

EVENING SITTING

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund
Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training
Vote 37

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

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. The officials are the same as they were yesterday but with three additions, and I'll introduce the three additions if that's fine. Tony Antonini is sitting behind Dan Perrins, to my left; and James Benning, the president and CEO (chief executive officer) of SCN (Saskatchewan Communications Network Corporation) is also here. He was here for part of the day yesterday. And John Biss, the director of universities branch, is also here.

Item 1

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again a return welcome, Mr. Minister, to your officials as well.

We had last day asked a few questions dealing with aboriginal and northern education funds, and so I'd like to continue with that particular focus this evening. And the first question there is how many people who have participated in that particular training have completed their education?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — We don't have the information that the member seeks. We will try, in the next day or two, to pull together as much of that information as we can. And that's about the best that I can do tonight, I'm afraid. But I will put the material together and send it to you.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. As an old educator I guess I should have known better — you always start off with the easy questions first to give a little confidence and then you move on to the tough ones a little later on.

The next question may create some of the same problems. And that is, how many of those have gone on to receive jobs? If we're putting money into it in order to produce that, I guess that's the measure of success. How many of those have gone on to receive jobs?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — We'll try and provide as much of that information as we can too.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Moving then to programs for the disabled, and one question there. And that is: list the programs and services that you offer for the disabled; what sorts of training do they receive; and how successful have you been over the past year in placing disabled people into jobs?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, and to the member, I'm going to provide some information now and we'll supplement

that with written information to the member when the officials are able to get back to their offices and dig out some more.

We have three programs. Vocational rehabilitation for disabled persons, the so-called VRDP, which is a program to assist disabled people in obtaining training and education they need in order to participate in the workforce. That's a cost-shared program with the federal government.

The second program is a training-on-the-job special needs program, which is a program that funds seven community-based agencies to provide vocational counsellors who assist disabled individuals to access the VRDP, the first program. And that's also a cost-shared program with the federal government.

The third program is the adults special needs initiatives. And that program provides the capability to respond to the learning needs of adults who have special needs, which covers quite a broad range. That initiative might include things like research, in-service, and other supports for training.

Going back to the VRDP program, this program is likely to be extended by the federal government for another year but with reduced funding, and we are quite concerned about the future of that program on account of the federal government's apparent intention to withdraw. We're going to carry on though as best we can for this year.

We fund training-on-the-job positions, for example, with a number of NGOs (non-governmental organizations) and that sort of thing.

And I think I should stop at that point because that's what I have to offer to the member as I stand here tonight. But as I said at the beginning of my response, we'll provide as much information as we have in response to the member's question.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. You mention in your answer basically I believe, there were three programs. The first two which had some federal funding in them — they were cost-shared. You also responded then there was some cut-backs from federal funding on those two programs.

Could you elaborate on that, to the amounts of cut-backs that exist maybe this year and in the next two or three years as you've been informed?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I know I indicated to the member that there was danger of funding being reduced for this fiscal year, and I'm just advised by my officials that there has been a recent development that will result in the funding staying at the same level this year as for last year. The development is that the federal government has established a parliamentary committee to examine this whole question of the training for the disabled. And while that committee is working, they're going to continue with their funding. What happens after that is, as I indicated earlier, really at risk. It's not known and we're quite concerned.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. Moving into the . . . one question

dealing with New Careers Corporation. And we notice with a certain amount of satisfaction, I guess, that you're planning returned funding to New Careers Corporation. And as you know, our caucus has always felt that's a very successful program and does an excellent job of training welfare recipients. And so it's more or less a continuation of an older program.

What areas will be getting further funding in the New Careers Corporation, and are there any new programs and initiatives that are being considered in that area?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — The programing for the current fiscal year will be under the same heads as last year, about the same as last year. We have no plans for any new areas of funding or any new programing within New Careers for this year. It will just be a continuation of the programs that were offered last year.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. I'd like to ask a number of questions dealing with universities. And it seems that any level of education, regardless of what it is, is a very solid, unchanging body. And it seems the higher the education goes the more less likely it is for change.

In looking at some of the cost concerns with operating universities and those sorts of things, it would seem that there should be substantial savings that can be put in place by making a joining of the universities in a number of areas.

One is just the financial aspect of it. Secondly, there should be some savings by running the universities more efficiently by having one body basically deciding what areas are offered at what universities.

So it becomes a fairly involved and complex question. And I would like some comment on that to see where we're going and what possibilities there are to achieve some savings through various forms of union or amalgamation.

(1915)

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chairman, and to the member, I appreciate the question. It's a very topical and very important question that has occupied a great deal of the time of myself and my officials over the last several months.

There are discussions and a lot of work being done between the two universities over the past few weeks and continuing on into the summer. And what they're . . . they are senior representatives of both universities meeting together and establishing working groups, spinning working groups off from that to look at quite a large number of possibilities.

I haven't seen the list personally but I understand that the two vice-presidents of administration have developed a surprisingly long list of services that have potential for finding efficiencies for cooperation or uniting the two programs and having the one university deliver — I shouldn't use the term programs — but uniting the two services and have one or the other of the universities deliver the service. And each one of these have

potential for saving some money, and in some cases, some considerable amount of money I'm told.

So that work is going on and Harold MacKay is involved in it, as I've explained previously, and I'm really encouraged by the approach that the two universities are taking. And I'm looking forward to seeing what comes out of it.

The member will know, Mr. Chair, of the Johnson panel, the Johnson committee that examined the university structure in Saskatchewan and made a number of recommendations. He recommended, that is the panel recommended, a three-person panel, that the two universities be maintained as separate institutions but that they examine a number of possibilities for program rationalization. In some cases it would be one or the other of the universities considering getting out of a particular college and that sort of recommendation. It's quite an interesting report and quite a thoughtful report.

The universities didn't do anything with it that amounts to anything. They sort of held it in abeyance, I think, until another day. And the recent events with the federal changes and the budgetary pressures and then our budget, they have dusted off that report, and it's back in circulation and in consideration for what they might do as far as rationalizing programs are concerned and realizing some efficiencies there. They want to address the question of overlap and duplication with a view to effectiveness and efficiency, with a view to realizing effectiveness and efficiency. So that's begun also and again, we're all very interested in seeing what comes out of the work of the universities on that score.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, and you mentioned the Johnson report and I think . . . I'm personally not overly surprised that it gathered some dust for a period of time because that takes me back to a statement that I made just at the start of the section on universities, that they tend to be fairly slow to invoke any major change.

In the rationalization that they're undertaking at this particular point, you mentioned that the service area was one that was looked at, and I think that's understandable. It's probably an easy one to work with. It's when you start looking at possibly the programing, which involves some of the teaching and instruction staff over there . . . And I'm wondering at what point your department's prepared to step in and maybe put a little initiative and spunk into the negotiations on that aspect of it.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — I don't know, as I stand here, how to answer the member's question with very much precision. We are all concerned that we have a high quality university system in this province, the highest that we're able to afford. We want that for the simple reason that we want our kids and neighbours' kids and people who are not kids to be able to go to the universities here and obtain a degree of a high quality which they can then use to find good employment and realize a happy and full life. So I think we all share that view.

The universities are faced with a difficult situation. They've been faced with a difficult situation over many years now. All

universities in Canada have. And I believe that they realize that significant change is going to have to occur. That change will take many forms, I think. We mentioned some of them — the cooperation with respect to the various services that the universities have to provide in order to run, and rationalization of programs, and an internal examination of their own programing with a view to trying to be very clear on what their mandate is, what their goals are, what their priorities are.

One university, particularly in a small province like this, can't do everything in the field of education. They have to make some choices. And those choices change over time as the province changes and as the economy changes, as the world changes, and as the needs of students change. Their own research that they do at the universities change in response . . . changes in response to the same factors. And that means they have to be flexible about their programing, and in my view make decisions about what programs they're going to continue to offer, what programs need to be modified, what new programs need to be brought in, what programs are no longer relevant to the world in which they operate.

So hard decisions there, and we're satisfied that the universities understand, at least in a general way, the public interest in the kind of decisions they have to make. And we're really encouraged by the work that they're undertaking.

We have Harold MacKay there to try and ensure the process gets off the ground, as I think it is, and gets going and keeps going and that the public interest is comfortable with what's happening. And we're proceeding on the assumption now that all that's going to work and that choices will be made and decisions will be made and changes will happen of which we will all be very proud because it will result in quality universities in this province.

Now of course, if that doesn't happen, then that's another thing. And that's where the member's question was really going. At what point would we step in and do something? And we don't know. We are optimistic at the moment that the present process is going to result in substantial things being done. And for the moment, we're content to leave it there.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And I guess I share a part of your optimism, in that obviously I think they realize when the dollars are just not going to be there, they will need to make some changes. However I'd like to pursue that direction a little further and suggest that we may need to have to look at an insurance that those changes that are actually needed out there actually take place.

I think within the last year on the Saskatoon campus, there was some discussion of moving the Education college into the Arts, making it part of the Arts college. It was a discussion that started, and it may still be ongoing, but I haven't heard anything of it recently. And I suggest that's very often a major part of each college being very protective of its territory. And having spent some 20 years trying to pick up a smattering of education at university, I know that some of the classes offered are very significant, very meaningful, on occasion even interesting. And yet there's others that seem to be very much a

filler of time to make sure that that's all adequately done.

And so I'd just like to get some assurance from you that your department is watching close enough that they are prepared to say at some point you will step in if those changes do not take place.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Well I understand what the member is saying. The way I think about it is this, Mr. Chair, there is a very significant public interest in the quality of the education that is made available at the two universities. And the source of the interest is easy to understand. We're the people and our kids are the people who are being elected . . . or educated, rather. And we have, I think, a consensus on the two universities — that there is a public interest and that it's appropriate that the government be involved to the extent that we are.

Now that's not much of an involvement, you know, but our representative, Harold MacKay, is there. He has the cooperation of the two administrations and the two boards of governors, and his project seems to be flowing smoothly. After some initial concern, particularly at the U of S (University of Saskatchewan), it seems to be up and running.

He hears and we hear things that are cause for optimism, that the universities realize that change is an element of life in modern society. And they realize that change is taking place in all of the other institutions that make our society what it is, driven by all kinds of factors over which we have little or no control. And they're a part of the this world and they have to move with it. We get that over and over again from faculty members and from people who are involved in the university in various capacities. And I think that it's going to work.

We run here into the reality of the autonomy of these institutions. And I think that autonomy is an important value. I think that it is just not appropriate for government, either elected members like ourselves or the very highly qualified officials that we hire to assist us in government programing and the delivery of that programing, I don't think it's appropriate for us to move in on the universities and start directing what should and shouldn't be done.

And that's certainly been the history of universities in the western world and I think it's a value that is important and should be respected. At the same time — at the same time — the public interest that I talked about earlier is an important factor and that requires us to have some assurances about quality and about the relevance of what's happening.

After all, it's taxpayers dollars that are going to fund the universities and there is a level of accountability that goes with that funding and that's . . . there seems to be a consensus that all those elements are present and are important.

(1930)

So in that framework, I think we'll go forward with this project that is under way. The people involved are trying to not treat it simply as a budgetary problem but are trying to treat it as an opportunity for change, an opportunity for renewal and

revitalization and all those words that have been bandied about about this project.

But they're trying to therefore view it in a more positive light and not merely as a negative, cost-cutting exercise. And I think that all speaks well. It may not come out to everybody's satisfaction — obviously it won't — but I think the universities that emerge from all this will be stronger and more relevant and probably of higher quality, considering the needs of the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. It's interesting you should mention the word autonomy because I had just written it down a couple of seconds before you came up with it. And I know it's one of the things that universities consider very precious to them.

I had two unique occurrences that I won't detail in great detail, but sometime last summer I was asked to visit with a member of the university students' organization in Saskatoon, and through part of the discussion they came up with a number of construction projects that they had costed out and looked at the value of them, and they were fairly upset as students that they felt these projects were, first of all, excessively expensive, and not particularly necessary.

And that was very strongly underlined later in fall, last fall, when I met with one of the contractors that does a fair bit of work at the university, at the Regina campus, and came out with very similar statements, where one particular parking lot had been sort of reworked and redone three times in five years. And he was moderately upset by what he saw as being a waste of money.

So if we on the one hand say that, let's respect the autonomy of the education part, because I don't think we want to see government telling the universities what to teach specifically and exactly how to do it, but I'm wondering on other levels in Saskatchewan, municipal level particularly, towns and RMs (rural municipality), a lot of the projects that they carry out have to sort of fit some government criteria in order to get the funding. Is that the case with university funding or are they totally autonomous on the projects they carry out?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, I agree with the member and my officials do also, namely that the autonomy is about education, about academics, and not about capital spending. We are more deeply involved on the capital side and scarcely involved on the academic side. And it's in respect of that autonomy that that result happens.

With respect to the capital programs, we of course set the budget, as we have this year. We set that every year. They provide us with a list of their projects, prioritized. If we object to them or think they're mistaken or some other prioritization is more appropriate, we say that, we work with them, we finalize a list in close consultation. And there's a lot more interference or involvement on the capital side than there is on the academic side, I was going to say. There's scarcely any on the academic side.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Switching to the SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) branch, a question. With the purchase of seats or desks or whatever you want to call it that takes place there, who now is purchasing seats and how many and at what cost?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Sorry to take a while, Mr. Chair, and Mr. Member. But the question is really quite difficult. But I'll give you an answer that I think is fairly close on two of the three matters that the member asked about.

First of all as to who purchases the seats, there are five sources. The federal government, which is now a moving target — the member will understand that, as they move their changes — but they would currently buy about 10 per cent of the seats. The province would buy about 5 per cent. These are mostly social assistance situations. Aboriginal organizations would probably buy about 1 per cent of the seats. Corporations, perhaps 2 per cent of the seats, which would leave individuals purchasing the balance which would be 84 per cent of the seats — 84 per cent.

Now the cost is the part where we just can't provide you with a satisfactory answer, at least not tonight. We can give you a lot of information but in the end we won't be able to give you a solid answer to your question because it's too complex. There's 156 programs that are offered at SIAST, and they all have a different cost element to them.

The tuition is about 10 per cent of the cost, and if that's what's required to be paid, that is the cost then. The tuition probably averages \$1,400 on the average. But with respect to some programs, there are sponsored programs and the purchase of the seat is a full-cost purchase.

Now we can give you a better breakdown on that cost matter that I have given you just now, and that'll take several days. But if the member likes, we would write to you and provide you with that information.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Moving to two or three final questions, and one comes from the *Estimates* on page 105, item 4. There is an item there about . . . under sub-programs: grants to Saskatchewan universities — urban parks. I wonder if you could just explain what that's all about?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Those urban parks are the — in the case of the University of Saskatchewan — the Meewasin Valley and the Meewasin Valley Authority. And in the case of the University of Regina, it's the Wascana Centre where we're now doing our work, and the Wascana Centre Authority. And that line represents the funding that the university . . . the part of their total funding that they turn over to those authorities.

Mr. Heppner: — And then from page 106, item no. 6, that's a whole section on distance education. And I guess what I would appreciate from you there is a general statement on the direction that you see distance education going as far as post-secondary education is concerned, and what kind of vision there is for the future in that area.

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

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, I wonder if I might have leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

(1945)

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, many years ago I was fortunate to have lived in Churchill, Manitoba. And I'm pleased that we have a visitor here that comes from Churchill, who I knew many years ago. He's here in Saskatchewan exploring employment opportunities, but that's another story.

I wonder if the members might join me in welcoming Mr. George Spence.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training Vote 37

Item 1

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, again I took a few moments to discuss this with my officials to try and give you the best answer that I could.

This is a very exciting area, this distance education, and I believe that it is . . . will be an increasingly important part of our future in this province. My vision is that more and more training and more and more education will be delivered to the regions of this province, if I can use that term — the rural areas, the small cities, the small towns.

As time goes on, more and more of the SIAST programing, more and more of the university programing, more skills training, will be delivered under the heading that the member uses of distance education. That will be building upon a long tradition in this province. Such things as correspondence schools; such things as instructors going out to teach classes at a regional college; the regional colleges themselves becoming quite active around their regions in delivering various kinds of programing.

And superimposed on all of that is the really exciting new technology that we're experiencing. The SCN programing and their delivery sites around the province and their arrangements with the regional colleges and the school systems — very exciting opportunities that are developing, have developed, and lie in the future.

In addition to that we have the multi-media technology that is just blossoming. Where interactive computer programs with CD-ROM (compact disc read-only memory) base will provide, I think, excellent opportunities for inexpensive, effective training delivered at a distance to the end that people don't have to move to Saskatoon or Regina or Moose Jaw or Prince Albert in order to get education or training but they can stay home in

Maple Creek and get it there, or get a lot of it there.

And I believe it's coming. I'm told that on the Internet today you can get a university degree in your own home by taking the courses that are offered over the facilities of the Internet. Now if that's possible in the U.S. (United States), it's possible here. And I think it has an exciting future.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chairman. I found this a bit ironic, that the minister is talking about distance education and the use of new technologies and computers when he himself is computer illiterate and he's talking to my colleague who is also computer illiterate, talking about all these new and wondrous technologies.

They are indeed very marvellous and do have a significant amount of potential. Unfortunately though, Mr. Minister, in some cases they're being restricted because of the shortage of funding, and some of the programs and some of the areas being stressed because of that. And it's a problem that we have with the distance education system because it is initially a high-cost system to initiate. While the benefits are certainly there, it's a capital-intensive, upfront program when you start it off.

Mr. Minister, what's happening in Saskatchewan though with university distance education or the delivery of university credit courses outside of Regina and Saskatoon? I look at my own constituency, and some programs are available but they're coming out of the university of Brandon in Manitoba. What is happening in Saskatchewan as far as university program availability outside of Regina and Saskatoon?

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Mr. Chair, and to the member, I have some information on that. But before sailing into it, I was stunned to see my friend with a laptop computer on his desk the other day, apparently using it.

An Hon. Member: — And knowing what I was doing.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — And knowing what he was doing, he says from his seat. And I have no doubt about that.

I want to tell the member that I read enough of those books I referred to in question period yesterday about various programs for dummies, and I qualify as a consumer of that book. I qualify as a reader, that I actually can do some things. I'm on the Internet. That's good isn't it; yes. And I've got an e-mail address, and I use it; that's good too. My scheduling is part of that process. And while I am not any kind of a speed reader, I think I'm better than illiterate. I just wanted to put that on the public record . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I'm very proud of it. I play solitaire too, that's right.

Let me give you some numbers now. The numbers are improving, and the level of interest is really high and growing. But let me give you the numbers that I have. There are, as of the last fiscal year, there were 49 programs being offered from the universities and from SIAST out to various points. Thirty-six of those were post-secondary, either from one of the universities or from SIAST; and 13 of those were high school programs. The hours are at, I think, the highest level they've

ever been in. The hours are over 2,300. And the number of classrooms into which these are being delivered are at 150, and that's a higher number than has been the case anytime in the past; shown a good, steady growth over the years.

So it's happening, and the universities are quite taken by it. They see this as part of the change with which they should cope. They have to get tuned into it and offer more and more of it. So they're talking about it in proper terms anyway, and I hope it comes to pass. And I'm encouraged by what I've heard there. I think that it has a great future, this whole area.

Let me say again I think the multi-media, CD-ROM technology will, in a few short years, really be the training tool. Some really remarkable things have been done there. I don't understand it, but they have demonstrated it in my office, and it is quite remarkable what they are able to produce. It would be a fun way to learn, if you were a student, you know, taking a class using interactive technology. It just seems to have limitless possibilities.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well I'm glad to know that the minister is learning something about computers. He's certainly getting all the buzz-words down: multi-media and interactive and CD-ROMs. One of the things though, Mr. Minister, that in accessing all of these technologies, the availability of which relies on dollars.

The schools, the community colleges, regional colleges, even over the Internet, Mr. Minister, it's a fairly expensive program. I understand that SaskTel has come out with a special program for schools of, I believe, it's \$150 per month for the school divisions, and I would assume that likely also applies to the regional colleges, for unlimited access.

But unfortunately next year that will go up to \$250, and I believe that's 75 hours a month. The third year, it goes up to \$500 for 100 hours a month. To me it simply seems like that is a trap. You get the students and the schools hooked on to it for \$100 a month unlimited time. And next year once they've purchased the hardware, they're locked into the system, and now you raise the rates and reduce their access time so that they're paying a much greater amount than they were before because of the cost of . . . I believe it's 250 an hour that the schools are going to pay.

So, Mr. Minister, if there is something you can do to lower those costs to the schools for those Internet connections, I think that would be a great advantage to those students, to continue to be able to have access to the systems at a reasonable cost with the unlimited time factor that they currently have this year. I think that would be a significant benefit.

The regional colleges, I think deliver an excellent program, but again as I mentioned earlier, they're stressed financially, and they have been limiting some of the classes that they've had previously. The access to the university programs, I think is a wonderful idea in the local communities because people can stay at home. They can live with mom and dad. They can hold down a part-time job or even a full-time job, because some of these classes are taught in the evenings, and maintain a

tax-paying base while furthering their education, which I think is important.

(2000)

So I'd like to encourage you, Mr. Minister, to do those three things. See if you can't get the cost of Internet down for the schools and the regional colleges. Expand the funding so that the programing can continue to the regional colleges. And encourage the universities to provide further access to their credit courses outside of their main plants in Regina and Saskatoon.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Well, Mr. Chair, I thank the member for those remarks. With respect to the cost of Internet access, the member's numbers are correct.

And I'm concerned about the same point he is. My department has been working with SaskTel, raising this question, and trying to produce a more satisfactory result. And we're going to continue that work and I thank the member for that encouragement.

On the funding level, I know the problem. I mean the whole system is short of money and everybody's concerned about that. As and when funds are available though, I tell the member that this is a priority area and we'll do the best that we can.

On his final point, university credits, I've indicated already in a previous answer that we're working with the universities and encouraging them to get involved in this and take some lead on this. And we're quite encouraged about that too. So things are looking good.

Item 1 agreed to.

Items 2 to 6 inclusive agreed to.

Vote 37 agreed to.

**General Revenue Fund
Loans, Advances and Investments
Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training
Vote 141**

Item 1 agreed to.

Vote 141 agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to take this opportunity to thank officials from the department and from SCN and from New Careers that have been here over the past several meetings to assist the committee in its work. These people have done a tremendous amount of work this year as the departments have been formed out of the former department and as all of the projects that are under way have taken form and taken root and begun to develop. They have performed at a very high level, and I want to recognize their work generally and with respect to their assistance to this committee.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to

thank the minister and his officials for the discussion that we had. I think it's exciting, some of the things that are happening in education. And also, as we discussed, there is some need to dig in your heels a little bit and work with a few somewhat intransigent groups. So thanks again to your officials for their help.

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

The Chair: — Before we begin, I'll invite the minister to introduce her officials.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you very much. Tonight, assistant secretary of Metis Affairs, Donavon Young; executive director of policy and planning, John Reid; and executive director of Indian lands and resources, Glen Benedict.

Item 1

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman. I'd like to welcome the minister and her officials here this evening. I wonder if you could give us an update as to what is the general progress of the treaty land entitlements and the specific entitlements, including the details of what lands have been purchased this year and what percentage of the entitlements have been fulfilled to date.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — That was quite a long question. Maybe I'll just summarize a couple of the points, and then I could send a copy of this across to you so that you have the detail that you're looking for.

There was sufficient money to buy a total of 1.9 million acres, and there's been 220,000 acres total so far purchased. And of that, 22,558 have achieved reserve status, and that's 26 bands having made their selections.

And I'll send the rest across to you.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Would the numbers that you're going to send across include the percentages of the entitlements fulfilled to date?

I'll repeat the question for the minister. The numbers that you're sending across, do they include the percentages of the entitlements fulfilled?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — We don't have it broken up in that way, but the answer would be that percentage is very small. We're in the first 4 years of a 12-year agreement that has the option of extending to an 18-year agreement. So really so far we've just got our toes in the water.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you, Madam Minister; 1.2 million acres hardly sounds like a toe in the water though.

There's been a lot of controversy over the settlement of the entitlements and the specific land claims as it comes to compensation to municipalities for the lands that are purchased

for treaty qualification, Madam Minister, as you well know because we've had a number of correspondences going back and forth dealing with this issue. And I'm sure you get all the same letters related to this that I get from the municipalities.

What role is your department playing in all of this? What presentations are you making to the federal government to try and get an equitable settlement on the compensations to the municipalities for the lands that are purchased within their jurisdiction that revert to reserve status? What role does your department play on that?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Basically we've had meetings with both the federal minister of Indian and Metis affairs and also with our Saskatchewan elected representative in cabinet, Mr. Ralph Goodale. And their indication to us was that, although some people were concerned about it, it didn't seem to be a large enough concern to warrant necessarily changing their position on it.

Now certainly when your members put forward your resolution and when the opposition supported it, and we supported it, I think that put us in a stronger position. Certainly the letters coming from municipalities have increased. And we recently sent a copy out to all the municipalities, rural municipalities, of that joint motion. And we received a response back from SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities), thanking us for taking that action in the House here.

And I guess we'll have to wait to see what kind of a response we get based on that all-party resolution and decide whether in fact we need to make an all-party presentation on the matter to Ottawa.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I wonder if you can give me some indication of how many RMs would be involved in the 22,000 acres that was transferred to reserve status and how many RMs would be involved in the 1.9 million acres.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — It could conceivably involve . . . I mean it does involve every area of Saskatchewan. It's north, south, east, west. So really it would be hard to get that specifically, but we could try to get an estimate of it and provide it if that's important to you.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, I've been getting presentations from a number of RMs on this particular issue. And I'm wondering if those RMs that are most vocal on this are those that have the 22,000 acres this year or acres that have been transferred in previous years to reserve status, if they're reacting more strongly and therefore the numbers are still fewer than if everyone affected by the 1.9 million acres was making presentations.

Normally in society, society doesn't react to an issue until it actually hits them personally. And I'm wondering if that's what the position is right now within the RMs, that those that are being affected directly are concerned about this issue, those that haven't been impacted directly yet are not viewing this quite as seriously yet until the land within their jurisdictions starts to get

transferred over to reserve status.

So that was the reason I was interested in the numbers, particularly of the 22,000, of how many RMs are being impacted by that group.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Maybe I should clarify. There is a difference between the tax loss compensation under the Treaty Land Entitlement Framework Agreement and specific claims. Specific . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Oh you know the difference. Okay.

So it's not all of the entitlements that are affected; it's only the specific claims. And there's a much smaller number of those, about eight or something. It's a much smaller number.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well maybe that's where I should be asking my questions then, rather than aiming at the entitlements, and the specific claims as a group.

How many RMs . . . or how many acres are involved in the specific claims, specific land claims settlements, and how many of them have reverted to reserve status, and how many RMs would be affected by that?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — We can get that for you. But really, to spend time doing it here now, we'd have to get out our calculators and what not, so . . .

(2015)

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you, Madam Minister. If you would supply that information.

This is an issue that I think is causing a great deal of controversy with those people who are affected by it. It certainly doesn't reflect on the natives who are buying the land because they're certainly entitled to it and they are well within their rights and privileges to purchase this property. The problem arises with the settlements from the federal government when they're only offering, I believe it's five times the assessed values for the specific lands where they're paying 22 times for the entitlements.

And there's clearly an unfairness in there. Obviously if there's a road goes past a piece of property that is settled as an entitlement, there's a cost to maintain that road. That same cost is associated with the road that goes past the specific land claim. There's no difference in the cost to the municipality in servicing either road.

And so to settle at 5 times for one type of claim and 22 times for the other is clearly unfair. And that, I think, Madam Minister, is what the problem is in here and it certainly doesn't reflect on the natives that are purchasing the land, although I'm sure to a certain extent there is some animosity towards them for those kind of settlements which they have nothing to do with. It's not a problem that they have created. It's a problem that has been created by the federal government.

And I believe this legislature did good work when we passed

the motion in this House to convey the message to Ottawa that we felt that it was unfair and that it needed to be changed. And I think anything we can do to encourage that the proper settlement's a fair settlement on those issues would be work well done by this legislature.

Under the treaty land entitlement agreements though, the bands are suppose to be acquiring lands from willing sellers and willing buyers. And in most cases, that is the case. However, some of the bands have been complaining that there has been some tardiness or some lack of cooperation amongst some of those who are selling the land in some of the areas, that they feel that some of the non-natives are trying to block them from purchasing land in that area or that they believe that the bands have unlimited funds and therefore they want this particular piece of land, so I'm going to sit on it and I'm going to wait until they up the price.

Madam Minister, some of the bands have been suggesting that the government should act perhaps as an intervenor in those particular kinds of situations and provide some mediation services or provide some assistance in making some settlements in that area.

Has your government, has your department, established a policy on this and are you acting on behalf of anyone in that particular area?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Really the only difficulty we're experiencing in the area is not with the private land that's purchased; it's with Crown land. And part of that is because people have often been able to use Crown land at very low rates and have been getting a very substantial economic benefit from it. So we do have some difficulty in that area. We have moved to mediation and enhanced mediation in some places to try to get it resolved.

Again, because we're in the first four years of the agreement, we're testing this out to see if we can achieve a settlement still through some kind of mutual agreement. I guess down the road we'll have to see, if we continue to have too much difficulty, but at the moment we haven't felt that the difficulty has been at the level yet where we need to take more measures beyond helping with the mediation.

Mr. D'Autremont: — When you talk about that Crown land, Madam Minister, are you talking about the lease holders on the Crown land being reluctant to release their leases, or are you talking about the owner of the land, the Crown, be it federal or provincial?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — It would be the lease holder itself. We've made a commitment to honour the entitlement agreements and provide the land. It's being conscious of the needs of our lease holders. I will mention that other provinces do not take lease holders' interests into account. They just make the decision and do it.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. On the other side of the coin, some non-natives have been complaining that the bands have been purchasing land all around them to

encircle their land holdings in an effort to encourage them to sell. Have you been receiving any complaints along that line, and are you involved in any mediations in that area?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — No.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you very much, Madam Minister. Some of my other colleagues have questions to deal with SIMAS (Saskatchewan Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat), so I will allow them to proceed. But I would like to thank you and your officials for coming in this evening. And I would certainly encourage you to put all the pressure you can on the federal government to make equitable settlements in the specific land claims.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just before I get to my . . . I've only got three questions for you this evening, Madam Minister. They're not very tough questions, but I want to make a very quick point in reference for the need for us as government to begin to address the whole issue of the Metis Act and certainly also something relevant to the Indian Act for the good of the native and aboriginal peoples of Saskatchewan. I think in northern Saskatchewan we've been calling for many years for some kind of devolution of control over a wide area of services that may include things like social services, like housing, and like the management of land, and you know, the list goes on and on.

The people are asking for that through the Metis Act and certainly through a similar Act for the first nations to try and see if they can develop their own system of government. And what they've been doing for that is that they want to see if they are able and if there is some way and there's some means in which they could develop their own capacity to manage themselves and their affairs.

We understand that along with self-government initiative we're calling for comes a tremendous amount of responsibility. Responsibility, Madam Minister, can only be achieved through knowledge and also through learning the process and taking time. We don't suspect the self-governing model that we are going to look at is going to be developed over a period of one year.

I think some of the tributes that the Metis people have towards self-government could be attested through the municipal government of northern Saskatchewan. Most of the municipal governments in northern Saskatchewan consist of Metis people. We have a Metis mayor, Metis councillors, and certainly Metis administrators, and these are the type of examples that we're trying to talk about when we talk about Metis self-government. And really, Madam Minister, we believe it is time that we be allowed the flexibility to not only exercise that right of self-government but also to certainly gain greater control over areas I spoke about earlier.

At this point in time we feel — and certainly myself as a legislator — that there is no overall plan or overall strategy to deal with these issues. We have to do that ourselves. Certainly

as a Metis person, I recognize 90 per cent of that challenge must come from ourselves to government and that there's a common misconception out there, Madam Minister, that government is developing this strategy. I believe with all my heart that you guys are not, and therefore I urge you all to start that next level of thought in terms of how we can devolve control of government services over to the local Metis people.

Again, some of the things that I think we need to immediately initiate when it comes to items of this nature, speaking about the Metis Act, is that we must develop a comprehensive plan. By "we" I mean we the people on behalf of the people that we represent to discuss on how we could actually begin to set up that process.

If governments truly want to support the Indian and Metis people in their call for self-government, then they must make every effort to recognize their input and take their values. Over the first step that we all have to do is we must go through the history of how the treaties were set up and the history of how the Metis people were set up. And this is where you go back — and I urge you all as government members and certainly as people involved with this department — is to understand our history. Once you have a basic understanding of that history of the injustice and the treatment of the aboriginal people in the past, then you'll be able to get a better grasp of what they mean when they call for self-government, of what they mean when they call for the inherent right to self-govern.

And this is what it's all about. And certainly I would encourage you as the minister to look at that particular aspect of northern and aboriginal life.

I guess one of the things that we need to look at is, in order for us to survive, to stop some of the problems that we're having in northern Saskatchewan, northern people must rid themselves of the disincentives of the government-run systems. Everywhere you look there are disincentives for the northern aboriginal people, whether it's in housing, whether it's in social services, whether it's in the non-existence of family support systems, the high rates of violence and crime. What hope have we got to educate our masses and get a brand new direction for our people if we as leaders cannot afford them the opportunity to develop an alternate system?

Yes, there are linguistic differences, there is some cultural ignorance, and perhaps even racial challenges, but I believe that facing the educational efforts that many of the Metis people have towards educating the non-aboriginal community on their background and their history is something that we should all admire.

And, Madam Minister, I think that's some of the things we have to look at when we talk about the Metis Nation, is that really if you maximize the benefits, not necessarily to one organization but to the Metis people themselves, that'll certainly be a positive step in this whole process of your understanding of Metis issues and certainly your responsibility as minister.

I think the key thing that we want to ensure, Madam Minister, that in our call for self-government, that time be allowed to

develop the capacity to manage ourselves, that time be allowed to understand how the inner workings of certain systems that you guys have been running for many, many years . . . that we could use for our advantage.

And as well, the key thing that we want to point out here is that self-government is of absolute no value if all you're doing is exchanging a white bureaucratic system to a brown bureaucratic system. We must make every effort to maximize benefits to the grass roots level, to the people that this system and any policy is designed to serve — and that is the Metis people in some of these communities; so right now and then, that there is immediate impact and an immediate support for the people at the grass roots level.

So again, Madam Minister, I just share some of these opinions with you and also look at the issue of the land and the access to the resources. Without those two tools, there's very little that the Metis people can do to try and get a brand-new destiny designed for their people.

So you throw in the fact that self-governance, access to land, access to harvest some of the things that we've traditionally harvested for many years, which includes animals and fish and some of the forest products I spoke about, then and only then, with these three tools are we able to over time develop a brand-new system of self-governance for Metis people. It indeed can be done.

There is no question in my mind that we've had challenges with various Metis organizations over the years. But, Madam Minister, we must be diligent in saying that yes, this can be done, and over time we can develop a system. All it takes is a government that says, we support self-government to the fullest and we will initiate plans in cooperation with the native organizations to do exactly that.

So, Madam Minister, we do need some leadership; we do need some solid commitment; and if we're going to profess self-government, then we certainly must follow through with some very good plannings.

And so with that, the few questions I have is, particularly for the Bill C-31's . . . As you're probably aware, Bill C-31's are people that were . . . had lost their treaty status years ago, either because they got married or they moved from the reserve or some other silly excuse.

Could you ensure this House that you will develop a strategy to deal with people in the North and in the province, the whole province for that fact, that are falling through the cracks of the aboriginal system?

(2030)

When we look at the situation with the treaty systems, they simply can't afford to take in more people. So as a result you have a lot of Bill C-31's that are actually in limbo, that have nowhere to go. They have their treaty status back but the reserve band councils can't take them back. They haven't got enough money for housing and for social services. They

haven't got enough money for the educational demands of the additional population associated with Bill C-31.

So I was wondering if you could commit a great amount of energy to try and come up with some system in which the non-status Indians and the Bill C-31's, the group of native people that we're leaving behind, to try and find some ways and means in which we can support them.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well you leave me with an interesting dilemma. I just want to mention a little bit on some of your previous points, because although Metis people are listed as aboriginal people under section 35 of the constitution, the federal government does not recognize this in any practical way. And I will remind you that that federal government are members of your party, not mine, and you should probably have a chat with them on this subject.

One of the things we have to think about carefully when we go about talking about an Act is that an Act can prejudice the rights under the constitution unless we very carefully think through what this is all about. We can talk about municipal government though and we don't need . . . it could be a northern municipal kind of approach rather than specifically a Metis Act. But there is that danger of prejudicing the 91 (24) section of the constitution by virtue of a province enacting legislation affecting Metis people.

In terms of an overall strategy, we have met with the Metis Nation. We do have a . . . jointly agreed on bilateral plan under which we've agreed to discuss the merits of the Metis Act, of economic development and gaming, of resource management, and of enumeration. And that is a commonly arrived at agenda which they have not suggested to us that they would want a different agenda at this point.

We actually had a meeting today with some people from the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, and the kind of gap you're talking about in history and people's understanding, I think this commission will go a long way to filling a lot of that gap. I'm looking forward myself to getting access to that information and materials.

Self-government does mean law-making powers. But as we go into this process we have to think about what's effective, practical, and affordable. And I would use, as an example, it wouldn't be practical for every local community to develop their own curriculum. So as we go through this process, we'll have to talk about what things are better done separately and what things are better done collectively.

As a province we are legally bound under the constitution to provide services and programs of general application to all of our citizens. So wherever we veer away from that, we have to carefully think about how it affects also our constitutional responsibilities.

The disincentives you talk about, certainly in the times that we've been elected, we've added sewer and water, we've added roads, we've got the multi-party training agreement, NORPAC, (Northern Professional Access College), NORTEP (northern

teacher education program), various affirmative action employment and job development agreements in the North. I agree with you that we need to do more, but I think these set a good tone for the kind of things that need to happen.

And as far as the Bill C-31's goes, getting around to your question, we do acknowledge them, but the fact is they are a creation of the federal government. It was their laws that created the possibility for people to become Bill C-31's. They created the crack. It is up to them to finance all on-reserve activities because the province certainly has enough on its plate with the almost two-thirds of first nations people that have moved off reserve. And there is really no way constitutionally, morally, or ethically that the federal government can escape the fact that that's their responsibility.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Certainly we need to have discussions on that issue at greater lengths, but not at this point in time.

I think the second part of the Saskatchewan solution, if you will, is in reference to the associated entities fund. As you're probably aware, you've entered into negotiations and discussion and perhaps even in agreement with the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan in reference to the associated entities fund. And really the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan . . . the first step in showing some of the things we speak about is that I think you must recognize the fact that you're dealing not with a cultural group, Madam Minister. You're dealing with a nation of people here. And I think throughout time . . . You talk about the document that your government has put out, *Toward A Shared Destiny*. You spoke about the need to recognize Metis governments and Metis people. So in essence one of the very things that you've entered in agreements with, namely the associated entities fund, you've referred to the Metis Nation as a cultural group.

I would suggest, Madam Minister, if you could give us a various breakdown of what role that the Metis Nation is playing in reference to this particular point. And secondly, will you now consider the Metis Nation a nation and deal with it from a government-to-government point of view? Thank you.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Again I will mention that that kind of recognition and jurisdiction begins at the federal level under the constitution. And the level of government which has the most control over that does not recognize the self-governance of a jurisdictional nature for the Metis Nation. Now that does not affect our thinking particularly in that way, other than making sure that whatever we do doesn't prejudice the potential that some day they may resolve that issue.

What we have done in the meantime is allocate 25 per cent of the associated entities fund to the MNS (Metis Nation of Saskatchewan) of Saskatchewan, and we have a joint negotiating committee where we're sitting down to talk about how that money will be held in trust, who the trustees will be, how that money will be delivered, what kinds of things that they intend to spend it on.

And I might add that at the moment they're incorporated under

the non-profits Act, and therefore that is where they legally must reside because that is their legal status as an entity. At some point, as we go through our discussions on self-governance, etc., that legal status may change. And then it would be appropriate at that time to talk about whether there might be other legal arrangements and future agreements.

I might add that first nations have millions of dollar investment in this project. And because of that investment, MNS will actually see real live cash before first nations will, because they've tied up so much of their money in the front-end investment. So in actual fact they're not doing too badly by this arrangement.

Mr. Belanger: — I've got two more quick questions, then we're certainly done.

The point I want to make, sometimes when it comes to the Metis issue, we hear the clause . . . and the comment time and time again that some day they may get to this in the constitutional discussion. But, Madam Minister, some day never comes.

And I would also ask, has the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan got their core funding this year? And if they have, can you assure me and the members of this House that in the future that we will not have delays in transferring their core funding to them as quickly as we can, because certainly two or three months past their fiscal year, it does create a significant amount of problems. And it feels that because the delay is there, then obviously it's meant as a . . . it's really affecting how the Metis Nation operates. Thereby it also affects their attitude; it also affects their credibility.

So in essence, if you could assure me that delays of that nature will not occur in the future, I think it would be the first positive, big step.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Of course there is no reason that we would artificially want to delay that funding. The core funding — just to be clear on terms — the core funding is federal, from the federal government. We provide tripartite funding under the tripartite agreement. They have their cheque for three-twelfths, and as soon as we're done this budget process they'll get the balance.

Mr. Belanger: — And my last issue, Madam Minister, is the issue about the Metis veterans, if you could give us an update on that. As you're probably aware, there was an Indian and Metis veterans commission that was set up to discuss the fact that upon the return of World War II, many veterans in the province were given a piece of land to begin their lives with. However the Metis and the Indian people that did go out to World War II went back to their home community, were isolated, and communication wasn't all that great in those years, so thereby they didn't have the same opportunity afforded to them.

So can you assure me that you'll do everything in your power to correct this injustice done to the Metis veterans and the Indian veterans of Saskatchewan.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes, the report you referred to, a federal Senate report, I actually did hear a report from one of the senators who was involved in doing that work. It was a good report. And I would say that partly as an outcome of that report, that SIMAS supported events last year for veterans, both Metis and first nations.

But we're happy to support you in encouraging the federal government to right this wrong. Because again, I know you smile, but there is a division of powers between federal and provincial governments, just as there will be between provincial governments, first nations, and Metis. And if you're going to respect that those powers mean anything, then the levels of government that have those powers must use them.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I also want to thank you and your officials for taking time to come in this evening. And over the next three years I'm sure we'll be having similar discussions and probably at greater lengths. Thank you very much, Madam Minister.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I'd like to thank both of the members for their questions. They were thoughtful, and I know it's frustrating when we get caught in these jurisdictional debates. But hopefully we'll be getting those resolved over the next couple of years.

And I thank my officials also for all their good work continually on getting this stuff done. Thank you.

Item 1 agreed to.

Items 2 to 4 inclusive agreed to.

Vote 25 agreed to.

**Supplementary Estimates 1995-96
General Revenue Fund
Budgetary Expense
Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat
Vote 25**

Item 1 agreed to.

Vote 25 agreed to.

(2045)

**General Revenue Fund
Highways and Transportation
Vote 16**

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Don Metz, Don is the acting deputy minister of Highways and Transportation; Barry Martin, Barry is the executive director of engineering services division; Lynn Tulloch, Lynn is executive director of corporate information services division; and Bernie Churko is the executive director of logistics, planning and compliance division.

Item 1

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, welcome and to your officials. A few questions, Mr. Minister, around some of the things that you've stated in the House over the last couple of months. You indicated a number of times that you're restructuring in terms of the funding and — I shouldn't say restructuring, I guess the better word would be, to use, is reallocating funding in different areas — you've indicated that you're shuffling, I think you've quoted, \$6 million. Could you indicate to us in the *Estimates* as to where the 6 million is being shuffled and exactly how you plan to meet that objective?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — The streamlining savings are from engineering services, 1.6 million; from regional operations streamlining, \$800,000; fleet operations, 1.2 million; preservation field organization streamlining, \$1.3 million; logistics and planning division streamlining, 700,000; other initiatives, 700,000; for a total of 6.3 million. And that will go 4.1 to increase in capital program expenditures and 2.2 into preservation.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. In terms of the reduction of \$1.5 million on engineering fees, I see that that's possible under your line item as you've referred to it there. How will you accomplish . . . I see that you're still planning to do the same amount of capital projects, or in terms of the dollar figure, or whether it's the same number of projects, I guess, we're not sure. Will you be able to accommodate the engineering by some other method?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — The reductions in engineering basically come from policy in the standards area. We've eliminated some duplication as well. If you recall, we used to have six districts. Now we have three regions. The engineering services are now provided out of Saskatoon and Regina and not the six different locations.

So there's the streamlining in the engineering department . . . is the reason for the savings. But we can certainly handle what engineering needs are there internally, so there will not be any changes. It's just streamlining and becoming more efficient.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, in terms of determining capital projects and the kind of capital project that . . . we note across the province that there seems to be various methods of resurfacing — whether you're talking about the hot mix or the cold mix. What kind of criteria do your officials put in place in terms of determining a stretch of highway, as to whether you're resurfacing it by method A or method B or method C, or how many there are?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — It's basically based on economics: maintenance versus reconstruction. And then we also take into account the type of traffic that's on a particular road. A road may need a structural pavement while another road may need a sealed, sand-sealed or sealed surface.

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Minister, in terms of a very specific project — and I've drawn your attention to this before — in my constituency, Highway No. 5, you were resurfacing 16 kilometres of road right now, of a total amount of about 23

kilometres, I believe, that is not resurfaced according to the specifications that will now be attained. And the response that I received was, number one, there wasn't enough money. And number two, there was an evaluation of the particular section of that highway that was not being touched this year, and it could handle the load for at least two years.

It turns out that this year, this spring, that chunk of road that is not being touched has just fallen apart completely. In fact there has been an accident, I understand, now on that chunk of road.

The third response was that of course you would look at it in terms of when the money was available, over two years from now. Your per kilometre cost for the 16 kilometres is at a particular level; I don't know whether it's high or low or whatever. When you look at resurfacing 6 kilometres that will be left in two years time, to bring in a contractor to do that, your costs are going to be astronomical. I wonder how you arrive at a situation where you take almost 80 per cent of the job and do it, and then leave such a small chunk for a year or two down the road.

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Well I'm sure the member is aware of the amount of roads that we have in the province of Saskatchewan, so we basically look at a structure and the distress on a particular piece of road. And if it needs improving, but a small section or a section we believe will last a couple years longer, we will not do that, but we'll move into an area where there is distress and a need and hopefully get another two years out of a particular piece.

Because of the competition in the road building industry, we haven't been paying, I guess, a premium for small jobs versus large jobs. So we'll have to continue to do that because we've got a lot of roads, a lot of roads need work, and we have to base it on something. And certainly, you know, to redo a 6 kilometre stretch that we believe we could get a couple more years out of, we believe would be wasting that money. And we would sooner put that money into maybe another area where there is more distress and more need.

Mr. Krawetz: — I appreciate your comments regarding the fact that there is, you know, keen competition out there, I guess, and that you're not worried about a small job versus a large job.

In light of the fact that I've pointed out to you that this particular chunk — not all of the 6 kilometres, but I understand about 2 kilometres . . . and I drove on it coming back into Regina on Sunday night, and it's a disaster.

What process . . . or who will determine that that is indeed an emergency situation and could be repaired by adding 2 kilometres again. Because as I see it, the person or persons who completed that survey on that particular chunk and said this is good for two years, you know, erred, and indeed we have a problem. Who determines whether or not that can be, you know, fixed at this appropriate time when you have a contractor there who might be able to get these 2 kilometres fixed and prevent serious injury?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — All the tenders for road construction this

year is already tendered. And so if in fact . . . The decision would be made by the executive director of that particular region. But you have to understand, if that decision was made, we would have to pull the cost of those two kilometres away from some place else that has already been tendered. So what normally we will do is go into that section and maintain it as best we can until we can get back to it.

Mr. Krawetz: — Mr. Minister, if you could indicate the purpose of a supplementary estimate. I note that we're going to be dealing with '95-96 supplements of about \$5.85 million. Am I correct that that is an expenditure that you incurred for the flood conditions that we experienced last spring?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — The money was used, you're correct, for the flooding. It was about half for municipal road damages and about half for highways damages.

Mr. Krawetz: — Before we turn back to this spring's problems that we've incurred, while we're on vote no. 16, in terms of a question, it's indicated there that you're also talking not only about the damage caused by spring flooding, but you also have indicated it's for expenses, including downsizing costs.

Could you give us a breakdown as to the \$5.85 million in terms of what amount went towards actual highway repair and what was used for downsizing?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — The figures were \$2.65 million for damages to municipal roads, and \$2 million for damages to provincial roads and a little over a million or right around a million to the early retirement program.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Therefore, Mr. Minister, if you were able to look at the problems of last spring . . . and I guess we're saying this spring we have very similar problems in the province. I've indicated to you, you know, that a chunk of road has fallen apart beyond what your officials in fact felt was a situation whereby it would last.

Is there any emergency type of assistance that can be provided to construct or resurface that 2 kilometres of road, rather than, as you've suggested, that you have to pull that 2 kilometres from somewhere else?

Obviously the repairs that were done last year, you quoted \$2 million of provincial repair; that must have been a fair chunk of resurfacing.

(2100)

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — As the member will know, Mr. Chairman, that the Finance minister presented her budget, our budget, not too long ago, and the estimated surplus this year is about \$8 million. It's very tight; it's very close. So we just haven't got anywhere to find that additional funding.

So what we will do is repair it. We will maintain it. The crews right now are about two weeks behind because of the wet weather. And so as they get the work done on the main primary roads, they will move then onto the secondary roads, and I

think by hopefully mid-summer that our roads will be in a reasonable condition again.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, you've indicated in this House of course that there were significant downsizing of depots in terms of the number of depots and how maintenance would be handled. I think you talked about centralizing repair services because of improvements in equipment and improvement in terms of how you'll be able to do that. When we start to look at the number of kilometres of road, and I find it difficult to understand how you will be able to maintain those same numbers of kilometres by reducing depots. Could you explain to the people of this province how you still will ensure that there is an adequate level of maintenance, not only summer?

As you have indicated, weather and spring conditions may play a slight role in that. But more importantly, in the wintertime, when we're talking about the severe winter storms that we have, constituents have noted that to me, that secondary highways have in fact remained closed or blocked because of winter storms for as much as two days because the crews couldn't get to them. Now we know in my constituency we're going to have a further reduction in terms of the number of depots.

Do you think that you can adequately say to the people of this province that there will be as good a maintenance program and as good a safety level this coming winter, next spring, as we've had in the past?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — The current maintenance organization that we had was developed in the 1960s. And the need for organizational change certainly was there.

We now have trucks, for instance, that have 8-yard capacity boxes compared to the old trucks that were 5-yard capacity buckets. We can do more with a truck. We don't need two trucks going to one job. We may only need the one.

We have larger graders. Certainly the snow ploughs have change dramatically. They're a lot faster; they can handle a lot more territory than they used to.

And I want to say that we still have 96 work crews in 107 communities in the province of Saskatchewan. And so we believe . . . It used to be like some of the crews would look after maybe 100 kilometres; some others would maybe be 275. With the restructuring we're looking at 300 to 350 kilometres for each crew.

In many cases, the crews are larger now. There's very few two-person crews. So when you do a summer maintenance job, for an example, you have more people on site to complete the work.

So we believe actually that maintenance probably will improve.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister this is not a question but I'd like to just make a comment about something that I found rather funny. And I know you talk about

automation and the improvement in our vehicles.

I recall about . . . well a number of years ago, five, six years ago, Highway No. 5, the maintenance depot was in the community of Canora. In the springtime you always use to end up with these small, little potholes that use to be, you know, 6 inches in diameter. And of course if they were left unmaintained, they became huge.

The gentleman that was, I think, the supervisor in Canora used to throw a couple of yards of cold mix on the back of a half ton and use to come out with a shovel down that stretch from Canora to Invermay and they used to be fixed in a matter of no time.

Now I noted the other day that this nice, huge, big truck that is equipped — I think it's manned by one person — and it has the ability to drop the oil and then drop the cold mix and then they back up. I think it took him about eight or ten minutes of backing up, going ahead, backing up until he found the hole and was actually positioned over the top of it and then he finally filled the hole, then he packed it, and he was gone in about 10 to 12 minutes. And based on what I saw six or seven years ago of manual labour, I think he would have probably have filled about 15 holes by that time.

So I know what you're saying in terms of improvements, but we wonder sometimes exactly how much improvement we really are gaining when we start looking at those small jobs that need the quick repair in the spring.

Mr. Minister, another problem that occurs and it's a problem that has been here for a number of years. And I know I've heard you say in this House you're very concerned about the abandonment of the Crow subsidy and the fact that now you're going to be looking at railway lines.

That's something that might happen in the future, but we know what has happened to the road conditions over the last number of years. There's a major problem in terms of how they've been standing up to the load. I know that in my area we see anhydrous trucks that travel the highway early in the springtime and that's not this year, that's last year and the year before and the year before. We can see the damage that they have done because the highway was not constructed to handle the load that they're taking. It has nothing to do with the farmers that will be sending large amounts of grain down that highway.

Is your department assessing the roads in terms of primary and secondary highways, in terms of trying to get a handle around what highways can actually take the kind of weights that the department is allowing on them now?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Well thank you for those comments. First, the comment about the temporary patching that was done a few years ago and the temporary patching that is done now, and that can happen certainly. But what the member may not realize is that our system of deep patching now where we take a complete section of road right out to the base and all and replace it takes fairly modern equipment and more than one person. And that's what we'd like and do as we go along. But

we often have to do temporary patches until such a time that we can in fact get to a more serious type of patching like a deep patch.

You're right. Things in rural Saskatchewan are changing dramatically. We have the grain system changing, the grain elevator consolidation, the use of anhydrous. We have now I think, in most cases, farms getting larger. In a spring like this spring in particular, where there was a lot of rain, everything was in a rush. The roads, you know, had to take that pressure, that's for sure. Now we have a lot of farmers with B-trains, with large, large trucks.

What we've done in the south-west is a pilot project. It's a transportation council. There's over a hundred municipalities involved with the Department of Highways to look at prioritizing the transportation needs in that particular region. Part of that is looking at the possibility of designating certain roads for truck traffic and that sort of thing. That will develop over the next while and I believe that there is a lot of possibilities in that kind of a concept. There is no large pot of money at the end of the rainbow. So what we have to do now in order to have a transportation system for the 21st century, that works for our particular situation, is look at new ideas.

I think you were in the House this afternoon when I announced the partnership with a forestry company. Those are some of the new initiatives that we have to look at in order to have a suitable transportation system in Saskatchewan for the 21st century.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, my final questions or comments around the area that you just discussed, and that is a national and a provincial transportation system. My questions to you, Mr. Minister, are you working with the federal department of transportation in terms of not only determining highway systems that need improving, that need changing, but also in terms of working with the railway companies, in terms of understanding what that map will look like in the year 2005, to try to figure out indeed where our railway lines will be.

We know that there will be some restructuring and we have had constituents of course that are questioning where the railway lines will be located. Because they want to know whether or not there will be a highway that will be able to accommodate the trucking that you've indicated. And I wonder whether or not you're working with the federal government in terms of trying to determine the plan that we will see.

Because I think if we approach this in a very segmented kind of way, we will never have that strategy in terms of developing the proper transportation system for the year 2000. It's just not going to happen.

I recall someone in the wintertime I think, said that, you know, the best way in Saskatchewan to save the roads is to ensure that all farmers could ship their grain between December 1 and March 31 and take advantage of the frozen road conditions, and then we'd never have a problem with resurfacing.

Well that's not reality. I mean unless we have every grain company in the world willing to abide by that fact. But that's not reality. So I guess I'm interested in hearing your comments about whether or not we're looking at this in a more national approach, a more global approach, in terms of the railway lines, the highway system, and of course the grid road system. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Well I'll start sort of from the last comments and move forward. The timing of hauling, a very interesting concept — perhaps we could haul more of our grain to the elevators in the wintertime. Well that might not be that bad an idea. And we have talked with the Canadian Wheat Board, for an example, at perhaps, you know thinking of that, where possible at least, and so that's not entirely out of the question.

As far as working with the federal government, I guess what I would say is we have tried, and we have tried very hard. We made a presentation to the Standing Committee on Transportation in regard to Bill C-14, and what that Bill does of course is deregulate the rail industry, certainly giving more power to the railroads, allowing them to abandon lines much faster, but we got absolutely no response from the federal government. There was no amendments made to the Act.

We also — three prairie provinces again, the Highways ministers from each of those — made a presentation to the Senate Standing Committee on Transportation. Again, the same thing.

We asked the federal government to participate with us in a national highways program. We have a national highways network that all provinces and territories sat down and determined back in 1987. In Saskatchewan, some of those roads that are included in the national highways program are Highway No. 1, Highway No. 16, Highway No. 11, for example.

What we thought is we could have a permanent program, a 50/50 cost-sharing program, that in fact we could improve those roads. If we could do that, then we would have more money internally for other roads. If you look at the United States, their national highways program is funded 80 per cent by their federal government, 20 per cent by the state.

But it didn't happen. The federal government has refused to participate.

We did get a little bit of money, and we are working with the federal government in regards to the little bit of transition money that Saskatchewan's going to get because of the cancellation of the Crow. There's \$84 million that will come to the province of Saskatchewan — \$20 million this year.

The first 10 million will go unconditionally to the rural municipalities; 5 million will go to municipal roads, and that will be cost shared between the federal government and the municipality; and the province will get \$5 million.

Now these roads will be basically agriculture roads that are to a

new elevator or to an elevator, and there is some concern with what will happen to the road. The problem I guess with that, is that we get \$5 million this year, but we have identified roads that would likely qualify for that funding in the neighbourhood of \$165 million. So it's not going to be very much but it will be a little bit of help.

The committee will be made up of three federal representatives, two provincial representatives, two SARM representatives, and one SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) representative. This committee will be set up in the very near future, and then we'll pick the projects that are most suited to the rules of the program.

(2115)

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a couple of points. As you're probably aware, Mr. Minister, I've been harping away on the road issues in this Legislative Assembly since the day I walked in, and certainly I want to make sure that I'm harping on it the last couple days that the session is on.

And for the benefit of your officials, I'll indicate the roads in my constituency that are in very, very poor conditions. First of all . . . And there were also promises made, I remind the minister, that Garson Lake would have a road. There was promises made that this road would be built — 30 kilometres. Patuanak — 80 kilometres . . . to repair, to repair these roads. Dillon — 60 kilometres, again to repair this road. And Turner Lake — 30 kilometres.

Those have never been done. The road to Garson Lake was never built. And certainly these roads were never repaired. And as I mentioned to you on a number of occasions, Mr. Minister, in terms of the ruts, of the wash-outs, and of the washboards and all the poor maintenance of the roads, that we often find that 3,200 Saskatchewan people are often stranded as a result of the poor conditions of these roads.

And in this day and age, I feel it is totally unacceptable, especially in the fact that you have the . . . there's medical emergencies, and these people can't get through with 4x4's. Then obviously something is critically wrong somewhere.

Will the minister please address this problem and commit to replacing these trails called roads and follow through on those promises made to the people of northern Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — I want to thank the member for the question, and certainly realize that some of the roads in the North, as some of the roads in the South, are in a condition that we would certainly like to see improved.

But I want to just mention that the roads that you talked about, Garson Lake gravel road cost \$1.2 million to upgrade. Turner Lake road, 1.8 million. Dillon, a sealed granular road would be \$5.5 million. Patuanak, sealed granular, \$8.6 million. Pinehouse road, gravel, \$4.8 million. Canoe Lake road, \$3 million. For a total of about \$26 million for 300 kilometres.

Now take a look at that and then take a look at what we've done

to this point. Grandmother's Bay access, certainly a partnership with Indian and Northern Affairs and the Saskatchewan government. The improvements to 102, 905, which again is a partnership with the mining companies. The commitment of \$1.5 million to the Athabasca road; 965, the Canoe Lake road, which we are proceeding with; \$6 million . . . well \$2 million provincially for the Cumberland bridge; and there are others.

What I am trying to say I guess, is we would like to do them right now but, you know, you only have so much money to work with. So what you have to try and do is, do a little at a time. Certainly I will be in Turner Lake on the 24th of this month. The executive director of the department for the northern area was up there this past week. We have to try and look at ways of maintaining those roads as best we can until such a time that in fact we can make the improvements necessary.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much. Just in reference to some of the things that the Department of Highways receives in terms of the road tax. I understand the partnerships that are starting to form and also the . . . Is there running rights on these roads? Like do companies like NRT (Northern Resource Trucking) pay certain fees and dues to the province? And in terms of all the different revenues that you do get as a provincial government, specifically for the highways program, where are these monies coming from and what are these amounts, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — We haven't got that broken down but it's in the vicinity of a million dollars and it's not with . . . NRT does not pay but Cameco pays on that partnership. But I could get you the exact figure if that would be helpful, but I can't give it to you tonight because they're all together here.

Mr. Belanger: — I guess that would also have the other types, of either the partnerships, or the road tax income and all that as well. Am I to expect that from you?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — We can give you a breakdown of the partnerships, but fuel tax of course has got nothing to do with Highways. Fuel tax goes to general revenue and makes up part of the funding of health care and education and social programs and roads and all of that. So that's a separate issue, and you would have to ask the Minister of Finance for the amount of fuel tax that the province receives.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you. Several years ago, SUMA put together a plan to begin the process of urban government renewal. I believe that they established a task force, and they also came out with a report. And if my memory serves me correctly, Mr. Minister, there was a proposal in there in which the municipalities would participate in generating revenues to assist in fixing up these roads.

And again if my memory serves me correctly — and many times it hasn't, so I may be way off here — but I understood that SUMA proposed a \$20 fee on each licence, the licence plates of each vehicle, to assist in that effort. Have you ever had any type of suggestion made to you? And what has been the general response to issues of that nature?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Well most people in Saskatchewan, I think believe — and it's my understanding that they believe — that probably we're taxed pretty much already. They understand that we have interest on our debt and our debt to pay down, and so they believe that another form of taxation or a tax wouldn't be appropriate at this time.

They would sooner us look at other solutions like partnership, like internal efficiencies within the department, like working much closer with other levels of government, rural municipalities and urban municipalities, so that the limited funds that we do have can be spent more wisely. So no, I have not had any request for a fee on licences as a road fee.

Mr. Belanger: — May I suggest, Mr. Minister, that one of your officials from your department get a copy of that and see exactly what the proposal spoke about, and there's some pretty interesting concepts and discussions on how the urban governments can, for the final time, have some say and have some direct benefits in terms of getting some of these roads fixed. They are the source of a lot of information, a lot of good ideas and suggestions. And I think we have to pay much more attention to efforts of organizations like SARM and SUMA.

I just wanted to share with you, again going back to the road issues in my constituency — and I spoke to you about the five roads that I feel are very important, or the six roads rather — well I want to share with you a letter from the mayor of Turnor Lake, John L. Montgrand. And I'll quote:

The present road conditions leading into Turnor Lake needs immediate attention on upgrading and construction. The road in its present condition is putting our people in a dangerous position. Accidents are waiting to happen.

We would like you to investigate into this matter regarding the road with the Minister of Transportation and Highways and to discuss possible measures to ensure the upgrading and construction needed will occur this summer. Please advise John L. Montgrand on this important matter. Thank you. Sincerely, Mayor Montgrand.

And that concludes the letter. I'll send a copy of this letter over to you if I can have the assistance of one of the pages, and you can certainly respond to Mayor Montgrand on that matter.

Mayor Montgrand's point is very clear. The people of Turnor Lake have waited long enough for this road to be fixed. They are Saskatchewan people and I urge — and I strongly urge — you as the minister responsible to do the basic, decent thing and that is to get that road fixed.

The other fact is we look at the Canoe Lake road. What is the cost of that road and when is the completion date, when you spoke about the Canoe Lake road?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — The cost of the Canoe Lake road from Highway No. 155 to Highway No. 903, 49 kilometres, about \$5 million.

And I just want to add to that, based on your comments about

working very closely with SARM and SUMA. I meet regularly with both SARM and SUMA. We have a good working relationship. We are working right now on railway crossing safety. Certainly we talk about roads so we're working together as an adviser and on technical advice to the proposal to purchase grain cars. We are working with SARM very closely with the regional concept of deciding priorities for road expenditures. We've worked very closely with the different municipal governments on many, many different issues.

And I want to say about Turnor Lake road, I did meet with a group of people at a meeting with the chiefs of the Meadow Lake Tribal Council less than a month ago, I would say, now. They certainly . . . they had the opportunity to give me some pictures of their road. We had a very good meeting, a very open meeting. The executive director, Stu Armstrong, was in the community this past week, and I am going to Turnor Lake on June 24 to meet with the community. And certainly we're going to have to look at perhaps maintenance solutions until such a time that we can upgrade the road there.

(2130)

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you. I just have about three or four more questions left on three or four different roads. In reference to the Grandmother's Bay road, how many kilometres were built, at what cost, and who shared in these costs?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — The total length of the road is 11.7 kilometres; there are 2.63 kilometres being on the Indian reserve land. That portion is 100 per cent funded by Indian affairs and northern development. The remainder is funded under the infrastructure program, so there is one-third by the federal government and two-thirds by the provincial government.

Mr. Belanger: — So there is a road to Grandmother's Bay and what is the total cost?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — We don't have the cost, but I will certainly get that for you. And we don't have that information here this evening.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, and I'll be certainly waiting for the information, Mr. Minister. As well, if you can for me, also the Canoe Lake road, whether there is some infrastructure dollars or whether there's some industry dollars attached to that development of that particular road?

And as well, the Black Lake road, as to what costs are being covered by the federal government, versus the provincial government, versus industry in general? And in particular with the Black Lake road, could you also advise me of the total kilometres that are going to be built and how much the province is contributing to that road? I'm understanding it is a significantly long road and the province has only contributed \$1.5 million. Is this correct, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — The total projected costs of the tote road. First of all, it's 190 kilometres in length from Points North to Black Lake. We believe we can have a tote road for

about \$8 million. Canadian Coast Guard, as you know, are not participating in the dredging to give access to barge service, and so that money will be transferred to this road and we estimate that to be \$5 million. INAC (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada) is willing to put up \$1.5 million. The province is willing to put up \$1.5 million plus contingencies, which we believe could equal our original contribution of \$1.5 million. Plus you have to remember that the maintenance is our responsibility and the liability on that maintenance could be, you know, easily equal to contributions from other sectors.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much. In looking at some of the situations with the Black Lake road, with the Canoe Lake road, with the Grandmother's Bay road, with the Cumberland House bridge, you tally up the total amount of dollars. Is it a fair assumption to make, Mr. Minister, the federal government, through their infrastructure program, and industry, through their needs to use these roads, have basically outspent the province in terms of road maintenance in northern Saskatchewan.

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Certainly we appreciate the federal government's help on many of these roads. Many of the roads, you must understand, serve reserve communities and so we believe that there certainly is federal responsibility. In fact probably a lot more responsibility than they're willing to accept.

But we're certainly willing to partner with them because there are other advantages to the roads for the province of Saskatchewan, like development of mining and forestry, and access for tourists, and certainly access for the communities in the North to the southern part of the province.

So we try and work in partnership and it's been working reasonably well. Certainly it would be nice to get more from the federal government and we could just do a lot of those roads just a lot quicker.

Mr. Belanger: — So I guess I'm to assume then, Mr. Minister, in the response, that yes, through INAC, and through the federal government contribution, and through the private industry sector, that they have indeed outspent the province significantly in terms of construction of roads?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — I haven't got the breakdown but certainly that will be very interesting to look at. But you have to understand that the maintenance of those roads, even though the federal government may contribute something to the construction, is certainly an ongoing expense and often much higher than the actual construction. So we take that responsibility. So we have to take that into consideration when we're doing that estimate.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Just a couple of other points in reference to the most significant problem that we have at this point in time is the road conditions. Certainly we look at the long-term solution you speak about — eventually fixing these roads and constructing them on a properly basis . . . on a proper basis, be it for Pinehouse or Patuanak or Dillon or Turnor Lake or Garson Lake. I can certainly appreciate what you're trying to do here. But the fact of the matter immediately,

at this point in time, these roads must be maintained with greater energy.

And I was just wondering, for that particular region, what type of budget allocation have you had in the previous years from the highest year to the lowest year in terms of budgets for the west side, which is of course Ile-a-la-Crosse, La Loche, Pinehouse area.

It would be interesting to see what was your largest allocation in one given year versus your lowest allocation in recent years.

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — The figures I will give you are probably very close to exact. The average provincial expenditure on 5,600 kilometres of gravel network in the province is \$1,300 per kilometre for surface maintenance. On the Dillon road in 1995 — well that's when we took the average annual cost — it was \$86,972 or \$1,478 per kilometre. Pinehouse was \$86,323 — about \$1,754 per kilometre. Turnor Lake road was \$58,017 for \$1,933 per kilometre; and Patuanak was \$126,364 or \$1,367 per kilometre.

Mr. Belanger: — Well, Mr. Minister, I'm just one massively confused MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) here. It seems the more you put into these roads the worse they get.

You look at the comparison of Pinehouse and you look at . . . it goes from 1,478 and to another community that has roads that are in worse shape it goes up to 1,754. And you go to Turnor Lake and it has probably one of the worst roads in the province's history — it's up to \$1,933 per kilometre. If all this money's being allocated to these roads on a per kilometre basis, why is it that we're having continual road problems? What is the problem here? And what is the portion of cost in relation to material versus salaries?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Thank you for the question. The member I think has been on some of those roads and I have, and in some cases there is not much of a base. They're built through some tough country — swamps and whatever have you.

So the maintenance costs are high — there's no question about that. And I haven't got the breakdown today but I will try and get the breakdown of materials to labour. And I'm not sure if we can . . . We should be able to do that, and I can try and do that for you.

And you also have to know that, in certain areas at least, moisture conditions have been unusual in the past couple of years and winters have been a bit unusual. So we've had considerable amount of concern with that.

I know in my area, for instance, in the Red Earth-Shoal Lake area, we've had a lot of floods coming off the Pasquia Hills, and certainly that has caused a lot of extra damage in the last few years that really for the 10 previous years we didn't have. So it's just, you know, some unusual circumstances.

Certainly the base of the roads are . . . Many times, like, the road is flat and actually almost below the sides of the roads;

like there is no built-up base so maintenance costs are certainly high on some of those northern roads for sure.

Mr. Belanger: — Okay. I guess the situation that we have — and this is probably my last question; I certainly appreciate the time constraints we're under — and I guess the one issue that I have, Mr. Minister, is to really ask you to investigate thoroughly with your department as to how these roads continue to get worse and worse. And why is it that . . . You know, I strongly believe when I made the statement that 10 yards of gravel for a kilometre, I believe, it's what they're using now to maintain these roads.

And you've also got equipment up there; you've got manpower, but what . . . if your department hasn't got the proper material to do any work, then obviously we're not doing our job to maintain these roads.

So can you assure me that — this evening — that you will undertake a very thorough examination of how these roads are being maintained so at the very least, if there is 1,700 or 1,900 per kilometre being allocated for northern roads, then these roads should be built up and getting better and better, but they're getting worse and worse. So where could the problem be, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Well I guess the worse a road gets the more you have to maintain it. And I guess that's why your costs go up in that situation. And I mentioned of course the condition . . . or the weather conditions in the last while too.

So I just want to reinforce that we have a commitment to the North. This government has as strong commitment to the North. I am personally visiting Turnor Lake. I have personally visited already other communities like Buffalo Narrows and Patuanak and intend to work with the communities to try and get as best maintenance service that we can provide until such a time that we can in fact reconstruct some roads.

There's a lot of other areas, like Waterhen, that we're looking at right now. There are a lot of other needs besides the communities that you mention in the North, and certainly will always be a priority with this government.

But as the member will know, it would be nice to do everything at once, but of course that's just not reality. So we just have to do as best we can and as fast as we can under the circumstances.

(2145)

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Just a final few points I wish to make, is that we have to make sure that we look at the situation with having the communities have more of an input as to how often you want to see some of these graders on the road and what type of gravel, or how much gravel, they need for these roads.

And many times the mayors and councillors of these communities that are impacted and affected by poor road and the maintenance problems really don't have a say. They can

pick up their phone and they can phone their regional manager and say, our road needs more gravel, but basically there is nothing that the person will do because of the budget problems.

In essence, what I'm asking you to do is to instruct your officials and instruct your department in Buffalo Narrows and other depots to have a lot more respect and allow the communities to have input into determining how these roads should be maintained.

Some of the communities say, well perhaps they're trying to grade too fast. Perhaps they should have a grader station here. Perhaps they should subcontract the road maintenance to us. Perhaps they should allocate more gravel to this particular area. This kind of input is very valuable, and I think it's just a decent way of showing that their opinion does matter.

So in that regard, I think that there should be more emphasis and cooperation extended to northern mayors and northern chiefs when it comes to the maintenance of these roads. These roads are very vital links; there's no question about it. They have to get them fixed. The taxi operators are complaining; the vehicle owners are complaining that many of these vehicles deteriorate and they depreciate at such an alarming rate because of the poor road conditions.

And these are the people that are Saskatchewan people; they're Saskatchewan taxpayers. And yet we see that their vehicles probably have half the life of a southern vehicle. So the maintenance cost and the deterioration of the vehicles really is also a major issue. So I would encourage you to hear those concerns and I would encourage you to address those concerns and certainly consult with as many people as you can. And have your staff and certainly your regional directors respect the opinions and the positions of mayors and northern chiefs when it comes to matters of good road maintenance.

So in closing I sincerely thank you for your time, and also your officials. And over the next couple of years we certainly look with a lot of anticipation as to what is being done to improve the roads to Garson Lake, to Canoe Lake, to Pinehouse, to Patuanak, to Turner Lake, and certainly to Dillon. Thank you very much.

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — I want to say one word before . . . I just want to commend our staff. I think our crews are excellent. Our staff in the Department of Highways do the very best they can under whatever circumstances they deal with. I have great faith in them. Can we improve our services in the North? I don't know, but we're certainly going to look at it. Can we locate a grader, perhaps, in a different location to improve that service? We're going to take a look at that just to see if there is something that we can do to improve that service.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I'm, as you well know, quite interested in the No. 368 situation, and I understand that there will be some work done on that highway. And I understand that it was going to be starting this summer. I'm just wondering if you can tell me when that work, that upgrading, will begin?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — There is no major restructuring of 368 this year. There will be spot maintenance and preservation projects on 368. That will be tendered in the very near future, it is my understanding. So we'll be starting fairly shortly.

Ms. Julé: — I guess there's always been some confusion or question about the commitment that you've made to that highway. It was my understanding that there would be definitely some upgrading in the very low spots, so I guess whether you call that spot maintenance or upgrading is maybe a misunderstanding on my part. But there was an article in our paper that in fact some substantial upgrading would be done on that. And I think we did have pretty firm commitment from some of your directors.

Okay, so could you just tell me once again when it will begin. I missed that for some reason. I don't think you committed to that either, but I'd like to know because the people out there are quite curious on when this is going to begin.

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — It is my understanding the spot improvements was the commitment, and so there will be sections that will be . . . some of the low spots will be done. That tender will be let out within the next week or two, and so shortly after that the work will begin.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I've noticed that some work has been done on No. 20 Highway from No. 11 to Lanigan. It's really very nice to see that done. It looks to me as though it's been an oil and gravel surfacing. But in the member from Watrous's constituency, it doesn't look like he's been lobbying you that much because from Lanigan to Humboldt No. 20 is really very terrible. I'm just wondering if there is some consideration by the department in also fixing up that stretch of the highway in the same fashion that it was done between No. 11 and Lanigan.

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Well I happened to have quite an experience in Humboldt the other day. I was going down to Watrous to a meeting, and of course the train was crossing in front of the . . . across where you go through Humboldt south to 20. And my wife decided that I should drive, so we're in the traffic line, and we both got out of the car at the same time. And when the doors closed, of course they were locked. So we had an exciting time in Humboldt.

And then we did drive south on that particular road. And basically it was fairly good. There were some spots certainly that were broken up in the spring. We have no plans for to upgrade that road at this time. Certainly there will be patching and maintenance on it.

We also have some hope that maybe that would be one of the highways that would be considered under the limited funds that the federal government is giving to the province in regards to grain transportation routes. So if in fact it would qualify under that program or be sort of a priority, there is some possibilities there.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, while you were telling some stories about your travels on the highways,

that same stretch of road, that No. 20 Highway, close to Burr, when I went home last weekend, I had quite an experience on that highway. And I thought maybe it was your government's strategy to be able to make use of all of its natural resources and to kill two birds with one stone and fix whatever we could with what we have.

In fact, it was night time and I was driving along and there was . . . I noticed in front of me, right across my side of the highway, sort of a white . . . it looked like a piece of cardboard or something. And I thought maybe also that it was gravel that had been thrown in the holes to patch them. But what it really was, was it was one of the many, many deer that are plaguing our country right now laying inside of the big hole in the highway, and it looked as though it were there for patching purposes. So I hit the deer and my car kind of really went flying, and I was wondering why anyone would have left this animal in the middle of the highway. But none the less, maybe we can mulch those deer up — there's too many of them anyway — and use them for patching the holes in the highways.

Mr. Minister, a little more on the serious side here. You're talking about the money from the federal government, the transition money is \$84 million. Am I correct that you're going to be using that all for highways here or . . . it's for infrastructure. What portion of that will be used, or have you calculated that yet, for highway maintenance and upgrading?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Well basically we know what the first year will be, and that's this year, and the federal government has said there will be \$20 million coming to the province of Saskatchewan of the 84.6 million.

The \$20 million will be used in this way, I believe. Ten million dollars will go to rural municipalities unconditionally, so they will be able to use those funds as they wish. So SARM will I guess develop a system as to how much each rural municipality will receive from the \$10 million.

There will be \$5 million that rural municipalities and urban municipalities can use on rural and urban roads. The province will get \$5 million for highways. And basically the criteria, as I understand it at this time, is that it would have to be spent on a road infrastructure that has something to do with the loss of the Crow or elevator consolidation or rail line abandonment.

And there is an eight-member committee that will decide the spending of that \$10 million — the 5 million provincial, the 5 million municipal. There are three federal members on the committee; there are two provincial members on the committee; there are two representatives from the rural municipalities; and there is one representative from SUMA. This committee will then I guess choose from the applications that come in from the municipalities, which will get the funding and which will not.

And so we will have to wait until the committee is in place and in fact some of the decisions are made, to know exactly which roads will be accepted.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Just one more question. Considering the value that I think every person in this province

puts on good highways for our own use and also for safety and for tourism, etc., I'm just wondering whether or not your government has considered taking any unexpected revenues that it may have coming in, that weren't projected in the budget, such as the 25 million from the potash dividends, and putting that into highways and upgrading. It's certainly an area that I think most people would agree, overall most people in the province would agree that it would be some of that money well spent. Has there been any consideration about using these extra monies in that way?

(2200)

The Chair: — Order, order. Order, order. Order. A point has been made.

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Well first of all, we hope that there is a balanced budget, and in fact the surplus that we've planned is \$8 million. If it's more than that, that would be great. But we have always, as a government, said that surpluses would be used in the following fashion: one-third to reduce the debt, one-third for targeted tax relief, and one-third for enhancing services.

So, you know, depending on what happens at the end of the year, I hope that the economy does what I think it will do. We'll have a great year in agriculture. We'll have a great year in potash and uranium sales and oil revenue, and in fact we will have a bigger surplus than what we expect — at least I'm hoping.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Okay, we've gone on with highways for quite awhile and most of the talk about potholes, potholes, full of deer, railways, and hauling grain and those sorts of things.

The one thing that hasn't come up very often — and I'd like to put some emphasis in that tonight — is the safety aspect and specifically Highway 11. I'm sure your officials have the stats there, the people that have been killed or maimed on that highway, and they're really quite high. It's one of the more dangerous stretches in Saskatchewan.

Now admittedly there is a certain stretch that is being twinned, and I think that's going to take a lot of the pressure off of the traffic going from Saskatoon to a number of the communities immediately north of Saskatoon. However, if you check your instances of fatal accidents and serious accidents on that highway going right up into the constituency from Shellbrook, Shell Lake area . . . And maybe the member from there needs to stick up for his MacDowall and Duck Lake friends as well . . . been a number of deaths in that area as well.

And I'm wondering what the Department of Highways has in place there, not necessarily for twinning, although we would like that, but other possible safety measures from acceleration lanes, deceleration lanes, and all those sorts of things because in my community we've had fatal accidents at every intersection that leads from the highway into town, as well as people who are now paraplegic and those sorts of things. So it's been a rather sad story.

So what are the long-term plans to get a more of a safe aspect to that stretch of highway? Especially now with summer coming and it being a very high tourist area, chances of more fatalities are very high.

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Well I guess it would be nice to twin every road in the province of Saskatchewan. I know we have No. 1 for instance, which is the Trans-Canada, which goes very near the MLA that sits next to you. And the cost of twinning No. 1 is about in the neighbourhood of \$80 million to do the section from Gull Lake to the Alberta border and from Indian Head to the Manitoba border.

We have Highway No. 16 from North Battleford to Marshall — that's another neighbourhood of \$42 million if you count the cost of going through the city of North Battleford. Highway 11 — I do not have the cost but I know it would be up there as well. If you look at traffic counts, Highway 1 and 16 are a little higher than No. 11.

The highest traffic count on No. 11 is the section that we're twinning, from Warman in. The twinning of 11 is not on our list for the immediate future. And I'll be quite frank with you, I believe No. 1 and 16 would have priority to 11.

I know fatalities are a concern; any fatality is a concern. I know on Highway 3, right near Tisdale, we've had three fatalities on a very straight road, wonderful highway; it's not twinned, but it happens. And I know we like to blame roads all the time and we believe that twinning would certainly help, and I believe it would, but we still have to, I guess, live within our means and urge as much caution by motorists as possible.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. At least the Minister of Highways will remember where we're from.

Minister, it's good to see you again. Good to see your officials. I want to welcome you and your officials here this evening. And I want to say that it is mixed feelings that I have to be here discussing highways with you.

Of course I'm always happy to have the opportunity to discuss the problems of highways in a question and answer atmosphere, and we've done this many times before. Most folks will know that I've been the critic for Highways for the official opposition up until the election, and I guess our leader must have thought that I asked enough questions about Highways that he thought I should do it again, so here I am as the Highway critic for our party once again.

So a lot of the things that we will talk about will be nothing new between me and you, but they probably still will be interesting to the general public because the problems largely still remain.

I don't think I can hold you personally responsible for the problems that we have with our roads because the problems that you have, I think, stem from the general revenue concept of your government, and that principle is probably something that you can't do much about as an individual. However, I would encourage you to do that.

I guess in all seriousness, Minister, I have to say that while the Minister of Municipal Affairs, in terms of technical matters, is in more trouble than you are and probably should be the next minister to leave the cabinet. She won't be, because the impact in the general community of what she does to people in her portfolio, is not going to be felt for some time and will be diffused, of course, by time and circumstance.

Whereas you yourself, having a rather a small portfolio in terms of the number of dollars, are basically right on the line because highways are something that everybody drives on almost every day. And there isn't a person probably in Saskatchewan that doesn't have a friend or a relative that has either been injured or killed on one of our highways in the last few years.

In fact there is a sad saying that goes around out in our area now and that is that our roads are now paved with coffins. And that's a sad scenario for a province as rich as ours. That's a very sad scenario when you take a look at the financial statements that we have.

And I've been looking through the financial statements and the amounts of money that you've got to spend, and when I compare that with the amounts of money that you've had to spend in years gone by, and then I compare that with the amounts of money that other portfolios and other areas of the government have to spend, I can only arrive at one conclusion. And that is that you are not getting your share of money to spend on behalf of your portfolio.

You have somehow allowed your cabinet to give you a portfolio without the dollars that are necessary not only to preserve your job and integrity but to preserve the lives and safety of the people of this province and the people that travel into it.

It is a sad scenario, Minister, when people in provinces like Ontario start to tell us that they advertise to their travellers not to drive through Saskatchewan, when they tell people that it would be better to drive through the United States instead of coming through Saskatchewan. We have to somehow, Minister, improve that image, and I think only you can do that.

There is a lot of things that you could do; there are choices that can be made. And I have to say though that I'm glad to have heard your comments that No. 1 Highway is one that has to get priority in terms of roads that need to be fixed and when they get fixed. And we can respect the need to do things over a period of time. However, it will never get done if you never get started. And right now you haven't started. And that's the position that people view it as.

I don't think that next to health care I hear as many complaints about anything in your government and probably all of them put together as I do about highways. Now maybe that's because I'm the critic and naturally they would let me know. But on the other hand, when you get 50 miles away from Regina, a lot of people don't know I'm the critic, so then you have to take that into the balance of the thing.

So, Mr. Minister, the folks out there come to me and they say,

why don't we fix our highways? What's the problem? It seems like the government has a lot of money. We hear they've got a 5.2-or-some billion dollars of a budget. It seems like a lot of money. Where's all this money going? And that's the question. Where is the money going?

Well I try to explain to them but I'm not in a position where I really feel I should defend your government. But I do try to explain to them that you have this pooling arrangement and that you sort of take from the general revenue. Because they always follow up with: how come . . . oh they're collecting all this gas tax. How come that goes up all the time? Why is it that this money from the gas tax isn't being spent on the roads? And I try to explain to them again, well the government has made the decision.

Well they don't really care about that answer any more, Mr. Minister. Quite frankly, they're tired of listening to the same old answers, whether I give them or you do. And I'm really kind of tired of trying to defend your position because it is not defensible any longer.

So I guess in order to allow you the chance to defend yourself instead of me trying to do it, I'm going to have to ask you a few questions that will give you the opportunity to go on the record to try to defend the way you do things.

And I'll go to that gas tax because that becomes the first question that people always ask. So how many millions of dollars do you collect for the gas tax in this province? And why do you, and how do you explain to people that you no longer use that tax money in order to pay for the road construction and maintenance programs which it originally was intended to be for?

(2215)

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Thanks to the member opposite for his statements and finally his question. As I mentioned earlier, gas tax is collected by the . . . and it goes into General Revenue Fund as does oil royalties, as mining royalties, as general taxation goes into general revenue.

And as the member would be aware when we opened the books just after we were elected, the Gass Commission stated that this is the way governments should operate — that revenues should go into general revenue. Then the government determines how much it will spend on health care, education, social programs, agriculture, highways, etc., etc. That's what this government does. That's what every government does. That's what the Alberta government does. That's what the Manitoba government does. That's what the federal government does. And certainly that's the way it should be.

The member mentioned Ontario, suggesting that they don't . . . somebody in Ontario, *The Globe and Mail* I guess, that they not travel into Saskatchewan. Well, I do have an editorial here that I believe was *Globe and Mail*. And it says:

Ontario's roads are among the worse. Though roads in the East rank among the country's most dangerous. Mr.

Facette believes Saskatchewan/Manitoba need help more desperately with the closing of rail lines in western Canada the loads on the roads are far more than they were designed for.

So what I'm trying to tell the member opposite is that road concerns are not only in Saskatchewan but across the country. Another statement in the *Globe and Mail* that I read recently stated that "the Devine administration was actually the worst ever in Canadian history." And I think it goes back to the spending that the Conservatives did in the '80s and in fact a debt that was created that costs us \$850 million every year in interest.

With that money, certainly could have been used, some of it at least, for improving our highway infrastructure, but we can't cry over spilt milk. We have to deal with the circumstances that are here now and I am excited about the challenges. Certainly there are new ways of doing things and this will force us to take a good hard look at moving into the 21st century with ideas like partnerships, like rural municipality, urban municipalities and the province working more closely together. Working on new technologies like central tire inflation that will reduce damage to our fragile road system.

So that's the way we're moving and certainly I know we like to complain about our road system but we do have a large road system. There are problem areas; there is no question about it but we do have a lot of good roads. For a province with 3 per cent of the Canadian population and 25 per cent of all the roads in Canada.

Mr. Goohsen: — Well, Mr. Minister, you have to defend your department in your way. And no doubt you will have done that many times. But quite frankly, the people of Saskatchewan are no longer swallowing your excuse that you can't fix the roads because past administration left you with a problem in financing.

It just doesn't wash anymore. You've been in government now for the second term, it started already, and responsibilities are now yours. And the responsibilities are to tell the truth to the people about how the deficit situation in this province really is. So why don't you tell them that really what's happening is that you're paying \$800 million worth of interest on the \$8 billion deficit; while at the same time your management expert at CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) has a full fund of \$7 billion that he reports only being able to get a return of between of 1 and \$200 million on, leaving a \$600 million loss between the difference.

Now anybody that ever went to high school already can figure out that instead of paying \$800 million on interest, why don't you borrow your own money from your own asset base and get rid of all your other creditors, and you would save yourself \$600 million.

The management structure of this government is an absolute appalling disgrace, and if I were you I wouldn't even talk about it anymore, because the fact of the matter is that you people just don't know how to handle money. As we find the situation

right now, we're running into one of the richest times that we've had in 15 years in this province. The monies are rolling in faster than you can probably pour them into the coffers, and yet you don't have any sense of responsibility or knowledge of how to manage those funds.

That's the same problem that happened to the government of the late 1970s. The province became so rich and so abundance with capital to handle that the government of the day, being an NDP government, didn't have a clue how to handle the management. They made such a botch of it that the people threw them out and got a government that knew at least how to invest money in things like a Saferco plant where there would be actually some jobs.

So the fact of the matter is, Mr. Minister, that if you're going to dwell on trying to make your excuses because of the past and past administrations, it isn't washing any more. I mean, nobody believes your figures. Your facts are all phoney. And the reality is that the responsibility now rests at your doorstep, and the buck stops with you and your government.

The highways are a mess because you've chosen to let them be a mess because you've made choices, conscious decisions, to spend the money that you have someplace else. That's the fact of the matter.

You've got targeted taxes that you charge people, and you tell them, well we're going to charge you gasoline tax because we've got to fix roads. We've got to have registration money on your vehicles because we have to fix roads. Those two were targeted for that purpose. You never change that argument, and you never change that approach when you talk to the people of Saskatchewan when you collect this money. And yet when it comes time for taking that money and spending it somewhere, you say, oops, now the story's different. It went into general revenue. Somehow it got lost, and we have to split the pie up some other way.

You're not consistent in your discussions of how you handle money and manage money, and that's why your government will eventually have to fall because people understand that in poor times NDP governments are reasonably good to handle the money because there's nothing to handle, and they can't make a botch of it. But in good times, they don't know how to handle money, and they throw it away and squander it, waste it, lose it, and apply it to all the wrong things. And there's no growth and development. It only means stagnation. And that's why socialism never works and can't work in a prosperous setting in the middle of a capitalistic North America.

It has to fail because it's out of sync with where it's located, out of sync with the reality of the road around it, and it just will not last. People of Saskatchewan will soon learn that . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well I see somebody else wants to get into the debate and discuss this, Mr. Minister.

But right now I think I need to talk to you a little bit more about the realities of life in our highway system. You've talked about Highway No. 1, and I appreciate the fact that you mentioned that Highway No. 1 is one that has to have priorities because

certainly if you measure roads in terms of need to be built, on the basis of the persons killed per mile, that one certainly has to qualify as one of the first ones. Isn't that a sad scenario when we decide in our society that we fix roads only after you kill so many people per mile and then you're going to patch them or fix them or rebuild them. That's a sad thing.

But the good part of this thing is that you have admitted that that road is needing to be double-laned. That it is a serious problem and we're glad that you've made that admission.

The fact though that you tried to tie with that an excuse not to fix it because it could cost \$80 million to fix is not going to wash either, because even though \$80 million is a lot of money in my pocket, it's not a lot of money for the south-west corner of Saskatchewan. The oil industry and the gas industry are pouring in more than \$80 million a year buying leases from your government in order to carry on the production and exploration for oil and gas.

The leases that you are leasing out to those companies comes to many, many millions of dollars more and the people of that area are saying quite simply and rightly, if you took even a portion of that money and spent it on the roads that those companies need to have in order to carry out their business, then you wouldn't have to look any place else in your treasury to find those dollars. Simply target back some of the dollars that are coming from those areas where they are being spent and put them back into the roads that are needed for the industries to continue. And you will have your roads built.

It's a simple matter of you getting into your cabinet and winning a few debates and a few arguments and proving to your government that your portfolio is one of the ones that is key to your government's survival. And that is how you have to carry the argument, because it's true. Your government will fall on simple things like the Department of Highways not getting roads fixed.

And it is a simple thing. It's not a complicated thing. The money is there. You have it. It's not like this province is broke any more. Don't hand us this line that you're broke. You're not broke. You've got tons of money. There's money running out of the ears of this government. You've got so much money you don't even know where to put it any more. You've got so much money in CIC you don't even know how to invest it to get more than one and a half per cent interest return on your money. You can't even get 2 per cent on your return because you've got too much money to invest and you don't know where to put it.

Well it's quite simple, Mr. Minister, that you don't know how to handle money in your government; you're squandering it, you're wasting it, and it's high time you woke up and smelled the coffee. All you got to do is put that money back into the province and you will get your return. Start by building the roads so that industry can come into this province and get to where they want to do business. Straighten out your tax base as well though, because without that and getting rid of some of your labour laws, you're never going to work.

So, Mr. Minister, I want to tell you quite simply that there are

people out in our constituency who are quite happy to take you for a drive to show you that they're not kidding around, they're not just trying to be vindictive, they actually have these problems, and they want to take you out and show you.

Ten-year old boy the other day told us that he would like to go for a ride in his school bus with you and I. Why don't we go on out there and ride with him? Or are you afraid that your insurance won't cover you? I'm prepared to take the chance. I'm prepared to go for a ride on that bus, and I invite you to come along.

So, Mr. Minister, would you be prepared to come along for a ride with us out in the country and ride with some of the school kids in this province on the kind of roads and conditions that they have to ride on?

Hon. Mr. Renaud: — Mr. Chairman, I didn't get . . . hear the question. I wonder if the member would repeat it, please?

Hon. Mr. Shillington: — On what is probably the best response of the night, I think it's time we rose, reported progress, and asked for leave to sit again.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 10:30 p.m.

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