

EVENING SITTING
COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund
Finance
Vote 18

The Chair: — I would ask the minister to introduce any new officials that she has joining her tonight.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Yes, Mr. Chairman. On my right is Gerry Kraus who is the Provincial Comptroller. And at the back, we also have Brian Smith, executive director, Public Employees Benefits Agency; Sheldon Schwartz, assistant deputy minister, treasury and debt management; and Larry Spanner, executive director, treasury board branch; Doug Lambert, director, revenue programs branch, revenue division.

Item 1

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And also a welcome this evening to the officials from the Finance department.

When we had left off earlier, we were speaking of annual reports, and I asked the Minister of Finance with respect to an annual report for her department. I know a number of points that were made by the minister. One was that a lot of the information are tabled from time to time by her department anyway, but I would just point out though that an annual report would be one means of tying all of these information together in an effective manner.

But on the topic, on the matter of annual reports, I do have another question or request. Most provincial annual reports provide an organization chart, and I wonder if the minister would provide an organization chart complete with the names of people employed in various out-of-scope positions within her department. And then secondly, realizing that the minister may not have such a thing available at the moment, would you just be able to provide a brief overview for us here this evening of how your department is organized and who some of the key people are.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite, yes, obviously such documents are available and there's no problem in ensuring that the member opposite gets this information. I mean you have the people here actually, essentially. You've got Bill Jones, who is the deputy minister. You have Gerry Kraus, who's the comptroller. You have the heads of the basic divisions are represented here.

But certainly that information is available. And I'm not even sure exactly what it is that you're after because, as I say, we have one division which is the assistant deputy minister of revenue, and we have the admin. division, Bill Van Sickle. So yes, we have such information; we can provide it to you. I can get this xeroxed and sent across to you.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I see you do have a chart there and I would appreciate if I could get a copy of that, please.

In the estimates provided here, there is a branch in the department which is known as the budget analysis branch. And I would trust that the branch analyses departmental spending proposals and other issues that will impact financially upon the province. Given that, I would like to return to the matter of equalization payments which I had brought up earlier.

This budget analysis branch costs the taxpayer almost \$4 million every year. Last year the minister came to the public and said that there was an unexpected 240 million some-odd dollar cut to federal equalization payments. Many people in this province found that a little hard to believe. The province had growing tax revenues and also resource windfalls. These windfalls were in fact the reason why the equalization transfers were reduced. More importantly, everyone in the province knew of them but yet somehow the province said that it was all a surprise.

Madam Minister, I would like to know how you could not have known about these impending reductions in the equalization program; and secondly, did your department actually fail to inform you of this? I would like to know what sort of steps you would be taking this year to ensure that that very thing might not ever happen again.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the members opposite, once again I wish the members would get the facts before they start making allegations. The problem in the estimates was with the federal government. It's the federal government who does the estimates for equalization. And as I said to the member opposite before, I'm not blaming them; it's a complex formula. But again, please, if you want to be a credible opposition, get the facts about who compiles the numbers before you start alleging that something was done wrong by these people. Nothing was done wrong by these people.

What happens in equalization is this. The amount of money you get from equalization depends on two things: one, you should know how well your economy is doing. These people gave us very accurate estimates about how our economy was doing. But the other thing that equalization depends on is how well everybody else is doing, particularly the big provinces like Ontario. If we're doing very well and Ontario's doing very well, we don't lose any money in equalization. Everybody's exactly the same level — no problem. The problem occurs if Saskatchewan is doing very well and other provinces like Ontario is doing very poorly. Now what I would say to the member opposite, and that's why he really should flush out facts before he goes making allegations again about civil servants. I don't know what the members opposite have against civil servants who are working hard to do their jobs.

There's only one government in Canada that can know how every province is doing. That's the federal government. The federal Department of Finance can know how all the other nine

are doing and how Saskatchewan stacks up.

So sure, we do our own individual estimates, but what we can be held responsible for is Saskatchewan. Only the federal government can be held accountable for Saskatchewan relative to every other government in Canada, every other province.

It's the federal government whose estimates were wrong. It's the federal government whose estimates were off. And we're not blaming them because, as I say, it's very complicated. Some of this information goes back two and three years. And it's revised again and again as new information comes in from the provinces. It's complicated.

But once again, to say to the Department of Finance, how are you going to fix something that isn't broken, what was broken, in that anything was broken, was what the federal government was doing with their own estimates.

And I would say as well that the timing was incredible and I mentioned this when I was answering another question from the members opposite. February 1995, in the federal budget, the federal government says Saskatchewan will get about \$650 million in equalization. They go right through April, say very similar estimates. In October there's signals that there is a problem. But even in December at the Finance ministers' meeting, when we asked the federal government for the estimates and transfers, they've still got their old estimate from the February budget involved. So they didn't change their numbers until December.

Now unofficially they had changed them with us in October. And then again when they came back in January, they'd revised them even further downward so that we were losing not over 200 million but over \$400 million in equalization.

But again, where does the problem lie? The problem lies in the complexity of the formula. If there is a problem it's a federal problem and you need to be asking them if they're going to do anything to ensure their estimates are more accurate. I'm not upset. I don't blame them for this one because it's complicated. But please, Mr. Member, be a credible opposition. Don't make allegations against public servants until you have the basic facts.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. With respect to the minister's comments, would it not seem to make sense that when you're attending Finance ministers' conferences, if you're not receiving what you would consider to be accurate estimates from the federal government with respect to these equalization payments components, that you not converse with the other provincial Finance ministers. And that you find out in fact that Ontario isn't doing as well as the federal government may have expected so that your own budget analysis people can in turn make some sort of a more accurate estimate in those respects.

So I would just throw that out for a comment from the Finance minister, please.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Again, Mr. Member, the federal government has a responsibility, which is the responsibility to

collect all the data and to measure it against the formula. Now I don't know whether it's this incredible desire to defend at every possible turn the federal government. The equalization formula is very complicated, very technical. There's simply no way that I would sit there from the minister from Ontario and say, now do you have a couple of hours because I'd like to know exactly what your oil production under category X is.

I'm not running the Department of Finance. And those kinds of discussions should not be occurring at that level. What should be happening is each province sends its information into the federal government. They are still the government for all the 10 provinces. The federal government should analyse the data, give us regular reports on how they think we're stacking up relative to the rest. That's the way the system should work; that's the way the system does work.

The federal government was not accurate in its assessment. It was way off in its assessment of how Saskatchewan was doing relative to the rest. But it happens because it's a very complicated formula. I'm not blaming anybody. Why do the members opposite feel they need to blame somebody?

Mr. Aldridge: — Madam Minister, it would seem to me that, as you're suggesting, if you don't have all the pieces of a puzzle — and in this respect the federal government is not providing them to you — that you might go to some of the others and in fact find a way of assembling that puzzle in a more accurate fashion. However I'll get onto a different issue here.

I'd like to ask the minister something about the job creation targets that she laid out in the budget. The creation targets were laid out last year at .9 per cent job growth over the next two years. And that works out to about 4,000 jobs. Regardless of the number, the unemployment rate in this province recently went up.

Given these circumstances, I have a couple of questions for you. And I wonder if the minister could tell us whether the budget analysis branch advises her that this sort of paltry job growth will be enough to help provide the revenues that this government needs to meet all its targets. And secondly, the G-7 countries are saying that unemployment rates are now at crisis proportions. And given this, I wonder if the minister could tell us whether her budget analysts also consider the situation in Saskatchewan as a crisis.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite, I do want to answer the first part of the member's comment because it deserves comment here. The member opposite says . . . I say to the member opposite, the job of the federal government is to collect data from all the provinces, to analyse it, and then to basically funnel that information back to the provinces.

Essentially the member opposite says to me, but why wouldn't you, in case their revenue estimates are off, why wouldn't we be duplicating their efforts here and checking up on them? Mr. Member, what more and more taxpayers are telling us is they don't want duplication of activities. The Department of Finance

in the federal government has that particular function. They do it reasonably well. Of course they're off sometimes; they were off this time. Why in the world would we want to be spending tax dollars to try to duplicate a function that is clearly within their jurisdiction. We don't want to do that.

Now with respect to the jobs numbers. We believe these job numbers are extremely accurate. We don't just rely on our own analysis, we look at forecasts from other, independent external agencies. And I would mention to the member opposite, recently the Conference Board of Canada came out with its estimate of what Saskatchewan's job creation would look like right out to the end of the century, and their estimate is more optimistic than ours.

So we stand by the estimate. We feel that it is a very reasonable, reliable estimate and there are private estimates out there which are actually more optimistic.

(1915)

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Chair, under the administration portion of the estimates here, the minister made a cut of just over \$100,000 and I see that the vast majority of the cuts involved a reduction of staff. I wonder if the minister could tell us what staff were removed, and what sort of rules . . . or roles, I'm sorry, that they played in the department. Specifically, could the minister give us the details of how many jobs are gone; how many are full or part time?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Member, I would say to you through the Chairman, which page are you talking about? Which vote are you talking about? That'll help us in answering your question here.

Mr. Aldridge: — This is under the administration portion of the *Estimates*, Madam Minister.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite. One of the main reasons for the decline is there is no longer an Associate Minister of Finance. There are no costs associated with that particular position.

Mr. Aldridge: — With respect to that, could the minister make a point of telling us just how that move will make the department more efficient or more effective. And could you explain why the efficiencies were not introduced much earlier then, if it was something that was necessary?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite. Ensuring that the government remains efficient and well run is an ongoing process and so never at any one particular point are you going to say here we have the government, it's absolutely efficient, and now we are going to stop changing it.

I mean, what people expect is an ongoing process where you look each and every year for efficiencies. And I would say this year, despite all the reductions from '91-95, we managed to find across government \$50 million in efficiencies of one kind or another to help back-fill the cuts from the federal

government. If we hadn't had that, we would have been passing that \$50 million cut onto health boards, or school boards, or whatever. So it's an ongoing process and there isn't a day in which you declare victory. You continue to work at it.

Mr. Aldridge: — Madam Minister, I know we hear that it's important to, on an ongoing basis, make government more efficient; and administrative burden is an important aspect, of course, to be looking at in that regard. But I wonder if the minister could tell us whether there are other places in your department which might be top heavy.

For example, if the department was top heavy in administration, could it not also be true that it might be top heavy when it comes to personnel in the department who write speaking or briefing notes for the minister? Could you tell us how many people there are that are involved in that and why you need such individuals?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite, the member opposite is falling into the member from Wood River's style — or the former Tories, not this group — taking words and twisting them. The member says that somebody was top heavy. Didn't say anything was top heavy at all. What I said to the member opposite is that each and every year, you look over your whole operation. You see, is there a way to tighten it up. Can you tighten it up? And so you do, and you take action to do that.

So this will be an ongoing process, and I can assure you that each and every year we will ask the appropriate questions about is there a way to save money on the administrative side of government and direct it at services? And this last budget was an excellent example of that, where across the piece, we saved money on administration and directed it to front-line services.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Looking under the treasury and debt management section of the *Estimates*, I see the department is going to spend some \$2 million-plus on managing the provincial debt and providing investment management services to several funds managed by the government and its Crown corporations and other agencies. Could the minister provide a list of the agencies involved, as well as the Crown corporations, and the names of the funds that are to be managed, thanks to this subvote?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, what I would say to the member opposite, this particular agency manages all of the funding requirements of all aspects of government. It includes, for example, borrowing for all agencies including Crown corporations, and it includes managing all of any surpluses that might exist. And it includes dealing with bond rating agencies and ensuring that Saskatchewan's fiscal position is presented as positively as possible outside the province. So the agencies that this particular unit deals with is every agency in government. Anybody who requires funding, which they all do, that has to be borrowed, this agency would be dealing with them.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Madam Minister. When it comes to investment management and the debt management services that we're referring to here, I wonder would you be able to tell

us whether the Crown corporations provide revenues to the Department of Finance to pay for this service. And secondly, does the Minister of Finance ever use the services of Crown corporations for investments as is done in a similar way under this subvote of the estimates?

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite, one of the ways this province got into difficulty in the 1980s was that everybody was allowed to go off and borrow their own money so that you could have the Crown corporations off borrowing money. You could have subsidiaries of Crown corporations that weren't even basically on the books of the province going off and borrowing their own money.

One of the actions that the government took, this particular government, after the Financial Management Review Commission reviewed the finances of the province, one of the actions that we took was to centralize borrowing in the Department of Finance so that every agency of government had to borrow through the Department of Finance, and the Department of Finance had some overall control of the level of debt that is incurred in the province so that we cannot return to the 1980s where you didn't . . . probably the auditor at that time legitimately did not know what the level of debt was because it was borrowing here and borrowing there and borrowing everywhere. It's centralized borrowing for all of the Crown agencies, all of the government agencies, as part of the function and services of the Department of Finance.

Mr. Aldridge: — Madam Minister, could you tell the House whether any contracting out would be done with regard to debt management advice or investment advice? I know you've just stated otherwise, but I do think from time to time there might be some contracting out done, and in particular whether the department would hire any firms, and what sort of projects these firms might be hired for.

I know, for example, there's been some, recently, investment dealers made mention of. And could I just have some comment with that regard.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite, from time to time we will engage outside agencies to provide us with advice on particular questions or issues that we want dealt with, and to organize a particular activity. But generally, most of the work is done within the department.

Mr. Aldridge: — Well on a similar issue, Madam Minister, in the last year I've looked over quite a few documents that refer to transactions made by your government, and I've repeatedly noticed that certain firms can be used by the government in a variety of roles. The only common tie to these firms is that they are providing some services.

I'd just like to provide an example and maybe the minister might elaborate on it. I noticed that Goldman Sachs has provided services to the government in a variety of fashions. For example, it provided some advice to the government about the Crown Life deal.

Secondly, it provided services as a broker when it came to

selling of the Cameco stocks, or at least a significant part of those.

Fairly recently, Goldman Sachs was also the whole owner of a company that purchased LCL (Leicester Communications Limited) Cable, or the East Midlands Cable Group, from this government.

Madam Minister, there are undoubtedly more cases where Goldman Sachs has provided consulting services or has interacted with this government on either the Crown side or the government-proper side. Obviously these interactions, where you have a company providing services for profit and on buying government assets, offer a wide variety of opportunities for conflict of interest.

Could the minister tell us what sort of means the department takes to ensure that consultants hired are not in a situation where they could be in a potential conflict of interest.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite, the kinds of activities that such firms would engage in are the following. When the Government of Saskatchewan goes out to borrow money to finance the activities of the Government of Saskatchewan — all the programs and services that we provide — somebody has to underwrite that issue. That is, somebody basically has to go out and sell it and ensure that you get the lowest possible interest rate that you can with your credit rating. So those are the sorts of activities that you pay other agencies to perform for you, and all governments do this all across Canada.

Now with respect to conflict of interest, I'm not at all sure what the member's talking about. Obviously we have conflict of interest legislation. We have conflict of interest forms. We have a Conflict of Interest Commissioner who looks at the members of the government and what their interests are to ensure that there isn't a conflict. And you know, from the point of view of the taxpayer, that's what they have to be concerned about.

And I think we've covered that base very well because our process for defining a conflict of interest is very rigorous so that I have to disclose every interest I possibly have or anybody in my family has, so that we can be sure that they don't have any interest in Goldman Sachs or anybody else doing business with the government.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Madam Minister, but I believe the conflict of interest situation that I had in mind was something more where, for example, Goldman Sachs, being majority owner of Diamond Cable Company who bought the LCL Cable group, and then in turn they're doing other investment services for the government. That is actually the type of conflict of interest situation that I was trying to convey to you.

And if you might just make some comment about that, please.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Well, Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite, I would say that this industry is one of the most regulated in terms of that sort of conflict, so that there are

agencies well beyond the Government of Saskatchewan that would be concerned about some agency of the stature of the agencies you're talking about having a conflict. And they would be very, very scrupulous themselves to be sure that they would never be put in that position.

(1930)

Mr. Aldridge: — Well thank you, Madam Minister. In the economic development strategy that your government promised . . . to undertake a number of measures to support the goals of the strategy. A number of those will imaginably take place during the next year. The most important of those, I would gather, is your review of the tax system.

Many people, I think, find it's quite ironic actually, because here we have a government that campaigned on how awful the Tory tax system was; it complained about the flat tax, increases to the sales tax. Then it goes on to do nothing about the flat tax and then increase the sales tax and broaden it to all sorts of items.

To make matters worse, you've added to your own new taxes. One of them is the deficit reduction surtax and the other, although not called a tax, is SaskPower's reconstruction charge — or reconstruction tax, I would refer to it.

We also have a whole host of utility rate increases and it looks as though this coming year we can expect one from SaskEnergy again.

And I would wonder if the minister could take the opportunity to tell us plainly, without blaming anyone else, I wonder if you could explain to us how you just started to notice now that maybe these high taxes are killing jobs in this province.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite, once again, you're putting words into my mouth that were never there and I'm going to have to take a moment to respond to what you've said.

We've been waiting for the federal government to try to review its tax system. From the day that this federal government was elected, we said to them, stop fiddling around with the GST (goods and services tax); look at your whole tax system and overhaul the whole tax system. We made a commitment to them that if they did that, we would cooperate on the provincial level.

So we've actually only now realized that the federal government is not going to do anything with its GST promise except break it, and so therefore we're going to have to do a review by ourselves.

But, Mr. Member, you have to have a sense of humour to have Liberals who so regularly defend the federal Liberals standing up in this legislature at this particular time talking about tax promises. I mean, across this country people are pointing to the fact that in 1993 the Liberals ran on a scrap-the-GST platform. Their answer to it is to come, spread it further to provinces, and then to get rid of, to force out of their own caucus, John

Nunziata, one of the few people who said we should stick to our principles and our promise. As one of the programs on the weekend said humorously, obviously John Nunziata has far too much integrity for the Liberal caucus.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, thank you, Mr. Chair. Madam Minister, I guess more than a question, I'll put a statement to you. There was prepared . . . a prepared package sent to your House Leader some weeks ago, and I was firstly wondering when you're going to have that prepared for the official opposition. In fact when you come to estimates the next time, I would ask that you bring that prepared package and the answers with you. Also a package on an issue that you answered moments ago regarding consultants, I would like to see firstly, consultants and lawyers, any projects — the list of projects; monies paid out; to whom; for what; the whole ball of wax. And you might as well bring that.

Our caucus has had a difficult time with you in the last few days, Madam Minister. You're avoiding the answers in interim supply and again tonight. It's politics — from your point of view it's politics from the word go, and if we can't get past that in estimates then I'm asking you to bring the prepared packages with you. Otherwise you're going to have a long time in this session, Madam Minister.

So I would ask that you do that and that would help us get a little better understanding of just the amount of patronage that you, Madam Minister, you get involved with. And we've seen so many of the strong patronage jobs that have come through, whether it's Mark Stobbe or Craig Dotson, people that you have relied on and it's a very . . . you're running a very political show. So if you want to play those games, that's fine. That's fine, Madam Minister, because that's, I guess that's where you think it's at. But I'm just telling you, bring those prepared packages and then perhaps we don't have to listen to all your rhetoric.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite. We will provide some basic information at some point, but I would say to the member opposite, I have no problem being here as long as they want to be here.

I enjoy this. I think this is a very good forum for the public to understand what's happening with the province's finances. So I am not in any sense trying to get out of here quickly. I'm prepared to stay here just as long as you're prepared to stay here.

Mr. McPherson: — Sorry I had to beat you up there. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well I am actually glad to hear that, Madam Minister, because I'm sure the public would like to see you in a more open forum where you could explain then some of the comments that you had as far back as a year or two ago where in fact you're telling people along the west side of the province that you can't give them tax relief, can't give them a tax break, because you'd rather have Saskatchewan in a welfare position.

And I'm sure that they'd be concerned or would like to hear some of the comments that you've had about tax since that time where in fact you're talking about people never approaching

you to ask for any tax relief. Well I don't know who all you invited to your round of meetings, but I'll tell you what the public think out there. They think it was a charade from your department from the word go. You're running a political department, a political show. People have no faith in you, Madam Minister. They don't. So bring your prepared packages when we ask for them. And I guess in your department that's how we'll operate.

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite. Of course I think it's highly amusing that he believes the people of Saskatchewan believe that the Department of Finance is a political operation.

Mr. Chairman, this is a department that has been in place in the 1970s under the Blakeney administration, the 80s under the Tories, and we even have people, I'm sure, who go back to the Liberals.

But I would say to the member opposite, if he wants to stand here and debate, we will have lots of time to debate and we will talk about the tax increases that the member opposite voted for when he was on this side of the House. And we will ask him why he has changed his position. Why one day he thought it was appropriate to be on this side of the House, standing up for a budget to increase taxes. Then a little while later, moves over to the other side of the House to talk about why taxes have to be cut.

And I honestly believe my closing piece of advice would be, I think it's the Conservative's turn. Everybody needs to share.

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

**General Revenue Fund
Intergovernmental Affairs
Vote 30**

The Chair: — I would ask the minister to introduce his officials, please.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much. Beside me is Greg Marchildon, the deputy minister. To my left is Paul Osborne, who is director of international relations. Bob Hersche sits behind him; he is head of the telecommunications division. And right behind me is Ms. Gorrill; she is director of administration.

Item 1

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to first of all welcome your officials. I have been introduced to least one of them for sure at one point, and I very much appreciated our association. I learned an awful lot.

An Hon. Member: — Which one.

Mr. Osika: — I'm not going to tell you. Anyway I just wonder, Mr. Minister, if in advance of asking some questions concerning your department, could I ask if you in fact might have a package of completed documents.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — No, we have not got it done. There's a fair amount of work involved in this. We actually only settled the contents of it, I think, a week, 10 days ago, a little more than that, because we got a much longer package. And then I think we agreed to a somewhat abbreviated package, so I don't have them ready.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you. I just thought I'd ask in advance of going ahead with this. We're dealing with Intergovernmental Affairs, and as I mentioned to you earlier, I got a little confused. I was looking for the provincial secretariat but I say that in jest really.

I wonder if, Mr. Minister, you could give us just a brief description and a mandate of the Intergovernmental Affairs department, please.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Thank you very much. The mandate is to manage the province's intergovernmental affairs, this being in some ways regional, federal-provincial, and international. The department coordinates, develops, and implements policies and programs having to do with our relationships with other governments in Canada and other governments elsewhere. It also manages protocol, French language services, information technology and telecommunications, and the Office of the Lieutenant Governor.

It houses the following branches: administration, quite obviously, and I mentioned the protocol office. I think most members are familiar with this. They organized the reserve day and so. Federal-provincial relations has become a major one in the last couple of years or so with the election of the Péquiste government. This has become a major chore.

International relations. We coordinate, develop, and implement policies and programs with respect to other jurisdictions. Things such as trade agreements and trade disputes generally fall within our purview.

Constitutional relations. This department provides advice to the government on constitutional relations.

Information technology and telecommunications. We establish policies with respect to information technology, telecommunications, and we advise the government.

There is, as I said . . . the Office of the Lieutenant Governor is in this department. And there's also the office of French language coordination as well. Those are the main branches.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you. How does that compare, how do those responsibilities compare, to the previous Provincial Secretary's department and staffing components and relationship to that department and to the department as it exists today?

(1945)

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — There's been a gradual evolution of this department. It has accumulated, not new duties, but over the years it has accumulated additional duties from other

departments.

I believe when the former administration was in office, this was a branch of the Executive Council. It was really handled, I think, by the premier of the day. With this administration a separate department was, in due course, set up and gradually there evolved additional responsibilities until it's taken its present form.

I don't think there's any real change in duties from the day when the former minister was there in 1995 to today. But over the last five years, certainly the department has grown from being a branch of Executive Council, and a relatively small one, to a larger one. As I say, no new responsibilities to government, but it has collected responsibilities from other departments.

Mr. Osika: — The number of employees within the department, how does that compare from the time that your department was initiated, created, until now? Has there been any fluctuation, changes, additions, or deletions?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — In '92, it would have had approximately half the number of employees which it now has.

Mr. Osika: — Okay. With all this constitutional wrangling then that's going on in this country in this last three years, has your department taken on greater importance, would you say? Is that perhaps the need for the additional people?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Yes, I think that's a fair assumption on your part. Whether or not the department has taken on new importance, the issue certainly has taken on a new importance. And while I don't think there's an enormous number of new staff, they've been given an enormous number of new jobs and responsibilities in the . . . to some extent we've worked the staff all the harder. And while I'm on my feet, I want to pay tribute to a staff of which an enormous amount has been asked and which are very dedicated. In this department the work they do really is a labour of love, and if it weren't, the government wouldn't be getting anywhere near the quality of service it is. So I want to pay tribute to a very dedicated and hard-working staff.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I can't argue with acknowledging dedicated staff. I too can appreciate that. Can the minister provide us, perhaps, with the cost Saskatchewan has incurred because of the continual constitutional negotiations in the last four years. Would you have a breakdown of those costs? And a breakdown annually and perhaps what those costs actually went for — what the money was spent on?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — That's not an easy question to answer. Your question is, what has all the constitutional wrangling cost us. That is not an easy question to answer because it has touched upon several branches of this department. I can tell the member opposite that one of the results of the wrangling was the establishment of the constitutional relations section. You'll see in your *Estimates* 191,000 budgeted for this section. Probably, oh, perhaps half of that relates in a very direct way to the escalation of the

wrangling as you, I think, aptly describe it.

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Minister, do you envision these costs increasing over the next couple of years as we near, once again, perhaps another referendum, and an approximate cost that you might project?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — We certainly hope not. I think there's a renewed kind of optimism; I'm not sure what it's based on. I'm not sure whether it's well-founded or not, that perhaps the Government of Quebec may be on a different agenda. No one knows for sure, but I think we hope there's no escalation. But it could happen without warning, and there's not much you can do but meet the challenge when it comes. So I think the only honest answer I can give the member is I don't know. We hope not, but we will meet whatever challenges come our way.

Mr. Osika: — Does the federal government pick up any of Saskatchewan's costs when it comes to these types of things? Do they contribute anything at all?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — No, the answer is no. They do contribute directly to the office of French language coordination, but that is a responsibility which pre-dates the constitutional problems of 1995.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you. What about things like first ministers' conferences and other meetings with Canadian ministers? Is this . . . how much does the province spend annually on these types of meetings?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — There is a service which the federal government . . . which has been established by the provinces and the federal government called the Canadian Intergovernmental Conference Secretariat. It provides secretarial and translation services to the first ministers' conferences and when premiers or ministers meet as well. Our share of that is, this year, \$46,000 in the upcoming budget year.

The balance of the cost is travel. That's really the only cost of these conferences to us, is the travel. First ministers' conferences, the federal government, I understand, picks up the cost of the meeting rooms and so on if there is any additional cost. But the cost to us is almost exclusively the travel.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you. Under the first subvote in administration, there appears to be some decrease. What is that decrease . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Under the first subvote, administration, there has been a decrease in the operating budget. Could you account, please, for this decrease?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — The motivation for it was that all departments were asked to find economies with the reduction in the transfer payments from Ottawa and our determination that we would back-fill all of the cuts in Health. All departments were asked to find economies and find ways of cutting back. This department was no exception. The reduction is mainly due to reduction in system consulting services and travel expenses and contractual services. So there's just an effort to economize.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you. Could you please, Mr. Minister,

explain to the House the role and the purpose of the accommodation and the central service section of the department.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — That is basically the deputy minister's office and the office and the facilities provided to Melinda Gorrill, who I introduced as being directly behind me. That's basically the office and facilities provided for them.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you. And under the section of protocol office, can you just give us an idea of what the mandate of that particular office is, please, just in a nutshell.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — They arrange for . . . protocol arranges for visits from . . . arranges for visits of distinguished visitors, and they arranged for the Armed Forces Reserve Day here. Perhaps it would be most succinctly put if I simply read the following: plans, organizes, and supervises visits of foreign diplomats, heads of state, and government delegations. It also oversees state ceremonials and symbols and provides protocol consulting services and policy and organization of provincial honours programs.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you. So I take it from that, that when we have an important visitor at any time to Saskatchewan, such as a head of state or a member of the royal family, the costs for those trips come out of this protocol budget. And if it does, does the budget then fluctuate from year to year in anticipation or is there some projections that are made in order to accommodate costs of those visits?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — The costs of royal visits is borne by the province, the federal government. It's borne by the visiting jurisdiction. It will vary enormously depending on the length of the . . . what a royal visit would cost would vary enormously depending on the length of the visit and the particular member of the royal family who came. We've a policy of not hosting more than one royal visit every couple of years, basically for reasons of economy.

As for diplomats and so on who come, of which Qiao Shi would be one example, generally we do not pay for accommodation, although there may be rare exceptions to that. The costs of such visits is normally confined to banquets and so on put on in their honour. That's normally the only expense to which we're put.

Mr. Osika: — Can you share any secrets with us, Mr. Minister, and let us know if there are any important guests coming to Saskatchewan during this coming year?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — There is a number of diplomats coming. I don't think you're asking about individual diplomats. There's one, for instance, coming some time this week. I will spend a half an hour with him and that's the sole extent of it.

Really as a result of my visit to China, there are a couple. One is Vice-president Gu, who is basically head of the agricultural cooperatives which distribute the potash. And so it's a key figure for us.

The governor of . . . or representative at that level, the governor of Jilin province, Governor Wang, will be . . . we expect to have him coming in September, and that's a province . . .

We have had a number of twinning agreements. They're beginning to bear some solid fruit, and so we're anxious to develop a good relationship and turn his visit into one he'll remember with fond memories.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you. How long has the protocol office been in existence, as we know it today?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — We believe it was created in the late '70s. I think it's fair to say I'm the only one here that can go back that far, and my memory isn't that great. I know it was around during the Blakeney years. I could not give you a more precise date than to simply say we think it was around in the late '70s. I know it was in existence during the Blakeney years.

(2000)

Mr. Osika: — Thank you. You didn't have to really reveal your age, Mr. Minister. But I appreciate that.

I notice that the budget for the protocol office has really been hacked up for this coming year. And first of all, under salaries, over half of this budget item is gone. Has anybody actually been let go from the protocol office?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — The primary saving here is that there is . . . Last year's budget reflected the 90th anniversary celebrations, and this is where the funding was. The difference is primarily that.

Again in an effort to economize, we eliminated some media advertising for the honours program, and I think there's one less position in the area as well.

Mr. Osika: — Okay, thank you. That would also probably explain the reason for the drastic cut in the operating budget as well. Okay, thank you.

If we could just jump ahead to international relations, Mr. Minister, can you tell us how long this office has been around and what the duties of that particular office are?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Again with respect to the length of time it's been around, the function has been around for awhile. And many of these officials have, Mr. Osborne being one, have worked with this government in a professional capacity over many years.

As a separate branch though, the separate branch was created last year, but the function has been around for some time. Let me just again give you a summary of the function. It coordinates, develops, and implements policies and programs of the Government of Saskatchewan in its relations with the governments of foreign jurisdictions and the governing bodies of international organizations and their institutions.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you. I believe that the federal

government also has a department of international relations. Does the minister see this perhaps as an unnecessary overlap here?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — The federal government has the Department of External Affairs which advises the federal government on a wide range of matters relating to its relations with foreign countries and foreign jurisdictions. And we certainly make use of that.

It is a foreign service of worldwide renown, one of the finest, most professional in the world, and we make good use of their assistance. This is not a duplication in that Saskatchewan has separate relations with foreign jurisdictions which require a Saskatchewan perspective and Saskatchewan policy.

And I could give you a number of instances of such areas where we have, if you like, a competitive advantage, and where we want to exploit that. That has to be generated internally and in many ways that's what this jurisdiction does.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you. Does that mean then that this department covers the costs of overseas trade missions and trips by ministers to other countries?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — It would cover any trips by public servants in this department or the minister, but not otherwise. The majority of trade missions are trade promotion and trade promotion falls within the jurisdiction of the Department of Economic Development. The vast majority of trade missions are trade promotion.

And the number of overseas visits by this department is much, much smaller. But yes, where public servants from this department travel overseas or when I did in January, it's covered by this department.

Mr. Osika: — Is it possible to get a list of all the trips taken in the past year and the costs attached, including anyone or everyone who went on these trips, minister's staff and anyone else that perhaps is paid by the province.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I'm not sure entirely what the member asked for. I can give you the . . . yes, I'm not sure this is . . . what I have before me is my own. What you asked for was the officials as well. I think what I'll have to do, I say to the member from Melville, I think what I'll have to do is to send it to you. I was looking at this as I was standing up. It does not include the officials who . . . the travel of officials. I didn't quite anticipate that question. We will undertake to provide it to you as early as possible.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you. Perhaps, Mr. Minister, would you not agree with nearly all departments conducting trips and that your department again is simply perhaps a source of overlap and perhaps maybe some waste involved here.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — No. The functions of the departments are different. Economic Development handles those matters which relate to trade promotion. Generally speaking, our department handles matters relating to trade disputes or trade

agreements or other relations. No, I don't think there's any overlap nor do I think there's any waste.

I've not seen a precise comparison done, but I would venture to say that overseas travel by this government would be modest by comparison to almost any other government in Canada. This government has a very austere travel regime.

Mr. Osika: — Just one more question along those lines, Mr. Minister. What about the overlap perhaps with Executive Council. I know that the Premier and the cabinet do much international travel. What department handles those trips?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Executive Council in this government does not keep in Executive Council staff which could advise and support him on all these sort of trips. Those are drawn from the departments. Thus when the Premier travelled to the Ukraine it was . . . his advice and support came in part from members of this department. So there is no overlap. Certainly members of this department are expected to give advice and support to anyone travelling overseas if it is relevant and proper for us to do so, if it relates to areas in our jurisdiction.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I'm sorry I had to step out for a few minutes. Did I hear you say that it's your department that will look after delegations from other countries when they're in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — That's correct.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Could you then tell me possibly the importance of these missions and the meetings of their politicians with politicians from your government when they come to Saskatchewan.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — It depends entirely on the country involved and the person involved. I was explaining to the member from Melville — the Leader of the Opposition actually, I should describe him — the Leader of the Opposition that I meet relatively often with ambassadors.

Some of them, we have only a very narrow and small relationship with. Our trade would be very small. But some of the people I meet with, it's done as a courtesy to them and because I know that they'll extend the same courtesy if I happen to be travelling in Austria or something. I just picked that country right out of the air.

Some of them are of the most profound importance. I mentioned a prospective visit of Vice-President Gu. It is his organization that distributes potash throughout China. That is one of the most profound importance, and I felt the visit of Qiao Shi to be in the same category. It depends entirely on the person and the country, and it's very hard to generalize.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Are you referring to the delegation from China that was just here recently?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Yes.

Mr. McLane: — Right. I guess could you tell us how many people were in that delegation that came with him?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — There was, we understand, 150 to 200 on the aircraft; only about 75 got off. And I should point out that there was no expense to the province by reason of that visit except the noon luncheon. I think that was the only exception. The balance of the expenses were picked up by the Government of China.

Mr. McLane: — Well thank you, Minister. So the only expense was the luncheon. Could you tell me what day that was, and where it was held, and who was invited to the luncheon?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — My officials point out that there were a few other expenses, and perhaps I should give you an exhaustive list. Gifts were \$672; luncheon was \$2,634; photography, \$373; translation, \$650; the total cost was \$4,329.

Who was invited to the luncheon? We tried to invite people who have an important relationship with China. Thus we would invite private sector people . . . there were some private sector people who have major dealings with China. Wheat Pool is one, by way of example. And I think one or two of the potash companies were invited as well. We invited the dean of the College of Agriculture from Saskatoon, because the Chinese are very interested in agricultural training. And so on and so forth.

The list was certainly not made up of party people or anything like that, believe me. We went through the list, tried to pick people who would have an interest in hearing what Qiao Shi had to say, and who in turn he would be interested in seeing. So we tried to match the guest list to the individual involved.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'm happy to hear that the list was quite extensive and certainly not party people in your view.

The question also, part of that question, Mr. Minister, was where the luncheon was held and who from the Chinese delegation was invited?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I don't have a guest list here. I do have a guest list if the member . . . of the Chinese people. We do have it and we could send it to if you're interested in it. Let me summarize by saying there was the Chairman Qiao, who was a member of politburo, as I think you know. There were a number of ministers, I would think six to eight, and some supporting staff. There were a number of people from the Chinese Embassy in Ottawa, a number that I wouldn't want to estimate. Those are the basic people who came. The chairman, ministers, and supporting staff from the embassy in Ottawa.

Mr. McLane: — I guess I'm interested about the 75 that got off the plane. Was there a criteria that was used as to . . . were all 75 invited, or were 50, and what criteria was used in deciding who would be invited?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — There were the people whom I mentioned earlier — Chairman Qiao. There was the ministers,

the supporting staff, Chinese Embassy people, their supporting staff. There were about 20 members of the Chinese media who got off to cover the visit. And there were about 20 security people. That is a rough description of the folks who debarked in Regina.

(2015)

Mr. McLane: — I guess back to my question. You seem to be skirting around the criteria, Mr. Minister. Can you tell me what criteria was used picking and choosing from the 75?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I'm sorry. I missed that question entirely. I wasn't skirting it; I didn't hear it. I can only guess. It's not our criteria. Nor was it shared with us. Nor are they under any obligation to tell us. They just told us who's getting off and didn't bother to explain themselves, nor are they under any obligation to do so. I can only assume they did the same thing. They went through the people who were there. They said these are the people who have an interest in our relationship with Saskatchewan, and these are the people that are getting off. So I assume they went through the same process, trying to match people with the province, but I can only guess at it. They didn't . . . under no obligation to tell us.

Mr. McLane: — No, Mr. Minister, the question was, of the 75 people who got off the plane, how many of them were invited to the dinner at the Ramada and what criteria was used in choosing from the 75?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — We're going to have to give you a more precise accounting. This is an estimate only, more of a guestimate than an estimate. We think about 20 were invited to the dinner . . . to the luncheon rather. And again it was on the basis of relevance. Was their job relevant to our relationship with the People's Republic of China? None of the media and none of the security people, so far as I'm aware, came to the luncheon at all. It was the Chairman, the ministers, and some embassy staff for the people who were there.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you. I guess . . . who would decide on that? And secondly, do the titles of first secretary and second secretary and counsel from the embassy, how influential positions would you class those people being?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — The determination as to who went where was done in consultation primarily in the federal government and the People's Republic of China. This after all was part of a Canada-wide visit which the federal government really organized.

We were involved. It was a tripartite discussion in, I suppose in each province, but it was a tripartite discussion here. We entered into a discussion with the government, with the Chinese Embassy, with External Affairs, that together, put together a list for the luncheon. That's how it was done, actually.

Mr. McLane: — Mr. Minister, you're surely not trying to tell me that the federal government dictated who you or who your Premier invited to the luncheon at the Ramada. If you are, then can you confirm or deny that?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I wouldn't say they dictated it. They certainly gave us advice, which in many cases we took. As I had described earlier, External Affairs is competent, professional, and one of the finest such departments in the world and we value their advice fairly highly.

I don't think I dictated who should come, but they certainly gave us advice. I think in most cases the advice was followed even if it didn't accord with what we anticipated.

Mr. McLane: — Well I guess I'm happy to hear you say that you appreciate the advice from the federal government and I wish you would follow a little more closely, and if you would then probably you could get off this business about fed bashing day in and day out, night in and night out, minister after minister. So I'm very happy that you appreciate the advice from the federal government.

We look forward, Mr. Minister, to your list of who was at the luncheon, and who actually made up the list, and the criteria as to who was invited and who was not.

I will share with you though, and I'll send you across, a couple of names, Mr. Minister. And we were informed that there was a couple of fairly high-profile people that were not invited to this luncheon and would ask — if we could pass that across to the minister — as to why these people were not invited to the luncheon and felt slighted because of that and were asked to go somewhere else and did gather in another fairly large group of fairly influential people from that republic.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — The names and the titles strongly suggest that those are people from the Chinese Embassy that . . . well again, there was a limited amount . . . the budget — and we did want to keep the cost down — dictated a rather small group. And thus we entered into discussions with the Government of Canada, with the Chinese Embassy. I'm disappointed that they, that the people on that list, felt slighted. There was no intention to do that.

By and large, by and large we, I say to the member from Arm River, we don't know, we're not intimately familiar with, the chief factors in Ottawa. I think that's, I would assume that's, where they came from, although I'm only guessing. In terms of who we ought to invite from the Chinese Embassy in Ottawa, and I assume that's where they're from, by and large we would accept advice of the federal government as to who needs to be included and who doesn't. I suspect the guest list from the Chinese Embassy was by and large a creation of the federal government. We simply wouldn't know, and we would rely very heavily on their advice.

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Minister. I would ask that the next time that we sit in this forum if you could bring back the answer as to why they weren't invited, if indeed they were not, and the reasoning for that. And at that point in time, I would hope that you wouldn't blame the federal government for it, because I think it would be incumbent upon yourself and your officials to see that the appropriate people were indeed invited when they were in Saskatchewan, and of course upon that time . . . if deemed necessary, that you would correspond an apology to

those people.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — Well I didn't . . . There was no admission. Please don't misunderstand me. There was no admission in my comments that anything untoward had happened, nor was there any admission that any apology is owed to anyone.

The seating at the luncheon was limited. Who came from the embassy, by and large, a decision of the Chinese Embassy. They would rank their people, and we would rely very heavily on the Government of Canada for any additional advice we needed on who came from the Chinese Embassy. I'm not suggesting any apology is in order. I am simply saying that we — the seating was limited — we accepted advice from others on who ought to be there from Ottawa; we took it. I'm not at all admitting that there's any apologies owed to anyone. I want to make that quite clear.

We couldn't seat everyone who came, the whole 75 of them, nor would it have made any sense. We wanted a select group of them to meet with senior people from the government, from the universities, and from the business community in Saskatchewan, to meet with them. And you couldn't get everybody sitting down so I'm not . . . we will certainly give you the list of who was invited. We'll try and . . . if there's . . . if we can expand beyond my bare comments that who came from the embassy is largely a decision of the embassy and the Government of Canada and we acted on their advice, I will do so. But I'm certainly not undertaking to extend any apologies. I don't think any were owing, actually.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, just back to federal-provincial relations, I guess the same question I asked previously. There appears to be a potential for a great deal of overlap between this particular office and services provided by other places in government, such as the Executive Council. Can the minister just briefly explain the necessity of this particular office and its mandate. That's the federal-provincial relations.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — The Executive Council under this government is . . . the function is largely confined to the coordination, supervision, and management of the departments. They have almost none, almost no functions such . . . there's almost no public servants who provide direct-line services such as who would advise on federal-provincial relations. Almost all those people are in departments.

Thus if the Premier would be meeting with the Prime Minister on a subject which might be trade, his advice would come not from Executive Council, whose function again is to organize, supervise, and coordinate the departments. He would get his advice from Economic Development.

If the Premier had to meet, was meeting the Canadian Petroleum Association, to pick a different example, there's nobody in Executive Council who would have expertise to advise him. I mean somebody handles his schedule, but beyond that he gets his advice and assistance from Energy and Mines. Thus, in the area of federal-provincial relations, he looks to this

department to get advice on federal-provincial relations. There's no expertise in his own department — in his own department, in Executive Council. There's no such expertise in his own department. The Premier draws advice and support from all areas of government depending upon what he needs at the time.

Mr. Osika: — Now then, how does this then differentiate itself from constitutional relations? Pardon me. Perhaps I'm asking that backwards. Could constitutional relations not be handled under federal-provincial relations and perhaps be a cost savings by doing it that way?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — No, it would probably cost exactly the same, and in our view it wouldn't operate as effectively.

Again, Executive Council does not have programs. They do not have capacity to develop policy or research; by and large that is . . . I shouldn't say by and large; that is entirely done in the departments. Thus when the Premier needs advice and support on the issue of constitutional relations, he looks to this department primarily, but he might also want to look to Justice if the matter is more legal than policy. And we think that's a better way to organize it. We think it's a whole lot cheaper than having those services in Executive Council. Because when they're in Executive Council you tend to duplicate them. They tend to be in Executive Council and there also tends to be a separate function in the department. We think this is a more efficient and a cheaper way of running things.

Mr. Osika: — How many full-time staff work in the federal-provincial relations office and has that number changed at all since 1991?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — There are five people in this branch. Your second question and really your main question was, is there more or fewer than there were four years ago, '92. That's a hard question to answer because the department has been organized and reorganized to the point where comparisons are very hard to make.

I think it's fair to say though, there's at least one more person working in this department than there was in '92.

Mr. Osika: — How many in constitutional relations?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — There are only three. There is a position or two which is vacant. There are only three people working here.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you. We've been through a period of pretty intense constitutional talks in this country as everyone's aware and I'm just a little curious — what do these people do when we are in a constitutional lull, which thankfully we seem to be in right now? What do they occupy themselves with during those periods?

(2030)

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I was smiling because the group is really . . . we're in danger of working these people to death.

We are, let me . . . there's a list here which is relatively long, too long to read. Let me try to summarize it. We try to organize and prepare and think our way through a response to the Quebec issue, if I can put it that way. We try to coordinate and develop policies relating to our relationship with other governments. We also work with the group which you'll see at 9:30, SIMAS (Saskatchewan Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat). We also work with them and with other departments on the whole issue which is coming to the fore — being promoted — in a very energetic way by the federal government and that's the issue of self-government.

So our department is involved in that as well. Perhaps we'll take a question or two more if the members have one and then we should move on, I think, to Women's Secretariat.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Then I take it from your last response that we should not see any increase for the budget in this particular department as a result of them continuing to work on those programs. It should remain fairly well static then.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — You're not going to find this, I think, very satisfying but we can do no more than hope here. We hope things remain quiet on the constitutional front. If that is the case, current staffing levels should remain. If something breaks loose, we have no option but to meet the challenge and get whatever resources we need to meet the challenge. So the best we can do is hope that things remain calm, as they are now.

Mr. Osika: — Okay, thank you, Mr. Minister. This next question, I don't want it to sound impolite because, as you know, I hold you in a great deal of esteem, Mr. Minister. But it seems to me that the Premier is usually the one we see in other provinces representing Saskatchewan at different events, and it is most definitely the Premier at the constitutional table.

I guess what I'm asking of you to do — in a very delicate manner as possible — is to justify your ministry. It just seems to me that much of this work is handled either by the Premier himself or in fact the Justice minister.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — That is largely true. It's true in all provinces. It's true in the Dominion of Canada. Exactly the same situation occurs. All provinces have a Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs with the premiers and the Prime Minister playing a major and, in many cases, the senior role in the area. What occurs in Saskatchewan is precisely what occurs everywhere else.

There is a need for the ministers. Let me give you an example. At their meeting in last August . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . St. John's, thank you. At their meeting in St. John's, the premiers established a council on social policy because they felt that the current system was not working well. A federal government would use its spending power to develop new programs and then would not continue to fund them and the provinces were left with them.

That work was left to the ministers, which I want to pay a tribute to my predecessor, the member from Regina Dewdney,

who did some very good work on it. But the ministers did that. The ministers carry on . . . on some issues such as social policy we are ministers in every sense of the word. Sometimes, quite frankly, our role is somewhat like that of an associate minister. We aid and assist the premiers in their work.

So this is the system which has grown up. It works exactly the same here as it does elsewhere and I think the system functions reasonably well. I think Canadians are reasonably well served by the system of intergovernmental relations which we have.

Unless the member has one or two questions you feel strongly about, I think I will move to move that we report progress.

Okay. I move we report progress, Mr. Chair.

**General Revenue Fund
Women's Secretariat
Vote 41**

Item 1

The Chair: — I will ask the minister to introduce her officials first, please.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to introduce to the House tonight Faye Rafter, the executive coordinator of the Women's Secretariat, and Joan Pederson, the assistant executive coordinator of the Women's Secretariat.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And welcome, Madam Minister, and staff. It's nice to see you.

I know that the Women's Secretariat has had some bit of controversy maybe within the government deciding on the importance of the Secretariat. In my short time here in office, in this Assembly, I'm amazed at the number of departments who delegate responsibility to this small sector of government.

Madam Minister, I'm interested in hearing how you can review 1995 and give our caucus an overview of the workings of the Secretariat.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you. I'm more than pleased whenever I can get to brag about the Women's Secretariat and the work that we do. There's really about five basic areas that we work in: one is research and policy development; another one is public awareness; policy coordination within government; consultation, both within government and in the community; and then administrative and financial work related to the various goals and objectives.

Now there's quite a bit of detail. I guess I'm unsure as to the level of detail you would want. But we participate both with all the other ministers responsible for the status of women across Canada. And in that we would work on things like national indicators across Canada to measure the status of women, because sometimes indicators that governments collect are too general to be of specific value in understanding how one particular sector of the society is doing.

So part of the work that we're doing as women is to find ways

that we can actually measure women's progress and the various economic, social, and political participation within the society.

Now one of the things I might mention that might be of interest is I just, in the last two days, received a document from the federal government that they've just adopted a gender analysis policy within the federal government where they're actually looking at ways that they can see what the impact is of policies on women as well as men because, for example, certain choices in health or certain choices in economic development may have a differential impact on men as to women. And so they've now actually adopted a formal policy at the federal level to be able to analyse their policies for the impact that they have on, shall we say, the two major sectors in our society.

I'm a little bit indefinite of how much detail you want. I do have . . . I'm wondering which would be best, whether to get a copy of this and send it across to you so you could take a look. That might be the best thing to do. There's no reason to not do either of these.

Could I get you to copy these and then we can hand them across. That might take a minute.

Ms. Draude: — Maybe while we have this minute, could you just explain a little more fully the document that you received from the federal government and what you feel the impact is going to have on your Secretariat?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Again, sometimes governments unwittingly make policy decisions that have an impact that it wasn't intended to have because the analysis is not as complete as it could be, of the impact.

For example, a particular decision on maintenance provisions could have a differential impact on male single parents versus women single parents. A policy on training could have the effect that it supports male-dominated occupations as opposed to occupations that are traditionally more typical for women to be employed in.

There's even differential impacts between, shall we say, different economic classes of women because, of course, the problems of a high income earning woman would be different than a single parent woman who perhaps did not have grade 12. So there's even a need to be sensitive to whether there is particular supports that are needed within a program for single parent women that may be different than for an unemployed male who didn't have parenting responsibilities.

So these are the kinds of things that the Women's Secretariat would increase sensitivity to within the government as we go through the various kinds of policy development.

I think it's particularly important to note in the area of even things like apprenticeship trades, a lot of these came out of the male-dominated trade unions. And I don't think it was anybody's intent, but just by virtue of the way those occupations developed and the way the apprenticeship programs developed, as it works out, most of the apprenticeship trades seem to be within job classes that are dominated by men,

and many of the job activities that have a high content of female workers don't have the same access to apprenticeship types of structures and opportunities.

So one of the things that's been discussed, for example, in the apprenticeship trades area is broadening some of the apprenticeable trades so that women also has the opportunity to go through an apprenticeship route and some of the occupations that are more dominated by women.

The other thing we do is look at whether we have the same kind of access to training opportunities and that results in things like particular focus on women in trades. Because when we look at the reasons why women have been traditionally underpaid, part of the reason is that sometimes the work that women do has been less valued than the work that men do, and therefore there's a wage differential.

But it also has to do with promotion. It has to do with career selection. It has to do with education. It has to do with supports to work. So when we're looking at policy we need to look at all of those things that have made for that wage differential between men and women.

And it's important to address the wage differential because many women in the society today are sole family supports or are a significant portion of family income. It's no longer the notion that they're just supplementing. Quite often now, it's the main breadwinner for the family, either whether it's a single parent or a two-person family.

And so this issue of wage inequity has become, I think, uppermost in women's minds, and the Women's Secretariat tries to look at the range of policies that can have a positive effect on that.

So I haven't yet had the full analysis of the federal document. If you're interested in it, we could make sure you get a copy of it and that might give you an opportunity to get a little better look at that.

(2045)

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Madam Minister. The 1995 budget had allocated \$975,000 to the Secretariat and yet the final figures actually showed that you only received 935,000. How did your operation work on a day-to-day basis to make adjustments for this actual cut-back?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — There was largely two factors that contributed to that. One was that we did eliminate the Women's Advisory Council, which was a 12-member council from the province, and as well we're moving into cheaper space, so the other one was really just a cost saving based on accommodation.

Ms. Draude: — So the work of the advisory council is done by another department or another segment?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I think what the change in the use of the advisory council represents is that instead of women having

. . . well what should we say, some easily packaged concerns, there's now much more depth of discussion. And what's happening is that many of the departments are setting up their own advisory bodies if it has to do with domestic violence or if it has to do with health care concerns.

They're consulting directly with the women who are more engaged in those professional sectors, and the women who were at the advisory council level were feeling that they were duplicating the work that's being done more substantively in other places.

So I think what's happening is we're broadening out the base of how government consults in order to get women's perspectives and policy development and program development. And the women's council was just seen to be a body that perhaps was not able any more to encompass the wide range of knowledge and involvement that is now present in these other advisory processes. So I see it as, I guess, a bit of a success story that we're able to move into this more broader base of women's involvement in policy development.

It's also a policy of the government to have 50 per cent representation of women on boards, commissions, and agencies, and in that way there's a very direct involvement. In fact the health boards in the province, for example, through the electoral process, have achieved 50 per cent of women's representation. So in areas where those views are now clearly there and clearly established, women in those professional areas are directly representing their views into the various areas. And it just seemed that that was the more effective body.

That doesn't mean that we might not from time to time bring women together for the purpose of a consultation on a topic or some discussions, but as a permanent structure the Women's Advisory Council was not seen to be as needed any more.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Madam Minister. It was interesting to hear you say that the government has appointed . . . on most of the boards they have 50 per cent of the appointees are women. Does that hold true with the Highways board?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — We could get that for you. I don't have specific boards. As I say again, it's our goal to have 50 per cent. We're not always right at that, but we've certainly increased it greatly from 1991 when we were first elected.

If you just wait for a minute, I could get you a figure on the overall improvement I think in representation.

Yes, at the moment we're at 43 per cent across the board in boards, commissions and agencies and continuing to be conscious of that whenever a new board is appointed. And in fact, I would invite you, if you know women who are interested in letting their name stand for boards, to submit them to the general list of names that are kept on a computer reference and referenced; whenever a board comes up for reappointment, all the names are looked at and we try to get regional and a variety of representation on to the boards.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you again, Madam Minister. I failed to

ask you when we first came in, we had a prepared list of questions that we've given to various ministers on departments; I was wondering how you were making out with completing that list of questions for us?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — We apparently haven't received our list yet. But our understanding is that it takes a couple of weeks to get it done after you actually get the list because of the amount of work involved. I'll have to check in to why it is we haven't received it and see if we can get working on that right away.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Probably the next time this estimates come up, it'll be done by then.

In the 1996 projections, I see that there's only \$901,000 that'll be allocated for the Secretariat. Do you see that this cut-back is going to affect your operations this year and can you tell me how?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I think I essentially answered that before. That's being achieved through the lower accommodation costs and the elimination of the advisory council.

Ms. Draude: — Madam Minister, the staff component has remained constant in your department, and so you're going to achieve the savings mostly just through the space allocation? I guess the question I've been waiting to ask you and you probably have been waiting for me to ask is: I asked the Minister of Labour if he considered pay equity a women's issue and now I'm asking you what your stand is on this question. Do you consider pay issue to be a women's issue?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — As I mentioned earlier, many families now depend on the woman component of the family to either be the sole breadwinner or certainly a significant partner in the economics of the family.

And I equate pay equity to women getting the vote. I mean to me, it's that significant of an issue. It's a fundamental issue of equity. And of course any time you're undergoing fundamental changes in society, it takes time because you've got attitudes. You've got systems. You've got pay structures. You've got a whole range of things that have come together to create that circumstance.

But certainly I think equity is everybody's issue because it affects the quality of life for the children, for the family. What that person is going to be able to participate in depends on their income. What the people who depend on them can participate in depends on their income. And if you have underpaid women raising children or families that are under-resourced, then there's no doubt that that creates other difficulties. So I think this is an issue that the whole society should be concerned about.

Ms. Draude: — I take it from your response then that you feel that there is . . . that it's not just a women's issue. And yet I imagine there's some controversy with your colleagues in whether this department should be solely responsible for pay equity. I guess as representing women, I feel very slighted that

women's issues should be delegated to one Secretariat where we actually . . . it's probably one of the lowest funded departments, and most of the problems and all the concerns that women have seem to be delegated to your department.

Do you really feel like you can do . . . that your department, with the amount of funding you have, is going to be able to deal with all of these issues?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — If I could use a parallel of the Indian Metis Affairs Secretariat, one of the things that we're very careful to do both in the Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat and in the Women's Secretariat is to not take over the program responsibilities of the other departments of government. What we're intended to do is be a policy window, to create a focus, to create policy coordination around those issues but not to take over the responsibilities of other departments.

So when we have a discussion on pay equity, for example, that would be a full-cabinet, full-caucus discussion, and we would arrive at our policy as a governmental position, not merely as a Women's Secretariat position, although we may do some of the work in coordinating the information throughout government. But we also work with the Public Service Commission and the Crown Investments Corporation in working on these matters.

So whereas we do the coordinating work, we don't do all of the work, nor do we take full responsibility for the policy. We only take responsibility for articulating the decisions that need to be made in regards to that policy. I don't know that I could explain it much better than that.

Ms. Draude: — I had asked a number of questions through the Minister of Labour and was disappointed to hear that he was going to designate . . . I had to wait to ask the questions to the Secretariat, so maybe some of the other questions I can wait till he comes up because I guess we agree that the women's issues are not just women's issues.

The Minister of Labour, I guess, has offered to answer some questions for the Women's Secretariat.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I'll just mention that I have every faith in the Minister of Labour's support for all of these issues, but we collect the information on a more routine basis so it's maybe a little more available to us in the format that you'd like.

Ms. Draude: — I'd be delighted to wait and ask him some of these other questions then.

Madam Minister, can you explain to me how you've been able to effect some changes that will basically make a difference to some of the women's concerns in this province?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Okay. The things that we've been involved in, in the last year, include things like the new labour standards legislation that improved working conditions and benefits for part-time workers, protection for domestic workers, and strengthen maternity and other family-related leaves.

Under the new occupational health and safety legislation it's the

first time this type of legislation has dealt with harassment. Under employment equity, it was extended to include all provincial Crowns and agencies as well as executive government, the requirement to have equity plans and implementation plans.

The sexual harassment prevention program is actually education and training that's established within the Women's Secretariat. In child care, there's been funding increases in subsidies to low income parents, over 1,000 new licensed spaces, and then a number of spaces for teens with infants.

In violence, there's The Victims of Domestic Violence Act, which was the first legislation of its kind in North America, and I'm very pleased. I think this Act has much exceeded even my expectations of it. I was actually discussing this with the then minister of Justice when this particular piece of legislation came in and I think it's been particularly successful.

In health, there's the province-wide toll-free information line on sexual and reproductive health; the breast cancer screening program has been greatly expanded; the new women's health centre at the Regina General Hospital; and then about 20 million being spent for home care expansion and support for family care-givers. Because of course in the absence of government support for care-giving, most women will find that it tends to fall to them within the family unit. Although that is changing, but it still tends to be the way it is.

There's been more funding for the enforcement of child maintenance orders. And as well, welfare rates have been increased in some of the areas, and the supports for training for young, single parent women and other women dependent on assistance.

In the human rights area, the Human Rights Code was amended to prohibit discrimination on three counts: sexual orientation, family status, and receipt of social assistance. Legal aid services were expanded. The unified family court model extended throughout the province, and the aboriginal courtworker program. And these would have all been things where we were represented on interdepartmental discussions to work cooperatively towards the best and most comprehensive, inclusive policy that government could develop.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Are there any men working in your department?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I guess we had one, but we lost him.

Ms. Draude: — Well I hate to be facetious, but I can see that with all the work you're accomplishing, it must be just women in there.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — I'd just like to speak for a minute about the women's abuse program. I know that there is . . . the program is fairly new, and can you give me an idea of the work that's been accomplished by the people that are within this program?

(2100)

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The government has a close working relationship, both interdepartmentally and in the community, with the Provincial Association of Transition Houses, Sexual Assault Services of Saskatchewan, the Provincial Partnership Committee on Family Violence.

These are all groups that we work closely with to try to address the problems of abuse in the community. Now there's also The Victims of Domestic Violence Act, and what has been particularly useful about this Act is all the training that's been provided to law enforcement people in order for them to be able to implement the Act. And of course whenever you have that kind of an educational process, people not only learn about the process but they also learn about the problem. And I think if there's anything that people have found particularly beneficial about this Act . . . I think there's been about 220 people who have utilized the Act over the past year, but there's also been a vast amount of training has gone into the community on this topic, based on that.

There is a fund that provides compensation for victims of crime, which is a counselling and support program for children who witness domestic violence; a sexual assault centre, child-friendly activities and facilities, and methods to effect investigation, prosecution, and treatment in areas where there is child abuse.

And as we've found obviously, over the past couple of years, these are things we still need to improve because it's very difficult to — in any of these abuse situations — to not end up re-victimizing the victims. So I mean it's a sensitive area where we really do have to put more work yet into how we approach dealing with these issues.

In cooperation with community groups, we have developed guidelines on protocols of how to handle these kinds of issues. There's been a community-based response to the abuse of older people because sometimes older people are a bit defenceless in their own care.

We were a co-signer of the *Regina Declaration on the Rights of Women Subjected to Violence*, along with the other federal, provincial, and territorial governments, and that was focusing on the needs of women victims who come into contact with the justice system. As well, the Children's Advocate to give more access to people concerned about children's services within government. The family law division in the Court of Queen's Bench, which is more sensitive to considering all family matters.

And I think that would be sort of a broad overview. But there is an interdepartmental committee that works with a community-based integrated committee to keep improving the strategies and the protocols for dealing with violence and abuse.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you again. Is there just one coordinator or a couple that are heading up this division?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — No. What normally happens with these

interdepartmental committees is, depending where the funding comes for the particular program under discussion, there will be a lead department assigned who coordinates it. But all the work is done interdepartmentally. So each department would contribute its piece to the strategic resolution of the problem being addressed because that might vary from issue to issue, which departments might be involved in something. If something has more of a legal context, it might involve Justice and Social Services. Some other things might involve Health, Education, and Social Services. Some might involve Economic Development and Education.

You know, it depends what the particular issues are, but there's always a lead department assigned depending on where the primary responsibility lays for the issue being dealt with.

Ms. Draude: — Does your dealing with these various programs and departments, does it require a lot of road trips, and are your staff on . . . do your staff do very much travelling inside the province or outside the province?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — No, within the Secretariat again, the focus of our work is largely within government, and so for the Secretariat itself not much travel is involved. For some of the other departments who work with community organizations and what not, they would likely be doing more travelling.

Ms. Draude: — How do you coordinate what is happening within Saskatchewan with the other provinces, especially the closer ones? Do your policies work with theirs or are they similar?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — When the ministers responsible for the status of women get together, they do develop a joint agenda for action on the Canadian front and then that's brought back to all the respective governments. And certainly on the matters that we jointly agree on, there would be some common efforts to move ahead on those matters. For other things which might have more of a founding in a department, for example maintenance orders, the Department of Justice would work with other provinces to set up reciprocal agreements and what not. But that would be once a program response has been decided on.

At the policy level, it would be done more at the national level with the other ministers. For example, one of the things last year they decided to concentrate on is women in economic development. And one of the things the Women's Secretariat has produced this year is a book on supports for women wanting to get involved in business. And you may in fact know women who would be interested in receiving that book. But we've just recently published a book for women interested in being involved in business and where they can get the information support they need for that.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you again, Madam Minister. That was one of the questions . . . one of my next questions is women in business and what you are doing to support them. Can you give me an idea of what the percentage of business set-ups that are operated by women? Is that percentage growing? Are you dealing more with them in the last few years?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — There is a single window of access through a toll-free number in the province. Of course, that's for all people. From 1981 to 1994 the number of Saskatchewan women who were self-employed increased from 11,000 to 29,000. So that's more than double. Women were initially 11.3 per cent of the self-employed. From 1981 to 1994 the number of self-employed men decreased at the same time that the number of self-employed women was increasing dramatically, so that by 1994 women comprised 27.6 per cent of the self-employed in Saskatchewan.

During this same time we also increased our portion of the total labour force from 38 to 44 per cent, so our increase in self-employment increased at a greater rate than our participation in the labour force. So that means as women entered the labour force, we entered more often in business than as being employed by someone else. According to StatsCanada, the number of self-employed women tripled between '76 and '94. So it looks like in the area of business, watch out, because women are apparently on the move.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you again, Madam Minister, and I'm not sure if you have these facts, but women whose businesses succeed are 2:1 compared to those of men in business. Working with the federal government, there's the program where they have \$5 million to aid women in business. Is the Women's Secretariat working with the federal government and this program?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — They have set up women's entrepreneurial centres but I'm told that they consulted really not at all with us other than a brief request for a comment of what did we think of it in the beginning. However they do use our materials, and as I mentioned, we have produced a book of all the various supports and funding sources.

As well, I might mention that the Department of Economic Development has had a program for small loan co-ops and I know women in the city who are members of these small loan co-ops, where they form a loan co-op. And I think it's up to a \$5,000 loan to the various women are members of the co-op and they support each other in the business endeavours that they do. So, for example, one woman I know used it to buy computer equipment so she could do her own home business service and what not. And that's one of the mechanisms that's used. But as far as the entrepreneurial centres, the province has not had much of a direct role in it at all.

Ms. Draude: — What percentage of the larger projects are women involved in? I know quite often we see the smaller businesses where the loans for \$5,000 sort of actually make or break the business. But the megaprojects that we see government so often interested in, I'm wondering if you see more of an increase of women on those boards and as directors of those companies.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I think generally all I could say is that might be a question better put to the chamber of commerce. But certainly wherever women are involved in enterprises they would be as welcome to apply and be considered for any programs that government may have as anyone else. Of course,

our deputy minister of Economic Development has most recently been a woman, and the head of SOCO (Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation) as well. So certainly, you know, women are there. They're in those kinds of roles. There's many women who have accounting . . . if you look at the graduates from accounting school these days, most of the people winning the awards and the large amount of graduates tend to be women. So I think that presence is definitely there, whether or not the business community is taking full opportunity of it.

I know that some banks like the CIBC (Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce) and what not make very definite efforts to work in those directions. But I really think that's a policy of those private sector employers. We don't have any requirement for them to have those policies. But wherever they do and wherever that makes up their workforce, certainly they would be as eligible for any of the loans or grants as anybody else is.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you again. Is the Women's Secretariat involved in program definitions or in setting up day cares? Are they involved in the actual decisions of government when it comes to publicly funded day cares?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes. We have nothing to do with the actual operations. We would have again a policy function. And, for example, if the federal government was to put forward a policy on child care, we would certainly be part of reviewing whether we thought that policy was either useful or applicable to the Saskatchewan situation, and whether in fact it was something we might wish to participate in. But we have no operational program responsibilities in that specific sense.

Ms. Draude: — And the University of Saskatchewan, the programs for women's education studies — it's not a department, it's a unit — are you working to improve the status of this area?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — No. Our only role in there would be maybe providing resource support to various activities they're carrying out. But that's really under the purview of the university and their board of directors, so it's . . . board of governors.

Ms. Draude: — Madam Minister, the mandate of the Women's Secretariat is so broad, and there's so many areas that I feel that there isn't the public profile that there should be, and I'm sure that your funding isn't allowing it.

I'm wondering if you're considering changing the mission or the vision statement of the Secretariat to elevate and bring to the forefront of the public minds the importance of the Secretariat. Or is it something that the government is trying to decide if it's better off just combined within the Department of Labour or maybe making a men's secretariat as well?

(2115)

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well we like to think that one's already firmly in place, kind of across the piece. But it is difficult because, like I say, it is largely an internal function it performs. And it's like Executive Council to cabinet, where there's an

internal policy and research function. Although it's very valuable and very needed, it's not a public service agency.

Certainly there's many people who understand the role that we play in trying to bring their views forward into the bureaucracy, but they're not necessarily terribly vocal or people who would necessarily think that they had to do that because basically they have a good working relationship with the Secretariat, and they're satisfied to the job that we're doing, representing them within the policy program areas of government.

For example, we meet with aboriginal women's groups, immigrant women's groups, farm women's groups, and try to bring all these perspectives into the interdepartmental policy work that we do. But I mean, you're right; there is a great difficulty in knowing how you get any profile.

We do have a large number of publications that are available publicly on everything from preventing harassment, working family, the *Women's Directory*, action on women's equality. And people who are counsellors and work in different areas tell me they make use of these materials.

But again, I mean, you identify a problem. I don't know; if you have any suggestions on how to cure that, let me know.

Ms. Draude: — Madam Minister, the aboriginal women and women who are members of visible minorities face even different barriers in today's workplace. Are there any programs in place that help the aboriginal women and women of minority groups to overcome the stigma that they face in the workplace today?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The one major initiative we have is the employment equity program that goes across all the Crowns and departments of government.

But the other thing I might mention is I met recently with a group of immigrant people — men and women — who were interested in how they might bring their views more directly to government. And so what we did is we looked throughout government to see where the places to hook them up. So part of our job would be to hook them up to the departments and the places that can hear their views directly and include them in their policy development and program development. Because I think it's much better if they speak directly to the people that are affecting their circumstance rather than speaking through us.

But I would see my job as minister, and the Women's Secretariat job, is to make sure they're linked up to government and that they're connected so that their problems are heard and are addressed.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you again. How much money is allocated to these specific causes? The source publication outlines these issues as important ones so I'd like to know where the funding is coming from to deal with these problems.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I wasn't maybe totally clear about the question. If you're asking about the publications, we could

certainly give you a communications amount. But if what you're asking about is the amount allocated to dealing with each of the problem areas, that would almost be difficult to do because, for example, take something like domestic violence. There's many departments who are responding to that in different ways and so you'd have to be able to figure out the amounts across all the areas of government.

So in a way it's a little bit like trying to figure out exactly what's spent in the Indian and Metis Affairs portfolio. It's difficult because it's . . . people are citizens of the province but then there's also special programs. So there would be one level of funding that exists as we all get a share of services and programs of the provincial government; and then another portion would be where there's special, targeted programs.

So like I say, if you're interested in the publishing amount, I could give you that . . . is this it here? The overall amount for the communications budget was in the contractual services involving developing the different materials, was 50,000. We did spend 10,000 particularly on a board-staff handbook specific to aboriginal women with appropriate, I guess, social and historical references because some of the other materials aren't as relevant in that community and we did contract with a woman to work on that particular handbook which has now been completed and published, made available.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you again. How do you decide which of the issues that are dealing with native women are going to be looked at under the Women's Secretariat now and what will be looked at under Indian and Metis Affairs? And I'm thinking of, do you have department staff that actually would go to the North and meet with some of these women to truly understand some of the problems they have there?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — In the particular instance of the development of the handbook, they had had a particular goal of their own to get their organizations in better shape so they had asked for some support to do that. And really we have no master plan. If we feel, in discussion with them, that this is a priority, that they've thought it out, that it's a broad-based priority of their organization, if we have the resources in that budget year then it's something we would consider.

Now when it comes to, again, direct abuse in violence services, child care services, and what not, we would see our main responsibility to be linking people up to the appropriate department, because again the Secretariat is a window into government where people who aren't sure who to go to, who to talk to, it's a starting point for their dialogue with government. And it would be our job to then move them into the appropriate areas of government to actually get attention to the particular issue that they're raising.

Ms. Draude: — I don't like to think of farm women as a visible minority but they seem to be a group of people that are overlooked at this time. Farm women have special needs and one of the items that I'm thinking about is the farm fuel tax rebate that I brought up in the House a while ago, and I was told that it was a human rights issue. I find it hard to decide where these questions should be put and also feeling bad for the

women of Saskatchewan that our needs are delegated to the human rights. Are you working or pressuring the Department of Economic Development or Agriculture to ensure that policies like the farm fuel tax rebate are actually brought to the forefront and women are looked at on an equal basis?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — In those areas we would have provided broader support to the organizations in pursuing their own issues.

And so, for example, we recently were involved in helping to support an SCN (Saskatchewan Communications Network Corporation) link-up of farm women to discuss some of their issues. And it would be more that kind of thing rather than pursuing a specific thing. On that issue we would certainly link them up with knowing how to address that issue and who they would have to speak to in order to address it.

But I will not claim that farm women have been as well represented in the discussion as some other women have, and again, for all the reasons you mention, of access, location, etc. But it's something that the Women's Secretariat has set as a goal, to have better ability to have those discussions with farm women and to bring their perspectives into the general policy mix.

I would have to say that for many years anybody but . . . I don't know how else to describe it, but very mainstream concerns were not well represented within the discussion because, of course, people who have other kinds of concerns often are a bit powerless, a bit voiceless, and a bit short of cash in order to make their views known.

So it does require special efforts to outreach into communities that haven't had as much access to government policy, to make sure that their views are included. And as we made a special effort in this last year to do some work with businesswomen, so do we still need to do some more work, I think, with rural women.

Ms. Draude: — Madam Minister, I'm hoping that you will stand up for these women that need to have their voice heard and not just put them in touch with another department official. It gets really frustrating and I think it's one of the reasons why we don't have the profile the Secretariat needs because they don't have the opportunity to actually make a difference. They can only refer all the time.

One of the other concerns I have is the downsizing in government. A study that I have seen has shown that often women are victimized by the government downsizing. I'm wondering if you can tell me, with this recent budget and the lay-offs that are . . . job positions that are lost, how many of them are women.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — It would be difficult, actually, on the lay-offs, because there's bumping going on and anybody who's a unionized employee has actually quite a wide scope of where they can bump into other positions. So that would be very difficult to know. We do have some workforce analysis on the existing workforce of government, if you're interested in that.

For the representation in management positions within government for persons . . . okay, for persons of aboriginal ancestry, persons with disabilities, members of visible minority groups, and women — the total representation within government in management is 32.7 per cent. For the permanent staff it's . . . The workforce analysis . . . I'll run down the female just by occupational group. For administrative, fiscal and clerical, it is 80 per cent, and that's the issue we talked about earlier, female-dominated classes. Engineering and applied sciences, 4.2 per cent. Agriculture and environmental resources, 8.4 per cent. Inspection and regulatory, 28 per cent. Education, 52 per cent. Medical and related, 73 per cent. Social services, 45 per cent. And trades, labour, and operational services, 21 per cent.

And I'll just mention that that's why whenever I talk to people about pay equity, I say that there's a number of areas that have to be addressed because obviously you can't be an engineer unless you've taken engineer's training and similar to other professions. So it's important that there's a broad range of educational opportunities, a broad range of promotional opportunities. And it's important that we make sure that within the education system that that awareness is increased so that we have a better representation through all the occupational groupings.

Ms. Draude: — Madam Minister, I was trying to determine if the salaries in comparison from the Women's Secretariat to other departments . . . I see that the staff of 13 people, full-time employees, works out to about \$51,000. And yet with what I compare it to other departments this seems to be below normal or near the lowest amount. Can you explain that?

(2130)

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Again it's got to do with the whole issue of occupational groupings.

Most of the women who work within the Women's Secretariat would be working in policy analyst type of positions that require a fairly significant level of education and background. And I think that the figures are a bit skewed there because it's a unit that is particularly put together for those purposes, so it would require mostly people who have a fair — like I say again — a fair bit of training and experience in those areas.

Probably if you compared a similar male occupational grouping of people in a specialized professional area compared to a more general occupational grouping, you'd find the same differential.

Ms. Draude: — Madam Minister, with only \$149,000 allocated to run the programs and policy initiatives that deal with equality and equity in the workplace, it seems obvious that it's not a true priority for your government. Can you please tell me how the Secretariat plans to adequately educate the public on the importance of equity and some of the other women . . . the issues we've discussed with less than \$150,000 a year?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well I guess I'll give the same answer to you that I give to a lot of people who believe that government is responsible for everything. I think that all people

in the community are responsible for this education and I think all people, no matter what organization they're in, what church they're in, what business they're in, are responsible to — what union they're in — are responsible to make sure that these things exist within their own organization, within their own workplace, within their own church. Government will never be able to be the sole arbiter of people's attitudes, opinions, practices, etc. So if it's something that we hold as a value for our society, we all have to get involved in making those changes.

And I don't . . . I think for people to abrogate their responsibility to government . . . government can facilitate that; it can set a tone; it can provide some resources. But at the end of the day, it's not a thing that governments can ever do by themselves when you're talking about advancing social change. It really has to be embraced by everyone who cares about it and thinks that society will be improved by it. So we can do our part within the limited resources of government, but I think it's the kind of thing that you and your colleagues and everybody else has to get involved in before a real, broad-based social change would ever take place.

Ms. Draude: — Madam Minister, most of the new legislation dealing with the labour standards in the workplace, especially for part-time workers, makes it look like women's issues are indeed labour issues. Did the policies and programs come into place by mutual decision making and consultation with the Women's Secretariat and the Department of Labour?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — There was two areas that the Women's Secretariat was more involved in with the labour standards. One was in funding specific consultations with women so that those views were well expressed within the process and also working particularly on the domestic workers issue because this was an issue where nobody had really paid much attention to the domestic workers' situation so that was an area that the Women's Secretariat focused on.

Ms. Draude: — Madam Minister, I have one more question to ask you this evening and that is I'd like . . . will you tell me what you would like to see the profile of the Women's Secretariat be by the end of this decade?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — That is indeed a very sweeping question and being the women that we are in the Women's Secretariat we will likely be sitting down in the next month or so to work collectively on that topic and also at the next conference of the ministers responsible for the status of women. But certainly our goal is that women would have not only equal opportunity but equal results, in both political, social, and economic realms.

And I think at that point we could say a job well done but until then I guess we just keep plugging.

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — I ask the member from Moosomin . . . we had planned on starting this at 9:30. Do you have one or two questions you want to ask before we go on to SIMAS . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . All right. I move we report progress.

**General Revenue Fund
Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat
Vote 25**

The Chair: — I would ask the minister to introduce her officials, please.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. This evening sitting to my left is Gord Nystuen, the secretary of the Secretariat; Ernie Lawten, assistant secretary, Indian Affairs; Donavon Young, assistant secretary, Metis Affairs; and John Reid, policy and planning.

Item 1

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. I just want to welcome the minister and her officials here this evening and to thank them for the time they're taking for this particular part of the estimates.

Before we begin I just want to give just a brief overview for the purpose of the people in the House, Mr. Chair, in reference to the area I wish to be talking mostly on and this will be on the Metis side of the minister's department. I will not elaborate on the Indian at this point in time until a later date.

But to begin questions, for all purposes, what's your interpretation and your understanding of what a Metis person is?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The definition that we've used as a working definition is someone with Indian ancestry who self-identifies as a Metis person and who has some acceptance in the Metis community as a Metis person.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you. The mandate of this Secretariat is to promote and facilitate partnerships between aboriginal and non-aboriginal peoples and organizations. Can you explain how this can continue with decreasing budgets and ever-increasing problems in aboriginal communities due to the years of inadequate funding and the lack of social and economic programs for these people and especially the Metis people?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — One of the mistakes that I think governments made for many years was that the answer to every problem was money. Now certainly in the case of very poor communities that you're talking about money has to be part of the equation, but there's also a lot of importance in the building of relationships that lead to business development, lead to employment. And there's a number of partnership agreements that have been signed around the province that I think are leading the way in terms of new ways that people are coming together to solve the kinds of problems you're talking about.

There is a greater interest at the municipal level to meet with aboriginal people because municipalities are becoming more aware of the mix of populations within their boundaries. Some of the ... both Indian bands and Metis are making arrangements with resource companies. There's co-management agreements being developed. And in some cases people are making direct agreements without government intervention

with resource companies.

And so I think part of the change is not only one in putting direct money into programs, but it's in building relationships that can lead to economic opportunities, jobs, and in the case, for example, of agreements that have been signed between health boards and aboriginal people, they've made an agreement for the health board to work directly to hire more aboriginal people into their workforce; to assist in making sure that people get the training that's required; to include people more in policy development, program development, and in service delivery; and even to assist in identifying economic opportunities.

For example, such as the building of a special care home for people of aboriginal ancestry where it would be an economic opportunity where the health board, for example, might guarantee to place people in that facility. But it would be owned, built, and staffed by aboriginal interests or a corporation that might be set up.

So I think what's developing is a different way of getting at some of this stuff.

Mr. Belanger: — Just for the sake of the House, in reference to your department, what's the significant difference between the Indian and the Metis people?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Certainly within the constitution, there's a generalized recognition of Indian and Metis and Inuit people, but there's no doubt that one of the, I guess, significant advantages that the first nations have is that they have an identified land base.

They have a definite political entity in terms of the 72 bands in Saskatchewan and they have a long history of land-based self-governance, so I think just that fact in itself and the fact that the federal government accepted its fiduciary responsibility for first nations but has not for Metis, has led to quite a difference in circumstance based on those factors.

Mr. Belanger: — Are there any other significant differences beside the ones you mentioned here tonight?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Probably one of the other largest ones I failed to mention was the fact that first nations have treaties.

Mr. Belanger: — In reference to the response, what portion of the money allocated through your department goes to the northern half of this province? How much goes to the southern half? How much goes to the Metis? And how much goes to the treaty? I think you're going to find a significant imbalance here.

(2145)

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I'm pleased to report that we're actually not doing too badly. Of course, when it comes to the first nations, one of the major expenditures we have is the treaty land entitlements, which is the settlement of long-outstanding land obligations. And northern Saskatchewan has received the lion's share of the settlement monies, so north and south, in

terms of those settlements, that comes very well. With the balance of the limited funding that SIMAS actually directly delivers, about 60 per cent goes to first nations and 40 per cent to Metis, which considering the population differentials, is not too bad of a breakdown at all.

Mr. Belanger: — What criterion are these allocations based on? Again, they're not obviously based on the Indian and Metis population. So what are they based on because, you know, really there is no significant records in terms of populations.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes. There's basically three separate categories of funding. One is organizational funding and for first nations that would largely be through the FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations) and through the Metis through the MNS (Metis Nation of Saskatchewan). And as well we do provide funding to Metis women, Aboriginal Women's Council, and Indian women's, because they find that sometimes without extra resourcing they are not able to represent their concerns within the structures of their organizations.

The second area is employment development which is a status-blind program. And that basically involves things like the health partnership agreements where a staff person from SIMAS goes out and encourages large employers within the community to make a commitment to bringing aboriginal people both into the workforce, and into the economical development opportunities, and into the policy and programs of their organization. And I feel we've had actually, over the last year, great success in having people within the community commit themselves to these objectives and put resources in place to actually make it happen.

And then there's a very small portion that goes to service delivery, and this is directed largely to the large urbans. And that would include things like the Metis management authority and the tribal council delivery bodies within the urban areas. Although there is some small amounts of program dollars, very small, based on merit, that goes to things like a little bit of supports to Batoche, to the Indian veterans, Indian and Metis veterans, to those kinds of things where there's been special celebrations or special acknowledgements.

Mr. Belanger: — I sincerely realize the, you know, the provincial perspective that you're responsible for as Minister of Indian and Metis Affairs, but I'd like to kind of concentrate in my particular area a bit for a few questions and then we can bounce all over the province if we'd like.

I've got a list of population bases from the communities of the west side, and of course, when we say communities we're including Metis, and off-reserve Indians, and non-status Indians in the non-aboriginal population. And this is from the CREDO (community regional economic development organization) information that I requested.

According to the CREDO region populations, in particular for my area there's 8,779 people living in what I term as Metis communities compared to the band membership of 3,334. Now that's approximately if not three times the population, yet we're not seeing the adequate funding coming from your department.

Can I give a copy of this to your department?

And I guess my question is why are the Metis of the north-west simply not seeing any adequate financial support from this government when we have an Indian and Metis department.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I'll thank you for recognizing that you got the figures from CREDO because of course that's a body that our government has established to help facilitate economic development. I will mention that we don't fund constituency by constituency. We would be looking at the entire North. And you can't contrast really the spending between Metis and first nations because we don't fund the first nations. The federal government does, who I might add has vastly deeper pockets than we do and has spent vastly more money than we could ever contemplate, even best-case scenario, on any kind of a province-wide basis. Certainly we need to keep paying attention to being as equitable as we can but some of the solutions for the North will be found in developing the economic development capacity and not necessarily in direct transfers of cash.

Mr. Belanger: — Yes, I think this has been an ongoing battle in terms of who is responsible for the Metis people, is being transferred from Ottawa back to Regina — it's a federal responsibility, is a provincial responsibility. And what we see here is, according to the *Estimates* here, is you are in essence reducing your support for aboriginal organizations and issue, on page 76, almost in half. And I was just wondering how much of that cut was to the Metis aspect of your organization versus the Indian.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Our budgets still aren't finalized but our goal certainly is to have parity in the funding.

Mr. Belanger: — I guess tonight we'll leave to the next questions. Will finances that are allocated to the Metis nation be reallocated and redefined once a enumeration of the Metis population of this province is completed?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — A large motivation behind the enumeration, I think, is more for the purposes of MNS being able to identify who their new . . . their own members are, and who exists in terms of their political realm within the province.

We don't, at this point, allocate the funding particularly based on population. We provide the same services to all persons living in the North, and the fact that they are Metis would not result in them getting less funding. Certainly they may, because of some special education initiatives and what not, receive more, but certainly not less. And I'm not quite sure how that question would practically affect most areas of programing. If perhaps we got into a debate with the federal government where they were actually willing to pay for some of their share of the responsibility, then the numbers would become more pertinent to that discussion. But we don't currently base our funding to Metis based on numbers, so having more numbers would not change that.

Mr. Belanger: — I think, Madam Minister, that you're confusing me a bit here when you say we don't really look at

specific regions, we don't look at numbers of Metis, we have to look at the federal government issue. It's all becoming very confusing to me. And I think the key thing here is what you're saying to me this evening is that it does not matter from the financial perspective whether there is 10,000, 50,000, or 80,000 Metis living in this province when it comes to financing from your department in support of the Metis people.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I think that's a misrepresentation of what I've said. What I've said is that Metis people are citizens of the province and we don't increase or reduce their funding based on the number they are. They are included in the total count of people in the province, so the funding that goes to the North would be based on people, not on race, not because they're Metis or any other race. They're just citizens of the province and therefore they get their funding accordingly.

Mr. Belanger: — Well then shouldn't your department be called Indian and people secretariat as opposed to Indian and Metis? I think the key thing here is, Madam Minister, with all due respect, is the fact that there is very little support for the Metis people within your government. And I think the funding for supportive aboriginal organizations and issues, as I mentioned, has been cut from 1.09 million to 550,000. And I ask which organizations are going to lose their funding and what avenues are available for them to make up the loss of funding? There are no avenues. And am I correct in saying that the major cut is coming at the expense of the Metis side of your department?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I'll restate two things. When we fund organizations that are not Metis, we don't fund them on the basis of the numbers who are not Metis and so there would be no reason why we would fund Metis organizations based on the number who are Metis. We don't fund any other group in the province in that way. So I think it's a misrepresentation to suggest that the funding that we get from Ottawa for equalization payments, for transfer payments on health, education, and social services . . . those are based on total provincial numbers and are not broken down in the way that you suggest. So people would be included in those total figures.

And you asked a second question about the funding. I mentioned already that when we divide up the funding in the department, it'll be done equitably, likely 50/50 Indian and Metis. And even though we haven't finalized our budget, that would certainly be our goal. Even though the numbers would not necessarily support that breakdown, that would be our goal, is to have an equitable split.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you for the response, and again I'll state that this particular segment of my questioning is based on a Metis perspective and of course, being the fair politician I am, we will also put a similar effort into the Indian and first nations estimates section of this particular part of our schedule.

I guess the other question is: salary expenses for policy and coordination are up by 339,000. How many people work in this department? What's the breakdown in terms of Indian versus Metis, and what's their average salaries?

(2200)

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I'd just like to mention to the member before I respond to his question, the numbers that you gave me for your constituency being over 8,000 Metis and 3,000 first nations. I hope you don't represent them in that proportion when you're also representing them, that because there's 8,000 they deserve twice your attention than the other folks do.

The comment on your particular view of the department, there's 22 people. Eleven are aboriginal — 6 first nations, 5 Metis — with an average salary of 35,000.

Mr. Belanger: — Again, continuing to dedicate this particular segment to the Metis questions, what kind of policies are being worked on at the present moment, with respect to the Metis peoples and their effort to finally have some economic and social justice offered to them?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Okay, our department would largely focus its attention on our bilateral processes and our tripartite agreement with the federal government. So what happens is we would have a bilateral meeting with various ministers of the government, meet with the Metis Nation, and we would agree on a common work plan for work that we wanted to accomplish.

Matters specific to northern economic development would now be dealt with through the minister responsible for Northern Affairs. But we would certainly have a role wherever we could in facilitating the discussions that the Metis Nation indicates to us that they wish to be engaged in.

For example, we're involved right now in negotiating their portion of the casino revenues from the associated entities fund, and the method by which those funds would be allocated and distributed. And we have representatives, and they have representatives, who sit on that discussion. But our agenda would be something that we mutually develop and then develop a work plan and proceed with it.

Mr. Belanger: — In 1994-95, 29 organizations were funded through grants to the Indian and Metis organizations. How many organizations do you expect will be funded in 1996-97? And who are these organizations? Where are they from?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Although the budget has certainly the appearance of less money coming from this area, this is not the only area where money comes from. And one of the factors that's been taken into account is the money through the revenue-sharing agreement with first nations and the associated entities fund revenue-sharing agreement with the Metis.

Now that will certainly flow new money into those communities, which much of it could be used in ways that were previously funded through Indian and Metis Affairs. We do not, at the beginning of the year, pre-select everyone who would get funding because over the year people send in requests for various things and they have to be considered on their own merit. But again our goal would be to be equitable in the distribution of that money.

Mr. Belanger: — What are Indian and Metis management authorities? And who is employed by them? And what do they do for the Metis people of the province?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — One of the things that we've been struggling with, in the urban areas, is how to adequately address all the issues of the large numbers of people who may have moved either from reserves or remote rural or northern locations into the urban areas, and how to address both the relevance and the accessibility of urban services to these folks.

And there's four management authorities existing in the province for the purpose of really trying to both figure out and directly deliver some of the services to urban aboriginal people. Now two of those organizations are tribal councils, one is Metis, and the other one is an aboriginal group that's made up of a mixture of first nations, Metis, and non-aboriginal people, really with the intent being they're working on evolving models of how to deliver services within urban areas that are meaningful and accessible to people.

Mr. Belanger: — I certainly applaud your effort in regard to looking at services being delivered and developed by the Indian and Metis organizations. Really without money and without a solid commitment behind that plan, I don't suspect we'll see any success in that particular model.

Goes back to my second question, you know, kind of related to this, is funding to Indian and Metis management authorities has also been cut in this year's proposed budget by almost one-third. Can you tell me which authorities are losing their funding?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I will mention that the picture's not quite as bleak as you paint. One of the groups who has been particularly successful has been the Saskatoon Tribal Council, and recently through an agreement with the Department of Social Services, they've taken over responsibility for delivering services. And with that responsibility went 200,000 in funding. So they are doing very well and working closely with all community organizations in Saskatoon to create a better service delivery system in that city.

Now again consistent with my previous answers, we have not come to any final decisions about the funding for this year in the urban authorities, but it is a very difficult question because of course it's tied up not only with issues of self-governance, but it's also tied up with issues of who has traditionally been providing those services in the absence of any firm decisions on self-governance.

And as well you may know, Mr. Member, from being involved for so long in these areas, that there is also sometimes some considerable internal organizational strife that gets in the way of solving some of these problems. So this is an area where we're really all having to be kind of patient and see if we can work our way through to something which . . . the first concern of everyone involved is the well-being of the people living in the community.

Mr. Belanger: — I certainly echo your sentiments in regards to

the aspirations of how we must work together. I guess in essence, do you have a guestimate that your department works to in relation to the total treaty population versus the total Metis population?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well at this moment, you know, again aside from particular features like the treaty land entitlement which is an agreement based on a long-standing obligation to provide land entitlements, the rest of the money, the balance of the money, I would say goes in larger amount to Metis, based on population as we have any estimate of it, than it does to the estimate of first nations.

Mr. Belanger: — The other question is, could you also provide an outline of the mandate and the goals of the aboriginal employment development program, which is controlled by Metis, and which is controlled by first nations?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — As I mentioned earlier, that particular function is status blind. Its objective is to strategically link both first nations and Metis people with large employers so that we can enhance both the economic development and the employment opportunities.

You may be familiar with our employee who's responsible for that, a Mr. Wayne McKenzie, who has certainly a long history within the Metis community and I think is just a real good example of a real go-getter on behalf of his community and behalf of the objectives that he's committed to. I'm very pleased to have someone of his calibre pursuing this work for us. And he has successfully helped us to conclude, is it four now, health agreements — four health agreements with large health districts within the province, one of them being an amalgamation of health districts on the east side, and as well is now working on two large projects which, until they're completed, I can't really say who the discussions are with. But a very large employer in the North will be of significance to yourself and also with a large, major union in the province.

Mr. Belanger: — Again, I echo the sentiments and I support you in your efforts. Then why is this program, if so successful, which is severely underfunded in my opinion, is also suffering a further cut of \$70,000?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — In actual fact, although in our . . . in every department's contribution to the need to make up the \$114 million we lost from the federal government, there's not a department in government that wasn't touched by this, and this is one of them. So that's just the repercussion of the federal cut-backs and that's where it falls.

The one thing I might mention, because a theme that keeps coming up in this discussion is that the Metis are somehow unfairly treated in relation to the first nations, you really can't ignore the role of the federal government in this, because like I say, first nations have had direct access to federal government pockets for a long time and the province puts in what it can put in, but it really can't compare with the resources that have flowed from the federal government.

Now we do have a tripartite agreement where the federal

government agrees to cost-share with us money that's spent for Metis, but they have not accepted their constitutional responsibility under section 35 to recognize the equal status of Metis to first nations.

There has been a recognition, due to court cases of the Inuit in the far North, but so far the federal government has not acknowledged that. So really the problem is not one of the province making choices between first nations and Metis, but a differential between the money available from the federal government and from the provincial government to these two separate groups.

(2215)

Mr. Belanger: — I certainly appreciate your response in relation to that and a lot of your responses, and I'm flying at you from all angles here and it's not done intentionally. I had it all kind of formulated.

I think the key thing here is when we talk about constitutional obligation, you're saying to the House that if the federal government is not meeting up with their responsibility to Metis versus the treaty . . . And by no means am I trying to differentiate between the funding of the treaty versus the Metis.

I think it's certainly commended the first nations in the province are doing a tremendous amount of work. I'm just saying that the Metis should have the same opportunity afforded to them. So in reference to that point, how is it then that Alberta is able to set up Metis Settlements Act without complicating the whole process and without complicating the Constitution of Canada, and yet Saskatchewan cannot?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Two things as we discussed this amongst ourselves seem to be emerging. One is the different historical circumstances of decisions that were made as far back as 1930 on these matters. And Alberta went in one direction; Saskatchewan went in another. I think the other one is that currently we have been discussing a whole range of ways of approaching this issue, but as long as the MNS has us in court with a large land claim in the North, one of the policies of our government is we don't negotiate where litigation is taking place. So we're at a bit of a catch-22 on that one at the moment.

Mr. Belanger: — Okay. I'll go back to the . . . I'd like to share another pamphlet with you, if I may, and I'd ask one of the pages, you know, to get a Xeroxed copy. And it talks about the . . . it's a pamphlet here from the New Democrats, talks about our commitment to the Indian people. It's time to fulfil the rights of Indian people . . . the land and self-government. It talks about our commitment to Metis people. It's time to recognize the rights of Metis people and I quote:

The New Democrat government will work with Metis people to address the outstanding issues of land and economic development. At the starting point, we will negotiate with Metis people a new Metis Act.

Can you give me an update on what type of negotiations that you do have with the Metis Act and why is it taking so long?

This pamphlet incidentally is from 1991, I believe.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Actually I have a copy of that pamphlet in my drawer. So I mean you can copy it if you want, but I have that one. I look at it frequently just to make sure that everything's . . . if the universe is unfolding as it should.

On the particular issue of the Metis Act, it is a matter for our bilateral table, and both the MNS and ourselves have been doing work on this matter to look at what the various options are, because they run the whole gambit from an Act that would deal primarily with organizational matters in the way that the MNS organizes themselves politically, to things that might encompass matters of culture and identity. And so there's a great deal of scope which could or could not be included in such an Act.

And the other part of an Act like that is it really does require both the government and MNS considering seriously what type of provincial legislation might for ever change their entitlements as they may or may not eventually be legally endorsed from the point of view of their presence under section 35.(1). If they were ever to decide to legally challenge their exclusion, the fact of the province doing a certain type of Act may then preclude the federal government or take them off the hook, if in fact the MNS ever had the desire to put them firmly on that hook.

So I say that what could be done within an Act, could be everything from an organizational Act to something that's much broader in scope, and it would be more of a cultural type of Act. But that whole discussion is taking place, and will take place until there's something that we feel that we can mutually agree on, both respecting the interests of the Metis and the public interest in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you again. So might I understand that you will not be dealing with the Metis people, under the Metis Act, for fear it may compromise your position in reference to the constitution of this country in terms of letting the federal government off the hook. And the second part of the question is that you will also not talk about Metis settlements with the Metis, Metis settlements in the province, because you are also being challenged in court by the Metis people. Is that a correct assumption to make on both counts?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — This is not special for Metis people. We do not negotiate with anybody we're in the midst of litigation with. It doesn't matter who they are, any shape, size, etc.

On the question of the Act, this is not just an issue for the government, this is an issue for MNS, whether in fact they wish to give up that potential for putting the federal government on the hook. This is a very deep consideration for them as well — this is not something that we have invented or imagined — this is a significant issue for them to consider as well.

Mr. Belanger: — I would suggest, Madam Minister, that based on those facts that I gave you, based on the CREDO that your government has established, the population base and what not,

that perhaps a good start in terms of negotiating these type of settlements and these type of discussions would be in the north-west. And of course the north-west is in the Pinehouse, Ile-a-la-Crosse, Buffalo Narrows area.

Which goes back to the provincial perspective. Is your department and are you personally committed to be getting into those discussions as to how we can improve service to the Metis communities so direct funding and direct benefit can happen right at the local level instead of being . . . kind of taking a shotgun approach?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Again, we've had several kinds of meetings in the North.

Now one meeting we had was with the organization of northern mayors that's been formed, and in that particular exercise the Minister of Municipal Government and the Minister of Northern Affairs are the lead ministers, and we would support those activities through SIMAS wherever we can.

Our main relationship is through the bilateral process where we deal largely with political matters and we have an agenda that we've mutually agreed on that we are working on. Those agendas, through the northern mayors association, would be largely carried out in conjunction — like I say — with Municipal Government and with the Minister of Northern Affairs. But certainly wherever we can aid in assisting some of those problems to be resolved that they identify, whether it be in northern housing or in other areas, we're certainly willing to contribute to that.

And often I find there's a great value in attending those meetings because I'm able to bring back perspectives from the discussions that we have there to contribute to broad policy discussions that are taking place in government. So it's a process that is not . . . in some ways it seems like a slow process but in other ways the progress in terms of resource partnerships, educational work, the funding of DTI (Dumont Technical Institute), GDI (Gabriel Dumont Institute) — these are areas where there's been a considerable investment made — NORPAC (Northern Professional Access College), NORTEP (northern teacher education program), all of these kinds of things.

I mean, I think there's no question that there's been steady progress, but when you're dealing with an area that has significant natural barriers to economic development and where even the simplest services are very costly to develop, obviously things are not going to progress as quickly as they are in areas where it's a little bit cheaper to do things and there's a little more population mass, so that if people start a business they at least have somebody to sell their product to. The smaller your business area the less commercial opportunities there are.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 10:27 p.m.

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