised, so I will sit down and let you remind me of it, because I was going to respond but I've forgotten the question.

Mr. Martens: — I think you did cover all of them, so maybe you forgot to forget the one you should've remembered at the beginning and then you would've . . .

An Hon. Member: — Oil on roads.

Mr. Martens: — Oil on roads. You're right. Answer that one, and then I'll ask some different questions.

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Mr. Chairman, my deputy reminded me that it was the question of oil on roads. We do not allow contaminated motor oil, for example, to be used. There are some products that come from other purposes, where there are no contaminants, where some dust control is permitted.

I can say that there are no uses for used oil that are available in industry that would not be available for the farmer. Farmers are not so much prohibited from doing what they wish with materials on their own land, except most of us are coming to acknowledge that when we go to sell our farms somebody is going to be concerned — mostly the bank or mortgage institution that's going to be providing a mortgage for the buyer — that there is an environmental cost associated with cleaning up something we've done in the past.

I think most farmers have accepted the fact that they don't want to face a 10 or \$20,000 bill for cleaning up a site some day in the future. And I think most farmers also have another view of the world that says if this is a good resource . . . I know I've used lots of used oil on the swather-knife, haying, and I imagine you've done it too. But if it is a resource that can be used for other things, that we should use it. And so I think farmers are motivated both by some sense of future liability, but also from a great sense of present responsibility.

And so they are looking for ways of dealing with these products, and we are also looking for other creative ways and uses for used oil. I know there are furnaces that are licensed for the burning of used oil that can be sold in Saskatchewan. I know there are. The larger the pool of a reusable material, the greater the number of uses that will evolve from that as well.

One of the great challenges and opportunities I see in the future is when we get into the used tire recycling. Because it's my sense that once you've collected enough tires and have bins full of crumbed rubber, then somebody will find a use for crumbed rubber.

They already have to some extent. I've seen patio bricks; I've seen water trays for under eavestroughs; and curb stops and other highway materials built from used rubber, some given additional weight by using glass that's been recycled to give weight to the product.

So there's sort of an exciting future in new resources which are reusable resources. And as we provide collection systems, and then these resources actually will take on value, and in a number of areas will end up paying for the collection system.

I think one of the good examples I mentioned earlier is used paper. For years, people did it as the symbol of the thing to do: collect your papers and recycle them. For years they were collected, and often then dumped in a landfill sight because nobody knew what else to do with them. They couldn't put them anywhere.

Well what's happened recently is that the price of pulp has gone up, and there is now a profit in recycling paper. And so the

collection of that product is now something that we could all put even more effort into because I know that the paper is still an important material that goes into landfills.

And so each of us, now that we know this is a product with economic value, can put more energy into taking it to a recycling centre where it can be reused at a profit for all of us and to create jobs for our economy.

Mr. Martens: — In the oilfields, I have a constituent of mine who's in the process of supplying tanks for oilfield service rigs, for oilfield exploration. All of these tanks are being used now for holding all of the materials that come out of the ground.

What I guess my question is: what are you doing with those that are still buried out there? Like I know that there's . . . farmers have complained to me, especially in the sand on the west side of my constituency, when some of these buried products start surfacing because the wind blew the top off the burial ground, there are a number of contaminants that kill cattle. And they've had some serious problems in that.

And is there, first of all, an inventory of those environmentally serious problems? Is there any way of getting them not only cleaned up but identified, — I guess is a better way of putting it — and making that area of our environment safe as well?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — May I ask you a question, tell you a short story while you're preparing the answer, and then come back and answer that question? I wasn't clear whether the question is about regular drilling sites or whether it's service company sites or what. So if you can just clarify again, if I missed it, what particular reference you're making.

The story I forgot to tell you as I was answering the previous question, when you talked about downstream impacts on other users of water, I had the opportunity to be in London, England this fall, speaking to an international conference of uranium users and producers, and took the opportunity to take a number of environmental side trips and met with Thames Water.

Thames Water is an agency that does what you would expect; it manages the Thames River basin. From the source of the Thames to its leaving London, the water of the Thames is used eight times. I don't know how many miles that would be; it might be a hundred miles or maybe a little bit more, but it's plus or minus a bit. The city of London uses more than the total flow of the Thames itself, so water is used more than once on its way through London.

And so you can see the importance of managing the quality of the water as it comes through these systems to make sure that the concerns that you were raising about human health and safety are properly addressed.

We are blessed in Saskatchewan with a couple of significant river systems that allow us the freedom to dispose of wastes, and we are becoming more and more conscious of the need to do it more responsibly, as you describe. Even though

sometimes a very small substance of a toxin is maybe diluted out in a great flow of the river, it ought not to be any comfort to our management that we haven't managed that product well. Because as you say, even small quantities will accumulate somewhere in a system downstream and we need to manage as well as we can.

So just if you could clarify the source of the pollution you were mentioning in the previous question.

(1545)

Mr. Martens: — Yes, Mr. Minister, they come from disposal of toxic materials. And I don't know whether they were buried when the well was drilled or when the well was continually serviced. And so it becomes a problem in those areas where the dirt was cleared away, the toxic material was buried, dirt was place over top of it and the problem was supposed to have been eliminated. It really was just deferred.

There are many of those kinds of situations in the south-west, as it relates more or less, I think, to those areas that are sometimes at risk because of blowing sand. And I know that this isn't to raise a whole lot of concern about it, but it's there; to begin to identify some of those places where this has happened. And your department should be able to access that information from all of the Energy and Mines information, so that individuals will be able to be held accountable for the actions taken at some point in time.

And it doesn't matter whether it's from the drilling of the original well or servicing during that period of time, there are those elements there. And I was wondering whether you had had any concerns expressed on that point.

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — Yes, thank you, through the chairman to you, for clarifying that question. I want to say first of all, the first line of responsibility with respect to the sites you describe is with Energy and Mines. And I could tell you that with my colleague, the member from The Battlefords who was previously the minister and with the member from Prince Albert now as the minister in charge, we are working cooperatively to try to come up with a common standard for the issues you raise.

I know the surface rights associations who work through the Department of Justice have also raised the issue you raise as a concern.

I want to spend just a minute talking about the concern because there certainly has been past practice for which someone needs to provide an answer. And again this is possibly in the context of the member who had spoken earlier, of his question about what happens when standards change or you become aware of a new truth one wasn't aware of before.

The whole issue of contaminated site liability is one of the important transitional concerns that we have right now. As we have become aware of the damage that past practice has given us, we now have to find a way to deal with it. We have as a . . .

we've prepared a discussion paper on contaminated site liability which outlines the procedures by which we would seek to provide redress for that.

There are 13 principles in that paper, as I recall. At least the Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment source document had 13 principles, the first of which is, polluter pays. And we need to find the source of the pollutant even though there may be an unfairness in that the people may not have known it was damaging at the time. There is no one else to charge for that responsibility.

And the last principle of which is joint and several liability, which is the one that is most troublesome for most people because that says if at none of the other 12 steps you've been able to find somebody you could provide the . . . who is responsible, then the last resort is that everybody that had anything to do with it has some responsibility in cleaning it up.

That paper is out for discussion so that we can find the right answer. But contaminated site liability has often been described as how to share in the unfairness of dealing with something we didn't know was a problem before, and there is no better description for it I don't think.

The fact is that the circumstances you describe exist, that one of the emerging concerns today is that as larger industrial companies have distanced themselves from the drilling exercise, there is often less of an ability to track a polluter. Because they often will be smaller companies that may have disappeared since contamination occurred. So there are problems associated with landowners.

I think what this indicates is an important alert — and I think people are becoming aware of this — but an important alert for all landowners, that in the absence of somebody else taking responsibility, the landowner has it. And so I think landowners need to become conscious and we need to work with them in providing the best regulatory framework that protects them. But I think, as in all things, the notion of buyer beware, or in this case, the person on whose land oil is being drilled for, need to be aware that they need to protect themselves against that future liability as well, by ensuring that the work that is done by contractors with them is properly done and properly decommissioned.

I know that they are getting excellent cooperation from the Department of Energy and Mines. I think it is a caution that all of us need to be conscious of, and that if there's anything we can do in changing the regulatory environment to make sure that's better, it's something we are certainly willing to do.

So I say that the issue the member raises is a real issue. And as we struggle with past practice, we will be going through an era of cleaning up sites, and we'll try to be as cooperative as we can in helping find a way to a solution.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Mr. Minister, I'm very interested in that particular topic, as it relates

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very closely to my own constituency, because we have a number of orphan sites for oil locations around our area.

Am I to understand that if there is a pollution site on a location, that if no one else can be identified as having been responsible, or be the owner of that, then the landowner, whoever holds the property surrounding that site, will be the one responsible for any clean-up that may result?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — That isn't the result of any particular policy. That I think is simply the way property rights and law exist in Canada, that you are responsible for the property you own; unless you can find somebody else responsible for a piece of liability you own, you own it. And that is an unfortunate truth.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Okay, let me play out this scenario for you. Company A approaches landowner and says, we want to drill an oil well on your land. The owner says, go away, I don't want to talk to you, not interested in your oil well. The oil company then turns around and goes to the Surface Rights Arbitration Board. The Surface Rights Arbitration Board says, Mr. Owner, we don't care whether you want that oil company there or not; they have a right to access their property, below yours, and we give them the right to come onto your land and drill an oil well.

The property owner didn't want them there. He said no. The Surface Rights Board, a government body, says yes, drill there. Now who's responsible, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — This question is a good question to put into your little pack sack for when the Minister of Energy and Mines is answering questions. My sense is that there are regulatory regimes that protect the landowner in that situation.

But again, I think the situations of which I've become aware where there may be a problem is where a drilling company may well recognize that they have a problem on the site and they may say to the landowner, look, if I'm going to clean that up it's going to cost me \$10,000. Why don't I just make a deal with you and you clean it up? And the landowner may take that opportunity to receive some compensation, not being aware, fully, of what they may be buying in that circumstance. But it's a question that you might want to take up with my colleague, the Minister of Energy and Mines, when that opportunity arises.

I think the regulatory regime is solid enough that companies are required to do clean-ups. But if I, the owner, take an action that may take that responsibility to me, then that . . . I may need to advise myself well before I take that sort of responsibility for myself.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Mr. Minister, when it comes to the Surface Rights Board, indeed the Minister of Energy and Mines is the one responsible for that particular set of regulations. But we've moved beyond the Surface Rights Board. The well has already been drilled. They produced it for a year or five years, 10 years, 20 years — whatever it might have been. It's changed

hands four or five times and Joe Schmoe now owns it and Joe Schmoe doesn't exist any more — he's gone out of business. The orphan site is left sitting there and it's a contaminated site.

The landowner didn't want it there in the first place. Your department comes along and says we have a hazardous substance here. We have a contaminated site. We don't see anybody else around here to make pay for this clean-up. You're it. You're responsible.

So what recourse, Mr. Minister, does the landowner have in this case when he didn't want it there in the first place? And he had no recourse in the law to say, sorry I don't want it. He did everything he could to keep it out of there but other government regulations put it there.

So now you have one government regulation says it's going to be there; another government regulation says that the landowner is going to have to clean it up when he didn't want it in the first place.

So I think, Mr. Minister, while we can certainly talk to the Minister of Energy and Mines about this circumstance, that it's your department is the one at the end of the day that's going to tell the landowner that he has to pay the bill.

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — No, I think this is, Mr. Chairman, this is the common misperception in that regard. These are really market forces at work. And there are government regulations in place, and my understanding is that there is a fund established within Energy and Mines — that's why I would like you to carry this discussion on with my colleague in Energy and Mines — that is there for abandoned sites. I'm just not sure whether it covers every circumstance that you describe.

But at the end of the day, as I said to you before, the issue may arise where I as an owner, either by action or inaction, take on some of that liability, and that's then a market concern for me. Because that will in all likelihood, first come . . . If there isn't contamination happening to somebody or providing a risk to somebody, this will only come to light for the landowner when the landowner goes to sell the land, if that circumstance exists.

And it won't be the Department of Environment at that day that will be the impediment to selling the land, it will be the mortgage holder or the purchaser who will say, I see contamination on this property that needs to be cleaned up. And so the issue as you describe it, there is provision within Energy and Mines for contaminated or for abandoned well sites.

But I say, the risk is in owners taking responsibility for things. I may quote a recent example on a different front where the city of Prince Albert, a number of years ago, signed a contract for some property, taking ownership in the contract for contaminated materials on a site. At the end of the day the costs of cleaning that site up has been substantial for them, but they took that responsibility knowingly.

Now the farmer in a circumstance where you described

somebody ending up with contamination may have accepted responsibility for a fee or . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The member says it may not have. I think in the event where they may not have, that could be pursued through other regulatory measures.

But my greater concern is where the landowner may have taken on the responsibility, not knowing the extent to which this could be a liability to them at a later time.

But as I say, I would invite the member to carry on that discussion at greater length with my colleague.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Mr. Minister, when these circumstances occur, a company might approach the landowner and say, for a fee we will turn over the clean-up to you. You now have a commercial arrangement in which both parties should be buyer beware. And so if the landowner accepts a fee to do a job, well if that job entails a greater extent than he had planned, then he's out the money.

But what happens in a number of cases though, there is no such arrangement. The first time that the landowner knows that there's a problem is when the cheque doesn't come in the mail a year later for that surface lease. And so maybe he waits awhile, or he tries to find out where this company has gone to and why aren't they sending him his annual cheque for this particular site for which they are responsible.

So at the end of the day, at some point in time, he approaches Energy and Mines and says, what's going on? I have a site out here that was owned by ABC, and I can't find them any more. Who's responsible for this?

So Energy and Mines comes out and has a look at it and says, here's a contaminated site. Now if that happens, Mr. Minister, do they report it to your department? And if so, then what happens with that particular site?

(1600)

Hon. Mr. Wiens: — This area of concern is entirely within Energy and Mines. But I would invite the member opposite to possibly formally communicate with us, with respect to any particular review of present procedures.

I know I've had people from various aspects of the industry comment to me about improvements that they think could be made. There was, I think at one time, a discussion between my department and Energy and Mines before I held this office, with respect to a different permitting structure for decommissioning of sites.

If the member opposite has any ideas or knows of constituents who have some good ideas in this respect, I would appreciate those being forwarded because I think if there are still inadequacies or improvements that could be made to the regulatory framework or the law that stands, we'd be more than willing to consider them.

**General Revenue Fund
Social Services
Vote 36**

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

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It's my pleasure to introduce, to my right, our deputy minister, Conrad Hnatiuk; to the right back, Neil Yeates, our associate deputy minister; and Bob Wihlidal, director of support services, directly behind me.

Item 1

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome, Mr. Minister, and welcome to your staff. I have a few questions I'd like to go over with you in the time that we have left.

First of all, Mr. Minister, I would like to talk to you about travel. As you realize, you will be providing us with some, what we call, global questions sometime in March, and we appreciate that. But last year, however, several government departments did not provide the information regarding travel, and particularly ministerial travel. So I would like to start there today, Mr. Minister.

Could you provide me with a list of your travels for the past year, how many staff accompanied you, the purpose of each trip, total cost of each trip, and what was accomplished.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Are you talking about out-of-province travel?

Mr. Britton: — Thank you. I'm talking about all of your travel.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, Mr. Chairman. We'll send that over just momentarily, in the next minute or two.

Mr. Britton: — While we're waiting for that information, Mr. Minister, would you inform us if there has been any staff changes in your office over the past year and what those changes were.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Mr. Chairman, there have been no changes in my office over the past year.

Mr. Britton: — You're saying there was no new positions filled. There was no vacancies and no reclassifications. Do I . . . Is that right?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — That is correct, yes.

Mr. Britton: — Then, Mr. Minister, could I ask you about salaries. Could you tell me if there were any salary increases. What were the percentages of increases given, and what were the before and after salaries of each staff member?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — If it's okay with the member, Mr.

Chairman, we can give you the current salaries right now and by tomorrow make sure you have any changes, if that's okay. We'll make sure that that's delivered to your office tomorrow.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, could you then at the same time indicate if you had any reclassifications in your staff, and if so, how many and what was the total cost.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — I believe there were no reclassifications, but we'll include that in the information tomorrow, if that's okay.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'll take up a little more time in this a little later when I receive the answers. Could you give me a date when they might be here, the global questions?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Those are in your office tomorrow, if that's okay. I'm sorry, the global questions would be a couple of weeks, I'm advised. Is that okay?

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I have a few questions now regarding your quarterly statistical report dated September '94, your quarterly report. Under table 1 to 3, Saskatchewan Assistance Plan, cases by major reason assistance was granted. Could you clarify a few of the categories? And first the employment related — does this mean that assistance was granted because of a loss of job, or what does that relate to?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — The numbers in the employment-related category referred to clients who may have lost their job or also to clients who are working but aren't making enough through, say, part-time work or maybe on minimum wage and with children, who aren't making enough to live on but they're getting partial assistance. Twenty-five per cent of all of our clients are actually working and require some sort of support in order to, I guess, give them enough to manage with the children.

Mr. Britton: — Okay, so then I understand you to say that under the term, employment related, what we're saying here is this person has a job or is employed in some way but the income is not enough and that you assist that person or persons with a little extra help. Is that . . .

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, the employment related, those are people who also may have, as I said earlier, may have lost their job or their UIC (Unemployment Insurance Commission) might have run out. You recall in the last year's federal budget there was a cut of seven weeks of benefits for Saskatchewan people in actual . . . in the number of weeks that they . . . and so some of those people would be on there whose benefits had run out.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'd like to know about the financial side. It says financial and then you have one listed as family/social. Could you explain those headings for me, please?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Well the financial . . . it could be people who may be on UIC but not earning enough to make ends meet and qualify for a little bit more — they're counted as a case but they'll be getting some partial assistance only, because, as you know, we have to take all the income into account — or someone who is working and just isn't making enough.

The family/social could be a variety of reasons. It could be a single-parent mom who's fleeing an abusive situation or who has three or four children. Or it could be, you know, some mental illness. I guess that relates more to the health aspect. The health, I guess that's more obvious. But the family/social could be related to the family circumstances at the time that prevent the person from pursuing employment.

Mr. Britton: — Then I assume of course that under the heading health, that's pretty well self-explanatory. This person is not able to work. And so could you then outline for me, Mr. Minister, the levels of help that you give to folks who, because of their health or incapable of working, what assistance you have for them?

(1615)

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes. As you may recall, everybody who's on assistance has certain basic allowances based on, you know, individual, family size, and so on. If you're unemployable or disabled, then you have . . . in certain categories you get automatically additional money. And you may access additional money even yet because, as you know, it's a needs-based program and that is, the greater need you have the more you get for some allowances and the more allowances you can access, based on your need.

But you always have to take into account sources of income to balance that, so sources of income have to be considered. So, for example, someone who's disabled would likely get about 225 more, likely — automatically or approximately — than someone who isn't disabled, but could get up to 350 or so more, and maybe even more than that, based on the needs.

So it depends on the needs as identified. And there's various methods of accountability to ensure that those are actually legitimate needs.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Can I assume then that you take into consideration the cost of drugs in your evaluation of how much you give that person?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, our responsibility in Social Services is to nominate clients for drug coverage. The drug coverage is actually provided by the Department of Health. So we have the authority with this arrangement with Health to make the nomination for health coverage, but the Department of Health actually pays the drugs.

Mr. Britton: — So that wouldn't impact on your department financially? Those drugs then, when you identify, just for the sake of a better word, an excessive need for a person on drugs,

when you move that into Health, the financial impact goes to the Health department too then? Is that right?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, that's right. We just make the nomination; the Department of Health covers all of the drugs. Yes.

Mr. Britton: — And then the maximum that you would be giving wouldn't change, it would be in this 225 to 250 range for that person, and the drugs would be something separate and different. Well thanks for that answer.

Now there's one called miscellaneous. Could we cover that a little bit.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — These are ones that in a sense there's not a natural category for because they may be a variety of things, transient. There may be a fire or something happen, you know, some unforeseen circumstances, so it has a variety of categories that there would be no great numbers in any one of them. So they're linked again. I think that number is quite small, but those are some of the examples.

Mr. Britton: — Thanks, Mr. Minister. I take from that that what you're saying is really pretty well what it says, that it's for those cases that the rules and regulations as you have them don't quite cover and that these people do need the assistance, and it's a category that you don't have a firm set of regulations for. Is that pretty well what you're saying?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, no they fall within the rules because you can't get assistance unless you fall within the rules, but they're not clearly identified in the normal categories where, you know, where the higher numbers are employment related, financial, health, social. They're more unusual kinds of circumstances like transient aid which all provinces provide for example, or some sort of natural disaster. There's always something happening across the province in some area of the province that requires some response, and so it's those kinds of examples.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. One other category that I'd like you to explain a little bit is . . . it's called other and unknown. What sort of things would these fall under?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — It's my understanding, Mr. Chairman, that we're introducing a new coding system, and these may be people who have come through intake that aren't sort of designated into some other category at this point. And so the cases are not yet coded but presumably will be coded into one of these categories, and I guess the new system is going to take care of that so that that would be the explanation as best I can do at this point.

Mr. Britton: — That would seem that could almost go under miscellaneous for the present time from what you're saying. All right. We'll maybe come back to some of this stuff as we get more or less into the estimates. Mr. Minister, could you provide us with the most recent updated figures on how many social

assistance cases we have presently in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Just on your last point, the other/unknown, we provide assistance if the need is there, right away, and then we sort out just to sort out what category that goes in. You know, I hope that adds a little bit here.

The number of cases we have, the latest statistics are for January '95, the latest official statistics: cases, 39,977.

Mr. Britton: — Could you now then give me the number of individuals that are receiving assistance, as opposed to the total cases?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — The number of individuals is 81,908 . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I'm sorry?

An Hon. Member: — What was the last number?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Eighty-one thousand nine hundred and eight persons . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Total beneficiaries, yes.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, could you then provide us with a recent breakdown of the demographics of these numbers? I'd like to know, for instance, how many of these individuals are under the age of 25 and 35. And I'd like to know how many seniors fall into that. Could you do that for me, please.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — If it's acceptable, Mr. Chairman, we will have that information in your package tomorrow . . . by the breakdowns, if that's okay.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I was reading in your quarterly statistical report on September '94. It appears that the largest number of cases by age and family structure is largely in the under-25 category; 5,952 cases are under the one-person cases. Do we have any information regarding how many of these young people have their grade 12 certificate and how many, if any, have university classes or degrees, and how many have dropped out of high school?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — We have a breakdown by education for these categories, and we'll make sure you get that by tomorrow as well.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I would like to have had some of these things to work with.

The family cases under 25, they total 4,970, according to your quarterly report. Now I assume that the majority of these would be single-parent homes. Could you verify that, whether it's single-parent homes or two-parent homes?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, I appreciate that you're willing to receive some of these tomorrow because we're not sure what questions you're going to ask, so we try and be as prepared as we can.

But with regard to the January case-load breakdown — I think you're quoting from the September one — but with regard to the January one, the single per cent, the number who are single is 54 per cent. The percentage where one parent is . . . 29.8 per cent of our clients are single parents; two parents, 12.2; and couples with no children, 4.0 per cent — no children.

Mr. Britton: — Well thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, in British Columbia and other provinces, there are several programs under way to help young mothers to become independent and to get off the social assistance. What sorts of programs are presently being implemented in Saskatchewan, and could you maybe outline a few of those for us today?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Interestingly, we have B.C. (British Columbia) and some of the other provinces coming to us for some of our approaches because collectively across Canada we're trying to put our heads together to come up with the best approaches that are possible.

In Saskatchewan, we've been using New Careers, as you'll be familiar with, to provide about 7,200 opportunities this year for education, training, skill development, employment options. We also have recently announced the Future Skills program which is designed to provide this kind of support and to support employers in the training of people who need to develop the skills needed to do the various jobs. And it's open to any training requirements that employers feel they need to hire young people.

In addition, the program that the Minister for Education, Training and Employment announced a couple of weeks ago, the JobStart program, is designed specifically for young people on assistance to provide them employment options from whatever level they attain in school, whether that be grade 10 or grade 12 . . . to the job placement. And in addition to that, in this budget, you will note that I think about \$2.1 million is designed to provide assistance to young people in the forestry area, to work specifically in the forestry area in northern Saskatchewan. And there will be about 2,500 opportunities for young people in the summer employment program.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, could I take it then on this JobStart thing, you're going to give preference to those particularly young people who are on social welfare?

(1630)

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — That is correct, and I might say, Mr. Chairman, there are a number of other initiatives. I mentioned the major ones that are province wide. But we're funding several others. For example, one in Saskatoon that I was just up to the open house a couple of weeks ago where there are young aboriginal women on assistance who have a child, who are in a program that links them from where they are today to developing a plan, to develop skills, get the training, the education they need along with the child care support to access the job market, which is their best shot at becoming financially

independent of social assistance and pulling themselves out of poverty.

We have a number of those options, those initiatives around the province as well, just for people on assistance.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, we know that other governments across Canada have been addressing the need for tighter controls on getting court ordered maintenance payment to the spouses and the children in need.

And after all I guess not all acceptable . . . How shall I say this? Some people have children, that aren't really happy at having the children, and they pull out of the family. And then we have situations where they're ordered to make payments, maintenance payments, and they ignore them. And unfortunately, Mr. Minister, that often happens. And by and large the children suffer more than the adults do in these cases. Do you have an estimate in any way of how much money would be saved to your department, Social Services, if individual maintenance orders were forced to pay their maintenance to their families?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, as you know, we have a maintenance enforcement program now in Saskatchewan. And in 1994-95, clients on assistance received or will receive by the end of this month 3.2 million in support payments directly from the non-custodial parent; plus, about another 1.9 million is being collected on their behalf by the maintenance enforcement's office and will be forwarded to the provincial Consolidated Fund. So that is about \$5.1 million currently.

In addition to that as you may recall, we added two new lawyers, through the child action plan this year, to legal aid and some support staff, a paralegal or two and, I think, a secretary to do nothing but to pursue maintenance.

In addition to that, our Minister of Justice is working with the federal government and other provinces because we have been promoting a national maintenance program. And we believe that with people moving from province to province, that it's important that there be a nationally coordinated strategy.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. That's, you know, a fair chunk of cash — 5.1 million. Do you have any idea of how many single-parent families would no longer have to be on social welfare if all the ex-partners honoured their maintenance orders?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Now that's very difficult . . . it's a good question, but it's very difficult to answer. But we believe that with the national child maintenance guidelines that were developed just, I believe, last month — this was discussed in the meeting in Victoria of all the ministers — that that will have a significant impact on the award levels and the consistency of application across the country and likely in Saskatchewan. And we'll be part of that. We anticipate that it'll make an important difference, but we just can't calculate at this point.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, the reason I asked the question, I think you and I have disagreed a few times on — probably every time — on the levels of what I call abuse to the system. And I think I've argued a bit with you that there are different levels of abuse in the system.

And I think in all fairness to yourself and to your department and to the cost your department has to account for in the system, this is, in my estimation, a form of abuse of the welfare system, even though it may be in an indirect way because, as I've heard from you on more than one occasion, you can't walk away from these people, and I wouldn't ask you to. But at the same time, if these other people were living up to their responsibilities, you would have a little more . . . you would have more money in your pocket, so to speak, and maybe could do something extra for some of those folks that you and I have talked about, over and above the regular level.

I think I've spoke to you in the context that as the minister, there may be times when you would use your authority in that capacity to go past what you may consider is the maximum under the regulations. And that is what I'm saying. Would you agree with me that this is in effect, although indirectly, a form of abuse to your system?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Well I think, Mr. Chair, on this point we would agree. This is why we have a . . . We do agree on many things.

This is why, as a condition of eligibility, it is expected that an individual on SAP (Saskatchewan Assistance Plan), a woman on SAP, pursue maintenance. It is a requirement unless there is some reason, you know, physical abuse or something, where it isn't appropriate for the time being. And I think you would agree there's got to be some case work sensitivity on those occasions. So I agree with you.

On the question of using my ministerial authority to grant more than people are eligible for, that becomes very tricky because presumably people have access to the same level of service and income and allowances across the province, and that that should be fair no matter where you are. And so those allowances are administered, we think, consistently across the province — we strive for that — which then makes it very difficult for a minister to say yes, but in this case I'm going to raise it a little bit more, but I won't in this case.

I think we have to develop the policies and the guidelines and the rules and the regulations, and then let our professional staff, to the best of their ability, apply those across the province — if I understood your second point.

Mr. Britton: — I appreciate what you're saying, Mr. Minister. But does the phrase extenuating circumstances mean anything to you? And I think this is what I'm talking about. And as far as your ministerial powers, I certainly am not suggesting that you step completely out of line, and I'm sure you don't.

But I believe . . . then maybe I can put another question. Do

you believe then, Mr. Minister, that in your portfolio you could approach your cabinet colleagues and ask maybe for another department or another regulations that gives you that power under extenuating circumstances?

And when you used the word regulations and guidelines, I believe you answered your own question. Guidelines are guidelines only. And while there are probably some firm rules and regulations that you have to abide by, I suggest in the department that you are in, sir, it's a little different than building, say, a highway or something like that. We're talking about people's lives. We're talking a little bit about the children involved here.

Children carry the scars for a long time if their childhood . . . I'm thinking in terms of a parent who can't really get out and work, but they have some children that maybe want to join the hockey team or maybe play ringette or volleyball or things like that, where a little extra money impacts on that childhood for the rest of their life. And if you need some assistance to approach your colleagues to get another little chunk of money for you to use your ministerial powers under extenuating circumstances, I would do whatever I could to help you with that.

The other thing I'd like to know, are these numbers climbing? The people who are not living up to their maintenance orders, are they climbing from last year? Are they declining? Are we having any effect with the extra two people you have working for you?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, the number of people are declining. The number of orders are increasing. So we believe that the new systems we've put in place, the new help, and the new focus with the new lawyers is working. And we'll keep you abreast of how that's going.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, that's certainly encouraging. I guess it proves to me and probably to yourself, that there's a lot of times you can't put down on a piece of paper the benefits of something like that.

If you have these two extra people out there, then the offender, if you will, knows that you have the help that you need to get this done; so it's much the same as we suggested to you on the tip line. It's not only the money that you may recover, or in other words not pay out, but how many people do you deter. That's something you can't put down on a piece of paper.

And I think something like this indicates that, when those folks out there who are not living up to the rules know that you have the manpower and the wherewithal to trace them down and demand they do that, the numbers then should slowly go down.

I would like to point out to you, Mr. Minister, that provinces such as Manitoba have passed legislation providing more enforcement powers, such as suspending and refusing driver's licences and motor vehicle registrations; reporting delinquent payers to the credit bureau; and increasing the maximum jail

term to 90 days from 30 days; and raising the maximum fine to \$1,000 from 500 for wilfully avoiding payments; and introducing measures to seize assets owned by the payer and other people, such as jointly-held bank accounts and other assets; and accessing accumulated pension benefits, credits, before retirement pay-outs begin.

And these are just a few examples, Mr. Minister, of what other people are doing to further enforce these maintenance payments to be made. Could you tell me, other than the two lawyers, what have you done to tighten up enforcement of the issue? What proposals have you brought forward?

(1645)

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Well those suggestions you've made on maintenance payments, all the ideas that can collectively be put together across Canada by Manitoba and other governments have been done, and so those are some of the considerations to be considered in terms of a national strategy.

Now I will certainly alert the Minister of Justice to the point you're raising today and it could be that he'll have a more up-to-date response on some of the things that might be considered. But I think we're feeding into the national strategy. We're very much a part of that and obviously we'll want to endorse whatever we believe will be the most effective.

But not to get into the discussion necessarily we had in question period today, but I think . . . but on the tips line I think what you have to . . . what I'd plead with you to consider is that we have two full pages outlining all of the strategies for accountability that we have in place in Saskatchewan. Now you have to take those in combination to say, well all in all we believe that Saskatchewan has a comprehensive approach to making sure that we are accountable.

And we compare . . . what we can't do is take one idea and use that as the model to . . . as the be all and the end all to solve the problem. In Manitoba for example, they are nowhere near computerized like we are. They still in a sense, with due respect to Manitoba, are back in the Dark Ages in that they've got municipal social welfare by the city and provincial social welfare. They've got two systems that deliver social assistance that don't even interface. Now we don't have that situation in Saskatchewan. So we're miles ahead of them there.

In Manitoba, Mr. Chairman, in Manitoba they have three verification workers. They've got three verification workers, and we have 31. Now I hope you give us some credit for that because we have 10 times as many, and those people are doing the verification before the cheque is prepared and goes out. So that prevents cheques going out where there may not be a legitimate need. In Manitoba, the cheque goes out, and then they have to try and recover the money. So we have, because of our system, we have a system that prevents cheques from going out and then not have to worry about collecting it back once it does, and we have 10 times as many verification workers.

In Manitoba . . . we've done some analysis because we got the figures from the department there too. Like we're communicating on a monthly basis with every department, every counterpart in Canada, because we're trying to learn from each other. As you know, we have the computer matching, the four western provinces. We had the first matching with UIC, I believe, the first exchange with UIC where we could match there, long before Manitoba.

I might say about Manitoba, their tips line gives them 350 calls a month. So far in the seven months, they've had 2,600 calls through the tip line, which works out to 325 per month. Through our network across Saskatchewan, we have about 500 calls a month of people calling in to suggest that somebody might be cheating on welfare. We pursue every one of those. So we actually get 175 calls a month more than they do already. And we have all of these other systems that in fact provide accountability. As a matter of fact, in terms of our verification people, we have . . . our ratio is 1:13 for every thousand population. In Manitoba it's 1:19.

So we have a better computer system than they do. We have more verification people. We have better interfaces than they do. And we have more tips from the public. So with regard to Manitoba's tip line, if you take their package, their accountability package, they're in deep, deep trouble relative to our accountability.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Well I think you and I will be going into the Manitoba-Saskatchewan numbers. As we have got them, they certainly don't jibe with yours. And we have them as of today.

An Hon. Member: — But yours are wrong though.

Mr. Britton: — Is that right? Oh well maybe I just won't bother. Would you come and sit here and help me out?

We'll take that up, Mr. Minister, at a time when we can develop it. Your numbers don't coincide with what we got from them after question period even, to recheck what we're talking about. But as I say, that's for another day.

Now you said you were at a meeting and all the ministers got together and talked about things. Now did you then not talk about what Manitoba's doing — those that I outlined to you that Manitoba has been doing? Just to pick Manitoba because they're close. You indicated that you're going to pass that on up to Justice. Does that mean that you hadn't heard of them before?

And while you're on your feet, can you answer another question or so, because we're getting close . . . You're talking about 31 to 3 in people looking for abuse; how does the Manitoba . . . and what's the Manitoba numbers? How many people are on welfare in Manitoba?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — I don't have the total Manitoba numbers. I've got the Manitoba provincial numbers, but we don't have the Manitoba municipal numbers. But suffice it to say that — and

this is a matter of public record — we have the second lowest dependency rate in all of Canada. In other words, you take our population and you take the number of beneficiaries on assistance, we have the second lowest rate in Canada, which is about . . . our rate, as of the end of January, our rate is 8.1 per cent. That is the second lowest in Canada. Manitoba is higher than that.

The only province lower, the way the formula calculates it, is Alberta. But the difference in Alberta, and this is very important, Alberta has a little bit lower rate, but consider what they've done. They've driven 12,000 families back to reserves, who came into the cities because of poor housing and no jobs. They've been driven back to reserve.

Now this is a matter of public record. They drove 7,000 out of the province, and they transferred 10,000 of their clients to another program, another dependency program where the public treasury is paying for it but they're not on social services. So even in the face of Alberta offloading like that, shoving the problem elsewhere, and manipulating the numbers, we are just marginally higher than them in terms of the dependency rate.

Now that's not good enough, but we're working very hard. In Saskatchewan, from May '94 to the end of January, we had 1,300 fewer cases on assistance. The regional offices have lower case-loads than they had a year ago. Now that's because the *Partnership for Renewal* is working, despite the UIC and the treaty offload. The numbers are going down. And they're way down for those who are employable. So it's a good news story. That is a good news story.

Now the issue of: did I talk to my minister counterparts about the issue of Manitoba's tips line? We were talking about the meeting last month that the Justice ministers went to where they discussed the national guidelines for maintenance enforcement. When I met with the Social Service ministers, we weren't talking about fraud and abuse. What we're trying to do, as ministers, is get on with providing the supports that people need to access jobs, the training and employment they need.

For the life of me — I have to say this with all respect — for the life of me, I can't figure out why you're so hung up on this. In the face of the fact that you're totally ignoring every single . . . you're ignoring the auditor's report . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . You can't find the auditor's report? Well we'll give you what the auditor says if you can't find it.

You're ignoring all of these strategies that we're implementing to be accountable. Why won't you give us any credit for these things that we believe are more effective than what Manitoba's doing?

Now your cheque pick-up scheme that you talked about, I mean I have the figures here. When you left office, when you left office, you were talking about what a good cheque pick-up scheme you had and you wanted to implement that across the province. Well in reality, we have some cheque pick-ups too, but we have cheque pick-ups where people have demonstrated

that that's the only way we can provide them with their assistance. We don't do it across the board because why do you hold out for public display and for public condemnation everybody who happens to be on assistance?

And that's what your preoccupation with dial-a-cheat is all about. Why on earth you, as the critic, continue to reinforce the negative stereotypes about low income, unemployed people and young people, baffles me. It's just mean-spirited; it's punitive.

And we're more effective than Manitoba. I mean you could do any independent analysis and we're more accountable than Manitoba. But we're doing it to be accountable; we're not doing it to be punitive. And that is the difference.

But we're more effective. Our error rate is very low. It is very low, yes it is. You're not operating from any basis in fact, I say with due respect. You just are not. You've provided me with no analysis. Here's two pages of guidelines of things we're doing to be accountable. What have you got to counteract that, to say it isn't accountable? We get more calls per month than Manitoba does through the tip line. I mean I'm baffled by your sort of Ralph Klein approach to low income people.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 5 p.m.