

EVENING SITTING

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund  
Saskatchewan Municipal Board  
Vote 22

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

**Hon. Mrs. Teichrob:** — Mr. Chairman, I have with me to assist me Mr. Graham McNamee, the chairman of the Saskatchewan Municipal Board, on my left.

Item 1

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Mr. Chairman. Welcome, Madam Minister. I'd like to welcome your official here tonight. As we've already had a round at this once before, I only have a couple of questions left to ask on this subject. The one question, Madam Minister, that I would like to start with is to do with the Municipal Boundary Committee. And how many municipal amalgamation proposals did the Municipal Boundary Committee review in '96 and again and so far in '97?

**Hon. Mrs. Teichrob:** — Mr. Chairman, the answer is none.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — I'll get straight to the point. I guess this question then is quite appropriate. Are you satisfied with the rate of voluntary amalgamation to this point?

**Hon. Mrs. Teichrob:** — Mr. Chairman, the answer to that would be yes.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Madam Minister, I'm totally confused. Last year, as you know, we had the service districts Act up and I think myself and probably about 298 RMs (rural municipality) felt that that was forcing amalgamation on them. Did you not feel at that point, and I think why you had the memorandum of understanding out there, was that . . . And I did myself. I felt that in some cases this might start to happen on its own. In fact I think I mentioned that a number of times, that I felt some of these things would happen. I know in my area, especially with the village and the RM, have already joined in the case of Wroxton and the RM of Calder. And I applaud that, because I think we all gained from that situation where a village gets so small that they're not viable on their own but with the RM . . . and if they can come to an agreement it's a great thing.

In that respect, that we've had actually though, none apply to this point, do you have any intention to introducing legislation similar to the service districts Act or are you thinking of introducing something a little different but to the same end?

**Hon. Mrs. Teichrob:** — Mr. Chairman, in response to the question that the member poses, we agree on this point — that any sort of reorganization incentive should come from the local level. Because the local people understand best their trading patterns, the affiliations that make the most practical sense, and

we have the highest level of confidence in local governments to make those determinations.

The member opposite refers to Wroxton-Calder, and I would refer also to Mikado-Canora, I believe was the rural municipality, where voluntary reversions have taken place of villages that have reduced in population who are obtaining most of their local services from the rural municipality in which they're located. There's a good sense of cooperation and community amongst them and they have voluntarily made these decisions.

We think that that's the way that the evolution of the rural landscape in Saskatchewan, as inevitable as it may be and has always been, should occur — quite unlike for instance the situation in Ontario where they're going ahead and unilaterally amalgamating, well first of all the city of Toronto, and more recently 22 rural and small urban municipalities in Ontario.

We don't agree with that approach. What we have done and will soon be in a position to — if we haven't announced it already . . . is a transition fund which will allow municipalities a financial incentive if they wish to take the initiative at the local level to form more effective local governance units. But we have no intention ever, or at this point, in forcing that kind of unions because we know that people at the local level know best what is the most practical unit of government for themselves. And there is no guru in Regina or anywhere else that could do a better job of realigning local governments in Saskatchewan than local governments can do themselves.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Madam Minister, and I'm very glad to hear that because I think your past experience as a reeve and I know mine as being a councillor and a reeve . . . What scares me the most is I think that at some point, if a government thinks it knows best and decides that eight RMs could be more efficient if they joined together or were forced to join together, because I know that's the only way that's going to happen, I cannot see — and I'm sure you've heard me say this before — where there is a money saving to start with.

I don't believe it's there because I believe what we would create is a bureaucracy that — and, Madam Minister, as you know how the bureaucracy goes but it has a tendency to grow and grow and grow beyond what we can control — end up costing us more money and really we lose that answerability that we have now where we can phone our councillor or reeve and have a problem looked at very quickly. That wouldn't be happening in what I'm talking about. So I'm very glad to hear what you're saying tonight and I would hope that your government would stick by that.

As far as setting up a fund for assisting amalgamations, I also agree with that and I think that would be the right way to go. I think we're going to see more and more of it with our small villages happening as time goes on, that they cannot afford to function on their own. And I think that assistance is greatly needed out there.

So, Madam Minister, with the answers I've got tonight, I'm

very pleased to hear that. And hopefully we can both keep agreeing on what . . . the process that we're taking. So with that I'll pass it over to the members of the third party.

**Hon. Mrs. Teichrob:** — The point that I . . . (inaudible) . . . this is that the only time that these issues would come before the Saskatchewan Municipal Board, which we're considering tonight, is if there is a dispute. So where these reversions or movements are voluntary, the Saskatchewan Municipal Board would not be involved.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you. You started off this evening, Madam Minister, with some short answers, so I'll start off with a short question.

What exactly does your department do?

**Hon. Mrs. Teichrob:** — Mr. Chairman, maybe I could ask which part of my department the member refers to. It's a very interesting and multifaceted department and portfolio. Being called the Department of Municipal Government, one of the prime functions is to establish a framework to enable local governments, rural and urban, to function.

It gives force . . . our umbrella legislation gives force to their bylaws. It gives force to the framework of legislation that they voluntarily adopt for themselves. It does do some things to provide uniformity, such as to provide uniform dates for assessment rolls to open; uniform dates for reporting financials; uniform dates for the fiscal year of municipalities rather than having it all over the calendar. The municipal calendar year ends at December 31 and so on, as the member will be aware from his experience in Saskatchewan local government, which I certainly respect.

On the other hand we also have responsibility for public safety, which relates also to municipalities in terms of the operations of fire departments, building codes, elevator standards — you know how our lives go up and down, and my name is in all the elevators and sometimes we're up and sometimes we're down. And then there is the cultural division, recreation and culture, which takes in the scope of the lotteries, the Western Canada Lottery Corporation, and all of the community-based groups — 12,000 in fact — which are funded by the lotteries.

There's also housing. The Saskatchewan Housing Corporation falls under the purview of the Department of Municipal Government. The emergency — Saskatchewan emergency program and preparedness, the emergency measures organizations, the responses to flooding and emergency of all sorts, which is why the development of the potential 911 service across Saskatchewan is housed in that department.

**The Chair:** — Can I bring the committee to order? In listening to the questions and to the answers, I must remind the minister and the members that we are not on Municipal Government. We are on Saskatchewan Municipal Board only. So if that's . . .

**Hon. Mrs. Teichrob:** — Just as a point of clarification, is that the Saskatchewan Municipal Board plays a very important role at the centre of a number of these activities, being the body

which hears appeals to the regulations that are made to planning and development issues; to boundary issues, which relates to municipal organization; to tax appeals, which is a fundamental part of financing a municipal government at all levels, municipal and education.

So these things may seem to be diverse, Mr. Chairman, but they're very clearly integrated in many ways with the operations of communities. And certainly the Saskatchewan Municipal Board, in many instances, is an arbiter when agreement cannot be reached in taxation issues, in boundary issues, and in planning and development issues, Mr. Chairman.

**Mr. Heppner:** — If a municipality, town, or RM ends up in financial trouble, obviously at some point government steps in and sort of takes over. Is that part of the responsibility of the Municipal Board?

**Hon. Mrs. Teichrob:** — Mr. Chairman, yes. The answer to that question that the member opposite poses is yes. And also not only when municipalities get into trouble, but before the fact, when municipalities wish to make long-term . . . As the member opposite knows and is familiar with, municipalities have to operate on a budgeted balance. They're not permitted to go into deficits on an annual operating basis.

So when they wish to make long-term investments such as buying equipment over a long period of time, building buildings over a long period of time, issuing debentures to make long-term investments that extend beyond the year under review — the Saskatchewan Municipal Board is involved in all of those issues and approves, before the fact, the plans that municipalities have to make in these areas.

**Mr. Heppner:** — From time to time there are towns and RMs that do run into financial trouble and I'm wondering, this past year, how many towns and RMs are in that situation where the province has had to sort of step in and take over control of their finances?

**Hon. Mrs. Teichrob:** — Mr. Chairman, I'm told that at this particular time there is only one village in the province that is under, what we call legally, the supervision of the Municipal Board because of its financial circumstances.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Has that community been in that situation for quite some period of time?

**Hon. Mrs. Teichrob:** — Mr. Chairman, the answer to that question would be approximately for a three-year period.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Recently Dickson Bailey was appointed to the local government elections office, and you've expanded that office. Is that covered under the Municipal Board or under the Department of Municipal Government?

**Hon. Mrs. Teichrob:** — Mr. Chairman, the response to that would be really neither.

(1915)

**Mr. Heppner:** — Next question: where is he then?

**Hon. Mrs. Teichrob:** — Mr. Chairman, this is . . . the electoral officer is an officer who reports directly to Executive Council, and in that sense is somewhat independent. And certainly departments of government would have input, such as the rural and urban Act, as you know, have provisions for rural elections and urban elections.

The Health Districts Act has implications for elections in health districts. The school boards, of course, have their own regime. But if there's to be coordination between them and the provincial and federal levels, then the elections officer, appointed provincially, has a role in coordinating and supervising all of those.

**Mr. Heppner:** — I guess I'll have to assume from that answer that he's under the direction of the Premier at that point, because that's about the only one that's left out there.

There's been a cut-back to municipal service as implemented in spite of the fact that the board, I believe, ran over its budget in the '95-96 year. That seems to indicate, if they ran over budget, that there is a workload that demands more funding, not less.

**Hon. Mrs. Teichrob:** — Mr. Chairman, I would ask the member opposite for some clarification of that because in our figures we don't have any indication that the Saskatchewan Municipal Board has ever operated beyond the budgeted figures.

There was an expansion of the budget of 1996-97 over the previous year of '95-96 to allow for what was anticipated as additional appeals and additional activity in disposing of a backlog of appeals that existed at that time. But I don't have any figures with me and certainly would refute the assertion of the member opposite that the Saskatchewan Municipal Board has in recent years, that I have figures for, ever operated beyond the budgetary allowance that was allotted to them.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. Interesting conclusion that they didn't run over budget. The amount of money allotted or given to them was just expanded, which comes out to much the same sort of thing. But I guess that's a matter of semantics.

Another of the board's priority plans last year was to reduce backlog of assessment appeals, and I'm wondering has that been taken care of, and to what degree has that been covered?

**Hon. Mrs. Teichrob:** — Mr. Chairman, I'm told that the number of appeals under review has been reduced dramatically to approximately 200 but none of those are actually in arrears. Of that number, they are either all scheduled to be heard, or they have been heard and a decision is in the process of being rendered.

So in terms of a backlog there really isn't one at this point. And this was the reason that the budget was consciously, ahead of time, increased because there did exist a period ago some backlog of appeals. It was desired to be dealt with those before

reassessment occurred, and a number of anticipated new appeals as result of reassessment happened.

So I would . . . my assessment of the situation would be now that the workload of the Saskatchewan Municipal Board is very well in hand, and that the increases in the budget that were approved in advance of the workload have been dealt with. And the number of additional employees, additional appeals officers appointed, have dealt with the backlog and are in a good position to deal with the challenges of the immediate future as appeals may increase due to reassessment.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you. As we know, even though local governments are not allowed to operate on a deficit thing, they still do incur debt for projects and this sort of thing. I would like for you to comment on the total size of local debt that's out there and to what extent it's been growing or decreasing.

**Hon. Mrs. Teichrob:** — Mr. Chairman, I would refer the member to the annual report of the Saskatchewan Municipal Board on page 18 wherein it shows that there are three types of debt classified that municipalities have incurred over the terms, and they're for infrastructure, buildings, and machinery and equipment. And the chart shows a progression from 1989 to 1996.

It shows in 1996, particularly infrastructure debt-related at a peak, and then probably partly due to the participation of the three levels of government in infrastructure projects over the last two years, that has been reduced in 1996 to a very minimal amount. In fact graphically, it hardly shows. So there is very little long-term debt that has been approved by the Municipal Board at the current time.

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you. And one last question for this evening. The recent changes to The Condominium Property Act . . . or how will those changes affect the budget for that committee in the coming year? And also will that committee be responsible for establishing the proposed condominium property registry?

**Hon. Mrs. Teichrob:** — Mr. Chairman, it's anticipated that there will be some increase as we go to the changes in reassessment and so forth because one of the things that . . . or the types of appeals that the Saskatchewan Municipal Board entertains is the assignment of unit factors in condominium developments.

And as the member opposite and we all know, that the rules and regulations and the whole regime surrounding the development of condominiums of every sort — be they townhouses, apartments, grain condominiums — are relatively new in Saskatchewan, and I think we're still all working our way through this. So there will be some appeals anticipated by the Saskatchewan Municipal Board in this area.

But I think they're well equipped to deal with them, and as the condominium concept matures in Saskatchewan, that everyone will find a greater level of comfort with their situation and with the results that the appeals board renders.

Item 1 agreed to.

Vote 22 agreed to.

**Hon. Mrs. Teichrob:** — If I could, this being the second session that the chairman of the Saskatchewan Municipal Board has attended to answer questions, I'd like to thank Mr. McNamee for making himself available to us.

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

**Item 1**

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. And welcome, Madam Minister, and since I know both of your officials, I'd like to welcome both of them too, Ms. Rafter and Ms. Senecal.

This evening, because we have had the opportunity last year to go over a number of the basic reasons why the secretariat is here, I think we'll just get right into the main questions today.

I know that the secretariat has a huge mandate and very minimal resources and I know that there's a controversy on the value of the secretariat because of what . . . the amount of money that you do have.

Before we talk about funding though, I was interested to read some of the material that was given to us on the economic status of women, and I have some questions on this if that's permissible.

One of the first questions I have is on page 2 where they talk about earnings of women and men by marital status. And I'm just wondering if you can comment, if somebody can tell me why marriage has a negative impact on women's earnings and marriage has a positive influence on men's income employment. Could you make a statement on that?

**The Chair:** — Before the minister answers, if I could get her to introduce her officials before she answers, please.

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Yes, I'm pleased that you've done your homework and know who the officials are, but just for the record, Faye Rafter, the executive co-ordinator, and Cheryl Senecal, education officer with the Women's Secretariat.

I think rather than just venturing an opinion on that, what we have here is a piece of information that identifies a situation, and you'd really need to do follow-up research to get into any depth about the reasons why that is. I think we could all speculate about what it has to do with child rearing and what it has to do with a family deciding that one person will be the primary wage earner and the other person more of a support person in the relationship.

But rather than speculate too much, I would have to say that this is very, for this area, this is fairly leading-edge, comprehensive overview research. And then if people found that the findings caused you to ask further questions, there would then need to be more depth gone into in the research to

really flesh out what these indicators are pointing to as far as things we should be paying attention to. But I wouldn't want to speculate too much without having . . . doing some specific research on that question.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. One of the other paragraphs that I found very interesting was, you talked about in 1977, one-third of Saskatchewan women with children under the age of three were in the paid labour force, and by 1995 this figure had increased to 62 per cent.

That leads me to believe that there are, of course, a number of women who are going to have problems with day cares or the lack of day cares. And I'm wondering if the secretariat has been putting pressure on the government or what you've been doing towards this very important problem of raising or looking after our children.

(1930)

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — I almost feel bad doing this because we're on such a cooperative footing here, but of course one of the promises in the "red book" was child care. And one of the difficulties was with the way that that promise was carried forward; that the money would only be made available if the province could match the dollars. Now at the particular time when that offer was made we just did not have the money to do that.

However, we have added child care initiatives. In the past five budget years 3.7 million has been spent on enhancements to child care, and we've also enhanced 500,000 in one budget year and then another 500,000 committed to wage enhancements for people working in the child care area. Three infant-teen centres are being developed with 18 new spaces, and there's been an increase in the per child grant, as well as another million in child care capital grants.

Now I don't think that begins to even hit the tip of the iceberg as far as child care is concerned. And I'm hoping that women will continue to use both elections and in-between elections to raise the need for a little more attention yet to this area because I think it is really important.

**Ms. Draude:** — Madam Minister, can you tell me, of that funding, how much of it has been spent in rural areas, meaning outside of Saskatoon and Regina?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — That kind of a detailed question you'd have to ask to the minister responsible for child care, and that would be the Minister of Social Services. We don't have that kind of detail about another department's programming.

**Ms. Draude:** — Madam Minister, I also found it interesting to read that one quarter of self-employed people in this province are women. I'm wondering how that stacks up to other provinces.

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Can you repeat that question?

**Ms. Draude:** — One quarter of the self-employed people in the

province are women. It talked about it, I think on page 10 of this brochure. I'm wondering if that is a sort of norm number across Canada or does Saskatchewan have a higher level of people that are self-employed?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — We were just discussing what's happening across Canada. We believe the figures are comparable across different jurisdictions, although we only actually compared to one or two other jurisdictions that we have figures for.

But what we do know is that most of the front-end growth in home businesses is women. Women are increasingly — more than men are — choosing this as an option to gain a little more control over their work, and also to be the boss.

**Ms. Draude:** — So, Madam Minister, can you tell me, is there something, is there something that the secretariat is doing to encourage self-employment by women?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — We do cooperate with organizations like the Women Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan. And I will mention that one of the purposes of the Internet project that we'll be having in this year is to assist women in rural, isolated, and urban areas to understand how to use the Internet for economic development purposes, to set up home pages to do marketing.

I think it's something like 8 billion — I'm a little bit cautious about venturing a figure — sales in the United States are now through the Internet and so this is a very growing area of sales for home businesses, and I think a good marketing tool for a lot of the small enterprises in Saskatchewan.

**Ms. Draude:** — Madam Minister, I'm looking forward to getting into a discussion with you on the increased funding that you have for this training — Internet, or whatever it may be. I just have a couple of other questions before we get into that.

One of them is rural women. In your information you talk about rural women earning significantly less than women in larger urban centres, and 88 per cent of rural women had incomes below \$20,000. Now as the secretariat, you have the responsibility to all the women in the province and I'm wondering what, if anything, is being done to address the unique problems?

You're probably going to come at me with your Internet thing, but I'm just wondering if there was anything that is specifically being done for rural people?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — I'll just start going through this. I'm having a whole range of things here. I presume you're wanting a range of responses — everything from child care to other types of initiatives.

One of the things is the Internet but we've mentioned that. We'll get into that later. The SCN (Saskatchewan Communications Network Corporation) operates two television networks that offer rural women opportunity to increase skills or further education in their own home or at learning centres.

The SCN's training network delivers distance education and career training, including high school and post-secondary credit classes, to more than 130 Saskatchewan communities and it supports rural women in this way. There are no other learning opportunities that are as available by other broadcasters.

In the child care, there is a new community-based child care registry and a survey and analysis of ongoing child care needs in Outlook district that has been completed. In Moosomin a 15-space child care centre was established to provide extended evening and weekend care for shift workers and seasonal care for farm families, and new child care centres were funded in Kerrobert, Shaunavon, Yorkton, and Dundurn. Pilot home-based child care centres are also operating in five other rural centres, and pilot centre-based projects have been approved for Assiniboia and Redvers.

So I think people have recognized for a long time that this need is there. There's child and family resource centres developed and equipped in 31 rural service centres across the province providing information about child care, child management practices, and health and safety issues.

The breast cancer screening program provides access. There are satellite centres in North Battleford, Swift Current, Yorkton, Moose Jaw, and Prince Albert, and a mobile screening unit as well that travels to rural areas to make sure that every woman in the province has access. There's a toll-free farm stress line that provides counselling and referrals to callers on issues ranging from farm management to depression and addiction; 52 per cent of the calls in '96 were from women.

There's also shelters for abused women and crisis counselling in various rural and northern areas of the province. And also outreach programs have been funded so that they can take programs out beyond the actual centres. There's been some social housing projects targeted specifically for victims of violence — family violence.

And I think there's been, on a policy basis, there's been a review of federal and provincial programs to determine if they contain barriers to women in agriculture — an increasing role for farm women through their participation in organizations and on boards; and to encourage the operational and managerial role of farm women in agriculture. There's also meetings annually with provincial farm women's organizations.

Now there's also a number of things within the Department of Agriculture. And I don't quite know how far you want me to go with this. I can continue. But the role that the Women's Secretariat increasingly plays is that when new policy is being developed we're invited to be a participant in the discussions of new policy development. And then we seek to bring the awareness of the women's perspective on the various issues into the discussion.

**Ms. Draude:** — Madam Minister, most of the information you just talked about was actually programing or work that was done through different departments like the Department of Education, Department of Agriculture, Health, Municipal Government, Social Services. None of it is actually something

that the secretariat does directly.

From what I see and I guess most people see it, most of the work the secretariat does is type of brochures and information. I don't believe there's the real tangible . . . something tangible that people can look to and say that this is what the secretariat does besides just giving me some more information on it. So I guess the question that I wanted to have answered, I did have answered. It just wasn't the answer that I wanted to hear because I don't believe the meat and potatoes of what people really need when it comes to all the concerns that women have in this province are being answered.

Maybe I would like to talk about pay equity for a few minutes. This year we had an opportunity to hear the secretariat talking about that. I found it interesting that the first Crown corp that actually was involved with pay equity was Workers' Compensation, which of course we all know is totally funded by the private sector. So maybe you can give me some input as to why the Workers' Compensation Board was the first one that was . . . introduced pay equity.

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — I'm just going to slip back to the previous discussion just for a minute because I probably should let it go but I can't.

When you develop a pension plan, the pension plan you would develop if you were only developing it for men would be very different than the pension plan you would develop if you were developing it to be sensitive to women.

Elizabeth Waring, one of the most noted writers on women's economic issues — she was an elected member of the New Zealand parliament actually. The youngest woman ever elected and appointed to their finance portfolio there. She says that if you only look at the male perspective, it's like going through the world with one eye closed. And what the Women's Secretariat does is to try to open the other eye of government so that it can see clearly what the broad range of needs of people are, and of course then as you get more sensitive on that level, you then get more sensitive to other diversity issues.

But the analysis that was done even in our government of the CPP (Canada Pension Plan) reforms took on many new dimensions when the Women's Secretariat became involved. And if you're going to develop good public policy, it has to reflect all the people not just some of the people. So really that's where the Women's Secretariat comes in. It's not our job to be a program department, but it's our job to open the other eye of government to the perspective of how programs affect women perhaps differently than they do men.

Now on the pay equity question, the Workers' Compensation Board was not the only — it was just the first one that got their work done and it's probably because they're a smaller unit that they were able to get it done more quickly. Some of the bigger units like the SGEU (Saskatchewan Government Employees' Union) that covers all the employees in executive government, some of the larger Crowns — it's a bigger job for them to get this done because they have a lot more jobs that need to be evaluated and they have a lot more employees that are involved

in the process. So Workers' Comp was not the only one — it was just the first one.

There is, I believe, eight agreements that are in active process right now of doing the work required to determine the pay-outs. There's about another three that are very, very close to being completed, and then there's about another eight who have started discussing it at the table but they haven't actually . . . they've made a commitment to the discussion, but they haven't actually sat down yet to determine how they're going to do the workplace analysis and to actually set up their union-management committee and get going. So everybody's in different stages of getting this done.

But at this point the whole of government, and the Crowns and our agencies, are in one way or another involved in this process. And we'll probably have about another three or four agreements completed this year. And probably a larger amount will flow through the following year because some of these bigger agencies will be getting their work done. But it is a process that takes awhile because you have to re-evaluate every job in the organization.

**Ms. Draude:** — Do you have a long-term goal for when you expect to have all the government departments and Crown corporations actually being involved in pay equity?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — It would about three or four years probably by the time they're all done doing their work, and then they've got five years to pay out the agreements because there is quite often substantial amounts of money involved. Particularly in the larger departments, it will be quite substantial.

**Ms. Draude:** — Madam Minister, one of the questions that was asked last year that we found kind of amazing was the response to the number of deputy ministers that were women. Can you tell me if that number has changed?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — At this point I believe that two of the deputies in government are women, and I can certainly indicate that there has been — what shall I say? — specific direction that there should be an examination of how to improve this within the short term, not within the long term.

**Ms. Draude:** — So this is why we talk about the negotiation and your work when it comes to working with the different departments, to make sure that the world isn't going around with one eye closed. So how much influence do you actually have when it comes to this decision-making process?

(1945)

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Certainly part of our role is to ensure that the commitment is there; that the policy is there to do that. But the other thing that we need to do is to help in bringing the names forward of good women who have these skills. Because quite often if people aren't shopping through the newspaper for a job, they might be the perfect person but they don't phone us and if we don't know about them, we don't phone them.

And I find that one of the areas where we still haven't got quite as good of a network on being able to locate each other. And I think that if you know of good and talented women, there's certainly no reason why people's names can't be suggested either for participation on boards or for looking at openings within the government.

One of the things that people who study employment equity issues find is that a lot of hiring, maybe not even intentionally, tends to take place through networks. And unfortunately if you only know some of the people, then quite often women don't get suggested for these jobs.

So I think women have to take a bit upon themselves here to develop a bit of their own network so that we're able to seek out these talented and capable women and to ensure that managers in government adopt policies where people are given assignments that allow them to grow and develop and become ready to be senior managers in government.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. I know that positions like deputy ministers aren't advertised in the newspaper, so I would imagine they come from more of a . . . there probably are other lists that are looked at as well. I guess it is probably important that women be looked at in all of these different roles.

Madam Minister, the new money that was given to the secretariat this year that made a lot of people happy — I think it was \$775,000; is just about double the amount of money you had — was intriguing, and when I look at all the different needs within the secretariat and women in this province I was very excited about it.

And then I think I'm to the point of being more than a little disappointed when I understand that the programing has already been determined. Maybe you could give me an update and tell me exactly where we are when it comes to spending this money.

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — It's not totally defined yet; we're still consulting, but the foundation should be understood. And the foundation was that we have a new communications tool in our society. And as we all know, information is power. And it's very important that women understand the use of this new tool because this tool is going to radically transform how people do business; how they work in their workplaces; how organizations communicate with each other; how individuals communicate with each other.

So the first thing we want to ensure is an understanding of the tool and what it can do, because sometimes the skills come before the use of the tool but sometimes an understanding of the benefits of a tool cause someone to want to know how to use it. And so it's a little bit, I guess hard to tell which is the chicken and which is the egg. But I think through a greater understanding of all the potential uses of the Internet, that can also become a motivating reason why people gain the skills in order to be able to do that kind of work.

Now we know that as we do this consulting we're going to find

a lot of needs, because I don't think governments ever undertake the consulting process where they find out just what they intended to. One time I was part of an all-party committee of the legislature. We were supposed to be looking at an environmental bill of rights. And everywhere we went, all they did was complain about the Tory bill on oil tanks that we inherited from you guys. So we went out with a particular idea there of what we wanted to talk about, but people will tend to talk about what they want to talk about.

So we will probably find that some people are very interested in the Internet. And I think one of our objectives is to make sure that people understand all the possible uses and how to access the new technology. But I'm sure we'll also have people who identify that they have equipment needs, that they have training needs. And I think our job then will be to work in partnership with training institutions out there, with sponsors, and see if we can get some of those other needs met. But our main focus on this is the use of this new communications tool.

**Ms. Draude:** — So just to clarify it then, the bulk of the money is going to be spent on Internet.

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — The expenditures are primarily on training, how to use the Internet access, as well as on support materials for the project.

One of the things I find, I very seldom read anything — even from the Legislative Library, some of the newsletters that are sent out by various organizations — where I don't get a little bit of new information on an important home page for women, perhaps a business access information. There's now a whole network for aboriginal issues. And certainly, aboriginal women that we've talked to are very interested in getting linked up on reserve. So there's many ways that we'll need to repackage the information so it's suitable for the particular audience that we'll be working with.

And also the training is geared not to all the broad skills of computer use, but the skills of using computers to access the Internet.

**Ms. Draude:** — Madam Minister, for the first time in very many years the secretariat has a considerable amount of money to spend to make a difference. And I just have to ask you: do you really believe that the majority of the women of this province are going to benefit? This is the best way that we can benefit the majority of the women, by allowing it to get hooked up to the Internet?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — If you looked at it as if the only thing we were doing, yes, you might have that view. But it's just part of many linked strategies. And I don't think there's anybody in a modern economy believes that you can participate in a modern economy without this.

When I spoke to Dianne Common, the VP (vice-president) admin at the University of Regina, one of her biggest concerns is that they have the lowest enrolment they've ever had of women in the whole computer area. Women are just going to be left behind in the dust if they're not involved in this.

And what surprised me, we consulted with literally hundreds of women's organizations before Christmas, and this came up over and over again — from the aboriginal women, from a woman who used to work with the Battered Women's Network who's now an at-home mom who decided to spend her money on the Internet instead of cable TV. It comes up with business women, many of whom have their own home computer-based businesses. It comes up with rural women who find that it is a way to combat isolation on the farm.

And so I would have to say that if anything surprised me about our consultations, was not that it didn't come up. What surprised me was the number of times it did come up and the diversity of women who raised it.

**Ms. Draude:** — Madam Minister, the women that are going to be able to take advantage of this Internet training or being hooked up to the Internet, they already have a computer, probably. They may already have their home business. They are already part of a more unique group of people who already probably have the wherewithal to become hooked up to Internet or part of that system anyway without this. And I think that we're leaving out a whole group of women who have concerns and needs that could be addressed with using this money, that would benefit from it a lot more than spending the money on the Internet.

I'm specifically concerned about people in rural Saskatchewan and on reservations. There's a lot of people with needs there. I know that there are some computers there, but I know that there is a lot of needs outside of Internet. Is there any . . . are you looking at anything else with this money?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — I'm beginning to wonder what your understanding of the Internet is because it's a fantastic research tool, it's a communications tool, it's a networking tool. Again to go back to this woman who used to work with the Battered Women's Network and is now an at-home mom with two teeny children — she uses it to keep in touch with women's organizations right across Canada. It's a way to save costs of travelling and meeting. It involves a much better ability to send documents to each other, to share information, to share budget samples, if you want, between non-profit organizations.

For women on the farm — who I just can't believe that most farms now don't have computers — it's a way to . . . because I hear people talking about it. It is definitely a way for them to access business information, program and service information, economic development information, even shopping if you want to go to maybe a less needed but certainly in some areas probably a very useful tool.

So I think it's important that people know that it's a long time since computers were just something for the kids to play games on, and it's a long time since they were just something to process letters on, and understand all the many and varied health . . . I mean if you have a disease that you think you may have or you've been discussing with your doctor, you can even punch up on the Internet to get the most recent information on that disease. It's just a wealth of resource for the home.

And our idea is not that everybody would have to own a computer. Part of government's policy is that there be public access through libraries, through other types of public buildings where people can access computers and freenet. Reserves of . . . the women tell me that the reserves have very sophisticated computer systems and what they need is to liberate them for some rather more public uses in those areas because they're under-utilized simply as workplace tools and need to be broadened into all the varied information and services you're now able to get through the Internet.

So the Internet is really just a window into a whole other world of services and information and contacts.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. And I do know about the Internet, and I have worked on it. And I'm not saying that there isn't some benefits of it. But I think I had talked to you or one of your officials awhile ago and described what I think of it. It's got lots of information. It's a thousand miles wide and one inch deep. I don't know how much really, how much of a benefit it's going to be for people. I know within my own business it wouldn't make a big difference.

What percentage of the people do you think that really will benefit from this?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — You know, I'm going to argue with you a little bit. One of the things I've been doing personally in my role as an MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly), not in my role as a minister, is harassing the Economic Development department and STEP (Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership Inc.) to get all our small producers in Saskatchewan onto an Internet marketing system.

If you run a little berry farm or a little wild rice operation or a little home dried flower operation, and you're trying to sell to all the many craft stores and hotels and tourist outlets in the province, you don't have the marketing capacity as an individual for all those addresses, all those stamps, all that secretarial work, all that marketing material. On the Internet, all you need is one page properly placed in the proper directory and every gift shop in Saskatchewan could order your jam. I think this is absolutely fantastic. And I don't know how you could even contemplate, that for a small producer this isn't almost a modern miracle.

**Ms. Draude:** — Madam Minister, do you think that there would be more women in this province would benefit from the Internet, or the opportunity to actually get some training on a computer?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Given the number of women who are starting their own small businesses, I would say that anybody in business, their immediate problem right after opening a business is how to market themselves. So I see this as being a very important tool for women.

**Ms. Draude:** — So then basically, I guess, maybe I should have asked this question up front.

What this money is going to do then is . . . you're targeting



women in business. Is that correct?

(2000)

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Well I think in a previous answer I mentioned how the women who are linking with other women's organizations, the access to research ... for example, our indicators projects ... there's many women who are making arguments everywhere, from the Inuit Tapirisat women to other women are making arguments based on economic information.

They're able to access this information to get the most up-to-date information. It will be used by women's organizations to use as a meeting vehicle, a communications vehicle. It's a health and wellness vehicle. It's an educational vehicle. I mean it's just the uses for women in isolated places are almost unlimited, and it puts a library right in everybody's home. You don't have to necessarily go out even to the book trailer. You've got those resources coming right into your home.

There's universities now on the Internet where you can take actual university courses on the Internet. There's no way that you can't convince me that this is the beginning of something very big.

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. I would like to welcome your officials tonight, Madam Minister, and I am pleased to be able to ask a couple of questions. As you well know, I'm Social Service critic and so I'd like to ask some questions pertaining to that area in conjunction with the Women's Secretariat.

I notice that the Women's Secretariat is responsible for the anti-violence initiative, youth strategy of Saskatchewan's action plan for children. I'm wondering why the Women's Secretariat and not Social Services would be responsible for that initiative?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — We co-chair the Family Violence Committee along with Justice. So this was to enable us to have a little more of a presence in contact with a lot of the women's organizations that are doing this, and to do some very specific things that they had identified as priorities.

**Ms. Julé:** — So that anti-violence initiative budget I notice is \$75,000. Does this funding come out of the operating budget of the Women's Secretariat or out of Social Services or from where?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — This was new and additional money that was new in this budget and it didn't come from anybody else's budget. It's part of the new money that was added in. It's \$225,000 and it's for three new violence-prevention initiatives. One is the youth strategy; the other one is community projects, to support community groups to do some pilot innovative treatment models; and the other one is for this farm stress line support, again to enhance community access to information on services and programs related to family violence.

These were all projects that were identified by the partnership on violence. These were not ones that we invented. They were

came directly out of the community partnership.

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you. Just incidentally, I understand that there are farm stress lines that are funded ... actually in information about that from other areas; the Department of Agriculture, I believe has some connection to that. So why would we duplicate that same information through the Women's Secretariat?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Again I'll go back to my, the other eye of government analogy. And what we're doing here is adding a new dimension and enhancing the farm stress line. We won't be operating it. We'll only be involved in helping to enhance it so it's more meaningful and more useful to other people who use it, particularly focusing on the family violence area.

**Ms. Julé:** — Okay. Madam Minister, could you please tell me what you mean by enhancing it then?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — The farm stress support line, as I mentioned, is getting 52 per cent of its calls from women. And they have perhaps more in-depth information needs than the farm stress line has been able to provide them with.

And whenever you add information to a system, wherever you add more capabilities to it, there's a cost involved. And so this will be the cost involved to enhance the access to information on services and programs related to family violence. It's just there's no way that you ever add a whole body of information to a system without there being a cost attached, and this is the cost attached to add that.

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. I notice that the government says it will distribute some funds through non-profit organizations which provide services to women, yet it allowed Working for Women to fold after the federal funding was cut.

I'd like to know if there are any organizations similar to Working for Women — whose mandate was to get women working — which the government has in mind right now in order to receive some funding for that same purpose.

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — I will only say that we all felt saddened about that, but the fact is when a government starts a program, it has the responsibility to do something with it. It can't just walk away from it like the federal government did, and it can't just assume that some other level of government can pick up a brand-new program that it never had responsibility for.

That aside, I recognize the value of that program. There was also a fairly substantial immigrant women bridging program that was also cut by the federal government that lost 16 staff in Saskatoon.

And I'll just say that as the province gets further into fleshing out the details of the new training strategy, we've already met, the Women's Secretariat has already met, with the minister responsible for the post-secondary training strategy. And as recently as today we've had discussions on how we're going to bring these perspectives in to the fleshing-out of the training

strategies so that the sensitivities are there to things like the need for the Working for Women type of programs as well as the immigrant ones.

But the fact is, is that when \$865,000 in federal funding disappears basically without any previous notice, another level of government can't just come in and fill that. Governments have enough trouble keeping the programs they're already committed to, without surprises like that. So we value that program and certainly Mitchell . . . Minister Mitchell has written to Minister Pettigrew to express the province's concerns about it. But as we go . . .

**The Chair:** — I must call the member to order. You cannot use proper names. I think the minister knows that she's made the error with the . . . Just the minister; continue.

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — I just get too darn personal about this governing stuff. Can't help it. He just seems like a person to me. Anyway, we won't be re-creating those projects exactly as they existed but certainly we'll be trying to bring that expertise and bring the understanding of the needs that those projects met into the provincial training strategy.

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, the government has said that special consideration will be given to organizations in rural and northern areas of the province. Are there companies and industries, in particularly the northern areas, which can provide high-tech computer jobs to these women? Because we're talking about the utilization of computer training, etc.

So I'm wondering if you have been able to identify any industry in northern Saskatchewan basically that has said that they'd be willing to provide these jobs once the training has taken place.

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — The initial focus of this particular project is not job related. The connection of the training strategy to jobs will be done through the regional colleges, the community colleges, the Indian and Metis educational institutions, and the provincial educational institutions. Our focus here is getting people totally up to speed and totally familiar with a new communications tool. So it is a slightly different purpose we're talking about.

There's no doubt that there is increased technology in the North in health care, in mining, in education. So I'm certain those jobs do exist. But that's a slightly different focus and it'll be the provincial training strategy that's looking after making those linkages.

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. I appreciate your comments and your answers and I'll just turn this over to a member of the third party for further questioning.

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — I want to thank you for your questions because I know that you do care about the answers and you do pay close attention. I want to thank you for your questions.

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, I see

that all members have been waiting abatedly for me to enter the debate here. I hate to disappoint them because I think the minister already knows from our debate last year I'm not really a big fan of this specific secretariat. I think there are many areas where women are helped in government through a number of other initiatives, and in some ways, Mr. Chairman, I see this as money that's really not well spent. I think there are avenues that we can reach out and provide for women.

And I would like to give a bouquet to the women out in our society and across our province who have done a lot for themselves, for their families, for their communities, on their own. They haven't had to look to government, and they're certainly not looking to this minister or this secretariat to enhance themselves in society. They believe that they are capable — quite capable and quite able to certainly enhance their positions on their own.

A couple questions though that our secretarial staff, who happen to be women, came up with as they were researching some of the information out of the *Public Accounts*, and they would like a few answers. And so I brought them with me this evening.

The first question they have is, since 1994 Ms. Faye Rafter has held the title of acting executive coordinator for Women's Secretariat. And the question they've asked and asked me to bring to the Assembly is the . . . when you use the term, acting — and as they see it's still acting — it refers to a position that is temporary, and one would wonder why this . . . what appears to be a permanent position is still referred to as a temporary position. I wonder if the minister could respond to that?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Ms. Rafter . . . I'm actually going to answer the question you've maybe didn't want me to answer first. You probably do believe that women have achieved everything they've achieved totally because they're good individuals doing good things. But the fact is that without the pressure created by collective women's experiences and women's expression of disgust at some of the oppression in our society, women wouldn't even have the vote today.

So I just beg to differ, because collective action by women is what has given women the vote. It's what has started the ball rolling on pay equity in government. It's what's improved women's pensions. It's what's improved women getting their share of the farm when there's a marriage break-up. So I will just have to tell you that I don't quite agree with your analysis that somehow these things aren't necessary.

Now on the other particular comment . . . oh yes. Ms. Rafter was on leave from the university and so the decision needed to be made that in choosing to become permanent in government, she would then be leaving her role with the university. And of course as you know, she is now permanent.

**Mr. Toth:** — Madam Minister, I think you would also have to agree though when it came to while women may have pressed the issue of the vote, it took the initiative of a number of men at the time who were in leadership to bring that into fruition.

Madam Minister, the other interesting thing that was pointed out, going through the *Public Accounts*, is we see Ms. Rafter was originally hired at a salary, in October of '94, of \$77,820 . . . (inaudible) . . . The former coordinator, Marianne Weston, 1991 NDP Regina Lake Centre nominee, left with a salary of 79,575 and was formerly hired at 75,000. The *Public Accounts* for the year '95-96 show Ms. Rafter received \$96,584. Madam Minister, it seems to be quite a large discrepancy for little over a year, whereas Ms. Weston went from 77 to 79 in that period that she was acting director. Can you explain that?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — This was simply an accounting error. What they did is instead of reporting her salary as it should have been, the benefits that were part of salary were put on top of the salary figure, and then the car allowance was put on top of that. And those are not normally included in that way in a salary figure. So if you compare what the actual salary base was for Ms. Weston and for Ms. Rafter, they're the same.

(2015)

**Mr. Toth:** — Well maybe, Madam Minister, you could make a clarification in the *Public Accounts* to that effect. It almost sounds like the same format that MLAs are referred to. And when I look at these numbers, I would think even you yourself would have to say, man, I thought I'm in charge, but I don't think I've seen those types of increases. And so it's interesting.

To the minister as well, someone has brought to our attention that Ms. Rafter is Duane Adams's, the deputy minister of Health's, sister. Is that so?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — I don't understand what relevance that question is to the department.

**Mr. Toth:** — So I guess that's true. I guess that was the question that the staff had brought to our attention. And I raise it with the minister and was looking for a simple yes or no answer. Obviously that's quite a concern to the members opposite. And it's interesting how you can raise comments and government . . .

**The Chair:** — Order. Order. I don't think that the minister can hear the question. And I don't think the people that are in the Chamber can hear the question; so I would ask the members to come to order and allow the member from Moosomin to put his question.

**Mr. Toth:** — Madam Minister . . .

**The Chair:** — Order. Order. What is your point of order?

**Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. The point of order is this: Beauchesne explicitly states — and I forget the paragraph — that we protect our officials, that is people of high station in this Assembly, from any attack, however direct or indirect that might be, and allegations. And therefore I would ask, Mr. Chair, that you listen carefully to the comments by the member for Moosomin to ensure that there is in fact no attack on any officials occurring in this Chamber.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. To speak to the point of order, Mr. Speaker, I must say that there certainly was no attack in place. It was a very simple question — neither pro nor con as to any implications at all, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I believe the point of order is not well taken.

**The Chair:** — Certainly the officials are protected against attacks by a member on a personal nature. However where their duties are related to may be brought into question. And therefore if that is the content of the nature, then I would say that the point of order is not well taken.

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, when it comes to the Women's Secretariat . . . and we had, I believe, referred to the fact that Women's Secretariat is expending \$1.4 million. And I note in the annual report discussion has taken place with a number of groups. I think you've talked about . . . and I'm going through community liaison, and it talks about having met with different groups about different activities like violence against women, pay equity, midwifery, and a number of other areas.

I'm wondering, has Women's Secretariat conversed with the groups like REAL Women as well when they converse and look at bringing forward policy regarding women's issues?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Actually I have met with some representatives. Following Beijing, I invited the women who had attended Beijing to meet with me, and one of the women represented there was from the REAL Women group. And as well we certainly invite them to our kind of open house functions where women meet and mingle and discuss different issues. So we don't have any direct program involvement but we certainly have been in contact.

**Mr. Toth:** — But, Madam Minister, have REAL Women lobbied your department for any funding at any time or for any of the services that they provide?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Apparently they share your views on their independence in getting things done without us.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Toth:** — Madam Minister, like I said earlier, I didn't have a lot of questions and I'm certainly not going to tie up the evening with just delving off on little issues. But I want to thank you and your officials for the time this evening.

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — And I'll thank you for bringing another perspective to the discussion.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. I just have a couple of questions, Madam Minister. First of all, when you were talking to the member from Humboldt, we sort of were half discussing the Working for Women, the fact that that program is no longer funded by the federal government. Maybe I was just reading something into your words, but was I hearing that you were perhaps going to fund it in some way?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — I think if I remember my words correctly, I said I don't see us re-establishing the program in its current form. However that doesn't mean that the value of it isn't recognized or there isn't expertise from the women that work there that could be brought into the new provincial training strategy as it develops. But where that will actually end up, I mean there's a lot of change taking place in the whole education and training area so it's difficult to predict right now.

It is a shame we didn't have more advanced warning of this change so there could have been more advanced thinking of how that could fit. Because the provincial training strategy is largely an institutional-based strategy. And a lot of these organizations that were funded by the federal government in the community, we have never had that level of funding for that kind of activity because all the human resource stuff all came directly from the federal government. So some thinking needs to go into it, but I would say that in the short term, likely not.

**Ms. Draude:** — Have you had an opportunity to speak to any of the people that are in charge of the program, and do you know how much money it would cost to keep that department or that group going in some way?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — For the six outreach projects, it was \$865,000; so we're talking, you know, a fair bit of money here. The actual Working for Women, it was 300,000.

**Ms. Draude:** — Have you had an opportunity to speak with women in charge to determine if there is some way that you could use their expertise and their experience in some of the programs that you have forthcoming?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — The Minister of Post-Secondary Education has met with them and I think it would be best . . . I met with them before they lost their funding, not knowing they were going to. And I think he's met with them subsequently — so you may want to ask him that question when he's here and he could give you a complete answer.

**Ms. Draude:** — Madam Minister, it's difficult in a position like the secretariat has, to actually evaluate and measure success, but I'm wondering now with this program that you've got coming up with Internet and you're going to actually be working with real people and making . . . Do you have some system set up where you can actually measure how successful . . . or what impact you're going to be making on people?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Yes, there'll be an evaluation system built into the design of the work being done and I always think there's two evaluations: one is the paper evaluation; another is the one that is the response of the people involved. And if the response isn't there, I think we'll know we're on the wrong track. And if the response is there, then I think we'll have a pretty good idea. But there will be . . . The program will be implemented over two years and there will be a formal evaluation process of it.

**Ms. Draude:** — Madam Minister, I know it's difficult to be your own auditor in things like that; so I'm hoping that there's some sort of system where there will be some response from the

people who are actually benefiting from that program.

I know from our discussion tonight you probably understand that I have . . . I'm disappointed that there isn't more opportunities for something besides the initial decision that you'd made on spending this money. Not that I don't have a problem with . . . I'm, I'm excited about the possibility that we can actually be out doing something substantial. I guess I think we have a very limited view or we have taken . . . or you have taken a limited view of what you can be doing And I think that we are missing the largest percentage of the people out there; and when I look at all the needs that there are, I think that we're touching a very small percentage of the people.

But at the same time, you must be making some impact on your caucus or else there wouldn't have been some increased funding. So I am hoping that the door is still open for conversation and that there is opportunity yet to perhaps make some changes where we can have more involvement with a wider range of people.

So I'd like to thank you and your officials, and the member from Humboldt would like to ask you another question.

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Just a couple more questions have come to mind, if you would be able to answer them.

I noticed the B.C. (British Columbia) NDP (New Democratic Party) government has developed a tool to analyse government policy in order to gauge its effects on women overall. This tool is called the gender lens, I believe. And I was wondering, does the Women's Secretariat here have any sort of similar tool?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Although we have, I guess, many of the skills involved in doing that type of analysis, we are using both the federal government's gender-analysis policy as well as the B.C. policy as a basis for developing a policy for Saskatchewan; but it's in process.

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you. That's good to know.

Just one more question also, on the equal-pay framework. The government says, and I quote it: "It is anticipated that government departments, SaskEnergy, SIAST, and SaskTel will conclude their negotiations under that framework this calendar year." And so . . . that was printed in a news release on March 7 this year.

What I would like to know is, how long would you assess that those negotiations or the negotiation process will take? I know that we have to the end of the year, but I'm wondering if you have any understanding of how long that the negotiations are expected to take.

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — The ones you mentioned will be finished this fall and winter, and the pay-outs will be completed in this budget year.

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you. Madam Minister, if there happens to be a lack of resolve or a potential stalemate, are there any

provisions in place to ensure that that doesn't happen or that there will be something to move this process forward?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — The Women's Secretariat, in last year's budget, got the money for a pay-equity specialist who is now on staff; has been with us for a few months now. And so we have a lot of support we can offer now to people working on these. But as well, there is a dispute resolution mechanism within the pay-equity framework. So whenever things get stuck there is a mechanism to resolve that.

**Ms. Julé:** — Madam Minister, I think the gentlemen in the back row there are having some qualms about this questioning. I notice that the ex-minister of Highways is really lacking for things to do nowadays so he's coming here to banter the women. But that's all right. We're enjoying you and we're having a really good laugh off of you.

So, Madam Minister, I'd just like to ask about the battered women's programs, in Regina particularly. Could you just mention what programs are in place, and organizations basically, that the Women's Secretariat is connected with, or in fact that the government is connected with, that you can bring to light for the women of Saskatchewan?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — I guess there is a variety of mechanisms, both service, organizational and legislative. There is the PATHS (Provincial Association of Transition Houses Saskatchewan) organization, which is the organization of transition houses. And they actually work closely with the Department of Social Services on setting priorities. And when we have additional money, we apply that money in keeping with priorities that have been established through PATHS. And certainly I think there's pretty good coverage in Regina on transition houses.

(2030)

There's the partnership on violence, which also brings together a range of community and organizational support services. You know, there's women's centres and a whole variety of those kinds of things. And then there's also the legislative approach, The Victims of Domestic Violence Act, which although I know we've had some debate in the House of some of the difficulties, it certainly is progress over the days when the only choice a woman had was to leave the home in the middle of the night with kids and toys in tow.

So I don't know exactly how much detail you want, but the Women's Secretariat has produced a wallet card that lists all the services. And that card is available to hand out to women. So that if they do need any of those services, they have a ready set of phone numbers that tells them where to access the various services.

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. I have one more question. And I know that there are certainly a shortage of safe houses in the rural areas in the province, and I know that that's not under your mandate as such. But I'm wondering whether the Women's Secretariat in fact, does look thoroughly into what's happening out there in rural Saskatchewan; and to

present to the Minister of Social Services and the Finance minister some of the views on the need out there; so that we can, in effect, have this situation and problem taken care of in the near future . . . would be nice.

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — We have a role that we play in inter-departmental discussions but as I mentioned, there is a direct relationship between the Department of Social Services and the Provincial Association of Transition Houses, and through the partnership on violence directly with all the organizations that deal with family violence issues. So our voice is added in the discussions that take place at budget time on prioritizing in the policy and program development. But there is a very direct relationship between Social Services, as I say, and the organizations that are working on these things.

So what we really do is try to make sure that every time there's a bit of additional resources, that they're added into these services. And I've had actually women who work in these areas approach me recently about how pleased they are about the additional resources that were in this last budget and the recognition of the wages and benefits for people working in these types of organizations.

The rural area has always been a little more difficult because of the high cost of providing services to a smaller group of people, because of course in an urban area, you're drawing from a much larger population base. But certainly rural services have been added, and I think the outreach services are more effective in the rural areas as well.

**Ms. Julé:** — Madam Minister, just one comment. In the rural areas, I know that the population density is lower, of course, but because of the stress of rural living sometimes, we do have a good number of women that are in need, and I hope that's taken into great consideration. I thank you once again.

Item 1 agreed to.

Item 2 agreed to.

Vote 41 agreed to.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 8:36 p.m.



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