

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present on behalf of residents of the community of Carrot River and area. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take immediate actions to ensure the survival of the Carrot River Hospital.

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

I so present.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have petitions to present today on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to cancel any severance payments to Jack Messer and to immediately call an independent public inquiry to find all the facts surrounding the Channel Lake fiasco.

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

These petitions come from the Kinistino, Melfort, Wakaw, Yellow Creek, and Prince Albert areas of the province, Mr. Speaker. I so present.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As well to present petitions, and reading the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to cancel any severance payments to Jack Messer and to immediately call an independent public inquiry to find out all the facts surrounding the Channel Lake fiasco.

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

Mr. Speaker, the petitions I'm presenting are signed by individuals from the communities of Heward, Stoughton, Regina, and Benson. I so present.

Mr. Bjonnerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have petitions to present on behalf of Saskatchewan residents. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to cancel any severance payments to Jack Messer and to immediately call an independent public inquiry to find all the facts surrounding the Channel Lake fiasco.

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

The people that are on the petition, Mr. Speaker, are from the community of Estevan. I so present.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to present a petition signed from people around Saskatchewan. And I read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to cancel any severance payments to Jack Messer and to immediately call an independent public inquiry to find all the facts surrounding the Channel Lake fiasco.

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

I so present.

Mr. Gantefoer: — I too rise, Mr. Speaker, to present petitions on behalf of citizens of the Carrot River Valley area. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take immediate actions to ensure the survival of the Carrot River Hospital.

Signatures on this petition are all from the community of Carrot River, Mr. Speaker. I so present.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition to present today regarding the impending closure of the Carrot River Hospital:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take immediate actions to ensure the survival of the Carrot River Hospital.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

People that have signed this petition are from Carrot River.

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise to present a petition, and the petition deals with the high power rates of northern Saskatchewan. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to address the issue of reducing the high cost of power rates in the North.

And the people that have signed this petition are from Ile-a-la-Crosse and Beauval and from all throughout the land. And I so present, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to present petitions on behalf of citizens of the province, this one concerning the Plains hospital closure.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to save the Plains Health Centre by enacting legislation to prevent the closure, and by

providing adequate funding to the Regina Health District so that the essential services provided at the Plains may be continued.

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

Those who have signed this petition, Mr. Speaker, are all from the community of Ponteix. I so present

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I join with my colleague in bringing forth a petition to try and stop the closure of the Plains hospital. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to save the Plains Health Centre by enacting legislation to prevent the closure, and by providing adequate funding to the Regina Health District so that the essential services provided at the Plains may be continued.

Mr. Speaker, the people that have signed these petitions are all from the Mankota, McCord, Glentworth area. I so present.

Ms. Haverstock: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise again on behalf of citizens who are seeking justice for men and women who have lost spouses in work-related accidents.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to have The Workers' Compensation Board Act amended for the disenfranchised widows and widowers of Saskatchewan whereby their pensions are reinstated and the revoked pensions reimbursed to them retroactively and with interest as requested by the statement of entitlement presented to the Workers' Compensation Board on October 27, 1997.

The people who have signed these petitions today, Mr. Speaker, come not only from Fort Qu'Appelle and Regina, Saskatchewan, but there are signatories from Alberta and British Columbia as well.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition from concerned citizens of Saskatchewan, and their concern is that people permanently injured through auto-related injuries covered by SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) no-fault insurance are being denied or having benefits suspended at the taxpayers' expense. And their prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to acknowledge the concerns of the taxpaying citizens by causing the government of Saskatchewan to ensure that absolute fairness and equitable treatment be given to those injured and disabled people and their families and be diligent in this most urgent matter.

And the petitioners, Mr. Speaker, are from Regina, Moose Jaw, White City, and Saskatoon. I so present.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to present petitions on behalf of the people from Fox Valley and Maple Creek today:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to reach necessary agreements with other levels of government to fund the twinning of the Trans-Canada Highway in Saskatchewan so that work can begin in 1998, and to set out a time frame for the ultimate completion of the project with or without federal assistance.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

I'm happy to present them on their behalf today, Mr. Speaker.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — According to order a petition regarding the high cost of power rates in the North presented on May 20 has been reviewed; pursuant to rule 12(7) is found to be irregular and therefore cannot be read and received. According to order the following petitions have been reviewed, and are hereby read and received.

Of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly to take action in health, education, jobs, homes, and roads to allow the North to join the rest of Saskatchewan;

Of citizens petitioning the Assembly to ensure that equitable treatment be given to those injured and disabled through auto-related injuries covered by no-fault insurance;

Of citizens regarding the funding of the Trans-Canada Highway; acting to save the Plains Health Centre; calling an independent public inquiry into Channel Lake; to put a moratorium on the closure of the Plains Health Centre; and to have the Workers' Compensation Board reinstate pensions for disenfranchised widows.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING, SELECT, AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Estimates

Deputy Clerk: — Mr. Whitmore, Chair of the Standing Committee on Estimates, presents the third report of the said committee which is hereby tabled as sessional paper no. 195.

Mr. Whitmore: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to move a motion, seconded by the member for Moosomin:

That the third report on the Standing Committee on Estimates be now concurred in.

I so move.

Motion agreed to.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on Monday next move first reading of a Bill, the big game hunt farming regulation ministerial responsibility Act.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 55 ask the government the following question:

To the minister of the Water Corporation: (1) what negotiations are presently taking place with the stakeholders in the Lodge Creek irrigation district in south-west Saskatchewan, locally known as the Spangler irrigation project; will the stakeholders be allowed to continue to operate the 1,000-acre project in the same successful way that they have in the past or will their project be shut down; will they be allowed to keep their money for the repairs of their project or will it be put into a general fund to be used by other projects.

I so submit, Mr. Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Kasperski — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and to my colleagues in the legislature a group of 17 grade 3 and 4 students from the Regina Christian School in the constituency of Regina Sherwood. I'd like all of us to welcome them here this afternoon. They're accompanied, Mr. Speaker, by their teacher Mrs. Wiebe, and parent chaperons Mrs. Chin, Mrs. Bates and Mrs. Jhanke.

And shortly after question period there will be a tour of the building at which time I will be meeting with them to discuss a little bit about the happenings here today. So on behalf of my colleagues I wish you would welcome the people from the Regina Christian School.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to the Assembly, I would like to introduce 24 grade 6 and 7 students from the Alameda School in Alameda, seated in your gallery. Accompanying the students is their teacher, Jeff Cameron, and chaperon, Randy Logue. I'd like to ask all members of the Assembly to welcome them here this afternoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont — While I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to introduce, seated in the opposition gallery, Rita Galloway, Wayne Galloway, Willard Ylioja, and Bret Powell, who are members of the professional outfitters association, who are in to observe the proceedings today. I'd like to ask everyone to welcome them here.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Tchorzewski — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to the House today, eight grade 7 and 8 students from F.W. Johnson Collegiate here in Regina. They're seated in your gallery and I want to extend a welcome to them as well as to their teacher, Bill Parr, and to their chaperons, Mr. Dennis and Ms. Borys.

And I'd like to ask members to join me in extending a welcome to these students from F.W. Johnson Collegiate.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the members of this House, a family

from my constituency, from the town of Osler, Pete and Jean Wall, and their children that are with them this afternoon, Kristal, Darrin, Matthew, Amanda, and Jonathan. I would ask them to stand.

I would also ask members of the House if you have some time this afternoon to meet with Kristal. She has an excellent article on what it's like to be a member of a family that's suffered from SGI or Workers' Compensation lack of caring there.

Kristal and her family are spending the four days this week on the grounds of the legislature. Would you please join me in welcoming them to the grounds.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the other members of the Assembly, representatives from two of Saskatchewan's regional economic development authorities. Mr. Speaker, they're here to participate in an announcement that I'll be making later on this afternoon.

With us here today are Ms. Joan Corneil, the economic development officer with the Great River Lakes REDA (regional economic development authority) — if Joan would stand please — and Mr. Graham Halliday, the general manager of the Prince Albert REDA. I would ask all members to join me in welcoming them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Lorje — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are many guests being introduced today, but I want to introduce you to 81 of the best and brightest grade 7 students in all of Saskatchewan. I'm talking about the group here from Lakeview School sitting in the west gallery. They are accompanied by their teachers Madam Cummings, Mrs. Block, and Mrs. Widenmaier, as well as parents, Mrs. Boyd, Mrs. Welsh, and Mrs. Clark.

Please join me in welcoming this great group of students.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

No-fault Insurance and Workers' Compensation Board Protest Rally

Ms. Draude — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we all know, this week individuals who are injured and subsequently mistreated by WCB (Workers' Compensation Board) and the SGI no-fault insurance program are protesting on the steps of the legislature.

The Minister of Labour has addressed the rally and for that I congratulate him. But, Mr. Speaker, it isn't enough to speak to people, you need to listen to them. It's also interesting that despite the fact a large portion of this group has been victimized by this government's no-fault insurance program, the minister responsible for SGI refuses to speak to the group.

Mr. Speaker, you can't determine what is wrong with a program without talking to the people it has wronged. I would strongly

urge the minister responsible for SGI to reconsider participating in the proceedings today or tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, many of the people have been seriously injured by no fault of their own yet their lives have been drastically changed forever. For some they are no longer able to work, some will live with serious injuries for the rest of their lives, and still some are forced on to social assistance because the government refuses to deal with them fairly. And it is high time, Mr. Speaker, that this government owns up to the havoc no-fault insurance and WCB programs are creating in the lives of the families.

I urge the Premier and the Deputy Premier to go out to the podium and speak with the victims of WCB and no-fault insurance today or tomorrow.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Fiscal Management

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP (New Democratic Party) were swept into power in Saskatchewan in 1991 by an electorate tired of financial mismanagement of Conservative governments. We have been cleaning up the Tory mess ever since.

How are we doing in this regard? Since the opposition never asked, I appreciate this opportunity to make a brief report, Mr. Speaker. The Toronto-based Investment Dealers Association of Canada had this to say about NDP efforts, quote:

The Saskatchewan economy is on track to its sixth consecutive year of expansion due in large part to admirable government management of provincial finances. The most indebted provincial economy in the country six years ago has now reduced the debt burden to the provincial average.

In fact the government debt to GDP ratio has dropped sharply from 56.1 per cent earlier this decade to 34 per cent in fiscal '97-98. This 22.1 per cent drop is double that of the next best provincial performance.

Sustained government efforts to restrain expenditures and the judicious implementation of tax cuts have paid off in higher levels of consumer spending and capital formation, paving the way for impressive economic growth.

The IDA (Investment Dealers Association) report also noted that Saskatchewan is only one of two provinces that has balanced its budget for five straight years.

The Speaker: — The hon. member's time has expired.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hiring of 200 Nurses

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise this afternoon to offer my congratulations to the Minister of Health on the recent announcement on the hiring of 200 new nurses in the province of Saskatchewan. I want to say on a personal note that

I hope some of those will be hired for the Battlefords.

Now I know some people will be cynical enough to say this is a small drop in the bucket compared to the number of nurses laid off over wellness. I know others will be cynical enough to point out that it comes on the eve of a by-election. However notwithstanding, Mr. Speaker, it is still good news and we do welcome it. The only note of caution I would throw into the mix is to tell our health districts they should get the money and hire the teachers very, very quickly.

An Hon. Member: — The nurses.

Mr. Hillson: — The nurses. Because, in the case of the North Battleford by-election, we were promised a \$25 million nursing home; the day after the by-election, the nursing home evaporated, never to be mentioned again.

So let's get the \$9 million, let's get the 200 nurses on the payroll quickly. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

World Catholic Education Day

Mr. Tchorzewski: — Mr. Speaker, in the world Christian community, today is Ascension Day, a day associated with both mission and education. In connection to the day's theme, the International Association for Catholic Education has designated today, May 21, as World Catholic Education Day.

Roman Catholic schools throughout the world will be holding activities recognizing their international ties. These activities range from prayers in individual classrooms to Internet hook-ups between schools of the same name in different countries. The clear benefit then of this kind of trans-world communication will be far beyond the narrowly sectarian, promoting both religious learning and international understanding.

In Canada, and in Saskatchewan of course, we have a long and valuable history of Catholic education. From the establishment of a church-run school in Ile-a-la-Crosse in 1860, Roman Catholic schools have been and continue to be an integral part of our excellent education system. Public and separate schools complement each other and provide an educational choice which recognizes the diversity of our society and our culture.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I commend the 19 separate school divisions in Saskatchewan with their 37,000 students representing just under 20 per cent of provincial enrolment. They will be very able Saskatchewan ambassadors to their fellow Catholic students around the world. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to join the member from Regina Dewdney and send my regards to all Catholic students and educators today in recognition of World Catholic Education Day.

I understand that many activities have been planned to link Saskatchewan Catholic students to Catholic students in all parts

of the world via the Internet. Certainly it is wonderful that these students will have the opportunity to share their faith globally through advanced technologies. That is certainly something that the first Catholic students in Ile-a-la-Crosse in 1860 could only have imagined.

Catholic education has been and continues to be a very strong tradition in Saskatchewan. Today I would like to congratulate all of the teachers, parents, and especially students for their hard work and dedication to spiritual learning, and hope that today's activities will be very meaningful for them. Thank you very much.

Agricultural Research Projects in Saskatchewan

Mr. Renaud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Agricultural research is very important to this province and to this government. More than \$1 million has been approved to date this year, already this year, for research projects by the Crop Development Centre and the department of plant sciences at the University of Saskatchewan.

Funding was recently approved for 13 unique projects to find solutions to weeds, to insects, and other advancements in agriculture.

The provincial government has funded nearly \$20 million worth of research directly related to agriculture in the past five years. Dr. Gordon Rowland of the University of Saskatchewan says this:

The superb support the Crop Development Centre has received over the years from Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food has allowed the CDC to become the leader in crop diversification in Canada. This partnership in agriculture research is the envy of all other provinces and ensures Saskatchewan's continued expansion in crop production and processing.

Mr. Speaker, we have the world leaders of agricultural research right here in Saskatchewan. We are committed to continue to support their research for the benefit of agricultural industry and for the good of all Saskatchewan people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Northern Housing Strategy

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to expound on some of the housing ideas that northern Saskatchewan people have had. For the past several years we've been harping on housing problems in the North and I, like many other northern leaders, have been elaborating on a need for an exciting, innovative, and comprehensive housing strategy.

We need substance and long-term commitments rather than ad hoc rhetoric when it comes to housing problems. These initiatives must be sustainable in both the financial sense and political sense. The northern people understand that we cannot have free houses. We understand that we cannot continue to wait for governments to react to our housing needs only when it's politically expedient to do so. This attitude would be contrary to the interests of the northern Saskatchewan people.

Points that must be included in the northern housing strategy are: (1) the provision of senior-specific dollars for renovations for private homes; (2) 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; (3) the establishment of a northern housing fund with the purpose of constructing new housing and providing continual flow of dollars for a repair program; (4) the devolution of more control of housing to the local level, to the housing authorities; and finally (5) the encouragement of homesteading, community lot development for affordable housing.

Mr. Speaker, I present some of these ideas on exciting northern housing initiatives. Thank you.

Long-serving Housing Authority Volunteers

Mr. Johnson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take a moment to publicly acknowledge two long-serving volunteers in my constituency. The first is Roger Laventure of Leoville. Mr. Laventure has served 20 years with the Leoville Housing Authority. The second is Luella Friesen who has just celebrated 25 years of service with the Spiritwood Housing Authority.

As you are well aware, Saskatchewan has one of the highest rates of voluntarism in Canada. We are particularly fortunate to have many fine, dedicated volunteers who are willing to serve in organizations such as local housing authorities. Even with so many volunteers however, the decades of service of Mr. Laventure and Mrs. Friesen have performed are really remarkable accomplishments. Such community service should not go unnoticed.

I would like all members of the Assembly to join me in congratulating and thanking Luella and Roger for their years of service. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Crown Corporations Accountability

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for the Crown Investments Corporation. Mr. Minister, yesterday the Provincial Auditor tabled his 1998 spring report, and when it came to SaskPower, Mr. Minister, the teacher gave you an F on management and accountability.

The Provincial Auditor is saying the public is losing confidence in the NDP's ability to manage the Crown sector. The Provincial Auditor is recommending that government take immediate action to address this flagging public confidence. The Sask Party agrees, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Minister, the Saskatchewan Party is recommending the Crown Corporations Committee hire an independent expert to examine governance and accountability at SaskPower and the other major Crown corporations.

Mr. Minister, will the NDP government follow the advice of the

Provincial Auditor and support the Saskatchewan Party's call for an independent expert to investigate the mess you've made in the Crown corporations?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite talks about changes in the governance of our Crown corporations, and obviously when we read the statement in the House on March 10, we dealt with the issue of proposed changes that would strengthen the operation reporting mechanisms of our Crowns, and I think that is truly important.

In his report the auditor, and I quote, also said:

CIC has taken steps to improve its performance reporting. For example, CIC's 1997 annual report includes vision, mission and information on actual results compared to plans set out in its 1996 report.

And he goes on to list out a number of improvements that have taken place in the Crowns . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The member opposite says, can we do better. Obviously there is always room for improvement. And our commitment has been and continues to be — to the people of Saskatchewan — that we will continue to work, not only with the opposition through the Crown Corporations Committee, with the auditor to improve mechanisms.

But, Mr. Speaker, I say to the member opposite, his continually playing politics with the Crowns leaves a lot to be desired.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if the minister and the NDP government are truly serious about improving this whole process, then they'll support our proposal. The Saskatchewan Party has asked the Crown Corporations Committee to hire Lawrence Tapp, the dean of the business school at the University of Western Ontario, to look at the governance and management structures at SaskPower and the other major Crowns.

Dean Tapp is an internationally recognized expert on Crown governance, improving corporate performance and corporate restructuring. And he's willing to do the job, Mr. Minister. That's exactly the kind of advice you say you need, and we've provided an opportunity for you to take it.

If the NDP is truly interested in improving the process, will you support the proposal to hire Dean Tapp as the Saskatchewan Party has proposed?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I say to the members opposite, and through you, Mr. Speaker, to those who may be listening to this debate, but it becomes obvious from the report that was given from the Conservative caucus, which that member now belongs to, to the review of Crown corporations in 1996, on page 8 of that report they give their position on the Crown corporations.

And I quote: "The government immediately take steps to privatize SaskTel." That's their position. We know that.

Where did we get that? You gave it to us. During the review of the Crown corporations in 1996, the Conservative caucus gave us this report, and I quote again: "The government immediately take steps to privatize SaskTel."

This is what their . . .

An Hon. Member: — Some sort of a communist plot.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Oh now he says it's a communist plot — the Crown corporations.

This tells you where that right-wing rump of a party comes from. That Crown corporations should be privatized and Crown corporations are a communist plot.

Mr. Speaker, can you believe that these people have any legitimacy here in this Assembly or anywhere else in the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Outfitting Industry Representation

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister for the Environment and Resource Management. Mr. Minister, you're currently proposing to transfer the power to license and set standards for outfitters to the industry, and that's fine.

But in true NDP fashion of picking winners and losers, the minister has ordained the Saskatchewan Outfitters Association as the sole regulator, even though it only represents 40 per cent of all licensed outfitters.

When Alberta transferred licensing to the industry, all outfitting associations dissolved and formed a new association representing all outfitters.

Mr. Minister, why at the end of the day are you favouring the Saskatchewan Outfitters Association when they represent so few outfitters, instead of creating an impartial process that allows input from all licensed outfitters, not just a chosen few.

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. member for the question. The Saskatchewan Outfitters Association is "the" organization of outfitters in the province. They are very responsible, congenial individuals representing not only the hunting/outfitting industry but also the fishing industry. And certainly we are looking at working with all outfitters, but we are starting out by using Saskatchewan Outfitters Association, as they are a good representation of the outfitters in Saskatchewan.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The "the" he refers to represent less than 40 per cent of the outfitters. Today we are joined by a group of very concerned outfitters. Number one, they are concerned about the minister's biased decision and the impact this will have on the industry. And number two, they're concerned because the minister has no intention of

consulting with them in a meaningful way.

Mr. Speaker, the minister hasn't replied to concerns presented to him by their legal counsel nor has he given outfitters sufficient warning of his so-called consultation meetings. Again we see this government hold mock meetings across the province but conveniently forget to send out notices until two days before the meetings.

Mr. Minister, will you commit to consult with all Saskatchewan outfitters before you storm ahead with your biased decisions?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We certainly . . . Our doors are always open and I'm certainly prepared to meet with the individuals that are here, if they so wish to meet with me this afternoon. And we can discuss some of the shortcomings that might be involved.

With reference to the Saskatchewan Outfitters Association only representing 40 per cent. That is certainly a significant number of outfitters. And no organization ever has all of the individuals of an interest group signed up, but we certainly are prepared to work with all the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, will you meet with us and representatives of the other outfitters in Saskatchewan today?

Hon. Mr. Scott: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The answer is yes.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

First Nations Fund

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Municipal Government, the minister responsible for the first nations fund.

Madam Minister, the trustees of the first nations fund are blocking the Provincial Auditor from looking at their books. The first nations fund received \$2.2 million last year and \$14.5 million from the government this year, money that is supposed to go towards economic and social development of first nations people. But how do we know how the money is being spent?

Madam Minister, why are the trustees of the first nations fund blocking the auditor from looking at the books? And will you immediately demand that the fund trustees comply with a complete audit by the Provincial Auditor dating back to the fund's inception in 1997?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to have the opportunity to answer this question and to set right the thinking on the issue.

This is a new fund established last year. This would be the first complete year of operation. There has been a misunderstanding that has arisen. I have written to the first nations back in April

asking them to give — the fund has been completely audited by a qualified auditor without qualification — asking them to give access to the Provincial Auditor.

I don't have a response in writing yet but the first nations leadership have been in touch with my office today indicating that there has been a misunderstanding. And we are mutually agreed that nothing less than a full, transparent public accounting is required.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Crown Corporation Financial Disclosure

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the minister responsible for CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) also.

Mr. Minister, the Provincial Auditor is telling you that the Crowns need to be more accountable. He is recommending that all Crown corporations be required to publish a list of persons who were paid more than \$2,500 by the Crown; on all of the suppliers who received more than \$20,000 from the Crown.

NDP Crown corporations continue to hide this information. For example, you still refuse to provide us with the list of the people and companies who were paid over \$1.4 million in a botched Guyana deal.

Mr. Minister, if Crown corporations are spending taxpayers' money wisely, you have nothing to hide. Will you follow the auditor's recommendation and will you release a list of all persons and companies who receive monies from the Crowns.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — I say to the member opposite that obviously the report of the auditor yesterday was one that we will look at very carefully as to improving the management, the reporting, and the operation of our Crown corporations. And having been in the Assembly for 20 years, we get an auditor's report every year and I'm sure if you compare back, Mr. Speaker, over that 20-year period, every year there are ways and means of improving the operation and governance of our province. And it's an important function that he plays, and obviously we will be taking all of his recommendations extremely seriously.

But, Mr. Speaker, what seems to be a little bit hypocritical is the Conservative caucus — some of them who sat with the Grant Devine administration — coming here when Crown corporations were being reported — s you will remember, Mr. Speaker, three years in some cases after they were tabled in the House they were being reviewed by the Crown Corporations Committee. For these individuals to be critical of this administration's management of the Crowns seems a little bit ludicrous.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister should realize that this government's been in power for seven years and the problems within the Crowns are getting worse and worse.

Mr. Minister, there was a story in today's paper about the no-see-ums. At first I thought it was another story about NDP Crown subsidiaries. The Provincial Auditor says they are continuing to hide financial information from the public in your no-see-um subsidiaries like Channel Lake. And we all know what happened there. Millions of dollars down the tube thanks to questionable trading activity and bumbling management by your government.

Mr. Minister, you keep hiding the activities of your Crown subsidiaries. In fact companies like SaskPower Commercial and SaskTel International aren't even subject to the freedom of information Act.

Mr. Minister, will you immediately make your Crown subsidiaries follow the same reporting practices as the parent Crowns, and will you start by making SaskPower Commercial and SaskTel International subject to the freedom of information Act?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I say to the member opposite, obviously what their statement's about their positions on the Crowns, and I quote again that in the document they gave us in 1996 they said, the first thing we should do is privatize SaskTel. We know that they want the Crowns privatized and nothing less than that will satisfy their emotional and political need to privatize. That's what they were doing under the Devine administration and if they're elected they have stated that's what they will do again.

As to the commitments that we will improve governance of the Crowns, already the auditor — and I quote again — quote, he said, "CIC has taken steps to improve its performance reporting."

And I tell the member opposite that we will continue to improve that.

Mr. Speaker, what I would like to know is whether the members opposite would open the Tory slush fund to the auditor and let him have a look at the millions of dollars that still exist there.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. Order, order. Order. Order, order. All hon. members on both sides of the House, all hon. members — order.

Regina Hospital Bed Numbers

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Liberal opposition has raised concerns on many occasions about the present number of acute care beds here in Regina. We maintain that the current figure of 675 is not enough to meet the needs of the people of Regina and southern Saskatchewan.

The Minister of Health has stated on a number of occasions that he's satisfied with the present number because he says an average of 620 patients require beds on a daily basis. The Minister of Health has also stated that reducing the number of acute care beds in Regina any further would be, and I quote,

"inappropriate because of the pressure they have from time to time serving Regina and the southern part of the province."

And the question today, Mr. Speaker, is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, do you stand by your minister's comments?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Health has reported on a number of occasions to this House, in his extensive discussions with this health district and with health districts and with health care providers across the province, he heard the clear message that new and extra workers were required to provide the care that's necessary.

Mr. Speaker, after hearing that, this minister and this government acted on it just this week to add 200, Mr. Speaker, 200 new, front-line health care workers to the health care system in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, across the province that news is being greeted as welcome news. Here in my own local paper, a major headline: "Health care will benefit from 200 more nurses."

Mr. Speaker, the commitment of this government and this party is to provide to the people of Saskatchewan the best possible health care that we can provide, which has been the tradition of this party and this government.

Mr. Speaker, we would be aided, we would be aided in this cause if there were some support, even a modicum of support, from the federal Liberal government who has cut 7 billion from health spending in this country.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister and that government responded only after we forced them to deal with the doctors. And they had to respond to our calls to get more nurses into the system. Now we're talking about beds, Mr. Minister, don't try and avoid the question.

Mr. Speaker, the Liberal opposition has obtained a memo from the Regina Health District — I have a copy here and I'll send it over in a moment — which confirms that 79 acute care beds will be shut down between June 28 and August 31. Two months. As a result there will only be 596 acute care beds in the system.

Mr. Premier, your Minister of Health has said the average daily patient load in Regina is 620, and in his words, any further reductions would be inappropriate because of the pressure on the system. What immediate action are you going to take to ensure that the number of acute care beds does not drop below 675 this summer?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, just days or weeks ago in this House the same member from Shaunavon stood in this House and created all sorts of consternation in the community of Swift Current by saying that beds were going to be closed in Swift Current. The district board people in Swift Current immediately had to reassure the people of Swift Current that the information that that member brings to this legislature, in fact at

that day and is often, not accurate, Mr. Speaker.

I have confidence in the Regina district to manage this health care delivery for the people of Regina and southern Saskatchewan, as they're doing, Mr. Speaker. This government enjoys that same confidence.

What we have no confidence in, and what the people of Saskatchewan have no confidence in, is any health care position taken by the Liberal Party of Saskatchewan.

Mr. McPherson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would caution the minister answering the question to watch who's talking about inaccuracies. Because on how many occasions have you had to swallow those words, Mr. Minister, and, Mr. Premier? And you'll be looking at this document in a few moments.

Obviously the Premier either doesn't understand or doesn't care. There aren't enough beds in the system now, and we hear this on an almost daily basis. The only reason that the Regina district is forced to even think about closing beds during the summer is because of the funding shortfall by your government.

Mr. Premier, you admitted this week that you went too far in gutting front-line health care workers, and you had to bring in 200 nurses into the system. Will you now admit that reducing the number of acute care beds for the people of Regina and southern Saskatchewan will only escalate the bed crisis. Will you take charge and prevent these summer bed closures?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, the hon. member from Moose Jaw, the Acting Minister of Health, has provided the answer in this matter. And I think it's fairly well known and accepted within the medical profession, within the medical profession and the medical community at large, that during the summer period there is bed usage utilization which adjusts to the question of the summer period and the summer vacation demands and others of medical staff and the patients involved.

But I remind the member opposite here when he's asking us about funding and bed shortages, what the Leader of the Liberal Party in Saskatchewan said in an interview to Costa Maragos of the CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation):

“What inefficiencies would you find to make up the \$1.3 billion?” Maragos asks.

Melenchuk: “Well, health care.”

Maragos: “How much would you save there? Give me a number.”

Melenchuk: “I don't know because I haven't seen the numbers. I'll have to look at the numbers.”

Maragos: “If you don't know, then how can you say that?”

Melenchuk: “Because I know there are inefficiencies in the system and I understand health care reform and I understand health care programs and I know there are inefficiencies in the system.”

If he does, tell us where your cuts are going to take place. Tell

us where your cuts are going to take place.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Northern Economic Development

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, yesterday's meeting in La Ronge was generally accepted as positive by many northern leaders. There has been a willingness of many northern people to once again look at your government for leadership in addressing the long-term problems of the North.

Mr. Premier, yesterday's meeting did not have any definite time lines or stated objectives. It is time for all levels of government to take responsibility. And, Mr. Premier, it is time that this government stopped signing MOUs (memorandum of understanding) and it is time we start fulfilling our IOUs (I owe you) to meet the long-standing promises made to the northern people.

Mr. Premier, what are your deadlines? What are your stated objectives as a result of yesterday's meeting with the northern people?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I note that the hon. member in his question prefaced it by saying that it's time for all governments to deal with this issue in northern Saskatchewan. And I agree with that.

And that means the federal Liberal government as well. And the federal Liberal government, while it had observers at the meeting, was not unfortunately a signatory to that contract and MOU — we were. This government was and the northern leaders, aboriginal, Metis, northern municipalities, were.

So I would urge the hon. member to start asking that those IOUs, that his Liberal Party that he is a member of, that they start ponying up too.

More specifically to answer his question, we have a three-pronged plan. We're going to have an economic assessment plan to identify the economic opportunities, since all had agreed that is where the thrust of economic development should go in the North.

Secondly, we're going to have a northern economic development board that utilize those plans and construct them into positive, concrete action for jobs.

And thirdly, talk about an IOU. Maybe they owe you an IOU, the federal Liberals. Get the Liberals nationally to join into a Canada-Saskatchewan economic development agreement plan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be in fact writing a letter to the federal government encouraging them to participate.

Mr. Premier, there are three flags we wish to raise and we do it

in support of this effort. One, the Athabasca basin people, the Dene people of Saskatchewan's far North, have opted for a 30-day boycott of this northern dialogue. The Dene people are unsure of your government's intention and have requested a second meeting to discuss the specific far North issues.

Second, that the initiative, any initiative, must be community based so as to maximize benefits to the northern people living in northern Saskatchewan. And third, there has been some suggestion of including the federal government in this effort, and we support that. We genuinely call for that.

But we do have some concerns that the Saskatchewan government may use the federal versus provincial argument to stall the application of further development and stall potential progress.

Mr. Premier, what are your comments and your commitments on the three flags that we have raised on behalf of the people of northern Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — The hon. member is inaccurate in his information. The Dene with whom I have undertaken to meet, the Athabasca Dene, because they were not at the meeting in La Ronge, they'll be meeting in 30 days time roughly, give or take a day or two here or there, to discuss the question of the MOU.

But every indication given to us by Mr. John Dantouze, vice-chief of the Prince Albert Grand Council from that area, indicates that the Dene from Athabasca basin are able to sign on this MOU, but they want the 30 days because they weren't there to take a look at where the word changes might take place. And we agree with that. I'm going to be meeting with them, hopefully in Wollaston. If not, at some appropriate time that takes place.

With respect to the timetables the hon. member talks about, the MOU actually does talk about timetables in terms of "as soon as possible." One can say that's very indefinite, but I view that to be an imperative to act more quickly than later and we intend to do that.

And with respect to the federal government, I sincerely will take up the hon. member's offer to use his Liberal connections to pressure the Liberal government in Ottawa to sign on on this issue so that we can get on and turn this page and provide the hope and the opportunity to prosperity the people in northern Saskatchewan rightly deserve.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Youth Employment Program

Hon. Ms. MacKinnon: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud today to announce an exciting new program that will provide job opportunities to the young people of our province and assist regional economic development authorities.

The new, \$240,000 REDA youth employment program will help young people gain practical work experience in community economic development. The program will also

enable REDAs to hire young people to expand their services in areas such as business counselling and business development.

Mr. Speaker, REDAs are essential in community economic development in this province. They work in partnership with local people to make decisions at the local level which directly affect them. This allows for greater community input in local development, a better quality of life, and more jobs and opportunities for Saskatchewan people.

This program will help build a stronger future for our young people who are the keys to Saskatchewan's well-being. By providing young people with jobs in urban and rural communities across our province we are investing in their future. We are helping young people gain practical and marketable skills, and we're providing them with the knowledge they need to succeed in the new millennium.

This will mean more opportunities, more jobs. It will also mean strong, healthy communities — communities that will provide a solid foundation for economic growth; communities in which there is a bright future for our sons and our daughters.

Mr. Speaker, I hope all members will encourage and support this worthwhile program. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, the minister's announcement makes me think of the lines at the opening of the book, *A Tale of Two Cities*, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." There are great times for many here in Saskatchewan but for our young people looking for jobs and a future it may be the worst of times.

REDAs can play an important part in developing economic activity, especially in rural Saskatchewan. In some, and I believe there's six REDAs in this province — one of which I am particularly proud because it's part of my constituency, is doing a tremendous amount of work.

This announcement should come as welcome news for REDAs and I look forward to discussing the details with the REDAs around the province. I hope the rules, the regulations, and the red tape are very, very minimal. I hope the emphasis will be on work experience, and learning for young people, not filling out enough papers to make the government look good. And I also hope the REDAs have free rein to spend the money in the way they feel would be best suited in their area without a lot of government strings attached.

I congratulate the minister in recognizing that REDAs and youth employment are both areas that need a lot of work by this government. I really hope that the initiative not only creates jobs, but starts the more important process of creating a more positive attitude about this province, and that young people will begin to have faith there may be a future for them in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too welcome the announcement we have heard this afternoon. I was of course

very pleased in the federal budget when we heard the commitment of the federal government to the education of our young people, and I was of course very saddened when the Premier was critical of our federal government for putting such a high priority on our young people. So I'm glad to see that the provincial government has now belatedly come on board.

It seems to me this program will complement the new youth employment strategy announced on February 12 by the federal government. That strategy will provide 110,000 young Canadians with work experience by the end of this year. The federal summer career program also will offer wage subsidy and career-related jobs for students during the summer months.

Nearly 1,200 young people in Saskatchewan have participated in the youth internship Canada program so far. Estevan Comprehensive School uses this program for students to be interned in local workplaces. Federal funding has made this possible, Mr. Speaker.

Also the job creation partnerships program has created 1,500 jobs since 1993. So Saskatchewan's gotten over \$6 million from the federal government for youth employment. I'm glad that the provincial government has now provided less than a quarter million. Thank you.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 216 — The Wildlife Amendment Act, 1998

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move first reading of a Bill, No. 216, The Wildlife Amendment Act, 1998.

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

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, before orders of the day I request leave to make a statement of a personal nature.

Leave not granted.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Mr. Speaker, with great pleasure in open, honest government I would like to table the answer to question 64.

The Speaker: — The response to question 64 is tabled.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 56 — The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 1998

Hon. Mrs. Teichrob: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 56, The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 1998.

As many members will know, The Municipal Revenue Sharing

Act establishes the level of provincial assistance to be allocated to both urban and rural municipalities. Accordingly these amendments give legal effect to decisions reflected in the 1998-99 budget.

The Bill provides for a method of calculating the funds available to both the urban revenue-sharing pool and the rural revenue-sharing pool in this fiscal year. The Bill provides for no change to the urban revenue-sharing pool and a \$3 million increase to the rural revenue-sharing pool this year.

The increased funding will go towards rural equalization payments in order to improve equalization and provide assistance to the rural municipalities in greatest need of funding.

For urban municipalities it has been decided to maintain grants at their 1997 level. In other words each city, town, and village will receive the same grant amounts as last year, the same dollar value. This distribution strategy is supported by the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association.

Funding for rural municipalities has been restructured this year in response to a proposal from the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities. Most of the conditional construction funding has been shifted to become unconditional funding for road preservation and construction.

(1430)

Making the grants more unconditional will significantly increase rural municipalities' spending autonomy. Decisions can now be based on local priorities. Amendments confirming the ability to specify funding distribution in regulations make up the remainder of this Bill.

In closing, the total revenue-sharing funding of \$50.7 million represents a significant level of financial support to Saskatchewan municipalities. I urge the members to support this Bill.

Accordingly I move second reading of Bill No. 56, The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 1998, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, just a few comments regarding The Municipal Revenue Sharing Act, that's Bill No. 56. For the most part as we understand, Mr. Speaker, the Bill simply implements what was announced in the budget in March; a budget I think, Mr. Speaker, if you took a look, very few people would really remember. The only things that people would remember and certainly the municipalities remember is the fact that they were left out in the cold again and the fact that the \$10 million of dollars they lost in revenue-sharing grants in the province last year certainly weren't made up for this year.

Another area that we are familiar with and that RMs (rural municipalities) are calling for — rural municipalities specifically — was \$56 million just to allow them to simply keep up and keep their road infrastructure in place, to just maintain what's there rather than adding to it. And unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, while the minister's piece of

legislation today talks about how they're going to now implement what was announced in the budget — it's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, that the legislation didn't as well address some of the areas that are a major concern to rural and urban municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, one of the areas that municipalities continue to bring to our attention is the payments in lieu of taxes, and we certainly will have some questions in regard to that question. And it's just forewarning the minister of the fact that that it is a question that will be raised, not only as we address these pieces of legislation we have before us but when we get into further estimates, discussion, and debate in the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, in light of where the Bill intends to go, in light of the fact that it's just moving basically to address the concerns and the issues that have been announced in the budget, we do not see any reason at this time to continue or prolong debate in second reading because we feel we can quite responsibly address questions directly with the minister in Committee of the Whole, and therefore we're prepared to move to committee at this time.

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

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 46

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 46 — The Credit Union Act, 1998** be now read a second time.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well it's been quite a number of years that The Credit Union Act and various versions of it have been before us. And generally in the past what has happened is government has created an idea, and then we've checked that back in our constituencies and back in our communities to see what the reaction would be. And invariably it put a real glitch into independent business and some of the brokers that are out there. And always there was a major concern and always this government got it wrong.

Well this time they done it a little differently, Mr. Speaker. And I think from the research we've done, it happens to be something that at this particular point in time the brokers have no problem with. I think the only concern that we do have is that it's in regulations and sometimes government there tends to get a little carried away with themselves and think that they are in charge of the whole wagon. And they're not.

But I think as far as what it does and doesn't do, it brings us into line with where we are in time and where we are in line with the amalgamation of banks, and a different kind environment that the whole financial institutions have to work in. And without belabouring that fact, Mr. Speaker, I think we're ready to see this go on to the Committee of the Whole.

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

Bill No. 50

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Teichrob that **Bill No. 50 — The Urban Municipality Amendment Act, 1998** be now read a second time.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, from my understanding, this Bill deals with what the minister describes as fine-tuning of the assessment procedures. And after the experience in many communities last year, one might be tempted to argue that much more fine-tuning is probably needed, and I agree.

Many local governments felt abandoned by the province during the reassessment process. Many of the problems experienced came out because the legislation or regulations surrounding reassessment were so late in coming, leaving municipalities with little or no time to prepare. This Bill will give the government, through regulation, the power to adjust the reassessment timetable.

This may help, but I think the greater help would be to have a government that seemingly had a plan going into major changes, such as reassessment. Clearly that was missing last year and it was local government who paid the price for the province's lack of foresight and planning.

There are many issues involving reassessment that must be resolved. Simply put, many people in this province were not treated fairly last year. I can use my own community of Saltcoats as an example, Mr. Speaker. Reassessment was clearly implemented badly last year and I hope this Bill will go far in solving the problems.

But in order to do this the government has to actually begin listening to what local governments and the people of this province have to say. The province has taken away most of their revenue-sharing grants and the least they can do is listen to them and not treat them in an arrogant manner we usually see in the bureaucratic triangle we seem to have.

This Bill refines the assessment appeals procedures. That's positive. But if reassessment is handled better next time, we would hopefully see fewer appeals and therefore fewer problems.

Mr. Speaker, I feel that we can address most of our questions in Committee of the Whole.

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

Bill No. 51

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Teichrob that **Bill No. 51 — The Rural Municipality Amendment Act, 1998** be now read a second time.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, many of the aspects of the Bill are routine or have been requested by the municipality. We have no objections to

these aspects. Our caucus respects the work of the provincial municipal governments and we want to do everything we can to support them. However, we do have some concerns about the Bill.

In the minister's speech we noted that the municipalities had concerns about the power this Bill gives the provincial government to amend assessment and taxation by regulation. The minister's only excuse was that the provisions would only be used if absolutely necessary. At the end of the day, the government can still use this power as it sees fit. So the concerns of the municipality should be heeded before instituting that aspect.

We also have some concerns about the sections that give the municipalities more flexibility in setting penalty rates for tax arrears. This may lead to a patchwork tax enforcement system although we should always give sober second thought to measures that would effectively increase taxes for property owners.

In the same vein, the Act prohibits property owners who are in arrears from removing fixtures. We would want to see the definition of fixtures more clearly defined. Further, does this apply to mobile home-owners? If they are given voting rights do they have the same responsibility as other home-owners and landowners?

Finally, we have particular concerns about the sections allowing fees for municipal services. This is a concept we generally agree with since it gives municipalities more freedom and flexibility to manage their own affairs.

However the Bill stipulates that the normal penalty for non-payment of fees is withholding services. Further in the Bill's explanatory notes, Mr. Speaker, fire protection and street lighting are given as examples of services that could be subject to fees. I do not think that that is a responsible public policy, to allow a house to burn down to the ground and endanger other properties because the individual has not paid his fees.

Mr. Speaker, I would be willing to let this one also go to committee because I believe we can ask our questions there.

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

Bill No. 52

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mrs. Teichrob that **Bill No. 52 — The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 1998** be now read a second time.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, most of this Bill is routine, and other more debatable aspects have been dealt with within the urban and rural municipality Bills so I won't waste this House's time belabouring those aspects.

There is one part unique to this Bill that I would like to examine more closely. This is the section related to the proposed Northern Revenue Sharing Trust Account Management Board. The official opposition caucus is not convinced that this board

as it is structured in this Bill is the right vehicle to achieve any goal.

For starters it has no real power. It can only make recommendations to the minister. There is therefore a danger that it would degenerate into nothing more than a feel-good exercise for the participants and a horse show for the NDP.

Further we find it disturbing that the Bill sets virtually no guidelines, mandates, or parameters for the new board. There appears to be no particular task or function for this agency.

This is especially a concern with regards to the membership of the board. The Bill leaves open-ended the number of people that can be appointed. Also the Bill sets out no restrictions on who may be appointed. Literally anyone who the minister feels like appointing may be appointed. There is a clear danger here of the board becoming a vehicle for patronage by the minister. The minister may appoint any number of people who need have no particular qualifications and can do then no particular job.

We're not saying that this is the way the board will be used or that the government is intending to use it that way, but that avenue of abuse is possible and there may develop a public perception the board is simply a pork-barrel.

On the whole, our caucus feels that the new Bill should be reviewed to make it more meaningful and more defined. We'll want to review these concerns in the committee. At this time however, we have no objection to passing the Bill at the second reading.

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

(1445)

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 7 — The Pastures Act

The Deputy Chair: — Before I call clause 1, I invite the minister to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Yes, Mr. Chair. With me to my left is Dr. Peter Rempel, the director of pastures; and to my right is Gloria Parisien, manager of land and resource policy.

Clause 1

Mr. Bjornerud: — Good afternoon, Mr. Minister. And I want to also welcome your officials here this afternoon.

We have just a few questions on The Pastures Act. And I guess maybe the first thing I would ask you to do is to explain really what you're doing in this Act, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Well the short . . . I'm just getting the short answer from the officials. I guess the best way to put it is it consolidates the Act; it brings it . . . The pastures program was under different Acts before and we're trying to streamline the Acts so that it's clear and concise as to what's going on and get rid of any redundancies under the Act. So it's an updating and a consolidation.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I guess really the only other question then that I have is, will there be anything coming in regulations to follow up this Bill that we don't know about now? Will there be changes to come later?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Well what . . . We don't know exactly, because we're going to do consultations to establish the regulations. And the people who are involved in the pastures program, the pasture patrons and stuff, will be consulted. The managers will be advising us.

And if there's any concerns that you would have, I'm sure they'll get a hold of you or you can follow it along, because we want to make sure that the regulations are easy and manageable for the people using the pastures.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, there are some pasture concerns that have been brought to my attention, and I'm not sure if you want to touch on them here or you'd rather wait until we get to estimates.

But the concern being that a complaint was brought to me last year, and it's happened before, where a patron would take his cattle to a pasture and through drought or whatever reason they have to leave the pasture early. And I guess the person involved in each case was very dissatisfied with what would happen because their rates were set — they had to pay the full rate — and yet their animals were taken out early. But they didn't get a refund.

Is there any thought down the road of setting out on how many days they go in there and a refund would be given back in excess of . . . if they were 20 days short, or say for an example it got dry and they would cut back 20 animals or something?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Yes, this is not really into the Act and if you want to explore this further we can do it in estimates. But we have a 110-day policy and if they're shorter than that then we will waive the difference. But at this point in time with our pastures we're thinking that we have enough resources there to keep the animals in. I know we're monitoring them very carefully.

And there's one other point here that my officials . . . Oh yes, to eliminate the non-delivery charges that would be accompanying the delivering of the cattle.

So we think we're going to have enough grass. If we can just keep the rain coming it should be all right. If not, they won't be overcharged.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. That's all the questions I have on The Pasture Act at this time.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I recognize that we're a little hard to see over here sometimes. So I do have a few questions though of the minister before we carry on with The Pasture Act, because of course in south-west Saskatchewan pastures every year are very important to us and of course this year may be more important than ever.

Minister, obviously the consolidation part looks good, but you referred to the fact that you're going to do consultation with

people in order to do the regulations. What consultation have you done in order to come up with the idea that you needed to consolidate?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Well this Act is now here as a result of concerns from the south-west pasture area, from your area. They wanted some policy changes. We took it back here, consulted with our officials in Agriculture and Justice, and decided that rather than making ad hoc changes, our advice was that we should look at the review of the whole Act.

And so as a result, responding to the needs from that south-west area, we are now at a point where the Act is being consolidated and hopefully streamlined so it's user-friendly. And the regulations — we're going to attempt to make them user-friendly as well.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I appreciate your answer. I was pretty sure of the answer and what it was going to be, but I did want you to get it into *Hansard* so that I could deliver it to the cowboys down in the hills. Because once in awhile they forget that they were talked to and then they suggest later on that nobody ever talked to me. So we'll be able to show them that in fact you have made that statement, that you did talk to them, and they can be assured then that this is a result of what they have been telling you.

And if they didn't tell you the right things, then they only have themselves to blame if it doesn't turn out right, I suppose.

But I do want to pursue it just a little bit further to make sure that we have gotten into the Bill what exactly they have been talking about. There's quite a bit of a problem, as you're aware, with noxious weeds in the pastures. Does this Bill cover the authority of local people to challenge and take on the problems of weed control in those noxious areas? And I think field bindweed was one that they talked about quite a bit.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Yes. I appreciate your earlier question because I did meet with these people about a year and a half ago. And the wheels of government do not turn that fast but at least we're able to respond, and hopefully, through the regulations we'll be able to resolve some of their concerns.

With regards to noxious weeds in pastures, pastures have to comply to The Noxious Weeds Act which we're also updating this year. But it's not in The Pastures Act. They are subject to The Noxious Weeds Act like everybody else is.

Mr. Goohsen: — Have you taken any measures in this Act then to provide for natural control of things like leafy spurge? I guess sheep, for example, eat it off so short that eventually it dies. And some of the people in our area, of course, have dealt with this by moving sheep onto pastures where that is a problem.

One of the problems of course is that the ranchers don't like to pay the cost of moving these animals around from pasture to pasture in order for the facilitation of weed control. So my question would be, does this Act provide for funding for that type of natural weed control?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — In the Meyronne and Mortlach pastures,

we are addressing the problem of leafy spurge with organic control — bugs, we've got bugs in the pasture and they will eat down the weeds and then reproduce in that fashion.

And in the Mortlach pasture I believe we also have sheep control. We're trying to use a combination of animals to make sure the pastures are managed well. Sometimes there is a cow-sheep combination. In fact they're experimenting, I think, with some horses; the horses will eat some grasses that cows won't.

And in the Meyronne pasture there's also a PFRA (Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration) research project, what is a research project for the control of leafy spurge.

So we appreciate your questions, and we think that through these projects we'll be able to make sure that leafy spurge is controlled and the pastures can be utilized to their fullest degree.

Mr. Goohsen: — Mr. Minister, will these types of control measures be handled in the regulations? What I was really getting at is are there provisions in the Act to provide for funding for these types of programs, or do they come under the regulations that are coming?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — The revolving fund is established by the Act and then the resources are allocated by the department under the direction of Dr. Peter Rempel. And of course then we have to decide where to put those resources.

So with the money that we have, in fact I think the pasture program is going very well. We've got a lot of cooperation from the pasture patrons and the boards because in Saskatchewan, as you know, these pastures are very important and we can't be allowing . . . we have to try to create an atmosphere with the whole pasture system, first of all, where you have long-time employees who do a very good job for us and to try to pasture as many animal units per acre as possible.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I guess what I was trying to find out is, I see that you have this pasture revolving fund but that doesn't answer the question as to whether or not people in the communities have the authority to access funds by their decision — pasture managers perhaps, or an area manager. Is there someone in the local area that can make that decision that they're going to spend some money to move some sheep from one pasture to another for the control of weeds and then pay for that trucking.

Or another example of course might be in a predator control program. If suddenly they decided that they had to bring in some expertise in terms of an exterminator for example, to control some types of predators, would there be that availability for those local people to access that pool of funds in order to be able to use it to control those types of problems?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Yes. No, what we do is, the revolving funds there, we allocate as the department. But we do that in conjunction with advice from the pasture advisory boards, from the patrons of course who are on those boards, and we allocate funds throughout our entire pasture system based on need.

In fact this year you mentioned predators. We've hired a person especially this year to carry out research and programs on predators because there's a coyote problem in some areas and we thought it was necessary. The farmers told us it was necessary so we used some of the money to do that. And so we do it.

So far we've been able to keep up with the funds that are in there with pasture rejuvenation, with special projects. And we work with the Sheep Development Board as well to make sure that we can utilize the pastures and have the right combination of animals.

So the boards advise us and we work with them to allocate funding.

(1500)

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. You bring up the subject of the coyotes of course and we have talked in previous days about the need for coyote control. And the discussions of course came up about the use of airplanes and the use of professional hunters from aircrafts.

Has any more work been done in that area? Have you done any more research in that area or have you any plans to bring about a coyote control by use of aircraft control measures?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Right now there's no plans to use the aircraft method of controlling coyote populations. We actually have two people, I understand. I didn't realize the Sheep Development Board has about . . . we've allocated \$40,000 for them to work on the predator problem. They've hired one person, we had one person hired before; there's actually two people working full-time on the predator control program.

The aircraft use of course is quite controversial and we at this point in time have no thoughts of using that.

Mr. Goohsen: — Well, Minister, I can appreciate that measures that require the killing of anything is always going to be controversial. But of course with coyotes, if you don't kill a coyote, the coyote kills the sheep. And I can tell you from my own experience that there are quite a few coyotes in the area. I have personally seen a lot more in the past year than I have in a long time.

You can always tell of course that the coyote population is rising when you go out on the land and you find that there are no more rabbits around and a lot of people who live and work with the land will know that the food cycle and the food chain is such that that happens. They will of course recognize that in a period of time the coyote population will decline on its own because they'll start to starve to death as a result of having exhausted the rodent food supply and the rabbit food supply.

But the point being of course then that drives those animals to killing of sheep and the killing of calves and of course the killing of young antelope and young deer. They just move up the food chain and start killing bigger things. And they start to pack up so that they can achieve that.

So in the long run, what is more humane? To kill a few coyotes

now or to allow them to starve to death after the food chain runs out and they simply have to starve to death and go through that. I think we have to accept the fact that death is a part of the circle of life. And in this situation, because the fur bearers are no longer in demand as a result of Greenpeace actions throughout the world, the reality being that there is nobody out there that particularly wants to go out and keep the coyote population under control.

And so I think we then have to take the measures ourselves of protecting the livestock herds. And so, Mr. Minister, while it may be controversial I think you will find that sometimes it's necessary to kill things in order to keep life going on. And I would suggest in that same light that the successes that have been accomplished in the Dakotas with the airplane control programs, clearly are recorded. They are clearly documented, people have studied them, and they have all come back with good reports of that as a method of control.

When we use poisons there are all kinds of problems with the poisons that you've outlined yourself and other days when we've discussed this point. But I do want to make one more time this point, that aircraft control with professional hunters is probably the most humane and most ecologically sound basis of controlling coyotes because that way you can go into a specific area with your aircraft where you can't get in with trucks and other vehicles without doing damage to the land. You can go into those specific areas, you can specifically target problem animals that are around those pastures; whereas if you put out poisons and baits and things like that you could be killing all kinds of things that you don't want to kill as well.

So, Mr. Minister, I would encourage you on behalf of the sheep producers of the south-west to reconsider your position on the coyote control. And even though it may be provided in this particular Act in a very broad sense in that you could, I think having read this, implement the program and fund it through this, it would take a decision on your part or the department's part to go ahead with that. And so I would encourage you to rethink that position and to reconsider it.

I noted in the front cover that we have a clear indication that this Act refers to Indian bands. And I would like to know in what sense it will deal with Indian bands and why the Indian bands are particularly pointed out in the definitions.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — This is in regards to the coyote problem. The Sheep Development Board has not indicated to us that they would like to see an aircraft control solution brought forward. If it gets bad enough, I mean that's always a consideration that we would, you would have to look at.

But the two areas that they are working at now is trapping and guard dogs. That's quite an interesting . . . I was just being briefed here by my officials that the guard dogs actually live with the sheep, not with the master, and the sheep become their masters instead of the humans. And so the development board brings some money out of that. And so we work with them and I guess if they came forward, the Sheep Development Board said look, you know, we think we should start using aircraft, we would have to consider that at the time.

And with regard . . . yes the poisons are restricted in some areas

as well. So you're right, they can kill just about anything, so . . . and it stays in the system too.

With regard to the reference to Indian bands, we have a management agreement with the Bapaume pasture that I think you're probably familiar with, where the band took over the pasture and they were managing it for them for a period of four years. And also allows any other instances that where we have to deal, work with Indian bands . . . so we have the flexibility, so we built it right into the Act.

Mr. Goohsen: — Well I think it's probably better to cover things in general rather than to wish you had had some direction before so I understand the need for that from your explanation.

Under the pasture revolving fund, Mr. Minister, you as minister, and the Minister of Finance I guess, has specific authority to go out and purchase lands for pastures in accordance, it says here, with The Provincial Lands Act, and acquire lands for pastures by lease, licence, permits or otherwise. Are there any lands that you are presently anticipating that would be covered by this particular section of the Act?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — At the present time there's no thought of purchasing more land. But again it does build in the flexibility if we had to add . . . if we could add pasture onto current pasture, add that on the current pasture. But the system hasn't changed. In terms of if there's any additions or deletions, it has to come through the Executive Council in the form of a . . . (inaudible) . . . past cabinet.

So it's not something just that the department can do, it's got to come in the form of a cabinet decision.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, have you ever considered, in view of the fact that we have weather conditions in the province that are pretty variable . . . and in fact in our area they say if you don't like the weather wait 30 minutes, you get something else. But we do live with the reality of drought in the south-west and of course that has now started to happen up North more frequently.

It seems though that when we have a drought in the South a lot of farmers are able to take their cattle and move them up North to find pastures up there. Has the pasture system and through this legislation . . . whether it would be possible to have alternate pastures in the South and in the North that you could alternate back and forth through sort of a program of a backup system of pastures, where you would I suppose buy from yourself, basically the Crown, more of the Crown land up North and lay it aside as community pastures to be used as alternate pastures for the cattle down South when we hit those drought periods and move them there. Rather than having people running around frantically trying to find people up North that will take their cattle in — or sheep I suppose, for that matter.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Yes, on this particular question, because of the . . . there's always demand for pastures. We try to maintain our pastures at 60 to 70 per cent of carrying capacity. That does a couple of things. It allows you some flexibility in terms of movement of cattle for a drought. It also gives you some carry-over from year to year for early pasture, good pasture.

And we've in the past had cattle move from pasture to pasture. For example, in the South there's some people who a few years ago moved a pasture to a north-east pasture and have maintained that. They truck them back and forth every year, thinking that maybe they have more security up there.

So we try to build flexibility in the system. But adding more land wouldn't really solve the problem because there is a large, fairly large demand for those pastures. If you put a new pasture together it would probably be full, you know, because of other people coming in. So the question is where would it end.

And what we're trying to do though is establish some flexibility. And we have done that pretty well in the past.

Mr. Goohsen: — Well, Mr. Minister, there very certainly is demand for more area of pasture in the south-west. In fact I just had a couple of letters this past week from young farmers who are rather upset with not being able to get allocation of pastures in order to expand their rather small holdings that they have at the present time.

Now the point that they make of course is a valid one: that as young producers, young people getting into agriculture, they don't have a whole lot of money, so the allocation into a community pasture gives them a little bigger base to be able to work from. They can take those cattle home for wintertime and feed them, and in the summer if they have some allocation of pasture, it broadens their base.

And they of course are rather critical of the present program where it is very difficult for young producers to get into the community pasture system. They have pointed out some glaring errors that I'm not going to bring up in this forum, but I have of course passed along to you by letter and you will have them shortly.

I want to deal more specifically here with the general principle of the fact that if we had an expanded land base and more pastures available, then younger farmers that are trying to get into the business would be able to get into those pastures.

Now particularly I'm talking about people in that Piapot area where livestock production is probably the best base there is for people to be able to sustain an agricultural lifestyle, because it's not conducive to intensified cereal cropping and that sort of thing. Now of course, they might go into elk or whatever, but realistically most of them look at cattle as the first option, sheep maybe at the second, that sort of an option.

(1515)

There has been reported to me in the past couple of days some rather large ranches for example that are for sale in the Cypress Hills. These ranches of course are being pursued vigorously by the Indian bands who are looking to spend their money for treaty entitlements and that sort of thing, from all the way to, you know, the northern part of the province. The bands are coming into the area looking at this land.

Now in reality, the young farmers down there, you know, don't want to get into this kind of debate as to who should have the land or who shouldn't. But what they are saying is that if the

department were to put some of those ranches into community pastures, ranches that obviously local ranchers don't appear to be able to buy and that only the people that can compete to buy them are outsiders that have federal government money, what these people are saying is that some of those ranches should be put into a community pasture system so that the young farmers around the area who actually are interested in farming and ranching rather than just having a wildlife preserve — and there's nothing wrong with wildlife preserves — but in a farming community people do want to utilize the land for the traditional purpose that they've used it for.

And so I guess what they're saying to me is, ask the question. Is the department considering or would they consider buying some of these ranches and hooking them into an expanded pasture program so that they in fact can get some allocation to put animals in there rather than fighting with their friends and neighbours who have seniority in the present system and seem never to give up that seniority.

And not that I blame them, you know. From a personal point of view, I don't blame people for not giving up their seniority, but on the other hand, how does a young person get started if they don't have a relative that has some seniority that sort of passes it on to them.

And so it's kind of a catch-22 for a lot of these people who want to expand and get started in agriculture. So do you have any ideas of implementing those kind of expansion programs for young producers to get started in the province?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — I understand your concern; I understand the problem. What we do right now and what we will be taking out to the consultation process, maybe to expand upon, is right now if spaces come available, about 50 per cent of those will go to the younger or new applicants, and about 50 per cent to the other applicants.

Under the new regulations we're going to see if we can allocate a larger portion . . . and see if there's any interest to allocate a larger portion to the younger people who are in the area. You know, as they score on a point system if they're young and they're near by. So that's one of the things we are going to do.

You see in the south-west it becomes very complicated because, as you know, the policy as it stands today is if you have deeded land and leased land, the leased land goes with the deeded land in a sale. There's no vacant land that we can just sort of use to convert to community pasture; we have to buy it. Of course then you start competing with the local people to buy the land and sometimes this land goes for a very, very high price, as you well know, in that south-west region.

So what we're trying to do, rather than getting into buying more land, is to try to get the allocations geared towards the younger people who have an interest in getting into livestock.

Mr. Goohsen: — Well I certainly sympathize with your view that things are difficult, and if it was going to be easy, I suppose we wouldn't be here.

But the reality is that that's why I brought up this concept of perhaps having back-up pastures in the North. Because land is

difficult to get in the south-west because it has pretty much all been spoken for. And realistically the good Lord isn't making any more land on earth that we know of that's available for pastures. There is no more real estate. We only have what we have available and we have to use it of course to the best that we can.

But that's why I suggested to you that I was hoping that there would be some plans through this legislation, some plans through your department, to expand the pasture bases in other areas where there is land available that would be rather cheap for you to acquire as a department and as a government.

That being of course your own land base, the Crown land base in northern Saskatchewan, where you could in fact of course, you know, go on the edge of the tree line area of the province and perhaps clear some land for lumbering and that sort of thing, and then put that into pasture land afterwards and maybe use that as community pasture.

There's all kinds of ideas out there. I'm just throwing out a few for you to think about because that's why I mentioned the fact that we should consider that alternative.

But in reality most of the agricultural producers — and especially the young producers — would like to have a land base close to home. And so some of these ranches that are presently up for sale obviously are for sale at a price that is attracting the native bands with their treaty money. If they can afford to buy it for their purposes, obviously then it must be a wise decision to buy that land I think for livestock production and for the maintenance of an agricultural base in the province as well. So that's why I suggested to you that maybe the department might at this time look at buying some of those pastures.

I also wanted to ask you, Minister, a little bit about the grants in lieu of taxes that are paid through this particular Act. It's under section 4(e) is the reference and how will that apply or will it apply any differently than what we have now and I'll just await your explanation.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — To answer your last question first, nothing has changed as far as grants in lieu are concerned. The RMs bill us and we pay the grant and the grant in lieu of taxes. Now with regard to your first question again, just to finish off, we're concentrating on trying to increase carrying capacities of existing pastures by pasture rejuvenation in order to accommodate some of the demand.

The problem with developing a new pasture of course, the land isn't that readily available in the south-west so it puts it in the north forest fringe area. You're looking at . . . well you can say, buy maybe an average of about 100 bucks an acre because you've got to break it, you've got to seed it; well you've got to scrub the bush off it first. So if you're looking at the average pasture in the North being about 7,000 acres, just for establishing the pasture you're looking at \$700,000 and then you got to start fencing, corrals, and everything else. You're looking at a million plus and I think that's a conservative figure.

That is part of the problem and if we're going to spend that money the thought is now that we should try to . . . or it would

be probably cheaper to increase the carrying capacity of existing pastures.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And good afternoon to the minister and his officials.

I just want to also voice my concerns following up on some of the comments made by the member from Cypress Hills with respect to predator problems in the province. I think at this point in time we can't overstate the problem. Specifically related to coyotes, I think we're reaching epidemic proportions really with respect to some of the problems that we're seeing associated with coyotes.

And I know specifically — I'm not speaking this afternoon with respect to the sheep producers and predator problems related to that — but I know on the part of cattle producers. I'm privy to a number of circumstances where there's been some rather substantial losses incurred this past late winter, early spring. And in fact even as recently as last week I'm aware of some losses related to . . . well calves being taken by coyotes.

So just a little bit further if we could with respect to those individuals that have been hired by the department with respect to . . . If I'm to understand correctly, it's strictly related to studying the predator problem. And I would maintain, given that this is the problem that it is right now, that resources should probably be more put towards the control aspects of it as well.

Now we'll no doubt be talking about this in estimates with Agriculture at a later point in time too but certainly cattle producers, being the independent sorts that they are, they perhaps aren't voicing their concerns as regularly as you might have expected to directly to the department and to officials.

Has there been any work undertaken by the department to try and establish what sort of losses might be incurred at this point in time related to predators?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — With regard to the numbers, in Mortlach pasture last year we lost approximately 30 head — roughly 20 lambs and 10 ewes. Tompkins pasture was a little more — 35 lambs and 15 or so ewes I believe. But that's out of — like Tompkins — about 1,200 lambs and about 1,500 ewes. So it's a problem and we've got to watch very carefully.

But we are . . . I hope I didn't mislead you. We are actively trapping right now. We're actively trapping; we're actively putting in the guard dogs for the prevention. It's not just a study. I mean it's kind of a pilot project. I mean we're studying it as we actively pursue these options.

So if we can keep the numbers down to where they were last year, you know zero is the best, but at least it's not an exorbitant number. And as we move along and increase or decrease the number of coyotes they're trapping and improve the systems, we should hopefully get those numbers down.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Minister. Also following up on some of the comments from the member from Cypress Hills with respect to the need — and it is a very real one at this point in time — of expanding the pasture program, I would have to say that really the government

has to look more seriously at an expanded base rather than trying to intensify, well perhaps a system of both, of trying to more intensively graze the existing pasture base.

But certainly at this time, the post-WGTA (Western Grain Transportation Act) era that we're in, where a lot more people are wanting to diversify into livestock and finding it extremely difficult. The minister is acknowledging here this afternoon just the difficulties in acquiring a pasture base and the costs associated with it, and you consider them to be quite onerous. Well I assure you that they're no less onerous for individuals and certainly young people trying to break into the business so to speak, and trying to get diversified into livestock.

So I would suggest that if there was ever a time to be expanding the pasture base, pasture program, it would be now. I'd like to hear a few more comments from the minister in that regard.

But also too, before I take my place, just with respect to the Act and the establishment of rates too and it sort of piggybacks on what I've just been mentioning. When you're trying to establish rates with respect to pastures, just how much of a factor does the cost of grazing land become in all of this? Because again I'd maintain with the high costs, or certainly becoming a lot higher — the cost of grazing land nowadays — I think it would put an unfair slant in terms of perhaps your formula in establishing rates for the provincial pastures. If too much weight was put on the current market value of grazing land being that it's, I would say, is quite over inflated at this time relative to its carrying capacity and what profits can be made in terms of what cattle, or whatever livestock you might want to graze on it. So if I might just have a few comments in that regard.

(1530)

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Well, at this point of time we're not going to be looking at . . . even though there's a demand up there, we don't think it's necessary to start new pastures and continue on with the programs like helping farmers, like winterizing, keeping their cattle over winter, increasing carrying capacities, and those types of things.

With regards to the rates, the status quo is going to remain. We haven't any changes right now, but the point here I want to make is that these rates are very, very reasonable compared to private rates. Now I don't know if you were saying, maybe we should charge more and use that money to you know fulfil some of the demand for increased capacity.

But there are other options that people have. You know there's other pastures around, there's you know buying land. The value of the land of course is set by the demand that's out there and whether it's plated or not is a matter of opinion.

But we understand the necessity to increase our livestock herd. We're working with the livestock industry to do that. We're working hard with our pasture people in the department to try to consult with patrons to find out what their wishes are for the current pastures.

And I repeat, winterizing, rejuvenation, higher-carrying capacities is something that we're putting our money into because that's basically what they're agreeing to right now.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Minister. I want to make it very clear this afternoon I certainly wasn't advocating higher pasture fees. I think it's very important that we try and maintain as least cost an approach in that regard, for the very reason I stated earlier that it's a way and means of producers trying to, well, certainly to break into the livestock business.

And if I'm going to take what I heard from you earlier where you're going to now, under your new regulations, lean perhaps a little bit more towards some younger producers wanting to get into the program — well, certainly I think it's more important than ever that you try and keep a lid on those prices.

And we've spoke before just about farm input costs in general and the need to try and maintain a watchdog role in that regard. And certainly anything that the department can do to do I think is appreciated by producers.

I'd just like to go back to a comment you made earlier with respect to predators and the control of coyotes by aircraft. And you mentioned that perhaps it's something that would be actively considered by the department if the sheep producers association or livestock producers association might be actively requesting that of you. Did I understand that correctly?

And if that's the case, is it something that you will definitely begin a program of if you've got such requests from livestock producer associations in this province?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — I'm advised that we have not had requests from livestock associations to consider the elimination of predators by aircraft. And what I said before was that we try to do this, number one, in the most humane way for the animals, and along with preserving the animals that are in the pastures for the producers.

So we haven't had the requests, but what I said was all these things can be considered if there's a demand for them. Right now we're trying to handle the increase in predators through the ways and means that producers themselves think it should be handled, working with us in consultation.

And I just want to add that, as far as the entry that we talked about before and the tenure, all these things will be part of the regulations discussions with the pastures. So if you have a group of people who have a certain idea for pastures, they certainly should be consulting our department, or we'll be consulting them probably, with regards to who should be using a pasture, what ages, and the tenure of the livestock in the pasture.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well on that topic with respect to the establishment of regulations, will notices be going out to pasture advisory boards or to patrons generally about that very issue so that they're able to actively participate in that process?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Yes is the answer, but it's not going to be limited to patrons. It's going to be the industry, the livestock industry in general so we'll get a flavour of what everybody's thinking.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, with respect to services that can be provided through The Pastures Act, can you perhaps outline for us what some of those services are . . . and then I guess more specifically with respect to backgrounding of calves I know I've had some concerns expressed by some pasture patrons, concerns of that program specifically and its relative success or otherwise. And they're worried that perhaps the otherwise, the non-success aspect of those sorts of services might end up having some impact on their fees in future dates and future years.

Could you make some comment about the success of some of these services that are provided within The Pastures Act.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Right now the breakdown is out of the \$5.5 million budget, 4.6 million comes from grazing fees. We're wintering bulls. A couple of reasons for that. It cuts down the fighting in the spring and it increases your ability to control disease. We're wintering cows, which has been a very good program in bringing some money into the pastures and to the revolving fund.

We did a project, a pilot project of backgrounding last year. I think the member from Cypress asked us a question and it's somewhere in the works at Old Wives pasture, which lost a little bit of money, \$12,000 roughly, partly due to the fact that the cattle were picked up and weren't full of water and feed. They were basically shrunk. It was a management thing. And then they of course they take shrinkage at the yards.

But that pilot project has given us lots of tools to improve upon that so that it could become . . . it may become something, it may not, but we're trying to provide another service.

The other thing too that we're trying to do through these projects is keep our people. There's a bit of a problem, of course, on a seasonal basis — when you're hiring some people seasonally — that you tend to lose them because they want a year-round job. In that way, by providing some of these services, we can keep the people year-round and keep a high quality of employee for the patrons of the pastures.

So we're trying a number of things. And like I say, we do pilot projects; we're working in consultation with the pastures. If they come forward with a project, we're willing to look at it. Because our role in this is trying to provide them with the best service possible, try to provide as many animal units as possible.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you, Mr. Minister. I don't want you to think this afternoon that I'm condemning any specific services that might be provided at this point in time through the pasture services or ones you might be contemplating in the future.

I think it's good that you're always adapting to today's environment and trying to look at innovative ways of trying to utilize the pastures better. And it's commendable too that you're thinking in terms of staffing and the continuum of staffing so we have experienced people always manning these pastures. A very important aspect of the success of every individual pasture is the management aspect and the trained workers to have on hand.

I have no other further comments this afternoon. I'd just like to thank yourself and your officials for having answered these questions. The only one thing I'll just say before I take my place is: I wish you would consider to expand that pasture base. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Mr. Chair, thank you to the members for their questions on the other side of the House.

I just want to end off by saying that we do intend to continue along the same vein, working with people. But I want to commend also the staff from the Department of Agriculture who make my job a lot easier by working with the patrons very well and trying to accommodate them as much as possible. I think if we continue that trend in the future, we'll just keep improving our community pasture system. Thank you.

Mr. Goohsen: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. There's just a couple of questions, Minister, that have come up as I've listened. And I wanted to clarify it because I know if I don't, I'm going to have some irate cowboy after me to write you a letter anyway. So I might as well do it now.

Under the powers of the minister under 6(i) it's:

determine with respect to each pasture:

- (i) allocation of grazing rights, in accordance with the regulations;

And then of course under section . . . regulations under 14(d) and (i), the ranking of scoring criteria to determine the allocations and under (iii) there, the assignment of the allocations. Those type of things, Minister, will there be any change in the formula that you were using under the old Act as compared to what you anticipate in the regulations of the new Act for the present time? And of course do you intend as the minister to step in and correct some of the inequities that we are being told exist but need to be researched to be sure of, to make sure that young producers are given a fair chance?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — During the consultation process all these things were up for review so if there's a hue and cry out there, if a number of people who want to make some changes, then we'll certainly try to accommodate that. We want to work with livestock producers to help make the system work as well as possible.

Like I said earlier, we're trying to . . . we're going to put out the thought that we should maybe be gearing it a little more to the younger people instead of 50/50 basis now, maybe moving the allocation somewhat higher than 50 per cent for new patrons and younger people. So I guess the answer is yes. That's open for discussion. Whether it'll change will depend on what the entire livestock community tells us that what the demand is.

So if they can agree that we should be moving it to the younger folks, we are certainly in favour of that and we will move that way yet we don't want to cut out the other people as well, so you've got to try to accommodate both.

(1545)

Mr. Goohsen: — Well I certainly understand where you're

coming from, Mr. Minister, because obviously the established producers can't afford to lose the base of their income in order to help out younger people either. They need to have stability in their lives over a long period of years as they carry on their ranching operations. I guess that's why the expansion of the pasture program would be a very ideal — maybe idealistic but nevertheless an ideal — way of solving some of these problems.

I got a little bit confused when you were talking about the budgetary process. I guess my simple question is . . . what is the budget from the government's annual budget for the things that are covered in this Act? You have mentioned \$4.6 million that you take in from grazing fees and of course there's other fees from the wintering of cows and that sort of thing. Which part or how much of the budget in this program comes directly from government besides what you take out of the producers as fees and permits and whatever?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — The money from the revolving fund . . . the budget in the revolving fund is five and a half million dollars, and of that 4.6 million comes directly from grazing. Now of that \$5 million, five and a half million dollars, it all comes from patrons. It's their money in the revolving fund and we administer it for pasture rejuvenation, as I've said consulting with all the pastures to determine where to spend the money to the best advantage of the producers in general in the province.

But there's an unmeasurable amount of money that is also contributed by government by taxpayers through our resource people, and everybody that works with the pasture system. It's very, very difficult to put money on that because we have a number of people working with them and it comes from extension, from the agrologists, right through to Dr. Rempel in his department, to me.

So it's very hard to determine the amount of money that's spent, but there is taxpayers' dollars going into the program. But the most of it, the \$5 million budget, is patrons' money.

Mr. Goohsen: — Well that's what I kind of thought but the way the conversation had gone, I sort of thought that we were being left with the impression that the government is spending a bunch of extra government money, but realistically the patrons are paying for this program themselves. And this legislation is basically being designed to help them to run a program fairly and equitably, and I think that that's a very commendable approach for you to do.

Also, though understanding that the patrons are paying for this program themselves and understanding that the government of course always has initiatives for people to diversify and to expand and for the province to assist people in order to get on with making better incomes, expanding the population base and the tax bases, then there can be made a pretty good argument for the government to look at expansion of the pasture programs by spending a million dollars on a new pasture here or there or somewhere else in order to expand the livestock base.

We've talked about expanding the hog industry by building hog barns, and obviously the government has only put in a limited amount of money, but nevertheless some money, into promoting those kind of things, and they are helping to diversify the base in Saskatchewan — that you are to be

complimented on as well. However, the same argument can be made in the beef industry and . . . but in the beef industry of course you can have a feedlot industry that will follow up with these inland terminals and use up of course all of the screenings and those sort of things and the feed grains that come out of those terminals that are now being built — that can go into a feedlot operation. Again we can look to Alberta's example of how they're applying that.

But you cannot have that kind of a program work if you don't have a cow-calf base in the province and an expanding cow-calf base, because realistically we don't have enough calves to put on feed to eat up the barley that we could grow in this province, considering of course the Crow and all the things that you all know too much about already probably. But the reality being that we should look for a way to expand the cow-calf base in this province so that we can expand the feedlot industry to eat up all our grain that we can't afford to ship out any more and that would lend itself to your whole program of diversification. And so, Minister, that's the argument I would leave with you as you work on this legislation.

There are some minor questions that I have but I don't think that I need to ask them now. I think we can sort them out as you get into regulations. I want to compliment your officials and your department people. I think they've done an excellent job of operating the pasture programs and I think they've done an excellent job under the old Act. I'm happy to see that you have put together the new Act just to more streamline the programs and to better assist the farmers and ranchers in the province to operate this program.

I'm very happy, Minister, with yourself. I'm very happy with the attention that you pay to the people in what appears to be a very concerned manner and a very responsive manner. And we very much appreciate that out in the hills. We appreciate a minister that we can call up and talk to about coyotes and all kinds of things that wouldn't interest a lot of others, like field bindweed or leaky spurge, and a lot of folks wouldn't care about those things.

You obviously do and that has been expressed by your concern and your actions and we want to thank you for that on behalf of the people in the south-west and I'm sure all the rest of the folks in the province that have had the experience of working under the old Act for pastures. And I'm sure that if you apply the new Act with the same vigour that you have put into the old one over the past year and a half, that folks will be very happy with you and with the Act, and so we congratulate you and we thank you for your work.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Well thank you very much. Just one quick comment and I agree with you and the department agrees with you as to trying to keep the cattle here. That was the whole thrust behind the backgrounding pilot project. The longer we can keep those calves in the province, the better. My advice is that for every dollar sale of cattle in Saskatchewan spins off \$6. That's very important, and we haven't started a pasture for about 40 or so years. If there's a demand out there we can consider it. The problem is that where does it stop and what's the government's role compared to the private sector role. And we just want to make sure we maintain some kind of a balance.

So I appreciate your comments, and I know there's a need out there and we're trying to accommodate it through these ways.

As far as expanding the number of pastures, probably it's not going to happen in the near future but it's something that certainly is not out of the question if there's demand and some group wants to come and we can look at it. But remembering budgets; somebody's got to pay for it. So we don't close the door but we think the pastures are working good. And I thank you for your questions.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. A couple of questions, Mr. Minister, as well, as I look the Act and we look at the paper that was just delivered into our office and it talks about parched pasture land in western Saskatchewan.

Now I know some of the members have talked about pasture land. I believe the Act before us is . . . Under the powers of the minister it talks about establishing, operating, managing, and maintaining pastures. And I know you've talked a fair bit about pasture land and some of the problems that arise from trying to even get into buying and purchasing more land or building more pastures.

But I guess what I would like to ask of you, Mr. Minister, I think you also talk about entering into agreements with other government . . . levels of government or Indian bands or persons or agencies. There are large . . . or there's a significant area of land across this province that's basically sitting idle, and that's a lot of the wildlife development land. Some of that land that really is not utilized whatsoever.

Now in some cases I believe, in chatting with the minister responsible for Resource Management and some of his officials, I think there's some movement on the parts of wildlife people to be sensitive to the needs that may arise at times if there's certainly a shortage of pasture.

And I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, in regards not just to this specific piece of legislation before us, but whether or not the department themselves have been conversing with SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management) in regards to some of the wildlife land. Some of this land certainly is out of your control as it's controlled by the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation or habitat trust or some of these areas.

Have there been any discussions, as we look at the long term and building for the future, as to maybe working with some of these organizations, working along with them. Helping them to understand the fact that they can play a significant role not only in the preservation of wildlife but certainly of meeting the needs of the agricultural community as well, as certainly wildlife plays a major role in the economy of this province.

But, Mr. Minister, I think you're very well aware that agriculture is still our main industry. And I think it's important that other organizations begin to recognize the importance of not just the agriculture community, recognizing that while working together as well we can build a solid wildlife basis as well that can be added to our economy. So I guess what I would ask, what has been done in the past? And under this legislation where you talk about the powers and entering into agreements, what types of agreements will you begin to enter into and

whether or not you've had discussions in regards to some of these lands that are just sitting idle?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — I'll just answer the first part of your question about the entering into agreements. We often enter into agreements with other people to provide services to pastures. A pasture may want us to provide . . . to winter their bulls for them, so we enter agreement. We have people for breaking, we have scrubbing, we have projects for rejuvenation, all those kinds of things. A myriad of things that we could enter into agreements with.

With regards to your question, which I think is . . . probably would deem your most important question of the two is, entering into agreements to utilize wildlife lands for grazing. I think that that is a potential. I think there's some agreement now, there's some shifting of thinking in the wildlife ranks, the saying that there is possibly a role for grazing. So I think we're probably, hopefully at the early stages of trying to work out some programs that we might be able to utilize some of these lands.

Because we have been talking with departments, SERM, and with the wildlife people off and on, and there seems to be some movement. I'm not going to try to mislead you and say this is going to happen quickly. But I think the up side is there's recognition that there is some use for grazing, for cattle over that land, and that we can increase your economic activity and enhance environmental sustainability by grazing. And I don't know the detail, but there's a number of things, from the kind of plants that grow there to the rejuvenation. Sometimes if you don't graze you have to rely on a fire to rejuvenate. And maybe grazing would be better and achieve the same result.

So this is, this is the types of discussion we're in. There's no signings in the offing. But I think there may be in the future a chance for maybe management agreements where wildlife people say okay, we can graze so many cattle on this parcel of land in agreement with the pasture patrons to use the land and put some qualifiers on it.

I think this can happen, I think it should happen, and we're going to continue to pursue it. Although like I say, it's not going to happen overnight.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Chair, thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, in response to that I would suggest that certainly for the number of years I've been elected to this Assembly there has been a significant movement. To be very candid, when I was first elected there was a real resistance to any move to have some controlled grazing.

And in my chats with some of the local wildlife people as well, I've talked about the fact that it's not a matter of just opening up the gate and just letting a number of livestock in; the fact that they could even control it or be involved in it.

It could be part of . . . And your comment about the fact of refurbishing wildlife land, certainly in our area alone, we haven't for a number of years, the late '80s early '90s . . . our area used to be, back in the '50s and through the '60s, an area where a lot of ducks used to reside and we hadn't seen them for a number of years.

But certainly this past year, and even this year despite how dry it is, we've got enough bodies of water, it's amazing how many birds are around.

(1600)

The other thing that we've noticed as well, Mr. Minister, without really going out and specifically working to attract, we might be in the near future looking at ways of trying to dispose of some wild geese that just seem to be multiplying in the area. And you know what geese can do when it comes to possible crop damage.

But I think, Mr. Minister, what it's pointing out and I think it should be pointing out even to individuals involved in wildlife, is the fact that if there's an environment, you don't necessarily improve the wildlife environment by just closing that resource off to some of the agricultural environment as well; that we can cohabitate together I guess, and work together.

And just looking at the Act, the reason I raised it is the fact your department, and under the Act your office, certainly does have the ability to work and arrive at agreements or arrangements that would certainly enhance pasture or grazing use in the province of Saskatchewan.

So I commend you and thank you for the fact that that's an area your department, under the Act, is certainly able to pursue if it's an area that we can move it, versus finding yourself in a position where agriculture is really under stress, your pasture lands are under a lot of pressure, and you just aren't in a position to start moving and start building lots of . . . or creating lots of pastures, taking advantage of what's there. And I certainly commend you on that.

One other question I do have, and that comes out of the lien on animals, section 11. I would take it what you're talking of here is if a patron has an outstanding bill, it gives the department the authority to hold or retain some animals until the bill is paid. And what I mean by outstanding, are we talking of say arrears that are past due to the previous year, or are we talking immediate pasture rent, let's say for this year?

At the end of the year are you asking patrons to have their cheque in hand before they remove cattle from the pasture? If they don't, that you have the ability then to retain possession of a certain number of head that can be agreed upon to cover that lease fee. Is that what we're talking of here?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Just to answer your last question first, I want to point out that in the pasture system we have a delinquency rate of about half of one per cent. It'll vary, but very, very, very small.

Pasture patrons are very responsible about paying their bills. Yes, we have the right to hold those animals, but most of the time a certified cheque will do it. And also if they didn't pay one year and they want to bring the cattle back next year, they'll have to clear it up.

It was about . . . It ranges between about 28 and \$40,000 delinquency on a \$5.5 million budget, so it's . . . Or 4.6 I guess from grazing fees. So it's not very large at all.

One of the things I want to mention is that our pastures . . . in our pasture system we are working towards a sustainable grass growth system. And the wildlife officials are watching us and our management practices in this area. I think that's giving them confidence that we can actually achieve some of the things that you talked about and what we'd like to achieve.

So all these things work towards trying to utilize as much land as possible. And then have the environmental processes looked after while the economic activity, through livestock. So it's a slow process but I think we're moving in the right direction.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 18 inclusive agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Mr. Chair, before I move the Bill I'd like to thank my officials again, and the members for their questions. This is a very important aspect of our livestock industry and I'm pleased that they all have such a great interest in it.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

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

Mr. Bjornerud: — With leave to thank the officials, Mr. Deputy Chair. We didn't realize those persons were leaving at this time.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. We'd just like to take this opportunity to thank the officials that dealt with The Pastures Act and be talking to them next time around.

Bill No. 35 — The On-farm Quality Assurance Programs Act

The Deputy Chair: — Before I call clause 1, I will recognize the minister to introduce his new officials.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. To my left is Bob Ford, manager of quality assurance for the industry development branch, and behind me is Maryellen Carlson, the director of industry development branch for Sask Ag and Food.

Clause 1

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. I'll maybe ask the same question of the minister with this Bill and I think I can see the changes that you've made. Could you maybe just give me an overview of the Bill and what you're trying to do here?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — The abridged version is that it's a nation-wide program development for quality assurance. In terms of our trading partners, we want to assure them that we have quality products, and the federal government is working with the different . . . all different provinces and we're developing quality assurance programs.

What this does is it provides a level of assurance and protection for the producers and works together with the rest of the country to ensure that . . . to send a message to our buyers that

we have a very high quality product and we have systems in place so that they might be able to track the product and have some assurances that it is a safe product.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Since the criteria for these programs will be set out in regulations and not really in the Act itself, can you give us an idea of some of the criteria that might be involved in this?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Well the regulations are going to be developed in conjunction with the industry and it's going to be an industry-driven program where the industry's going to provide the paperwork and the detail of how the quality assurance program should go.

And in conjunction with the industry we're going to help them develop standards. Now initially they're going to be voluntary so that let's say the hog industry might want to put together a program where they have forms . . . we're working in this respect already. They fill out forms voluntarily, keep track of production, inputs into the animals, and a number of things that assure quality.

And it may be at some point in time where the industries in conjunction with the packing plants may want to make it mandatory. That will of course be driven I think by consumer demand.

And we export a lot of our products from this province. We export a lot to Asia and they are very, very quality conscious and safe-food conscious. This is a very good move forward I think on the part of all of Canada. And I think in the future you'll see it tightened up a little more too, driven by consumer demand and competition from other countries who are also exporting.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I wonder why these changes have happened now. Have agricultural bodies out there been lobbying for these changes? Is that where these changes came from?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Yes, we're providing support through legislation like this to the industries. Before council developed the HACCP program to provide quality in the pork industry, and that is a new program being developed now. But this is being driven by demand.

We know that quality control in Europe for example, they're probably a little bit ahead of us. In the U.S. (United States) we're very close I think to some of them, maybe behind some of them, some of the states. So as a country we know that we have to be in the game by maintaining quality. So we're working with the industries. The industries will be leading the efforts. And so I guess the answer is, it is not a government driven program, support program.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, in regards to this on-farm quality assurance program, what's basically driving it? Is it being driven by the fact that we don't produce crops or we've got no crops, or even areas of livestock where we're not just producing, but we're also in the area of starting to look at processing the product and sending it out as a product, not a raw product. But right now we're looking at

trying to move a product outside of the province adding value added to the product and sending it out as a product that is now ready for consumer consumption. Is that one of the major reasons and the push behind this particular Act?

(1615)

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Yes. I guess the short answer is yes. We're planning and trying, as every province in Canada and the country as a whole is, to add value to our products. That means instead of shipping out the half of pork, side of pork, you ship out all the different cuts, chops to tenderloin.

And in order that we might fit in from the farm level with all the other programs that are being put in place like the ISO 9000 (International Standards Organization) for example, 9002 and so on, which are step by step quality assurance programs, we thought we should also have one right down at the farm level where you can record what the animals have been fed.

The consumers are driving this because of food safety and quality. And with this there can be a continuum right from the farm gate, to the packing plant, to the processor, to the consumer. And if you can identify what the animals have been fed and where they've been fed and where they've been processed and the quality of the processing, it gives the customer off-shore or outside this province and inside, but in this case mostly export, the assurance that there is a quality to the product that can be traced.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Chair, I guess, Mr. Minister, another question that comes as we look at this piece of legislation — I guess the question that arises — how many producers will be directly affected? Are we talking . . . as you start talking, you talked about the fact that in the area of even livestock production going back right to the individual producer — say the cow-calf operator — whether or not they use an implant in their livestock? Are you talking of record keeping or what have you?

I guess the question and the concern that arises out of this is it going to mean down the road that every agricultural producer in this province is going to be put into . . . or have to comply with regulations that they have no control of . . . basically are demanding that they have basically top-notch record keeping, whether it's in livestock production or grain production; or are we dealing specifically with areas where there's direct producer-to-consumer consumption product?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Well I want to make sure that I can give you a complete answer here.

The reality here is that it's the packers, the retailers, and consumers who are driving it. So what we are doing as government through legislation like this is trying to keep up to that demand.

Will there be some point in time where every product will be under these programs? I would assume yes. Not that we're going to make them do it; it's going to be that you probably won't be able to sell your animal unless you are enrolled in the program because the packer'll say I don't want it unless you can show me what you've put in, show me what injections you have, what feed additives there have been, and so forth.

So I think the industry people that we've talked to are all supportive of this. We've had our pork central people go out to a number of hog producers with the quality control manuals and show them and help them how to fill it out. And maybe they don't have a problem with it, it's minimal effort for quite a great return because if you, especially the way the industries are going today, but it just doesn't matter.

If you rely on a hundred-sow operation to add income to your farming operation or if you have a free-standing 1,200 sow operation, it's all important money to you and you don't want to someday have the packer say to you I'm sorry we don't want your product because you're not complying with the demands of my consumer.

So it's an industry-driven program. We as government, like other governments across Canada are doing, are trying to react to that by putting legislation forward; that's what this is about. At the end of the day you're going to see more and more emphasis put on quality assurance simply because you have to do that to be and maintain your competitiveness in the world markets.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, I guess the question being raised here and what I'm suggesting to you is that I don't have a problem with quality assurance. I think if we're marketing a product we want to continue to market a quality product and I don't think anyone has a problem with that.

The problem that arises though is when all of a sudden we find, and the fact that so much is going to be put into regulations, as the regulations change and producer groups or individual producers find themselves with some bureaucrat arriving on the doorstep saying that we're going to close this place down because you're not meeting these assurances. Those are some of the concerns that I have that may arise in the future and I'm not saying they're there today.

But I think it's certainly imperative that we be mindful of how things have transpired over the years. I don't think there's a producer out there who does not want to produce and put a quality product on the table or make it available for the consumer. They're going to do everything to make sure that the bottom line is positive . . . that they can certainly can make it.

I guess the concern I have and that people have had in the past is how regulations can — all of a sudden you find yourself facing regulations that you really had no knowledge of — facing more red tape. And making sure that while we're attempting to achieve and address a quality of a product that we want to present and make available, at the same time not becoming so top-heavy and so heavily regulated, that we discourage production of agriculture products.

And I guess that's the concern I raise in making sure that we're aware of that and mindful of that. So as you've indicated, while you're talking to all the groups involved, the agriculture groups, that we certainly do have full discussion to make sure that we don't start stepping on and interfering with people's ability to produce this quality product we're talking of.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Well this is going to go at the speed the industry drives it. Regulations will be set up at the request of

the industry. We may not have to have regulations for the things that may be a requirement of licensing. I would try to make it as simple as possible.

It won't be a situation where somebody from government marches in and shuts down a production operation because it's going to be the consumer who asks the marketer if you're involved in a HACCP-type program and to show them . . . and then the marketer will be probably at the same time the packer and processor, so they will then require animals under HACCP-type programs right from the farm.

So it's . . . in this case we, as government, are keeping up to the industry. It's going to be driven by them. The speed of which this is implemented will dictate them because if they want to stay in business they're going to respond to what the market-place demands are, what the consumer demands are.

So we're trying to, as many other governments across Canada are, to accommodate this. I really appreciate your concerns because we don't want to have a heavy hand — the government sort of coming down on producers. This type of legislation and the development of the regulations are done in conjunction with the industry requesting it saying — let's say the livestock industry — we want to come in and develop a quality-assurance program and this Act allows that.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. And again good afternoon to the minister and to his new officials with him.

This particular Bill has me concerned. I've got a number of concerns — I guess two — with what I've heard you make comment on here this afternoon. Maybe I'll start out with some of those. But it seems to me when you suggest it's industry driven, that it is just that. It doesn't necessarily have the best interests of the producers of any given commodity necessarily in mind. It has the best interests of the consumer, certainly, in mind. And we all know what those are. They want the very best of quality for the very lowest price — that's it.

The marketers of any given commodity, it has their best interests in mind certainly, because they want to be assured that, again, that they the very best possible quality of a product available to them readily at the least cost price.

It seems to me it might end up throwing a whole additional level of record keeping upon individuals that isn't necessarily the most cost-effective thing to be placing upon them. I see at the outset here it mentions in clause 2 that entering into contracts — this is with respect to the delivery agent and activities pursuant to the on-farm assurance program — that it's only with respect to participants in Saskatchewan who wish to be enrolled in such a program. So I take it from that it's not mandatory.

But then I go on towards the end under regulations and where it says the Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations (a) defining, enlarging, or restricting the meaning of any word used in this Act but not defined in the Act. I just worry that it's opening a door towards requiring every producer in the province to suddenly submit to an assurance program that may place an undue amount of burden upon them.

Another aspect I notice in the Bill, with respect to immunity, it looks like the government has made all efforts to make themselves immune from any actions relative to this Bill. But I wonder in terms of being industry driven, and you talk about you know, about providing a continuum from the farm gate the end user, aren't you also creating that conduit for liability for producers?

Are you opening up a can of worms there where suddenly there's a cargo of some particular grain that's delivered to a consumer somewhere in the world and it can be tracked back through this system to particular producers, and suddenly they're made liable for some sort of an action taken by a consumer somewhere in the world.

Do you think I'm over-exaggerating these concerns? I see them as very real concerns. I saw situations where for example mustard seed manufacturers in the States at one point — now this goes back a little ways, maybe 15 years ago now, but . . .

An Hon. Member: — 15 or 50?

Mr. Aldridge: — I said 15 not 50.

And we all know how in the States everybody's pretty litigation-happy. Well 15 years ago they were then as well, and there was a mustard seed manufacturer who had an employee who met an unfortunate end — industrial accident on site. Well it ended up that the exporter, a Canadian exporter at the time, was actually attached in a court action in the States related to the death of this individual at a food industrial plant. It happened 15 years ago. Is it something that potentially could happen with this particular piece of legislation?

Also I'm curious with respect to grains. We've had a Canadian Grain Commission federally that I think has certainly done their part in trying to maintain quality assurance with respect to grains as defined under the Canada Grain Act. Is there . . . I guess I'm raising a lot of concerns here. Maybe I'll let you address a few of these. But I'll go on with respect to the Grain Commission and the Canada Grain Act.

(1630)

Are there specific examples where there has been problems related to particular agricultural commodities, whether they're more of a raw commodity or more of a processed commodity, that have arrived somewhere in the world that haven't been of the particular quality that a consumer had contracted that has led to this particular sort of legislation being necessary?

And grains are one prime example of where I could see this sort of thing perhaps occurring, where cargoes of grains are traded a number of times before they might arrive to an end user. Is this what's led to this particular piece of legislation?

Because again it seems to me it's putting an unfair burden on producers that the actions of a trader, of a marketer, as you use the term, might end up being put to bear financially on a producer that really . . . It's unfair. It shouldn't be put upon them.

Maybe I'll just take my place and let you make some

comments.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Yes, I think you're maybe building in a little bit more worry than necessary into this, because it's producer groups that come forward and ask for it. So they're driving it. They're asking for it.

It's all to do with marketing and what is being asked for by consumers. You can't separate the consumer demand from any portion of the process to deliver that product to the consumer.

So in the case of hogs for example, the producer council came forward, asked us to do it. It's very, very minimal bookkeeping. And of course there's a cost, a time cost to bookkeeping, but it's a cost of doing business that the producers agree with and they want to do.

The whole HACCP theory, the hazard analysis critical control points, means that you should be able to identify the liability areas. Now is it a greater liability to have a process where you can register your inputs and have the paper there showing the flow of the product, what you fed the product and where it was processed — is that a greater liability than not doing it where you have no records? Most producers keep records now. I mean if you're in a livestock operation of any kind, and you're administering some kind of medicinal product to that livestock, you keep a record of it for your own protection, of when it was administered, how long the separation date was from shipping, and to the kill.

So this is not anything other than an industry group, whether it be grain or livestock, coming together. We have a control mechanism now through the Canadian Grain Commission that's been built in for many, many years. But if we had a case where, you know, the mustard people, as your example, wanted to come forward and develop a control system, then we would through regulation help them build that.

So I think you are putting a little more fear out than necessary. We don't see it as a government push. It's not a government push. We are simply accommodating the needs of the producers, the wishes of the producers. If there's somebody out there that you know of who thinks this is not a good idea that's talked to you, I'd like to have that name or the group because to this point we've had very favourable response from all groups.

And it's again, I repeat, it's groups bringing their desire to the government to create regulations to form a quality control mechanism for their product, to ensure that consumer demand is met and that they stay in the market-place with their product.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair, and Mr. Minister. I know I rambled on a fair bit there so perhaps in fairness to you I'll just put the question to you again, and you can put in this way. Like is the current system broke? What are we fixing here? Are there specific examples of where the system has failed, where consumers are coming forward and saying, look, you've got to do something to assure that quality is maintained from the farm, from the producer level, right through to when I get it at my facility wherever that may be around this world. And I'm not trying to suggest here that producers of any particular commodity should not be sensitive towards what the world consumer wants. In fact I think more

than ever they need to be.

I recall, it's almost 30 years ago . . . no . . . yes, it's close; it's at least 25 years ago now, when a rather innovative group up in the Eston area started out a specialty crops company at that time — the Allstate Grain Co. — and they had a rather catchy slogan, Grow What You Can Sell. And I think it probably is even more applicable than ever in this post-WGTA era.

I'm not saying producers of any commodity should be removed from knowing what the consumer wants, but I don't think they should be ultimately bearing the responsibility as far down on the chain as they may be. Now they're not always that far down. There's producer exporters, producer marketers as well, which bears you know additional responsibility on the part of those particular situations.

But somebody who's just a producer of a raw commodity, why should they ultimately bear some liability when there was perhaps, who knows how many marketers that might have been involved — resellers, traders — from when that product left his farm until it ended up in a consumer's facility.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Well I'll try to keep this as concise as I can but there are a number of cases — you asked for specific cases — of food-borne illnesses and other things. There was a case in Toronto — I believe it was eastern Canada, I think it was Toronto — not too long ago where there was a needle found in a ham. There's hamburger disease; there's, you know, any number of food-borne illnesses that have a liability attached to them.

What this does — this is why producers are asking for this — is it protects them as an industry group. It protects them because they have a record of what they've done to produce this product. If you don't have the record, their liability's much greater. Because they may be perfectly innocent, but if they don't have the record they could be named in the litigation and without a defence, just saying, well no, I didn't do that. If they have a quality assurance program, where they register the amount of feed that goes in and whatever processes they use to grow that animal, to produce that animal, then they are protected.

So it's nothing other than the consumer's understanding that there is a market-place out in the world and every country now that demands safe food. This will accommodate that. But there are food-borne illnesses that can cause many bankruptcies if people don't protect themselves. This should go a long way. It should protect them from that.

So that's why consumers want this. It keeps them in the market-place and reduces their risk, reduces their liability. Because if they don't have it . . . and there are, like I say, these incidents as you mentioned, and the good old U.S.A. (United States of America), where it's litigation heaven; then we want to prevent that from happening here. The producers want to prevent that. That's why they're asking for this type of program.

That's why the whole country is going towards this, because it's a cost of doing business for the time it takes you to maintain your records, but I'll tell you, it goes a long way to keep

yourself protected in any kind of litigation that might come forward.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. And I agree, Mr. Minister, that if legislation such as this comes to pass, that every producer in the province is going to have to be keeping a lot more detailed records. But my point I'm trying to make here is that why should that significant of an offloading of a commercial liability be passed on to the shoulders of producers. This is what I'm worried about.

Now another thing is too, you mentioned at the outset that this was supported by industry, by marketers, by consumers. Do you have some documents to back that up here with you this afternoon?

And then you mentioned producer groups that are supporting the advancement of this particular piece of legislation. Do you have a list of those producer groups here this afternoon as well? Because I'd certainly not just be interested but I'd require such. I'd like to know who these organizations are.

I recognize that a lot of organizations, when approached on issues affecting the quality of agricultural products that are exported from this country, they develop, and rightly so, a very . . . you might call it a patriotic approach to it, where we have a very good reputation in the world for quality of Canadian-produced goods. And I think everybody recognizes all the way down the food chain that we want to maintain that.

So I think just by virtue of that — that good nature, that patriotism, however you wish to describe it — that producer groups may suggest, yes we do buy into this system, without perhaps considering some of these implications.

You might suggest I'm trying to read too much into it. But I would maintain that there are some concerns here that individual producers, certainly when they were faced with it in terms of like a commercial liability upon themselves, that they would be starting to reconsider perhaps aspects of this legislation.

Maybe some of my concerns too might be addressed in terms of what you'd call "agricultural product" under the Act. It seems to be rather broadly based. I know a lot of the examples you're citing here are perhaps some further processed products. You mention a lot of, like, problems related to meat products and such. Could there be exemptions made — something a little bit more clearly defined with respect to what an agricultural product is, where if it's more of a raw product which isn't perhaps harbouring some sort of a food-borne illness that you're suggesting that there might be in further processed products, meat products, where some of these more raw products, grain-type products perhaps, might be exempted from this sort of legislation.

The other thing that I'm curious about too. You mentioned this being sort of a national initiative — how many other provinces are introducing a piece of legislation of this nature at this point in time? Are we the first? Are we one of a few? Could we slow-step this process, I guess is the question I'd put to you?

Perhaps some further consultation with individual producers of

producer organizations might be more appropriate. I'll just wait for your response to these concerns.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Well I don't mind your questions. I don't know what more I can say to reassure you that this is not an onerous piece of legislation, but it's a very positive piece of legislation.

We are the first province to hopefully pass this in the legislature. Manitoba has an Act in place. They'll be coming along very shortly. And by all indications, all the other provinces will be coming in behind simply because this Act is accommodating national demand.

Right now the pork industry nationally has a program in place. They've established beef, dairy, bison, pulse crops, and honey industries on a national basis, are developing a quality assurance program, and what this Act does, when those industries get their quality assurance up and running is this accommodates them in our province.

And if there's regulations needed they will come to us and say, under your Act, which is an enabling Act, we need regulations for whatever, fill in the blank. We can accommodate them.

So it's been driven by the industries — 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, I've named here who are working right now. The pork industry already has a system in place.

(1645)

So while I understand the role of opposition in that you should express concerns on behalf of the public, and I appreciate you doing that, I don't know what more I can say to you to reassure you. Because you're coming at it from the angle that this is going to be an onerous thing for the producer to do, and he shouldn't have to do that because it's driven by somebody else and not his responsibility.

If you go out and talk to any of the producers who are in the business of exporting — and we're the highest, largest exporters per capita in Canada — they will tell you that this is not onerous. In fact it protects them. Like right now if you're in the dairy business and you have antibiotic in your milk, you don't sell your milk. This is a program that is going to help the industries and help us as an exporting province.

So I may not be able to say much more to alleviate your concerns but I can reassure you that this is being industry driven. The producers are building it themselves to protect themselves from litigation, to ensure themselves that they have a quality product that they can trace into the market-place.

I'll give you an example what's happening, and this is a phenomenon that's going to be worldwide. There are processes in place now where you can put a chip in an animal's ear to trace the animal's movement. Pretty soon you're going to be able to — in fact I think the technology's available now — where you can actually fingerprint the meat. So you'll know exactly. And I believe in Europe right now they're at the place where when you buy the product it'll say on it where it was grown, where it was slaughtered, where it was further processed, and where it was marketed.

Those types of things are leading edge right now, but they'll be commonplace in the not too distant future, driven by consumers. The best way for the producer to protect himself is to have a process in place to assure that he is not somebody that can be named in litigation as contaminating product, because he has his records done that the processors and packers and all those people comply. It's a continuum, as I said in the beginning.

So I don't see anything but positive out of this, simply because it's accommodating legislation that is enabling producer groups to come forward and ask us to, with them, develop regulations to protect themselves and keep themselves in the market-place.

Mr. Aldridge: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Well, Mr. Minister, you're asking what else you could do to alleviate some of my fears.

Well I suppose one way you could certainly help to alleviate some of the fears is to assure me here this afternoon that this on-farm quality assurance program would always remain voluntary, as is stated in the Act. Only those producers who wish to participate would be required to do so. Would you be able to state that unequivocally to us here this afternoon?

Now you talk about what'll be the best way to protect yourself as a producer. Well under this system it sounds a lot like you better get yourself a good lawyer and keep him on retainer because that could be what, in effect, you're going to end up having to do. It's a case of right now under the present system, the market demands certain qualities at certain prices — the producers attempt to meet that. If they're not able to quite meet those particular qualities, the marketers apply a discounted price to purchase their products and then the marketers take those products and sell them on to consumers who'll accept that quality and maybe it will be at somewhat of a discounted price.

And in an ideal system certainly producers will want, as I said earlier, they'll want to grow what they can sell. They'll want to try and maximize profits by keeping the best records they can, by growing the best types of varieties of grains, let's say; growing or producing the particular breeds of livestock that produce more desirable traits in carcasses that the marketers want that the consumers want. That's fine and good.

But in terms of when the consumer gets a particular shipment of a product whether it's more of a raw food product or a finished food product, where I start having concerns is if when that consumer gets it and then it isn't meeting particular contract specifications that that in turn some sort of liability may end up falling ultimately upon a producer who, for no other reason other than out of a goodness wanting to try and meet certain quality requirements, ends up being named in sort of a lawsuit.

So again I'd ask you to try and address some of these concerns here this afternoon.

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Well let me try this again. Right now they're liable with no defence for the most part unless they have records of their own that they can produce.

Under this system, they are still liable but with a good defence as an individual or a group of people who can produce a quality

assurance program with records, with a process that is acceptable to the general public. And the voluntary nature of this program would only change if the producers came and said, we want it to be mandatory.

And it wouldn't just be on a provincial basis, it would probably be on a national basis because when you're selling to a country, they don't know whether the pork really comes from Saskatchewan or Alberta or Manitoba or Ontario. I mean you can market . . . Alberta tries to market Alberta beef but there's . . . you know, without the records there's no guarantee that it is Alberta beef. In fact most of the Alberta beef that's sold in the world market, about 60 per cent of it comes from Saskatchewan.

So this type of program could be mandatory but it would be the producer saying that we want to protect our sales and our industry. It would only become mandatory if the majority of the people want it to be mandatory. And they would only want it to be mandatory if it gave them greater assurance in the market-place. And as far as the lawyers are concerned — your point — it's entirely the opposite. Because under this type of program you have complete records that is recognized if it's a HACCP type program, not just in Canada but worldwide, and it should reduce litigation.

So I think for some reason we're coming . . . we see this in different light and totally opposite lights, but I reassure you again that it's going to be the producers who are driving it. It's going to give them more protection, not less. And it's going to be something that's only going to increase in the future, not just in Saskatchewan.

But we are the largest exporter per capita in Canada — grains, meat, other products. The hazard analysis critical control point mechanism is world-wide accepted. A number of quality control programs are in effect. And we're accommodating that because we know we have to be leaders in this field as Canadians — not just Saskatchewan, as Canadians. This legislation accommodates the wishes of someone who wants to put forward their product under a quality control mechanism.

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Chairman, I'd agree with the minister that certainly producers at this point in time bear responsibility in terms of what they're producing and what they're selling on to a marketer, but not necessarily to some end user, some consumer somewhere around the world. Right at this point in time, certainly they might enter into a contract with a particular, let's say in the instance of some grain, a particular grain company here in North America to provide X number of tonnes of a certain quality. If they don't do that, certainly they expect or should expect some recourse against them by the marketer, by the grain company.

But that grain company in turn, when they take and sell that on to somebody somewhere in the world and that particular consumer claims back on the grain company, when the producer had met the criteria at the farm gate as far as what they sold to that marketer, why should they suddenly bear any of the commercial risk that at the present time is assumed by the marketing organization. That's my point here.

I see some additional risks, some significant additional risks

that might be put upon producers through this. And I just think that it's something that if we're the first province to be considering to enact such legislation, that perhaps there should be some more consideration given to the fact that others aren't wanting to put this through so quickly.

And I might add that some of these other provinces that are perhaps not putting this particular piece of legislation through as quickly are ones that might even have a lot more added value food products that they might be producing than we are here, where we recognize that we're growing in terms of the further processing of food in this province but we're still recognized as a producer, by and large, of raw commodities.

So why should we be the ones to be the first one to enact such a piece of legislation when we could perhaps learn from some of the experiences of some other provinces?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Well I guess we're all judged by our actions, and I'd sooner be criticized for doing something than doing nothing. In this particular case, it's just accommodating the desires of the groups that are interested in it.

Now I've given you a list of six industry groups who are already developing these programs on a national basis. And I understand your concerns. I don't agree with your concerns, but I understand them.

So maybe you could provide me, when you stand up again, with a list, your list of producer groups who oppose this legislation. And if you can do that, then I guess maybe we could go and consult some more with the industry.

But stand up and tell me . . . I've given you six groups — pork, who already have one; beef, dairy, bison, pulse crops, and honey — who are producing control systems nationally and when they get that organized they can come to us and we can make our regulations to accommodate them. So if you can tell me one group that you have evidence of who is opposed to this, please do so now and I promise you I will consider this again.

Mr. Aldridge: — Mr. Chair, I would maintain to the minister that he can't pass the buck quite that easily. How many of these producer organizations have put it to their individual producers that by the way, contravening this particular piece of legislation could lead to your imprisonment or fines up to \$20,000. How many of those producer organizations actually polled their producers to ask them their opinions of that?

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Well it's not the producers who are fined; it's the delivery agent. And I knew the answer to my question. You don't have any evidence. So I mean you can keep me here till it's very cold in somewhere, but it's not going to change because you don't have any evidence of people who are opposed to it. You know you don't, and for some reason you're doing this little filibuster. I don't mind. I mean I'm around here today and tomorrow and next week so it's up to you.

But I think that in order to preserve your credibility you may want to go out and consult with the producer groups. But before you come back, bring this back because to the best of our knowledge in our research and consultations they're agreeing with it. The livestock people have one of their own that can

easily be converted into this if they come forward.

But it's up to them to come forward. We're not pushing anything on them. So I understand what you're saying. I don't think . . . I think that you're making a mountain out of a molehill, but even let's say next time this comes up, whenever it comes up again in this legislature, that you bring forward the names of producer groups who are opposed to us going forward with this legislation. I would be willing to listen to those people.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Mr. Chairman, I move that the committee rise and report progress, and ask for leave to sit again.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 7 — The Pastures Act

Hon. Mr. Upshall: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 7, The Pastures Act, be now read a third time and passed under its title.

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

The committee reported progress on Bill No. 35.

The Assembly adjourned at 5:04 p.m.

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