

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
March 31, 1995

The Assembly met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition today. I'll read the prayer.

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to urge the government to make the necessary changes to the New Careers program to allow the Saskatchewan Assistance Plan recipients who have started the bridging program for women to complete their program, to ensure that in the event of program changes or cuts, that the vulnerable are not trapped; and we urge this Assembly to encourage both levels of government to enter into a cooperative effort so that the people in these programs are allowed to complete them.

As in duty bound, your petitioner will ever pray.

And, Mr. Speaker, all but one of the petitioners are from Regina, and one is from Qu'Appelle.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here on behalf of people from around the province. We have Pangman, Frontier, Eastend, even one from Calgary; Southey, Glen Ewen, Glentworth, Lafleche, and Swift Current, and Vauxhall. All of these people have the following prayer, Mr. Speaker.

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 toward 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.

I'm very happy to table these on behalf of the constituents of Saskatchewan today.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My petition, the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to unequivocally 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 urge the federal government to recognize that gun control and crime

control are not synonymous.

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

These petitions, Mr. Speaker, come entirely from Pense.

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

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

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you today and through you to members of the legislature, a group of 12 adults from the Open Door Society who are here with their teachers, Roshnie Thaver and Donna Spreacker. And we'll be meeting later to have a conversation and some refreshment. And I'd like everyone to join me in welcoming them today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Roy: — M. le président, je veux vous présenter aujourd'hui, des élèves de l'école de St. Isidore de Bellevue. Il y'a dix élèves d'onzième et douzième grades. C'est un plaisir de les accueillir aujourd'hui ici à la Chambre.

M. le président, Bellevue, c'est une communauté spéciale pour moi parce que mes enfants prennent leur formation éducatif à Bellevue, et aussi la communauté est très proche de mon cœur parce que on fait beaucoup de la commerce et nos activités dans la communauté.

Les élèves sont accompagner par le principal de l'école, M. Euclid Dareau, et aussi Mme. Marianne d'Armignon. M. le président, la communauté de Bellevue démontrer qu'ils veulent préserver pour nous voir la culture et coexistence avec la majorité anglophone est spéciale.

(Translation: Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you today, students from St. Isidore de Bellevue School. There are 10 students from grades 11 and 12. It's a pleasure to welcome them to the Chamber today.

Mr. Speaker, Bellevue is a special community for me, because my children received their early education at Bellevue, and also the community is very close to my heart because we do much of our business and our activities in the community.

The students are accompanied by the school's principal, Mr. Euclid Dareau, and also Mrs. Marianne d'Armignon. Mr. Speaker, the community of Bellevue demonstrates to us their wish to preserve their culture and to co-exist with the anglophone majority is special.)

Mr. Speaker, I just want to introduce to you and to the members of the Assembly, 10 grade 11 and 12 students from St. Isidore de Bellevue in my home community. Mr. Speaker, Bellevue is one of the French schools in the province in the new French governance system; and I think they have demonstrated as a community that they can co-exist with the anglophone majority and still promote and preserve their culture. So I'd like all the members to welcome them here today. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, students from the women's bridging program in Regina at the south campus of Wascana Institute. They are here this morning to meet with the ministries of Social Services and Education at 11 o'clock, and they've come to observe the proceedings of the House.

I'd ask them to stand as I read their names: Cristy Anderson, Kathie Kuntz, Charlene Bruce, Lorraine Hatfield, Sheila Gyurak, Clovel Carbon, Olga Pryhitka, Gracy Carvalho, Marny Molnar, Sandra Ennis, Sandra Kavas, Theresa Prokopchuk, Morag Hurnrabbetz, Rosemarie Frischholz, Gayle Payette, and Geinna Ludwig. I'd like the members of the Assembly to join me in welcoming these women, who are on the road to new careers, to the Assembly this morning.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

State Of The Environment Report

Mr. Scott: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to comment on the release today of a third bi-annual report on the *State Of The Environment*.

Mr. Speaker, the *State Of The Environment Report* has several purposes. First, it helps provide people with a status report on our environment and resources. Next, it helps us to understand how we are managing the environment. Finally, identifies areas where improvements or changes are necessary.

Past reports have met with much success and been acted upon. For an example, in 1993 the report recommended the development of an ecological land classification framework as a basis for future state of the environment reporting. I am pleased to inform the House, Mr. Speaker, that the 1995 report incorporates that recommendation.

Mr. Speaker, the environment belongs to all of us but more importantly to our children. How we manage and sustain it

today will determine the environment that we bequeath to our children. The *State Of The Environment Report* is a valuable tool that tells us how well we are doing. I hope that all members of the House take the opportunity to review the report and share it with constituents.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Canadian Speed Skating Championships

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The other day I made a statement about a local skating club's annual carnival. Today, Mr. Speaker, I would like to up the intensity level just a little bit.

Regina and the Regina Speed Skating Club have been selected as the hosts of this year's Canadian Short Track Speed Skating Championships. These championships are being held this weekend beginning at noon today at the Al Ritchie arena in Regina. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I'll be representing the government at the opening ceremonies at noon today.

Canada is one of the top-ranked countries in the world in short track speed skating. This national competition means then that spectators will be treated to some very high calibre performances by some of the top athletes in the world. Among those athletes — and at the risk of not leaving out too many — is Kim Weger from Regina, one of the top women short track speed skaters in the country. As well, Jeremy Gougoux from Quebec, the top rated men's skater, will be competing.

Short track skating is quick, exciting, and involves a great deal of split-second strategy. It is a crowd-pleasing sport and there's competition for skaters from age 10 right up to the seniors 18 and over. Mr. Speaker, this is the first time ever for these championships to be held in Regina and I want to congratulate the Regina Speed Skating Club for bringing them to us.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Borden Citizen of the Year

Mr. Jess: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The other day the Deputy Premier announced formal recognition of the many Saskatchewan citizens who volunteer their time, money, and effort to make our province the finest place to live in Canada. Volunteers, as we all know, are the very roots of our individual communities.

There are many people in my constituency worthy of recognition. One I would like to mention this morning and that's Mrs. Jean Newman who was recently named Borden Citizen of the Year for 1994. She was presented with the award by the 1993 winner, Helen Sutherland. His Honour, the Lieutenant Governor, has pointed out that Saskatchewan has the highest number of volunteers in Canada.

Jean Newman is a retired school teacher, having taught in Yorkton, Lamoyle, and Radisson. She has worked in the Borden Co-op and acted as secretary to the Halcyonia school board. She has been a 4-H leader, a founding member of the community museum, a member of the Anglican Church women's organization, and much more. In her spare time, she and her husband raised three daughters.

Mr. Speaker, the citizens of her own community have recognized the contribution of Jean Newman, and I am happy to bring that recognition to members of this Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Avonlea: Female Hockey Capital of Saskatchewan

Ms. Bradley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Did you know that Avonlea, at least in my view, is the female hockey capital of Saskatchewan? The village sent two teams to the 1990 provincial championship tournament, and two times they were victorious.

On March 5 the Avonlea Eagles won the bantam, 15 years of age and under, title. They secured the victory by defeating a team from Saskatoon. The tournament was held in Avonlea, which is also in my constituency, Mr. Speaker. One week later in Eston the Avonlea Eagles — this time the pee wee squad, 13 years of age and under — were victorious.

This is quite an achievement, Mr. Speaker, considering the Avonlea girls only joined the Queen City hockey league two years ago. So in two short years, both teams are provincial champs.

I would like to congratulate the coach of both the bantam and pee wee teams, Tim Forer, and the manager of both teams, Brenda Arnold. But most of all, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate all of the girls involved in the pee wee and bantam provincial tournaments.

And I would especially like to congratulate all the members of the Avonlea pee wee and bantam Eagles for capturing the very first provincial titles for their community, making it the female hockey capital of Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan's Endangered Species Proclamation

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I hereby give notice that tomorrow at this time I will issue in this Assembly a proclamation which I urge and expect all members to support.

Immediately after delivering of myself here, Mr. Speaker, I will stride outside the legislature where, with absolutely no fear or concern for legal or moral retribution, I will proclaim this statement once more for the assembled media. If they would

take note, Mr. Speaker, that's at about 10:20 a.m. on the front steps.

In my manifesto I will proclaim the crow as the new and most dangerously endangered species of Saskatchewan — indeed of all western Canada.

I have timed my speech to the first flight of migrating whooping cranes passing over the dome from their winter home in Texas. They will dip their wings in precision to signify the passing of the guard. The whooper hitherto has held the precarious position now occupied by the crow.

After eloquently urging consideration for the crow, Mr. Speaker, I will propose that Mr. Goodale dictate that the crow be engraved on one side of the new \$2 coin; the other side, we know, will feature a purple martin, the Montreal bird which has feathered its own nest at the expense of the crow.

It is fitting that the bird responsible for the feared extinction of our fine western feathered friend share the billing on this new coin worth \$1.40 American. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and happy April Fool's Day to you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

SaskTel Construction Tender

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the minister responsible for SaskTel.

Mr. Minister, on Wednesday the bids were opened on a tender that was recently let by SaskTel to do some office renovations at the SaskTel office on 2550 Empress Road. This was one of the first tenders to be let under your new union preference policy.

Could you tell us the results of the tender opening: how many bids did you receive; what were the amounts of the bids, and who got the contract?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much. Having spent — by my calculation — some eight years here, the member should know that such detailed questions about tenders are a proper subject for asking in Crown corporations. Ministers really cannot be expected to have such detailed information here.

Some of the information you ask, as I tried to make note of the questions as your reeled them off — you had half a dozen questions — some of that information I do not think is revealed under any circumstances, but the member's better advised to ask such detailed questions in Crown Corporations.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Mr. Minister, maybe you don't

want to reveal it, but the public already knows. We have learned that you received three bids on this particular tender, and this is remarkably a low number due to your union preference policy, but it gets worse, Mr. Minister. Two of the three bidders indicated they would be unable to meet the union-hiring quotas, so they were disqualified.

In reality you received one bid, one bid only, for your union preference policy. Is this the kind of competition you were hoping to generate for a quarter of a million dollar project? One bid? Mr. Minister, will you now admit that your union preference policy is failing? It eliminates competition, and it drives up the costs. Will you admit that, Mr. Minister, and get rid of the policy?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — In the short run, Mr. Speaker, members opposite may get away with misrepresenting this policy. You may get away with it in the short run. In the long run, your chicanery on this issue and on all others has caught up to you. I ask you to have a look at the latest polls done by anyone. That's the result of misrepresenting information, which you've done continuously, and you're doing on this issue, as well.

This program is intended to provide a level playing-field for union and non-union alike. And given half a chance to work, I am confident and we are confident it'll accomplish that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, the misrepresentation is being done by your government when they claim that there will be no additional costs. The lowest bid for this particular tender was \$230,000, but you didn't accept it because it wasn't a union-hiring quota. And you couldn't accept the second one for the very same reasons.

The one you did accept, the only bid that met your union preference policy, was the highest bid at \$259,900 — 13 per cent higher than the lowest tender. That's \$30,000, Mr. Minister, straight from the taxpayers' pockets to the unions, only to satisfy your NDP (New Democratic Party) political agenda.

Mr. Minister, why don't you do the right thing — get rid of the union preference policy, accept the lowest bid, and save the taxpayers \$30,000?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — If . . . One of the first lessons any member of this caucus learns in coming here is not to accept information from the opposition at face value. I suspect that the . . . I am sure that the . . .

An Hon. Member: — Assume it's true.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Well if I were to assume everything you people said was accurate, I would have a very strange view of the world, and it would contradict itself from one day to the next. You people have a . . . I must say . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Order. Order. Order. I want to . . . There's just too much interference when the minister is trying to answer the question, and I ask members to please quit interfering. If you want the answers, then you should listen to it.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I think Thomas Hobbes's comment was that inconsistency is the hobgob of little minds. He didn't say it was the stuff of greatness, which is what you people seem to believe, because it's all you ever indulge in.

I am sure the minister in charge of SaskTel will be reviewing this matter. I am quite sure he will find the facts to be very different than what you relate this morning. And I'm quite sure, come next week, you'll be on to some other issue which you'll be misrepresenting with equal lack of responsibility.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Transportation Partnerships Corporation

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Highways.

Mr. Minister, you've been telling us that your new highway Crown is supported by the Saskatchewan road builders. I have here an official position of the road builders association regarding the new Crown. It says, and I quote:

This association supports the creation of the Crown corporation providing all of the following provisions are contained in the legislation:

- (1) all work done by open public tendering;
- (2) that the corporation be specifically not allowed to borrow money;
- (3) that there will be no union preference such as the Crown corporation tendering agreement;
- (4) corporation be not allowed to purchase construction equipment or hire employees directly;
- (5) corporation be responsible directly to the legislature and not to any government body other than the Department of Highways.

Mr. Minister, do you intend to put all of these amendments into that legislation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Thank you to the member opposite. Mr.

Speaker, it's very strange indeed. We have a Transportation Partnerships Corporation that is willing to partner with the private sector industry to improve roads in the province of Saskatchewan — some in the constituency where the member lives. Highway No. 1 for an example, may be an example of where the partnership can work to twin the highway. And we have them in the House saying that the program is no good.

Highways 102 and 905 as an example: in that agreement with COGEMA and Cameco, the industry is putting up to \$2 million into those two highways from La Ronge to Wollaston Lake, at no cost to the taxpayers of the province of Saskatchewan. And the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, refuse to accept that as an innovative and a good program.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, you are refusing to allow an amendment that excludes the Crowns from the union — or this Crown — from the union preference policy. The road builders see this as the most important amendment. And after what we've just heard about the SaskTel tendering, it is no wonder, Mr. Minister, the road builders have asked us not to let this legislation pass unless this amendment is included; we intend to honour that request.

Mr. Minister, will you include this amendment, or will we be forced to push this Bill past your self-imposed deadline, which is today?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to the member opposite. The Transportation Partnerships Corporation will tender its work the same as the Department of Highways. It's a Treasury Board Crown, and I've told you that on numerous occasions.

What you want to do is stop progress. You do not want to see Highway No. 1 twinned right through the constituency of Maple Creek. The member from Moosomin does not want the highway twinned through the town of Moosomin. You can go home and explain to your constituents that you don't want the highway twinned. And if that's what you want to do, that's fine.

VLТ Expansion

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I hope we have more success with the minister that I'm going to be addressing now. And I want to actually question the person responsible for gambling in Saskatchewan, but since the Premier won't answer questions on that, I'll direct this to the member from Regina Centre.

Madam Minister, the town of La Ronge is so fed up with your VLTs (video lottery terminal) that they're planning to hold a plebiscite on this issue. The mayor of La Ronge went on to say that VLTs are victimizing the poor in La Ronge and draining thousands of dollars out of the local economy. And that money,

incidentally, Mr. Speaker, is being used to pay for vote-getting and pre-election goodies for members opposite.

Madam Minister, why not just allow every community in the province to have that opportunity in a province-wide plebiscite?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I never tire of answering the member's questions on gaming.

You suggest that the person responsible for gaming expansion is the Premier. I'll remind you that gaming has expanded steadily in this province since 1969, through several governments. And I might add that the particular person who's raising a lot of this concern in La Ronge was there through all of those expansions, particularly the large bingo expansion that took place in the '80s. I don't recall him ever expressing any concern at that time, and I would think that there's a little bit of politics being played here.

Now you know as well as I know that we are surrounded by other provinces where gaming exists, and that our people in the hospitality industry have to compete with these other range of services that are offered in the hospitality industry. It's our view that prohibition won't work any more in the North than it does in the South, and because of that we've tried to take a very controlled and regulated approach to gaming. Certainly there's careful and controlled access. Nobody under the age of 19 can enter these establishments. There is a moratorium on the number of machines in the province.

I think people might be a little better put to concentrate on the positive developments taking place in the North, like the northern development fund, the development of Saskatchewan gold mine, McClean Lake uranium mine. These are the kinds of things that people would be better put to spent their time concentrating on as the kind of positive developments that . . . people can then choose the activities they care to be involved in.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad the minister finally got through reading her script in an attempt to answer the question.

It's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that we have a government-sponsored, government-initiated . . . and a government that stands to raise a lot of money for its own coffers. That's what's motivating this, Madam Minister.

Madam Minister, the mayor of La Ronge is quoted as saying: if the province allows us to take it to a vote, we're not going to be the only community hammering on the door. And a recent survey has shown, Madam Minister, that the vast majority of people would welcome the opportunity to have a vote on this issue. So what's the problem, Madam Minister? What are you afraid of?

Perhaps we have to go one step higher in this hierarchy, and

maybe we should ask the Premier to answer the question. Are you intending to put gambling to a vote? For that matter, Mr. Premier, are you planning to put any plebiscite question to the people during the next election? Any question at all?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I'll thank the member for his question, and I will remind him that the government does not have some personal and exclusive way that it spends money that goes into the General Revenue Fund. This money is then spun back out to communities for health, education, social services, roads. We do not use this money for any other purpose than the general public purpose, so to suggest that is to mislead people regarding the use of government funds.

I don't think there's any particular advantage in pitting community against community in this discussion because the revenues are shared across the entire province, not on a community-by-community basis. And I think that's appropriate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Contamination of Water Supply

Mrs. Bergman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week I asked the minister responsible for Sask Water about the management and allocation of a Regina area groundwater which is his responsibility. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Environment took notice of the questions that day, and we have not yet received an answer from Sask Water. So I am obliged today to raise the issue again on behalf of my constituents and users of the Regina aquifer who, by the way, have experienced the same kind of evasiveness from the minister.

In 1989 the city of Regina agreed to remain at its 1989 groundwater allocation and also agreed that future water increases would be dealt with by pipeline expansion rather than further pressure on an over-allocated groundwater.

To the minister for Sask Water: will you confirm that further licences have been issued to the city of Regina for increased allocation of these stressed, possibly contaminated groundwaters thereby increasing the risk of rural users as well as the people of Regina?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I will confirm for the member is that there have been some licences issued for new wells in the aquifer that she refers to. As other wells are closed, new ones come on stream. I will also say to the member from Regina that there is no incremental usage. What we have done . . . replaced old wells and allowed old wells to be replaced with new ones.

With respect to her concerns about the condition of the water, it's been analysed by more than one different government department: by Saskatchewan Water Corporation, by the Department of Health. The information is being compiled and will be sent to her as soon as we have it put together.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Bergman: — Mr. Speaker, this is what the government has said to the people concerned about this issue for a long time. We may have serious problems at some of the aquifer recharge points for the Regina aquifer, and that's at Wascana Creek near the city of Regina sewage treatment plant.

According to a 1988 Saskatchewan Research Council report and the 1989 Clifton report, both commissioned by Sask Water, which I now table, this has been an area of possible contamination of the Regina aquifer since at least 1988. That is seven years, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday's *Leader-Post* article about a city council report, warning of possible contamination, just reaffirms the possible threat to the first users of the aquifers, the farmers, not to mention the people of Regina.

Will the minister assure the farmers that he is taking all measures to protect them as the first users of the aquifer?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Let me say to the member that we are well aware of her concerns with respect to the aquifer. And I would want to say that I wouldn't want her to unduly raise concerns with respect to the quality of the water that the people of this area are using from that aquifer.

Now she may want to play politics with this issue, and it may be good local politics for her. I don't believe it is because I think that the people well understand that the Department of Health, the Department of Environment, and the Saskatchewan Water Corporation will fulfil their mandate to ensure that there is a good quality of water available to the city of Regina and to the people in the surrounding area.

So what I would ask the member is to be a little patient. People have spent many, many hours analysing this situation to ensure that there is a good quality of water available to the citizens that she represents. We will do what we can, working with the different departments to ensure on an ongoing basis that she can rest comfortably, knowing that this government will manage the water quality in this province in a very responsible way.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Bergman: — Mr. Speaker, the farmers north and west of Regina are worried about the integrity of the Regina aquifer. One dairy farmer has had recurrent problems with dying cattle and health problems in her family ever since the city put more pressure on the overallocated Regina aquifer. She and other farmers whose wells access the aquifer have been trying to get straight information from you, Mr. Minister, from the Department of the Environment, from Public Health and from the city of Regina for several years. Mr. Minister, they are frustrated and fear the water from the aquifer may be contaminated.

Will you be straight with farmers, Mr. Minister, and with the people of Regina concerning possible contamination?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well, Mr. Speaker, let me again say to the member that if she wants to continue to play politics with this issue, that's fine. But let me say to her constituents in the Assembly today that, regarding sewage contamination of the aquifer that she refers to, the Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management Department have analyzed this; it's under their jurisdiction. And they have received no indication that there is any contamination due to discharges from the Regina sewage treatment facility, and I say that to her today.

She may disagree with that, and she may want to play politics with the issue, and I accept that because I understand how Liberals do politics. But I want to say to her and, through her, to her constituents that the water supply is safe. It is not contaminated.

We have been monitoring it. We're working with the Department of Health, the Department of Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management and the Saskatchewan Water Corporation. And we can assure her constituents today that the supply of water and those around that we have monitored in this regard . . . are consuming a quality that is well within the safety limits that are required by the different departments.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mrs. Bergman: — Mr. Speaker, Sask Water has ignored the problem and in some cases increased the burden on the groundwater system around Regina. Sask Water has approved an irrigation project that is pumping large amounts of groundwater to the surface, reducing the water supply that is available to other users on McGill Creek. The recharge point for this area is also being affected with return of salts, nitrates, and farm chemicals associated with this irrigation project.

Mr. Minister, why is Sask Water, a corporation that is supposed to protect our water, increasing the strain on local groundwater by increasing usage levels and increasing the danger of contamination while waiving all environmental reviews and public advertising on the McGill Creek project?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well the member can make allegations, and that's fair, and that's fine. But I want to correct her, and I would like to correct her, if I could.

She refers to the allocation from the aquifer, having more pressure on it from the city of Regina's source. It's not factual. And if she would take time to acquaint herself with the situation, she would understand that it's used for peaking and when there are high areas of demand.

And if she would also acquaint herself with well technology, she would understand that the life of a well, at some time, expires, and new wells will have to be drawn. We haven't put any more allocation from the city of Regina on the aquifer. The allocation from the aquifer remains the same. She may choose not to believe that.

With respect to other water projects in this province, whether it be irrigation or capturing run-off, she can make all the allegations she wants. I would ask her to look at the information when we have it from all of the different departments. When we've got it compiled, we'll send it to her. She can do an analysis of it. And if she still has some concerns with respect to this issue, we'd be more than willing to sit down and discuss them with her. But I suspect, Mr. Speaker, politics is first and foremost on this member's mind — not safe water.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

GRIP Surplus

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the NDP blitzkrieg on rural Saskatchewan seems to never come to an end. After the closure of rural hospitals, the \$188 million budget GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) rip-off, and the downloading of taxes onto municipalities, the NDP government continues to find ways to milk Saskatchewan's rural families.

My question is to the architect of that rural revenge, and that's to the Premier of this province. Mr. Premier, can you confirm that your government will be looking to retrieve an additional \$115 million in GRIP money from Saskatchewan farm families after the next election?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Speaker, I can quite clearly confirm that we will not. I've gone through these numbers with the member opposite a number of times. The wind-down of the GRIP program is taking place the same as we wound down tripartites.

The agreement calls for each party in the agreement to get back their share of the GRIP surplus. We are estimating right now — and I think fairly accurately — that the farmers' share of the GRIP surplus will be \$253 million. And they will receive that money through deferments of pay-outs again rather than collecting the money from the farmers and paying them back \$253 million.

At the end of it, we've chosen not to collect it and then not to have to pay it back. It will still be \$26 million going back to farmers. That's our estimate at this point when GRIP is finally wound down. There's \$112 million of the '94 premium that we didn't collect, \$115 million of the '93 overpayment that we did not collect, and \$26 million of final settlement that will come to farmers.

So no, we will not be collecting that \$115 million. If we do collect it, then we'll be legally obligated to mail it back out to them, and that would make no sense.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Swenson: — Well, Mr. Minister, no one ever believed that you would break their legally binding contracts a couple of

years ago. Mr. Minister, the fact is that you took \$188 million, and you balanced your budget with it. Every farm family knows that. Mr. Minister, there are over 7,000 farm families with a dunner from your government. They understand that, and it amounts to \$115 million.

Mr. Minister, why should they trust you, after your re-election, that the Minister of Finance will not decide to balance her books once more on the backs of rural Saskatchewan? Do you admit, as you did in estimates . . . or on Bill 23's discussion, when you were directly asked that no farm family would have a dunner, a payback to your government, and you said you couldn't guarantee that? Why are you saying this morning something that you wouldn't say the other day?

Will you guarantee that no farm family, Mr. Minister, in that 115, will have to pay back your government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Speaker, I've said over and over and over again in this House, the \$115 million is farmers' money. Legally and technically, we should have collected the \$115 million and paid it back. We chose not to collect it and pay it back to save administration, to save farmers from cash flow problems. The agreement is that the farmers get back their share of the \$253 million of the GRIP surplus. I've said that over and over and over again.

The member opposite would like to mislead farmers and confuse farmers on this issue, if he possibly can. But, Mr. Speaker, it is very clear. Our policy is clear. The agreement is clear that the money will be divided between the parties, and farmers will get their share.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MOTIONS

Referral of *Estimates* and *Supplementary Estimates* to the Standing Committee on Estimates

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Before orders of the day, I move, seconded by the member from Prince Albert Carlton, by leave of the Assembly:

That the *Estimates*, subvotes LG01 - LG06 and *Supplementary Estimates*, subvotes LG03 and LG04 for the Legislative Assembly, being vote 21, and the estimates for the Provincial Auditor, being vote 28, be withdrawn from the Committee of Finance and be referred to the Standing Committee on Estimates.

Just before taking my seat, I would remind all hon. members this is a routine motion which is moved each year so that the committee on estimates can deal with this matter, with these votes.

Leave not granted.

The Speaker: — Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Neudorf: — On a point of order, I guess. The reason I did what I did is because I don't know what he's . . .

The Speaker: — Order, Order. Decision has been made.

(1045)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 22 — An Act to establish the Transportation Partnerships Corporation and to enact a Consequential Amendment

The Chair: — I would ask the minister to please reintroduce the officials who have joined us here today before we proceed to clause 1.

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. To my left is Clare Kirkland, deputy minister of Highways. And behind me here is Mr. Dale Beck of the Department of Justice.

Clause 1

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before we begin, by leave, I would introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the members of the Assembly. I want to take this brief moment to introduce to you, sir, and through you to the members of the Assembly, four people that we have sitting in the opposition gallery this morning: Mr. Bruce Drake, of course, and Leonard Wellings, and two of their companions from the road builders association of Saskatchewan.

And I would ask the members to please help me to welcome them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — With leave, to add comments to the introduction of guests?

Leave granted.

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — I would also like to welcome the members of the road builders. We had a good meeting the other day, and I'm glad you're here today to watch the proceedings. Please welcome the guests.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 22
(continued)

Clause 1

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I guess we'll get on with the business at hand, which is Bill 22. And I have some questions I would like to ask the minister. Are we on? We're on, good.

Mr. Chairman, I want to ask the minister specifically this question. Mr. Minister, yesterday and earlier this day in question period we asked you a specific question. That question was: would you allow amendments to this piece of legislation that would include in principle the following points: (1) that all work be done by open public tendering; (2) that the corporation be specifically not allowed to borrow money; (3) that there will be no union preference or referrals such as the Crown corporation tendering agreement; (4) the corporation be not allowed to purchase construction equipment or hire employees directly; (4) that corporations be responsible directly to the legislature and not to the government body, any government body, other than the Department of Highways.

Those are the five questions that we have asked on behalf of the Saskatchewan road builders association, Mr. Minister. Will you allow those points, in principle, each in its own way and in its proper place, to be placed, through amendments, into this legislation, making it totally clear exactly what everybody is going to do; exactly what is going to happen, so that there are no confusions and so that everybody will know exactly where they stand?

We have, as I pointed out to you, a very sad situation in our province, where people in general do not trust politicians. They don't trust them no matter what party they come from. And I've asked you to help us to alleviate some of that mistrust by putting into your legislation here today, the exact words that will qualify exactly what you intend to do so that there can be no doubt, so that there can be no doubt at all, that you are going to do what you're saying you're going to do and not stab folks in the back later for political reasons.

So, Minister, will you put these principles into this legislation through amendments?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the member opposite for his question. We've had many, many days of discussion on Bill 22. And I told you yesterday and I'm going to tell you again, I don't think you should be playing politics on the backs of the road builders, on the backs of Saskatchewan industry, on the backs of Saskatchewan people. We told you yesterday that we would, in principle, look at your amendments, and we will do that, but we will not play politics with this Bill.

We told you that there is going to be open and public tendering. We've told you that on every occasion. We have told you that we will tender the same way the Department of Highways tenders presently. It's a Treasury Board Crown. I've told that to the road building industry; I've told that to industry; I've told that to the people of Saskatchewan; I tell it to you today.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, Minister, we will concede that we heard you loud and clear yesterday when you said that you would agree to item no. 1. However, there are four other important items. And just to cut through the chase I might as well go to item no. 3 and ask you specifically, are you prepared to include an amendment that will specifically spell out this principle, that there will be no union preferences or referrals, such as the Crown corporation tendering agreement? Will you allow that type of amendment to be put into your legislation today?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — I thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to read one of the amendments, or part from one of the amendments that the opposition has sent over: where the corporation deems it inexpedient to let the work of the lowest bidder, it shall report the matter to, and obtain the authority of, the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

Now it's very clear, this . . . we've used this in the Department of Highways since I've been there and since before. It clearly indicates that the lowest bidder will be used unless there is a circumstance and if that circumstance . . . has to go before the Lieutenant Governor. Now how more clear can we make it? We can, I suppose, go on and on on this, but I tell you right now that to play politics with this Bill, I don't think is the right thing to do.

Mr. Neudorf: — I thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I think it's becoming obvious to everyone that has been listening to the debate over the last few years that a stalemate has been reached whereby it's obvious that the Minister is saying, well yes, we have this in the legislation but we don't intend to use it. That is not our objective, he says; union tendering policy alone is not what we're after. Yes, it's in there but we won't use it; trust us.

And I know that the people of Saskatchewan, the road builders associations, those people that are going to be intricately involved and affected by this type of legislation, have simply told us, don't accept that. Don't accept the member's word as such. If that's what he intends; if that's what the objective is, then put it in the legislation.

And we, as the opposition, have attempted to do that precisely. And we have those amendments before us. The Minister steadfastly refuses to accept that. He says, trust us. We're not prepared to do that.

So perhaps what we need is a little bit of a cooling period, Mr. Minister, whereby you will come to your senses and realize that if indeed those are not your intentions, then there's no harm in putting it in legislation, making it law. Because quite frankly, Mr. Minister, people don't trust you.

I'm going to give you that cooling-off period pursuant to rule 55.1 whereby we ask that Bill No. 22, An Act to establish the Transportation Partnerships Corporation and to enact a Consequential Amendment, be hoisted for that three-day period, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: — At the request of the official opposition, under rule 55.1, proceedings on Bill No. 22, An Act to establish the Transportation Partnerships Corporation and to enact a Consequential Amendment, are hereby suspended for three sitting days.

(1100)

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

The Chair: — Before we proceed to clause 1, I would ask the minister to introduce the officials who have joined us here today.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With me I have Dr. Hartley Furtan, who is the deputy minister; I have Doug Winsor, who is from the department; and ADM (assistant deputy minister) Terry Scott.

Clause 1

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, when we were visiting with this particular Bill the other day you indicated that you would go back and look for letters of intent, pieces of correspondence which your officials have had with the federal minister and his officials, indicating the outline of this larger agreement and how this fits into it. And how, I guess, Saskatchewan farm families can feel more comfortable about what you've done on their behalf vis-a-vis the . . . over the GRIP payment, the GRIP monies that were taken and turned into other programs.

And I'm wondering if you're prepared at this time to table that correspondence so that we might have a look at it, to try and understand the framework of this agreement.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Well, Mr. Chairman, we have the pamphlet, the outline of this agreement which has been public for many weeks. It consists of an enhancement to the NISA (net income stabilization account) program which is already in effect and in operation. We have a program for grains and oil-seeds — we call it the sector program for grains and oil-seeds — which is in effect at this time. It includes crop insurance, which is in effect.

The piece of the agreement dealing with the research and development side of the equation is here and is outlined in this Bill that we're presenting here today, clearly outlines our side of this funding. The Act is here for us to approve. The federal funding commitment is not in a formal agreement and won't be in a formal agreement until we get this particular Bill through.

We have correspondence between myself and the minister, and documents between the departments. Again, those are documents that . . . letters that were used in negotiation. And at this time, I'm not prepared to table those because I do not have permission from the federal minister, who is out of the country, to table those particular letters at this time.

I can table the document that outlines the agreement. Again, it's public knowledge and most pieces of this agreement are being put into effect now. This is the last piece, the research and development side of it. We need to get this Bill passed through here in order to be able to formally sign an agreement with the federal government for their \$64 million which is committed to this fund.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I'm disappointed in that. I would have thought that you and your officials would have been working overtime in order to come up with the problem, our problem. And I clearly remember when the New Democrats were in opposition being very, very critical of the government coming to the House with time lines saying that legislation had to be passed by such-and-such a date or else.

And what you've effectively done is come to the opposition here and said, we brought this Bill in a few weeks ago. You'd better pass it by the end of March, or else I'm in trouble because the Finance minister will be angry with me and the Premier will be angry with me and I've got to move my money around in a different way because it messes up her budget numbers if it comes out of '94-95 instead of '95-96.

And you put the gun to the head of the opposition, and have people around the province phoning us because they're worried — and they're the people that'll legitimately benefit by this Act in R&D (research and development), and we're all in agreement with R&D — and say, opposition, you don't have any choice but you got to pass this Bill by March 31.

And I don't really appreciate that process. And that's why I think it has been reasonable for us to ask you about the agreements that you have in place. And you say, well I don't have any. Well I don't know if you knew the minister was going to muck off to South America or not, but his officials and his deputies sure as heck knew where he was going.

So he's out of the country; he can't answer. You say, I can't answer because he's out of the country and I've got this deadline, and you're to blame, opposition, if I don't get this through, when you've known for months and months and months — since last October, you told me — that you had the agreement in place and you were going to put it through.

And the Minister of Finance has got in the road and said you can't get it through unless you do it with supplementary estimates out of the previous budget year. And then say that I and the opposition caucus are at fault for the mess that you're in.

And I don't appreciate that. I mean if a guy just wanted to be downright ugly, I'd stand up here and just hoist the silly thing just to be ornery, just to be ornery. I mean I remember in the . . . prior to '91 that's usually what happened in here when there was any sort of a deadline. It was, just be ornery — nothing else — just be ornery.

Well I don't operate like that. I've always been as reasonable as possible with people and that's why I would really clearly like to understand the parameters of this agreement.

There is no federal money coming until 1996 as you have told us. And not one signature or anything from the federal minister that say that there's an absolute guarantee on that. No guarantee at all. I'm supposed to take your word for it. And right now the media says that you and the federal minister aren't doing a whole lot of chatting about anything. And that's the problem we have. Plus this deadline.

I mean was . . . Maybe you could answer this. Was it your preference to have this deadline or was it the preference of the Minister of Finance to have the deadline?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — It was my preference to have this fund up and operating absolutely as quickly as possible.

That's why we're . . . \$18 million is out of '94-95 funding, and the member well knows that the year ends on March 31. Certainly it was my preference to have this up and operating as quickly as possible and without any delay.

That's what it's all about, to get this up . . . get the fund going, get the board appointed, and be prepared to get on with the value added in rural Saskatchewan.

(1115)

Mr. Swenson: — You didn't answer my question. What, in your mind, is the magic about March 31 as opposed to April 10? Or if you'd have been doing . . . if you'd have got your agreement signed with Goodale earlier on, you could have done it at the beginning of this session rather than March 31. What's the magic about it?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — The magic of March 31, the member well knows, it's the end of the '94-95 calendar year, or the fiscal year for the Government of Saskatchewan. What this Act is proposing is to spend money from the '94-95 fiscal year to get this fund up and running. This Bill has been in the House a for good long time. You well know the process of bringing a Bill to this House. It was introduced and had first reading and second reading, and it's been in here twice in Committee of the Whole where it's been delayed and held up.

So the Bill is . . . certainly we were prepared to do this Bill. We had the agreement. As I said earlier, the agreement that we had was as early as last fall and this is the results of this agreement. As I say, this is the last piece of the agreement that falls into place.

You may say that there's no legal guarantee for the federal government to live up to their agreement. That may well be the case. I don't know why delaying this Bill would enhance that.

Mr. Swenson: — Well it's very difficult, Minister, for me to keep my temper. This Bill never came into this House until February 27 for the first time and went through the normal process. It never got to second reading until March 13. You know, that's not a great deal of time.

I am responsible as the agricultural critic for the official opposition to account to people in rural Saskatchewan for \$91 million of their money — \$91 million of GRIP money which you and Goodale have turned around and said it didn't make any sense to put it out to you in an acreage payment because there wasn't enough to affect anything. We're going to do it in a different way in research and development and value added, and you got to trust us that we're smarter than you are, even though we broke your contract.

I mean your explanation to me about why you had to get it in here. That hasn't stopped you before. You can break a contract just like that. Use this House, change timetables, say anything you want — you've done it. You know? There was never any hesitation to do that.

So the magic here escapes me. It really does on that . . . on a very short amount of time for that amount of money, and yet you want this thing passed. No guarantee, no correspondence, and ask me to trust you with that amount of money, of GRIP money. It's a really tough pill to swallow, Minister, really tough.

Will you commit that before we are done with the estimates of the Minister of Agriculture in this House, this spring, you will be prepared to table to the House the agreement — and that's predicated on you having your legislation passed — that you will be prepared to table the agreement that you have with Mr. Goodale to ensure that the farmers' GRIP money, which you have redirected, will be guaranteed in this program over the next four years, before your estimates are finished, which should be sometime in the middle of May?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Yes, the process here was, this Bill will be passed; an OC (order in council) will be passed where we sign a formal agreement with the federal government. And once we have that agreement signed, we will certainly table that.

Mr. Swenson: — So you're saying that you anticipate the agreement will be signed and the guarantees will be in place and that you'll have it to bring to the estimates of the Department of Agriculture?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Yes, I anticipate that.

Mr. Swenson: — Okay. I appreciate that.

I yesterday talked to the minister, Mr. Chairman, about some

amendments that would be possible in various areas of the Bill. We had strong concern — and have had conversations with people out in agriculture — about who should control this fund. Should it be producers, primary producers, secondary producers, or probably the people that will receive the funds and government bureaucrats, and I think I'd like the minister to respond to those initiatives that we've proposed to have producer control implemented.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Yes, Mr. Chairman, the member opposite is quite correct. We had discussion yesterday pursuing structure of the board and quorum. I think the member opposite has made some good points, and we would be prepared to accept the amendments that he has proposed.

Mr. Swenson: — That's good news, Mr. Minister, because I think most producers out there want to feel some ownership of this process. They want to clearly understand that this thing will be for their benefit and not the benefit of either politicians electioneering or people in the federal or provincial bureaucracies who are off on some type of an agenda — that the producers will actually have some say in how this goes.

So with that commitment, Mr. Minister, I think we can get on with going through the clause by clause of this Bill.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 5 inclusive agreed to.

Clause 6

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have an amendment here that will deal with clause 6 and the number of representatives that will be on the board for the primary producers and the secondary producers.

We discussed it with the minister previously that one-third was not appropriate; that it should be some higher number. And we have the agreement of the minister on this.

So I would move:

That clause 6 of the printed Bill be amended by striking out the words "at least one-third" where they occur in subsection 6(1) and substituting the words "at least a majority".

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 6 as amended agreed to.

Clause 7

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This one also we had some concerns with, about who would form the quorum or how many representatives of the producers would be on the quorum structure. We have discussed this one also with the minister and have his agreement to it. So I would move:

That clause 7 of the printed Bill is amended by adding the words ", which shall include at least 50 per cent of the primary or secondary producers that are members of the Fund" immediately after the words "quorum of the Board" where they occur in subsection (7).

I so move.

The Chair: — Can we take the amendment as read?

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Chairman, we just would like that read one more time, please.

The Chair: — The question is the amendment moved by the member from Souris-Cannington:

That clause 7 of the printed Bill is amended by adding the words ", which shall include at least 50 per cent of the primary or secondary producers that are members of the Fund" immediately after the words "quorum of the Board" where they occur in subsection (7).

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 7 as amended agreed to.

Clauses 8 to 16 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill as amended.

Mr. Swenson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I just wanted to thank the officials for coming in and helping out with the deliberations on the Bill.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Yes, we'd like to thank the opposition for their consideration and cooperation and working with on us on the Bill, and also the officials for the information that was supplied.

Ms. Murray: — Thank you. With leave, I'd like to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Murray: — Thank you. Mr. Chairman, to you and through you to my colleagues in the Assembly, I'd like to introduce two young men seated in the west gallery, Kevin Baker and Jim Bobst, who have in the last little while shown a great deal of interest in the political process. And I'm delighted to see them here, and I would ask you to welcome them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I move the committee rise and report considerable progress, although not as much as we would have

liked, and ask for leave to sit again.

SUSPENSION PURSUANT TO RULE 55.1

Bill No. 22 — An Act to establish the Transportation Partnerships Corporation and to enact a Consequential Amendment

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, first I want to advise you that at the request of the member for Rosthern, under rule 55.1, proceedings on Bill No. 22, an Act to establish the Transportation Partnerships Corporation and to enact a Consequential Amendment has been suspended for three sitting days.

(1130)

THIRD READINGS

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

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that the amendments be now read the first and second time.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Cunningham: — Mr. Speaker, by leave of the Assembly, I move Bill No. 23 be now read the third time and passed under its title.

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

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Speaker, I'm advised it will be about 15, 20 minutes before His Honour the Lieutenant Governor is able to join us for Royal Assent. I think we'll therefore go into Committee of Finance. I have to beg people's patience because we'll have to rise from Committee of Finance, I think, to receive the Lieutenant Governor. So I think we're going into Committee of Finance now. When he arrives, we'll rise and receive the Lieutenant Governor in the usual fashion.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat Vote 25

The Chair: — Before we proceed to item 1, I would ask the minister to introduce the officials who have joined us here today.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you. I'd like to introduce with me today . . .

The Chair: — Order. Order. Order.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you. I'd like to introduce today

Marv Hendrickson, the deputy minister of SIMAS (Saskatchewan Indian Affairs Secretariat); Ernie Lawton, assistant deputy minister of Indian Affairs; and John Reid, the executive director or policy and planning.

Item 1

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, I'd like to begin . . . I have a few questions that have been . . . I guess are nagging questions, especially in the rural community.

And coming back to some of this treaty land entitlement and the number of the land sales that are now taking place throughout the province, certainly in my area and other jurisdictions or areas of this province where settlement of native land claims . . . in some cases we have Crown land that is being used to honour some of the agreements and honour settlement. And some of that land or a fair portion of that land happens to be land that is presently utilized as pasture land, Crown land that is being utilized as pasture land.

I realize some of that is out of your jurisdiction as it's PFRA (Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Association) run pastures, but there are some provincial pastures as well.

And I'm just wondering, Madam Minister, what your department is doing to alleviate some of the fears and the problem that . . . The major concern that is being raised and is being brought to our attention is the uncertainty as to whether that pasture land will now be available for grazing — whether the department is into or has an understanding with the federal government regarding PFRA pastures and whether there's an understanding with regards to ACS (Agricultural Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan) and any of the pastures that they would maintain, whether this land, if it does transfer under the treaty land entitlement, will be available to these ranchers and to these farmers who do lease land.

Because if it isn't, Madam Minister, a number of producers find themselves in a predicament as to where they find the pasture then to graze their livestock either this year or in the years to come.

And I'm wondering if you can kind of bring us up to date where we are on that agreement and how we are addressing or how your department is addressing those concerns that are out there.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, thank you for the question. An agreement was signed in 1992 which provided the framework for treaty land entitlements. And the main principle in this agreement was to resolve outstanding treaty obligations. But a very important principle that was included in this was the concept of willing buyer/willing seller. And certainly the province and the federal government and the Indian bands have been working on a principle of discussing and negotiating with people who have interest — third party interests — in the land to try to reach agreement.

Now sometimes that's difficult. But my experience is that in most instances the actual use of the land itself often doesn't change at all; all that changes is who's administering the land. In the case of our pastures, 75 per cent of the people who use the pasture must agree. And in the federal instance, they're not obliged to the 75 per cent, but they are obliged to discuss with other persons who use the pastures.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Madam Minister. So, Madam Minister, what you're basically saying is that on the provincial side, on the provincial scenario, you have an understanding whereby the patrons of that pasture that's provincially owned, 75 per cent of those patrons must agree to a land sale.

What I'm wondering, when we talk about agreeing to a land sale, in the discussions you've had, the fact that this land may be up . . . and you talked about equal buyer . . . or I mean, I don't know. I just don't remember the exact word you used about the fact that a fair buyer/fair seller or other person has that opportunity to sell it or purchase it.

In this agreement with regards to pastures and the fact that the 75 per cent in favour, what . . . how does the agreement . . . or what type of agreement have you reached that would allow producers to have a confidence in the fact that they still have access to the pasture if they vote in favour of it then?

When I'm saying that, Madam Minister, I'm suggesting that there must be something that says that the producers themselves do have access to continue use or lease of this pasture land for an indefinite period of time or for a long enough period of time to allow them to seek alternative sources if, down the road, that pasture is then going to be taken out of access to them. And so I'm wondering . . . Because it seems to me there's no sense going to the producers to get their approval unless there's an understanding of what you really mean by making this land available for native land entitlement process.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — What ever agreement would be signed with an Indian band would be as legally binding as any agreement that we would currently have with the people who occupy that land. In the initial stages of some of the settlements, what we're trying to do is establish a model for how this would proceed in other areas.

And Thunderchild would be a good example of that. All the stakeholders have been involved, and we are really working on the notion of long-term arrangements as opposed to short-term arrangements. So I think that people who enter into these agreements can do so in the confidence that all parties have thoroughly considered their obligations and will live by them.

(1145)

Mr. Toth: — So does that mean, Madam Minister, that the negotiations that are taking place, you're basically talking to the producers out there as well as the native bands in the area who would be looking at possibly purchasing that land? Or does the government have a clear-set policy whereby you just go to the

producers and say, this is what we're proposing? Does it look good enough to you? Or is there an involvement from the producer community?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The agreements, when you're referring to producer involvement, the agreements are between the first nation and the producer. And either our department, SIMAS, or the Department of Agriculture may well get involved in helping to work through the process. But it is primarily an arrangement between the first nation and the producer. And we'll also take other special steps like contracting with a mediator to help the community resolve the issue.

But really I guess one of the advantages of this process is the community undergoing these discussions that may not have taken place in the past and certainly need to take place in order to proceed in the future with the different kind of relationship.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Madam Minister. So basically what you're saying then is as the discussion takes place and if a provincial pasture happens to be part of that discussion or be part of an area that a native band would look to as fulfilling some of the land entitlement, that that band then will — representatives or the band itself — will take the time to sit down with the actual producers and come to some form of consensus or agreement before an actual agreement is laid out. Is that what I understand?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes, that would be an accurate statement. It has to be formally signed.

And I might mention that some discussions have been going on for some generations. So this is not always a very speedy process although we have been trying to move along from the signing of the 1992 agreement.

Mr. Toth: — I guess another question that comes up, Madam Minister, is the fact of maintenance of roads and certainly hospital and education taxation that local schools and hospitals have that they derive from RMs (rural municipality) at the present time.

But I think the biggest concern is road maintenance. And certainly it is a concern, even more so this year in the area of the province that I represent because of the extreme weather conditions we've had over the past month. About three weeks ago it looked like well, we're into it. We had some good snowfall, and we've had a nice snowfall. This snow is starting to melt, and — boy — it's going to be a good spring because we're going to have moisture around, but the roads are going to dry up — no major problems.

And then we ended up with two . . . We thought one wet snowstorm with rain was bad, but we've had three since then and some of the roads are really atrocious. And in fact, most RMs have really set a limit as to the weight load that can travel on the roads.

And the concern that I'm raising is when you have a parcel of

land . . . Okay, you've got a willing buyer over — say — on the north-west part of an RM, and then there's an area where someone decides no, I want to continue to farm this land, and then you get down to another about two or three miles down the road. So you've got a parcel of land that now becomes part of native treaty land entitlements.

And the concern is, who is going to maintain that road especially . . . are the RMs going to get compensation for the maintenance of that road and property? Are the natives being included in helping to compensate for road maintenance? Or are they going to be expected to provide the road maintenance?

What access and what channels do people have with to view, if they feel, at the end of the day that the road program or the roads in this area are really being destroyed because there's a section that's properly maintained? And then you've got a section that may be part of a treaty land entitlement that isn't properly being maintained?

What agreements have you arrived at? And I realize we've had some discussion on this, but a period of time has lapsed since that last discussion. Has there been any more movement, any more understanding? I'm sure you've probably met with SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) officials. They're got that concern. Where do we sit today in relation to or regard to all of this?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you for your question. The first thing I would like to respond to is the concern over SARM being included in these discussions. And I would say that we are working very closely with SARM on all of these related issues that affect them.

There is a formal provision for tax loss compensation in the 1992 agreement. It includes 25 million for RMs, which applies fairly specifically to roads, and 25 million for school boards.

As far as service goes, each first nation would sign a service agreement that suits the particular circumstances in the area where they are. Existing road agreements between municipalities and reserves are 20 years old. And in some cases, some of those are now being renegotiated. And one example I would bring to your attention is Big River which has reached a very satisfactory conclusion, and we're hoping that Big River can become a model for other agreements that are signed on service.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, you indicated 25 million for roads and 25 million to school boards. Where is that funding coming from? Is that coming from the provincial treasury or is this a joint agreement between the federal and provincial government, or is most of this money coming out of the federal government?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Under the agreement, the compensation, tax laws compensation, is a shared arrangement between the federal and the provincial government with each party paying 50 per cent.

Mr. Toth: — And how is this money distributed? Is it a cost-share basis, or are you looking at a percentage of the funds being allocated over a period of time? Or is this money invested in a fund, and then each RM that would be affected, as far as road maintenance, would get a percentage of the investment return per year so it basically then goes on into perpetuity, I'm suggesting, or in school boards? Is that basically the same way? Is that's how it's being handled?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The monies are paid into a trust fund that's administered by SARM, and annual grants in lieu of taxes are paid to the municipality out of the trust fund in perpetuity. And the same exists for school boards within that same fund.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, based on that, that's one of the thoughts I had in the back of my mind. And I'm getting away a bit from Indian and Metis Affairs, but when I look at the Crow benefit and how it's allocated, that was certainly something that I thought might have been an avenue whereby the province of Saskatchewan certainly could have maintained, if you will, a transportation type of program. And it's unfortunate that possibly that avenue wasn't pursued a few years ago when there was the potential for a fair amount of funds.

And I realize that you weren't here, and it's certainly not within your department's purview, but I think what you have arrived at . . . or the decision and how you're handling it, I would suggest, is certainly a fair and equitable way to handle the fund. And it continues to be there, rather than a lump sum that's dispersed today, gone tomorrow, and then an RM down the road 10 years has nothing to compensate it. So I appreciate that.

Madam Minister, we had a bit of a discussion the last time we met over the audit investigation of the Metis Nation's finances and the fact that the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) decided not to charge the MNS (Metis Nation of Saskatchewan). I'm wondering, have there been any further involvements regarding this? Are there still concerns arriving from this?

It seems to me the Metis Nation . . . some of the Metis people are not totally satisfied with how the process has been handled, or was handled at that time, and I'm wondering where we sit today and whether there are still concerns being brought to your attention that should be reviewed, or what the department has done. Or is this basically a matter that is now closed and complete and everyone has basically accepted the recommendations?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I wanted to provide the member with a bit of background on some of the history and then bring it up to date with the current situation. Any criminal or investigative activity that was taking place is all over and completed. And last year the province did provide funding for Deloitte & Touche to get involved in working directly with the organization — reviewing all of their systems, their finances, and to provide direction and advice to them on that.

Now at the end of that process, the MNS and ourselves and the federal government accepted the plan that was arrived at, and our information to date is that they still want this kind of assistance in dealing with their finances.

They do still face serious issues of debt retirement and cash flow, but certainly in any of my meetings with representatives in the last while there is a strong desire within the organization to be accountable, to be seen to be accountable, and to restore some public confidence in their operations.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, I believe when we had completed our discussions the last time we were here, we were discussing, or we were in the process of discussing, sentencing circles. And if I'm not mistaken there was a headline in the paper just the other day, and I just failed to grab the headline talking about sentencing circles and how they are working, how well they're working, how they are meeting the needs of our native community.

The one headline I do have actually goes back a little while, and what it basically is is . . . and I'm going to quote from an article that says: Many people are unaware of what this means — meaning regarding sentencing circles. Why is the offender not given a sentence by the court like everyone else? What is a sentencing circle and how does it work? Why is a circle preferable to the regular sentencing process? How can an offender get into sentencing circles? And this article I'm quoting from, is I believe it's out of the *Star-Phoenix*, addresses these questions.

And there were a number of general ideas brought forward as to the process of sentencing circles, and I'm wondering if you can inform us to date, Madam Minister, how that process has worked — that sentencing process of using sentencing circles — has worked in the past; how you perceive it working into the future?

(1200)

It would seem to me from my observations that it certainly has provided an avenue whereby the native community can have some involvement in addressing some of the problems in dealing with crime and dealing with, if you will, offenders out of the native community regarding sentencing and regarding the justice system. And it would appear to me that this may be a fair and equitable way of addressing some of the concerns and hopefully, at the end of the day, rather than — if I can use the phrase — building more institutions, we maybe can address some of the compensation factors that arise from a number of the crimes.

In a lot of cases a lot of these crimes are fairly minor crimes — and I'm not saying it's not just the native community, it certainly is all segments of society that we have this type of criminal activity. And yet people themselves feel that they do not receive the compensation, that the proper sentence isn't . . . a person isn't really reprimanded for the actions done and the effect it has had on the innocent bystander.

And so I'm wondering, Madam Minister, can you bring us up to date as to where we are, how the process is working, and how you see it working into the future?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I'd like to thank the member from Moosomin for his thoughtful comments on the subject. It is a new area as far as implementation goes, and because of that I think there'll be many discussions that need to be taken before the thing works as everybody hopes it has the potential to do.

You will realize that it is the Minister of Justice who has total responsibility for this. So, although I'm familiar with some of the discussions around this, I have no direct involvement in it.

I will say that there have been discussions over concerns raised between the chief of the federation, the Minister of Justice, and the federal government, on improving and defining further the role of sentencing circles.

Mr. Toth: — I thank you, Madam Minister. And I guess that's . . . I would just . . . The reason I raised the question is because it deals with the native area and the native responsibility of your department in some ways. Even though it comes out of the Department of Justice there's still, it would seem to me, an avenue whereby the Indian and Metis Affairs is possibly involved or questions are raised as to how they deal with the process. And any involvement or any ideas that may come . . . arrive out of your department that the Justice Department could implement or use in their arguments, if you will, or their justification of this type of a sentencing . . . and that's the basis on which I was raising it.

And I guess the question would be, does your department cooperate with the Justice department and native organizations in planning sentencing circles?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you. You may be familiar with a document that was just recently released, *Towards a Shared Destiny*, which lays out the Government of Saskatchewan's commitment to its relationship with aboriginal policy and with the community affected by that framework agreement. Certainly the concept of sentencing circles and the idea of some self-determination in the conduct of justice flows from this agreement and the principles outlined in the agreement, so you're right in the sense of, it is part of the policy framework.

Within this document, under justice reform, we've laid out the broad objectives of reducing the incidence and the effects of crime, promoting understanding of and respect for positive justice values and processes, and fostering a justice system that's more respectful of and respected by aboriginal peoples and therefore more likely to be honoured.

The one comment I would make, seeing as you were waxing a little bit philosophical, is one of the things that's happened when our society has worked with other people is we've quite often taken the position that they should adjust to all of our ways of doing things. And I think what we're moving into is an era where perhaps we're able to look at practices that have

developed in other cultures and to see whether in fact there's other things that we could benefit from that have been developed in other areas. And certainly sentencing circles, in terms of community accountability and accountability of people to their community, is a useful principle to explore within the broader justice system.

The committee reported progress.

ROYAL ASSENT

At 12:08 p.m. His Honour the Lieutenant Governor entered the Chamber, took his seat upon the throne, and gave Royal Assent to the following Bill:

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

His Honour: — In Her Majesty's name, I assent to this Bill.

His Honour retired from the Chamber at 12:10 p.m.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Mr. Speaker, before we go to Committee of Finance, I think perhaps it might be well if this House were to express its appreciation to the Lieutenant Governor. His Honour delayed a meeting which was important to him, just to be here. So I think it might be well if this House just expressed its appreciation for his courtesy in attending here.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — With leave, I move we go to Committee of Finance.

Leave granted.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat Vote 25

Item 1

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Madam Minister, it's come to my attention that in some areas of the province certain literature is being passed around that is derogatory to our native citizens. And some of this has been found in my own constituency. It's been found in Estevan. It's been found in Prince Albert, and various other areas of the province.

In particular I am talking about a booklet that's titled *No. 2 Word Search Puzzles*, and perhaps you're familiar with the particular pamphlet. I would call on the pages to make a photocopy of it and send this over to you. There's also been an article in the paper dealing with this particular issue in the *Leader-Post*, written by Trevor Sutter, who's dealt with this, talked to Donna Greschner about it.

I'm just wondering, what is your department prepared to do or what is your department doing about this particular booklet. The person who brought this up to me in Carlyle said that she went on a search to find out just how widespread this was. She found that not only in Carlyle but also in Estevan in our area, and according to the newspaper report it's also been found in, as I said, Prince Albert and Moosomin. So, Madam Minister, what are you doing about this particular type of literature and what are you doing to prevent it from coming into our province?

(1215)

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Now I want to go through a little bit of the broad context for this so you can get a sense of the larger context that specific items would be dealt within. We are committed as a government to dealing with and overcoming inequities and barriers based on racial and cultural differences.

We do recognize that all citizens of the province should understand and appreciate the history and culture and status of Indian and Metis peoples, and we take a promotional and educational approach to developing understanding and appreciation for Indian and Metis cultures. There's some initiatives in curriculum development and in a range of other areas.

Preventative measures are important, but on particular issues when things arise like this, we would pursue those kinds of things directly with the Human Rights Commission. And I appreciate the member for being concerned and for bringing this material to my attention. I hadn't seen it directly.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Madam Minister. It seems that this particular booklet had been around some time previously and reappeared again. So it's not the first time.

In fact when the lady who contacted me phoned . . . when her friend who initially found this phoned the company that was producing it, or where it had come out of, they said they had pulled this particular book off the shelves nine months before. And yet within our area it was being found on the shelf still.

So it seems to be a problem that doesn't go away after the first complaint; it keeps reappearing. And I'm not just sure how these booklets get transferred around — whether, if somebody pulls them off the shelf, if they pop back up some place else later because they sell them cheaply, you know, as a bargain, to somebody else.

I'm not . . . I wonder if you could look into that, Madam Minister, to try and ensure that this does not reappear.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes, we would undertake to do that.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister.

One of the other issues that comes up in my own constituency is dealing with the Pheasant Rump Reserve, and there has been some concerns there about the operation of the band, and it's

been under investigation.

I wonder, Madam Minister, if you can give us an outline of what's happening there.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The particular situation that you're referring to at Pheasant Rump is a specific claim, and as such it's not under the 1992 agreement. So this is something where the band is dealing directly with the federal government on this issue.

And we'd like to help with the situation and we have tried to put ourselves forward to the federal government to assist, but they are really not interested in us being involved in this. It's between themselves and the band.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay. Thank you, Madam Minister.

It always also seems to be a problem on some of the reserves as to how welfare is dealt with. Now is your department and the welfare . . . Social Services department deal only with natives when they're off the reserve as far as welfare is concerned, so you actually have no impact on how the circumstances may be dealt with on the reserve?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — There is an agreement that in regards to on-reserve assistance — that's all federal government . . . and there is some limited instances where in the North some bands are delivering some off reserve as well because of the nature of what would be effective in a more remote location like that.

The general principle is that the federal government follows provincial rates in making sure that there is a level playing-field, because of course you would have people choosing where to live if there was a lot of difference between the two approaches.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, do the bands have any input on whether or not a recommendation that a band member who is living off the reserve, perhaps because no housing is available on the reserve . . . do they have any input on who does receive welfare?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Generally, no, would be the answer to your question.

There is good communication between the bands and our department and we try to work closely on these questions. There is no particular input on housing. And it's really the band, the band administration, and the federal government that works on this. And the federal government really performs more of an audit function. It's more the band that administers it itself and the federal government that just reviews and satisfies themselves as to the conduct.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well in circumstances, Madam Minister, where there is not enough housing on a particular reserve, does Sask Housing become involved in housing off of the reserves dealing with band members who, because there is no housing,

have to live off of the reserve?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I'll try to divide the answer up into two pieces. Where that kind of a situation does apply is, in some of the urban areas there's federal-provincial, cost-shared programs between SHC (Saskatchewan Housing Corporation) and CMHC (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation) through Indian-managed boards in urban areas to provide housing. And this would tend to occur in the larger urban centre.

As regards other housing, it would just fall under the regular social housing programs in the province and would have no particular direct attachment to being for band members.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So bands would have no input on housing outside of the reserve jurisdiction. So when someone from the band can't find housing on the reserve and goes outside of the reserve to find that housing, the band has no impact on that whatsoever?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Their input would be primarily through the boards of these housing corporations that I referred to in the previous answer.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay. And these boards though are only dealing in urban circumstances. Now am I to take urban circumstances to mean the cities, or a small village in rural Saskatchewan would also classify as an urban setting, would it?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — It's mostly in large urban centres, but there is the odd place like Fort Qu'Appelle that does have some provision.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, what kind of impact or provisions do the bands have with housing off of the reserves, and would that housing deal with Sask Housing or some other agency?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The boards are made up of the Indian band members, and the policies are developed in direct cooperation with CMHC and SHC. I guess maybe some of comments that are at the source of your question is yes, there is a shortage of housing. There always has been, and it's a difficult thing to overcome because the need is greater than the supply. But certainly every effort is made to keep cooperating and working on these issues together.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, I don't think it's any secret that there's a shortage of housing on reserves, and I don't . . . That hasn't changed in the last three and a half years, and it probably hasn't changed in the last 100 years, so I don't hold my breath in waiting for there to be a surplus of housing on reserves. So, Madam Minister . . .

An Hon. Member: — Turn blue?

Mr. D'Autremont: — I have been blue for a long time, Madam Minister.

I'd like to go back to the welfare side of it a bit if I could,

please. On the reserves, the federal government deals solely with . . . in conjunction with the native bands on the reserves in supplying welfare to their citizenry. Off the reserve it's supplied by the provincial government. Are there any inputs, recommendations, any provisions for some sort of communication between the band and Social Services to deal with welfare off the reserve?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — There clearly have been two administrative systems over the years, and of course this is not particularly useful as far as even keeping track of the whole system. But there are discussions going on about changing the way that process is managed and having a single-service provider, which may in fact end up being a tribal council that then is able to know the people they're dealing with more directly and are able to deal with the movement on and off reserve in a more direct way.

So those kinds of discussions are taking place. There's nothing concluded yet, but we see this as the direction it's going in.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. When you have joint federal-provincial delivery of the program, what form of monitoring do you have in place to ensure that a person isn't receiving assistance both on the reserve, federally, and off the reserve, through the provincial system?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I wouldn't want to venture much further into these questions because it is a Social Service purview. But I'll say that Social Services and the federal government meet on a monthly basis and review these kinds of matters. So I think there's a system right now that adequately handles that, but you might want to ask the minister responsible for Social Services more detail about that.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Madam Minister. I can certainly understand your reluctance to answer any questions in this area. Even the Minister of Social Services is reluctant to answer any questions in this area.

Madam Minister, when you talk about turning the system . . . or changing the direction of the system and turning it over to a tribal council decision base, where they would review and know the clientele somewhat better than perhaps the department does, what form of accountability have you been considering in that area?

(1230)

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — There are formal discussions taking place between Indian bands, the federal government, the provincial government. But what I would say is that whenever an agreement is arrived at in any area that involves transfers of authorities, a fundamental part of those agreements is also the transfer of accountabilities. And what the principle has been to date is largely what applies to the provincial system also applies to the other system in terms of accountability.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Madam Minister. I have

some concerns in this area, and I can't say that these concerns reflect the general mood across the province, but it has come to my attention that at times, particularly on the reserves themselves, that the delivery of social assistance can be a very haphazardous thing that is perhaps influenced at times by your relationship within the community.

And if the whole delivery of social assistance on the reserve and to those band members outside of the reserve . . . I see some potential hazards there. And band members have brought forward concerns to me about this particular type of delivery that's already in place on their reserves. Now whether that's an isolated circumstance to one reserve, I don't know. But there is a concern there, Madam Minister, by some of the band members who would then be eligible to receive social assistance. It may depend on your relationship to the other community members as to how that would be delivered to them.

And so I'm wondering, what do you contemplate in place if you go to, as you suggested, a tribal council delivery system to ensure that all members receive access to the benefits based on their need and not some other criteria?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — What you've actually managed to do is portray quite accurately all of our concerns with federal government offloading. They sometimes provide some dollars to deliver the actual service but not for the administration of the service and the program management of the service. Certainly there is difficulties created when there's shortage of housing and other pressures that get created by the federal government not honouring its obligations for first nations people.

And the province takes the position of continuing to push these responsibilities to the federal government where they belong because obviously they have more capacity as well as jurisdictional and financial responsibility for dealing with these issues.

Where the province would have some difficulty at times is that for compassionate grounds you end up sometimes dealing with situations that really belong in the federal jurisdiction. So any assistance you can provide us in continuing to remind the federal government of their obligations and help them live up to them would be very helpful.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Madam Minister, coming back to an issue that we dealt with just a little bit prior to this debate, and one area that I didn't get into, was the debate that is taking place regarding urban reserves. And we see that there has been a debate certainly in the Fort Qu'Appelle area regarding the establishment of an urban reserve, and that's been enhanced somewhat by the fact that FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations) has agreed to some certain terms on the gambling question and the fact that there may be some casinos placed on reserves and what will happen. Would Fort Qu'Appelle basically . . . may be one of those locations. There's the possibility of Saskatoon.

And I know there are a number of issues that have arisen over the past few years, specifically about the establishment of urban reserves and how you deal with land claims, how you settle, how you work out, how you negotiate and establish the formation of these urban reserves, and how you address the questions that arise, both from the native and the non-native community.

I wonder, Madam Minister, if you could basically bring us up to date on the discussion that has taken place. How many, if any, urban reserves have been established and how they have worked out that process? What has been done to address the taxation question regarding urban reserves, and basically the process that the department may be involved in as this evolution, if you will, takes place, whether the department is involved in mediating some of the terms or the terminology regarding urban reserve development?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you for your question. It does create a number of interesting dynamics when we discuss the creation of urban reserves. Urban reserves weren't covered in the 1992 agreement that I've referred to several times. They are governed directly by the Department of Indian Affairs and under their policy covering additions to reserves.

Now we basically took the position with the federal government — and they agreed — that they would not grant urban reserve status unless there was a formal agreement signed between the band and the municipality that dealt with by-laws, taxes, and service agreements. And this is the principle that's being followed now. And there's been a great deal of progress with a number of locations, Saskatoon being a good example. Apparently the agreement signed in Saskatoon is being taken as a model across Canada for how to proceed with this kind of development.

And I met a few weeks ago with the REDA (regional economic development authorities) from Saskatoon, and they're very actively involved in economic development initiatives. And the agreement there is between Muskeg Lake Band and Saskatoon. But there's other model agreements such as for smaller centres, Fort Qu'Appelle and Star Blanket Band, and in Yorkton with the Sakimay Band. So we now have three very good examples of how this can proceed and address the kind of issues that concern people.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Madam Minister. So do I take it from your answer, Madam Minister, that to date we're into three basic agreements regarding urban reserves? Are there any further developments as far as further urban areas? And how many do you anticipate may be involved in the province of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The only two areas right now that there's I think really much discussion going on. Prince Albert has had an agreement for a long time, but now they're talking about developing a new agreement. And they've just passed a minute at their city council meeting to enable this to happen. North Battleford, apparently, is also considering some kind of

arrangement but hasn't reached any conclusion on it.

I think these developments all fit within the principles that we've enunciated with the treaty land entitlements, with the gaming agreement, and with other agreements that we're signing where these things really do need to be worked out between the bands and the municipalities in order for them to proceed.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, a moment ago you indicated that most of the discussions have taken place with Indian and Native Affairs. I would anticipate that you're referring to the federal department as they have the greater responsibility.

But as well, it would seem to me that we do have a department in this province that for most people in general . . . would look to the provincial department as having some involvement or say in representing them because we're the individuals that are a little closer to the action. And so the question I would have is, what role does your department play in the discussions that are taking place, whether it's rural or whether it's urban reserve land settlements?

And as well, do the municipalities . . . and let's bring this down to the urban municipalities as well. They would, I imagine, basically have a lot of the same concerns that the rural municipalities would have, and is there involvement of the urban municipalities in many of the discussions regarding the urban reserves?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — We will participate directly in meetings where the municipalities request that we do because we agree with your assessment of the situation that we are the closest to the communities. And therefore we are responsible for making sure that things proceed in a reasonable way. And we would certainly be happy if the federal government was as available to look after their responsibilities in this area.

In some instances we've been involved in direct coordination, as with the Fort Qu'Appelle-Star Blanket development, and we're recognized for our role in helping resolve that situation.

In the last two years, there's been a lot of discussions with SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) and SARM around these questions, and some resources have been provided to SUMA and SARM to help work on these things and to meet with first nations on these issues. In fact a round table has been established particularly for the purpose of airing these kinds of discussions and concerns.

And it sounds like what you'd really like is for me to increase my budget, so I could do all of this stuff better.

(1245)

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, I have this day received a call from a Mr. Perry Windjack of Maple Creek, Saskatchewan. And he has expressed

considerable concern about an issue that is related to your department, and so I will take just a brief bit of time to explain to you what is happening out there.

You are obviously aware that we are going to have a new healing lodge built on the reserve, the Nekaneet Band reserve, south-east of Maple Creek. The construction program has gotten underway. I understand that the power lines either have been put in or have been decided to be put in and that sort of thing.

Also the other form of energy required out there is natural gas, and of course that requires the construction of a natural gas line. Because the line will be running through the reserve, in order to get to the healing lodge which is also located on reserve property as we understand it, the Nekaneet Band was asked to help to select the route that the line would take in order to hook up the gas.

My understanding is that there will be natural gas provided to the homes of the native people that are living on the reserve as well as to the healing lodge. However I think the problem is here that there has been a lack of communication and a lack of knowledge of what was going on off of the reserve, and that's what I want to bring to your attention.

I believe that, as it was explained to me, the native people chose the route that was the most cost-effective. And they chose that route because they were told that that would be the way it would most easily get done and the quickest.

However, unknown to them I believe, is the reality that quite a few farmers and ranchers who live just a little bit further east of the proposed route would also be willing to pay the very exorbitant high price that SaskEnergy asks for farm hook-ups. Even though it's an exorbitant price, they would be willing to pay that to get hooked up. Now if they did get hooked up, even though the line would be a little longer, it would still be more cost-effective because of the extra users and the extra gas used. We don't believe that the Nekaneet people knew that these folks off of the reserve wanted that line. And so the decision is being made today, we understand, as to what the route will be.

And now a new proposal has been offered, we understand, through a Mr. Bryce King of Maple Creek who works for SaskEnergy. And he is supposed to be delivering that for consideration today, and a decision is supposed to be made.

We're not sure if the communication is good enough to trust that that has all happened. And so I'm asking for your assistance in terms of good public relations between the native community and the rest of the people in the community out there in Maple Creek. And I'm wondering, Madam Minister, if you would consider checking into this matter today to see that SaskEnergy, in fact, does consider the needs of the off-reserve people, as well as the needs of the Nekaneet Band.

Obviously it couldn't make any difference to the band members if the line runs a mile or two one way or the other and does, in

fact, have a little extra gas in it that would help other folks out. And I don't believe that they would have picked a route that would eliminate their neighbours if they knew, in fact, that their neighbours wanted the gas and were willing to pay the price to get it.

So I'm asking you, very simply, would you contact the minister in charge of SaskEnergy? Would you contact the Nekaneet Band office, perhaps the chief or whoever's in charge out there? And would you talk to Mr. Bryce King? And would you talk perhaps to whoever is in charge of the Crown corporation end of SaskEnergy to make sure that this new proposal and the needs of the folks are considered before that final decision is made today so that everyone can have the natural gas benefits that certainly are good for rural people, good for the healing lodge, and good for the Nekaneet Band?

Folks out there have always gotten along really well. We hold up the race relationship between the Nekaneet Band and the people in Maple Creek as an example of how people in the rest of the world should live, and we definitely don't want that to break down.

Could you assist us, Madam Minister?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you for providing us with that information, and I would just affirm that what you say is true, that there have been good relations out in that area, and we would certainly want them to continue. We'll check with the energy people on this question, and we'll get back to you with the information. And perhaps you could relate directly to the people who are raising the issue with yourself, but we will deal with the department on that question and get back to you.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Minister. I really do appreciate that spirit of cooperation, and I certainly will pass on to Perry Windjack and his neighbours, your willingness to assist. And I would hope though that you might, in your capacity, talk to the people in the Nekaneet office. They too might want to not feel left out. I'll give them a call, but I would appreciate it if you would call them as well to make sure that all the bases are covered. Would you do that, Madam Minister?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. Madam Minister, there's one area, and I keep . . . for some reason land claims keeps popping up, but one area I wanted to discuss just a little further. And we're getting away from the native land claims in particular, as far as dealing directly with native land claims, and the discussion and the suit that was filed by the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan and their assertion that they should be involved or they have a right to a settlement of land or the establishment of land or a land base for themselves.

The *Leader-Post*, Wednesday, May 4, '94 talks about government rejecting that land claim. The Metis Nation, it says, has no claim to a large section in north-western Saskatchewan because it is not a legitimate government, and Metis people

never lived in the area as a distinct group, says the statement of defence filed by the federal government.

And of course, the government was responding to that suit filed by the MNS and 34 Metis citizens on March 1. And they claimed they had access or should be given consideration, and they were looking at roughly 144,000 square kilometres in the north-west as what they would feel would be appropriate in the whole process of native land claims settlement.

And I'm wondering, Madam Minister, has there been any further discussion to date? Where is the department in regards to the claims by the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan? Or is the case, as it were, basically just closed? Or has the Metis Nation decided that it isn't in their interest to push for further developments in this area or push for reserve status? Madam Minister, exactly where do we sit in regards to this claim today?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Sorry to take so long. This is a bit of a complicated situation.

Regarding the court case, because it's in court, there's limitations what I can say on that. But on the broader question of Metis land claims, historically the federal government has dealt with Metis land issues. And there is a section of the constitution, 91(24) that addresses itself to federal responsibilities for Indian peoples which, for the purposes of that clause, certainly we've interpreted to include Metis and due to historical practices of the federal government in that regard.

Now we've had a discussion with the federal minister of DIAND (Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development) on this topic, and at this point I would just have to say that both we and the Metis are in the dark regarding how they intend to deal with this or what position they intend to take in the future. But historically we would certainly say that it's up to them to deal with those issues.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 12:57 p.m.