

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN
April 10, 1995

EVENING SITTING

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**Bill No. 45 — An Act respecting Trading in Real Estate, the
Real Estate Commission and Brokerages, Brokers and
Salespersons Trading in Real Estate**

The Chair: — Before we proceed to clause-by-clause consideration, are the members agreed that we can proceed through this part by part? Is that agreed?

Mr. Neudorf: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Prior to the supper break I believe that both our critic, the member from Moosomin, and the minister had a very engaging discussion on the aspects of the Bill that we had some questions about, and most of those have been answered. There may be a few questions that we would want to ask later on, but to expedite matters, Mr. Chairman, perhaps we could do precisely what you suggest.

Clauses 1 to 92 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 7 — An Act to amend The Apiaries Act

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I move this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

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

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

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I move this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

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

**Bill No. 45 — An Act respecting Trading in Real Estate, the
Real Estate Commission and Brokerages, Brokers and
Salespersons Trading in Real Estate**

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

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

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

**General Revenue Fund
Public Service Commission
Vote 33**

The Chair: — Before we proceed to that I would ask the minister to please introduce the officials who have joined us here this evening.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have seated beside me, Shiela Bailey, who is the Chair of the Public Service Commission. Behind me is Rick McKillop, the executive director of employee relations. To Rick's left is Elizabeth Smith, the director of administrative and information services, and across the aisle from Ms. Bailey is Ron Wight, the executive director of staffing and development. Mr. Hank Dorsch and Mr. Will Loewen are in the row behind that; Mr. Dorsch on the left, Mr. Loewen on the right.

Item 1

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome, Minister, and welcome to your officials.

I'd like to discuss first off this evening under the Public Service Commission estimates, the affirmative action program, Minister. Our office received a call from an individual who was employed with the Public Service Commission as an affirmative action worker. This was quite some time ago but, however, this individual, Mr. Wall, was watching the proceedings of this House on television one day and called into our office. Now he asked that the official opposition raise the issue of the affirmative action when the Public Service Commission comes up in estimates, and here we are.

So I'm going to ask you a few questions regarding the affirmative action and I will have your responses of course passed on to Mr. Wall for his information.

Mr. Wall tells us that when he worked at the Public Service Commission that two areas were sadly lacking, specifically, the hiring of natives and the hiring of the disabled.

Can you tell us what your government is doing in this regard?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, I want to thank the member for his very important question. There have been affirmation action programs in place in the Government of Saskatchewan for some very many years now, and that has been buttressed by the employment equity policy of this government, which is designed to try and hurry up the representation of aboriginal people, of disabled people, and of women in management and non-traditional positions. And I think that, by any test, the program has been reasonably successful. We're probably still subject to criticism for the under-representation of these groups in the employment of executive government, but we've been making steady progress.

Let me give you some examples. Of persons of aboriginal ancestry employed by government, in 1989 the figure was 2.9 per cent. That is now 5.5 per cent. So we have been making pretty good progress there. Persons with disability, the percentage employed by government has risen from a figure of

2.3 per cent in March of '89 to 3.1 per cent of March of '94.

(1915)

Women in management, there again we have shown steady improvement. In March of '89 that figure was 24 per cent. Two years later, in March '91, it had risen to 26.1 per cent. It is now — or at least as of March, 1994 — 30.6 per cent women in management positions.

A harder nut to crack has been the women in non-traditional positions, but that number is now, or at least in March '94, was 19.7 per cent; five years earlier it was 18.1 per cent.

We have a total overall figure of women in government employment which has risen from 53.2 per cent in March, 1989 to 54.7 per cent in March, 1994.

So all told I think we have made reasonably satisfactory progress in those groups, but we still have some work to do, and therefore we are still subject to some criticism from persons who have an interest in these questions.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Minister, for those interesting figures. A couple of them caught my attention. It seems like at the rate of progress that we're making, anything that most folks would call equity will probably coming along in about 30 or so years. So while your comments alluded to the fact that you're trying to hurry up or speed up, I think maybe 30 or so years down the road might seem like a rather slow pace to some folks.

And then on the other hand I note your last figure of 54.7 per cent of the total government workforce as being women, and then you'd almost start to think, well maybe at the bottom levels we've gotten a little out of balance and we haven't been allowing men to have opportunities. So I kind of wonder if we have to take a look at that part as well.

But I want to continue with Mr. Wall's comments and complete his series of questions so that he can find out where his problems can be solved. His next question was, what is the Public Service Commission's goal with regards to the affirmative action program, and how is the Public Service Commission planning to reach these final goals?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The goals are goals set down by the Public Service Commission and they're considered to be 20-year goals, so that they are in every sense long-term goals.

With respect to persons of aboriginal ancestry, the goal is 12.2 per cent which is the percentage of the population that aboriginal people represent. In the case of persons with disability the goal is 9.7 per cent; women in management, the long-term goal is 45 per cent. So you see we still have a ways to go but we are making progress.

These are difficult times in which to make progress because we're not increasing the size of the public service. We have in

fact decreased it over the years so that the number of new hires is not as brisk as it was in earlier decades. It's not a time to be hiring a lot of new people, although there is some turnover of staff and we're working with those turnovers to try and implement this program.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Minister. Well I understand the dilemma you're in, but you know realistically, reducing the size of your workforce is not surprising because the age of the computer is upon us. And of course when we as a society decided that we were going to wholesale buy into the computer age, we were bound to eliminate many, many jobs because one computer with a good operator can take the place of probably 10 or 15 ladies that would work in an office keeping records and that sort of thing. And that's just one of the facts of life that we have to deal with so the size of the public service has to drop realistically. There's no way around that.

So I don't think you're going to get out of your dilemma of balancing these figures very easily. I readily admit that. In fact, I guess, you may have to try some other programs like creating jobs for these folks in some other way and maybe work at it in that direction because certainly the computer age will not go away. And I think we're going to see it in fact probably escalate especially when I take a look at some of the other departments and the amounts of money that have been spent on computers.

Obviously if you've got hundreds of thousands of dollars invested in big computers that are touted by hackers — and I know nothing about this personally — but hackers tell me that many of these computers are bigger than the ones used in the American war machine in the Second World War. And even in the south-east Asian conflict — the kind of computers they had in that process. The computers that are in Saskatchewan are bigger than that even and can handle even more work.

In fact I'm told there's a computer in Regina that could in fact take over the entire province's payroll for all municipalities, all of the education system, and every other bureaucratic system in the province all put together. And it could all be done out of one office with one great big computer that is already in Regina and been bought and paid for by the government.

So I guess your problem is real. You're going to see an awful lot of people out of work as these machines are put into their full capacity. But Mr. Wall does have some more questions and I'll go on to the next one, Minister.

Are there any quotas set in this regard? If yes, please provide those numbers for the different groups being targeted. Now I think you said a few of them but maybe you'll want to go over all of them.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — There are no quotas set as such. There are goals and targets and through a variety of measures we try and encourage the development of the affirmative action hiring and promotion. But there are no quotas as such, there are only goals.

Mr. Goohsen: — So what are your personal goals in this regard?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Over the long term, the goal is that the population of Saskatchewan will be represented in the workforce of the Government of Saskatchewan. So accordingly, if the aboriginal population in Saskatchewan is 12.2 per cent, our long-term goal is to achieve that level of aboriginal employment, more or less, so that the workforce is representative of the Saskatchewan population. That's our long-term goal.

We don't break it down any finer than that and we don't have a quota let's say, for this fiscal year or for next, we just have . . . we work towards the long-term goals and hope to arrive at that at least within the 20-year period in respect of which they're set.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Minister. Well to be a little more specific, did the government reach its goal — I guess you don't want to use the word quotas so we'll call it your goal — that you had established for the last fiscal year for example? Could you provide us with what that goal established for last year was for each of the different target groups. If you have it on a piece of paper perhaps you could table that for us or send it over or something like that, and we could forward it on to Mr. Wall.

We'd like to know for him also the number of people that were hired and of course if there were any that were let go for any reason — those kind of things he wants to know about. And if your goal was missed, could you tell us why that might have happened; or if you did attain it, would you like to brag about how you managed to achieve that?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, we have . . . we know Mr. Wall, I can tell the member that. And we'll be glad to provide this detailed information to Mr. Wall and to the member, of course. And Mr. Wall is, I believe, sight impaired and we'll send it to him in Braille so that he'll be able to get all these numbers; and give it to him individual department by department.

We don't have the individual department numbers here. We have the aggregate numbers and I gave those to you earlier on in percentage terms; what we had accomplished as of March of 1994 which is our latest numbers on the matter.

But we have a publication, an annual report on employment equity for '93-94, and we will be able to provide that information and break it down in the way that you suggested, department by department if he wants that; or specific departments if his interest is more focused on a few of the departments of government.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Minister. Well I'm glad that you know this individual and are aware that he requires his information in Braille. I wasn't actually aware of that but I'm sure that he will appreciate that consideration. So I'll take the opportunity now to thank you for him, for that consideration. And I'm also wanting to thank you for your straightforward

answers for Mr. Wall and we will certainly make sure that he receives all of the information that you provide to us. And you say you will deliver some personally directly and that's welcomed and we thank you for that.

Now we have from the re-employment list a question with regards to a Mr. Prabhaker (Parry) Bhatt. And I don't know if I've pronounced that quite right and my apologies if I haven't. He's of Saskatoon and he's on the re-employment list at the Public Service Commission.

Now Mr. Bhatt is a former employee who had open-heart surgery and then was put on a long-term disability program, I guess. Now he has now graduated from the business administration and marketing. He has taken some accounting and some classes in computer information systems. To date he has not received any reply from PSC (Public Service Commission) regarding re-employment.

Now he states that he has applied for a number of positions for which he is well qualified and has not been given or granted an interview. Mr. Bhatt is also of the employment equity target group, a visible minority, as well as a person with a disability. Mr. Bhatt would like to know what his status is on the re-employment list.

Could I have your commitment to look into Mr. Bhatt's situation and that someone in your department will get back to him on his concerns, Mr. Minister? I have his address and I'll forward that to you.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Yes, I'll commit to that.

Mr. Martens: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I have received a few phone calls from a problem that arose out of a transfer of the manager of a community pasture. I just was wondering whether that was something that I would ask you about, or whether that has to be asked with the Department of Agriculture officials, because the individuals that were overlooked in the matter seem to have raised some concerns with various groups of people, including myself, including the pasture advisory committee.

It's raised some concerns on my part, too, that an individual who has spent . . . well the family of that particular pasture just outside of Kyle has had a tradition of having a certain family occupy the management position. And this man's son has spent, I don't know, 22 or 23 years in that pasture and he was overlooked for a person of lesser qualifications. And I was just wondering if that was your responsibility to check into that. If it is, then I'll give you the information off the record here and have you look into it. If not, then I'll ask the same question of the Minister of Agriculture.

(1930)

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — We'll take the details and try and look into it. It may be that we can provide the information you need, and if not, you can go back to Agriculture at a later moment.

But we'll give it a try, if you just bring me the information behind the rail or after we're finished.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I didn't think I'd get my chance so quick again. Minister, I have a general kind of a question here I guess. Did your office receive the list of standard questions forwarded by the official opposition? I realize that we have just recently passed the year end and that this information may not yet all be available, or perhaps it has because I guess the days have been going by as we have been waiting to get into this particular process of estimates.

So I guess I'll let you answer for yourself. Do we have those pieces of information and when could we expect to get them? Or have they been sent perhaps and I missed them? What is the status?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, we intend to respond to the questions. There is still some information with respect to transactions that are outstanding that we haven't yet incorporated into our data. But we'll be able to complete these responses relatively soon and get the information to you as soon as we can.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Minister. We will wait with anticipation to get those pieces of information so that we can study through them and perhaps have some supplementary questions later on.

More specifically, today we thought that you might provide us with some information regarding ministerial travel. Could you provide us with the information on destinations, purposes of trips, and, if any, ministerial assistants that had accompanied ministers on the trips.

Now I'm not sure how many ministers this is going to include or not, so I'll just let you reply with regards to everyone.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, I had no travel in connection with my duties as the minister responsible. There were, I believe, two inside province trips taken by my ministerial assistants, but they were in province and not out of province.

Mr. Goohsen: — Well perhaps, Minister, you wouldn't mind telling us what those trips were for and the details.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I'm told that they were to take training courses in Saskatoon in connection with the Public Service Commission responsibilities that they have.

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

Mr. Trew: — To ask leave to introduce guests, Mr. Chair.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and members,

particularly the hon. member from Maple Creek whom I've interrupted.

Mr. Chairman, in the Speaker's gallery this evening we have a group from the 81st Scout troop right here in Regina, and their leader, Chris Saxby. It will be my pleasure to meet with this group in a few minutes. We'll have pictures and then some refreshments, and hopefully I'll have a chance to answer some questions. I ask all members to join me in welcoming the 81st Scout troop.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Public Service Commission Vote 33

Item 1

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — With respect to the last question, we don't have the details of the training courses, but we'll provide them in the usual course as soon as we get the particulars within the next day or two.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. I'd also like to take the opportunity to recognize the Boy Scouts, as a past Queen Scout. It's an excellent program that you're involved in. In fact I received my Queen Scout sitting in one of these desks on this side. And it wasn't last week, it was one or two days before that. So if you keep working hard at it maybe one of these days you can sit on either side of the House, but only once at a time.

Mr. Minister, how often do your staff get the opportunity to take this type of training? Were these people new employees that you were providing initial training to or was it some specialized course that you would provide to an employee who was a long-term employee?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — We're a little lost, Mr. Chair, and I apologize to the members opposite for not having this information here, but our recollection is that these were the kind of courses like effective communication and it was for secretarial staff, that sort of thing. They were small one-, two-day courses. That's about the level of detail I can give you, and we're just guessing from memory at that. We can provide more solid detail when we do a little research.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. How about something other than those two particular employees. Do you have an extensive training program in place for members of the PSC, or was this just sort of a specialized, one-time shot that you provided to these employees? Do you have a policy or a program of providing training for your employees?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, there are training programs and courses and the like that from time to time are taken by commission staff, and I think that was your question. It's very

rare that my office is involved in that. I personally can't remember it ever happening before this past year that some members of my staff were actually involved in any training course.

There is no program as such for the training of commission employees. The opportunities arise and the training is approved on the basis of a particular need, of a particular purpose.

And there is no preset training that all employees get year after year after year. It depends on the individual and on the individual's needs and the job needs and the opportunity to take that training.

Just before sitting down, I can say that the amount of training is not large. The commission has got a relatively small staff for a big job, and most of their time is spent at work, performing their job, rather than being trained to do it.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. How would you evaluate then whether an employee needed to have some further training within their workplace? Surely you must have some sort of criteria that makes a determination as to whether it would be employee A or employee B that was eligible for further training or that needed further training. So what do you have in place, Mr. Minister, to make those kind of determinations, to determine whether or not an employee A needed to be upgraded in some particular area, and whether or not that was the proper employee to receive that type of upgrading?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, I'm advised that one way of identifying the training that may be necessary for an employee — probably the main way — is through the annual performance review that the management of the commission does with respect to the employees. And during that performance review, it is often the case that training needs are identified and that would probably be the main way of identifying what training would be required.

It is also the case that new aspects of the job may emerge, new duties, and some training has to be provided in respect of those duties.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. So if you make these determinations at the time of your annual performance review, surely if the employee was deficient in some area previous to that review point that it would have been identified by the commission that this person has a problem in an area or else they're lacking in a particular piece of training. You have new equipment or a new software program or whatever it might be that they need to be upgraded in, or a new program has come in that they have to deal with; surely you must make that evaluation for new training or the need for new training before you do the performance review.

I would have to suggest that surely within the commission you have identified a deficiency in the training area prior to that performance review. Perhaps you let the employee know at the

performance review that, we believe that you're deficient in operating WordPerfect or whatever it might be. But I would suspect, or at least hope, that you would have made that determination that there was a need for training prior to the performance review.

(1945)

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I'm not certain how I can answer the question of the member because I'm not certain . . . I'm not perfectly clear what the point is. But I can say this: that the idea of an annual performance review has been embedded in the operation of the Government of Saskatchewan for many years now, and that the purpose of that review is to identify . . . or evaluate the performance of the employee for the reporting period, and in that regard, to identify how the employee can strengthen employment, what particular shortcomings there may be, or what needs the job has that the employee is not yet trained for and requires some further training in order to improve performance.

It is very difficult to generalize about these things. In a particular case it would become more clear. This employee may have difficulty communicating and so would benefit from a course in upgrading communication skills. Another employee may have acquired some supervisory responsibilities and requires additional training in order to be able to discharge those supervisory duties adequately, and so on and so forth.

The performance review looks back on an employee's performance in the past and looks forward to the employee's performance in the future, and that may involve new duties or it may involve performing existing duties at a higher level. So it's very difficult to generalize and that's why I'm having some problem with the member's questions.

But there is no program of, in year 1 you will take this course, and in year 2 you will take a second course, and in year 3 you will take a third course. We don't have that kind of a program. We try and respond to the individual needs of the particular employee in that particular job, to assist him in performing that job to a satisfactory level.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. While an employee is taking training — I believe you mentioned it was a two- or three-day course, whatever it was that they were on — if it's during the week, do they receive their regular salary at that time or do they forgo their salary to take the training? How would that work?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — They're paid a salary while they take the training.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. In the areas that I have worked in, it's always been the desire of the employees to receive this type of upgrading or this type of training, and preferably the longer rather than shorter. So how do you make the determination as to who should receive an upgrade and who does not?

If all the employees would like to take advantage of an upgrading program — be that in communications, be that in a mechanical skill operating a particular program — how do you determine that this employee is the one that needs to be upgraded, that would benefit the Public Service Commission and this employee? While it certainly may aid them in a personal sense, how do you make that determination as to which employee would receive any upgrading or any training?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Those are decisions that are made by the management of the department, probably by the manager of the unit in which the particular employee is working. And the managers have regard to the needs of their work unit or their organization in deciding how much of this training will be made available and who will get it. It's not the kind of question that ever gets up to the minister's office, of course, but this sort of thing goes on within the department all the time.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. Well perhaps it doesn't reach your desk but some place within the chain of command there must be some direction to those managers as to what kind of approvals they can give. Now do you train . . . if you have an office of 20 people, do you train 10 of them? Or, you know, there has to be some direction given by upper management to the other managers in the system that say we can train one person this year, or we can train somebody in accounting or whatever it may be, in how to write reports or something. You have to give some direction to your managers so that they know what they can and what they cannot do. So what is the direction that you provide for them?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, and to the member, I've just taken a short course in how training decisions are made within the commission. I had been talking earlier about how the individual training needs of employees are identified between a manager and the employee. And that is part of the performance review and appraisal system that I was talking about earlier.

These managerial units operate within the organization of the commission and while the manager appraises the employees who are reporting to him or her, that manager is in turn appraised and performance is reviewed by someone superior to that manager and . . . No, it's not me. But that, and the quality of the work that's being done in that area, is part of the review, and the extent to which employees may or may not be able to perform all the functions are part of that review, and in that sense training is also part of that. The training that is being provided or required of the employees is part of that review also.

The total of all these little individual plans come up in a reporting way along with a lot of other information to the managers of the divisions and the managers of the commission, and they are able in that way to sort of keep track of how much training is going on. If things got out of line, either too much or too little, the Chair and her senior staff would be able to take steps in order to correct the situation. That hasn't happened to this point.

But they are generally aware of what's going, and where the training is happening, are the new programs for which we may be responsible, are the new computer programs and that sort of thing, being planned for and sufficient training provided. That changes from time to time, depending upon what's happening and what's new. And it's a kind of a flexible, sort of responsive idea, and my answers I think reflect the idea that it is a flexible sort of idea without any very rigid programs or long-term plans for the delivery of specific kind of training.

The training, I repeat, is on the basis of the needs of the employee to perform the job at hand and as that job will be in the future.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. Was it only the two employees within the past year that received training, or were there others also?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — This all began with talking about members of my staff travelling, and one or two of them travelled to Saskatoon for one or two training courses. But the commission staff as a whole, probably somewhere between 50 and 75 per cent of them received some kind of training during the last fiscal year.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. What kind of training would they then be receiving? What kind of programs would they receive? Who would provide that training? And how do you evaluate the success of the training? Does that come up, that they received a certificate for attending the course and they got 80 per cent or whatever it might be? Or is there some other mechanism that you use to determine whether or not you're receiving value for dollar in the training programs that you have provided for or allowed your employees to attend?

(2000)

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, most of the training was provided within government by resources within the government. And the kind of thing that it may . . . A typical program would be the WordPerfect 5.1 program and how to use that, and systems training, how to use the e-mail system, how to write better letters, leadership courses. We had a lot of training in connection with the interest based bargaining approach that was used in our negotiations with the SGEU (Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union).

And the assessment of the training that the employee received is worked out at the level of the manager. I think the best way of thinking about that is that they . . . is liking it to a contract. The manager and the employee agree that the employee is going to take the training and that the objective in taking the training is to be able to do a certain kind of work. And then after the training the employee and the manager meet and assess whether or not that program delivered that kind of skill that the employee was looking for.

So these are all internal government programs and there is

feedback all the time from the people taking them through the various departments. And if a program isn't satisfactory then I assume they'll make changes so that it becomes satisfactory. But there is no rigid, no fixed system of general evaluation. These are quite subjective from the viewpoint of the people who take the training and reporting and relating back to their managers as they perform their job.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I move we report progress.

**General Revenue Fund
Social Services
Vote 36**

The Chair: — Before we proceed, I would ask the minister to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, to my right, deputy minister, Con Hnatiuk. Behind Con, our associate deputy minister, Neil Yeates. Directly behind me, Bob Wihlidal, director of support services. And at the back is Shelley Hoover, our assistant director of income security.

Item 1

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We'll probably agree on this item no. 1 a little later, Mr. Minister. I welcome you back. I welcome your staff back.

I was looking back through some of the stuff we'd talked about the last time we were together. And I thought what I'd like to do tonight is pick up again on the assistance there is available for the disabled. We talked a little bit about that but I don't think we got clearly . . . I think we got into it a little bit but we didn't clear it up.

For instance, I raised a question in the House in question period one day when you were unavailable for the answer. And the Minister of Economic Development arranged for the member from Saskatoon Wildwood to take that and talk to the family concerned. And we appreciated that.

But I'd like to discuss it a little further with you, as to what happened in that case. Do you remember the case? Would you maybe tell us what has happened since that.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and the hon. member, for the question. I remember that case specifically. I know you'll appreciate that it's very difficult to talk about specific cases publicly. But you may recall as well that I clarified in the following week, some additional information with regard to the question since I wasn't here the day you asked that.

But the amount of assistance that's available to a disabled person, of course, is all of the basic allowances plus additional allowances for special diet, special assistance that's required, additional rent, shelter rates. And this program is a needs-based

program.

So the greater your need, the more available some of the allowances are to meet those needs. And of course, the program also has to account for the income from all the sources, because as you, know social assistance historically has been a program of last resort.

So you as an applicant have to explore all sources of income. And in the case you're referring to, we of course have made all the adjustments we can make with regard to covering the needs that are available with all of the provisions and the additional monies that can be provided. And we're obligated as well to take into account the individual and the family income. And then whatever the difference is, will be the level of the cheque that would come from the department as part of their social assistance payment.

So that's basically how the program works, and it's my recollection . . . I think I maybe had the last piece of correspondence here, that we have made all the adjustments that we can make in that particular case. But the door is always open; if there's some need that surfaces, we can always reassess it.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. That's exactly what I would like to get clarified with you is, was there any extra help you could give this person? Did she qualify for any extra besides the \$40 a month that we were . . . the last I heard was that she was only entitled to an extra \$40 a month. Did her situation allow her to get more assistance than that?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, I am advised that there were a number of extenuating circumstances here that had to be taken into account, and it's my understanding that yes, there were some additional adjustments made in this particular case that you're referring to.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I certainly appreciate that because as you remember at that time we were a little concerned.

One of the things that the member from Wildwood said at that time, and it was to the effect that the poor are poor, and no one poor person can be viewed as poorer than another, which was a little convoluted. But I guess what they were saying, that there was no extenuating circumstances. You were poor, and you were poor and that was it . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . well this is the member from Wildwood, in the interview indicated that a poor person was a poor person, and that you in your wisdom didn't have no room to move. And I think my position was that . . . And the phrase you just used . . . There are extenuating circumstances in some cases. And so I'm certainly glad you recognized that in this particular case, and we certainly thank you for that because I personally do believe that there are people who are poor, and then there are people who are poor and also unable to help themselves as well as being poor. So there is a situation where you in your position and your staff can help them.

I was going to ask you if you would agree that there are differences, and I think you've answered that for me.

The other thing that I would like to . . . I'd like to develop this disabled thing. I wonder if you would agree with me that disabled people are unable to change their circumstances. If they're disabled to the point where they can't work and it's a lifelong disability, they just can't change their circumstances; would you agree with me with that?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — That's a good question, and I think an important question from this perspective. You know, as we look back many years ago, I've sort of been in this field for about 20 years, and I know a number of my officials have been in, some longer than that. Our views 20 years ago and 15 years ago, 5 years ago, 2 years ago about what sorts of opportunities that people could access, I think, have changed over time.

Persons with disabilities I think have proven to us that it may just be a matter of different abilities. And with a little support and the right kind of support and some opportunities, I think disabled people themselves are saying that there are a lot of things that we can do that the non-disabled community has felt that we couldn't do for a long time. And what they're looking for are opportunities to be empowered, opportunities to participate more meaningfully in decisions that affect their lives, and opportunities to participate in the wider spectrum of the community. So I think this is all very healthy and we should do whatever we can to support those with disabilities — and I know you would agree with us — those with disabilities to access opportunities based on their abilities and their interests and aspirations. And as I look back over 20 years, it's amazing the degree to which people have been able to, I think, to become part of the mainstream of the community, if you will.

Now with the information technology and the information highway and the potential to work at home with computers . . . for example, if you go to Cheshire Homes today in Saskatoon — where I recently was — before long you'll be able to hold a job down from just sitting there in your room. It's phenomenal, sort of, I think, what kinds of opportunities this is opening up for persons with disabilities.

(2015)

Now I think your point as well was that there was some people who may not be able to improve their situation; at least I assume you meant as it relates to some earning power, to be more financially independent. And I would agree with you. There probably are some circumstances where that just simply won't be the case. And then it's up to, I think, the rest of us to demonstrate our generosity and our compassion and our caring and support and to work with those individuals and the associations that represent those individuals to make sure that they can live with dignity and with their self-esteem intact and so on. So I think I'm agreeing with you.

But the coming home-staying home program, that is a joint federal-provincial initiative to move persons with disabilities

from Valleyview into the community. We just continue to move people out into the community to the point where a lot fewer people with disabilities are in institutions, and I think that adds another whole dimension to their life that is a very positive trend that's been occurring for 30, 40 years in the province and in Canada. We need to support disabled persons to maximize those and I don't know where it'll end up. Hopefully, we'll be able to continue doing that with the kind of support that they would like to see.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I think we're both agreeing here. I think what I maybe should have said, there are those who are disabled for life, and not necessarily physically disabled, but for instance cerebral palsy is something you're not going to recover from. And I think those are the people I'm thinking about that are unfortunately locked into assistance for life. And they can't be retrained and do as you say.

And I agree with you. I really do. I agree that there are people today earning a living by themselves who may at some time in the past been considered as simply unable to earn a living. I agree with you on that point.

But I was just hoping you would agree with me that in some cases there are people that no amount of training or instruction would ever allow that person to get off of welfare. And the point I was trying to make is that there are times when you as the minister — and your staff of course, as they're out in the field — have to make a judgement like that. So I'm glad that we're kind of on that same wavelength there.

The difference I would say is between some young person, healthy and strong, with some retraining, probably the rest of their life they earn their living, whereas some person that is totally disabled have no hope for that. And I believe what I'm saying is they have to have that extra little something to make their life worthwhile too.

Mr. Minister, could you indicate to me how many people on social assistance are unemployable due to disabilities?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, certainly I agree with the hon. member, Mr. Chairman, that there certainly are some people who require social assistance on an ongoing basis who would be, I suppose, termed permanently disabled. But again — and so I agree with the hon. member in that regard — but I also say that, and that we . . . of course based on need, but approximately those individuals would be eligible for \$300-plus over and above say a single person who was employable. But again, based on needs, it could be more.

But it still is a relative term in terms of the case-load that is unemployable because many of them are termed temporarily unemployable. For example — and then people's circumstances change over time — for example, someone may have some short-term emotional difficulties; some may have some short-term mental health treatment; some individuals, single-parent families, maybe a single-parent mom with young children, as the children get older and the opportunities can be

accessed; and some are in training. But even persons who are not fully employable, of course, are in training.

This morning I was fortunate enough to provide some additional money from the government to the Voyageur Club in Saskatoon, which provides supports to persons who designate themselves as slow learners. It is not my terminology; that's the terminology that they prefer.

And these are typically people, many of them on assistance, who would fall between the cracks in some of the other systems — the mental health formal system. They don't necessarily require that kind of service, but they require some life skills and some parenting support, and some job training support and training and this sort of thing. And I think those people would fall into the category of temporarily unemployable.

But a little bit more specifically to your question, approximately half of the current case-load, that is approximately 19,800 clients, as of February of this year, we would term as not fully employable for some of the reasons that I've just mentioned. Sixty-three per cent of those are single individuals, about 29 per cent are single parents, 3 per cent two-parent families, and about 3 per cent childless couples.

So those are the numbers and the percentages as to the clients who would be considered not fully employable. Some of those would be partially employable and some of those indeed would be working part time.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I appreciate that information. That isn't quite what I had asked but it was something we would have got to later. I thought I had asked: that were unemployable due to disabilities, not unemployable because of the other things you mentioned, which is fine. I would have liked that. But how many in your case-load are unemployable due to disabilities . . . disabled people, I guess? Is there . . .

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Well sorry. I'll try and answer this another way then to see if I'm correct. Of those numbers that I gave you, approximately 20,000 who are not fully employable. You're using the term disabled and I think in some ways we're talking about the same 20,000 clients. But for example, 5,100 of those clients, 5,149, are permanently unemployable as designated by our system; 4,738 of those individuals would be . . . are considered temporarily unemployed or you would say temporarily disabled. Almost 1,500 of those individuals are in sheltered workshops. Almost 1,200 of those individuals are in life-skills programs and so on. Almost a thousand of those individuals are actually working part time or casually, even though they're only partially employable. And about 7,000 are unemployed in that 20,000 that we talked about.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. That's quite helpful. That's kind of what I was trying to get to . . . is to . . . In some cases we get critical about the numbers, and you and I have gone back and forth a time or two on those numbers. And it would help me and I think help me explain to others who

sometimes beat on me a little bit. If we can take these and split them up and show those folks that all of these people . . . in some cases these people just can't help themselves. So I appreciate that breakdown.

One thing I'd like you to maybe talk to me a little bit about is the criteria that you use to determine who is disabled and what level that they are disabled at. Do you have a bit of a criteria you use? Could you just give us a bit of a short . . . or whatever time it takes, I guess, to explain that to me.

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, the criteria is certainly based on each individual client's assessment. And to some degree the information presented at the time of an application related to medical information, previous work history, level of education, level of life skills, level of functioning, and those kinds of considerations and often supported by medical information or, you know, a social assessment or so on. But persons who are considered fully employable are those who are capable of working 36 hours per week. And this includes of course persons who are employed now because, you know, probably about a quarter of the case-load are actually working now. But it includes persons who are self-employed or unemployed . . . so 36 hours a week.

Not fully employable but they may be partially employable. Not fully employable — as I said — based on some health information, physical, or some difficulty in functioning emotionally or for mental health reasons; as I say, poor work history, some family difficulties, or some social struggles that some of our clients sometimes have. Of course persons in sheltered workshops and so on are part of this. Sometimes age is a factor. Not employable in the market given your age, number of children, age of children, and so on as a single person.

So those are some of the factors that are determined in the initial assessment with qualified social workers. We often, I believe, have some of our best trained workers and experienced workers on what we call intake to where they first . . . people first apply to assistance. Workers who are experienced, who know the community resources and the kind of supports that people need and can often make the referrals to the relevant agencies to help support people, because sometimes we want to minimize the length of stay for people on assistance — as do they — and we want to provide them with the kind of supports that they need to get back on their feet as soon as possible.

(2030)

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'd like to just leave that now. I think you've given me what I kind of wanted.

I'm going to ask you, Mr. Minister, to your knowledge, has your department ever looked at implementing a two-tier system?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Now if you're, by two tier, if you're meaning differential benefits, in a sense we have that now. And

I think maybe last time we sent over the rates for persons who were fully employable relative to persons who were partially or unemployable. And as I've tried to say here tonight, the rates are . . . because it's a needs-based program, the rates are generally higher for persons with disabilities or who are partially employable. And so in a sense that's two tier already, if that's what you had in mind.

Mr. Britton: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. What I was going to talk to you about and your deputy minister, I think, will know what I'm talking about when I talk about the AIS program in Alberta — AISH I believe they called it. They called it assured income for severely handicapped and for those severely disabled or those not treatable. And I was wondering if you've talked to your minister about that? I'm sure that he . . . because from what I understand that you were involved in that. And Alberta offers — I'm told this and you can correct me if I'm wrong . . . that a single person on welfare receives about 394 a month compared to someone who's on this AISH who would receive about 810.

And this is what I was wondering, and I would like to have you respond to that. Have you talked it over with anyone and thinking in terms of trying to implement that or do you have something that's equivalent?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, we are familiar with that program in Alberta. And I guess it's my understanding that if the needs of the individual, the person who's disabled, exceed the allowances, they still have to apply for social assistance in Alberta. And of course we also have the SAIL (Saskatchewan Aids to Independent Living) program that we've not talked about but services there over and above. And as you know, we don't have any health care premiums as they do in Alberta.

So in many ways when you compare Alberta and Saskatchewan with regard to the level of support, just with regard for example to employment-related expense benefits, there is a flat rate . . . in Alberta it's a flat rate that they have available to them for employment-related expenses. In Saskatchewan the allowances are available according to the actual costs to the individual. Rather than allowances necessarily, it's based on the actual cost to the individual to become employed.

So you'd have to take a few cases to know whether an individual's better off there or here as it relates to some partial employment opportunities.

In terms of emergency benefits, again there is a granting system there that's available to the individual, where in Saskatchewan again it's based on actual costs of the emergency.

So one is based on allowances, the other one's based on the need. And I suppose there may be some advantages and disadvantages of both approaches. But we would have to look at some specific cases to see whether in fact disabled people are better or worse off in terms of whether they're living in Alberta or Saskatchewan.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I don't think I was trying to compare the benefits of the two in terms of the financial end of it. I was just wondering if your minister, Mr. Hnatiuk, had talked to you about that system.

I understand that it's income tested, but you don't take the assets into account. And my understanding also was that it's run a little bit more like a pension program. And I tried to get a pamphlet on it but they're not issuing them any more. And I was just hoping that maybe because of your relationship with Mr. Hnatiuk, he would maybe, you know, have talked to you about it.

And I understand then from what you're saying that you have taken a look at it, and as you say maybe with . . . you compare the two. Maybe Saskatchewan is okay. And I used numbers, dollars, but I don't think, as you say, I don't think the dollars always tell the same story because of different costs and different pressures that's on different people. I just thought it was kind of an interesting thing when I ran across it, and I thought I'd bring it to your attention.

As you mentioned, I was going to ask you . . . I have only contacted three provinces. There was Alberta, Manitoba, and Ontario; all use a two-tier system. Could you tell me, have you checked to see if there's any other provinces using the two-tier system?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — There actually are maybe more, but at least two different ways in which we refer to two-tier systems. And one is a two-tiered delivery system which involves different levels of government providing social assistance, and only Manitoba and Ontario still have that system. That's one form of two tier.

I think you're talking about two-tier benefit levels. And I would say that as far as I know, all provinces, certainly most provinces, have differential benefits, more benefits for persons who have disabilities than those who do not have disabilities.

I'm going to send the member over information I've just received recently about the AISH program in Alberta; formally it's called the assured income for the severely handicapped persons program. I'm going to send you over information about that program, a recent article in the *Edmonton Sun*, because I think it'll be self-explanatory. But that program is under a fair degree of criticism right now.

Yes, so I'll send the copy over to the member if I could. And, you know, some questions might arise from that, but I just saw it, so I think you might find it interesting too. Thank you.

Mr. Britton: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. I appreciate that. And I'll ask you another question and you might get the answer from your assistant there. In your opinion, Mr. Minister, do you think that there'd be more chance for abuse under the two-tier system?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — I think we really are . . . I guess are not

really in position to judge the accountability of other programs in other jurisdictions. We believe that we are accountable here in Saskatchewan. I think, by and large, as you know, we've got a number of control measures that we believe are effective and believe that we're being judged by the Provincial Auditor to being effective with our controls.

I think that accountability is not really based on whether it's a one- or two-tiered system, although many times persons with disabilities have a more stable health situation, if you will. So there could tend to be less change in circumstances which means sort of a more regular monitoring of assistance.

But we believe that accountability is really related to the degree to which the system is understandable and the program is understandable, the degree to which . . . in our case, we're probably the most automated system in Canada in terms of computer automation, the degree to which the expenditures are monitored. And so all in all, with regard to accountability — and I won't review all the measures — but in regard to accountability we believe that we're running a very accountable program with respect to the social assistance expenditures.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I didn't mean the question to be critical. I was just wondering if Mr. Hnatiuk had . . . what his thoughts were on the two systems because he has a chance to . . . he's worked with both of them. And I was just wondering if there was any thoughts along those lines. It certainly wasn't meant to criticize either one of the systems. And so if you got that impression, I didn't mean it that way.

You and I have talked many times about the checks and balances and bells and whistles that you have. And I think I've agreed with you that they are in most cases adequate. There's one or two suggestions we've made to you now and again and probably will continue to.

But I think we'll just leave the disability side for now. I appreciate the information that you've given me.

And I want to move into another area. And this is an area of a concern from an individual. And this individual has asked me to raise it in this forum, so if you're wondering why I haven't given you a call, that is why.

(2045)

And this Mrs. Attwater, she's from Dalmeny and she called me with a number of concerns. And I think she brought up some points that, you know, it might look into. And I'm going to relate them to you.

And what she's telling me is that she has confronted a problem where individuals on assistance are moving without notifying the landlord. Mr. Minister, she feels that this shouldn't happen. And she's wondering why it does happen and keeps on happening. And she's asking how can social services recipients be allowed to move without providing notice to the landlord. Can you elaborate on that a little bit?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Thank you. Just in finishing off the last piece, with respect to the one- and two-tier system and my consultation with the deputy minister, I think it's fair to say that we believe that the two-tier system is more complicated. Because it's more complicated and people move back and forth, there is a greater potential for information not to be accurate and the potential for mistakes and so on to occur.

Now on the point raised by Mrs. Attwater, certainly it's my belief and understanding that in the vast majority of cases between individuals on assistance who rent, and landlords, the relationship is positive. Of course the lease is between the individual and the landlord; it's really their contract with each other. We really are not in a position where we control our clients in that sense. We obviously provide one month's rent. We provide one damage deposit. If people move without giving notice in a month and go somewhere else, then they don't get duplicate assistance.

But this point is being addressed — this is the point I want to make — this point is being addressed by a special task force that's been set up by the Minister of Justice and all of the participants, all of the stakeholders in the landlord and lessee rental business, all the participants, so that they can all have their say and hopefully make recommendations to the Minister of Justice with regard to the effectiveness of The Residential Tenancies Act in this regard and in many other areas.

So at this point we're awaiting that report. And if there are, I guess, good ideas where there's some consensus reached, we will study it, and — I'm sure — take any action that we believe might be appropriate.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Another reason that I was prepared to bring this forward is, as you know, the landlords' association are running into this problem, and they were asking for a larger deposit because this was happening. And the damage deposit was only \$125, and they would sometimes leave them, and they wouldn't even get the \$125. And even if you did, \$125 don't fix up very much damage. And so that's why I thought I would like to discuss this with you on the two levels — one from the landlord's side and from your own position. You tell me you issue one damage deposit and one month's rent. If that person does leave and don't pay the damage deposit, how does the landlord get that? Does the department pay that for that recipient?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Yes, again I know the point you're making. And of course the landlords' association are very well represented on this task force that's been set up. And you know they obviously can present their case there. And you know, often, especially if they're employable people and they're marketable, they're on assistance for a short period of time and then they're off. They get a job and they're off.

So in many cases there's a perception that people are on assistance and they're actually not. I know this from my experience in looking into matters where we get calls.

But again, I would just say that the vast majority of clients are, I believe, responsible. The essence of becoming independent is that you manage your own affairs.

But the Rentalsman is the arbitrator. And it's the Rentalsman who's chairing the task force and we will obviously take any concerns that come forth very seriously.

You might know, and I'm sure you do, that in Alberta, for example, I think as of October of '93, persons on assistance do not get any damage deposits in Alberta unless it's a mother fleeing a violent situation. There are no damage deposit provided under social assistance in Alberta and haven't been for the last year.

I don't know how that's working — that's Alberta. But we're trying to sort of deal with this in a Saskatchewan way where all the parties have the opportunity to express their point of view to the Rentalsman. And we'll look forward to their report.

Mr. Britton: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I thought I heard you say that you supplied one damage deposit and one month's rent. What I'd like you to explain to me, what happens if that — assuming this person is on Social Services, welfare — that person moves to another building? Do you issue another damage deposit at the next building and another month's rent, or how is that handled?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — No, as I tried to say last time but I think it's important to say it again, we do not issue duplicate damage deposits. In the scenario that you outlined, the damage deposit would be considered an overpayment. We would only consider issuing it again, without it being an overpayment, if it were two years since the last one. Otherwise it is definitely an overpayment if we were to issue one again.

Mr. Britton: — I see then. So that if in the case that Mrs. Attwater's talking about, and they didn't get their deposit from that person, then that person went to another apartment, they had to put up their own damage deposit; they wouldn't get it from the Social Services. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Pringle: — Well that depends. Sometimes we simply wouldn't do that. You know, through the pattern of this, we simply wouldn't do that. But if we did reissue another damage deposit, that clearly, in this case that you outline, would be an overpayment to the client. There's no doubt about that.

That would be considered an overpayment and it would not be . . . we just don't keep doing this, because we're supporting people to be independent. And again, the vast, vast, vast majority of cases we know, in fact we also provide a lot of rent in the name of the landlord and the client. Ten or eleven thousand of these cases, there's a joint cheque.

So we've . . . see again this is one of the measures that we have taken to minimize the degree of overpayments and frauds in some ways that other provinces haven't done. So in the case you talk about, we wouldn't issue it again; and if we did, it

would be an overpayment.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Chairman, I move the committee report progress.

**General Revenue Fund
Economic Development
Vote 45**

The Chair: — I would ask the minister to please introduce the official who's joined us here.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Chairman, I'd like to introduce to the committee my deputy minister, Pat Youzwa, and a couple of others will be joining us and I'll introduce them as they come in. Seated directly behind me is Mr. Peter Phillips and to my right and behind, Mr. Bob Perrin.

Item 1

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and, Mr. Minister, and staff, it's good to see you here this evening. I think we'll just start out with an easy first few questions, Mr. Minister. It would have to do with your *Partnership for Renewal*, I believe it was called. And I'm just wondering how you're making out, if in fact you're on target? I don't have one of the documents here with me this evening but I do recall that you had some time lines that were associated with several parts of the *Partnership for Renewal*. And can you give us sort of a sketch of where it's at today?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Yes. The member asks, I think, an important question because *Partnership for Renewal* is a document that was really developed by government, by the Department of Economic Development, and by business . . .

An Hon. Member: — Can you send one across to me?

(2100)

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I can . . . cooperatives and working people. And it really goes back to a meeting in November of 1992 at which time — or pardon me, a meeting in the spring of 1992 really — where in Saskatoon the Premier, and myself, and a group of business people, along with a number of cabinet ministers, met and worked on a strategy for economic development. And we had people from various political backgrounds in a room for a couple of days discussing where we should go to try to solve the economic dilemma that really Saskatchewan was in at that time.

And at the end of the meeting we came up with a mission statement which is basically: Saskatchewan in the year 2000 will be a province where businesses, cooperatives, working people, government, and communities have worked together to lead the province towards prosperity and security.

This then became the foundation or the basis for what became known as *Partnership for Renewal*. And we then set out three

main principles or three main goals that were agreed to. And they were to create a positive environment for economic renewal, because I think most people believe and know that creating the right atmosphere for economic development is key and fundamental. Secondly, to secure and build on existing strengths based on sustainable development. And we identified six key clusters for fast growth in the province and we are building around those fast growth areas. And then also to seek full employment. Those became the three main goals.

In addition to that, we set out a number of objectives. And I'm not going to go through all of the objectives now, but just to say that out of that came 31 major, broad initiatives. And on those we are on target with all of them and we're in different stages, depending on which one of them you would want to look at.

But the fact is, this was one of the first documents in Economic Development that actually tied dates for development of the programs and we are well on target to meeting all of them in the time lines that we set out for ourselves.

Mr. McPherson: — Well, Mr. Minister, hopefully you have one of those documents you could send across. I didn't . . . My understanding was that we weren't going to be sitting doing Economic Development tonight so I don't have the document with me.

But if you could send that across, because I think part of the document dealt with your regional economic development authorities, REDAs. And what I would like to know is just how you're coming with the REDAs, how many of them are set up throughout the province . . . how many of them are set up around the province, what the time lines for having REDAs all throughout the province were?

And if I remember, Mr. Minister, when you first set up the REDAs, that they weren't to be funded by government. And in fact I noticed in the newspaper — I don't know how many weeks ago now — that you had allowed a certain amount of funding to get REDAs established so . . . well I'll leave it at that. You could maybe answer as to some of the questions I've asked on the REDAs.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Yes. If you were to flip in your document to page 16, you will see the item there to promote community-based solutions, and in the second column:

Introduce community-based Regional Economic Development Authorities to support community development by streamlining services and focusing support on regional strength and opportunities.

You see the time lines, begin implementing authorities in April of 1993. At this time we have nine of them up and operating. We expect that 16 more will be established by the end of the year. So nine of them have completed all the work that goes into the implementation of a REDA. Sixteen are at various stages of development. A number of them will be announced in the next month or two, and by the end of 1995 we expect that

the province will then be covered by the mandates of the economic development authority.

The member from Maple Creek, who is also working with us here tonight in estimates, will be well aware of the REDA in south-west Saskatchewan because he has been at the opening of the REDA and involved in it. And they really are successful in those areas where the communities get together. But as the name would indicate, regional economic development authorities are basically the responsibility of the various regions.

Some are up and running, doing very well, creating a lot of jobs. Others are slower, but these are not being driven by Regina. We go out, we facilitate, we move them along as quickly as they would like, but some are slower to develop than others for various reasons. Some are starting from a different position. Some had rather complicated economic development structures already and it made it easier for them to move to a REDA. But we expect by the end of the year to have announced all of the economic development authorities in the province.

Mr. McPherson: — But by the end of this year, Mr. Minister, given the fact that your target date was April '93, so you're going to be two and a half years off your target date, are you not?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — If you read what it says . . . to begin implementing authorities, April of '93 . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . To begin. And so we started in April, 1993 and we expect to have them completed by the end of 1995. And so we expected the whole process to start in 1993 and to be completed sometime this year, and we will expect to have them completed by that time.

My deputy advises me we're not at 9, we're now at 10. And they're coming on a couple a month, one or two a month, and we expect to have the balance of the other 16 up and operating.

But I say again you should really get involved in the concept because it's a great experience, and what you realize is that these . . . the amount of work that goes into the establishment is quite phenomenal. And I think to get a system like this up and running in two years is actually a major, major accomplishment for the communities to the extent . . . I think it's my understanding that one of the economic development authorities, the one in Prince Albert which was one of the first up, has had an invitation to go, and I believe it's to the Philippines, and use their expertise in forming a regional economic development, to actually help in that country's development of a similar kind of program.

But I say again you shouldn't be critical of those areas that aren't up and running yet because there just is a terrific amount of work in some of those areas that has to be done before you can get a proper functioning REDA. And I think if it takes some of them a couple of months longer to get to that point, it probably is a couple of months that's well worth the time and effort.

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Minister, just to set the records straight: I wasn't being critical, I was only asking your time lines to having these not just to begin but to when we could expect . . . I guess you expect — what? — some 26 once they're all up and running to your satisfaction? Would that then cover the entire province? . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . It would.

So can you tell me then how much money that is costing? In fact why it was that initially there wasn't going to be any money? Or there was start-up money and it was going to end, but now there is some money. Can you give us some idea what we're looking at?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — The concept when we started it was based on the idea — and here again this came from the communities — that they believed they would need some start-up money, and there was an allowance of \$25,000 per REDA in the initial phase.

But we listened very closely to the communities and they said, look don't make a commitment to any ongoing funding initially because if we can possibly make this work on our own, we will be that much stronger if we are independent from government funding.

And we worked along with the associations, the REDAs, for a number of months. Some of them have now been up and operating since early in 1993. And those that have been up and operating say look, we can almost make it on our own but we need a small amount. And I think in this case, the exact amount per REDA has not been established. I'll just check on that. But what they're saying is for a very, very small amount of ongoing money they can basically raise the rest of the operating financing by themselves.

So this funding that we are looking at setting in place as a result of this budget came as a result of those REDAs that are up and established saying to us, while we're trying as hard as we can — the start-up money works to that point — but we need a small amount, only a small amount of ongoing funding.

And therefore in the budget this is one of the few areas that actually saw extra money being spent because we see economic development as jobs, and jobs being one of the big priorities of the government, especially as it would relate to youth employment. And so this is why REDAs were, as I say, one of the areas that got a tiny bit of extra government attention.

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Minister, well what do you call a small amount of money? I'm not sure in the budget document exactly what line we're looking at as far as what monies you're committing to the REDA program.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Well when we finalize this and get it operating, it will be a cost share project where the monies that we put in will have to be matched by the local REDA. The amount for this year, for example, is going to be very, very small because as I say, we have 9 or 10 REDAs, 10 REDAs up and operating. And you have to go through all the initial

establishment phase first before you're eligible for the ongoing funding. So a REDA that will be in the process of being set up — for example Moose Jaw might be one, where they are working on their project — we will not need the ongoing funding this year.

So the amount of money for the coming fiscal year will be very small. And once they're up and operating, the amount will be on a cost share basis, dollar for dollar with what is being raised at the local level, up to a certain amount, and that will be capped at a certain level.

Mr. McPherson: — All right. Well getting back to the actual figures, can you tell me where in the budget document I can spot the amount that REDAs are going to cost for this upcoming year.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — It will be under our estimates, under subvote 5.

Mr. McPherson: — So are these other 16 REDAs then, are they also going to get this \$25,000 start-up? Is this the kind of money we're talking about?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Yes, each REDA will be eligible for the start-up program. And I say again, you can't leap-frog, you can't combine the two and get all of the money in the initial phase. You have to go through all of the steps that the original REDAs went through to get to the point of collecting your initial \$25,000 start-up operating money. And then once you're up and operating, and you raise your own money, there'll be a matching portion that will come from the provincial government. In this year's budget, that money that's allocated for a matching portion is 378,000.

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Minister, now the RDCs (rural development corporation) that the REDAs were replacing, they were probably throughout most of the province on a lot smaller scale. But if these people that are out there working on these community projects or regional projects were given their options and their choices, do you have quite a few that are telling you they would far sooner be into an RDC rather than into a REDA?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Some areas where they had existing RDCs are continuing their RDCs and it's perfectly all right. There's no mandatory situation where one would have to get rid of the RDC in order to set up a REDA, so they're not at odds with one another. A number of areas though are choosing to wrap them together — several RDCs into a regional economic development authority — but others are taking a different route where they're maintaining both over a given period of time. So we're leaving that totally optional to the communities. So there never is sort of a butting of heads where you're saying which one is better or should we compete with one another. We leave it up to the local areas and they're basically allowed to put it together, or to amalgamate, or to leave them both as free-standing entities.

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Minister, a lot of the reason why these RDCs aren't in fact going to be around in the way that they were previous is because the government doesn't fund them any longer. Now I've had a number of people that have raised some of the concerns with me, that in fact they'd far sooner have an RDC, but the very fact that they would have to do all the funding themselves and there was no government support led them into being involved in the REDA if they were going to be involved in an economic development project at all. In fact a lot of the concerns that have been raised are probably ones where they now . . . the REDA now takes in so many different trading areas, it's become such a huge monstrosity of an economic or a regional development board that they say it's virtually unworkable.

(2115)

Now I could see it if it were in the Regina or Saskatoon perhaps, where you have, you know, a lot of other boards: your educational boards and your hospital boards and all other governing jurisdictions within that same geographical centre and where you had coterminous boundaries so to speak. Then I could see perhaps the REDA working a lot better.

But when I take a look at the REDA . . . and I'm not being critical. I'm just curious as to how the REDA in the south-west . . . Perhaps if you're a member or a participant of the REDA, and say you're from Eastend or Frontier or Climax or a community like that, how is the REDA really going to help you if in fact you're working on a project within the REDA that, you know, includes the community of Leader within the same REDA? What do you hear on this?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Well I should say I feel a little inadequate answering this question when your colleague, the member from Maple Creek, is whispering in your ear because he lives right in the middle of it. But quite honestly, I have not had a lot of people complaining about the size. Now there may be those who would rather be in a different REDA, but these are not etched in stone, and we work with the communities. And if the community, for example if you say Leader, would rather be in a different economic development authority, that would certainly be looked at.

One thing about this concept is there is no preconceived idea as to where the boundaries should be, and if in the initial phases a community would rather be with another economic development authority, in Regina we don't go out and force them into one REDA or another.

And so what I wanted to say to the member opposite is that I have not had a lot of complaints about the size. I speak to organizations of REDAs. As recently as a couple of weeks ago, we had all of the established REDAs and a number of those working at a meeting here in Regina. And while there were questions raised about the new funding formula, how it would apply, who would be eligible, those kinds of things, I think the concept in a very general way is massively supported by the rural communities.

Now that's not to say that there won't be problems as there will be with any new endeavour. And going back to 1981 when I was the minister of Social Services and we were establishing the home care program — just by comparison — at that time we were rolling together probably 400 different boards, existing boards, meals to wheels, transportation, various home help organizations throughout the province — 400 boards, 400 bank accounts, and we rolled them into 45 district home care boards.

This by comparison is very, very, I would say, easy to accomplish by comparison to what we were done with establishing the home care program back in 1981. So the concept of community partnerships in Saskatchewan is not a new one or one that our department people have to learn, because there's a great deal of experience in government in this whole area of amalgamating and doing partnerships.

I say again that's not to say that there aren't people who are concerned or would like to see things differently. But overall, as minister responsible since the inception of this program, I find it to be a very, very — enjoyable is not the right word — but a very productive exercise and one that is very, very much driven by the local people especially in rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Minister, I know that the RDC that is in Shaunavon — what is it? The Frenchman River Valley RDC — they are a very proactive group. They had an economic development officer under their employ from . . . I guess he lives in the community of Eastend. And they actively went after a lot of projects because I think they were able to operate on, well sort of economy of scale where they knew that the . . . you know the geographical size of the RDC was still a size that they could all work together for a common goal.

But when you're now talking about REDAs that are the size of these God-forsaken health care districts or larger, I keep hearing how this is a lot . . . or is often unable to work just because of the sheer size. It doesn't matter if we're talking tourism projects. I mean, the tourism, if you're in Leader, Saskatchewan versus Climax, what projects would they be working on that would have any overlap at all?

Now I'm just wondering, is this something you find all around the province, where in fact there's many people that would be involved in the REDA because they don't have a lot of . . . they don't see a lot of options or other choices. They either have to stay in the RDC themselves, fund it themselves, have no support — I don't think they would have any support from the government, even though they're funding it themselves, would they? — but in fact being forced into the REDA.

So what I'm hearing a lot of is the fact that they had to get into this program but they don't see a lot of benefit from it. I mean can you give us a list of projects that the REDAs themselves would have brought into their areas? Do you have that breakdown of each REDA in the province and the projects that they brought in, which would in fact be outside of the projects which would normally move to those communities?

I don't want to be critical of the REDAs, but I don't want you, Mr. Minister, to also take credit for every job that's ever been created in this province by your Economic Development minister.

So if you have that breakdown and in fact if you can give us some idea, I guess, of the REDA versus RDC as far as being actively able to draw business and development projects to their area.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Just so the member is clear on the size. If you look at the tourism districts — and these are the districts that manage the tourism for the province — down in your area the Horseshoe tourism district is one of nine districts in the province.

So the province doesn't have 25 different districts, as we do with economic development authorities; they have chosen to do nine. In Alberta they have even fewer tourism districts; I think there's seven.

And so the size isn't nearly as important as the cohesiveness of the partnership that exists. And in the south-west area, which is the one that I know the best, there's actually a very, very good working relationship, for example, between the Horseshoe Tourism Authority and the Southwest Economic Development Authority, and they work hand in hand.

And if you look at the Eastend group, for example, you will find that the REDA works with the tourism authority and they actually are managing to get a lot of things done. And the other REDAs that I just want to mention, the Entrepreneurs 2000 REDA which is Rosetown and Elrose — you asked about how many businesses and jobs. These are . . . by their numbers, indicates that they have assisted the establishment of 35 business and created 77 jobs.

The Prince Alberta REDA, Mark Hislop who is very much involved in that operation, they indicate that they had assisted in starting 23 businesses, expanding 18, maintaining 7 businesses. And in 1994 the REDA assisted in the creation of 40 jobs and maintaining 43, and the list goes on.

And so the point that you're making about us taking credit, it's exactly the reverse of that. We are saying local people working together are creating jobs, stimulating business by the economic development authority, not only attracting business or creating jobs but also acting as a sounding-board for business people who want to have some place to come and float ideas.

We also know that the REDAs is a different concept than RDCs, RDCs of course being basically municipal government with no involvement from the chambers of commerce. And what we're hearing from business people, that actually that inclusion of the business organizations in the REDA concept has taken us another step beyond where the RDCs were. And here I'm not being critical in the least of the previous administration and the RDCs because the RDCs really, in many cases, were the building-block on which the REDA concept is

based.

And so what I would urge you to take is not an adversarial approach where you try to nit-pick and take apart or find problems, but follow the example of the member from Maple Creek who has been very supportive. And we've sat and had a number of discussions about the REDA concept and he has actually come to many of the meetings and takes part and is very much involved and doesn't sit on the sidelines and snipe. Because I think the worst thing to an economy is where you have an MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) that, rather than get involved in the mainstream, simply sits and waits until something goes a little bit wrong and then attacks and attacks and attacks. Because what you'll find in those cases, while it may be politically popular to do that, the communities suffer a great deal because they end up being divided, business against business, family against family. And before you know it, you've got bedlam.

And I compare, for example, your constituency which you represent and which you're running in now, and I see many communities that I believe are odds with one another because of the adversarial approach of pitting one person against another or one group against another.

And if you compare that to the Cypress constituency where you have a different MLA who works in conjunction with community groups, you'll find that there are communities there that are . . . Go to Leader. Go to Eastend. Go to Maple Creek. It is not by accident that those communities are cohesive and working together. And I say to you that you have a responsibility.

For example in a town like Ponteix which is very, very divided, and I would say as a result of your meddling personally in the politics of that community, that you should take an example, that you should take an example from the member from Maple Creek who works cooperatively with the communities as opposed to trying for political reasons to pit one group against the other. And you would find that it actually works much better. And we find in Economic Development that where we can form partnerships and communities work together, that actually the results are very, very much better.

Mr. McPherson: — Well thanks, Mr. Minister. That was a bit of a humorous little speech. But you did mention that there were several communities that were — and members of those communities — that were at odds with one another. Could you table a list of those communities and what they had odds with one another over?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Well I think the member opposite would know that his area is one of the areas, for example, that is having the most problem with health care, had the most problems with GRIP (gross revenue insurance program). And the main reason that you're having all those problems down in that area, just in your little area, is because of the role of the MLA which is one of being a bit of a rabble-rouser and going around and, for political reasons, stirring things up.

And I say again, it's not by accident that in Eastend, for example, where their hospital has been converted that there's . . .

An Hon. Member: — That's in my constituency. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — No, you spend all your time in your new constituency which does not include Eastend. But there the former member, Mr. Ted Gleim, who takes more the approach of the member from Maple Creek, has managed to heal any wounds that were in that community. And economically that community is doing very, very well.

I say the same thing of Maple Creek and Leader. And I say you could use your influence, and I know being a new member that it will take you some time to catch up, but the actual fact is that you could do yourself even a bigger political favour by acting as a leader to bring people together as opposed to split them up.

And I say this legitimately and that you should actually try the other approach because it's much more satisfying. You'll get more economic development, and you simply won't have the heartache personally that you have by trying to pit people against one another for your own political betterment.

(2130)

Mr. McPherson: — Well, Mr. Minister, this begs so many questions now because obviously you weren't interested in answering questions on REDAs and RDCs. You wanted to have some personal attacks. And I think that's very disappointing, the game that you're playing tonight.

In fact what you are saying to these communities is that your government is willing to do things to those communities — pull out SaskPower offices, close down hospitals, gravel highways — do everything because of a member that you may think is a rabble-rouser or doesn't support some of your ludicrous ideas.

Well I can see you smiling from your seat, and I think you now realize just that you jumped in with both feet there, and you wish probably now you hadn't.

But in fact I just want to get back to some of the RDCs and REDAs for a moment. And then I'll make sure that we have enough time to have a personal debate that you're so anxious to get into tonight because it's you and people like your wife, the former minister of Health, that devastated those areas, and you are going to have to answer for it. And if you want to get into that tonight, that's fine.

So, Mr. Minister, getting back to the RDCs for a moment, if there are some areas where the RDC is of such a size that they would like to become a REDA, would they be allowed to in fact do that?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Yes, if they were to . . .

The Chair: — Order.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — If there was an RDC that wanted to change, to become a REDA, and they went through the policy development, that is, including the other business organizations, and went through all the structural changes that were needed, it would be possible for them to make the transfer relatively in a painless manner.

And I say again though, that there are different criteria for REDA than there are for an RDC. I say again, an RDC was basically a grouping of municipal government — not officials, but representatives who work together to better the economic development in their area.

REDA's taken a fairly major step past that to include the business people, business organizations in the communities as well. But if you had an RDC of a certain magnitude that included all of the necessary criteria, I say again it would be a relatively painless effort for them to make the transition.

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Minister, and I raise this from the RDC point of view, for the one being in the south-west, because that RDC was the largest in the province, I understand. And in fact if what was required to bring in a business element to it all was just to make some minor changes to the RDC, did then they have to get so large as to expand into a REDA which really has decentralized so much in the south-west. And I . . . granted there's going to be some projects — regardless of how large the Authority gets — there are going to be some projects that get supported by one means or another.

But in fact it was raised by a few people just in the past few days, this RDC already being of such a size and a workable RDC — they seem to be a very proactive group. I know that they're in the paper every week searching for projects. And I just find it strange that they couldn't have been helped along, in fact not being made to be even that much larger, but in fact rolled some of these RDCs into a smaller REDA if they seem to be working.

Now, I notice that there's Community Futures, I think that's the federal. Now is there still some movement towards, for lack of a better word, amalgamating the REDAs and the Community Futures? I guess you're not amalgamating; it's more of a joint venture type of affair. Is this still happening?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — It's interesting the member raises the issue of the amalgamation of Community Futures and REDAs because this is something the federal minister Mr. Axworthy and I have had a number of discussions about here in Regina, as well as in Winnipeg, and at various meetings that we've attended together. But the member will know that, for example, our business office in Saskatoon was recently amalgamated with the federal government's business office and we now have a co-location in Saskatoon which is working very, very well. And there actually is within economic development a very good working relation between our counterparts in Ottawa and Saskatchewan Economic Development.

And this is also why in the south-west we would very much like to keep the . . . because it really is a model of what we can do working together between the federal government and the provincial government. The Community Futures boundaries are virtually coterminous with the new REDA boundaries. And we are working on now a pilot project which would actually see an amalgamation — and I believe the first one in western Canada — right in your own area where the REDA and Community Futures would amalgamate.

And I would ask the member, it might be possible for he and I and the member for Maple Creek to sit down and begin working with Mr. Axworthy about how we keep this as a cohesive unit, because the RDCs in that area I think would stand to lose if they began fragmenting and working away from what was, I think, a very good process where all of them were involved in the negotiations, funding, and setting up the — and I say again — the very good working system in south-west Saskatchewan.

But the fact is, I think, we have a big opportunity, set an example for the rest of the country right down with Shaunavon, Swift Current, Maple Creek, being the basis for a new, exciting system where the federal government and provincial government would amalgamate their resources to build what we could have as an example for the rest of the country.

And so I would just urge the member to work with us and to work with the member from Maple Creek to put together the kind of system that Mr. Axworthy and myself have been working on for some months.

And not to go back to restate anything that I have said, but I think there's an opportunity for you to be a real leader and a bit of a hero. And I'm not saying this because I want to help the Liberals or I want to help the Conservatives in Maple Creek. But I think there is an opportunity for us to work together, a tri-party group of Conservatives, the member from Maple Creek; yourself as a Liberal; myself as a New Democrat minister. And I'd make the commitment to sit with you at any time at any place down in the south-west to see what we could do to work out the actual funding arrangements between the provincial and federal government, and develop a program that we could take the REDAs past the stage they're now at, to be actually a federal-provincial jointly funded, jointly administrated local economic development entity.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. While you were talking, I got the nod from the member from Maple Creek that he would be more than willing to sit down with myself and yourself and have this meeting in the very near future. That we can accommodate.

But don't miss my point here, what I'm getting, Mr. Minister. As far as the amalgamation or the working jointly with the federal government, I think that's great. I'll commend you on what you were trying to achieve in that sense.

What I do have concerns about is whether we're losing some

more local drive, which the RDCs I think — at least the ones I'm aware of — had, and now to go to a larger picture and perhaps to larger-picture projects, maybe that's great. In fact you probably need that, working in conjunction with the federal government, to make some of this come about.

But I do have concerns that we're losing some of the more locally driven projects that wouldn't need to be having authorities as large as REDAs to make them workable. In fact now that we don't have funding for that RDC, I'm unsure of the life of it or how long it's going to be around there for. But I think in the end it will be something that will be missed, because I just do think that we can end up getting too large with some projects.

And I know what some are raising. I don't know if it's legit or not, but in fact people are of the fear that it's moving more towards a county system. And I don't know if that's what the government is wanting to do. Perhaps it's only because there were so many things that come around, like the Scharf-Langlois report on education, the larger health care districts, now REDAs. It just seems like bigger is somehow better in the minds of the present government.

And I'm not sure that's where the local people's minds are always at. Not to rule out that REDAs can play a role or will play a role, I'm just saying that there's this fear out there that we're losing some local control. What do you feel about that?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Well I think there's . . . actually when it comes to control, control is really having economic development, because without jobs and without some plan for the future of your community, you don't have control.

And what REDAs have been able to do, I think, is for the first time is . . . and I say again, give credit to the RDCs because they really have done a lot of work in the province. But really those communities that have REDAs established actually have much more control over their economic development than they had before.

So what I would urge the member to do is really seriously look at working with us on trying to create this new system: federal-provincial-local development called the REDA which the federal government is . . . Your counterparts in Ottawa are very interested in doing a pilot project in that exact area.

And to that end, I really would like to be able to send off to Mr. Axworthy tomorrow a letter which would say look, we have an agreement of the MLAs in the area who are also now interested in cooperating, because it would be very helpful. And I'm serious about this because this is a big opportunity to put a stamp on something that you could help create.

And I would be more than willing to give the credit to the two MLAs from south-west Saskatchewan for taking a major leadership role in this. And I mean Mr. Axworthy, when he comes and is involved in the official opening — if we ever get it to that point — he should take credit as well. But the most

credit should actually go to the local people who have led the way, once again, in south-west Saskatchewan, as they did back in 1946, I believe, when the first health region was set up in the Swift Current area. That was not at the time government driven. It was driven by the local people in south-west Saskatchewan. When they got together after the tough times of the Depression to actually . . . or during the tough times. I guess it actually happened before that, when they formed health region no. 1 in order to hire a doctor to take care of some of their health needs.

I say again that I think you as an MLA, the member from Maple Creek, have an opportunity here to work with us, to work with the federal government. And I say again, try not to fall into the trap of trying to hive off an RDC and go to meetings and . . . Because you can always do that. Anybody can go out and make people angry and get people upset. But it takes a real leader to go out there and get people to cooperate together for a common goal and a common good.

And I think there is an opportunity for both of us, for all of us, to work together in that region to create more economic development than what we presently have.

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Minister, were you going to provide a list of those projects I'd asked initially, as far as which REDAs have which projects and what the stage of those projects are? And if you could, I guess, give us a comparison as to in those same areas the RDCs that there were then and in fact the types of projects that they themselves had been working on.

(2145)

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I thought I had given the member some examples of REDAs. I'll get it for you as best I can, although as you know some have been up and running for years; some have just been announced in the last month and so obviously those would just be getting under way. But what I will commit to do is put together a package that will show you some examples of business projects that people have worked on.

Saskatoon Economic Development Authority, for example, were involved in attracting the Cargill crushing plant and it falls within the mandate of that economic development authority, and Mr. John Hyshka, who now heads up and is the director of that operation, was very helpful in putting together the program for the Cargill crushing plant. And so that's one of example that you'll be well aware of because it got a lot of media attention.

But there are many, many others and I'll try to compile a list as complete as I can of projects, but knowing full well that we don't keep all these records in our office; they are basically locally controlled and kept track of, but we will try to compile a list so that I can feed that to you.

In the south-west area there are actually a number of projects, both in the area of tourism and economic development, that you'll be well aware of. For example, in tourism you'll know that the whole Scotty, T-Rex project that some of our mutual

friends in the Eastend area have been involved in, have now led to the production of a full length, feature length IMAX production — probably 2 or \$3 million dollars being spent in the local economy of Eastend as a result of an aggressive local group who got on the bandwagon and through the Tourism Authority and with the cooperation of the REDA have landed that project.

Who knows how many jobs that will lead to and the great profile it gives to the entire province, not only to the Eastend area, but this IMAX production will appear in over 100 . . . on 100 screens around the world and the run of an IMAX production is 10 years. And all of these endeavours will have the Saskatchewan involvement and the Tourism Authority's involvement.

And so the ability of that group working together to identify a niche tourism, a very unique tourism opportunity, has led very directly to many, many jobs being created not only for a short period of time but we believe for the coming years.

So that's just one example, but I'll try to compile a list of where communities working together have actually done a much better job by having communities amalgamated into a working unit as opposed to the idea of this community isolated, doing their thing; this community over there isolated, doing their own thing. There seems to be a belief in rural Saskatchewan now that in order to compete at the world level, you have to have a certain mass of people, of investment, in order to make yourself competitive at the provincial, national, and international level.

What is the magical number? This is very much left up to those local REDAs to work on and . . . but I think they all agree that there's a certain size. If you get below that, you just don't have the advantage of having an airport, of having a rail system, of having certain things that you need within that trading unit in order to make a REDA work for you.

Mr. McPherson: — Mr. Minister, on another note. A few months ago the member from Prince Albert Northcote, I believe it is, raised in Crown Corporations meeting there was going to be a fibreboard plant — I think it was called fibreboard — that he would be announcing the project probably to go ahead, couldn't do it at the time, couldn't do it at the time because of some financing . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well obviously the member from P.A. (Prince Albert) is over there saying, it's a lie. I think it would be on your part because you're on *Hansard* . . .

The Chair: — I thought I heard the member use unparliamentary language, and I'm not sure. If the member has used unparliamentary language of the kind that I thought I heard, then the member should stand up and retract that. If the member did not say that then we can always check the verbatim tomorrow. But if the member has, I give him an opportunity now to retract that.

Mr. McPherson: — Yes, Mr. Chair. I think what I was saying was that the member from P.A. Northcote was heckling again

from his chair and hollering, liar. That's maybe where you heard this come . . .

The Chair: — Now I gave the member an opportunity to retract that and I ask him to retract that unequivocally and do so now.

Mr. McPherson: — Well I guess then I will have to retract that, Mr. Chair. In fact this fibreboard plant . . .

The Chair: — Now did I hear the member retract that, or that the member is not sure whether he's going to retract that? Now I asked the member to retract that unequivocally and to do so now without further debate, further discussion.

Mr. McPherson: — Yes, I retract that, Mr. Chair.

Now if I could proceed without constant heckling and never having people brought under control. The fibre board . . .

The Chair: — Order. Now the member is casting reflections on the Chair. I ask the member to discontinue and not to cast reflections on the Chair or decorum in this Chamber.

Mr. McPherson: — I don't want to cast any reflections upon the Chair, Mr. Chairman.

The fibreboard plant, Mr. Minister, could you tell me if the plant is going to go ahead or was this perhaps somebody's dream at one time leading up into a campaign? Could you tell me in fact where this plant is today? And in fact is there is going to be one or if there isn't going to be one; who's going to be backing it, who's the financial backer? Is this something once again that SEDCO (Saskatchewan Economic Development Corporation) is going to be involved in?

And in fact there's a number of projects that we hear coming up in, I guess, in Crown Corporations and different committees that in fact never seem to come to fruition. But this one on the fibreboard really did stick out because there were so many of the officials that were in that meeting that day with the minister and they went on for some time talking about all the benefits of this fibreboard plant.

In fact I think there was even some employment numbers and amount of money that would be invested and brought to the province at that time. And I'm not sure, Mr. Minister, is your department aware of this? I see your head shaking no, so I'm not sure of that.

But I'm just wondering if the Department of Economic Development was ever made aware of some of the plans that the member from P.A. Northcote — or Northcott, or whatever it is — was referring to? Or in fact is this something that he and his department alone, perhaps outside the knowledge of the rest of the members of the government, were involved in?

If in fact that's not the case, then it would be tougher for you to answer this because it would be up to the member from P.A.

Northcote to try and 'fess up, I guess, where it was that he was getting his facts and figures and some of the stories that he was coming forward with that day. But I do know that it's in *Hansard* regardless of what that member hollers from his seat at this point. It's in *Hansard* and I'm sure he took a half-hour to 45 minutes explaining this plant.

So what I would have to ask you is, if there is such a plant coming to Saskatchewan, if there was ever one considered coming to Saskatchewan, fibreboard plant, and in fact are there a number of other projects that are involved with probably more northern development or development of forest products, that perhaps the member from P.A. Northcote himself was completely off the wall and should have perhaps been talking about a different project. And I'm just trying to help him out here. I can see he would love to get up on his feet and speak to this but . . .

Mr. Minister, if there's any projects that you could think of that this member could have even mistakenly been talking about because that's the only time I ever heard anything about it.

Our concern, I think, would be, is, if that member is going to be announcing, for election purposes, things that were never going to come to this province, he's got to offload those costs onto your department. So that's where I think not only am I concerned and the taxpayers concerned, but you'd have to be concerned also, Mr. Minister, because being the minister in charge of SEDCO, the financial institution that was going to be wound down at some point, and in fact I'm not saying I believe this, but I keep hearing it out there that SEDCO stays afloat just for political purposes. Would this be a case in point, Mr. Minister, where in fact SEDCO would be revived perhaps for a more . . . to be used more as a political tool to sort of fulfil the hopes and dreams of the member from P.A. Northcote in some of the projects that he's going to be announcing?

If not SEDCO, Mr. Speaker, or Mr. Minister, then is it this new one, SOCO (Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation)? Now I would like to have you answer that as far as whether it's SOCO, if not SEDCO, is going to be doing such projects and perhaps if you could give us a list of the projects even in the last . . . well in the past fiscal year of the projects that SEDCO had been looking at and SOCO, because I guess there was some overlap in that first year of operation.

So if we could get some understanding as to what both of these corporations were looking at and in fact if either had ever been involved in some of the projects that the member from P.A. Northcote had announced in Crown Corporations. And I'm sure you'd oblige me by having some of your officials go through the Crown Corporation *Hansard* verbatim and see just what it was that that member was speaking on; because in fact I think it's just inappropriate if members for political reasons . . . because my sense is that you're unaware of these projects just by looking at you shaking your head no.

So I mean at what point then — as people such as myself, as a representative of many taxpayers out there — at what point are

we able to reel some of these people in that are just completely off the wall and in fact maybe struggling with the truth at times as far as whether or not there's actually projects that are coming forward. And if in fact these kind of remarks are just used to win votes and to try and get themselves re-elected, Mr. Minister, how then does that actually reflect back on your department where in fact you perhaps have a number of business people that are in the province that — or perhaps investors that are outside the province — that would have to be looking at such projects in a more, well . . . through the eyes of perhaps having to make one of these projects work.

Now if there was companies say that were interested in coming here and doing fibreboard plants but in fact caught wind of, you know, members like the member from P.A. Northcote doing this for political reasons . . . How would you feel, I guess, if you were a company wanting to come here with good intentions, putting your money up, perhaps putting your last dollar up to make sure that you're going to get into a business that is really and truly going to work, but in fact being afraid that once again the government of the day is going to get into some politics and in fact put everything that you're working for at a great deal of risk, Mr. Minister.

So I'd be curious then to finding out just how it is that your department would handle such cases as that, and in fact if . . . I don't know if you're comfortable doing this, but in fact if there are other cases of other ministers or other MLAs that are going around making these announcements, you know, I know that you can't chastise them, but is it possible that you perhaps could publicize a list just so that the investors of the province would know which ones are, you know, more unlikely to proceed rather than likely to proceed. And in fact, you know, I think we've got to give some level of comfort to the investors that are coming into this province to know if in fact everything that this government's announcing in the last while is done for political reasons. So I give you a few things to answer, Mr. Minister, if you'd be so kind.

(2200)

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Chairman, when I conclude my remarks, I just, in consultation with the Opposition House Leader and my colleague who acts as House Leader for the Liberal caucus, we will report progress and call it a day.

But before I do, I want to say to the member opposite that fibreboard is a very important product in a number of manufacturing processes in the world. And just so the member knows, that fibreboard is a replacement in many manufacturing processes where fibreglass has been used in the past. And for example, in Europe, in the manufacture of automobiles, there are a number of components that are now made of fibreboard versus fibreglass because the environmental problems with fibreglass are so important.

Now what the member may be thinking of when he thinks about the fibreboard project is a project . . . I met with Cargill and a company called Fibre Form in Canora on Friday. And

they have set up and are about to hopefully announce a pilot project in Canora that will use flax straw. And the process is taking flax straw and stripping off the exterior of it, and inside there's a very powerful filament. And from a ton of flax straw, you can achieve about a third of this material, and that material takes that flax product from \$50 a tonne for raw flax straw to about \$500 a tonne.

And this project in Canora, which Cargill believes to be a viable project, they're in the process of arranging funding. They believe that a number of farmers in the area will be able to grow flax.

And what has been to this point a nuisance straw, because it's very difficult to deal with because it doesn't break down easily, taking that straw, using a process that is being developed at PAMI (Prairie Agricultural Machinery Institute) at the present time — and you'll know about the expansion of the project at PAMI, the announcement that the member from Humboldt made recently — they will then be able to use this flax straw to produce fibreboard.

Now the member opposite may be confusing something the member from Prince Albert said with this proposed fibreboard at Canora. There seems to be a lot of confusion here in the Assembly tonight and it might be that he's mixing that story up with the fibreboard plant in Canora.

Or it could be the REDA in Prince Albert is working on a hardboard, a process of using hardwood and processing it and actually doing hardwood production. This is a project that has been worked on by the REDA there, Mark Hislop and his group, for the past several months.

So there's two things that the member opposite might be confusing here. It might be the hardwood plant that the REDA in Prince Albert is working on, or it might be the flax board project in Canora. And it would be easy for him to become confused because there are so many good projects being announced at the present time.

And I don't want to bore the committee with all of them, but Cargill has announced a major project. CIBC (Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce) has announced 500 jobs in Regina to the point where CMHC (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation) in their report on April 7 announced that Regina is bucking all the trends across Canada and actually huge housing starts are predicted for 1995 based on the many jobs that businesses are creating here in the city of Regina.

And so I hope that has clarified for the member the particle board or the fibreboard plant that is being studied for Canora and the hardwood plant that is being worked on by the regional economic development authority in Prince Albert.

But I hope I've been helpful here, and, Mr. Chairman, I would therefore like to ask the committee to rise and report progress and ask for leave to sit again.

The committee reported progress.

MOTIONS

Sitting Hours of the Assembly

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, this is a motion that I have spoken to the opposition about, and the member from Shaunavon from the Liberal Party, but by leave of the Assembly I move, seconded by the member for P.A. Northcote:

That notwithstanding rule 3 of the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly*, that when the Assembly adjourns on Thursday, April 13, 1995, it do stand adjourned until Wednesday, April 19, 1995.

I so move.

Motion agreed to.

The Assembly adjourned at 10:07 p.m.