

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to present petitions on behalf of people from northern Saskatchewan. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to develop a plan that will address the housing needs of northern residents in a timely manner.

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

Mr. Speaker, the lists of people, signatures, are from residents of Ile-a-la-Crosse and Turnor Lake. I so present.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise on behalf of the good citizens of the town of Kamsack:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to establish a special task force to aid the government in its fight against the escalating problem of youth crime in Saskatchewan, in light of the most recent wave of property crime charges, including car thefts, as well as crimes of violence, including the charge of attempted murder of a police officer; such task force to be comprised of representatives of the RCMP, municipal police forces, community leaders, representatives of the Justice department, youth outreach organizations, and other organizations committed to the fight against youth crime.

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

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise today to present petitions from concerned citizens of Saskatchewan, citizens concerned about the government's change to The Labour Standards Act and the hardship it has caused. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to recognize the hardship which this failure to inform affected parents and employees has caused, and immediately develop a program to compensate all affected by the mistake.

The petitioners are from Elstow, Allan, Colonsay, Dundurn, and Saskatoon. I so present.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I too rise on behalf of citizens concerned about the hardships caused by this government's failure to properly inform either parents or babysitters with respect to regulations under The Labour

Standards Act. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Deputy Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to recognize the hardship which this failure to inform affected parents and employees has caused, and immediately develop a program to compensate all affected by this mistake.

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

Those who have signed these petitions, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are from communities such as Birch Hills, Spruce Home, Prince Albert, Meath Park, and a number from the city of Saskatoon as well as the community of Watson. I so present.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by citizens of northern Saskatchewan on the issue of northern housing. I'll read the prayer for relief:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to develop a plan that will address the housing needs of northern residents in a timely manner.

This petition is signed by several hundred northern residents. They come from Ile-a-la-Crosse, St. George's Hill, Buffalo Narrows, Beauval, and La Loche, and one petitioner who simply identifies himself as NDP (New Democratic Party). Mr. Deputy Speaker, I so present.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise on behalf of the citizens of Big River:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to recommend to the provincial government that it keep the Big River Forest Nursery in operation; and implement a buy-Saskatchewan seedling policy for government departments, Crown corporations, and forestry companies in receipt of taxpayers' support in the form of government grants, loans, or tax incentives.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have . . . Deputy Speaker, we have hundreds of signatures from Big River. We got some from Victoire, from Debden, from Saskatoon, and we have petitions from all throughout the land. And I so present, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have petitions as well to present on behalf of Saskatchewan people, and the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to take whatever action necessary to ban stripping in establishments where alcohol is sold; including appealing the recent court decision striking down the existing law banning stripping, invoking the notwithstanding clause of the constitution to enact banning all stripping in establishments where alcohol is

served.

And in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to present these petitions on behalf of Saskatchewan people. From all over Saskatchewan these petitions come from.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed. Pursuant to rule 12(7) they are hereby read and received.

Of citizens petitioning for the following:

To cause the government to develop a plan that will address the housing needs of northern residents;

To establish a task force to aid the fight against youth crime;

To support the creation of regional telephone exchanges;

To protect the Dore, Smoothstone lakes area by declaring it an accessible and protected wilderness area; and

To enact legislation banning all stripping establishments where alcohol is served.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to draw your attention and that of the other members in the Assembly to the west gallery, where there is a group of students from Balfour Collegiate in Regina — 67 students. They're accompanied by their teacher, Pat Maze.

I look forward to meeting with this group after the question period. And at this time I would ask the members to join me in extending them a very warm welcome here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly today, a group of concerned citizens that have had a big problem with reassessment and with SAMA (Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency), Mr. Deputy Speaker.

This is only part of the committee that was formed in my home town to deal with this problem. I'd like to introduce them to you: Debbie Koptie; Margaret Bruner; Carm Tate; Al Westburg; Jack Dawes — and Jack, by the way, is a farm director on a local radio station out there; Joan Wilson, who is a councillor in the town of Saltcoats; Walter Farquarhson, who . . . Walter, by the way has been our United Church minister for many years and with some distinction is the past moderator of the United Church of Canada; Jim McCallum; Andy Sawkey; and Ms. Sara Marcel Pelletier.

I would like the Assembly to welcome them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — To you and through you, I just want to join the member for Saltcoats in welcoming our guests here. As some of you may know, I was born and raised there and Saltcoats has a long tradition, a long tradition of sending good members to the legislature. The last one we're not so sure about, but I wanted to . . . Just a joke.

I just want to join with the member, Mr. Speaker, in welcoming people from Saltcoats here.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Through you and through you to the House, I would like to introduce 32 grade 6 students from the Redvers School sitting in the east gallery. Teachers with them today are Ginni Nielsen and Heidi Nielsen. And chaperons, we have Blain Millions, Gayle Carlsen, Karen Dangstorp, Rita Parker, and Marilyn Garnier. I would ask all members in the House to welcome them here today and I look forward to meeting them after question period.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'd like to introduce 23 grade 9 students from Sandy Bay that are in your gallery. Accompanying the students is the teacher, Ina Fietz Ray, who is also the mayor of Sandy Bay, and also the chaperons, Denise Ray, Charlene Larson, Flora Wagner, Nathan Ray.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to say a few words of welcome in Cree.

(The hon. member spoke for a time in Cree.)

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Just on behalf of the Liberal caucus, I wanted to add to the Minister of Northern Affairs's welcome to the special guests. I also want to say hello to the mayor of Sandy Bay, Ina Fietz Ray, is also the Co-Chair, I believe, of New North. And I'd like to welcome her and her group to the Assembly as well. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, just to be sure that our visitors from Sandy Bay feel most welcome, I also want to add my words of welcome to them and to the chaperons that have accompanied them, and of course the mayor of Sandy Bay, a progressive northern community. And I look forward to joining the group following question period for some discussions. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce in the east gallery a member of my constituency, Marcel Pelletier, who's with us today in the gallery.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Closure of Big River Tree Nursery

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today in the Assembly I presented petitions signed by over 600 residents of Big River calling for the provincial government to recognize the devastating effect that the closure of the Big River Tree Nursery . . . and the effect it'll have on people's livelihoods, the local economy of Big River and area.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the closure of this nursery is indicative of this government's failure in three major areas: jobs, the environment, and northern development. This government constantly states that its number one priority is jobs; yet the closure of this nursery will mean the loss of 16 full-time and over 100 part-time jobs which will severely impact the local economy of Big River.

Mr. Speaker, this government states that it is working with the people of Big River to come up with a solution to an economic situation this closure has put their community in. So far this is not happening. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the people of Big River are asking this government for mediation services to look at and exhaust all possible avenues whether this facility could be expanded and diversify the function of the nursery.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Big River are looking to the members opposite to take a leadership role in the negotiations of the future of the Big River Nursery. I believe that it's time that this government make a meaningful commitment to the creation and preservation of good jobs in this province and to protect our renewable resources. Appointing a mediator to explore all possible options for the Big River Tree Nursery would be a good place to start.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan's Economic Growth

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am pleased to rise in the House and speak about some very exceptional news that was reported in Saturday's *Leader-Post*. Mr. Speaker, it is a testament, this news story, to the people of Saskatchewan and to the leadership that has been provided by this provincial government. Simply put, in 1996 Saskatchewan led all provinces in economic growth. Saskatchewan led all the provinces in growth, with an increase in gross domestic product which was 3.3 per cent, Mr. Speaker, while the national average was 1.5 per cent.

Allow me, Mr. Speaker, for comparative purposes, to quote some numbers for the House and for yourself. In Saskatchewan

the GDP (gross domestic product) was up 3.3 per cent. In Manitoba it was up 2.9 per cent. In Alberta it was up 2.6 per cent, down from the previous year. In mighty Tory Ontario, up a whopping 1.3 per cent. Liberal New Brunswick, up all of 1.9 per cent. And as well, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan led all provinces when provincial growth is measured on a per capita basis. Saskatchewan growth rate was 2.7 per cent while the national average was .3 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, somebody is doing something right and I want to congratulate the farmers, the workers, and the employers in Saskatchewan for working together and for working with the Government of Saskatchewan to provide the climate making it possible for this kind of economic growth to take place in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Air Ambulance Award

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, the air ambulance service has been a vital part of our province's health care system since 1946. Since it was established, it has provided crucially needed transport from rural and remote locations for critically ill or injured people in need of specialized medical attention. And it has helped to save the lives of more than 35,000 people.

As you know, the government recently announced the addition of a second plane to the air ambulance fleet.

The Piper Cheyenne 3A can go almost anywhere in the province in 30 minutes to an hour and can even transfer patients to specialized treatment centres outside the province. The new plane's larger cabin will allow us to transport up to two patients at a time — for example, a mother and a newborn child.

Fast planes are one thing however, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and unquestionably they are important. But it is the professionalism of the men and women in our air ambulance service that really deserves recognition.

The International Northwest Aviation Council Achievement Award recognizes outstanding achievements in aviation. This award will be presented to *Lifeguard* at the council's annual conference this summer. No group of people could be more deserving, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I ask you to join me in congratulating the professionals of *Lifeguard* for this overdue recognition. Thank you.

Artist Rosa Gebhardt Recognized

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize a constituent of mine, Rosa Gebhardt of Humboldt. Mrs. Gebhardt is an artist who makes bauer malereri, a German word which literally translates as a farmer's painting. She is a native of the Black Forest region in Germany and bauer malereri goes back to her childhood — however you pronounce the word.

The art form got its start in the 1600s when the common people wanted to add a little extra to their furniture and their homes,

but couldn't afford the luxuries of the upper classes.

One of Mrs. Gebhardt's specialities is wood-turned plates portraying themes from the Prairies, including the Saskatchewan lily, wheat stocks, and other prairie sights. Her plates can now be found around the world, in no small thanks to an order from the protocol office which is in charge of providing gifts to visiting dignitaries.

Congratulations, Rosa Gebhardt.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Cathedral Village Arts Festival

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Cathedral area of my constituency has been likened both to Kitsilano and Greenwich Village, and I think that's a compliment to both of those places.

But for the sixth year in a row we invite all members of the public and this legislature to join us this week for the Cathedral Village Arts Festival. It began yesterday and continues through Saturday.

Each year the festival produces a new and exciting array of artistic, literary, dramatic, and culinary opportunities. It's a celebration of arts but also community, because everyone leaves their houses and congregates on the sidewalks and the community halls, the businesses, and joins in celebrating a release from the shackles of winter. But as well a reacquaintance with friends and neighbours.

Some highlights include award-winning poet Lorna Crozier, Saskatchewan singer Connie Kaldor, guitarist Jack Semple, and for the first time this year, a daily offering of drum performances which contribute to the heartbeat of the festival. It culminates in a street fair and concert on Saturday — 13th Avenue is where it's at. I urge you all to explore and enjoy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Canada Day Poster Challenge

Mr. McLane: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently the president of the Canada Day Committee for Saskatchewan announced the winners of the Saskatchewan Canada Day Poster Challenge. Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to announce that Janel White of the Schell high school in Holdfast took the second place award for Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, there were 3,092 posters from 141 schools in Saskatchewan received, and some 30,000 entries from across Canada.

The provincial and territorial finalists each win a trip to Ottawa to be with Prime Minister Jean Chrétien on July 1 to celebrate Canada's 130th birthday. Once again, Mr. Speaker, congratulations to Janel White of Holdfast.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

New Addition to Hudson Bay Hospital

Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the past number of years this government has been working to enhance health care in this province so that Saskatchewan can continue to have the best health care system in the world despite the massive cut-backs courtesy of the government in Ottawa. This government has dedicated itself to preserving the fundamental principles of universal health care. We are committed to providing the best possible service to Saskatchewan people in partnership with health boards and local communities.

Proof of that commitment and that partnership is occurring in Hudson Bay. It was recently announced that the Hudson Bay Hospital will receive renovations and addition of a nursing home wing to the existing facility.

The project will allow space for the operation of community-based programs such as public health, home care, mental health, addictions counselling, acute care, respite and palliative care, along with others, to be administered from the centre. This will allow a better coordination of services to the community and provide residents with easier access to health care.

I want to congratulate the Pasquia Health District, the community of Hudson Bay, and the many people who have given their time and energy to ensure this project's success.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Owner of Ambulance Service Marks 40 Years

Mr. Jess: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Having fast, efficient, and compassionate ambulance care in our province is very important to all Saskatchewan residents. Our health districts enjoy some of the most dedicated professionals who commit themselves to providing enhanced emergency medical service.

One of these dedicated people is Mike Dutchak, owner and operator of M.D. Ambulance in Saskatoon. Mr. Dutchak has been involved in the ambulance business for 40 years. He has given selflessly to developing emergency medical services in Saskatchewan.

In 1957 he created with his own station wagon Blaine Lake's first ambulance service. Since then he and his family have developed services at Rosthern, Spiritwood, Prince Albert, and Saskatoon, which not only serve these communities but the surrounding areas as well.

Mr. Dutchak has been instrumental in developing the EMT (emergency medical technician) course in Saskatchewan and the paramedic training program, the First Responders program, and enhanced medical dispatching.

Mr. Speaker, for 40 years Mr. Dutchak has worked to create world-class ambulance care in our province. I want to commend him for his years of commitment and support for the ambulance profession. It was appropriate that earlier this year

he received the 1997 volunteer recognition award from the North Central Regional Recreation Association.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Child Protection Services

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Social Services criticizes me for raising the issue of child deaths, demanding that I put forth evidence on which I base my suspicions that children in the system may be dying of abuse and neglect. Well, Mr. Speaker, in a letter to me from the minister last March he states, and I quote:

Between 1991 and 1995, 14 children died from violent abuse or neglect in Saskatchewan. In seven of these cases their families were receiving services from the department.

Yet on Friday last, the minister stood in this House and stated there have not been charges of abuse or neglect. Can the minister please explain which of his statements is true?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, as I indicated to the member in correspondence, as I've indicated in the House, when there are charges of abuse or neglect, those charges are investigated. If it results in criminal investigation, those investigations will be undertaken by the police.

If any member of this legislature or any member of the public has specific knowledge of a circumstance where there is neglect or abuse, it is our duty by law to report that to the Department of Social Services, or I suppose to local policing authorities.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, this is precisely why we are calling for a public review. Mr. Speaker, the minister knows the Saskatchewan's child death review policy is inadequate or he would not have quietly set up the interdisciplinary committee to review the full scope of child deaths in Saskatchewan this year.

In writing, the minister says that there have been cases of children dying from abuse and neglect even though the freedom of information response I received does not list this as a cause of death.

Mr. Speaker, the process is fatally flawed. And further mistakes could put more children at risk to a violent death. Given all of these facts, will the minister open up the child protection and child death policies to a full-scale public review?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, let me repeat. In 1991 we believe it needed some change. We reviewed the circumstances of how child death is reviewed in our province. Mr. Speaker, we've done that. We are always, always seeking improved

mechanisms — hence the interdisciplinary committee.

Mr. Speaker, if the member suggests we need a large and very expensive judicial inquiry, it seem to me, Mr. Speaker, that would consume a great many of public resources — resources that we're trying to devote to the care of children and their families, Mr. Speaker.

Again I repeat, Mr. Speaker, if the member has some specific knowledge of cases that are not being investigated and if she would care to report those specifics to the department, we will follow up, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, there have been cases . . . (inaudible) . . . that tragic deaths of children in our province. They are investigated, Mr. Speaker, and we are trying on every front to strengthen families, to strengthen homes, and make life safer and securer for all children.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saltcoats Reassessment

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, frustration and discontent over reassessment is simmering to a boil in the town of Saltcoats. The Nipawin *Journal* hit it right on the mark in the May 14 editorial, and I quote: "It's just another black mark on the government's poorly planned reassessment exercise." In the case of Saltcoats, SAMA has admitted it made a mistake, but so far the error has not been corrected.

Just to show you how unfair the whole process really is, at a March town hall meeting the CEO (chief executive officer) of SAMA publicly stated that SAMA has used one lot sale, Mr. Deputy Speaker, just one lot along the lake to base their values on.

Will the minister explain to the residents of Saltcoats why she is refusing to help resolve the matter? Because by not stepping in, the NDP government is basically telling residents their concerns really don't matter and that SAMA is always right.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, the government has a minority representation on the SAMA board of directors. It's an arm's-length agency. We're responsible for the legislation but only three out of the nine members on the board of the directors are appointed by the government. The others are elected in a democratic process by SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) and SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) and SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association) — the local government organizations.

They told the local governments and finance review commission in the early '80s that they wanted to own the assessment system, that they didn't want it to be a government function. So there it is; it's independent of government.

Notwithstanding this, as a result of some letters and phone calls that I've had with people from Saltcoats and from people from Saltcoats and others, I did hold a meeting last week with the chairman, Mark Thompson, over the weekend actually.

And I'm told that the process is unfolding as it should; that there was a court of revision that was held on May 6 and 7. And there was one of the 50 appellants who asked for a two-week referral. That will be held . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order, order. Next question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Madam Minister, just once take a leadership role and do the job that you were put in place to do. Mr. Speaker, the government said the people have the right to appeal; well over 50 people have already done so and quickly found out that even this process is flawed.

Residents say that SAMA has treated them with contempt, has been condescending and arrogant, and had resorted to intimidation. Residents are disgusted with this treatment, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There has even been talk of a tax revolt. When normal, law-abiding citizens are considering breaking the law in protest, you know that they have been pushed to the edge, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Will the minister commit to take some time today and meet with the Saltcoats residents who have gathered in the gallery to discuss the way of resolving this problem?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, sometimes they say the government interferes too much. Now they're asking for political interference in an issue that is not political. And when the member opposite says that this situation is reaching the boiling point, I hope that he's not responsible for lighting the burner under that fire by stirring up the situation.

As I said before, there will be due course. There will be one more appeal to be held when all 50 appellants have been heard. The court of revision will write their decisions. And if there are wrongs to be righted, that is the point at which it comes. And anyone who had to pay a fee to have their appeal heard, if their appeal is even partially successful, will have it refunded.

That's due process. It's always been the due process. And it's being accorded to the residents of Saltcoats.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskPower Proposed Project in Guyana

Mr. McLane: — Mr. Minister, we all know that SaskPower has signed a letter of intent to purchase half the Guyana electrical company for a reported \$22 million U.S. (United States). Last week, the minister in charge of SaskPower indicated that a decision will not be made until we're assured we have bought it for the cheapest possible price.

Mr. Speaker, one of the unsuccessful bidders in this venture has shared with the Liberal opposition its evaluation of the entire electrical utility in that third-world country. The study pegs the total value of the GEC (Guyana Electrical Corporation) at \$16 million U.S.

Can the minister in charge of SaskPower explain why he's willing to spend \$22 million to purchase half the utility when an independent study has estimated its total worth to be only 16 million?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's no secret that there were six companies from around the world who had put forth a proposal with respect to narrowing down and developing a process whereby negotiations could take place for the partial sale of that corporation.

I haven't got the documents that the member from the opposition party has, but quite clearly it's from an unsuccessful proponent, which would, I would suggest, indicate the reason they may have wanted to share with members of the opposition.

What I am saying to the members of the opposition in this House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that if and when a decision is made to enter into an agreement to purchase a portion of GEC, I can assure the member it will have been done after the appropriate evaluation of those assets will have been made, and those assets will have been under major scrutiny before any decision is in fact made.

Now if the member wants to share the information he has with me, I'm certainly more than willing to look at it. But I can assure you and assure members of this House, before a decision has been made, we will assure that it is the correct decision.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McLane: — Mr. Speaker, there are a number of legitimate questions about SaskPower's decision to sink millions of precious tax dollars into a venture that appears risky to say the least, and given this government's \$16 million gigatel fiasco, the people of Saskatchewan deserve some answers.

The fact that SaskPower is prepared to spend more than one-half of the Guyanese electrical company than it is worth in total makes no sense whatsoever. Two independent studies — this one and now the Price Waterhouse — have suggested you're paying too much.

Mr. Minister, common sense seems to have gone by the wayside. You're like a gambling addict who can't seem to stop throwing away good money after bad. To top it off, you're using taxpayers' dollars.

Will you table all the documents relating to your bid in this House today to justify the purchase of the Guyana electrical company? If not, will you make a commitment to get out of the deal?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well, Mr. Speaker, let me say to the member opposite, we're not into the deal. We are into a process whereby we have signed a letter of intent that would lead us perhaps to negotiations on a finalized settlement for a purchase.

I want to say to the member opposite, I can understand the passion that he has and his feelings towards the Crown corporation utilities. I understand that, given his philosophical background.

I won't dwell on that, Mr. Speaker, only to say that this government is not hidebound by any political philosophy with respect to a business deal that we may enter into. It's either going to make economic sense for the people of Saskatchewan who own that corporation, or it's not. If it makes sense, we'll certainly look at the purchase and finalizing a purchase. If it doesn't make sense, the fact of the matter is we won't.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskTel's Failed Venture in the United States

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was going to say, ring-a-ding, ring-a-ding, where did Lily go, but I'm not sure. Mr. Speaker . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order, order. If the member has a question for the minister, the member must address the minister respectfully, the minister responsible for whatever position she's in. That kind of language is very unparliamentary and I would say to him to . . .

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Liberal opposition has received a number of unsubstantiated reports that SaskTel losses in the NST fiasco may be higher than \$16 million.

To determine if these reports are true, we contacted SaskTel's private sector partner in Vancouver. However, Ian Robertson, the president of N S. Telcom Group, said he is prohibited from making any public statement because of a confidentiality clause between the company and SaskTel.

Mr. Robertson tells us that he is prepared to waive the terms of the confidentiality clause. Mr. Deputy Speaker, will the minister or her designate open the books on this money-losing venture?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, to the member opposite, I understand that a lot of the research done by Dr. Melenchuk is unsubstantiated, so it doesn't surprise me that what you're bringing here is in fact unsubstantiated.

What you might want to do — and just a word of advice from somebody who's been around here a long time — is to hire a researcher who would get you substantiated documents and

information to bring to the House.

But I want to say to the member opposite that the issue that you talk about — you should remember that a project called the Chunnel that was stalled in its production in the recent years was solved and brought to fruition by a group of young men and women from SaskTel, who were called in to help complete the project that had stalled out because of technology that they needed and SaskTel was able to provide.

You'll know that we made, SaskTel made, over a \$100 million on the Leicester project in England. And I want to say to you if you include the basket of projects that SaskTel has been involved in around the world, you will see that it's a very, very successful . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order, order. Next question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Well to the Deputy Premier, I can send him a letter if he likes, after question period, substantiating what Ian Robertson has said; and I will do that.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberal opposition believes it's important that the taxpayers of Saskatchewan know the entire story behind the NST money loss and how many of their tax dollars were actually lost in this lame-duck venture. Mr. Robertson has indicated to us that there are certain investment decisions made by SaskTel management which his company disagreed with. Given the fact that the people of Saskatchewan are in fact shareholders in the Crown company, they deserve to know the entire story behind this venture.

Will the minister . . . for once, will you be honest with the people of Saskatchewan, and will you waive the confidentiality clause so all of the facts surrounding the NST fiasco are in the open; as they should have been in the first place?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite when he asks the questions will know full well that he has as many hours as he wants to ask questions in the Crown Corporations Committee. And the minister has answered, I think in a very appropriate way, the issues that you have raised.

But what we will be watching is that individual member, when Crown Corporations Committee comes up, to see how much time he personally spends in the committee asking questions when the press may not be sitting there.

And we will decide whether or not he's sincere, or whether this is more political grandstanding in order to try to make a point and try to cause problems and grief for many, many men and women who make their living working for one of the most productive telcos anywhere in North America.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Silver Sage Casino

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My question is for the Gaming minister. Madam Minister, despite assurances from your government that there was enough casino business for everyone, it is now clear that Casino Regina is driving the Silver Sage Casino into the ground. Your casino strategy was supposed to create jobs, but the closure of this casino would put 240 people out of work.

Madam Minister, is the Gaming Corporation seriously considering striking a deal that would result in the closure of the Silver Sage Casino and the loss of 240 jobs?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In Regina, as in other sites where there was already existing casinos when we signed our casino agreement, we guaranteed that they would maintain their revenues at the five-year average. The discussions with Silver Sage in Regina have only been about the maintenance of their revenues. And whether they choose to operate or not is a management decision that they will make, but we have held to our end of the bargain, which is to guarantee those revenues.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Madam Minister, the Regina Exhibition Association is very concerned about your government renegeing on its commitment to ensure 2.2 million in annual profits for Silver Sage. This isn't too surprising, given your government's tendency to break promises regarding gambling revenue, like the 10 per cent one on VLTs (video lottery terminal) to municipalities.

Madam Minister, the exhibition association is worried about your government arbitrarily reducing the \$2.2 million commitment at any time. Considering profits at Casino Regina have already fallen to less than 4 million, it might be awfully tempting for you to bail out of such an agreement.

Madam Minister, if you enter into an agreement with Regina Exhibition Association to ensure that they will receive \$2.2 million a year, will you put that commitment into legislation?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The exhibition has been at the negotiating table, as we have, and there has been no suggestion that they would ever get less than they were promised. And I would just ask them to stop worrying.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

David Milgaard Case Review

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Justice. Mr. Minister, the Ontario government recently provided compensation to Guy-Paul Morin after DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) testing proved he had been wrongfully convicted.

Will you be providing compensation to David Milgaard if DNA

testing shows he spent 23 years in jail for a murder he did not commit?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, this matter will be reviewed when all of the evidence has been reviewed by the latest review in this matter.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Apology for Remarks About Reform Leader

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my questions are for . . . oh the deputy minister, I guess, Deputy Premier. Mr. Deputy Premier, at least one of your members continues to defend comments comparing Preston Manning to a Nazi. You made the member for Regina South apologize. You made the Minister of Justice apologize. Why can't you control the Minister of Agriculture and make him apologize as well? Mr. Deputy Premier, the Minister of Agriculture is providing no explanation and no apology for remarks defending the offensive comments made by the member from Alberta South. Mr. Deputy Premier, are you going to make the Minister of Agriculture apologize or do you support his defence of the other members' comments?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I say to the member opposite, who continues to fly the flag for the Reform Party here in the Assembly, I believe that the remarks made by the Member from Regina South, which started your questioning, the apology was made here and I believe it was accepted.

But what I want to say to you while you're flying the flag for the Reform Party, why don't you be honest and say that the Reform Party is also willing to do away with the Canadian Wheat Board, which is in their document and you can read it and find out. And secondly, introduce American style Medicare in Canada as well.

If you are going to take their side and demand apologies, why aren't you at least honest enough to tell us what the Reform Party stands for when you come here and ask questions on their behalf in the House?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Premier. Mr. Minister, if you want to talk about the federal election, well let's talk about it. It isn't exactly going according to plan though for you, is it?

The NDP here in Saskatchewan are running the federal NDP's campaign and they seem to be running it straight into the ground, is where it's going. According to the latest poll in *The Globe and Mail* the NDP now is projected to win one seat nationally.

That's a direct result of the kind of intolerant comments that the members on your side of the House have made. The member

from Albert South, the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Agriculture, and even, and even the federal NDP leader has said that if you vote for the Reform Party, it will result in a civil war. Talk about intolerance.

Mr. Premier — Mr. Deputy Premier — are you going to show some leadership and put an end to this kind of gutter politics? Will you start by demanding an apology from the Minister of Agriculture?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, now that we're into the federal election, I want to go out on the limb just a little bit and say that when you look at the numbers, when you look at the numbers in *The Globe and Mail* that you're talking about, and realize that the prediction there was that the Liberals will win 186 seats across Canada, the Tories 50 seats; one thing I would be willing to bet is that we'll win more seats in Saskatchewan than the Tories even though they may win 50 seats in Canada. And we'll win more than the Liberals even though they are predicted to win 186.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Chief Electoral Officer Report

Mr. Osika: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've heard from the Justice minister that the delay in releasing the Kuziak report . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order, order. I'm having a little problem hearing the hon. member from Melville. I would ask the House to come to order.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As I started out, we've heard from the Justice minister that the delay in releasing the Kuziak report is tied to a department policy of not releasing information that could influence a federal election campaign. Yet the former Justice minister says he is not aware of any such policy. It appears the government is playing games with taxpayers and essentially taking away their right to make an informed decision.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's obvious we have two cabinet ministers at odds over policy. So I was hoping to go straight to the top for an answer today, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would like to ask the Premier or his designate, which is it? If there is a policy, may we see it? If there isn't, will the Premier then explain why the report is being suppressed?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Mitchell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now it's clear that the member is grandstanding. I say that with the great respect that he knows I have for him. I say it because — I say it, notwithstanding that respect — because during the estimates of the Justice department the other evening — last week, I think it was — this subject was canvassed very, very thoroughly. And he understands perfectly well what the Justice minister meant when he said what he said.

Now the fact is that the Chief Electoral Officer enjoys a high degree of independence from the government, from all members of this legislature, and I think the member would agree that that's appropriate. And it would be quite wrong for us to interfere with that independence by starting to order this person around.

Now if the member feels free to do that, I invited him last week to pick up the telephone and phone him, and I would be glad to know whether he did that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Tchorzewski: — To ask if it's appropriate to ask for leave at this time to introduce a guest?

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the members for providing me this opportunity.

I'd like to introduce a former member of this Legislative Assembly who is seated behind the rail, Alex Taylor, who was the member for Kerrobert-Kindersley, I think the riding was then called, elected in 1971. It's a pleasure to introduce Alex Taylor because he and I were elected at the same time, in the same election. And we also entered cabinet at the same time with the Blakeney government in 1972.

Alex Taylor made a major contribution as minister of Social Services while he was a member of this House. He made an important contribution to his constituency and I know that at the present time he's doing very important work as a minister of the United Church here in Regina.

And I'd like to ask members to join me in welcoming a former member of the Legislative Assembly, Alex Taylor, back to the House.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 229 — The Education and Health Tax Amendment Act, 1997 (Indians off-reserve)

Mr. Boyd: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of Bill No. 229, The Education and Health Tax Amendment Act, 1997, short title (Indians off-reserve), be now moved the first time . . . be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a first time and ordered to be a read a second time at the next sitting.

Bill No. 230 — The Farm Security Amendment Act, 1997

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I

move first reading of Bill No. 230 entitled An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Farm Security Act, be introduced and read a first time.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a first time and ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

Bill No. 232 — The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Amendment Act, 1997 (Appointments Review Committee/“ARC”)

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move first reading of a Bill No. 232, The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Amendment Act, 1997, short title (Appointments Review Committee/ARC), be now read a first time.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a first time and ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

Bill No. 237 — The NORTHERN Act

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I read that Bill No. 237 entitled The New Organized and Rigorous Transportation, Housing, and Economic Renewal of the North — The NORTHERN Act, be introduced and read the first time.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a first time and ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask leave to make a motion which would extend the assignment of Mr. Speaker, who is currently in Ghana, until the end of the week.

Leave granted.

MOTIONS

Extension of Leave of Absence for The Speaker

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Lloydminster:

That an order of the Assembly dated May 1, 1997, made with respect to the participation of Mr. Speaker at the ninth Commonwealth parliamentary seminar in Ghana, and post-election seminar for newly elected members of the Ghanaian parliament, be extended to May 23, 1997.

Motion agreed to.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Speaker, I now request leave of the Assembly that we would proceed directly to private members' public Bills, second readings, to consider Bills No. 227 and then Bill 236, and to vote both of those Bills off.

Furthermore, I request leave, following the voting on those Bills, that we proceed directly to government business for the remainder of the day's sitting.

Leave granted.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 236 — The Chief Electoral Officer Accountability Act

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have been eagerly awaiting my opportunity to speak to this proposed legislation. My private members' Bill would bring about much needed change in The Election Act in order to give Saskatchewan's Chief Electoral Officer the independence he needs to carry out his duties as efficiently and as effectively as possible.

Currently he reports to Executive Council, and I am gravely concerned that this relationship may be inhibiting him from performing his duties to the fullest of his capability. We all know that the long-awaited Kuziak report is now ready, yet the Chief Electoral Officer has decided not to release the report until after the federal election.

Now that problem arises from this decision, that it was based on the advice of officials in the Saskatchewan Justice department. The delay in releasing the report and the obvious interference by the Justice department clearly shows that such legislation is desperately needed. We need that report to be released to the public now — today and not later.

I have said it before and I will say it again. Using the federal election as an excuse to withhold the report smacks of political manipulation. The people of Saskatchewan have the right to know the results of his review now. And this government has a responsibility not to get in the way of the release of this information.

We all know what developments in the past few years led to this investigation. Last year we all found out about questionable aspects of political fund-raising in which it was revealed that the Tories and the NDP were receiving hundreds of thousands of dollars in secret donations. There was not detailed information provided by the PC metro council trust fund nor from the Tommy Douglas House corporation.

Insufficient information may also have been provided by constituency associations that had raised large sums of money on behalf of their respective candidates.

The Kuziak investigation probed into the practices that were carried out under The Election Act of 1978, which stated that anyone who raised money for a party or a candidate was required to disclose the identity of the donors, and the amounts they gave.

It is imperative that we know if all these laws were being properly followed so that the correct adjustments can be made as soon as possible. With the parade of former members of the House through Saskatchewan courtrooms, it is absolutely the duty of this government to restore public confidence in our

system of government, and that includes fund-raising practices.

(1430)

That is why the investigation was launched in the first place. It is only appropriate that the results of that investigation and that report be released now — today. This government has a responsibility to restore public confidence. But when it suppresses reports that might prove to be embarrassing, it is being disrespectful to the people of Saskatchewan and to the entire political process. I have proposed this legislation in order to avoid such embarrassment in the future.

Bill No. 236 would enable the Chief Electoral Officer to report directly to the Legislative Assembly, as does the Ombudsman, the auditor, the Children's Advocate, and the Conflict of Interest Commissioner.

Because our electoral process is the basis of our democratic system, it is absolutely imperative that we take the steps necessary to ensure that the Chief Electoral Officer is allowed to properly scrutinize and monitor the electoral system without any interference, or threat of interference, from a cabinet.

Bill 236 sets out to do just that. How can any government members argue against giving the Chief Electoral Officer more power to do what he is supposed to do? I just don't understand it. Why would government members resist serving the people of Saskatchewan to the best of their capability? We have seen how the long arm of cabinet tries to influence even those outside its exclusive jurisdiction.

Take for example the shameful attack on the Provincial Auditor that was led by the minister responsible for SaskPower. Because the Provincial Auditor reports directly to the Legislative Assembly, he could not delay the release of the auditor's report. But once it was released, the minister did everything he could to discredit the auditor's findings.

I believe this carefully crafted attack was launched simply because the minister did not agree with the auditor's findings and his criticism of SaskPower's reporting methods. Saskatchewan people have a right to know exactly how the reconstruction fees are being allocated.

This attack, carried out by the minister and supported by every NDP member sitting across the floor . . . because they somehow now feel that they are beyond reproach. They attempted to undermine the credibility and the autonomy of the Provincial Auditor even though they had so vigorously defended the auditor while they were in opposition. At the same time the Provincial Auditor was struggling with the hazy accounting methods of the Tory government, and the NDP opposition rightly defended him and his right to fully examine and report on the accounting methods of government.

Now when it no longer suits their purpose, they conveniently forget the arguments they presented on behalf of the auditor's position, and instead try to undermine him. This is absolutely shameful. This NDP government is not beyond reproach. It is not beyond valid criticism. It must answer to the people it

serves, yet all we see are more and more examples of its blatant and flagrant arrogance.

Day after day the Minister for Municipal Government stands in this House and refuses to acknowledge the devastation her cuts to revenue sharing are having on Saskatchewan communities. She even had the gall to say that all is well in municipal land.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, things are definitely not well in municipalities right now. Reeves, mayors, and administrators and councillors are struggling to find enough money to carry out the basic maintenance and projects that are needed this year. Many people outside of the major urban centres are extremely concerned that they are not included in the future funding plans of this NDP government.

Communities have cut services to the bone in an effort to maintain control over the mill rate, but many have been forced to announce increases this year. But when we raise these concerns on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan, the minister arrogantly denies that there's any problem with funding or assessment. How can she fix a problem if she fails to acknowledge that it even exists?

We know that there is a problem with youth crime in Saskatchewan. Thousands of cars have been stolen, vandalized, throughout the province. We the official opposition suggest an establishment of youth crime task force. The minister scoffs at our suggestions.

There are other critical problems with Saskatchewan's justice system, as have been highlighted with the Milgaard, Latimer, and Martensville cases. Yet the Justice department failed to give Martin and Wilson an extensive mandate in their review of the operations of Saskatchewan Justice. These high-profile bungled cases were not even mentioned in the final report.

Once again, how can the Minister of Justice fix a system plagued with problems if he does not admit that the problems even exist? It's nothing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but pure arrogance.

The irony is that the officials in the same Department of Justice are also advising the Chief Electoral Officer against releasing his report. They influenced the final report of the Martensville review by refusing to give it the mandate it desperately needed. Now the Department of Justice is also affecting the timeliness of the Kuziak report. The Justice officials made this recommendation even though the minister responsible for The Elections Act agrees that the report should be released as soon as possible.

Who is running the show over there? How can people have faith in a government that is saying one thing that should be done yet is advising exactly the opposite action?

The Chief Electoral Officer needs to be autonomous. Even the Premier agrees. In a *Star-Phoenix* article from June 8 of last year, the Premier himself said he did not know why the government refused to grant the Chief Electoral Officer greater independence and promised to reconsider the matter. I quote:

The premier acknowledged that the idea of making the Chief Electoral Officer an independent officer of the legislature has got lots of merit to it.

He goes on to say, and I quote:

I think this is an issue which needs consideration and revisitation as well. I don't rule it out. In fact this legislation may fulfil the recommendations made by the chief current electoral officer, Mr. Myron Kuziak.

He recommended making the Chief Electoral Officer an officer of the legislature. He noted that the same officers in Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, and British Columbia are all independent of cabinet.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have saved the government some of the work. We have drafted legislation that would do just that. The Premier agrees the electoral officer needs more autonomy. The current electoral officer agrees that the position should be accountable to the legislature and not the cabinet.

Once again, Bill 236, An Act to ensure the Accountability of the Chief Electoral Officer to the Legislative Assembly . . . and to amend The Election Act is essential to making Saskatchewan's electoral system more fair.

The electoral system is the basis of our democracy and it must be operating correctly and legally. The overseer of this system must have the independence he or she needs to ensure that that has happened. This legislation would create that independence and would help to restore public faith into our system of government.

I ask the members opposite in government to really think about who they are here to serve — themselves or the people of this great province of ours. Supporting this legislation would show that they are at least interested in effectively serving the people of Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, thank you. Mr. Speaker, in a province which desperately needs to raise the level of public respect for the democratic process, the Kuziak report is another tawdry chapter in the erosion of that public confidence. We had the spectacle in the House last week of the Minister of Justice saying, well there's a policy that we don't issue reports that may be an embarrassment during an election campaign. The former minister of Justice says he's aware of no such policy.

My question is, if there is a policy, let's see that policy directive. Let it be placed before this House so that it may be debated and examined.

My question also is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if this is a long-standing policy, that the Justice department suppresses reports that could be an embarrassment to the government during an election campaign, what other reports have they suppressed over the years? If this is a long-standing policy of

our Justice department, then when else has it been used? What other reports have been kept back during an election campaign if this is a long-standing policy of the Department of Justice?

If it's not a long-standing policy of the Department of Justice that we don't release reports that could be embarrassing during a campaign, then why is it coming out now? Let's see the Kuziak report. Let's take one small step back on the long road to restoring public confidence in the integrity of our system.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. minister says the Chief Electoral Officer is independent. He can't direct him. But that's not what the Chief Electoral Officer says. He says the only reason he's not released the report is because that's what the Justice department has told him to do.

So while the minister is claiming the Chief Electoral Officer is independent — and that's what my colleague from Melville is saying we really need — the Chief Electoral Officer is claiming no such independence. He is saying: I've got the report; it's all done; it's ready to be released but the Justice department tells me I shouldn't release it. Some independence.

If the Minister of Justice seriously wants to restore a bit of confidence in himself, in the government, in the democratic process, then he will encourage the Chief Electoral Officer to release this report. The only reason he can think of for not releasing the report is, oh we wouldn't want to influence the election.

Well let's examine that for a minute, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The last time Canadians heard any argument as ridiculous as that was when former prime minister Kim Campbell argued that we shouldn't be discussing social policy during an election campaign. Now the Minister of Justice, of all people, argues that we shouldn't have a report on the integrity of fund-raising for political purposes in this province during a campaign because the voters might read it and they might draw some conclusions from it.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a free and democratic process involves more than just being able to cast a ballot on election day. The democratic process also presumes an informed electorate, an electorate that will be given the information, tools, with which they can come to a right decision on the public affairs of this nation. The democratic vote assumes free and open discussion on the basis of freely available information. A democratic vote is meaningless in a society which suppresses information.

(1445)

Marking our ballot is done in privacy, but it is not supposed to be done in the dark, in a cloak of secrecy. Secrecy yes, as to how we mark it, but not secrecy as to the information as to how our public officials have conducted themselves so that we can come to a judgement on them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it gets more bizarre by the moment. This is a report on provincial fund-raising. We are in the midst of a federal election. What is the connection here? There is no connection, save one. There is absolutely . . . We're talking

about elections in different jurisdictions; we're talking about fund-raising for political purposes by Saskatchewan provincial parties. We're now in the midst of course, of a national election campaign. No connection at all, except that the official agent for the provincial NDP, during the years under investigation, is now a federal NDP candidate.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is not my place to allege any impropriety on the part of Dick Proctor, and I wish to say that I do not. But I do say this — if there is no impropriety on the part of Dick Proctor, members opposite should be extremely anxious to have this report open and public. It is the only thing now which can exonerate the cloud which hangs over the process.

I am certainly not going to say there is anything wrong, but if there is nothing wrong, then friends opposite should be clamouring for the release of this report before June 2. And if in fact — if in fact — there is by anyone some improprieties which are being held back from the electorate before the June 2 election, then I say in all seriousness, Mr. Deputy Speaker, any minor, temporary advantage which may be gained through the suppression of that report today will be infinitely outweighed by the spectre that will haunt those who try to suppress this report and deceive the electorate in the long haul.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I end where I began. For a hundred different reasons and on a hundred different fronts and in a million different ways, the members of this House need to take a step to restore public confidence in the political process and in their political leaders here in Saskatchewan. It has been eroded in many ways and for many different reasons. The Kuziak report, being held back and denied to the voters of Saskatchewan lest, lest, it become an embarrassment during the campaign, is just one more way — one more way — in which we are doing our bit to fuel cynicism. One more way in which we are thwarting the growth of public confidence in the political process.

Let's try and turn the tide. Let's take one small step towards integrity, towards openness, towards decency. Let us join together, all members of this House, for the release of this report. This is not a partisan appeal, this is an appeal to put nation above party, to put principle over politics.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the many years that I've been in this Assembly, when a member stands up and says that this is not a partisan appeal, you can be rest assured that it is in fact a partisan appeal. Let me just make that very clear, Mr. Speaker, in speaking to the Bill before us.

Mr. Speaker, when the history books of Saskatchewan are written and they talk about political interference, I think that there will be significant chapters in there dedicated, I think first of all to the Liberal Party of Saskatchewan, with its record in the 1960s of the infamous gerrymander which occurred as a result of the Ross Thatcher government, the Liberal Ross Thatcher government, telling the returning officer of the day how to draw up the constituency boundaries so as to favour the

political party of the day.

That is one of the black chapters in Saskatchewan history, Mr. Speaker, which stands and is fact and is part of the record in Saskatchewan, and is a black mark — is a black mark — on government and in that case on a Liberal government in Saskatchewan. This Liberal Party that is here today shows all of these same traits that Ross Thatcher displayed in those days.

We heard it here in question period today, where we have a process with respect to assessment where that if property owners are not happy with the assessment that is being handed down, there is a court of revision procedure that is there for them to pursue. But in question period we heard today, we don't care what's happening in the courts, we want you to ignore the due process. We want you to ignore the law, and we want you the government to politically interfere in that process. That's what we heard today, Mr. Speaker. Political interference in the '60s, political interference today, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: — Same old party.

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Same old party. And we've heard it also with respect to Crown corporations. They say we don't want the arms-length relationship that we had with Crown corporations, we want day-to-day political interference in this Assembly. That's what they say, Mr. Speaker.

So let me just make it clear that the political . . . or that the Liberal Party has a long history of political interference. Not unlike the Devine Conservatives when they were in power, their soul mates, who also had a very checkered history when it came to accountability and political interference. I mean their history was very black, very bad on that point, Mr. Speaker.

The NDP government has moved to restore integrity, accountability, to the whole question of the electoral office and boundaries. One of the things that we did, Mr. Speaker, unlike the Liberals who try to . . . who did interfere with the boundaries process, what the Tories who also sought to direct how political boundaries should be drawn up here in Saskatchewan; is that we set up an independent — independent — Electoral Boundaries Commission. I might say, headed by a judge who was a former Liberal leader. But we felt very comfortable with that approach because we believe in independence, we believe in openness. We believe in that type of independence, Mr. Speaker.

We acted in that way to restore some creditability and to restore some independence to that process. We've also appointed a Chief Electoral Officer and said to him, we want you to behave more independently than has been the case.

And now when he behaves independently, they don't like it. Just like the old SAMA approach. We don't like the way that the laws are structured, we don't like the way the process is moving independently of us here in the Legislative Assembly, so we want you the government to interfere. Or in this case, we want you the Legislative Assembly to interfere.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the Chief Electoral Officer is acting,

behaving, independently. He has the right to do so. We will await for his report when he feels it's appropriate to make it. Although I might say that the minister responsible has publicly indicated that he would like this report made public, but the Chief Electoral Officer says that he's prepared to proceed independently and to table this report when he sees fit.

Now the Bill in question, Mr. Speaker, the Bill in question. I'm not necessarily opposed to the notion that at some point that we move the appointment of a chief electoral office out of the government itself and into the Legislative Assembly and to make that person an officer of the Legislative Assembly. I'm not necessarily opposed to that suggestion itself. And I'm prepared to take a good, hard look at that at some future point.

But I might say that the Bill itself does this issue no justice. The Bill is insufficient and incomplete. It says it should be appointed by the Legislative Assembly but doesn't deal with the question of how that person should be funded.

Should it be funded also as other independent officers of the Legislative Assembly, or should it continue to be funded through the government? As this Bill is silent on that point, and my guess is that if you're going deal with this issue, you need to deal with it in a more complete form, Mr. Speaker.

So I think that the legislation is insufficient, and I think more importantly, it sends out the wrong message. That when you have an officer such as this acting independently, saying I'm going to release the report when I think it's appropriate — the first act of the Liberal opposition, a knee-jerk response, saying, well we don't like now what you're doing, although we've been satisfied in the past and therefore we didn't see fit then to make you an officer of the Legislative Assembly. The first point we don't like what you're doing, now we want to have political interference by the Legislative Assembly.

That is what the Liberal opposition is saying.

So I think it sends out a very bad and very wrong message at this point, to say that we don't agree with what you're doing today, so now we want to change the terms of your employment. We were happy with what you're doing before and we didn't see the need then to change the terms of your employment.

Well I think that these issues need to be discussed not when you have an issue such as this before us, Mr. Speaker, because it sends out the wrong message. I think that if the people want to bring it back at some appropriate point, Mr. Speaker, I'd be prepared to take a look at it.

But I think the Bill is, as I said, not only insufficient and badly drafted, but I also think it sends out the wrong message, which is the message that we've been getting from the Liberal Party, and that is one of continuing political interference — whether it's to do with assessment, whether it's to do with Crown corporations, or today, with the chief electoral office.

We know that they stand for political interference. That's their history. That's their record as a party now. We don't agree with

that and we're not going to support this Bill at this time, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — Is the member wishing to close debate?

Mr. Osika: — Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — The hon. member from Melville, as the mover of the motion, is about to close debate and I must warn all members of the Assembly if they wish to speak on this that they do it now.

Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I've listened quite intently to what the government member was saying with respect to our Bill; that is should be . . . that it was incomplete. We have similar legislation, as I mentioned, for the Ombudsman, for the Children's Advocate, for the auditor, and the member opposite has the audacity to say that the legislation would not be complete.

And accusing the Liberal opposition of calling for political interference. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we're not asking the government to interfere. We are asking this government to clear up the confusion that's been created surrounding the Kuziak report. We have divisiveness within . . . disagreements within cabinet ministers with respect to whether or not there's a policy. And we're told by one there isn't; the other one says there is. And people are totally confused.

However, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that the people that will read and have seen or listened to this debate will definitely understand and recognize the utter disdain and arrogance that this government has for the people of Saskatchewan for not being allowed access and be privy to a report that was initiated . . . an investigation that was initiated almost one year ago, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The report should have been released two months ago. It's been sitting and waiting to be released, but on the advice . . .

Talk about interference. Talk about interference. The interference comes from the Justice department officials who advise the auditor not to release the report. For what reasons? The people have a right to know why. The people have a right to know why. Is there a policy of that nature in place? If there is, let's see it. If there isn't, let's clear up this controversy.

Let's have that report released to this House before the end of this session so we can debate that report in this House and again pour some fire on the fires of cynicism . . . pour some water on the fires of cynicism that have been created because of the arrogance — the utter disdain — by this government for the electorate in this province.

(1500)

The division bells rang from 3 p.m. until 3:03 p.m.

Motion negatived on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 15

Krawetz	McPherson	McLane
Gantfoer	Draude	Osika
Bjornerud	Belanger	Hillson
Julé	Aldridge	Boyd
D'Autremont	Toth	Heppner

Nays — 26

Mitchell	Tchorzewski	Johnson
Whitmore	Goulet	Upshall
Kowalsky	Crofford	Calvert
Teichrob	Koenker	Trew
Bradley	Lorje	Renaud
Nilson	Stanger	Hamilton
Murray	Wall	Kasperski
Ward	Jess	Langford
Murrell	Thomson	

**Bill No. 227 — The Saskatchewan Health Bill of Rights
and Responsibilities Act**

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a recent poll by the NDP conducted indicates that 62 per cent of people in Saskatchewan believe that health care services will deteriorate in the near future.

I don't know about the members opposite, but I wasn't surprised in the least at the number of Saskatchewan people who have no idea what to expect from this government when it comes to health care services. It's no wonder, Mr. Speaker. All families, rural families in particular, have experienced hospital closures, bed closures, loss of emergency medical services, and much more. And the problem is there seems to be no bottom line.

Last summer my colleague from Moosomin and I toured different areas of the province. There were many, many concerns aired by the local people, administration heads of health care facilities, nurses and other medical professionals, doctors, town administrators, mayors, and others.

These meetings had nothing to do with what political stripe anyone had. People just simply came to express their thoughts. Instead, they had everything to do with real concerns from real people about the problems within our province's health care system.

Yes there was a good deal of criticism how . . . over how the members opposite have handled health care reform, and there are many good ideas and proposals from local people in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, one message came across loud and clear. People all across Saskatchewan wanted to know where the bottom line was with respect to health care services in this province. How far can a government cut back in funding and still expect communities to deliver health care services?

They said if they knew the answer to these questions they could make whatever adjustments are necessary and develop a long-term plan, rather than having to work in a type of crisis

management system that they have to now. That's exactly the position the NDP across the way, who claim to be the defenders of medicare, have forced on local communities — crisis-style management.

The PC (Progressive Conservative) caucus has asked people to do something about it . . . has asked the government to do something about it. We've asked you to outline a long-term strategy and guarantee long-term funding when we asked the government to outline what health care services the government is obligated to provide, the funding to provide these services and in a timely manner.

Instead of addressing this concern, the NDP keep saying that Saskatchewan's system is the best in the country and they will take care of it. Well maybe the NDP should look at their own polling to see how Saskatchewan people feel about health care services in this province.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 227 would alleviate these problems, implementing a health care charter of rights and responsibilities. This legislation could go a long way in addressing the concerns of Saskatchewan families and the future of health care. It says, after public consultation, advice from medical professionals, municipal officials, guidelines must be set. These guidelines include such rights as:

- (a) access to 24 hour emergency services within a specified distance;
- (b) access to a specified . . . number of acute care beds based on community population;
- (c) access to a specified minimum number of long-term care beds based on community population and number of seniors;
- (d) access to necessary surgery within specified time frames; and
- (e) access to an impartial body to have complaints about the health care system investigated and adjudicated.

There are some basic guidelines that could . . . These are some basic guidelines that could be adjusted after the consultation process is in place and completed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, given all the benefits of this health care charter of rights and responsibilities, the NDP refuse to support our Bill. Instead of outlining for all Saskatchewan people the rights and responsibilities within our province's health care system, they would rather leave the majority of families concerned about what's in store for them and their communities. They would rather ignore the advice of their own constituents, their own polling, and their own consciences.

Mr. Speaker, if the NDP were truly concerned about the future of health care in this province, if they were truly concerned about the well-being of the people they serve, they'd be lining up to vote for this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, you notice the title of this Bill speaks of rights, but it also speaks of responsibilities. It clearly outlines who is responsible for funding health care services to Saskatchewan people and who is responsible for administering those services and what each and every citizen in this province can expect from its government. This way we would all know what responsibilities fall onto the provincial government, the Department of Health, health district boards, health care providers, and health care recipients.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, no more crisis-style management, no more 62 per cent of people worried about health care services, no more treating rural people differently than those that live in the cities, no more unfairness, and no more uncertainty.

Mr. Speaker, I'd genuinely like to see each and every member of this Assembly support this important piece of legislation. I would genuinely like to see the Saskatchewan families rest at ease about the future of health care services in this province, because they have so many other difficulties to deal with in their lives. I would genuinely like to see that Saskatchewan become the first province to provide a health care guarantee in writing to each person in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all members to support this legislation, and in doing so improve the lives of thousands of people all across this province. Thank you.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's certainly a pleasure for me to stand up and support my colleague from Kindersley in the introduction of this Bill and to make a few comments as to why I feel this Bill is so important and why we would bring it forward at this time.

As my colleague mentioned, the Leader of the Third Party, last summer the member from Kindersley and I had the privilege of going to a number of communities and meeting with interested personnel, not only from the health field, the people interested in health care, givers of health care, but certainly community folks, leadership in the local communities, and people from actually different walks of life who have some real concerns about health care and its effects on each one of them.

And certainly there are concerns about the number of health care cuts that have been taking place. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we saw was indeed disturbing. Mr. Speaker, we heard of stories of elderly people sent home with their IVs (intravenous) still intact because there just wasn't any room for them in — I was going to say there wasn't any room in the inn, we all know that story . . . but certainly this is something that a number of people in the province of Saskatchewan are beginning to feel as well.

We heard of people in critical emergency situations driving over an hour to reach acute care facilities and in some cases not making it there alive. Mr. Speaker, we have heard as well of individuals who were in an emergency situation, were in transport and in an ambulance, and then from their local centre while they were stabilized were . . . had to sit or wait in that emergency vehicle while it was determined where it would be best to send them as a result of the lack of beds that may have

been available in certainly the two larger centres of Saskatchewan.

And so you can see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are a lot of people who are quite concerned. In fact the federal election is currently going on in Canada, and while a number of politicians and parties would like to argue jobs and the economy is important, I think as we've seen with the poll the NDP did not that long ago, health care is a major issue. It's a major concern on people's minds, and it certainly is a concern on people's minds in this federal election.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, day after day we are confronted with the effects of the closure of 52 hospitals on the lives of rural people. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are many other stories were shocking and unfair, and we as legislators must put an end to this campaign of abuse that the NDP government has inflicted on rural people and indeed on all Saskatchewan residents.

Mr. Speaker, our party understands the financial constraints that have driven health reform. At least that's what the government tells us. The government tells us that we undertook health reform to try and save some money and to wrestle our provincial debt, bring it under control.

(1515)

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you take a close look at it, you would ask yourself, did we really save anything or what have we saved. Did we save anything as far as funding? No we haven't. We're actually spending more on funding in health care than we did in 1991.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at 52 rural hospitals closed, when you look at nursing positions, when you look at beds that have been taken out of the system, not even not just the beds in the hospitals that were closed but even currently functioning facilities where beds have been substantially reduced, and when you add it all up, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you would assume that there would be a bottom line that would actually be lower. That there would be some actual cost savings. And the government would argue, well it's the inflationary factor that we brought under control by doing this.

But, Mr. Speaker, I don't believe we have had a very high inflation in this province over the past number of years, and to not show any major reduction in spending one has to ask: where are all the dollars going? And you can see why people across this province — not just rural residents but people right across this province — are concerned about their health care.

Now I guess I can feel for the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Health when we talk about health care funding. And on many occasions we've heard in this Legislative Assembly that the government has argued the reason they haven't been able to really wrestle and show substantial changes and savings in dollar value is because the federal government has cut some \$200 million out of health transfers. And it's clear that any government has to act responsibly to stay within its means. We agree with that.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, while the federal government has cut, the provincial government would like to argue we've had to make changes and we've had to make choices because of their cuts. The realities are, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the provincial government certainly is not innocent of making cuts neither. And we as taxpayers in the province of Saskatchewan have had to absorb more and more every day — every day, Mr. Deputy Speaker — whether it's in health care or whether it's in education or whether it's in municipal services and municipal government.

What has happened? Back in 1991 the provincial government made a choice. They argued we need to bring the deficit under control. And their choice was, rather than really cutting spending, rather than cutting administrative levels of spending, they moved the cost to the taxpayer via transfers. They transferred by not providing the funds that were available or that were needed to provide the services. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we can see it in the three major areas that most people in rural Saskatchewan experience on an ongoing basis.

And so while the provincial government would like to argue the federal government's offloaded, the provincial government has offloaded substantially on the taxpayers of the province of Saskatchewan. And as a result, taxpayers are becoming more and more concerned about the lack of services that they are receiving despite the heavier tax load that we are bearing in the province of Saskatchewan.

However, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's more than just the financial responsibility to consider. There's also the social responsibility — the responsibility to show compassion. It is on this score that the NDP government has failed the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, their own polling shows that a majority of Saskatchewan people feel that the health care system is going to get worse rather than better over the next 10 years. And that is an interesting statistic, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

While people of Saskatchewan . . . while the Minister of Health would stand in this Assembly and tell us we've got the best health care system in the world, there are many people in this province who would beg to differ. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, all members in this Assembly I'm sure have been consulted by constituents or by concerned individuals who feel that they have been let down by the system.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, people understand that the government and the health care system have to operate within its means. They understand that the government cannot be all things to all people. None the less, health care is a central value to Saskatchewan people, and Canadians generally.

What wears on their minds, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is not so much the sacrifices that have been made so far, but the uncertainty about the future. And that is the big thing on people's minds, especially as we find a . . . as we move into an era where there will be more seniors living in the province of Saskatchewan and certainly needing access to more services.

In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when you look at the numbers . . . And I think this is a concern. This is an issue that's been raised over the past number of years about the movement of the baby boomers after the Second World War in moving up into their years of retirement. And to have uncertainty in the health care field is something that is intolerable, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

From community to community, people are asking themselves, is our hospital going to be next? Is our nursing home going to be here to care for our parents or to care for me? I've put so much money into this province. I've paid my taxes. Am I going to have access to the services that I believed that I was paying my taxes to fund and provide?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if our children break their legs playing sports, how far will they have to go to find a doctor? Half an hour? An hour? Or two hours?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the taxpayers just want to know what the bottom line is. They just want to see an end at the light . . . a light at the end of the tunnel of health care cuts. If they have to make alternate arrangements for clinics or retirement homes for their parents, they are willing to do that. But they need to know how, and they need to be able to plan for their futures, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, what our Bill does, our Bill would provide them with this assurance. The health care Bill we have brought in — this health care charter of rights and responsibilities — would set out clearly what basic medical services Saskatchewan people can count on.

Just as important, it would define incontrovertibly who was responsible for providing and paying for these services. Mr. Deputy Speaker, there would be no more shell games of shifting blame from the province to the health districts to municipalities, etc., etc.

These guidelines would not be arbitrary and they would not be done in haste. We would want to see the Department of Health, the health districts, and all affected interest groups be actively involved in a thorough examination and discussion of the regulations for this Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, health care is a feature of Saskatchewan life that we are all proud of. This Bill reaffirms our commitment to the principles of solid, sound financial health care in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we believe this is a project that I think cuts across partisan lines. I don't think it matters whether you are Tory, Liberal, Reform, NDP, or old-line CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation), or what political affiliation you may have, the importance of health care is something we all agree on regardless of politics.

With a health care bill of rights and responsibilities, we would be putting our money where our mouths are, and give Saskatchewan people a new, lasting commitment to health services that they can plan on.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would ask all members in this Assembly to support this Bill; to stand up and support Saskatchewan people and give Saskatchewan people the opportunity to have a say and a voice in the health care services, in the health care program that they feel would best serve them into the year 2000 and beyond.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'll be very brief in my remarks since I do . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes. I do believe that we already do have, in effect, a bill of rights and responsibilities respecting health care in this province. We do have a guarantee. It's called medicare. And we are reaffirming that guarantee through our reforms, the wellness plan.

I am very pleased though, quite frankly, that the small third party has brought forward this Bill because it is nice to see that they actually do care about both rights and responsibilities.

We can assume therefore that if this province is ever unfortunate enough to have them once again form government, that we won't see again the sorry spectacle that we saw in the '80s, where in a vain attempt to curry favour and gain votes, that they would be building hospitals every 20 miles. Not based on the needs of the community, but based on the needs of the MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) who wanted to get re-elected.

Now they've reformed. What are they doing? They want to have the same kind of nonsense that the Reform Party seems to be proposing right now — fee for service and two-tier health care. That's not the style of health care that the people of Saskatchewan want and need.

Now I will grant you that there is anxiety right now in this province; that some people are concerned about change and I respect their concerns. But Bills like this and rhetoric like we've heard from the two members opposite, do nothing to calm fears or to deal with anxiety. All it does is fuel the fear and create a situation where people start to be concerned about what kinds of medical services they're going to have.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the only thing that has not been done that is referred to in this Bill 227 is to establish a very specific task force. All the other things that are referred to in this Bill are already in progress.

Mr. Speaker, people in Saskatchewan do have access to 24-hour emergency services within a specified distance. People do have access to a specified number of acute care beds. It is not based on community population though, Mr. Speaker; it is based on community needs. And those community needs are determined by locally elected and appointed boards.

People in Saskatchewan do have access to a specified number of long-term care beds. They have access to necessary surgery. And the doctors prioritize that. And they have access to an impartial body to have complaints about health care systems investigated and adjudicated. We have 30 care coordinators in

this province, and we have elected representatives on the health care boards.

As well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have MLAs who are more than capable of hearing people's concerns, complaints, and suggestions for change.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will admit that there have been some problems as we have been reforming the health care system. Those problems though, Mr. Speaker, have not been as a result of this government not having a broad plan and not knowing where the light at the end of the tunnel might be. The problems, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have come as a result of the federal government as a johnny-come-lately finally discovering that perhaps the debt and deficit are a problem in this country. It comes as a result of them not having proper priorities, of not deciding that people's health care, people's education, and people's welfare are top priorities in this country.

So consequently, Mr. Speaker, we had the unfortunate cycle . . . or the unfortunate sight of the federal Finance minister, hopefully soon to be former federal Finance minister, deciding to fight the deficit on the backs of the sick in Canada.

So what did they do? They chopped out transfer payments to this province. And what did our government do in response? We decided to back-fill the problems that they had created. Because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government, this NDP government, cares very much and puts as a top priority, a sound, solid, responsive, and sensitive health care system.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would suggest that the Act to establish Health Care Rights and Responsibilities in the Province of Saskatchewan is a redundant Act. It is not needed and I would certainly recommend that all colleagues in this House not support this Bill. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — Is the member wishing to close debate?

Mr. Boyd: — Yes.

The Deputy Speaker: — I must warn the Assembly that the mover of the motion is wishing to reserve his right to close debate, and if anyone is wishing to speak on it to do so now.

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was very interested to hear the member's comments with respect to health care and the delivery of health care services in Saskatchewan, concluding that, and saying in her address, that people already have access to all of the things that this Bill outlines in a bill of rights and responsibilities for the people of Saskatchewan.

And I would certainly have to take issue and I think people all across Saskatchewan would take issue with the fact that they do not have access to 24-hour emergency services within a specified distance.

If you look at rural Saskatchewan, Madam Member, you'll find that there are many communities that at one point in time had health care services that no longer have those health care services within their community. They don't have access to the number of acute care beds based on community population any longer. They no longer have access to a specified minimum number of long-term care beds based on community population or the number of seniors within their community. They do not have access to surgery within a specified time frame either.

These are the kinds of things that are outlined in this Bill. These are the kind of things that I think the people of Saskatchewan are looking for. And these are the kind of things that even though the member says we have access to all of that, the only concern essentially that she has with this Bill is that there isn't an impartial body to have complaints about the health care system investigated and adjudicated.

Well I would hope that if we . . . if those are her only concerns, that there isn't what we would call something like a health care ombudsperson, that would be her only concern, then it shouldn't be any problem whatsoever for that member and all members of the government to support this piece of legislation, I wouldn't think.

We would hope that they would do so to provide the people of Saskatchewan with the kind of quality of health care services and the delivery of those health care services that are so critically important.

And that, Mr. Speaker, is the reason why we have presented this legislation. That's why we believe it's important to the people and the families of Saskatchewan. And that's why I urge all members to accept this legislation and pass it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The division bells rang from 3:32 p.m. until 3:33 p.m.

Motion negatived on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 12

Krawetz	McPherson	McLane
Gantfoer	Draude	Bjornerud
Hillson	Julé	Aldridge
Boyd	D'Autremont	Toth

Nays — 20

Mitchell	Tchorzewski	Johnson
Whitmore	Kowalsky	Crofford
Koenker	Bradley	Lorje
Renaud	Stanger	Hamilton
Murray	Wall	Kasperski
Ward	Jess	Langford
Murrell	Thomson	

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 67

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Upshall that **Bill No. 67 — The Agri-Food Amendment Act, 1997** be now read a second time.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'd like to begin this debate on a Bill to give this government the power to abolish marketing boards in this province by having a look at marketing systems.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, people in Saskatchewan, especially producers, are well aware that a few short months ago this government was using thousands of taxpayers' dollars to fight a proposal to allow open marketing of feed barley. They said it was outrageous. They said it was heresy. In fact a former minister of Agriculture said some things I am prevented from repeating in this Assembly.

So we fought against opening up the Wheat Board even to a minimal degree; and in fact Liberals were taken to task for saying that, well let's let the producers decide, let's have a vote. Liberals weren't saying that we should do away with the Wheat Board. They were simply saying, well let the producers decide what they want to do with barley. And to the NDP that was going much too far. And they were outraged and they used taxpayers' dollars against that plebiscite and they used some pretty crude, foul language on farmers who supported the vote.

Well so where are we now? Well the member from Watrous, he said on April 4, 1996, farmers are better off financially under the Canadian Wheat Board. We need single-desk marketing. And yet now this same member from Watrous is standing in this House asking for the right to abolish every single provincial marketing board without a vote of producers — just a stroke of the pen and gone.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, is this hypocrisy or isn't it? This is the same member who found it offensive that producers would have a vote. He doesn't think that letting producers decide their own future is appropriate on an issue as sacred as single-desk marketing.

Well some of my colleagues here have been saying that the members opposite have been inconsistent. You know, they fought for the Canadian Wheat Board; now they're fighting against provincial marketing boards. They're saying this is inconsistent.

Well at the risk of sounding as if I'm disagreeing with my hon. colleagues, may I say that I see something very consistent in the NDP's stand, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In both cases, they were opposed to a producer vote. In both cases, they didn't think the farmers should be listened to. They didn't think that producers should have an input into their own future. And in that sense, they have been very consistent.

They were angry with the federal Liberal government for saying we will allow producers to decide their fate and the fate

of the Canadian Wheat Board. They were opposed to that. And now they stand in this House to say they are opposed to a producer vote on the future of the provincial marketing boards — nine marketing boards under provincial jurisdiction. Should they have a vote? Should producers have a vote as to whether or not these marketing boards are still the way to preserve and protect their future? Of course not. The NDP doesn't believe in that.

In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the former minister of Agriculture, in talking about the debate last year over the Canadian Wheat Board, he ran across some farmers who were in favour of taking away the Wheat Board's monopoly. He found this outrageous — say he resorted to obscenities — but he found it so outrageous that farmers would say they don't believe in the monopoly of the Wheat Board that he said this: when it comes to freedom of speech — in opposition of single-desk marketing — quote: "I think there have to be limits." So if a farmer dares to express doubts about single-desk marketing, that is an example where we cannot tolerate freedom of speech.

So here we have an NDP that not only stood up for single-desk marketing, but opposed a vote, and actually opposed the exercise of freedom of speech. Freedom of speech was going too far when you had people with the gall to stand up and say they didn't think there had to be a monopoly. How outrageous. Those people should be in a concentration camp. Well . . .

An Hon. Member: — What are you saying?

Mr. Hillson: — Please listen, you might learn something. So these same people who spent taxpayers' money — taxpayers' money — to say that we would not have a free vote by producers on whether or not to preserve the Wheat Board monopoly over barley now are asking this House — this House — to abolish nine marketing boards, nine marketing boards, with no vote at all. The stroke of a pen.

Yes, that's what's in this legislation. And if the hon. member from Saskatoon whatever doesn't know this is in the legislation, I encourage her to read it, because that's in the legislation.

Well we the . . . Well I don't know what was so offensive about saying . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. Why is the member on her feet?

Ms. Lorje: — Personal privilege, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — What is your point of privilege?

Ms. Lorje: — I was listening to the member, and I heard him say that members opposite — referring to the government members in this House — should be in a concentration camp. I'm sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I found that extremely insulting, extremely negative, and absolutely unnecessary. And I would ask the member opposite to withdraw the remark and to apologize for all the victims of the Holocaust who actually were in concentration camps. I think that what he has said is reprehensible and I would ask that he withdraw it.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I don't think the hon. member was listening to me. I did not say that learned members opposite should be in a concentration camp. I was quoting from the former minister of Justice who said that he did not believe in freedom of speech. There have to be limits to freedom of speech for people who . . . for people who come out against the Wheat Board monopoly. This was the quote I read.

Now I did go on from that to say that these people who have stood up and argued against freedom of speech, their position appears to be that anyone who argues against single-desk marketing should be in a concentration camp. Now I freely concede the minister did not go that far, he only said there have to be limits to freedom of speech; we can't allow freedom of speech to include the right to argue against a monopoly of marketing boards — the same minister who is now wanting the power to abolish all marketing boards. And I'm certainly prepared to retract that part of my remark.

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. There seems to be a little confusion of what the member originally said, and because of that confusion, I will check the verbatim and bring a ruling back to the House at the earliest convenience.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the boards the government is now seeking the right to abolish without a vote is of course SPI. Now SPI is the son or daughter of Saskatchewan Hog Marketing Commission. And who formed SPI, who formed the Saskatchewan Hog Marketing Commission? Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one Jack Messer. One Jack Messer, to whom members opposite owe so much, who has done so much for public policy in this province.

So this is another one of the nine boards this government wants the right to abolish without a vote of producers. And I think it is incumbent on members opposite to tell us: why did you find it so offensive earlier this year, so offensive that the federal government allowed a vote on barley under the Canadian Wheat Board on whether or not there'd be a continued monopoly?

You found it so offensive that you spent taxpayers' dollars on the vote. You found it so offensive that a former minister was using obscenities on a farmer who came out against the Wheat Board monopoly. You found it so offensive that that same minister said there have to be limits on free speech. And yet now you ask members opposite to give this minister the power to abolish every single provincial marketing board with no vote of producers whatsoever.

Well last week the Premier stood in his place and encouraged members opposite to get some public reaction, some producer reaction. Well we've done that. I know my colleague will say the letters we've sent to farmers . . . we've been on the media; we have been asking producers to contact us as to whether or not they want these marketing boards to go or whether they think that marketing boards are still a way to protect them. And we've asked them whether they think a vote is important or whether the minister can just make this decision for them.

Well of course this only just went out. We haven't had a chance

to get the reaction back so we don't know what producers are going to say. But as with Ralph Goodale, we think it is important to hear from producers. This is first and foremost their livelihood. So we want to get the reaction of producers on whether or not marketing boards continue to be a beneficial way for them to market their products.

And I think I can speak for all of my colleagues when I say, if producers no longer feel that marketing boards are the way to go, we can certainly live with that, as Ralph Goodale can live with that. But if producers still believe in the integrity of marketing boards, I think we need to consider that too, without giving the minister authority to unilaterally abolish every marketing board with the stroke of a pen, without consultation with the producers.

Well I am sorry that the hon. member opposite found it offensive for me to bring up the fact that the former minister of Agriculture would use obscenities in addressing a farmer, would question whether or not we should have free speech on this issue. But I'm sorry, those are the words of members opposite, and in view of those words, I ask again: how can you justify your position on the Wheat Board vote with the legislation you have now placed before this Assembly this afternoon?

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak in this debate here this afternoon.

The debate on this Bill thus far has been a rather short but certainly a stormy one. In the House we've already seen a rare occurrence in that the Premier got up and spoke on a Bill. Now you have to wonder why the Premier would take the time to get up and comment on a Bill when the minister responsible claims it's merely a housekeeping one.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm of the opinion that the Premier doesn't normally spend his time addressing issues unless they are of the utmost importance. And this Bill is important to the government not because of the final result that they believe it might help them achieve, but because it exposes their inconsistent stand on the democratic rights of farmers.

For years this government has consistently argued it is the defender of the little guy. It also tries to claim that it's the defender of due process in the democratic system. When we look at this Bill, we see otherwise. The government realizes this and it hopes to just pass this Bill off as a housekeeping one. According to the members opposite, this is just about amending the law so it reads as it once did.

The other argument we've seen the government use here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is to say that this Bill is about the end justifying the means. The government argues that this Bill is about expanding the hog industry, not about giving the NDP the arbitrary right to abolish marketing boards.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, those are the two basic arguments or reasons which the members opposite use to justify the passage

of this Bill. But I have problems with both of them, and in fact I think both are poor reasons for passing a Bill. In my remarks this afternoon I intend to show how I believe the members opposite are abandoning important principles and making this Bill out to be something that it isn't.

Before I begin, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I must say a few words about the remarks I heard the Minister of Agriculture make on the noon agricultural newscast last week. I don't have the exact text of the remarks available at this moment, but it wasn't so much what was said but how it was said.

(1545)

Last week on the BBS (Baton Broadcasting System) noon agriculture report, the Minister of Agriculture was remarking on the comments made by Jim Morris, manager of SPI. The minister disagreed with Mr. Morris's assessment that this legislation was causing a great deal of uncertainty, uncertainty which in turn was forcing SPI to lay off people at the Moose Jaw packers plant.

Obviously the minister disagreed with Mr. Morris and, well that's his prerogative. The tone of voice, however, would leave the viewer to think very poorly of the minister. Without saying it directly, the minister used his tone of voice to virtually attack the character and integrity of Mr. Morris.

Most people watching this would probably wonder whether this is how the minister handles every member of the public who disagrees with him. Is this the extent of the minister's listening skills? Is this how the minister addresses members of the industry he's supposed to defend and represent? In any event, the minister should reconsider his actions and avoid attacking the character of members of the public.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Premier and the Minister of Agriculture suggest this Bill is simply housekeeping. It's simply a matter of restoring to The Agri-Food Act, provisions which were overlooked. According to the minister, the Bill just restores the government's power to revoke a marketing board without first holding a vote of the producers to decide on the matter.

Essentially the minister argues that this has been the case all along, and when the law was changed by the previous government they had inadvertently changed it to remove that right. The argument made by the minister is more of an argument of convenience than anything, Mr. Deputy Speaker. He says this was just an oversight, but in doing so he neglects to mention that this government reviewed and amended The Agri-Food Act in 1992.

At that time this government obviously directed its legislative draftsmen to review this piece of legislation to locate mistakes. I'm sure that these are competent people. If they thought that maintaining the democratic right of farmers to choose whether or not to wipe out their marketing boards was just an oversight, I think they would have told the minister so at the time, and the Act would have been amended at that time.

No, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the arguments used by the Premier and the minister clearly don't wash. They freely chose back in 1992 to maintain the law as it stood. They chose to maintain the democratic right of producers to ultimately decide the issue of marketing boards, just as they are choosing opposite today on this matter of principle.

For the minister to downplay the serious issue of the democratic right of producers to decide their future is a gross injustice to an important issue. While it's clear that this government took a look at this issue back when it amended this Act five years ago, its argument that this is just turning this back to the way they used to be, is also riddled with another serious error.

I ask the members opposite to consider applying the same principle to other issues. When it comes to farmers' democratic rights they have no problem turning things back to the way they used to be. But what about other issues like, say, social policies? Throughout the years we've made all sorts of progress on social policies. We now have a social safety net, which we didn't have before.

Take Unemployment Insurance, or Employment Insurance as it's now called. Would the members opposite suggest that we just go back to the way it used to be where Canadians in the 1930s had few, if any, protections from the devastating effects of losing a job? I don't think the members opposite would go for that.

So I say to them, even if previous legislation, amended by the Devine government, allowed for the dissolution of marketing boards without a vote, does that make it right? Just because something was a certain way, does it mean we have to keep going that way?

If this is the minister's philosophy, to go back, just because that is the way it was, does he want that applied to the agriculture industry? I don't think so. I think he would agree that going back simply because that's the way it was, is a rather absurd argument.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, unless the minister can come up with a more rational, a more logical, sound reason to justify what he's doing to the democratic rights of farmers, he should reconsider pushing this Bill through.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Premier and the Minister of Agriculture also imply that the principle of this Bill is to expand the pork industry in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, the principle of a Bill or a piece of legislation is not about the end result, it's always about the means. And the members opposite are more aware of this.

Legislation, as always, does not provide an end in itself and it never has and never will provide an end itself. Legislation is there to provide a means of reaching an end. Governments show their true colours by how they try to reach these ends.

This government, like most people in Saskatchewan, wants to see an expanded hog industry and all the jobs which come from it. They've chosen to reach that goal, in part, through this

legislation. Mr. Deputy Speaker, given that legislation only helps government and the people to reach their goals, this Bill is therefore only a means to an end. Mr. Speaker, the end never justifies the means. Sure, everyone in Saskatchewan wants economic growth, but we also value other things, like our democratic rights and freedoms and the importance of consultation.

We all know the government will ultimately use its majority to get its way on this Bill, but I raise this question: do you think it's right to wipe out the democratic rights of farmers to decide whether they want to eliminate or amend their marketing boards? Do you think it's right to do that just to achieve an end? Surely it isn't right.

When people disagree on how to accomplish a goal it's easy just to use legislation to decide the matter. But it takes a great deal more courage to let those involved use the political and negotiation process to resolve the matter themselves. While a solution might be more difficult to obtain, its future will be more solid and everyone in society will benefit from finding a compromise.

The principle of the Bill before us today is the democratic right of farmers to ultimately decide the issue of marketing boards through a democratic vote. It's not about housekeeping. It's not about an end. It's about the means which the government intends to use to reach that end.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I find it sadly ironic that this same government which now wants to use undemocratic means to reach an end is the same government which wants to paint itself as a defender of farmers' democratic rights.

I note that a senior political employee of this government and the federal NDP candidate for Palliser suggests that he supports defending the Canadian Wheat Board. This government suggested it defends the right of farmers to choose on that issue, but in this legislation the NDP government is willing to use any and all means available to undermine the democratic rights of farmers to decide the future of their marketing boards.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the government has a poor reputation with farmers. And by having this double standard they're doing nothing to correct it.

Before I conclude my remarks, I'd like to remind the members opposite and the minister that I've written to my constituents regarding this issue. In the next couple of days they will be receiving a letter from myself outlining this issue, and reiterating a promise made by the Premier. In debating this Bill in the House the Premier stated, and again I quote:

You want time to consult with your constituencies? We'll give you the time to consult . . . but make sure you consult with them in fact and in substance and in all honesty.

(1600)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe this was good advice. So I wrote my constituents on the issue but many of them are busy seeding

and they've yet to receive the correspondence. So the question remains as to whether the Premier's words were just another hollow promise like that of eliminating the Saskatchewan flat tax. If you really want to hear from my constituents you'll do as the Premier promised and wait for them to respond. This is your government's promise and like anything else, we're here to encourage you to keep that promise. But you are ultimately responsible for keeping it.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'll take my place and leave the responsibility of keeping this promise with the people who made it. If this is more than a hollow promise, you'll wait on this Bill. If you ram this Bill through instead of adjourning it, then we'll all know just how much a promise from this government is really worth — nothing. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: — Is the minister about to close debate? The minister is wishing to exercise his right to close the debate and I must warn members of the Assembly if anyone wishing to speak on this motion must do so now.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I won't take long, although I could take a long time, but we will have a chance in committee to expand on some of the things that I would like to say. But I want to take a few minutes just to set the record straight on a few things.

And I know the members opposite have the right to stand in their place and go on about what this Bill may or may not do, but I want to just correct a few things because obviously they haven't done their homework, okay. So while they have the right to do that, I would also wish that they would speak the facts about this Bill. And the member from North Battleford, the two-year member from North Battleford, was saying that the government, the minister, has the right to . . . is going to nullify the vote.

Well if he were to look at the Bill and see what the Bill does, the right to a vote of producers is still in the Act; it does nothing to take that away. Nothing to take it . . . doesn't take anything. The Agri-Food Council, through The Agri-Food Act, if requested by a marketing board, can still conduct a vote. At the end of the day, if the province were to decide that we would be put at a disadvantage if the wishes of those producers were carried through, then we would have the right to overrule that.

And not the minister; this is simply enabling. This is simply enabling. It has to go through Executive Council, it has to go through Executive Council . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . well now there again the member should listen, because obviously his leader on the government payroll hasn't done his research for him. And he hasn't or is not willing to do the research either. A vote still can be taken.

But what it does, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is to allow Executive Council, not just the minister — it has to go through all the hoops — to make a decision. And I would when it comes to . . . when this comes to Committee of the Whole I will be asking the member if he doesn't think the province has the right to control the economy of its people. And certain situations you

have to.

I will also be asking him, Mr. Speaker, if the Liberal provinces who have similar legislation, if he's asking them to revoke their legislation. I mean this makes no sense, what he's saying over there.

So the other thing I want to talk about, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the Liberal news release that was put out a few days . . . last week actually, the middle of last week — in where they quoted Mr. Jim Morris of saying the reason that the Moose Jaw packing plant was going to be . . . the lay-off notices were put forward was because of this Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is absolutely false — absolutely false. I have a letter here from Mr. John Germs, the chair of SPI Marketing, which states, and I quote:

The Board of Directors of SPI Marketing Group has decided to downsize the Moose Jaw Packer plant for two reasons:

1. The hog shortage problem in Saskatchewan; (There's a hog shortage problem in Saskatchewan, and indeed across Canada; not the only province suffering from that. And secondly)

. . . The Directors are not prepared to subsidize it's Provisions Accounts through the weekly pool (meaning they're losing money).

And the fact of the matter is if the members opposite would have done the research before they jumped to a conclusion put forward by Mr. Morris — a false accusation — they would know that the decision to give the lay-off notices in Moose Jaw are done annually. And the extra provision for lay-off was made before The Agri-Food Act was introduced. So how could it have anything to do with it?

The other thing that . . . the other accusation that was made is that this Act somehow is going to stymie the hog industry. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, since 1990 — from 1990 to 1996 — there were 1,112 hog producers left the industry. All of them . . . not all, all but 12 of them, were under 100 sow producers. That's nothing to do with the government. That's since 1990. That's the trend in the industry — two governments. There were 33 new hog initiatives, all over 200 sow units, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So for anyone to relate The Agri-Food Act to the production of hogs simply has not done their homework. And the other thing, Mr. Speaker, I want to say, the last thing I want to say, and because this provokes a much longer debate; but the last thing I want to say is this province and western Canada's positioned very well to take advantage of the great demand in the world hog . . . world pork meat consumption, pig meat consumption.

Everybody — nearly everybody — in this province is agreeing and excited about the things we have to do to make sure we get there except the Liberal caucus. I mean even the Tories understand it. They understand that you have to pull together.

And I'm going to just read you just a small quote here to end this. It's from the *Urban Voice*. The *Urban Voice* is the monthly newsletter of the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association. And the headline is "Local hog initiative has LeRoy squealing!" And this is from the town of Leroy. And it says "The Town of LeRoy has . . ." I'm quoting now:

The Town of LeRoy has boldly stepped into the industry we feel confident will provide the missing equation to maintaining a rural community — more people!

Three years ago, our rental properties had a high vacancy rate, businesses in general were strained to survive. Today, the community is busy handling construction crews and new residents. More importantly, a new positive attitude has developed, inspired by economic activity.

You know what that economic activity is, Mr. Deputy Speaker? It's the building of their third new hog barn. They've gone into training initiatives for pork. They've gone into manure management with PAMI (Prairie Agricultural Machinery Institute).

And I want to just put another quote here:

After three years and two \$6 million projects, our community is feeling a new sense of optimism. Projections for school enrollment look good; a housing market has developed, bringing value back to existing homes; business has picked up; and best of all, the recreational facilities are holding their own without (having to be subsidized. Well,) excessive subsidy.

This is what's happening. All I want to do is ask the members to do a couple of things.

First of all, get your facts right. Don't be going around scaremongering, trying to destroy this industry. I could never figure that out. Figure out who's telling the truth and who isn't telling the truth.

And I think the Chair of the board, his letter is about where you go. There's another old saying: when you talk to the horse, you talk to the head — and the head of SPI is the Chair of the board.

So just ask members to do that. Get on board. Get on board, because I'll tell you, the only people that you're hurting is all of Saskatchewan. This initiative's going to put people back into rural Saskatchewan, as proven by the town of Leroy. It's going to put economic development back in. Why in the world do you want to stop that?

And as far as . . . the last point I'll make, the very last point I'll make, when the member from North Battleford or wherever compares this to the Wheat Board, again this is simplistic, simplistic. And you can't . . . you have to do the analysis. And I'm sure that his leader's not capable of doing that analysis, but there are people who can do it for you. Do the analysis.

And you know the board does give us advantages. In Saskatchewan we have to analyse all our projects, all our

institutions, and decide what has to happen. Basic three things — status quo, totally change, or modified to meet modern trade rules. That's all we're asking. Let's figure out what we have to do to make sure our province is going to lead in Canada in this production and adding to our economy of the province.

So I just ask members to please get their head out of the sand. I know there's time to do politics, there's time not to. Now is the time to stand up in your place and get onside with the development of this industry. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole at the next sitting.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Agriculture and Food Vote 1

The Deputy Chair: — I invite the minister to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. On my left, Dale Sigurdson, assistant deputy minister. On my right, Terry Scott, assistant deputy minister. Behind me, Jack Zepp, director of — don't have — director of administrative services branch. Behind me, Ross Johnson, budget officer, administrative services. And at the back, Donn Farrer, manager, agricultural operations. And Jacquie Gibney, acting director of pork central.

The Deputy Chair: — Thank you, Minister. Members, this department was before the committee on April 14 and May 5 and then again today.

Item 1

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well I couldn't let you get away with it that quickly, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I'd like to welcome you and your officials here today.

Mr. Minister, I know I've discussed this with you before, but I wonder if you can clarify for me again what the position of the department is on lease lands — that the person leasing them, particularly pasture lands, and that person no longer has animals. What's the procedure if that person is still leasing the land?

(1615)

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Mr. Chairman, to the member, I just wanted to make sure that I knew the procedure here. If the land is being leased to a lessee, then . . . they don't have cattle on the land and it's pasture land, of course when we discover that, that somebody reports that he doesn't have or we find out there's no cattle on there, then there is a period of time that I believe he is allowed, or the person is allowed, to put cattle on there to graze. But eventually if cattle are not placed . . . if they're not being

... a piece of land is not being grazed or utilized, then it will be taken away from that producer and re-tendered.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. I've had complaints come to me that some individuals under these circumstances are running animals for someone else on that leased land and those animals do not belong to them. What happens in those cases?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — While we think that's happened in the past and maybe still happens once in awhile, there's no provision for subleasing. So if you have land rented, leased in your name, they technically should be your cattle. Unfortunately if they're not branded and you're brand registered, it's very difficult to tell who's cattle they really are. Some farmers will just say yes, they're my cattle.

Now, but if you know ... I've had a situation in my own area that I know that the same thing happened. And if you have cases where people suspect that this is happening, then we ask you to bring it to the department. Because while we do have rules it's very hard to determine sometimes whose cattle they really are.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. This particular case that's been reported to me is supposedly the cattle are branded but the brand belongs to another person. And I'll give you the land location and I can give you the name in private if you want, but I'll give you the land location. It's the west half of 29-5 of 2 west of the second, the land in question that has been reported to me. So if you can check into that and perhaps the thing that needs to be done — and I don't know if you can do this or not — but check and see any cattle sales in that person's name and whether or not they're showing up on his income tax to determine whether or not he actually owns those cattle or if they're simply being subleased to somebody else.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — We will definitely look into it because we discourage things like this because it is public land and we're in charge of that land and we have rules by which producers have to abide by, and in fairness to all the producers we'll enforce those to the best of our ability.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you, Mr. Minister. One of the things that's happened over this past winter and that has come before this House on a number of occasions — indeed the first debate we had in this House after we came back into session dealt with this particular issue — and that's the delays in the grain handling.

Now, Mr. Minister, it's been suggested — and we favour it — that those who are responsible for any delays in the grain transportation system should be held responsible for those delays and that they should pay the costs associated with that. Farmers are paying the demurrage today on the ships that are sitting off the west coast. That has been going on for a good period of time. Certainly now we're down to less than 10 ships waiting, but at one point in time we were over 40 ships. I believe that farmers are on the hook for over \$65 million.

That cost should be spread out amongst all those that are responsible. If farmers didn't deliver the grain on time, then they should be responsible. If the elevator companies didn't move it through their system on time, it should be their responsibility. If the rail didn't allocate the cars properly, didn't move the grain to the west coast and to port, it should be them. And it should be the Wheat Board's responsibility if they put the wrong grain in terminals at port.

So, Mr. Minister, do you agree with all of those areas facing their own responsibilities and paying the cost rather than simply the farmer bearing the cost for everyone else's unfortunate deficiencies?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Yes I do. It appears to be \$30 million demurrage. Lost sales could be — depending what the price does — could be 100, 200 million. There's no ... I mean it's an unknown figure right now. But I do agree. The people who're responsible should be charged with paying for the costs of their delays.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you, Mr. Minister. Would you agree that that also applies to any labour unions that may have held up the system, or to the Canadian Wheat Board? Now if the Canadian Wheat Board is to be held responsible, that again comes out of the farmers' pockets. So some other method has to be found to hold the Canadian Wheat Board accountable for their actions. And perhaps if there was some sort of lien put against the managers, the executives, the CEO of the Canadian Wheat Board, on their salaries and to hold them personally accountable, would go some ways in making them more accountable and more efficient to the farmers.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Well the Canadian Wheat Board is an arm of the federal government. So yes, I'm not sure how it would work if you went to a personal guarantee. You may have some problems attracting commissioners to the board, because there are times I'm sure when they call grain to port and for various reasons they need different grain by the time the ship gets there, or whatever the reason.

And as far as labour unions are concerned, I agree they have to have some responsibility. That, like anything else, we'd have to sit down and discuss, because I don't believe that that responsibility though should take away from their collective bargaining rights and the right to strike. But yes, we can have these discussions.

And I'm really disappointed that Mr. Goodale and the Liberal government has left it this long. I thought always that at times when elections were coming that you could ... as a lobby group, that we are now, that we could rely on some pressure being applied. But we're applying the pressure, but unfortunately Mr. Goodale and the Liberal government isn't listening.

And the other thing I'd ask you to do is, we've intervened in the Wheat Board application to the CTA (Canadian Transportation Agency), whether we believe the railroads are the major contributing factor to the 30 million demurrage. We would ask you to support that action.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Mr. Minister, we're supportive of shared responsibility in this; that each area accept their share of the responsibility. And that includes all players — farmers, rail, Canadian Wheat Board, and the unions involved, and including the grain companies. Because the inefficiencies that they may have in their system can also cause problems. So all areas should bear the responsibility rather than just simply the farmer, who bears it all today.

Mr. Minister, one of the changes you have made this past session has been the tax relief to hog operations. I have a news article here that talks about the deductible of the PST (provincial sales tax), \$500 deductible, and the rest being written off or being forgiven for major hog operations and other livestock operations, providing they exceed the \$500 PST limit.

Mr. Minister, this article though suggests . . . by a Mr. Terry Boehm of the NFU (National Farmers Union), that any benefits to the hog industry is . . . well I'll quote: "There's a lot of hype right now and it's sort of unsubstantiated."

Now on the other side we have Mr. Richard Wright, who is the general manager of Quadra Management at Outlook, who would indicate that there is some benefits. And I'll quote Mr. Wright: "They are making a small premium by selling it at a barn, but there seems to be no question of that, that there is going to be a benefit to the barley producers."

So is there going to be a benefit to Saskatchewan producers in general by these larger hog operations, by the benefits being accrued by the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool generally? Because that is the major component going in on these larger hog operations, not to say that others might not also, but right now it's the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. Is there going to be a benefit to Saskatchewan producers?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Absolutely. The benefit will . . . To producers, you said. And I'll just maybe expand that. To the grain producer, as far as the price is concerned, there won't be a great increase in the price because of the production. But what it does, it provides you with a very good market and another option in your rotation of your farm crops.

But the producers and the communities will certainly benefit from the tax incentives. The communities will benefit. As I just said a few minutes ago in this House, the town of Leroy is very excited. They've got a number of hog operations going up. They've got three now, I think two or three more slated, and their activity in their town has increased.

Now Mr. Boehm said, unsubstantiated by . . . I happen to know Mr. Boehm. He doesn't live too far from me and we have some good discussions. I think that if we were to have a discussion about the potential, and I've said many times in and out of this House, potential, then we would all agree that we have to take advantage of the rate . . . the increased consumption.

And the fact that two major countries are out of the pictures for awhile as far as production is concerned, so definitely advantage. Not just to grain producers, who have probably the smallest an advantage unfortunately, but it will flow to market

— hog producers, communities, and the general economy. And I just might add, the people who are dropping off of the industry are the, basically under a hundred sow units; people who are coming in are the 2-, 300-plus units.

That's nothing to do with anything; it's that way right across the country. Nothing to do with anything but the economies of production.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Well I certainly hope that these hog operations are a benefit both to the people who invest in them and in the producers who will sell supplies to them.

But if this tax relief is of benefit in job creation in the hog industry, would it also not be of benefit across the board to all agriculture, to all Saskatchewan people, if those types of tax relief were given to industry to come in and set up new operations in the province of Saskatchewan?

I would certainly encourage you and your government to move in that direction rather than simply pinpointing it on one particular area, the hog operations, and to a smaller extent to livestock outside of that.

And the only reason that is happening today is because the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool wanted to move into that area and certainly must have lobbied successfully your government to make those changes, to give them some tax relief from the PST to go ahead with those operations.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Well as a matter of fact it does apply to quite a broad base. As you will know, the new exemption is for intensive livestock operations, potato storage, fruit storage, greenhouses, and vegetable storage.

But as far as industry's concerned, a couple of years ago we removed the tax from any flow-through products. Like if it's steel coming in to build an air seeder, the tax was removed from that. We have no . . . we have removed the E&H (education and health) from machinery. For example, if you're starting up an industry, there's no tax on the machinery you install for production. In fact this year, this last budget, we removed the tax on used machinery.

I know the Weyburn cable company had some used machinery and we made it retroactive to them. I think IPSCO had some used machinery they put in. So we are expanding the base.

This is why Saskatchewan, next to Alberta, who has no E&H tax, is the lowest taxed province in Canada. Even though Manitoba has a 7 per cent tax, the same as we do, our base is quite a lot narrower — the articles we tax compared to Manitoba. So as far as the province goes, we are the lowest E&H tax in Canada.

Item 1 agreed to.

Items 2 to 11 inclusive agreed to.

Vote 1 agreed to.

Supplementary Estimates 1996-97
General Revenue Fund
Budgetary Expense
Agriculture and Food
Vote 1

Item 1 agreed to.

Vote 1 agreed to.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. I'd like to thank the minister and his officials for coming in today and for answering our questions.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — I too would like to thank the officials for helping me provide the answers to the questions for the opposition members.

(1630)

General Revenue Fund
Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat
Vote 25

The Deputy Chair: — I invite the minister to introduce her officials.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I have with me today, Ernie Lawton, the acting secretary of Indian and Metis Affairs; Donavon Young, assistant secretary, Metis Affairs; John Reid, executive director, policy and planning; and we also appreciate that we've been joined by Ray McKay, deputy minister of Northern Affairs, and Brian Cousins, director of communications for Department of Northern Affairs, because apparently there was some questions that there wasn't an opportunity to ask during the Northern Affairs. And seeing as those were voted off, we thought we'd make that convenient here today.

Item 1

Mr. Belanger: — Again, welcome to both ministers and their officials, and thank you for making the extra effort in addressing some of the questions we have for Northern Affairs as well as SIMAS (Saskatchewan Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat).

Just getting right into the mix of things, Madam Minister, did you indicate that to resolve the issues of racism in regards to aboriginal workers at the Casino Regina that a mutually agreed upon arbitrator/mediator would be selected?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Yes we did. Because of the range of concerns that were coming forward, it didn't fit well into any of the existing processes. And so we sat down together, met, and we jointly agreed and co-signed an agreement to have a mediator, a mutually agreed on mediator, and that it would be a mediation and arbitration process. So moving from mediation to arbitration.

The Deputy Chair: — Order. I thank the member for yielding the floor. If we are going to entertain questions of the Northern

Affairs office, that would require leave of the committee members, and as Chair, I need a motion. I just . . . what I need is to know, is leave granted to consider questions of Northern Affairs office. Is leave granted? That is agreed.

Leave granted.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, did the employees submit a list of acceptable arbitrators or mediators?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The actual selection of the mediator was handled by the board of directors in conjunction with the representatives of the employees. So my understanding is that they both agreed to this name submitted. Some of the names that were discussed earlier didn't have the background in labour issues, mediation and arbitration, that were required to do the extensive review that was needed. But all parties did agree to the person that was eventually contracted to do the work.

Mr. Belanger: — Were concerns expressed to you about the selection process and what steps did you take to resolve them in terms of the two groups?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — No concerns were expressed and no steps were taken.

Mr. Belanger: — Were there any roadblocks to reaching a mutually agreed upon arbitrator/mediator?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Certainly not in my understanding. Mr. Ish, who was chosen, has a very good reputation in this field.

Mr. Belanger: — Was there any pressure by management for the employees to agree to an arbitrator or mediator whose name the employees may not have supported or did not submit?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Again, an agreement was mutually signed. And this was an alternate process that was offered to them; it was certainly not the only process that they had at their choosing. They could have gone to the Human Rights Commission. They could have worked strictly with a lawyer. They could have gone through a union process in the workplace.

This was chosen and people signed their agreement to this process with this mediator. So I would assume that if they had not agreed they should not have signed that paper.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Madam Minister. What are you doing to address the concerns that job descriptions do not encompass skills and experiences that are not directly and narrowly connected to job experience? That by having very narrow job descriptions, you're keeping capable people out of management jobs, people who sometimes happen to be native.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — If this is a problem — and I don't recall right off that this was a problem mentioned in the mediator's report — but if this was a problem this is not a problem uncommon to any workplace which is working in an environment where they're trying to reflect more broadly the

skills that people may bring to a job that weren't perhaps received in a university or training institute, or were not perhaps received on the job.

For example, women going into the workforce may have many experiences with doing volunteer work in organizations and what not, which although requires a high level of skill is often not considered a qualification for a job.

So this is a problem that runs throughout all corporations, all government departments, and it may in fact exist at the casino but it hasn't been an issue of particular discussion. However now that they have a union in place there, that would be the vehicle to deal with that issue.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Madam Minister. And what are you doing to address the concerns that minority groups do not have fair access to management positions? What actual plans have you got to address some of those concerns?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I do believe that the mediator's report speaks to improving career pathing, training, and perhaps strengthening the recruitment efforts.

Again these are things that can be worked out with the union and management, and I think every organization could improve those practices.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Madam Minister. And a final question in reference to the actual Casino Regina. Are you planning on selling this casino? Are you talking or negotiating with any native organization or band about the sale? And if you do decide to sell, what provisions are you making to ensure current employees' jobs are protected in case of a sale?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I would ask the member if he's making an offer? I know that you are an astute businessman.

Right now there's a review going on by a business consultant who's looking at the business aspects of options to sell or not to sell, and what kind of factors should be considered in a request for proposals if in fact there was a decision made to proceed with that.

The review that they're doing isn't done. None of those decisions have been made. A list is being kept of everyone who has expressed an interest, but no discussions have taken place with any interested party beyond the receiving of their interest.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Madam Minister. And just one final question in terms of the negotiations with the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan, in terms of their revenues from the whole issue of gambling and the association entities fund. Could you give us an update as to what the Metis Nation may have received and what they're about to receive in the next year or two years? And that'll conclude my questions in terms of the gambling aspect.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — As you know, the percentage of their share of the total fund was 25 per cent of the associated entities fund. And I just wanted to make sure I had the correct budget

figures for you. In '96-97 it's 260,000, and in '97-98, it's projected to go up to 607,000 just on the straight revenue share.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Madam Minister. And at this point in time I just want to quickly make a statement in reference to Northern Affairs. And certainly having an overlap in responsibility with Indian and Metis, there'll be some interest in what I have to say and what I view as currently a major problem in northern Saskatchewan.

And I guess the fact that 80 per cent of the northern people are of Indian or Metis ancestry, it does in essence complement both yourself and the member from Cumberland's portfolio. However, for the past several decades northern people have been harping about housing problems in northern Saskatchewan. And I, like many other people of the North, have been talking and pointing out the fact that housing remains to be the number one problem in Northern Affairs . . . northern Saskatchewan.

(1645)

For many years people have been talking about an exciting, innovative, and comprehensive strategy to deal with housing. Housing, in a large part, is filled with a system of disincentives. There are major problems in terms of repairs for many senior citizens. There are many problems for working families. There is very little influence that the communities have and the leadership of the communities have in terms of housing. And I just want to elaborate on that a bit because we probably have about 15, 20 minutes of statements and one question to follow.

However, we need to have substance and long-term commitments rather than ad hoc rhetoric when it comes to sustainable housing initiatives. And northern people understand, they understand very clearly, that they do not want nor do they expect free housing.

Now, Madam Minister, and Mr. Minister, the fact is they want to make sure that the housing initiative or strategy that we develop from here on in, is a strategy that would assist them in helping them to become home-owners and people that could really build their future based on the fact that they have a decent house and a decent roof over their heads for their children.

Madam Minister, in northern Saskatchewan I know of a great many elderly people who live in homes that lack decent insulation, that lack decent doors and windows, electricity, water and sewer services, and the list goes on. And I want to say publicly that it's a shame that we allow our elderly people to live in substandard houses and run-down housing in northern Saskatchewan.

For your information, I've completed a survey of housing conditions in many northern communities — La Loche, Uranium City, Beauval, Pinehouse, Ile-à-la-Crosse, Buffalo Narrows — and I'll be sharing some of those findings with you. In fact, Madam Minister, and Mr. Minister, we have a list of elderly people here — 246 strong — of people we know and we've identified that have housing problems. And I would like,

for the Assembly's record, is to send those invitations . . . or the applications over to you so that you know exactly which people we're dealing with here.

And again the predominant theme that emerged from the results: that many houses in northern Saskatchewan are in desperate need of repair. And many of these senior citizens are living on fixed incomes. They simply — and I stress simply — cannot afford to repair their homes given their fixed income. These elderly people wish to live independently and yet they do not have the means to maintain their homes, so many times look to senior governments to assist them in that effort.

And I want to make it perfectly clear, Mr. Chairman, that when we talk about repairing these homes, we don't mean the lap of luxury. We don't mean Jacuzzis and patio doors, we're talking about simple things like proper insulation, water and sewer, and decent doors and windows.

Now I think the key thing here is that, in the final years of many of our senior citizens in northern Saskatchewan, you know the problems that they have in terms of fixed incomes and health problems and so on and so forth, the last worry that we should have as a senior government — and the last worry that they should have — is to ensure that we have a long-term, sustainable housing support package for them.

Now in northern Saskatchewan, as we realize and we know, that the housing markets do not exist in northern Saskatchewan. They simply don't. They may exist in pockets like La Ronge or perhaps Creighton or perhaps even Air Ronge, but largely the rest of the northern communities are totally ignored and totally forgotten. And since the banks don't go and deal with some of these communities, then you almost guarantee yourself that there is no dollars for buying homes from any other source except people's private pockets. And, Madam Minister, many people in northern Saskatchewan don't have 60,000 to \$70,000 to build a home, especially the elderly people.

Now what I wish to do today is to highlight that point and to share with you some of the graphic examples of why housing continues to be a number one problem. In terms of medical proof, and I share with the minister a statement of April 30, 1997. It's an article in the *Star-Phoenix*. And according to James Irvine, a medical officer with the province's Northern Health Services, and I quote:

Hepatitis A, a less virulent (form) . . . of hepatitis B and C, is endemic in the region (of which he's referring to the North) with an average of 60 cases reported each year over the last decade.

The virus which is spread through fecal-oral contact, affects the liver and causes a loss of appetite, fever, nausea, abdominal pain, and jaundice in some (areas) . . . Most victims are . . . under the age of 15. Two Saskatchewan residents have died from the virus in the last decade.

In case I may have lost some of you, this would be the good time to start listening. This medical expert stated that the North

has a high rate of hepatitis A because of poor living conditions including bad housing and poor sanitation.

So we have medical proof and we have the necessary *Star-Phoenix* report to substantiate what was being said — and I'll share that with the minister; I'll put it here for her to collect in due time. And although the doctor goes on to say that there is a vaccine for this virus, which by Irvine's own analysis does not work very well, well it seems to me, Mr. Speaker, the best cure or vaccine for this virus would be to solve the root problem and that's getting adequate and decent housing for many senior citizens and families in northern Saskatchewan.

The deplorable housing conditions in the North are making people sick — clear as day. And for the life of me I cannot understand how come the members opposite do not understand this, after all these years of northern leaders explaining to you what the problems were.

Mr. Speaker, in the early stages of health reform, before they got rid of the Saskatchewan health council, the members opposite used to preach about the determinants of health. Let me remind the members opposite of their philosophy — that a person's health is greatly affected by their physical environment.

Mr. Speaker, we need to begin to address the housing problems in northern Saskatchewan and highlight the health concerns and the elderly people's concerns for the members opposite to once again hear how these problems have continued to affect northern Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, the government cannot neglect these symptoms any longer. The poor housing conditions are making northern people very, very angry. This is one reason why the government must begin to adopt a comprehensive housing strategy in northern Saskatchewan. And I believe a truly comprehensive strategy must cover the following five points.

Number one, the provision of senior-specific dollars for renovations to privately owned homes by senior citizens and not an ad hoc approach, Madam Minister, and Mr. Minister. An approach where we have a 5-, 10-, 15-year strategy. An approach in which we can't say, well we had RRAP (residential rehabilitation assistance program) 12 years ago as a senior citizen so we can't fix your door or your window.

We need to have a senior-specific program to deal with those senior citizens that are living independently, to address their ongoing housing needs. If they choose to be independent, then by golly we should support them to become independent.

Number two is an examination of the possibility of a housing package geared for working families similar to the remote housing program, ensuring that housing prices reflect true market values.

Madam Minister, as you're probably aware, the remote housing program was a federally initiated project in which a huge portion of the mortgage over a long-term, 10-year period was forgiven if people come up with their own dollars and

maintained their own homes.

Now, Madam Minister, I would encourage you and I would also encourage your colleague, the member from Cumberland, to look at the possibility and research the idea of having all existing mortgages for working families in northern Saskatchewan fall under the same guideline as the remote housing program — the remote housing program that you're familiar with.

And perhaps you will see, when you encourage people to work and you don't discriminate against people that are working, then you will see they'll begin to take care of their homes; they'll have pride in home ownership, and eventually they'll have this home under their own names, thereby reducing the system of disincentives that the moment they go to work, all of a sudden 25 per cent of their income, whether they're making \$600 a month or 6,000 a month, no longer acts as a deterrent for people to help themselves.

The second . . . the third part of the housing fund would be to look at a continual flow of dollars for a repair program, generally for a lot of the senior citizens but specifically for all northern people that have housing problems.

And the fourth item of interest that I share with you is the devolution of more control of housing to the local level, to housing authorities. You have a very good example of how housing authorities could be empowered to make more and more decisions. And, Madam Minister, and Mr. Minister, it is hoped that you expand those authorities' power so that they can do more and more at the local level.

And as well to encourage homesteading in which people wish to live out amongst the northern forest, whether it's at the fringe of a lake or the fringe of a river. You know you should encourage more homesteading. And as well to involve the community councils a heck of a lot more in terms of lot development for affordable housing.

And, Madam Minister, I also want to share with you again a number of letters from people that we got. And I'll just list off the names of people that are concerned about some of the housing and I'll share with you some of the exact words.

Again I used this gentleman as an example before and his name is Robert Aubichon. And I quote:

Anyway I'm getting tired of being harassed, bothered by people from housing division. I've indicated to them on numerous occasions in the past few years that I'm making an effort to pay and I'm paying what I can afford. I have other debts and bills to pay besides my mortgage.

Then he goes on to add, quote:

I also want to add that there's absolutely no way that our house is worth the kind of monies that we're being required to pay.

That's from a working family, Madam Minister, and Mr.

Minister.

And here we have a list of a number of things that he sent me, and of course I'll share this information with you as time is done.

In all we have another example here of a lady from Buffalo Narrows, Helen Tinker. Her and her husband worked many years in Buffalo Narrows. They ran a café there. They employed people. They're very proud, independent people that put a lot of effort into their community and into their family. And again in their older years they're asking for some help and they aren't able to get any help.

And again I'll quote from her letter:

Dear Buckley, I am writing this letter to you in the hope that you might be able to do something and help us get some work done on our house . . . Last year we filled out forms to request help with renovations and were informed that there were no funds available for mortgaged units. I would like to know why this is?

And that's another example, Madam Minister.

And then we'll go to another example here in terms of a lady by the name of Denise Moise. And I used her as an example before but I'll use her again. Quote:

I have lived 15 years in this building and every year I am having (a) problem with water in the basement, this doesn't happen only in the spring, from spring all through summer I have flood in . . . (my) basement, Besides I have 11 children, 5 under age.

And this of course is from a lady by the name of Denise Moise.

And continuing on. Have another letter here from Alice and Marcel Lemaigre. And again it's addressed to me, March 8. And I quote:

The house is in poor condition and it's cold in my home all the time (as) we have (to have) the furnace (on) almost constantly. I've applied through Social Services for repairs and it can't be approved.

And continuing on to another letter, Madam Minister. And another letter. And it just goes on and on and on.

But I wanted to share this with you, Madam Minister, so you'd know exactly what I'm talking about, and in the hopes that something could be done to assist this process.

And I'll share with you, Madam Minister, as well some letters from Glen and Karen Bouvier of Ile-a-la-Crosse. Again these are a young couple that have been married for a number of years. They worked for themselves. They've raised their family, and again — housing problems. Why? Because they're working. They're required to pay an enormous amount of money for the house, a house that is not even worth half the amount that the government wants.

And this is exactly what I'm talking about, Madam Minister, when I talk about decent appraisals, a decent housing market, and a decent chance for working people to make it in northern Saskatchewan, and to not have housing hurt them.

All right, and finally, Madam Minister, the last five minutes of my allotted time here, I wish to share with you a letter that I wrote to the Hon. Diane Marleau, minister responsible for CMHC (Canada Housing and Mortgage Corporation). And I share that letter with you in which I ask both the federal governments and the provincial governments to get together for the sake of northern Saskatchewan communities and people and home-owners that find themselves in these very serious problems.

(1700)

This is not about politics, Madam Minister, it's not about race, and it's certainly not about northern versus southern. Madam Minister, this is about serious problems, problems that northern Saskatchewan people have for many years harped on and spoke about through thousands of meetings with thousands of bureaucrats, cabinet ministers, and politicians. And, Madam Minister, I'll send the entire file over to you so you can see firsthand exactly what I'm talking about.

So in closing, you have our letters. We presented petitions here today. You have the news report. You have all the resources at hand. The ideas and solutions have been presented. The report with names of many of the elderly people that are finding themselves in this poor housing. You have the constant reminding by northern leaders. And, Madam Minister, the province is now in better fiscal shape than it's been in the last 10 years, and you are able to do things. And now we ask for the will, the will to change things.

So the question I have for either the Minister of Northern Affairs or the minister of SIMAS — you can flip a coin who wishes to respond. But unless and until you both begin to address this problem in a comprehensive way, then the response will not be a winning response.

So the question I have is, what are you going to do to address the issues and concerns I brought forward to you in reference to northern housing?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I thank the member opposite for his comments, and the matters he raises, and for bringing the letters of his constituents to our attention. He's obviously doing a thorough job of representing his area.

However, having said that, I will say that being familiar with the North myself, I would say under no government has it received better attention than it has under our government. And under the leadership of this particular minister and the particular deputy minister in place at this time, probably moving towards the best working relationship, the best understanding, and the most improvements that have ever been made in the history of this province in the North.

And I'm very optimistic that with the kind of relationships that

have been built, and with the good understanding that exists, that the whole government decision-making apparatus is becoming more understanding of the issues of the North and more able to respond with appropriate programs.

I'll also say that you suggest that the federal government and the province get together. Well it's hard to get together when you're dancing by yourself. And we put 8 million in. What was the federal government's response? They withdrew entirely. So you can shake your head, but you can't shake off that reality in the North. Under the old system the federal government would have put 10 million in here. They've withdrawn that entire 10 million. And you know and I know that with that 10 million added to our 8 million, we could be getting more done than we can with the current 8 million.

Between '92 and '96 there was 218 units went in at a cost of 18 million. And I know you're aware of the high cost of providing these much needed housing allocations in the North.

You will know that the New North is now involved in helping to generate both solutions for what's needed in the North, and as well to help set some of the priorities. And with that new relationship, some of the innovative things you refer to have been developed and are in the process of being implemented.

You would know many of the people who sit on that housing committee — people like Fred McCallum, Ina Fietz-Ray, June MacDonald, Max Morin, Donald Favel, Irwin Henny, Morris Onyskevitch, Melvin Nataweyes. These are all people who have a good understanding of the community and who we now are working very closely with to make sure that the available dollars are used in the best possible ways, and in support of the money that those individuals and communities have, to create the best solutions we can to both the sewer and water and the housing problems.

During the past six years there's been 15.25 million for water and sewer compared to 7.8 million in the previous six years. So I guess we can still say that we can do better, but I think every sign, every step, the commitment of funds by the provincial government in the absence of commitment by the federal government, illustrates that we are on the right path here and that we can expect greater success in addressing the very legitimate concerns and the matters that you raise.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon, Madam Minister, and good afternoon to your officials.

Madam Minister, I have some questions and concerns surrounding victims of domestic violence and particularly in the North. Could you tell me what provisions and services have been made and actually are now in place to provide transition houses or some sort of service to battered women in the North?

As you well know, the incidence of domestic violence is at unacceptable levels and it certainly is a problem in the North as well as in rural areas of the province as well as throughout the province. But I would like to know if you have some information that you could provide me with. How many transition houses are in the North, north of Prince Albert, and

where they're located, and also if there is any stats you may have on the number of women that have come forward with a need for the service of a transition house.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Certainly that's been a matter that the women of the North have raised. When I lived in La Ronge was when the La Ronge services got going. There is a transition house in both La Ronge and Sandy Bay. And the members of those transition houses, who operate those transition houses, are members of the provincial association of transition houses who work together with Social Services to develop the plans for where new services should be added when they're needed.

There certainly is an issue of people who prefer to receive services in their home communities and people who prefer to go out of their home communities. So that would be part of the issue that the transition house association would struggle with, is where the appropriate place is.

But the women's organizations are strong in the North and they are members of the provincial committees who deal with these issues.

Now they deal primarily with the Department of Social Services, so any specific details would really have to be dealt with — I think those estimates are still coming up — with the Department of Social Services. I can only give you a general answer.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Madam Minister.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you. Just one question to the . . . a couple of questions to the Minister of Northern Affairs. First of all, will you support Bill No. 237, The New Organized and Rigorous Transportation, Housing, and Economic Renewal of the North, thereafter called The NORTHERN Act, once it comes up for second reading?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — For the member's information, I looked at the proposal for the Act, and a lot of the major issues are already covered in the existing Act. The only thing that I saw that was different on your Act was in relation to housing, which is already covered in the municipal services area.

And I think that when you're looking at Acts you have to look at the existing record on the Acts and move from there. So what I'm telling the member is that they're already covered on the existing Acts.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Minister; a couple more questions. Currently the provincial government charges rent equal to 25 per cent of family monthly income for rental of a government-administered housing unit.

For poorer families this is typically maybe 100, \$200 per month. However over time, if these poorer families gets good paying jobs and do not want to move out, their rent becomes totally unreasonable.

For example, 25 per cent of a \$30,000-a-year job is 750 a month. This makes it very difficult for families to save money,

to build their own homes, and provides very little incentive to work.

Given that the provincial government is administering the program in conjunction with the federal government, will the minister consider changing these mortgage units where possible, and these rental units were possible, into a program similar to that of the remote housing program?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — The minister gave you all the names of the very important members of the New North committee. That will be one of the issues that we will be reviewing this year. So we'll be dealing with that issue, and they'll be sending a recommendation to us.

Mr. Belanger: — The second part of the question, Mr. Minister; would you pay \$140,000 for a home in Buffalo Narrows? Or would you pay \$120,000 for a home in Patuanak? Or would you pay \$160,000 for a home in Beauval?

And by homes, Mr. Minister, I'm talking about the homes that are currently administered by Sask Housing.

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — In many cases when we looked at the history, you know, of the development in northern Saskatchewan, part of it was, when those houses were built, part of it was to also look at the job creation element. So in many cases when they were built, there was a lot of labour costs involved. And also it was done in partnership in many ways with the federal government. So that any changes in that regard, we'd have to look at historic changes on the laws that the federal government work with, and the laws that they work with in the province, you know, as a whole.

But there was a very deliberate policy to try and get the job creation element so that local carpenters, and local carpenters' helpers, and electricians could be part of the building process of those houses. And as a result, those costs were highly inflated, you know, as for a building cost in the urban setting. And I sense that was the basis of those housing. And many of the leaders, you know, talked about it at that point in time in history. And they would have hoped to make, you know, changes. But such were the . . . such was the record that is, you know, before us.

So there would have to be federal agreement in regards to the laws that the federal government operated on. Let's remember that most of the housing in the '70s were built with a 60/40 cost share agreement with the federal government. The feds paid 60 per cent; we paid 40 per cent. And as such, the housing was done under the rules of both the federal government and the provincial government; and unless there was changes, you know, at the federal level, then it would be very difficult for the province to hold all the costs, you know, that were brought into focus at that point in time in history, because it was also a federal decision.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. In my closing comments I just wanted to point out that this is a northern issue. It has been prevalent in northern Saskatchewan for a number of years in terms of the problems of housing.

And the final two questions I have for you — and thanking both ministers for their time and thanking both the officials of both departments for being here — is number one, is to heavily involve the municipal governments in negotiations that you have in reference to housing. Many times they are totally eliminated and they have no influence whatsoever to determine who should receive support and who shouldn't. And many times their assistance is very valuable.

And the second point is, we've done our homework. We've gone out there. We've identified which people, in the cross-section of communities — not all communities — who identify which communities and which people are being hurt and being neglected by the housing programs. And if we're to get the names and the exact problems at their house, which we have here, would you undertake to contact each and every one of these individuals to see if they're eligible for RRAP or ERP (emergency repair program), or some assistance to repair their homes? Because their voices are certainly going to be heard and we want you to share the concerns that they have written down for us. And will you undertake to address some of these problems?

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — To the member, there's two aspects to the issues in regards to the mechanism. One is that we're working with a New North group to continue making improvements on the existing situation in regards to housing. The other thing is that on the existing housing, we have the local housing authorities. The majority of them manage, you know, our housing units in the North and they work with the federal government and the provincial government in regards to the RRAP programs, and the emergency repair programs, as well as a program in relation to seniors. And I think that through those mechanisms — both the New North plus the housing authorities — we could mount a housing strategy that's indeed beneficial in dealing with the issues that you mention.

(1715)

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much. And I'll now present you with the completed surveys.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Madam Minister, Mr. Minister, and officials, I'd like to welcome you here this evening.

I'd like to deal with an issue that we have talked about many times and that's specific land claims. SARM has now gone to court with the federal government to try and seek a solution to those areas where the federal government certainly isn't meeting their commitment. Madam Minister, what is your department doing to either assist or to intervene in this particular court case?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — We just met with SARM officials last week and what we're doing right now is examining the content of their court challenge, and they needed some additional information to be filled in — historical information — and we've assisted them in developing the court challenge in such a way that all the necessary information is provided. At this point we're just playing a support role to their action and certainly

have indicated to the federal government at any time we're prepared to come back to the negotiating table, but not until they're prepared to table a real and sincere offer.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Golden West, one of the municipalities directly involved in this particular case, is in my constituency and they have been fighting the federal government since 1993 on this particular issue, when they believed at that time they had an agreement for I think it was twenty-two and a half times the assessed values for compensation.

And the federal government, with the change of government, the new administration, reversed that decision and I think it would be incumbent on the provincial government — and I know that you're supportive of a better compensation than what the federal government is offering — incumbent on the provincial government to participate to the fullest extent possible to come to a successful conclusion to all of these specific land claims because obviously the reserves in question are entitled to the land — it's not in dispute — but the settlements being proposed by the federal government is where all the difficulties lie, and I think we need to bring that to a speedy and successful conclusion.

Madam Minister, another area that I wanted to touch on was a persistent concern both in native and non-native communities, and that is of welfare abuse. And recently the Lac La Ronge Band, to their credit, is taking action on this particular issue by requiring that social assistance recipients on the reserve between the ages of 15 and 20 to either actively look for work or be in a training program. What kind of support is your department providing for this type of initiative within the Lac La Ronge Band or indeed any other band that may be involved?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — The bands administer their own social services and their authority comes directly from the federal government. The way in which the province could be involved is sharing information between on- and off-reserve transactions or to share with them how we do some of that due diligence in provincial situations.

But we have no direct authority over that. They're relationship on those matters on reserve is directly with the federal government.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Have you been tracking how the project is working? Whether it's being successful while it's providing the incentives? Whether it's providing for what they hope to achieve?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — La Ronge Band is keeping track of that, and they have more individuals enrolled in post-secondary education than any other band in the province.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Do you think that there will be any examples or benefits that can be applied outside of the band structure, off the reserves, for this program?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I think there would be. And I guess one

of the things I would say, part of it could be looked at as a requirement, but also when a community sends a strong message that it values education, that it values people being involved in the workplace, that also has a very strong result.

I was on Red Pheasant Reserve the other day at the school, and I asked the woman who's the principal there, what is the single most important thing that you need at your school for your students to be successful? And she said, community support.

Sure they could have used a little more room or this or that, but the strongest feature they need is for people to get out to the school parent-child days and to support school activities and to really show the children in the community that education matters.

So one of the things the La Ronge Band is obviously doing is they've made a strong statement that education matters.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Madam Minister. I think that statement applies no matter whether you're on the reserve or off the reserve. In every one of our schools the parents need to support what is taking place there. It needs to support the students in that school.

And I think the Lac La Ronge Band should be commended for the efforts that they're putting forward in this area, and perhaps the Minister of Northern Affairs could pass that on because I don't get the opportunity to get up to La Ronge very often. And I'd appreciate that if he would.

The one other area, Madam Minister, that I would like to deal with is, does your department provide any advice on tax issues dealing with Indians and Metis?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I just thought I'd clear up a factual thing first. You would know that Metis persons always pay taxes; they have no exemption.

We are not central to the tax discussion, although sometimes we might be involved in some of the discussions. But we're contemplating whether we need a special federal-provincial first nations table to deal with this issue. And should that happen, we would likely be more involved. But at this point it's largely been a matter between the Finance department and first nations.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Madam Minister. It seems that it's becoming more of a problem in my own constituency. White Bear is in a tax dispute with liquor sales from the casino. I know my colleague in Moosomin, the Ochap reserve is in conflict with the government over the PST collections on reserve.

Really I was wondering, does your department offer any advice either to the Finance department or to the native bands dealing with these kinds of tax issues?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Probably the best way I could address that is by saying that through the work that SIMAS does, we build a lot of relationships. And part of course of getting

through a difficult discussion like this is drawing on the relationships that you've built and the working relationships.

And so whereas we are not tax experts, we certainly do have some understanding of the history of how these discussions evolved and why people today have the expectations that they do on a number of fronts. So we would be part of informed discussion on the matter, but still and all, current arrangements take place within the framework of current tax law.

The other role we would play is if it seems that a matter that involves the federal government, first nations, and the province is not able to be resolved in the normal ways, we may then look at helping to set up a negotiating table so we can have a specific forum within which to address these problems.

And again our role would be that of a department that has established significant relationships in this area and can perhaps keep people together as we get through the discussion.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Have you set up or have you offered to set up these kind of committees with the White Bear Band or the Ochapowace Band?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — One of the . . . there's sort of two trends that encompass all of these discussions in Canada. One of them is that people think sometimes that they can be resolved through legal means. Well what we've determined is quite often that courts will bounce these decisions back to the political arena because they will say that these arrangements sprang out of what were originally political agreements, treaties between nations, and that as such they're not necessarily narrow legal or administrative interpretations. And so quite often even court challenges don't resolve these kinds of discussions.

So when we hit a particular problem, such in the case of the White Bear situation, the departments that are empowered to look after those things, such as Liquor and Gaming and Department of Finance, look at them to the extent they can, but sometimes you hit a jurisdictional, constitutional, historical wall which can't be resolved by those rather simple administrative mechanisms that seem to apply to all other situations.

And at that point, again sometimes we become involved because these are issues that will be resolved sometimes through the negotiation of a new political arrangement. Because that was where those arrangements came from in the first place. They weren't created by the courts; they were created out of agreements made between leaders of the day. And so we need to look at those in a modern day context. And sometimes when they cannot be resolved in the more predictable manner, that's where these discussions will end up.

And I think most people . . . what was interesting, we had a meeting of all the ministers of Indian and Metis Affairs from across Canada, of all parties, all persuasions, and I think everybody recognizes that there are these same difficulties inherent in dealing with an issue that's this laden with history and with other constitutional and legal impediments.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Madam Minister. When I look back at the original White Bear situation though, with the original casino in place, your Minister of Justice resolved that issue with force of arms and direct . . . the clout of the law in raiding the Bear Claw Casino. And I believe in that particular case, a committee such as what you suggested your department could set up, I think could have perhaps worked to resolve that.

Because the leadership at White Bear wanted to negotiate, wanted to resolve some of the issues, and were prepared even to allow it to move into the courts without the force of arms. Because they wanted a resolution on the constitutional issues. And that has never been resolved. The courts have avoided making the decisions necessary in that area.

And yet we're facing almost the same . . . similar circumstances now with liquor taxation, or with the PST at Ochapowace. So while you avoided it in the one circumstance and you negotiated an arrangement for the casino usage later, that still could have been done in the initial situation without the force of arms or without the intervention of the court's heavy hand.

And I think it would serve the province well if we were to enter into negotiations and settle that issue, but do it in a reasonably speedy time. Obviously the taxes need to be collected under the current system. If no negotiations are taking place, well then that's when the force of law comes into place. But certainly negotiations, in my mind, would be the preferred method but they need to be expedited; they simply can't drag on for years.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — If I could just respond briefly, that is in fact what happened with the White Bear situation; is what I said, is that the line departments responsible for these things proceeded in the normal way that would have been proceeded. Because our responsibility as a province is to administer the Criminal Code when it comes to casinos. So the Criminal Code required that no means no.

And so the first attempt to have no mean no, led to the armed confrontation and what not, which then led us to go the next step, to a negotiated settlement, because any court agreement would have taken too many years for it to have any meaningful effect on the conflict. And so a negotiated agreement became the solution. And so that was very much what happened in that situation.

Mr. D'Autremont: — One final comment. Unfortunately, Madam Minister, it's back into the court again on the original Bear Claw Casino, unfortunately. And perhaps . . . I'm not sure what can be done and what will happen in that case but it's unfortunate that it's heading back into the courts again.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — If I could clarify, the issue at White Bear is not over jurisdiction; the issue is over a narrow legal point about whether or not non-awareness of a law constitutes a valid legal argument. This is a lawyers' debate that's going on. It really has not much to do with the larger issue.

Item 1 agreed to.

Items 2 to 4 inclusive agreed to.

Vote 25 agreed to.

(1730)

**Supplementary Estimates 1996-97
General Revenue Fund
Budgetary Expense
Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat
Vote 25**

Item 1 agreed to.

Vote 25 agreed to.

The Deputy Chair: — Why is the member for Saskatoon Northwest on his feet?

Mr. Whitmore: — Mr. Chair of committees, with leave, to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Whitmore: — Thank you, Mr. Chair of committees. In the Speaker's gallery, I'd like to introduce today a constituent of mine, Mr. Gordon Gunoff, who is down probably on business today in Regina. So I'd like all the Assembly to welcome Gord Gunoff here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

**General Revenue Fund
Municipal Government
Vote 24**

The Deputy Chair: — I'll invite the minister now to introduce her officials.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On my right is Ken Pontikes, the deputy minister of Municipal Government. Directly behind him is Ron Davis, assistant deputy minister of municipal services. Behind me is Ron Styles, the associate deputy minister for housing. On my left is Brij Mathur, the associate deputy minister for culture and recreation; and seated behind him is Larry Chaykowski, director of finance and administration.

Item 1

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Madam Minister, welcome to your officials. Madam Minister, we've been over . . . either in question period or discussing the municipal Bills that are on the floor this session, we've been over the \$29 million cuts — the 17 to urban, the 12 to rural. We've been over the main farm access program being cancelled. We've been over the futures program being cancelled. We've gone over the percentage of grid road assistance being lowered. All these things have led to what . . . the situation that municipalities of all kinds are in.

And I think the question, Madam Minister, and the main

question that I have for you in today's estimates is the stability, or lack of, in the funding for municipalities. I'd like to quote you a quote that SUMA has come out with in one of their revenue-sharing fundamental papers, but it says, "Revenue-sharing grants in Saskatchewan are lower in 1997 than the initial pool established in '98". And they go on.

And I'm sure, Madam Minister, you've seen the chart that they've come out with from where the amount of money in 1978 that was being spent on . . . and this chart actually is just for urban revenue sharing, but how it went up till about the peak of 1986 through to 1990.

And then in 1991, and I believe that was the first year your government was elected to power, how it started to drop. And we've went from a 60-some-million dollars the first year you dropped from . . . oh I believe it's about 68, and all the way down to 1997 where it looks like we're less than 30 million.

And, Madam Minister, I guess the question that I hear from all municipalities right now, keeping in mind the cuts that they've had to endure, is where are we heading with revenue sharing for municipalities? And I realize, Madam Minister, this may not be a fair question because to ask you to go beyond '99 would probably be a waste of time, because I would presume we're going to be on that side and you'll be on this side after that, to do with what you've done to municipal governments.

But where are you heading, Madam Minister, with revenue sharing? I think the municipalities would like to know when the bleeding is going to stop. Will there be more cuts next year? Will they be at an even stand-off? Will they at least hold their own? Or will we be at the point next year where maybe you will be returning a little of this money back to them? Can you give them a feel here today of where we're really going to be heading in the next couple of years?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, there are a number of changes that will need to be made as a result of reassessment, as a result of the 1996 census where population numbers will be taken into account at different rates in the future. And in terms of the size of the total pool, it has been a trend nationwide for provinces to reduce transfers to municipal governments over time as it has become a trend for the federal government to reduce transfer payments to provinces over time. I can't speak to the exact number.

It is too bad in a way; it's unfortunate that in the previous administration the amount of revenue sharing was de-coupled from the true revenue-sharing formula that was established by the Blakeney government in 1978. Because once it became an arbitrary pool, it became a target, I guess, for reductions when those were needed.

But we listened to the priorities of the people of Saskatchewan when they said they wanted more money for health, more money for education, more money for highways. Very seldom — if ever — in the surveys that we did, which were open questions, did they mention increases in transfers to municipal government.

So it were to meet the requests and the obvious priorities that Saskatchewan people placed on funding, then in the absence of large amounts of new dollars and in the face of back-filling for federal reductions, if some departments were to get more, then some had to get less. And that's what happened when the cuts to revenue sharing were announced a year in advance to give them time to plan in the budget for 1996-97.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I know where you're coming from; you go by population when you're dealing with these grants.

But I would like to remind you that the amount of grain and the commodities and stuff like that that are moved on rural roads out there have not changed and probably, if anything, will increase with the short-line rails being closed right now, shut down. I think that you know as well as I do the load on, especially RM (rural municipality) infrastructure out there, is increasing; the cost is going to be increasing.

And I don't believe . . . And I think you know this yourself, Madam Minister, that four out of five of the RMs that I've been talking to said they're raising their mill rates. And I think we're only passing the buck if we just . . . we keep our house in order here, but in turn make them raise their taxes to the degree they're going to have to.

So I would hope somewhere along the way here we can find a way to quit the funding cuts. Politics aside, I don't believe they can handle much more of this. I really don't. And the services they are providing out there are hurting now, but they're going to hurt a lot more if we keep doing what we're doing.

Madam Minister, I only have a couple more things because we've covered many of our points, either in question period or somewhere along the way. But the regional parks is a bone of contention with me. We've gone from \$2 million in funding down to, I believe, 75,000. And I think where I have a problem with this is that the tourism industry in this province is collecting many tax dollars through the tourism that is being provided by many of the municipalities that are funding these regional parks to keep them open.

Would you care to comment on how we can justify cutting the funding to these regional parks when the Government of Saskatchewan is actually the big winner in having these parks open?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I'll start with the last question first. With respect to regional parks, the funding of them is not in my budget. It's in the SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management) budget. So your question would more appropriately be directed to the Minister for the Environment. But I do know that in this year's budget we did allocate considerably more, an increase in dollars, to be directed towards the parks system. But you could ask the minister how that's over time to be allocated between the different park systems.

I have to make sure to correct you on one point. You seem to feel that the population was a highly determinant factor in the

revenue sharing. And I did mention it as being part of it and that it will be adjusted on the basis of the new census, but it's not the major part. What we've changed the formula to reflect is not to recognize administration at all in any kind of municipality but to recognize the amount of . . . the dollars that are spent at the service level. So if two municipalities of equal population, if one has a larger administration and more administrative costs, they will receive less revenue sharing than another community of similar size.

Also on the rural roads, I agree with you, but I think it was important for us to take a pause because the transportation system, as a result of the accelerated rail line abandonment and changes in the transportation system generally, are forcing a radical transition.

And to make sure that municipalities didn't go ahead on a local basis and build roads to facilities that will be, in two or three years, abandoned, I think we need to have a complete transportation study such as been undertaken by the municipalities in the south-west. And of course this year a new classification, an entire reclassification of the road system, will be conducted by the Department of Highways. And so we will be in a better position to prioritize funding for roads based on the new classification system next year.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Madam Minister. And I'm glad to see you say that there's going to be a transportation study done. I feel we should have had this done a number of years ago, and we wouldn't have the big grain facilities building in a spot that was not conducive to the road system that's in the RM that it happened to be built in — or for that matter the highway system that might be as much as 10 or 20 miles away from the facilities. So I think we have to be looking at this, and it will save us all a bunch of money.

Another question, Madam Minister — and we touched on this last year — I just wonder if the policy has changed for the government to do with the low rental housing units. And I think you know the situation I have in my constituency of Stockholm, but I believe there's others, where some of these little towns are actually growing and the need is greater for them. And some of the towns are shrinking, and the need is less. And I know the town of Stockholm especially is still in great need of more housing units. Has the policy changed there at all, or is there any chance of more units being for a community such as Stockholm?

(1745)

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, there are some programs that we have initiated such as relocating existing housing from communities where the population, for whatever reason, has declined. Where we have vacancies, chronic vacancies, we try to work with the local housing authority to allow those units to be moved. There's a cost to that too, but there's a cost of maintaining them while they're vacant. And the cost of relocating on a new basement in a community that has a need for housing is considerably less than constructing a whole new unit there.

The other issue that we still have to work through yet is the federal-provincial agreement that we reached for our Housing Corporation to take over the federal social housing portfolio in Saskatchewan. And that will free us up in a way to establish our own priorities for housing. Where so often in the past where it was a 75/25 funding arrangement, often our funding, in order to capture the 75 or 50 per cent of federal funding, our dollars would flow to their priorities. Where now we will be in a position to make those decisions independently of what other . . . because there'll be no federal program out there, we'll be able to tailor our programs to meet Saskatchewan priorities, including those in small, urban villages and towns in Saskatchewan.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. I'd like to welcome the minister and her officials here today.

Madam Minister, this deals somewhat with SAMA, but indirectly. I wonder if you would happen to have the formula for farm assessments? The formula . . . how it's determined what a piece of land is worth as far as the assessments for tax purposes are concerned.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I don't have that information with me. It would be found as part of the SAMA assessment manual. If there's any general policy that you would want to inquire about, I am familiar with that.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well a constituent called, Madam Minister, and wanted the formula; so I wonder if it'd be possible if you could, unless it's a whole book . . . you know, is there a simple formula written down, A plus B plus C, etc., and what the A's and B's and C's stand for? Is there a formula actually in place that you could pass on to me? Because he is concerned about how the values are determined.

And secondly, what he is interested to know is — and I believe he may be mistaken in this particular case — he wanted to know if the farmers, when they have to send in their written information on an appeal, he says to SARM; I think that's to SAMA they would have to send that in, wouldn't it be?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, yes, the member is correct in that it would be SAMA that they would have to send it in to for action. It's possible that SARM may have requested, as a result of trying to maybe get a handle on what's happening throughout the province, a copy and that would be at their discretion. But in order to get action, they would have to approach SAMA.

The values are still determined basically the way they always have been, based on the productivity of the land for the purpose of growing cereal crops, which may or may not be as relevant as it used to be with the diversity that we're having. But then there are other factors.

One that is controversial is their policy of assessing a quarter section based on the predominant use. So if you had 81 acres out of 160 that was in production and 79 acres that was in pasture, it's contemplated that they would use the — that's an extreme example — but that they would use the predominant

use, where they used to have a more detailed field sheet which would take off sloughs and pieces of bush and so on.

But generally the people who assess farmland for SAMA are seasoned and well-qualified agrologists, but you would be able to get an information package or an outline, I think, for your constituent on the practice directly from SAMA. That would be your best avenue.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. When you say predominant use, are you indicating then that the entire quarter section — let's say some of it's in cultivation, some of it's in bush, some of it's pasture — would all be assessed as cultivated land?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, if cultivated land on the basis of the proportion of the acreages was the predominant use. This is a SAMA policy and it's one which has engendered some controversy to date that I've become aware of and I'm not surprised.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, I think when people in my area find that out it's going to be somewhat controversial also, because on average we're probably looking at 20 to 30 acres of sloughs per quarter section. Now if you happen to be from the Regina plains where you got a hundred and sixty acres from wall to wall and it's all cultivatable, fine, but in a lot of areas of this province that's not the case and those other . . . those non-productive lands need to be taken into account and to decrease the assessment. You can't simply count all of the land as being productive, Madam Minister.

Does the municipality, in an appeal situation, also have to file their information within 10 days of an appeal?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the usual practice in our legislation hasn't . . . our changes in legislation haven't changed that, is that the appellant would receive the information he needs relative to his assessment and others that he wants to compare with, from the municipality, and then the SAMA staff would be at the appeal, at the court of revision, as a resource base to explain the rationale for the assessment that they have arrived at. But I'm not aware that any time limit accrues to a municipality.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you, Madam Minister. On the predominant-use taxation assessments, I think I see a problem developing there, and not in the area of what the tax is owing or what the assessments will be. But within this province we have programs within SERM to try and encourage the saving of bush, the saving of habitat, and if you're going to count, under SAMA, all the land as being productive when a portion of it is not — it's in sloughs or whatever — you're going to see more and more people now trying to drain those sloughs and push the bush off of them so that they do have some productive value out of that land which they are paying taxes on.

And I think, Madam Minister, unless your government is prepared to see that happen, you are going to have to go back to SAMA, and to the drawing boards, to provide some sort of a

relief for those non-productive lands; or you are going to see a good portion of the habitat, a good portion of potholes across Saskatchewan, eliminated simply because of the needs of the producers to get some production from those lands on which they're paying productive taxes.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, of course this can work both ways. Wherein there might be a smaller portion, less than 80-acre portion for example, of a quarter section, that is highly productive and the balance was sloughs or bush, which would then form the predominant use. That farmer would reap the benefit of that by having the whole quarter assessed at a lower level.

But I did receive a number of representations about this. In fact I first learned of this policy. It's an administratively driven policy. It's not part of the manuals, and it's not any part of instructions from us. But a number of municipalities and council members brought this to my attention, and we did ask SAMA to review this. Because it's a departure from past practice, where every acre that was a pothole that you couldn't seed in the spring, you could expect to receive relief from that through the appeal process.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, I think as this becomes known throughout the province, you're certainly going to have much more hue and cry on this particular issue to get some relief. Or as has happened in the past with the quota system, farmers had to put land into production to gain access to quota, and that destroyed habitat even though the land in the long term may not have been in production that often. Once you ran the plough through it, you now had quota acres.

The same things is going to happen here. People are going to drain those wet lands. They're going to push that bush to try and get some production from those lands because they are paying taxes as if it was productive land. And they're going to have to recoup some of that, Madam Minister.

On another issue . . . and I'm not sure whether your department deals with this because initially it was under Intergovernmental Affairs. And it's dealing with the Internet developments through the infrastructure programs. Does your department deal with this, or has somebody else got it now?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the entire infrastructure program was transferred to our department from Intergovernmental Affairs during 1996. That was before it was known that there would be an extension to the program. I think it was placed in our department as sort of a wind-up to the previous program. Now we have assumed the administration or part of the administration for the extension as well, and it is housed in our department.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Then what's happening with the Internet programs that were put in place in various communities around this province? I know that Lampman has one. They received, I think it was in the neighbourhood of \$30,000 to set up a server and to supply Internet to the community. People in the community had to buy memberships to participate in it. What's happening with those

programs now that they're facing much stiffer competition from SaskTel?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, there was a federal program. I've been trying to remember the name of it. It just escapes me. But it was separate and apart from the infrastructure program. And I think that in order to access the capital for that program, that municipalities had to demonstrate an operating plan, and operating funds, once the capital was delivered under the program, to set the system up.

If you have any particular problems or concerns that you want to inquire about, I can certainly undertake to give you fuller information on any individual circumstance.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well, Madam Minister, then is your department administering any Internet development projects and funding?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, our activity and funding would be limited to what is being done within the provincial library system. Where they are . . . They've undertaken a huge project of linking . . . in effect, making interlibrary borrowing province-wide by having the entire provincial collection available and accessible. And they're developing, on a pilot basis, some home pages for the Internet, but that wouldn't constitute a major portion of their budget or their activity; it's just part of it.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So under the infrastructure program, since it was carried on again this year — in all likelihood because it was an election year by the federal government — can you . . . will this program carry on again next year, or what kind of a position is that going to put the libraries in if this funding is all of a sudden stopped?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, the infrastructure program in the original program and the extension was capital money; so it wouldn't relate to the ongoing operations.

But as part of the electronic highway, if you like, being part of infrastructure, I'm assuming that applications for that kind of infrastructure, to the current extension of the program, will be considered in the same light as they were in the first round.

Mr. D'Autremont: — How many libraries actually accessed this program to go on-line to provide access to the library facilities across the province? And are all libraries going onto it or is it just simply the central locations such as Regina, Saskatoon, Weyburn, Estevan, Yorkton, or are all the branch libraries also going on-line?

I know that a number of them, particularly in our area, were already tied in through bulletin boards, into the central libraries in Weyburn, which is our district. And are they now using the Internet rather than bulletin boards? And is the whole province going to be tied-in and all the libraries in the province going to be tied-in?

(1800)

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the answer to that question is that it's still work in progress and the goal is to have every library in the province linked. And about a third of them are now; so it's a mixed situation out there now. Some of them are on the integrated system, and some of them are still using the bulletin board. But the goal is to migrate them all onto the same system.

Mr. D'Autremont: — How long will it take for all of the libraries to get up and running on the Internet, the integrated system?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, the goal is three years, and that will be reliant on the sustainability of funding throughout that process. But provided that that's sustainable, we're looking at a three-year horizon for everybody to be connected.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Are we in the first year or the second year of this process now?

I'm concerned that we're going to end up in a situation like we did with SaskEnergy, with most people being able to access gas, but some being left out because the program is cut off before it was totally completed. My concern is that some of the libraries are going to be left out because all of a sudden, two and a half years after the program started, the funding is cut off, or two years after the program is started the funding is cut off because the infrastructure program . . . there's no longer a political need for it because the election has passed, and money won't be available.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Well, Mr. Chairman, we passed the enabling legislation last year, in the last session a year ago. And it's certainly our goal to have a completely integrated system. And we are, I would say, in the first year now because the legislation last year, the first move to bring people on-line in the last few months, and so we are on track. And I'm optimistic about the availability of funding to complete the project because it's very important, and it will lead to some administrative efficiencies that will save money. So there is a pay-back on that investment very definitely.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Is this particular program a three-way split with the federal government, the provincial, municipalities? Or is it a municipal . . . I mean, excuse me, a federal and provincial funding?

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, this particular program . . . I think we have a bit of a misunderstanding here . . . is that there was a strictly federal program, not part of the infrastructure program — which the program name escapes me. And that was directed towards electronic highway and information infrastructure. And that wasn't part of the infrastructure program. So that this part, the linking of libraries provincially into one catalogue system, for example, for access is part of the normal funding that the province provides through the municipal budget, and it's not part of the infrastructure funding.

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

That's it for my questions, and I would like to thank you and your officials for coming in. Thank you.

Item 1 agreed to.

Items 2 to 12 inclusive agreed to.

Vote 24 agreed to.

The Chair: — That ends the estimates for Municipal Government. Thank you.

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Chairman, I just simply want to thank my officials for their attendance and diligence and thank the members of the opposition for their questions. Thank you.

**General Revenue Fund
Social Services
Vote 36**

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

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. This evening we'll be assisted by, to my left, Bonnie Durnford, who is the associate director, child and family services; directly behind me, Bob Wihlidal, from our budget branch; Neil Yeates, associate deputy; Phil Walsh, our director of income security; and Con Hnatiuk, the deputy.

Item 1

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome to your officials, Minister. I have presented questions a couple of times in the last few weeks and I just have a few more.

Mr. Minister, I've noticed that over the last few years the number of people on social assistance has dropped approximately 1 per cent and that spending for SAP (Saskatchewan Assistance Plan) has dropped about 7 per cent; so I'd like you to explain the decrease in the spending.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, again I think we talked about this in one of our other opportunities. The spending decrease that the member refers to represents the transfer of those monies to Post-Secondary Education to fund the Youth Futures program and the provincial training allowance.

Ms. Julé: — Yes, I recognize that we did discuss that, Mr. Minister. However, you know my concern remains that a number of people will not be able to access training and so on, especially given the fact that training is something projected into the future and this spending has been decreased as of the budget, I presume.

When I look at social assistance allowance, and under your regulations and from what I know and understand, that one adult on social assistance gets \$195 a month. Is that correct? Or maybe you could clarify what it is right at this time.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, that is correct, but the amount

that the member mentions is the amount of money provided for personal allowance. In addition would be any special needs, in addition would be any supplemental health, and in addition would be accommodation.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I noticed that in Alberta the allowance for one adult is \$229 per month. So I guess I'm referring to the level of assistance in Saskatchewan as compared to Alberta and other provinces. And there was a news report out that we do have substantially lower levels of assistance than other provinces. And I'm wondering why that is.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — We try, Mr. Chair, as best we can to match our allowance rates with two factors — that being the need, and the other factor being our fiscal ability.

During the 1980s I watched, and many watched, as the former government significantly reduced the rates paid under social assistance. We've been incrementally trying to rebuild some of that loss that happened in the 1980s. We have, even in the most desperate of circumstance financially for our province in the early 1990s, we have resisted . . . and have never reduced benefits.

While our benefits are lower than some other jurisdictions, they will be higher than yet some other jurisdictions. In some jurisdictions the cost of living will be greater. The Alberta cost of living may in fact be somewhat greater than it is in our province. That's not to say we're not sensitive to the needs of social assistance recipients. We're sensitive also to the fact that our rates are low in comparison, and we've been trying incrementally, as we've been fiscally able, to try and bring them up.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, if you could project into the next fiscal year — or even within the next few months — do you see that the assistance that is being given to recipients will be lowered below 195 per month?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — No, Mr. Chair. I would anticipate no reduction of benefits.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you. Mr. Minister, I just want to go over to some of your budget measures, and I noticed the government has committed 500,000 additional dollars for school supplies and fees for families receiving social assistance. Now is that \$500,000 going to be going to people that are . . . Is that part of the working income supplement or is this for all families with children?

(1815)

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — No, Mr. Chair, that money is separate and apart entirely. This \$500,000 is dedicated to providing school supplies for families with school-aged children and it represents about a 25 per cent increase in that narrow category.

Since becoming minister, and even long before becoming minister, one of the areas that I have felt it has been a real burden on families with school-aged children receiving social

assistance, is the matter of providing for those fees and costs and supplies and books that are due at the start of the school season. As a parent I know that those can be quite dramatic. And so with this small amount of money, we're putting it directly to those families with children who will be going into school.

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Minister, I note that there are about 39,000 children benefiting from social assistance and the \$500,000 in additional funding means that each child would get about 13 to 14 dollars. And so I wonder if the minister believes that that funding is going to be adequate to genuinely assist them with those supplies for school, that they do need very much.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Just to clarify again, Mr. Chair, this money is directed just to those families who have children going into school. So it's not by any means all of the children on social assistance. We would have a large number of children who would be under school age. And so the monies are targeted to that group of children who'll be going to school. It's a large number of children, but to do the mathematics correctly would be to take that amount and apply it just to the school age children, and it does represent a 25 per cent increase to that support.

Ms. Julé: — Well I thank you for that clarification, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I'd like to now move to child protection workers, particularly. I know I did speak with you before about child protection case-loads, but I don't think I specifically asked you how many child protection workers there are in the province at this time. Could you give me those numbers, please?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, approximately 110.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you. Mr. Minister. As you know very well, we have been speaking in the House a bit about concern over child protection. You have indicated to me that the average case-load is 26 children per worker. But I understand from some of the studies that came out of British Columbia that the average — average — case-load, recommended case-load, is 12 to 15 children; and 26 seems to be quite a lot, quite a number of children for any child protection worker to have to deal with.

You've mentioned that your government is committed to helping children. So what my question is, is why aren't there enough caseworkers here to meet the needs of the children in the province, and to ensure that any children that are getting protective services are adequately served, and completely served in the way that they would have absolutely great monitoring of their situation being done. And then there wouldn't have to be a question about what are happening to children that in fact have ended up dying under the system, or children that are dealing with the abuse and neglect.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I'm not entirely sure where the member brings to bear the 12 case-load number. It will be recommended I'm sure, by some agencies, and it may well be the ideal we should all be aiming for. But as I survey the circumstance across Canada, two provinces now have actually set standards, case-load standards, and in Alberta the standard

has been set at 23 cases per worker; in Nova Scotia it has been set at 20 cases per workers. In other provinces, for instance in Manitoba, urban Manitoba, the current case-load is 36 per worker; in British Columbia it's 34; in Ontario it's 28; New Brunswick it's 20. We've seen a decrease in the case-load of our child protection workers. We reached a high of 36.6 in 1993-94. We've been able to bring that down now to 26. I agree it would be to all . . . to the advantage of all if we can bring that down.

It is I think important to point out though, when we're talking about the 26 cases per worker, this is an average number. There may in fact be workers who have a higher case-load but may be dealing with more . . . less traumatic conditions. If a case-load is lower it may mean that they're dealing with much more intensive interventions. So that's an average number.

It's also I think important to realize that the caseworker is often but one of a number of people who may be involved with that family, by either from the department or from community-based agencies. It is our goal, as again we're able, to bring the case-load down. We're anticipating next year, with the child benefit coming into place in the national program, that resources that can be made available to us through that program — as we have committed to the federal government — will be returned to the care of children and family, particularly those at risk.

And we're hoping that some of those resources may in fact go to serve to bring the case-load down even further. We're making progress. We're about where most provinces are. We think we can be doing a little better.

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Minister, I can pretty well anticipate your answer for the next question I have, but nonetheless I feel it's important to ask it because I am concerned about the process which child protection workers go through if they have been notified of children in need of some protection.

Are you convinced in your mind that there are clear policy directives that follow an absolute process wherein the child protection workers can follow, in order that are sure that they were scrutinizing and monitoring every situation absolutely adequately?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, yes, I have a high degree of confidence in the process. And I have even a higher degree of confidence in many of those people who are serving as child protection workers. Now that's not for a moment to say that if there are suggestions of improvements that can be made to this process, we're more than willing to look at them. I believe we have a very . . . like a good process. And as I've met them, we have some exceptional people doing the work. But if there's other things we can and should be doing, we'd sure be looking at them.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Are some of the child protection workers left sort of to their own judgement when they come upon a situation, in as far as what step they may take next, or do they have to follow a given guideline of policy directives?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — No. No worker is sort of working solo. Each worker will be working with other workers and with a supervisor in making decisions. There is a risk assessment tool that they all use and some clear process and protocol. So there will always be, I think at the end of the day, some human judgement required in a family circumstance, but there are colleagues, there are supervisors, there's risk assessment tools and they're a clearly defined process.

Ms. Julé: — Do those risk assessment tools include follow-up to a situation that they've come upon? If they believe something is or can be resolved at the time of intervention, is there a follow-up that they must adhere to in order to ensure that their assessment in fact was right on?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Yes, Mr. Chair, absolutely. The answer is absolutely. And it may require different action in different circumstances, but in each and every case there is the follow-up.

I had a unique . . . or an interesting experience at one time about a year ago where I found myself on radio, advising that if anyone is concerned or suspects abuse or neglect that they should report. That was broadcast on a Friday night and my phone at home rang most of the day Saturday with reports to me directly, which I passed on to the department, to the workers, and each and every one of them was followed up.

Ms. Julé: — I guess what I'm referring to, Mr. Minister, is where situations have been reported to the department and the department has certainly sent over a social worker or child protection worker, but there are instances that I've heard of where the worker has come to that place, to that home, and basically left without doing anything or without helping, and so the abuse goes on and on and on.

And neighbours are trying to help but they say they're getting into the middle of things. And it's actually an expression to me of people's concern over the inadequacy of the system to really follow up on some of these situations and deal with them appropriately.

So I just wanted to make that comment, not in any adverse way, but simply to bring it to your attention, so . . . I know that social workers do try to do their part, but I also know that their case-loads are heavy. And I know that we might, might have maybe a little more funding spent on child protection workers to assure that children are not falling between the cracks.

Mr. Minister, if you could . . . you had mentioned that you had made . . . there are risk assessment guidelines and so on given out to child protection workers. I wonder if you would be so good as to forward to me any of the documents you have whereby child protection workers follow a given process, so that I may look at those things myself. And I would be pleased to have that sometime within the next week; it doesn't necessarily have to be today.

I'd like to turn my questioning over to something I mentioned just a few minutes ago to the minister responsible for Indian and Metis Affairs and also Northern Affairs. This concern is

about battered women in the province and the need basically for transition houses, etc. I asked the minister if she would be able to forward to me a list of the transition houses for battered women that exist in northern Saskatchewan. And she did mention that there was one in Sandy Bay and there was also one in La Ronge. Other than that I don't believe there are any that exist from what she said.

But, Mr. Minister, the very real need is there for assistance for women because there is a lot of battering going on and at unacceptably high levels; women that are coming forward and in need of help in this way. So in view of the fact that there are only two transition houses, as I understand it, in the North, north of Prince Albert — and that is certainly not enough — I'm wondering what else your department is doing to assist women in this very great need?

(1830)

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I was just trying to clarify in my own mind. There are the shelters and transition houses directly funded by Social Services. There are some examples of shelters in the province that are funded by Indian Affairs Canada, in which we purchase spaces when the requirement's there.

We do have the two shelters in the North. I've had the opportunity only to tour the one at La Ronge; I've not toured the one at Sandy Bay. And they are doing very valuable work.

As the member will know, in this budget year we've increased some resourcing to the transition houses and to their staff. We think that's an important ingredient.

We work with the provincial association of transition houses in developing policy and in determining how best to meet the needs, particularly in areas of the North or in rural Saskatchewan where the populations may be smaller, the communities are smaller, and how to try and meet the needs in what we might describe as rural Saskatchewan and the North.

As the member will know, we took a step as this legislature to pass the victims of domestic violence assistance Act which, now having been in place a year and more, is beginning I think, to show some real benefit in the homes and the communities.

The whole roots of family violence, of abuse against women and children, the root causes here are something that I think we all need to be working at to try and address. Again these are not simple root causes to get at. And as we all know, this in some ways becomes an intergenerational thing; so children observing abuse and living with abuse tend to become the adult abusers.

We have taken steps in this budget year. We're always looking for innovative ideas to deal particularly with widely dispersed populations and rural populations and so on. I know another example of some innovation that is happening is to use some of our Sask Housing stock even if just to provide a safe shelter without the significant staffing that will often go with the transition house, but even to provide some of those facilities as a safe shelter. And I happened to tour one, actually in your

constituency, where that seems to be meeting a certain need — just to have a place for women to go to in that hour of need.

Again we go back to our domestic violence Act, and we are hoping that the more we can do to allow women and children to stay in their own home and remove the abuser, the better.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'm glad you made reference to the safe houses that are out there, but I do know that there isn't any funding from the department in many cases in rural Saskatchewan for any kind of services within those houses, like counselling. And also some of these are in small communities whereby the abused cannot find transportation to them. And I understand that the police help in some instances.

But for a battered woman to have to go to a small, small community she's unfamiliar with without knowing anyone around, without having anybody in that house other than the shell of the building, for them to have to deal with that kind of a thing, without having someone close by to counsel and to assure them of their safety is really, I feel, not adequate and quite ineffective as far as really helping the person.

Mr. Minister, speaking of the victims of a domestic violence, I know that the federal and provincial governments have recently released a report on the Saskatchewan Victims of Domestic Violence Act. It did come into effect on February 1, 1995. Now the Martin-Wilson report also made recommendations about that Act, and the Department of Justice here has not acted yet. So I'd like to know when the department's studies will be over, the studies of these reports, and when will the minister take action?

And although you're not the Minister of Justice, this does involve you because as Social Services certainly does cross over here. I'd like to know if the minister is going to commit to further education for front-line workers about what resources, legal or otherwise, are available for battered women. I'd like to know if the minister will commit to a public education initiative to raise awareness about the tragic and unacceptable levels of domestic violence and its causes and solutions.

And I'd like to know if this government is going to address the many women's concerns out there that are battered, by providing funding for safe houses in smaller communities. I think safe houses need to be there. And I think you've suggested some ways they might be, through buildings that are in existence right now that could be used. But I also know that we need funding to ensure that there is some counselling, some care, and maybe medical help and someone there to protect them while they're in those safe houses.

So I'm asking the minister whether he and his government will commit to this kind of funding.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I think the record of this government, and particularly reflected in this most recent budget, indicates significant commitment to the issues that the member raises. This was the government that passed that legislation, took that stand and passed that legislation. You don't find that in many other jurisdictions.

This year we provide, in this budget, \$3.7 million to provide for 10 shelters across the province. We have nine sexual assault counsellors and importantly, seven, now seven, outreach programs that reach out to people in their communities where they live. And in addition, as I mentioned before, we provide per diem payments to the federally operated shelters in our province.

We've also provided funding to the Provincial Partnership Committee on Family Violence, and that encourages the networking that should and must go on between the government and community-based organizations. We now have eight communities, working in partnership in eight communities to address family violence and several more have indicated — initiated and indicated — that they want to build partnerships there.

As I pointed out, we have provided in this budget new and substantial resources to all community-based organizations to improve the working conditions for their staffs. We've worked this year to develop an equitable funding formula for the transition houses in the allocation of staff. And there's some money in this budget to those shelters who require additional staff.

I want to say in regards to the review of The Victims of Domestic Violence Act, of course we're going to be very sensitive to that review. If there is legislative change, I know that I and the Minister of Justice and indeed the government in total will be looking at those changes.

And I can say in response to the member's question that we are definitely committed to the issues and I think that's demonstrated in this budget and things that we have done.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I'd just like to ask you the process that takes place when there is violence taking place in the home and there is a call that goes in and Mobile Crisis goes to that home. What process do the workers with Mobile Crisis go through and what do they follow . . . how do they follow up on a situation after they've gone into a home and do indeed see that there has been violence and children are either involved — or scared to death, basically — and basically the home is amiss at the time?

So could you tell me just what the Mobile Crisis workers are expected to do in a situation like that?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mobile Crisis, Mr. Chair, as the name suggests, is a crisis unit only. They would enter the circumstance and make their assessments of the circumstance, and from there then they would refer to appropriate agencies, which may be many or varied.

In some cases, it may mean contact with the law enforcement, with the police — city polices or mounted police. It may mean contact with the health district, with various health providers in whatever community.

It may mean referral to the Department of Social Services if there are issues of child protection here. It may mean referral to

a transition house circumstance that we've talked about. It may mean application of The Victims of Domestic Violence Act that we've talked about.

Mobile Crisis — those folks are, as the name suggests, crisis interveners. They would then assess the circumstance and then refer to the appropriate agencies.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Well, Mr. Minister, I've heard about some problems revolving around that also and I feel it is my duty to let you know. So again please don't take this as a personal affront; it's not.

But I understand that because of the lack of transition houses whereby to take children and spouses — whoever may be involved in the violence — and have a place for them . . . the fact is transition houses are full and there's not enough room in the inn for them. So the word that I've got is often Mobile Crisis workers — not always but often — they will look at the situation and the children or the spouse will be protected overnight, only to be put back in the same situation over and over again.

So this doesn't seem to meet the needs that are out there again, and I ask the minister to comment on that, please.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, while I give every due regard to those people who are working at the community level of working at our transition houses, I think it's fair to say that the member makes a point. There is room for a broader range of services. We would like to have that full gamut of services available to all of our people in all communities when they're required.

We've been working under some pretty difficult circumstances as a province; I think the member would admit that. Things have not been easy over the last number of years, and we have not seen large numbers of expansions. I've outlined some of the things we've been able to accomplish; I think some important things. But there are a wide range of services that I think you and I and many people would like us to move towards.

I think we move towards them gradually, won't happen overnight. But we'll move in the correct directions if we're always in contact with the people who are really providing those services, and in this case we're talking about shelters and so on. The provincial association of transition houses is a body that we work very closely with in trying to develop policy. There's lots of room to go; I admit that. I hope the member would also admit that we've come some ways in some pretty, pretty difficult circumstances.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Your comments and mine, I guess, reflect on the need to recognize that many of these children that are returned to their homes are in need of child protection through Social Services, but I don't know if the process or adequate process is in place for monitoring a situation well enough when in fact a number of those children . . . If they can't even get as far as a transition house, how is there any tracking or any recording of their situation? And they're ending up back in that home again.

Now that is a cause for grave concern. Those are some of the children that are sometimes statistics; and they may not be under the Department of Social Services' care, but it is possible that they should have been. And so these are the kind of things that have been brought to my attention. And, Mr. Minister, this is why I believe that when it comes to our children and it comes to families in that sense, we should ensure that a priority of government is the children and protection of our children.

Mr. Minister, I would like to just ask you a few questions surrounding agreements with native bands as far as family services goes. Which bands or reserves have agreements with Social Services? And I would like to know if you could give me a listing of those. I understand it's 10, and possibly 11, because you just made an agreement the other day with the Beardy Reserve.

And I would like some clarity on also who has what jurisdiction when you in fact make agreements with bands for family services.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, I'm very happy to provide for the member the actual lists of the reserves, the bands that where now we have either agreements signed or both signed and operational. There are now a total of 15 agreements which are signed — check that. There are 16 — I signed the one this week . . . last week.

So there are 16 signed; 8 of them are now fully operational. And for instance, the Beardy's agreement, which we signed this week, they hope to be up and running by fall of this year. I mean there's a fair bit of work that needs to be done to put the processes in place on reserve. So the others will come on stream.

We'll be very happy to provide the member with the names.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, what is the status of the James Smith Band in regards to the authority they may have for their own family services right now?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, we do not at present have an agreement with James Smith. There are some discussions going on.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I believe you have received a letter from . . . I hesitate to say the name of this person because I do respect that he has contacted you; however, it is a person from the James Smith Band, and he's encountering some difficulty regarding who has custody over a child.

This child is being bounced back and forth because the band members claim that they have got the authority to determine where that child goes. And in fact there has been no agreement with the James Smith Band by the provincial government, and so the provincial government social worker is getting into this. And I think the child right now — after a Queen's Bench court case — the child right now is in a safe situation. However, there was a lot of ruckus going on over who had custody of this child and who had the right to do it.

So, Mr. Minister, I'm wondering why this kind of a thing happens? And who communicates with the bands about their duties and their rights? And if a band is taking authority where they should not be and the minister has been informed of this, have you in this case . . . I could forward you the letter. I believe you've seen it. But I'm wondering if in this case, you have made some sort of contact with that band so that you clarify for them who has the authority so this kind of thing does not continue to go on.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, it would not be appropriate for me of course to discuss that, any individual case, in the House. But let me say generally these are rarely happy circumstances — most often very, very difficult circumstances where there may be conflict between parents, between families, or between other agencies or groups. And this is, in some cases, a band.

Some of these circumstances reach the point of court proceedings. In the case of a court proceeding, anyone may seek to become an intervener in that proceeding, and that's the law of Canada.

Ms. Julé: — I'd like to thank you, Mr. Minister. I'd just like to make mention again that in cases like that, it is the children who suffer. And if we're ensuring that the children . . . we're doing everything that children do not have to suffer, I would hope that you will provide myself and people in that area with some assurance that cases like that are being looked into, and future cases like this can be prevented.

And at this time, I'd like to thank you, Mr. Minister, and I'd like to thank your officials. And I will turn the questioning over to my colleague from Moosomin.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Just a few quick questions I'd like to run through here, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Minister, you talked in your . . . last year, your government in the throne speech talked about a number of welfare reforms you plan to undertake. To date, what have you done to fulfil the promises that were made in last year's throne speech?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — We have, Mr. Chair, I think made significant progress. I might have hoped we'd be a little further, but we've made some real, significant progress in my view.

One of the centrepiece recommendations in the reform of social assistance was to establish the child benefit. We've made, I think, some significant process now, not just provincially but nationally, bringing on other provinces and the federal government. We're not there yet, but we see somewhat of a road map ahead. We'd like to see a longer road map to the federal government.

We made changes this year to the Family Income Plan as a bridge to the child benefit. That's point number one.

Point number two, we now have established the training program, the youth training program. It has been removed from Social Services into Post-Secondary Education where we think

it's more appropriately delivered. The Minister responsible for Post-Secondary has made announcements in that regard.

I was happy to join with the Minister of Post-Secondary Education to, point three, to establish a pilot project for the Youth Futures concept which we discussed. In our consultations with the community — which were quite extensive — it was quickly pointed out to us that our concept of the Youth Futures program was a very complex undertaking. Perhaps even I was too ambitious in suggesting that we could implement this on a province-wide basis immediately.

What we have done is worked now with the community of Prince Albert to put the Youth Futures program in place. It will begin this fall. The committee is in the community now establishing it.

(1845)

The employment and maintenance supplement is a program now that has been deferred for budgetary considerations next year as a result of the onset of the child action plan. And so it's the one major plank there that has been put aside.

We also talked in our redesign document about improving accountability within the system. We've taken further steps in that regard, now having linked all of our systems with the federal systems, and so that further step in accountability is now in place.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Talking about accountability, I was just going to raise another question in that regard. Manitoba just implemented a 1 800 fraud line and I'm wondering if you can just . . . if there's a simple way of just explaining what you're doing on this accountability feature so that indeed the funds that are meant for recipients in need are available to them rather than abused by someone who'd take advantage of the program.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, we have, in the province, regional offices of Social Services. They serve as our point of contact with the general public. On a daily and a weekly and a monthly basis, calls are received to our regional offices pointing out issues where the public, or people who have some knowledge, will have concerns.

Each — I guarantee the member this — each and every call that is reported to our regional offices is followed up. Our tracking of the calls indicates that we receive more calls through our regional offices in this regard than we would . . . or than does Manitoba through its 1 800 concept.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, there still are a number of people on social assistance in this province. I'm wondering if you could give me an idea of the percentage of children on assistance who . . . or I mean the percentage of people who would be children. And also, do you have a number that would indicate how many families . . . or single-parent families who are on social assistance as a result of the inability to receive funds through their court-ordered maintenance payments? Do you have any such figures, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, we'd be very happy to provide all of these charts and tables to the member; that might be simplest.

Let me just say in reference to his first question, the number of children would represent today — April 1997 — 43.6 per cent of the total numbers of people being supported on social assistance. But we'll provide all the information by chart form to the member.

Mr. Toth: — I appreciate that, Mr. Minister. Another issue that we'd raised at length in the last session was regarding post-adoption services.

And at that time I believe you had cut Christian Counselling Services from any financial assistance. Mr. Minister, what have you done to date? Is Christian Counselling receiving any funds this year? Are they still without funds? And how many . . . I guess I would have to ask you is, regarding the post-adoption services, what's the average length of wait for a couple waiting for an adoption?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, we do not now provide funding in this budget year to Christian Counselling. They are supported by the community. We do have a program arrangement with them.

In terms of the wait for adoption, if one is seeking an infant, it can be up to five to six years. And that's essentially because many, many, many people now choose to keep their infants.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. You can see that I've got a number of questions here, but I'm trying to just go through some that I think are very important. One I should get off is, have you got your global answers to the questions that we had sent to the department? If they're not with you tonight, you could certainly send them to our office; we'd appreciate that.

Mr. Minister, the other day you announced a joint initiative with the Minister of Justice in regards to tougher sentences for individuals who would take advantage of young children acting as prostitutes on our streets. At the time, though I commended you and I still commend you for the action that's being taken or for the attempts to come to better action, but one of the things that still disturbs me, Mr. Minister, is I think we're missing out on one of the key ingredients, and that's the fact that we have to ask ourselves, why do we have young children — children as young as 10 years old — on the streets?

I think, Mr. Minister, in some ways there's an underlying problem that has to be addressed. And some of the things that I've heard . . . and I think it even was mentioned on a program on TV a couple of weeks ago — actually about three weeks ago — where parents were even putting their children on the street. And I think that's rather unfortunate. If it is, it's sad.

And while we're going to criticize the individual who would seek the avails of this individual . . . or these individuals, what about the people who would ask them, or require or whoever it may be, how do we . . . what are you doing to make sure we

address and get these children off the streets in the first place? And I think at the end of the day as well, I think people who would force young children, or for whatever means, should be certainly held accountable. Someone's got to be responsible on the other side as well.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Well, Mr. Chair, I can only agree with the member. Having children on our streets is the result of a wide range of, in some ways very complicated issues that results in children on our streets, children who will be selling their bodies for profit, whether it be money or for drugs.

And the solutions, if the member or any member of this legislature has the magic solution, we should implement it immediately. The solutions are not simple and I know the member knows that.

The point the member makes, that there are some family causes in some cases and we need to be dealing with those family causes — it may be family breakup; it may be drug or alcohol; it may reflect on abuse that happened to parents when they were children — all of these factors are there.

But I share the member's view that as parents we have to have some responsibility for the children that God has given us. And how we can meet the needs of those parents, and therefore the needs of their children, is a challenge. We've implemented a number of programs, as the member knows — family support programs, parent-aid program, children-at-risk programs — but it just takes an ongoing, I think, an ongoing and concerted effort by our entire community, by our entire society.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I want to thank you and your officials for your responses over the past number of weeks on the different occasions we've had to certainly stand and debate some of the issues. Needless to say, there's a lot more . . . a number of other areas we could certainly get into and debate as well.

But I just want to close by saying, Mr. Minister, while there's some areas that I certainly want to applaud you and your officials for working on, there's some areas that I feel more needs to be done. We've recognized that. And I think at the end of the day our working together to try and create a better family environment, and certainly work to build better families, is something that is important and is essential.

And having said that, I'd just like to again thank you. And certainly we want to give the . . . I understand and I see the Premier is itching and ready to go. We want to have a chance to chat at him as well, so we won't delay the process.

But I look forward to further debate in the future in regards to a number of these issues and will certainly indicate, Mr. Minister — and I thank you as well — I think I mentioned a couple of questions the other day I've got to get a little bit of information in writing to you so you can respond to them. Thank you for the work of your office and the staff in responding to questions. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Chair, perhaps just before we vote

these off I want to say a word of thanks to members of the opposition for their questions. And a very particular thanks to the officials who have joined us in this legislature to assist in our deliberations.

But let me say this, Mr. Chair, while we've been joined by four or five individuals from the department, they simply represent the entire Department of Social Services, which represents 2,000-or-thereabouts individuals across the province who are serving the people of Saskatchewan . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . and part of the entire civil service, as the Premier points out, who are doing an excellent job, in sometimes some very difficult circumstances, at serving the people of our province. So by thanking the officials who have joined us, I want that thanks to be extended to all the employees of the Department of Social Services and the public service in general.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Item 1 agreed to.

Items 2 to 7 inclusive agreed to.

Vote 36 agreed to.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Krawetz.....1801
Osika1801
Julé1801
Aldridge1801
Hillson1801
Belanger1801
Boyd1801

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk1802

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Van Mulligen.....1802
Bjornerud1802
Upshall1802
D’Autremont1802
Goulet.....1802
Belanger1802
Teichrob.....1802
Crofford.....1803
Tchorzewski1809
Whitmore.....1835

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Closure of Big River Tree Nursery
Belanger1803
Saskatchewan’s Economic Growth
Tchorzewski1803
Air Ambulance Award
Wall1803
Artist Rosa Gebhardt Recognized
Julé1803
Cathedral Village Arts Festival
Crofford.....1804
Canada Day Poster Challenge
McLane1804
New Addition to Hudson Bay Hospital
Renaud1804
Owner of Ambulance Service Marks 40 Years
Jess1804

ORAL QUESTIONS

Child Protection Services
Julé1805
Calvert1805
Saltcoats Reassessment
Bjornerud1805
Teichrob.....1805
SaskPower Proposed Project in Guyana
McLane1806
Lautermilch1806
SaskTel’s Failed Venture in the United States
Bjornerud1807
Lingenfelter1807
Silver Sage Casino
Heppner1808
Crofford.....1808
David Milgaard Case Review
Toth1808
Nilson1808
Apology for Remarks About Reform Leader
Boyd1808
Lingenfelter1808
Chief Electoral Officer Report

Osika	1809
Mitchell	1809
INTRODUCTION OF BILLS	
Bill No. 229 — The Education and Health Tax Amendment Act, 1997 (Indians off-reserve)	
Boyd	1809
Bill No. 230 — The Farm Security Amendment Act, 1997	
McPherson	1809
Bill No. 232 — The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Amendment Act, 1997 (Appointments Review Committee/“ARC”)	
Boyd	1810
Bill No. 237 — The NORTHERN Act	
Belanger	1810
MOTIONS	
Extension of Leave of Absence for The Speaker	
Kowalsky	1810
ORDERS OF THE DAY	
PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS	
SECOND READINGS	
Bill No. 236 — The Chief Electoral Officer Accountability Act	
Osika	1810, 1814
Hillson	1812
Van Mulligen	1813
Recorded Division	1814
Bill No. 227 — The Saskatchewan Health Bill of Rights and Responsibilities Act	
Boyd	1815, 1818
Toth	1816
Lorje	1818
Recorded Division	1819
GOVERNMENT ORDERS	
ADJOURNED DEBATES	
SECOND READINGS	
Bill No. 67 — The Agri-Food Amendment Act, 1997	
Hillson	1819
Lorje (privilege)	1820
Aldridge	1821
Upshall	1823
COMMITTEE OF FINANCE	
General Revenue Fund — Agriculture and Food — Vote 1	
Upshall	1824
D’Autremont	1824
Supplementary Estimates 1996-97	
General Revenue Fund — Budgetary Expense — Agriculture and Food — Vote 1	
D’Autremont	1827
Upshall	1827
General Revenue Fund — Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat — Vote 25	
Crofford	1827, 1833
Belanger	1827, 1832
Julé	1831
Goulet	1832
D’Autremont	1833
Supplementary Estimates 1996-97	
General Revenue Fund — Budgetary Expense — Indian and Metis Affairs Secretariat — Vote 25	1835
General Revenue Fund — Municipal Government — Vote 24	
Teichrob	1835
Bjornerud	1835
D’Autremont	1837
General Revenue Fund — Social Services — Vote 36	
Calvert	1840
Julé	1840
Toth	1845