

EVENING SITTING

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 40 — The Saskatchewan Indian
Institute of Technologies Act

The Deputy Chair: — Before we formally start the Bill, I'm going to invite the Minister of Post-Secondary Education to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — I thank you very much, Mr. Chair. To assist me on deliberation in committee, to my immediate left is the deputy minister of the department, Neil Yeates. Directly behind him is Shelley Hoover, the executive director of the institutions branch. And behind me is the assistant deputy minister, Lily Stonehouse.

Clause 1

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. To the minister, we have a few questions with regards to this Bill. And I might start by looking at clause 5. It says SIIT (Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies) is not an agent of the Crown in right of Saskatchewan.

I wonder if the minister could explain how . . . the relationship SIIT will have with the province and give some examples of other existing agencies and so on that might have a similar relationship as SIIT would have?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chair, in response to the member, to differentiate between a body which is an agent of the Crown in right of Saskatchewan being SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) — if I can just use those two by way of comparison — at SIAST the board is appointed by the province; Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, the province will not be appointing the board. At SIAST there is a financial relationship and there is an operating grant that comes from the province. In SIIT there is no financial relationship or operating grant that exists by virtue of this legislation.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Chair, to the minister, one of our concerns deals with the area of curriculum and credit transfer and that whole area with we're somewhat concerned that perhaps there may be a lower level of requirements, and therefore their certificates and diplomas coming from SIIT may not be . . . stand up to scrutiny as do the diplomas and certificates coming from SIAST and that sort of thing.

Has there been . . . is there an agreement between SIAST and SIIT dealing with credit transfers and that and curricula in that whole area? I wonder if the minister could comment on that area.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chair, the member puts his finger on an important element of this Bill. Currently there is not a block transfer of credits from SIIT to SIAST. There can be transfer of credits, but it's for individual students on an individual course basis. The significance of the legislation is that it will facilitate the potential for there to be block transfers so that it can be automatically assumed that someone who takes a program that is

similar or identical to SIAST can get block transfer of credit, but that doesn't exist at this point in time.

With SIIT taking on the status of a credit-granting body, it will facilitate that block transfer, and I would see that potentially as helpful to SIIT in terms of maximizing the recognition for credit transfer not only with SIAST but with other similar educational institutions in the nation. I see this whole matter of credit transfer as we look down the road into the future as being increasingly important not only for, say, a SIIT with SIAST, but just between institutions generally. And this status for the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies will facilitate the achievement of that for their students.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Chair, I'd like to thank the minister for his answer. Dealing with that general area of credit transfers between particularly SIIT and SIAST, you see that they will both be operating in the same area of skills training and that sort of thing. Will there be any ties or liaison between the two boards, the SIAST board and the SIIT board, once it's established, to facilitate these agreements and dealing with credit transfers and programs and all those sorts of things.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Yes, Mr. Chairman, there isn't anything in the legislation that causes that to formally happen. But I think that's a reasonable expectation, in terms of the working operations, that SIIT and SIAST will see it as mutually advantageous for learners in Saskatchewan in order to have that kind of working relationship.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Chair, just one further question with regards to standards. Did I understand the minister correctly when he answered an earlier question that the standards in both institutions will be at the same level — incomparable?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chairman, to the hon. member. The concern for standards and, therefore I think what you're reaching towards, is the strength of the credibility of the credential that the student has. That isn't something that's found within the legislation but becomes earned by the institution over a period of time. And I think it's useful to note that what is one of the great strengths of SIAST, for example, is their credibility as it is recognized by employers.

Just to give you a small example of that — released just on Friday of last week, I believe, were the results of the 1999 graduate survey from SIAST programs which indicated that, if I remember correctly, 91 per cent of the 1999 graduates were employed and 95 per cent of them employed in Saskatchewan. And so it is, in that case, the track record over a period of time of the institution that gives it its credential.

Now SIIT, we have to keep in mind, has been an institution which has its own track record, has been operating for 25 years now, and it will be SIIT's objective to similarly achieve a high level of credibility by employers.

And in the case of certificate- or diploma-granting bodies, it is really the test of time that causes the reputation of that credential to take on a worth. And it will clearly be then SIIT's intention to achieve that in its own right as quickly as possible, building on its reputation that it has now.

There won't be anything in the legislation that will stipulate that because, as with any educational institution, it will be its track record of its graduates and their attractiveness to employers that will ultimately determine that. It will be, I expect as well, over a period of time that we would see that there would be some programs that may be common to both SIIT and SIAST. But I think also what we'll see over a period of time is SIIT establishing its credential and its reputation in some program areas that simply are not being delivered by SIAST, and that they'll be working hard to achieve that industry of recognition on their own right.

(1915)

Mr. Hart: — Well, Mr. Chair, I'm happy to hear that the minister has explained that the institute will be working towards ensuring that the quality of graduates and the skills training that they have upon completion of their courses are at a level that will be, we would hope, somewhat comparable to those coming out of SIAST. Because I feel that it would be a great disservice to those young people who would . . . or to those people who are taking the training to receive somewhat less as far as training is concerned, going into the workplace, and finding that they aren't successful in gaining gainful employment.

We have a few questions with regards to the makeup of the board, the structure of the board, and those sorts of things. And for those questions I'll defer to my colleague from Humboldt.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good evening, Minister, and good evening to your officials. Mr. Minister, I'd just like to put forward a couple of questions. Will the board established for SIIT by the passing of this Bill be consistent with the provisions of The Regional Colleges Act?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — There will be a significant difference, as the hon. member will know, Mr. Chair. The regional colleges' board members are appointed by the province. With SIIT the board will be appointed by the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, what I was wondering about is some more particular detail on just what the board will . . . what the composition of the board will be, what the structure of the board will be. Can you just elaborate a little bit more for me on the structure of the board in its entirety?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chairman, the legislation stipulates that the first board of SIIT will be its current board and that is the one as approved by the province. It is made up of 10 representatives of the tribal councils and it will be important, I believe to SIIT, that their board will continue to have a makeup that reflects its importance by the tribal councils in Saskatchewan.

However at this point I'm unable to comment further regarding their structure because that will be developed by regulations that would flow after the Act is passed and will be determined by the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I was going to just go with a follow-up question to that, but before I do that I'm just wondering in reference to something that you just mentioned.

The province will be appointing the board members after they're nominated by the FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations) I take it, and the province will be appointing the board members or be responsible for the appointment. No? That is incorrect? Okay, then I'll just leave that aside. I misunderstood that then.

Section 2 . . . clause (2) mentions:

(2) The bylaws mentioned in subclause (1)(b)(i) must be consistent with any directions received from the Chiefs' Legislative Assembly of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations.

Now the reason that I'm bringing that up as it may be a problematic area . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Pardon?

Okay section 2, or section 11, I'm sorry. I'm sorry, section 11. Okay. And if you go down to (2), okay, mentions that bylaws that are mentioned in section 11(1) and then reference (b)(i), that the bylaws:

. . . must be consistent with any directions received from the Chiefs' Legislative Assembly of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations.

Mr. Minister, there have been problems in the past where there have been as many as 12 people attending the SIIT board meetings, and each of them having a vote. There have been instances where non-board members have walked into SIIT board meetings and have proceeded to partake in discussions and so on and then to vote on issues when they shouldn't have been.

Mr. Minister, whenever a tribal council splits or breaks apart into two tribal councils, the political protocol kicks in, and each new entity then wants a seat on all the boards and commissions. Now while the FSIN has legislative protocol for board and commission composition, this tends to be ignored at times and then the result is to add members to a board without following protocol as it is written.

So with that in mind, that the FSIN has legislative protocol with respect to board commission and composition that represents representation from tribal councils and independent First Nations, we also understand that tribal councils may from time to time break apart, as I've mentioned, creating two new entities.

What assurance have we got that we will not have a board that exceeds the recommended number of board members that would be reflected, as I had the indication from the Bill here that board members would be reflected in the provisions of The Regional Colleges Act? And so if that is so, then this creates a problem where you may have tribal councils splitting and wanting to have say on that board as they split. They want to have representation.

So I guess the question is: what assurances do we have that the quorum will be consistent and not subject to some change by political whim?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chair, first of all, just for clarification.

In my previous answer, I referred to regulation; I meant bylaw, which is exactly what the hon. member is talking about.

The Act establishes that the board is appointed by the FSIN as the governing body and that the bylaws are established by the FSIN, and therefore the board is accountable to the FSIN. The FSIN will receive . . . sorry, the SIIT, I should say, will receive about two-thirds of its funding from the tribal councils, and it'll be through that structure to the FSIN and the tribal councils that SIIT will be held accountable.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I want to refer to your opening speech when you were introducing the Bill, in second reading speech I guess it was. You referred to clause 5, and in your statements you mentioned the Bill contains the requirement that SIIT is to provide information about its plans, activities, and students to the provincial government. So I take it then that this board has a measure of accountability as far as reporting to your government on plans, activities, and students to the provincial council.

Is the provincial government also going to take on the responsibility to ensure that there are financial and performance reporting requirements on a timely basis so that there is a constant monitoring of how things unfold with this new authority being given to SIIT?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chair, I think there's a useful and important distinction to make here that the SIIT is accountable to the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations. That's the governing body which outlines its bylaws and requires its reports.

However, in preparing the legislation, SIIT is certainly conscious of the fact that what educational activities take place through their jurisdiction is also within the province of Saskatchewan of course. And what they in fact asked to have included is that they would be required to provide information to the department to assist the department in its ongoing planning and assessment of educational activities in the province.

So there will be those informations provided, as it lists in the legislation, to the minister, but they're provided by way of information as opposed to as a measure of accountability. The accountability measure is to the governing body which is the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, to the minister. Mr. Minister, in your speech you also indicated that clause 15 requires SIIT to provide government — I take it you mean provincial government — information pertaining to its head office and its board members. So what kind of information would that requirement pertain to? What kind of information about its head office and its board members would the government have access to?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — As the hon. member will note in section 15(1), it would be the location of the head office and the names of the board members.

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, that's quite interesting. It's not a whole lot of information, I guess. But anyway that is fine,

that seems to be good.

In your next statement here on the same paper, you indicate clause 15(3) requires SIIT to provide to government information concerning its plans for the future and the annual report including audited financial statements and outcomes of its activities in terms of its graduates. You further indicate in your speech that . . . and the next paragraph is:

This desire and the information in clause 15 demonstrates that SIIT is committed to being accountable, not just to First Nations and its students but to the whole province.

If it's going to be, Mr. Minister, accountable to the whole province, does that follow that the Provincial Auditor would be able to scrutinize the whole financial statement — the expenditures, the income, and so on — a line-by-line report of SIIT?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chair, to the hon. member, the financial reports are provided to the province by way of information, and they are required to have an auditor, which is KPMG. And then their accountability is through the audited reports which are held accountable by the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations.

I remind the hon. member there isn't any provincial core funding that is going to SIIT, and so that will be a significant factor in terms of the relationship. However, as I said before, SIIT wishes to provide that information, as other institutions do, to the province to assist the province in dealing with its planning for its educational needs and plans for the future.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, to the minister. Mr. Minister, this statement here clearly indicates that SIIT wanted to report its plan, finances, and outcomes to the provincial government so that the people of Saskatchewan would recognize that they are committed to being accountable.

If that is so and they report their finances to the province, is there then an assuredness that we can have from you as minister that you will refer these financial statements to the federal government — because they are in fact contributing some funding I believe for this — and make sure that that financial statement is forwarded to the federal government? Because it stands to reason that they should have a role of responsibility to play to ensure that expenditures are being used properly and to monitor just like any other agency would be monitored to make sure that the best use of this money is being made.

(1930)

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chair, to the hon. member, the SIIT is required to provide an annual report, including a financial audited statement, and they would make that public. I would expect that the federal government would require of SIIT the audited financial statement. That would be part of their relationship with SIIT.

And as I would think it's quite likely that the tribal councils who are also providing funding to SIIT would require to be presented to them the availability of the audited financial statement.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, will the provincial government and the minister responsible be getting a copy of the financial audited statements?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Yes.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you. Can we have the assuredness, Mr. Minister, that you will scrutinize those and have some communication with the federal government on our behalf?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chair, to the hon. member, the province would receive the audited financial statement by way of information. The relationship with the federal government would . . . again is the responsibility of SIIT, together with the federal government, and I quite expect that the federal government will require that as part of their funding relationship.

Because that money doesn't . . . none of that money flows. The money from the federal government and the money from tribal councils to SIIT does not flow through the province, and so those fiduciary kinds of relationships then will be stipulated by requirements by the funding sources. And I really quite expect that the federal government will do that correctly.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, to the minister. Mr. Minister, we have a minister responsible for Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs in this province, and it would seem to me that he would take his responsibility seriously and would be having access to the financial statements.

And it may not be the province's responsibility, but the very fact that that minister has a portfolio in this area tells me, and I think the people of Saskatchewan — including the Indian people of Saskatchewan, the Metis people of Saskatchewan — that that minister is in place to ensure that there is monitoring on their behalf, and that that minister may be the liaison with the federal government in these kind of matters.

So I'll just, after making that comment, I have one other question. Mr. Minister, do you know if the intention, when there is program development, course development taking place, whether the intention is to continue working with the business community and a corporate community in order to ensure that we have got appropriate courses taking place that will reflect the needs of the labour force in Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chair, that has been the practice of SIIT thus far, and it is strongly, strongly in the interest of SIIT to be doing precisely that, along the lines of the question the hon. member for Last Mountain-Touchwood was asking.

Ms. Julé: — One more question, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, to the minister.

An Hon. Member: — It's my final answer.

Ms. Julé: — One final one. Mr. Minister, I'm wondering why this issue was brought forward in the first place, as far as SIIT having the authority and the responsibility to make sure that the credits and credentials and certificates that would flow from different course developments and programs be placed in the

hands of First Nations people, to the degree it has.

I know that there have been First Nations and Metis people taking different courses in this province through SIAST and other technical institutes, and I'm just kind of wondering what it was that precipitated the development of this new authority for FSIN?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chair, to the hon. member. The discussion in regarding the SIIT Act is nothing recent. This has been going on actually for several years that there's been a request to eventually come to this point where SIIT has its own Act. This is certainly something that the province sees as a part of an evolution.

As you will know, the SIIT institution started out as a regional college or a community college just initially, and that really wasn't a structure over a period of time that fit their needs. We will all recognize the very, very important place in our province of successful training for our First Nations people, and the successful participation flowing from that in our economy and our labour market.

And this is an initiative that's been requested by the FSIN, by SIIT, for some time, that is supported by the province because we see it as contributing to the ever-growing importance of that successful post-secondary training that this province badly needs in order to achieve our potential as a province with the full participation of our people in the economy. And SIIT has proven over a period of a quarter of a century that it is a comfortable place to train and does some good quality training. And it by no means will be the only place, by any stretch of the imagination, that First Nations people would be involved in technical training, but it provides an option and something that I think is supportive of those needs in this decade to significantly improve the successful numbers of completions of First Nations people in post-secondary education.

Ms. Julé: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I would certainly commend First Nations people on their recognition that there is a certain comfort level that many First Nations people thrive much more wholesomely in when in fact their educational institutions and so on are culturally sensitive, and also have professors and teachers that are of their own people. And so I understand that and I do wish SIIT and FSIN all the very best of luck with their new authority.

And I just wanted to make mention that I think it was from your office that we got a little bit of information on other technical institutes that are similar to this in Canada. There are only two other ones, I guess, First Nations technical institutes in Canada, and one is located in Ontario, but it is not recognized by the province and does not grant diplomas and certificates, but it does broker from four surrounding Ontario colleges. So that's interesting. And the second one is Nicola Valley Institute of Technology. It's located in British Columbia. It is recognized and funded by the province under the BC (British Columbia) College and Institute Act, and it does grant certificates and diplomas and is affiliated with the University College of the Caribou. But that one is very small, with a total enrolment of about 221 full- and part-time students.

So I agree with you that we have a unique situation in

Saskatchewan in that our First Nations population is much more expansive than any other provinces, and it kind of excites me to know that there are many more First Nations people . . . And I must say I'm a little biased, particularly woman that I wish the very best to. I just find it so very exciting that there will be educational opportunities where people feel at home, gaining their education.

So thank you, Mr. Minister, to your officials and to yourself for answering our questions tonight.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chair, I thank the hon. member and I appreciate her sentiments, and I think all of us can feel a sense of pride in our province, the First Nations people in our province.

It should be a surprise to no one that leadership and the quality post-secondary education in a national context is coming from Saskatchewan. I think we all wish SIIT nothing but success in the years ahead. Thank you very much.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 17 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Bill No. 39 - The Department of Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training Act, 2000

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chair, there is one change in the officials. You'll see that behind the deputy minister in this case is Karen Lautsch, executive assistant to the deputy minister.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Minister.

Clause 1

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. To the minister, first I would like to . . . I neglected to welcome the officials earlier and I'd like to extend a welcome and thank them for being here this evening.

As the minister indicated in the second reading . . . during the second reading introduction of . . . the second reading of this Bill that this Bill is the Bill that, I guess to summarize it, puts all the powers that the minister operates under, you know, under an umbrella of one Bill. I wonder, Mr. Chair, if the minister, if he could give us an overview of what the new responsibilities of this new department will be upon its creation, particularly in the skills training area.

(1945)

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chair, the legislation doesn't introduce new authorities that the minister doesn't currently hold. What it does, as you correctly point out, is it brings them from a series of different Acts under a single Act.

But you're also I think correct in understanding that one of the things that brings us forward is the involvement in the skills training area that much of which would have been inherited as a result of signing the Labour Market Development Agreement with the federal government, and through post-secondary

education skills training then, are involved. All of those things, in a nutshell, that would be involved in preparing Saskatchewan citizens to assume their career involvements.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Chair, to the minister, do I understand the situation correctly in that now the province has assumed all responsibility for skills training within the province; that the federal government, the arrangement that you have with the federal government has removed itself from the skills training area, other than perhaps funding some of the activities? Is that a correct assessment of the environment that we are operating in this province today?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — The answer, Mr. Chair, is essentially yes. We will just have finished our discussion of course about the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, which receives federal funds that flow to First Nations people, for example. And the federal government still retains some amount of involvement in youth skill training. But with those two exceptions, in essence the province now assumes the responsibilities for skill training.

Mr. Hart: — Further to that — I don't think it's stipulated in the Bill — but does the minister envision creating within the department, this new department, will there be two areas of responsibility? One being the post-secondary education, which would deal more with the universities, with SIAST, and the other one dealing with regional colleges and I guess SIAST . . . those programs in SIAST which deal more with skills rather than education and those sorts of things. Will there be a division within the department, or will the department operate the entire area of post-secondary education and skills training as one unit?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chair, the answer is kind of a yes and no; that they all are under the one common department of course. But there will be within the department four main branches: one that will deal with the universities; one that will deal with SIAST and regional colleges; one that will deal with student financial assistance; and then one that will deal with career and employment services.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Chair, to the minister, some of the skills . . . particularly skills training programs are in partnership with employers and community groups and those sorts of things. I wonder could the minister elaborate some of the activities in that general area, and perhaps are there any new initiatives that would come into play upon passage of this Bill in that particular area?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chair, there won't be anything that is specifically new pursuant to this Act. You're quite correct in that partnerships are often increasingly common as part of the provision of education as it relates to workplaces. And just by way of a couple of examples, the career and employment services centres can arrive at specific contracts, as may, for example, a regional college with a particular employer for provision of skill training.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Chair, to the minister. Section 8(1) deals or section 8 deals with advisory committees; 8(1) there's . . . about half-way or near the end it says:

. . . the minister may appoint one or more advisory

committees for a specific period and for a specific purpose.

I wonder, could the minister explain what that section of the Bill means and perhaps give us an example?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chairman, an example of this would be the Scholarship, Bursaries and Loans Committee which is an ongoing committee and provides ongoing assistance related to the matter of student financial assistance.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Chair, to the minister, section 15 dealing with the powers of the minister, subsection (2)(f). The minister may:

encourage and stimulate job creation and job development efforts by the departments and agencies of the Government of Saskatchewan and the private sector;

This seems to be a fairly broad and encompassing section. I wonder if the minister could give us an idea of how those powers would be used in the future.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chair, the hon. member I think is quite correct in referring to this section as an important element of the department's focus and responsibilities. I'll give you a couple of quick examples. The JobStart Future Skills program would be an example of this.

And another one that the hon. member may recognize as more recent was the announcement of the commitment to funding for the forestry industry, which is intended to follow the multi-party training program approach that was very successful in the mining industry training; and bringing together in partnership then industry as well as educational and other related interests. And all of this intended then to support the development of employment and sometimes then related to a particular area or sometimes related to a particular industry.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Chair, to the minister, I believe the . . . I'm sure the minister's aware of people who are on social assistance wanting to take further training and skills training, education, and that sort of things. And I know that during discussion, or during estimates with the Minister of Social Services, my colleague discussed this area, of those people who don't feel confident for whatever reason — perhaps family commitments, being out of the education system for quite some time — and are reluctant to become a full-time student.

And there seems to be a crack that a number of people are falling through and that sort of thing. Is there anything in this Bill that would deal with those people?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chairman, if I can refer the hon. member . . . he was very close to a relevant section in his earlier question. If one would look, for example, at section 15(2)(d) then you would see there that:

The minister may:

. . . take measures to provide the people of Saskatchewan, or classes of people within Saskatchewan, with the opportunity to participate in programs and services related to post-secondary education, training, career and employment services and student financial assistance.

And one way that he will be familiar with, where that's been enacted, has been with the provision of the provincial training allowance, intended to be supportive for people who would be in a category the member just was referring to in his question.

Mr. Hart: — Okay, Mr. Chair, that pretty well concludes any questions and concerns that we may have with this Bill at this time. And I would like to thank the minister and his officials for their information.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — And, Mr. Chair, I thank the hon. member for his questions and comments.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 20 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Bill No. 7 — The Student Assistance and Student Aid Fund Amendment Act, 1999

The Deputy Chair: — Are there any staff that you'd like to introduce, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chair, just one change in the rotating chair here — oh two changes. In the rotating chair behind the deputy minister is Brady Salloum, who is the executive director of student financial services, and to my right and behind is Edith Hazen, who is associate executive director.

Clause 1

(2000)

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to welcome the minister's additional officials that joined in for the discussion on this Bill. In the second reading presentation by the minister he indicated that on most of this Bill, or a portion of this Bill, deals with merely updating the language and those sorts of things, but there was some changes with regards to the authority given to the trustees of the Student Aid Fund if I understand it correctly.

I wonder . . . The minister explained that the trustees have the authority to hold trust money and invest them and those sorts of things. Could the minister explain why these changes were brought forward in this amendment?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chair, because the Student Aid Fund is a separate fund outside the General Revenue Fund. It is to enable the fund to receive monies from the federal government on the one hand and then to disperse them.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Chair, Minister, in the explanatory notes that were distributed along with the Bill makes reference to the Student Aid Fund, section 5(2), it says the fund consists of a million dollars in cash . . . securities or cash and so on, and it makes reference to the education fund, and that's in the (a) section.

In the (b) section there's a sum of \$2 million transferred from the fund known as the school lands fund to the trustees.

I wonder could the minister explain the education fund and the school lands fund?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chair, both the education fund and the school lands fund are there historically. They were set up that way and the Act just simply carries them forward.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Chair, to the minister, I wonder could the minister give us a description of the trustees that administer the Saskatchewan Student Aid Fund — how many people make up this board of trustees, how are they appointed, and so on? You could just briefly give us a brief description of the makeup of those trustees.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chair, and to the hon. member, they're appointed through order in council. And to give you a description of them, one is a rather slender fellow with dark hair and another is a good-looking woman who is seated behind me on camera. But the three people who make up the trustees, Mr. Chair, are the deputy minister for Post-Secondary Education, the assistant deputy minister, and the deputy minister of Finance.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Chair, I have perhaps one or two more questions to the minister before we move on in this Bill. Could the minister explain or bring us up to date as far as the administration of the student loans? The financial institutions, the banks, I believe, are backing away; the federal government hasn't been able to, at least I'm not aware, whether the federal government has been able to negotiate a new agreement to administer student loans. Could you just bring us up to date in that area?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chair, the up-to-the-minute description where the federal government is at at this point is that nothing has changed at this point. There may be some announcement in the not too distant future, but as we speak the process for student loans and for students is exactly the same as it has existed for the past period of time where students will take their loan applications to the banks as previously negotiated.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Chair, I understand then from the minister that students will not have any problems in as far as the administration of student loans for the upcoming academic year and that business will go on as usual. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chair, yes, the hon. member is correct; it's business as usual.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Chair, I'd like to thank the minister and his officials for the information provided with regards to this Bill. That concludes any questions that we might have at this time.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chair, if I could ask a page to provide a copy of an amendment to Clause 1. No, I think the Chair has a copy of that. If I could provide it to the hon. member, to the critic.

Mr. Chair, because the Bill was introduced in the calendar year 1999, but will now be carried in calendar year 2000, there is a need to amend the short title of the Bill. And so therefore, Mr. Chair, I would move:

Amend clause 1 of the printed bill by striking out *The Student Assistance and Student Aid Fund Amendment Act, 1999*, and substituting *The Student Assistance and Student Aid Fund Amendment Act, 2000*.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 1 as amended agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 16 inclusive agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chair, I would like to move that the committee report the Bill with amendment. And before taking my place, Mr. Chair, I'd like to thank the hon. member . . . the members opposite, but particularly the hon. member for Last Mountain-Touchwood, for their scrutiny and their questions related to this Bill and the others. And at the same time, to express my appreciation for the officials of the department in the development of the legislation as well as helping me to provide sensible answers to the questions posed by the hon. members opposite.

The committee agreed to report the Bill as amended.

Bill No. 35 – The Automobile Accident Insurance Amendment Act, 2000 (No. 2)

The Chair: — I'd like to invite the minister responsible for Crown Investments Corporation to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to have with me tonight, Larry Fogg, the president of SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance); Bernadette McIntyre, who is the assistant vice-president, driver and vehicle safety services; Anna Lapierre, assistant vice-president, licensing and insurance services; and Elizabeth Flynn, who is the legislation advisor.

Clause 1

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome, Mr. Minister, and to your officials as well. When we spoke on this Bill No. 35 a number of days ago, I think we went through a lot of the details and the philosophical comments that we need to make. So today I'd just like to ask a number of questions that are fairly specific.

This Bill does allow SGI to go after thieves of vehicles for recovery of damages. And my two questions related to that: how much does SGI realistically hope that they're going to be able to recover through the courts; and what are you going to do with minors who steal vehicles? Are you going to go after their parents for some of that costs and damages?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — This particular change will allow for recouping about \$1.9 million in fees that cannot be recouped now, but it will not allow SGI to go after parents.

Mr. Heppner: — There's probably a sigh of relief from all the minors who want to drive Oldsmobiles in Regina right now — and their parents. In view of the fact that we ask these questions in Saskatchewan, we're quite aware of this government's penchant for not allowing private property. And I'm wondering

how that relates to the fact that radar detectors are being de-insured. Why is that? Is this the first step in government confiscation of private property?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — SGI as an organization is very concerned about safety. And basically the plan is not to insure the radar detectors but there is no plan to go any further than that. Basically it's just discouraging their use in Saskatchewan because of the question of speed. Speed ends up increasing the severity of damages in accidents, increases the number of deaths, and part of SGI policy is to discourage speed.

(2015)

Mr. Heppner: — Well the question I hadn't planned on asking, Mr. Minister, but it's . . . I think it follows directly out of that. If you're concerned about safety, then why would you try to de-insure radar detectors and not cell phones in vehicles?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — At this point it appears that there is no study that directly links cell phones to traffic accidents; but there are some studies, and specifically one that we know that is taking place in Quebec. As that information comes forward, the information from the study will be reviewed and the question of cell phones and traffic safety would be examined at that time.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, Mr. Chairman. The new chairman of your PIPP (personal injury protection plan) review committee has in the past made some strong statements in favour of no-fault, as I'm sure you're aware, and a number of members linked to the College of Physicians, which has also endorsed no-fault. And other of the members of that committee is connected to a head injury organization which received funding from SGI.

So when you put those things in a place, I think you can understand why the public has some very strong suspicions about the fairness and openness of your review panel. So, Mr. Minister, what is your opinion? Are the victims of no-fault and the law society simply 100 per cent wrong and you're 100 per cent right? And if you don't go with the 100 per cents, then why didn't you create a committee that would have created the confidence that was needed?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Basically the legislation sets out a plan to review the personal injury protection plan, and in that process there are people from many varied aspects who are providing their advice and their assistance. The victims of no-fault have forwarded some of the information that they have received. We're also hoping that before the process is completed, that the various lawyers groups along with the victims groups, will forward the information to the committee so that it can be included in the overall review.

We're hoping that by next spring when we're looking at legislation we will have the knowledge that they have provided so that we can improve the plan that we do have here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. You've given quite an eloquent rundown of how the process is going to work but you haven't answered the question about public confidence in that particular committee when you've appointed people that have already

prior positions on this particular issue. And if you expect to get an unbiased report from them it's pretty hard to do. If you want to comment on that one that would be the last question that I would have on this particular Bill, Bill No. 35.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 9 inclusive agreed to.

Clause 10

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes, Mr. Chair. We have a proposed house amendment to clause 10 which basically will delete a couple of items and that's been given to the opposition and to the Clerk. And so I would propose that we amend clause 10 as set out in this House amendment.

The Deputy Chair: — I'm going to read the House amendment so that it's clear to all. It says:

Amend Clause 10 of the printed Bill:

- (a) by renumbering it as subsection (1) of Clause 10;
- (b) by striking out clause (1)(b) and substituting the following:

“(b) by repealing clause (e) and substituting the following:

‘(e) to sound equipment or communications equipment located within or attached to the vehicle, other than equipment prescribed in the regulations;

‘(e.1) to radar warning devices’; and

- (c) by adding the following subsection after subsection (1) of Clause 10:

“(2) The following subsection is added after subsection 38(3):

‘(3.1) In clause (3)(e.1), ‘**radar warning device**’ means any device designed or intended for use in a motor vehicle to warn the driver of the presence of radar or laser speed measuring equipment in the vicinity, and includes any device designed or intended for use in a motor vehicle to interfere with the effective operation of radar or laser speeding measuring equipment’”.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 10 as amended agreed to.

Clauses 11 to 20 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill as amended.

Bill No. 36 — The Motor Carrier Amendment Act, 2000

The Deputy Chair: — First I'd like to invite the Minister of CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) to

indicate whether there's any change in officials. I take it there is no change.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, this particular Bill, Bill No. 36, deals with the trucking industry to a large extent. And I guess I have a bit of a philosophical question. You put a fair bit of emphasis on this one dealing with safety — that's your I think underlying thought behind The Motor Carrier Amendment Act, 2000.

How do you feel that agrees with the stance on this government when you have throughout this province literally thousands of miles of roads that are totally unsafe — so unsafe that the school buses actually take country and grid roads to avoid your highways because of a matter of safety — and you're doing this? Do you not find that somewhat hypocritical to have the trucks safe and then turn them loose onto thousands of miles of unsafe roads?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Chair, the purpose of this legislation is to deal with the deregulation of the trucking industry in Canada. And I think it's important that we get the rules coordinated right across the country so that issues around the safety of trucking are appropriate. And that's what the purpose of this is.

And we're pleased to present the legislation for that purpose.

Mr. Heppner: — Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I take it you didn't want to answer the question about the condition and the safety of the roads which is rather unfortunate because when we're dealing with safety those are two aspects.

You have vehicles, you have drivers, and you have roads. If all three of those are safe, you have some very safe conditions. Any one of those gets out of sync and you have a major problem.

In this particular province your government has created a road situation that is totally unsafe, so it really matters not that much in the long run about your drivers and your vehicles when the roads are blatantly unsafe, and in fact some of your other safety organizations ought to ban people from driving on them.

The question I have: how much consultation was done with the trucking industry in Saskatchewan prior to these amendments? Or did you just take that and say we're now going to be in line with the National Safety Code?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — This legislation is the result of extensive consultation both on a national level and on a provincial level. The Saskatchewan Trucking Association has been involved provincially in consultation with officials here but they've also participated in the national consultations. And this legislation, as I said before, comes out of the deregulation of the trucking industry and then the subsequent arrangements to make sure that there are appropriate rules for truckers right across the country.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. Mr. Minister, I think in a previous address I did on Bill 36, I said the idea of having a National Safety Code is a good thing to have so that our safety codes are similar in all the provinces and you don't suddenly

say, now I'm in a different province; codes have changed. How many provinces at present, after we've completed Bill 36, will have adopted and be following the National Safety Code?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The answer to that is, if you start on the west coast, British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, and Ontario have already implemented this. The provinces to the east — Quebec and the Maritimes — have a commitment to be fully legislated in this area by the end of next year.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. I think that answer is somewhat reassuring. So at least you have the stretch from the Pacific coast down to Ontario where people don't have to change rules as they switch from province to province and that's good.

In bringing us up to speed with the National Safety Code — no pun intended there — did we find ourselves in a situation where we had to make our safety standards much more stringent than they had been? Did we have to relax some safety codes in order to comply with the National Safety Code? Were we behind or were we basically a province that was tougher?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the simple answer to that question is that we were pretty much on standard with the other jurisdictions that are across the West, and that there wasn't much adjustment that was needed. It's based on the individual carrier's records. And that continues and the work has been done.

But if you have more specific questions, I'll be happy to try to answer them.

(2030)

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, to the minister. You're talking about different companies putting in safety programs and a number of safety programs to come up to National Safety Code standards.

And I guess I have a question on who is going to be checking on this. How is that whole process going to be working? Along with knowing the trucking industry in our province, going from big carriers right down to single-owner carriers and that whole issue, is how is that all going to be orchestrated and worked through the department?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Basically, effective July 1, 1999, almost a year ago, Saskatchewan implemented the National Safety Code carrier profile and compliance review program, where they keep track of all of the various convictions and road inspections that happen to the carriers. And that's a shared database and that's used to ensure compliance with the rules that are there. And this is done on a national basis now so that they work together.

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Chair, to the minister. So the way I understood it is when there's convictions, that's when they're checked up and there's nothing done prior as far as preventative. I mean, to me, when I think of a safety program, the safety program is to prevent situations like you've already just mentioned. Once they get to so many convictions then it kicks in.

Now to me a safety program would be preventing these

infractions from happening. And so I question whether that's a safety program as much as just an audit on their performance.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the answer to your question is that the carrier profile which is compiled is based on the carrier's accident record which is like you say after the fact, the convictions which are after the fact, but also on roadside inspections. That information goes in. Plus there are spot checks now and again where that information is fed into the carrier profile. And so there are all of these aspects.

As the demerit points are added up, when a particular carrier hits 40 per cent of the maximum, there's a warning letter that goes out. It says, you know, you've ended up with a number of points here which lead us to believe that you need to examine your practices in your carrier. And that's the first sort of initial contact with them based on their total carrier profile.

Mr. McMorris: — One other question that I had that I threw in the first question and it was too broad. How does the size of carrier factor into this whole process? You know if it's a single operated . . . I know there's piles of fellows farming around my area that commercial haul and they have the one truck and how does that all fit into this process? Will this affect them?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The carrier profiles can be on a single . . . I mean a carrier can have just one vehicle and then they would be compared to other carriers with only one vehicle. Two vehicles compared to others with two vehicles. All the way up to many hundreds of vehicles, the very large carrier. So that the profiles are kept on all of the different levels, whether you start with just one vehicle or if you have many more.

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Chair, to the minister, so this administration whether it's one carrier or ten carriers or a huge carrier, who does the administration — I'm kind of foggy on this — but who does the administration? How much is it going to cost SGI to get into this program or does the National Safety Code . . . who organizes it?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — This program is completed by SGI and the Highway Traffic Board. And they also work in conjunction with Transport Canada and Transport Canada provides some of the funds but it also . . . some are provincial funds and some are SGI funds. So it's costed that way.

Mr. McMorris: — So will there be an increase then in expenditure to SGI to implement this program or to follow up on this program?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Last year when this program was introduced there were four new auditors that had to be hired. And some of the cost of that was offset by the fact that there is I think a \$50 fee for being part of this national carrier profile system that offsets some of the cost. But the effect was four new people at SGI.

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Chair, to the minister, one other question and I'm kind of going from memory but the National Safety Code, it talks about hours of operation — correct? And so where our drivers or our companies in Saskatchewan have to follow along with the hours of operation — and I forget all the numbers and how all that worked, I knew it went on a sliding

scale — but from my experience in dealing with a number of the trucking companies in our province and dealing with the northern trucking companies, NRT (Northern Resource Trucking Ltd. Partnership) for example, that some of their hauls it would be impossible for them to make those hauls in the hours that were allowed through the National Safety Code.

And I'm just wondering is there going to be any sort of exceptions made for some of the geographical situations that we have in our province just because of the hours we're not . . . didn't suffice to get the job done?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — That particular question that you raise is actually under review right across Canada. And our Department of Highways and Transportation are part of the national consultation, the people who work in this area in that department to look at the hours and then also look at the places where there may need to be exemptions if necessary.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Minister. I have one more question and at that point I am prepared to let this Bill move on.

The question is probably particularly critical in holiday time when we have people from other provinces and also from the states coming to our province, and then from time to time it just works out in such a way that they want to use one of our vehicles. And the question I have is: what coverage is there for people from other provinces with valid licences in their provinces or states who have valid licences in their states, when they drive my vehicle, is there any loss of coverage that I incur by allowing them to do that?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — No.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 11 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Bill No. 54 — The Vehicle Administration Amendment Act, 2000 (No. 2)

The Deputy Chair: — I'd just like to ask the minister responsible for CIC if there's any change in officials? The officials remain the same.

Clause 1

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, a part of The Vehicle Administration Amendment Act, Bill 54, deals with photo ID (identification). And on the issue of photo ID, what will be the cost to the drivers to get this done? And is there any period of time after which it will have to be renewed because from time to time we change our appearance?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — There are two parts to your question. The first one is, how often do you have to have your picture taken. We anticipate that it would be every five years, would be the plan. Presently photo ID for a driver's licence costs \$12. The plan would be that it's less than that but we haven't completed all of the costing to know how much less. But it could be in the

10, \$11 range or maybe even slightly less.

Mr. Heppner: — Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, from time to time people are asked to get medical checkups done in order to maintain their licences, probably for particular medical conditions and also in some cases for some of our senior drivers. And the question is, how many medical checkups are ordered by SGI in a given year, and do you pay for any of those, and about how many?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — At the present time there are about 25,000 medicals requested by the medical people at SGI, and none of those medicals are paid for.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. An issue that's pretty critical in Bill 54 is the imposing of a zero tolerance policy for drivers drinking that are under 19. Now about four years ago, the member from Kelvington-Wadena proposed that particular legislation and it was voted against by the NDP (New Democratic Party). And I'm wondering what has changed in the thinking that at this point the NDP is in favour and four years ago they weren't.

(2045)

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the simple answer is that there's been more experience with the program, plus we've received information from other jurisdictions where they have this program and the co-operation and the results, I guess would be the best way to state it, have been very good. And so it's now something that is recommended to deal with this particular problem.

Mr. Heppner: — Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Minister. It would have been nice if Saskatchewan in this particular case could have taken the lead. And it's unfortunate that just because a good idea happened to be presented to this government from the member from Kelvington-Wadena, and that was an opposition member, you chose not to accept it. Hopefully you'll be a bit more open-minded in some of the other ideas and concepts that come from this side of the House.

Dealing with restrictions for new drivers. Could you just tell us what these restrictions are and if there is any leeway to waive those if, for example, that particular person, new driver, is needed to work on a farm or just needs some special access for a vehicle?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The particular legislative provision that's in this Bill is enabling legislation which would allow for the development of a program. The plan is to consult with the community as to which things should be included in this kind of restricted licence for new drivers. But it's clearly contemplated that there would be exemptions for young people who had to get to work or take somebody to a babysitter or all of those kinds of things that are reasonable explanations about why you might operate outside the restrictions.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Just a little bit more on the restrictions for new drivers. Four years ago we brought in the probationary driver's licence system and now this seems like it's going more towards a graduated driver's licence system. Am I correct on that assumption?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes.

Mr. McMorris: — So with a graduated licence, obviously there's restrictions saying when they can't drive, certain times when they can't drive, whether it's not with more than one or two. I just remember different restrictions in other provinces. And I believe at that time we went with a probationary driver's license as a way of saying to the 16- and 17-year-olds that most of you are very good drivers. In fact 99 per cent of you are very good drivers. Why restrict what you can do as a good driver and punish you in a graduated system for what 1 or 2 per cent of the drivers do poorly and we punish all the rest of them? And I really question the rationale to going towards a graduated driver's licence system when we have already implemented a probationary driver's licence system.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I appreciate your comments because it is an area where there are many opinions, especially among young people who are going to be affected by this the most. But the graduated licensing programs for new drivers have proven to be more effective in reducing accidents and injuries and deaths than Saskatchewan's system. And so most Canadian provinces and many states in the United States have moved to a graduated licence program with some very good results. And so that's the reason that we're re-examining this.

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Chair, I think if you were to look at restrictions, you could put a number of restrictions on. Completely restrict them from driving and you're going to have a lot less accidents. And that was the whole point. It's not to restrict them from certain . . . expose them to it, but under strict scrutiny. And that was the whole point of it.

And I think when you start comparing our experience in Saskatchewan with other provinces with the rural base and the agriculture base that we have in our province, and I realize there may be exceptions for younger drivers in rural areas if they're helping on the farm. But I would really get into this very slowly because I think the probationary licence system, although maybe it hasn't reached the results of perhaps in Ontario through a graduated licence system, or British Columbia, I don't know if we're comparing apples to apples there with our driving experience compared to their driving experience.

And I think when you start going into that area, you're going into an area with the amount of driving that's done by younger people in rural Saskatchewan for jobs, for the farm help, that you could be really stepping on some toes out there. And so I'd really hesitate before I would go too far down that path.

The one area I do look at is zero tolerance for alcohol consumption for newly licensed drivers. What is the penalties? What will the penalties be if they're at .02 or .01? Zero tolerance is zero tolerance. What are the penalties going to be if you're going to say zero tolerance for newly licensed drivers?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The questions that you've asked are part of many sort of complicated facets of what may be proposed around the graduated licences, and were actually going to be part of the discussion about how we might set up a program that

specifically related to Saskatchewan. For example, I think in Ontario they have some restrictions as to which roads you can drive on when you have one of these kinds of licences.

Well we have no plans of doing anything like that in Saskatchewan, but one of the concerns that we have is that in the last part of the '90s decade we've ended up with a pretty poor record on some of the traffic safety. And we know that young drivers, under age 19, are over-represented in all collisions — the fatal collisions, injury collisions, and property damage ones — by as much as 3:1.

And so we're looking at some things which will emphasize the fact that driving is a privilege, it's something that you need to take some responsibility for, and we're going to work together with the community in Saskatchewan so we can balance that with clearly what has to happen in the rural areas, where it's very important that all of the people who are part of a family operation have the ability to drive to serve the needs of the farming operation with as little restriction as possible.

So the goal is to balance those things in a way that makes sense in Saskatchewan.

Mr. McMorris: — I'd certainly agree with the minister in that, you know, our youth are way over-represented in the number of collisions and fatalities and things like that. I guess the question I did have, and it was at the back end of my previous question, was the zero tolerance policy. And what sort of fines and penalties are you looking at in that area?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The penalties would be the same as what's now available for the point zero four for all of the other drivers. So it would be the same kinds of penalties that are there, you know, driving suspensions and things like that.

Mr. McMorris: — Just one other area that I wanted to touch on here, and I see that it's an area that I am interested in. It says that SGI has the ability to revoke a driver training school licence if it sees fit. What are some of the areas that SGI would see fit to do that?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Under the present rules that we have before we proceed with this legislation, we can basically discipline drivers schools or the driving school owners by revoking their licence, but it could be up to 11 months, after a whole series of complaints come in. All this legislation does is allow for the revoking of that at a time when there are a number of complaints primarily about the safety aspects of the driving school. So this is a . . . before you just had to wait until they applied again for a new licence and you would say no. Now we're saying, look if there's enough concern we better get that particular driver trainer or that driver training school off the road.

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Chair, to the minister, I believe a year or two ago, maybe it was three or four years ago, that SGI was looking at hiring someone to evaluate the driver training schools around the province, and I wonder how that's gone and if that has something to do with this — him finding problems and then not being able to do much about it until a year down the road.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think your surmise is correct that this comes out of that program which was introduced. SGI funds one position in the Department of Education, a person who goes and works with all of the driver trainers and driver training schools in the province. And there have been a couple of situations at least where it would have been appropriate to have the ability to revoke a driver training school licence. And so that came out of the program that you were talking about.

Mr. McMorris: — Just one final statement more than a question, is I think I would like to applaud SGI for going down that path because I know from experience in dealing with a lot of different driver educators that there needed to be some check on the system.

For 30 years people were out conducting driver education and there was absolutely no check on the system. For the 10 years that I was involved I had no one check on it, and I think it's a shame. And I think this person or even two or three, there's a number of driver trainers out there that . . . and every driver trainer should be evaluated and see what type of a job they're doing because it's an extremely important job.

So I applaud SGI for going down that path, and if it means revoking a licence mid-term, I think that's a real good idea.

I think my colleague from Cannington has one question.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I would just like to take this opportunity to thank the member opposite on behalf of SGI for your applause and thanks because we don't get a lot of that these days. So thank you.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Minister and your staff, I'd like to welcome you here today.

One question. I was interested in the comments that were being made about the possibilities of going to zero tolerance on alcohol. There was a committee of this legislature that was struck a while back, Special Committee on Safe Driving reported I believe about three years ago. At that time the recommendation from that committee was not to go to zero tolerance.

I wonder what the rationale is for a possible change? And will there be public input if a change is being made?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think that there's been further experience in this area. One of the factors that leads us to bring this legislation forward this particular session is the fact that most other jurisdictions in North America have gone towards zero tolerance for new drivers.

And basically some of the information used to be that there wasn't that big a problem below .04, but now it appears that there is some evidence that that's not accurate.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. You never responded on public input into it.

And my colleagues want me to ask you another question dealing with motorized medical chairs. In light of the current situations before the courts, will there be licensing provisions

provided for those vehicles? Will there be requirements put in place for medical certificates to be qualified to utilize one of these without the licensing? What kind of insurance rates would apply if these vehicles had a licence? And will there be a dual medichairs for the transportation of a driver trainer?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I'm advised that none of these things have been contemplated.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 25 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

(1900)

**Bill No. 78 — The Highway Traffic
Amendment Act, 2000 (No. 2)**

The Deputy Chair: — I just ask the minister, is there any change in your officials for this Bill? There's no change in officials.

Clause 1

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Again I'd like to welcome the minister and his officials here today for Bill No. 78.

I'd like to go through some of the issues that we have on this particular Bill that make some significant changes in the operations of our highway system and the regulations that people must adhere to. But I do have one clause here that is bothering me and it is section 81.9 or in this particular Bill it's clause 17(1), (2), and (3). I wonder if you'd mind explaining what the purpose of these clauses are.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — These are the provisions in 81.9? Okay, these provisions enable the Highway Traffic Board to make a safety order against an operator or group of operators. It also includes the power for the board to increase the fines that they can impose on a carrier or group of carriers who don't comply with the board's safety order.

It also . . . there are clauses in there that prevent operators from transferring any company assets without the board's approval when the operator is required to attend before the board to explain why he or she has failed to comply with the board's safety order.

So they're basically enforcement clauses around enforcement of safety orders.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. From your comments in your second reading speech, you talk about a proposed amendment to establish a consistent seven-day grace period for both registration and insurance.

In what cases are you thinking about? Is this when somebody transfers a vehicle or if someone has failed to renew their insurance within that seven-day period, or just where does it quality?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — This just relates to purchase of a new vehicle or transfer a vehicle at that point. There's a seven-day grace period both for the insurance and for the registration.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. So this has nothing to do with somebody who is late in renewing their licence, and between the date of renewal and the date they actually get in there — let's say three days — if anything should happen then there is no insurance and no registration applicable. I see the minister's staff shaking their head negative.

Mr. Minister, it talks about Saskatchewan . . . you talk about Saskatchewan residents being able to operate vehicles that are properly registered in another jurisdiction. Has that been a . . . something new that people in Saskatchewan have not been able to operate an out-of-jurisdiction vehicle here because I think it certainly has been happening. I see a heck of a lot of Saskatchewan residents driving Alberta-licensed vehicles, particularly company vehicles, Mr. Minister.

Have they been operating without proper jurisdictional considerations, without at the end of the day, without insurance and registration?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the member is correct in observing that it's common practice to do this. But the present legislation prohibits the Saskatchewan resident from driving an out-of-province plated vehicle. But it is common practice.

We want to change it so that the rules include allowing a person to drive their uncle's car, if their uncle is from British Columbia or wherever, when they're actually in Saskatchewan. So this is basically fixing something that nobody has perceived as a problem but there is a problem in the legislation.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well if there's a problem in the legislation, I'm surprised that some enterprising insurance company like SGI hasn't found a loophole in there to take advantage of and to avoid making settlements. Has any of that happened?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Not that any official here is aware of, no.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Further on in your comments, it talks about learner drivers under the age of 16 are exempt from the requirement to wear a seat belt. I'm surprised that that would be the case also, Mr. Minister. How was that missed and . . . or is it not a problem? Why are you changing it now? If it was missed, was it missed by accident or was it some different interpretation in the Act that didn't require it before and does require it now?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the simple explanation here is that there was no intention to have this exemption for drivers under age 16 who were using learner's licence not being required to use their seat belts. And so practically this is correcting an error that was made.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. One of the things that you're changing in this particular Act is dealing with funeral processions. And you're changing this. It says here that the current legislation that funeral processions must obey all rules of the road and obey traffic control signals. This

amendment would clarify the right of way at controlled intersections. Wouldn't people still have to obey the traffic laws? If the lights change in the middle of a funeral procession, people would have to stop. And if they turn and follow the procession, the procession will be split, obviously, but don't they have to meet the requirements of the road the same as everybody else?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Basically a funeral procession follows the rules of the road, so at a controlled intersection, an intersection with a light, they would have to stop for the light. But if it's a situation where it's a stop sign and the people who are at that intersection yield and allow the procession to go through, then they would be allowed to do that. But the answer is that for a controlled intersection then they have to obey the signals.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. In section 2(c) dealing with red light cameras, what kind of restrictions, if any, will be placed on the locations that they might be placed and what would the typical location be? Would it be an intersection in a community? Would it be on a highway? What kind of locations and what kind of restrictions might be in place?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The use and the location of the red light cameras would be set by the local municipality.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. It also talks about obstructions on your licences so that the red light cameras might not be able to take a photograph of your licence. What kind of obstructions are you talking about? With the weather we're currently having in Saskatchewan, mud may very well be one of those obstacles. Or if you happen to be from the northwest part of the province, that might be grasshoppers. What type of thing are you talking about?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think part of it does include good, old Saskatchewan mud. But I think it also is referring to the fact that there are some covers that one can get for their licence plate which makes it impossible for a photograph to be taken of the licence plate. And that's specifically referenced.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Minister, the Bill also talks about loading lights and beacons. What's the necessity for making changes there? Why are you making changes to that area? I haven't heard of a single person raising a concern about it, but what's the rationale?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — This particular provision relates to the loading lamps that are used often on trucks when you're loading the truck and they're quite bright floodlights. And the concern is that these would be kept on when they're going down the highway and therefore blinding other drivers so that they couldn't see. And this is just covering that particular situation.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you. Just a couple of questions on the red light cameras, and I think when we're doing estimates I asked a couple of questions regarding that also. I'm just interested to hear what type of study is SGI going to do with the red light cameras and the reduction. I mean the whole point of this is to reduce collisions at intersections and some of our major intersections.

I notice the one out on Vic or Number 1 and Fleet. There are some

cameras sitting way up high when I drive in and see them way up there and I make sure I'm paying attention. So hopefully it's going to reduce the number of collisions and incidents at intersections.

Is SGI going to be monitoring that and to see what sort of an effect there has been prior to the implementation of the red light camera as opposed to after it's been in place?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Just a little piece of information that might be of interest. Over 40 per cent of the accidents in Saskatchewan take place at intersections. So there is concern to focus on that.

What's happening now is that the municipalities that are using the red light cameras on an experimental basis are collecting data. They work together with the person and/or people at SGI that are also collecting the data. And we're hoping then to basically monitor how well this works to reduce accidents.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you. The question that I had asked before in estimates was regarding the costing and where the fines, because probably there'll be an increase in tickets issued.

I'd be very interested to find out, if there is such a reduction in collisions and the savings that will be incurred by that because of the reduced collision, those savings, where will those be returned to? Because it will be a savings to SGI by not paying out as many claims and injuries and everything else. I'd be interested to know if there's any idea of where you're going to be targeting that — hopefully — the savings.

(2115)

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Any savings that would accrue here would accrue to the benefit of the motorists, keeping our rates down. So it would be that. But I would assume also that the nature of your question is, are there going to be other programs that would be encouraging safety. And I think the answer to that is yes, that SGI is always keeping their eyes and ears open for suggestions around programs that will improve traffic safety.

Mr. McMorris: — I think that covers off most of the questions I had. I'd like to thank the minister and his staff, the ones that I know especially, for having input and giving us as much insight to these Bills as possible. So thank you very much.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I would like to thank the members opposite for your questions and ideas and suggestions. And as you will note, there are some places where we're going to continue with community dialogue. And I would encourage those of you who have specific interest in some of these issues to make sure that you participate in whatever way you can. Thanks.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 25 inclusive agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, I'd just like to take a moment to thank the officials who are here and who have provided the advice as this legislation was developed. I very much appreciated all of their assistance. And with that, Mr. Chair, I would like to move that we report this Bill without amendment.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

**Bill No. 9 — The Child and Family Services
Amendment Act, 1999 (No. 2)**

The Chair: — Before I call Clause 1, I'll invite the Minister of Social Services to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Seated beside me is Bonnie Durnford, the assistant deputy minister of the department. And seated beside Ms. Durnford is Dorothea Warren, the associate executive director of family and youth services. And seated behind Ms. Durnford is Ken Cameron, the senior program consultant, children's services, family and youth services of the Department of Social Services.

Clause 1

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the minister and his officials for being here this evening. Mr. Chair, I have just a few questions for the minister, and I understand that most of the amendments are housekeeping in nature.

Mr. Chair, to the minister. Mr. Minister, under section 56(2), will there be a timeline put on a person for completion of their education, and could you please enlighten me on what it would be if this is the case?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — The proposed provision stipulates that after the person completes his or her education, if that occurs before the person attains 21 years of age or after the person attains 21 years of age.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, to the minister, who decides whether or not a person's needs for transition to adulthood are legitimate?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chairman, this'd be a matter of discussion between the youth involved and the social worker to agree upon a plan for furthering their education or employment prospects. That plan must result in an agreement and that's how we propose to proceed. And if at some point the agreement is broken then we always have the option of discontinuing with that plan.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Again, Mr. Chair, to the minister. I understand that the agreement is made between the minister and the youth. Could you give me a brief description as to what the terms of this agreement would be?

The Chair: — Now why is the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — By leave, Mr. Chairman, to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Chairman, I'm pleased to introduce Tammy Heinemen, who is a day care operator from North Battleford. She sat on the day care committee and has come to

Regina specially this evening in order to witness the debate of this Bill. So I'd ask all members to please join me in welcoming her.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

**Bill No. 9 – The Child and Family Services
Amendment Act, 1999 (No. 2)
(continued)**

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, in answer to the member's question, an agreement might contain elements such as which courses it is that the youth proposes to enrol in; what the various costs might be that are associated with that, such as tuition; what plans there are for residence or shelter; and any additional support that may be required that would also then be outlined in the agreement.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, you have sent over a copy of the amendment. Could you just give me a brief explanation of this, please?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Yes, Mr. Chair. Hopefully that will be the last of the Y2K (Year 2000) problems that we've seen.

In brief, this particular Act was amended in the spring of 1999 when the legislature sat; and then subsequent amendments for a different part of the Act were introduced in the fall session of 1999. So that therefore those amendments then became The Child and Family Services Amendment Act (No. 2) dated 1999. But because of the exigencies of legal or of the Legislative Assembly and the Law Clerk's, because this Act is being proposed to be passed in the year 2000, it should be retitled The Child and Family Services Amendment Act, 2000, and not No. 2 because this would be No. 1 of 2000. And in short I think that's the explanation, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And, Mr. Chair, finally I would just like to thank the minister and his officials for their help in answering my questions here tonight. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — If I might, Mr. Chair, I want to thank the member for her questions this evening.

Mr. Chair, the amendments I have are to amend the long title of the printed Bill by striking out (No. 2). Now I don't know if we're at that point?

I move that we:

Amend the Long Title of the printed Bill by striking out “(No. 2)”.

Amendment agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, for clause 1 then I would move that we:

Amend Clause 1 of the printed Bill by striking out “*The*

Child and Family Services Amendment Act, 1999 (No. 2)” and substituting “*The Child and Family Services Amendment Act, 2000*”.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 1 as amended agreed to.

Clauses 2 and 3 agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my officials for attending here late in the evening on a rainy night. And having said that, Mr. Chair, I would move that we report the Bill with amendment.

The committee agreed to report the Bill as amended.

The Chair: — I recognize the Minister of Social Services.

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

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, I'm pleased to introduce members of the minister's Advisory Board on Child Care, who are here this evening to observe the discussions on The Child Care Amendment Act, 2000.

And they are seated in your gallery, and they are — as was pointed out by my colleague, the member for North Battleford — they include Tammy Heinemen of North Battleford, who is an unlicensed child care provider; Nona Laird of Regina, a licensed child care provider; and Myrna Mossing of Gray, a group family child care provider.

I hope they find the proceedings interesting and informative. And I would ask all members to join me in wishing them a warm welcome, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 17 — The Child Care Amendment Act, 2000

The Chair: — I'll invite the Minister of Social Services to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Seated beside me again is Bonnie Durnford, the assistant deputy minister. Seated beside Ms. Durnford is Deborah Bryck, who is the director of child day care branch. Seated behind Ms. Durnford is Brenda Dougherty, the assistant director of child day care branch.

Clause 1

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I believe what the Bill is doing is expanding some of the services and the opportunities for child care in this province. And I

think, as you indicated the other day, a number of concerns were raised regarding child care and the original Act.

The fact that, especially for rural residents, there just seemed to be some constraints that made it difficult for young couples to have access to child or day care programs, specifically if they were both working, and in some cases especially for those who may have part-time employment and trying to find an opportunity or a place where their children could be well looked after, especially if they didn't happen to have parents around who enjoyed having the children come over for a while, such as we've been privileged to have for a number of years.

And of course our children are beyond that stage, but I know when they were growing up, if my wife . . . and my wife was a substitute teacher. So it was always . . . if she was called in, it was always nice to know that our parents, or my parents were handy and they just enjoyed having our grandchildren come over or their grandchildren come over and babysit for a while in the afternoon, but we realize that for many young couples that may not be possible.

I guess, Mr. Minister, the optimum in child rearing in this province or anywhere would be for a family member or a spouse to provide that child care and I firmly believe that, especially, Mr. Minister up until school age. And I think it's very important for couples if it's at all possible, to take the time to provide the care because they're the ones that will be able to really provide that child with the type of training and the outlook on life a lot better than a caregiver. You're going to implement your values and give your child a real opportunity to inherit those values.

And when a child is very young, they're very susceptible to what's being taught to them. And if you're concerned about the child rearing, I think, every couple should give serious consideration to . . . if at all possible, providing the care at home — being that at-home parent.

Having said that, Mr. Minister, we do realize that there were some situations in the former Bill where it was very difficult for parents to find the care . . . or even if they did find care, I believe, or a group home, or a child care home that would look after their children, many times they were refused because of the fact that there were limitations as a result of the number of children that could be looked after in that care home.

So as I understand it, what this Bill does is provides an opportunity if you can find a location that is more central to meet the needs of the children you're providing care for. It opens up the door for that rather than forcing parents to come to the residential home which may be out of the way.

And secondly it expands the ability to provide care for up to . . . if I understand it correctly, for up to 12 children if there are two adults available versus the 8. Those I think are the two specific areas you're addressing and maybe you could comment.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, the member is correct. Those are the two main provisions. There is one further provision which makes it clear that under no circumstances can we accept that families or that child care providers attempt to provide for more than eight children in their care at any time.

Just to make that crystal clear because we have some concerns about safety.

But as the member points out, the two major provisions that are proposed to be changed is: one, is to allow a family child care provider to provide care for children in a home other than their own home; and secondly, to provide for a model, that we have been testing on a pilot basis for a number of years in rural Saskatchewan in response to concerns that people in rural Saskatchewan had, that allows for a home to care for up to 12 children provided that there are two caregivers when there are more than eight children in the home. So the member is correct, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, so what you're saying . . . you made a comment earlier that, about a limitation of eight. I take it that still applies if there's only one caregiver — is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — That is correct, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Minister, so what we actually have here is the ability, and in more of the rural setting — and I understand that that's what you're specifically looking at — and the question I would have is, who determines who would qualify to provide a care home or child care home? Is it your department? Is there a level of criteria that's followed up on? And who would a family or an individual go to to ask for a licence, if you will, to operate a child care home?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, if people are interested in providing child care on a licensed basis, we'd certainly encourage them to contact the regional office of the Department of Social Services and a child care consultant would be available to meet with them to explain to them the regulations that we belabour under that . . . also the advantages of operating as a licensed child care provider, as opposed to an unlicensed child care provider, and would work with them to ensure the necessary licensing, provided that they met all the requirements, recognizing that the benefits of operating as a licensed child care provider are that parents who are subsidized by Social Services, because of income receive subsidies for child care, we will do that if they obtain child care in a licensed facility.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, just one further question, and that's how many licensed daycare centres do we have in the province and what percentage would be rural if you . . . when I say rural probably looking outside of say the Regina, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, P.A. (Prince Albert), North Battleford catch area?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, I can't provide an urban-rural split on this. I don't have that information. But there are 318 family homes, 113 non-profit daycare centres, 17 teen infant-toddler centres, 3 private centres, for a total of 133. I know that with respect to rural Saskatchewan we set into place a series of demonstration grants, if you will, to assist rural communities and rural people to look for ways to respond to evolving child care needs in rural Saskatchewan, and as witnessed in the amendments before us tonight.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, of those numbers — and I take it those numbers you gave were the licensed, or the

recognized licensed facilities — how many would be just run privately or non-licensed facilities, or do you have any idea of how many child care centres there might be in the province operating without a licence?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — I wouldn't want to hazard a guess, Mr. Chair. There are many private care arrangements in Saskatchewan, as the member pointed out, within families, sometimes extended families, sometimes friends. We would not be able to provide an estimate.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Chair, to the minister, as was indicated earlier on in a number of our second reading speeches and adjourned debates, certainly this piece of legislation is something that our caucus certainly doesn't have a problem with. We recognize the need and are pleased to see that there has been a recognition of that need, and I understand there has been a fair bit of consultation before the amendments were brought forward. So I thank you, Mr. Minister, and as well to your staff.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 9 inclusive agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, just before I move the motion to report the Bill, I would like to thank the member for Moosomin for his questions this evening. We appreciate his support for this involvement in daycare, especially for rural areas, and I should also like to thank the officials who are with us here tonight. Having said that I would like to move the committee report the bill without amendment.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

(2145)

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 76 — The Research Council Amendment Act, 2000

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I move this Bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

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

Bill No. 40 — The Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies Act

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 40, The Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies Act be now read the third time and passed under its title.

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

Bill No. 39 — The Department of Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training Act, 2000

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, I'll move that Bill No. 39, The Department of Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training Act, 2000 be now read the third time and passed under

its title.

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

Bill No. 7 — The Student Assistance and Student Aid Fund Amendment Act, 1999

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, I move that the amendments be now read the first and second time.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, by leave of the Assembly, I move that Bill No. 7, The Student Assistance and Student Aid Fund Amendment Act, 2000 be now read the third time and passed under its title.

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

Bill No. 35 — The Automobile Accident Insurance Amendment Act, 2000 (No. 2)

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I move that the amendments be now read the first and second time.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, by leave of the Assembly, I move that Bill No. 35, The Automobile Accident Insurance Amendment Act, 2000 be now read the third time and passed under its title.

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

Bill No. 36 — The Motor Carrier Amendment Act, 2000

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

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

Bill No. 54 — The Vehicle Administration Amendment Act, 2000 (No. 2)

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

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

Bill No. 78 — The Highway Traffic Amendment Act, 2000 (No. 2)

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

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

Bill No. 9 — The Child and Family Services Amendment Act, 1999 (No. 2)

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I move the amendments be now read the first and second time.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, by leave of the Assembly, I move that Bill No. 9, The Child and Family Services Amendment Act, 2000, be now read the third time and passed under its title.

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

Bill No. 17 — The Child Care Amendment Act, 2000

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to move that this Bill be now read the third time and passed under its title.

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

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

**General Revenue Fund
Social Services
Vote 36**

The Chair: — Before I call the first subvote, I'll invite the Hon. Minister of Social Services to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Seated beside me is Bonnie Durnford, the assistant deputy minister of the department. Seated behind me is Bob Wihlidal, the executive director of financial management. Seated beside him is Dorothea Warren, the associate executive director of family and youth. Seated beside her is Richard Hazel, the executive director of family and youth. And seated in the rear are Deborah Bryck, the director of child day care; Brenda Dougherty, the assistant director of child day care; Larry Moffatt, the executive director of community living; Gord Tweed, the income security programs manager; and Marilyn Hedlund, the associate executive director of income support. And that's it.

Subvote (SS01)

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and to the minister and his officials, welcome. And I have a few questions here. I'm not going to belabour a lot of points because a few of my colleagues would like to . . . have some questions as well.

Mr. Minister, in the annual report you show the income support for the estimated 2000 as a decrease in the neighbourhood of \$12,500, I think is what it is, a decrease in that level. And I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, why there's a decrease in that income support level when we've been talking about income supports for people, low fixed-income families. I've got a question to follow this in regards to a letter I've just received and I'm wondering if you could give an explanation for that decrease.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Yes, Mr. Chair. A few years ago, the provinces and the federal government entered into agreements by which the federal government would provide a national child benefit to all children, or the parents of children in Canada, provided that the family met certain income qualifications. This program is based on a computation of a family's income as stated in their income tax forms and automatically calculated.

When the federal government entered into this arrangement, they agreed that they would increase the amount available under this child benefit over a number of years to reach a maximum level of about \$2,500 per child. This would, as we understood it at that time, take five, six, seven years to reach that level.

(2200)

We took the position that rather than wait for Saskatchewan families to get the full benefit of the child benefit, that Saskatchewan would institute its own Saskatchewan child benefit in addition to the national child benefit, although those who receive the child benefit won't see any distinction that way. They just receive the one cheque. So that we would be able to go to the \$2,500 maximum child benefit immediately, and then as the federal government increased its commitment to the child benefit, we would be in a position to decrease our commitment to the child benefit and make those funds available for other programming needs within the department and throughout government.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, my colleague from Weyburn has some questions specifically related to this area so I'll just defer for a moment.

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Chair, and to the minister, I have a question about the employment supplement for low-income families. Could you tell me how this works? Who is eligible for this and what is the cut-off line for income?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, the Saskatchewan employment supplement provides a monthly supplement for families who apply. And they must apply and there is a 1 800 number. People can call 1 877 (6 working). So that's 1 877 (6 working). And depending on the eligible monthly gross income and the number of children, a supplement can be provided.

For example, if the eligible monthly gross income is \$750, the supplement can be \$156.25 for one child. But if there are four children, then the supplement would be \$250. If the monthly income were \$1,250, the supplement would be \$131.25 for a single child and \$236.25 for four children.

This is contained in the program brochure and I can certainly undertake to send a copy of the brochure over to the member's office — tomorrow. This is the only copy we have with us tonight.

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, in light of what you have just told me then, I would like you to explain to the Assembly why a farm family that has a negative income is not eligible for this benefit?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, the answer is because

the calculation is based on gross income. In fact it's based on 40 per cent of gross income, so if there were specific problems and the net income were less, they might not qualify. But it's based on gross income.

I might also state that this is a program that is unique to Canada, it's something with which we don't have a great deal of experience. There were questions raised when we designed the program. I remember the member for Humboldt raising questions about whether it should be based on gross income or some other indices.

And we did not have clear experience from other jurisdictions to help us assess as to what the appropriate figure might be. And so at this point we still have it set at 40 per cent of gross income and that's after roughly about a year and a half of operation. This is something that can be reviewed at some future time.

We also point out that we're planning to do an enclosure with the next national child benefit cheque that is going out, about the program, so that more farm families, more families generally in Saskatchewan, will be knowledgeable about the employment supplement.

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Chair, and to the minister. I guess this is the whole issue, Mr. Minister, is that farm families have already received these pamphlets indicating that they would be eligible. And when they fill the form out they find out that they are not eligible because it's 40 per cent of their income, which absolutely doesn't have any bearing on reality in the farm situation today. So we are penalizing the farm families by saying they can only qualify for 40 per cent of their income, whereas people on a fixed wage automatically qualify.

I would like to ask the minister how you plan to change this and if you're going to change it soon so people can benefit from it.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Well, Mr. Chair, I would point out that this year the provincial and federal governments were able to negotiate an assistance package for farm families in Saskatchewan. There are a number of components to that package, including write-offs, or a rebate for property taxes. The fuel tax is gone. There is also the, I believe it's \$240 million under the Canada-Saskatchewan assistance program. Plus generous — or perhaps not generous, but anyway substantial — cash advances, loans. And we feel that's the best way to help farm families.

Again, our experience with this type of program is very limited and we have no real experience from other jurisdictions to guide us in this particular area. And as we accrue greater experience we may be able to become more sensitive to various issues as they arise — whether it's on the farm or off the farm.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, for the minister. Mr. Minister, speaking of being sensitive to farm families, it was your government — after the opposition brought it to your attention that we asked you if farm families were going to benefit from this employment supplement program, and it was after that inquiry by the opposition, I believe, that there was consideration for farm . . . or certainly there was debate in the House on that — that your government decided that they would

include farm families.

Now certainly your government is knowledgeable enough to understand that the gross income of a farm family is far removed from their net income. There are costs associated with farming that bring the actual net income down to about one-tenth of what a gross income is. And so, Mr. Minister, we need to have fairness and equitable treatment for farm families as far as this employment supplement program goes.

It doesn't really take looking at another province to see what's happening. It is clear in this province, if you understand what farmers are going through here and what kind of a margin they have between net income and gross income, that it's pretty clear that you should be considering their net income as the basis for issuing or making them eligible for this employment supplement program.

I think that other provinces may have something to offer — but I think it's obviously up to you to make sure that you're looking into that — if they have the same sort of program.

Now I don't know what you're shaking your head about, but I do know that there are a lot of farm families out there that are completely dismayed, Mr. Minister, when they get their application form and they find out that this eligibility for application is based on their gross income. It is totally unfair because it is unlike any other working sector in the province in as far as they have a great deal of costs associated with their farming operation. So their gross income is much, much, much higher than their net income.

And I'm just asking you if your government has taken that into consideration or will in the future?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, I'd like to correct something. The member stated that if it weren't for the interest by the opposition that farmers would not have been included in this program and nothing could be further from the truth. The fact of the matter was that farmers were included in this program from the very start.

The member raised questions in the Legislative Assembly about the question of gross income versus net income as was raised tonight to be sure. I recognize that. But farmers were included as part of this program from the very outset as farmers are also eligible for social assistance in Saskatchewan if they qualify. Farmers, or also farm families will also, depending on their income, income flow, receive the national and Saskatchewan child benefit and also will be eligible for a supplementary health coverage if they benefit from the child benefit.

Mr. Chairman, the member talks about other provinces. Perhaps she could enlighten the Assembly about what other provinces offer a program such as this because I am not aware of any.

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Chair, to the minister. Mr. Minister, what I issued to you was a challenge to look at other provinces, if in fact other provinces had a program . . .

An Hon. Member: — I'm not aware of any program like this.

Ms. Julé: — All right, if they have no program like that so be

it. If this program is going to be fair and equitable to all people then there has to be consideration taken for the situation farm families are in, in as far as their income goes.

So I guess I'm not going to stand and argue with you all night, Mr. Minister, in as far as who brought forward the idea that farm families should be considered. But when this program was announced there wasn't to my recollection very much indication or any indication that farm families would be included, as you know that they would be able to have application for this program. After some questioning went forward I think that there was a mention by the minister that that would certainly be looked into and considered.

So I rest my case and I just thank my colleague for allowing me to make a few statements. And, Mr. Minister, it is a good program. We're asking no for fairness and equitability for farm families with others in the province when it comes to application and being eligible for application for this supplement program.

(2215)

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, as I understand it, that nearly 500 farm families have received the Saskatchewan employment supplement since the program started in July of 1998, but I do recall the member raising questions about this program in the spring of 1999. So the program was in existence before the member had raised questions about the entitlement of farm families for this specific program. And that's the record.

Again the member asked us to look at other jurisdictions. I've indicated that it is a considerable difficulty for us that there is no experience in other jurisdictions that might guide us with respect to this particular program.

No other jurisdiction in Canada has a program akin to the Saskatchewan employment supplement that assists working families, including farm families. We don't have any experience. We're unique here. We're leading the nation in this. So if we had help from other jurisdictions we'd love to get it, but we just don't have it.

Ms. Julé: — To the minister. Mr. Minister, on many accounts the opposition has been asking the government of the day, which is your NDP government, to take a leadership role. If there aren't any other jurisdictions, fine; possibly you could just take some internal leadership in your caucus and see that farm families are treated more equitably as far as accessing this supplement.

And that is what they're asking. I don't think there's any need for going on with this. I ask yourself, as minister, to speak with your cabinet and with your government to ensure that farm families are treated better in this instance.

And 500 farm families, Mr. Minister, just a reminder, are not a great number of families. I believe there were over 2,000 families that did receive employment supplement funding — if I can recall correctly what your answer to my question was in this regard — so 500 families is not a great deal.

And I guess it also remains to be seen and should be disclosed

exactly how much each of those families received. Because when you're looking at their gross income, I don't think it can be a great deal of help to them. Any amount is welcome, but I think we have to be clear about the facts. And I don't believe that there would be a great amount because of the stipulations involved.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — I appreciate the member's comments, Mr. Chair. And I can say that we will undertake to review this program over time — not only for farm families but for all families in Saskatchewan — as to whether it's meeting the objectives that were first set out and is doing so in an efficient fashion and in a fashion that helps the children in Saskatchewan, whether they be children in our cities and towns or whether they be children in farm families. And that would be our intention, Mr. Chair, so I thank the member for her question.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman of committees, and welcome to the minister's officials and to the minister through you, Mr. Chair.

Just two quick questions on funding for supported employment programs in the province. In Swift Current we have . . . and many communities have various agencies that help deliver this program on behalf of their clients. In Swift Current, the Southwest Ability Centre is the agency that really does a remarkable job of providing services to their clients through programs like this and others frankly.

And, Mr. Minister, I wonder if you could outline for us the funding mechanism for this supported employment program, or at least I guess I should call it the planning process for it. I understand that not just ability centres in the province, but other agencies involved in the program have asked the government for some way of improving . . . I guess no government funding is fixed per se; it's all subject to change. But they're looking for more surety.

And I wonder if you could outline specifically what they have asked for by way of funding changes in that regard? And what the department's response has been to date?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, in Saskatchewan we have a network, I believe about 60 rehabilitation centres throughout the province that — I think the exact number might be 62 — that provide employment opportunities for people with primarily intellectual disabilities. And we have felt the need over time to help people with intellectual disabilities to locate employment opportunities in the community with regular employment, regular employers, and regular employment situations.

So in this year's budget we announced that there would be \$300,000 extra to assist the disability community to look for specific ways in which that form of employment might be encouraged.

We are in the process of negotiating with the Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres, which is an umbrella group for the 62 rehabilitation centres, to obtain their assistance in administering the funds and reaching out, not only to the 62 centres across Saskatchewan, but also other groups in

Saskatchewan that may have an interest, and to come forward with specific ideas on how to promote supported employment in the community.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the answer, and in addition to the additional funding in the budget for what I believe is a worthwhile program as well. But I guess one area, just one area of my question that you didn't quite touch on, is this issue of the desire on the part of these agencies and SARC (Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres), I guess, for its members to do a little more long-term planning in this regard, to have some greater surety of monies not only in the current fiscal year but in the future.

So under the process that you just outlined or the direction that you've just outlined, the department is trying to go with SARC. Is that on the table and what's the department's response to it? Is the department open to this concept of providing a little bit more surety, for perhaps long-term funding for this program?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Well, Mr. Chair, the funding that has been provided this year, \$300,000, is in concert with an increase of funding through Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training under the employment assistance for persons with disabilities, the EAPD (employability assistance for people with disabilities) program, and I understand that increase in funding is about \$1 million.

The question we have is to find opportunities for persons with intellectual disabilities in addition to persons with other disabilities to access those funds under Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training. And we felt that it's necessary to provide additional funds for the disability community, to work with them to help them identify these additional opportunities and to take advantage of the EAPD funding that is there as a result of negotiations with Ottawa.

So for that reason we've allocated \$300,000 in the budget this year. We're hoping to allocate a similar amount next year again to see if there's an infusion of new ideas and new interest, sparking new interest in communities throughout Saskatchewan. And after the two years we'll evaluate where we're at in that program.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, Mr. Chair. Just one very final question and it goes to the same issue. I guess if you were speaking directly to the 62 agencies in the province, Minister, and they were asking you the question about five years down the road — understanding the vagaries of budgeting with government, with any organization frankly — what are our chances that we can plan on being able to offer this kind of supported employment program that far down the road or further into the future I guess? What would you be able to tell those folks?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — On this all I could say, Mr. Chair, is that the EAPD is the successor to a former program — the VRDP (vocational rehabilitation for disabled persons program). That program has been in existence for many, many years. We expect that the EAPD will similarly be there for many years to come, and be there to support people with disabilities including people with intellectual disabilities.

We see our funding at this point as being a short-term stimulus to help the rehabilitation community to identify some of those opportunities so that in the long run we can make better access for people with intellectual disabilities of those funds that are there.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and through you to the minister. First of all I'd like to welcome the officials here this evening.

And my question, Mr. Minister, is with respect to the community-based organizations providing services to people with disabilities, and as you are aware we have a large number of agencies in this province that do an absolutely marvellous job of providing some very high quality residential vocation employment services to people with disabilities.

Some of the challenges that those organizations have had to face over the last couple of years have increased dramatically, not the least of which are some of the changing demographics and aging population. And interestingly enough, in some way some of the agencies are a victim of their own success in that they've been very successful moving people with disabilities into employment situations. Consequently the individuals remaining in need of service are typically a more severely disabled individual.

And the various staffing ratios that are made available to these organizations are based on level of ability. At the developmental centre level, the staffing ratio is 1:4; at the activity centre, I believe it's 1:8; and at the sheltered workshop level, it's 1:12.

There's always been some debate about whether those are adequate or not, but the one difficulty in that, Mr. Minister, has been that the managers of those agencies are included in those staffing ratios.

Now a number of years ago that may have been entirely appropriate when the organizations were smaller and far less sophisticated than what they are today. But now we're looking at organizations that are very much larger than what they were a number of years ago. Some of them are extremely sophisticated operations and the manager's responsibilities and duties just do not allow them to directly supervise clients, residents, participants, employees, or whatever the case may be.

And SARC, the Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres, has passed a number of resolutions over the years, and I know that individual member agencies of SARC have lobbied your department to have managers withdrawn from the staffing ratio.

My question, Mr. Minister, is there any thought to doing that, what would the cost of doing that be, and what would any kind of time frame for implementation of removing managers from the staffing ratios be? Thank you.

(2230)

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, this is a funding issue that represents about \$1.4 million. Our rough calculation is that for about 40 centres that would be affected at \$35,000 per

centre for management positions, it calculates into about \$1.4 million. This will be an issue of discussion with the SARC managers — in this year; likely will be next year.

But we have made other changes. We have recognized, as the member points out, that we're beginning to see an increase of clients in the rehabilitation centres who have multiple disabilities or very severe disabilities, and so some of the front . . . some of the funding for the front-end workers has changed. So some of the ratios now, for example, can be 1:2 depending on the caseloads that some workers may have.

So there has been some recognition in that area. There hasn't been the recognition of the issue that the member raises, but these are things in the long term that we hope that we can carry on with support for the rehabilitation community. We have just finished a program, I think, of four years of 4 per cent increases to the rehabilitation centres. This year there's a further 2 per cent increase to help them with wage costs and the like, and we look forward to continuing our support in the years to come. And I want to thank the member for that particular question.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, just one very quick question with respect to an issue we discussed in previous estimates. The vocational and transition program at Hudson Bay that's being developed and established there, can you provide us with an update, Mr. Minister, as to where that's at and what is the expected start date of that program?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, as I understand it, the negotiations have been concluded. The funding is there and it is my understanding . . . I'm informed that the program can start just about any day now. I think all the necessary signatures have been granted, and so yes, any day.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Mr. Minister, welcome to your officials. Mr. Minister, one of the most sensitive issues and one of the most heart-wrenching issues we have to deal with as MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) has been with custodial and non-custodial parents and the children that are torn between them in cases of divorce. And often we get calls to our office, as I'm sure you do to yours, about the fact that the parents aren't able to see their children.

Mr. Minister, I've got one specific case where a non-custodial parent had charges laid against him that were later dropped, and there was no effort on anybody's part to further pursue it, but still the worker is not allowing the non-custodial parent to have any kind of visiting rights even though he was allowed to under the court access before the charges were laid. And, Mr. Minister, without having the funds to go to court and further pursue it, this non-custodial parent is left without having the rights to see his child.

Now, Mr. Minister, I have contacted your office about different cases along this line and I know that it's an issue that social workers deal with all the time and they find it difficult. But I'm wondering what can we be doing to help these parents to make sure that the children have the benefit of having both of their parents in their lives as the court has originally asked this to be . . . asked to be part of the children's lives.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — The member raises what is a very difficult area for our social workers. Suffice to say that, separate and apart from any determination that the courts may have about custody and the like, when we receive stated concerns about the safety of children, neglect, and abuse, then we have an obligation to respond, to investigate, and to act accordingly.

Sometimes we investigate and there are no real issues. It was a complaint made by someone that ought not to have been made. Sometimes complaints are made and the safety of the children is at risk, and then we take the appropriate action — sometimes with the agreement of the parent.

If there's a need to remove the children from the home, then we look to . . . if in the case of the one parent, we try if at all possible to place the children with the other parent. If that's not workable then we will sometimes . . . or we try to look to extended family to look after the children — if that's not possible, sometimes foster care — until such a time as the courts can make a determination as to what should be done in the absence of the parents not being able to do so.

All I can say is that when we receive complaints we are obliged to respond, to investigate, and to take the appropriate action at that time.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, but in the case when the justice system has already determined that there's no legitimacy to the complaint and all charges were dropped, then your department has determined that they still won't allow the court ordered judgment to go ahead. On what grounds does your department determine that there is more problems than the justice system sees? When can the parents actually feel that they have been absolved of any problem and they have the right to see their child again?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, there may be instances where complaints are made and both the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) and our department will investigate. And the RCMP may determine that they have insufficient information on which to base criminal charges. But there may be sufficient information for my department to continue with its investigation and to act because there may be cases of abuse or neglect even if that doesn't lend itself to criminal charges being appropriate in the eyes of the police. There may be instances where we still need to proceed for the safety of the children.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, a number of individual concerns. But I'm going to actually ask, Mr. Minister, if I forward a number of these for an immediate response.

I would have to say first of all though just before I get into a couple of concerns I would like to raise here. Mr. Minister, I'm not exactly sure from the comment you made earlier if you really understand what a cash advance is. A cash advance is nothing more than a loan, and for an agriculture producer you take a cash advance out, the very first thing that happens when you deliver any product to market is that that funding . . . the income from that goes strictly to the cash advance. You don't have anything to even take home to put against expenses that may be still incurring on you. So I think it's important for people to realize that a cash advance is not free money. It's

money that has to be paid back. It's like a loan. It really isn't income and it's usually taken just to cover expenses so that you can continue to operate. So I think that's important for us to realize.

Another comment in regards to the member from Kelvington-Wadena and her comments. I think sometimes, Mr. Minister, and certainly a number of situations have been brought to my attention, one begins to wonder at times if workers . . . when they're responding to concerns that are raised, and especially in domestic situations, I think too many times be it the husband or be it the wife, complaints against the other spouse are fairly common, because of the turf war if you will that takes place in trying to get custody of children.

And I'm not exactly sure if sometimes your department staff end up getting caught in this turf war in determining whether or not one spouse or the other should see a child. Certainly I've got a couple situations very locally where the fathers haven't seen their children for six years, even though they're supposed to have access. And part of the problem is they happen to be working away. And when you're working on the rigs and you're away for two months and you're home for about two weeks and you come home and you don't get a chance to see your child even though you have custody, and yet at the same time every time your cheque comes you're sending a cheque to cover the support payments. So those are areas of very significant concern.

(2245)

And I think . . . I know what we're discussing here actually has an overlap in Justice as well. But I think it's very important that we recognize the fact that there are fathers out there who . . . and children need to have access to and be . . . have some input from the fathers in their child rearing as well.

Having said that, Mr. Minister, a couple of concerns that were raised here. And one comes from a pastor in a community in our province, who brings up the fact that in his involvement in this community there's a food bank was set up some two years ago and continues to function to the point that they're not exactly sure where to turn.

The concern he has is that they provide a service to transients, to single parents, to those on social assistance, to the working poor, and to those who do not qualify for social assistance yet find it difficult to hang on to a job.

And I guess what he is raising here is wondering where do they really turn? They've got this food bank set up and he's wondering where the Department of Social Services is coming in and why they're even providing assistance to people on social assistance.

I would take it he feels . . . his belief is that the department should be helping and assisting people to provide for themselves, and why are they coming to the food bank looking for assistance?

Now I can see it when it comes to transient workers. But, Mr. Minister, I'm wondering, has your office been consulted in regards to providing assistance to transients who may be

travelling across our province or from our province to another province, looking for work? Is there a means whereby consultation can be taken with your department in providing some assistance to meet the needs of individuals who are just travelling across the province?

And also — maybe I'm just throwing too many questions at once — but the letter also brings out the fact that Mr. Martin talked about more help for families, or poor families across our province or across this country, in his recent budget. And is the province of Saskatchewan seeing any funding beginning to trickle down to assist in meeting the needs of those less fortunate?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, if there are transient individuals who can demonstrate to us that they have some opportunity, whether it's in another community in Saskatchewan or in another community outside of Saskatchewan, if they can demonstrate that they have, for example, a job to go to or someone who can assume responsibility for them, then we can provide short-term assistance to help them with that.

We will also work with other agencies including The Salvation Army and the RCMP where, if they determine that such help at a particular time is appropriate, then we'll support them in doing that as well.

With respect to the issue of poverty and . . . I am optimistic that given the changes that has been made that we will begin to see increasing impacts on the issue of child poverty in Saskatchewan.

As I indicated earlier, we moved immediately to a fully mature national child benefit which provides assistance of up to \$2,500 per child, I believe, maximum. In addition to that we have the Saskatchewan employment supplement which can provide a further, oh, perhaps up to \$3,000 in some circumstances, plus family health benefits so that those poor people who might have been in receipt of social assistance but now have financial incentives to work, we can continue to provide supplementary health benefits for the children and their families so that some catastrophic illness doesn't put them back onto social assistance because the assistance for health benefits was more generous under that program.

We believe that this year when the statistics come out by campaign 2000 that we have reason to be optimistic although, you know, given statistics and how they're measured are always subject to discussion. But we feel that we're on the right track with the changes that we have made, which especially help the working poor in Saskatchewan including farmers whose income has been depressed.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Chair, and Mr. Minister, you recently received a letter by the Leader of the Official Opposition in regards to a circumstance that was raised with our caucus, and brought to my attention as well, from a gentleman concerned about how some people misuse social assistance. And I believe the former minister was also . . . the concern was raised at one time and I believe in regards to the same instance.

And I just would like to know tonight, Mr. Minister, what has

been done? If you will or what is normally done when people raise these issues? Do you take them seriously and are corrective measures taken so that people don't feel that they can continue to try and find ways to circumvent the proper use and the funds that are available for individuals who are legitimately in need of assistance and find themselves — and I'm sure your department as well — as funds get a little tighter, may be trying to reach out to meet the needs of others.

So I'd like a comment from you, Mr. Minister, as to how these types of circumstances are dealt with.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, if I could just say with respect to the individual situation that the member raises, or for that matter any time that someone contacts our department about what they believe to be abuse of social assistance, we investigate. We have income verification officers located throughout our regional offices in Saskatchewan and we do investigate those complaints and act appropriately.

And we do receive calls on an ongoing basis, not just in letter form from the Leader of the Opposition. We receive calls on an ongoing basis and we investigate them.

I might say that Saskatchewan has comprehensive controls to prevent fraud and abuse. We have a sophisticated computer system to administer benefits. We have a provincial client registration system which prevents clients from receiving benefits in more than one location. We have client matching with other western provinces and some federal government departments and other provincial government departments.

And as I indicated, we have verification workers, 30 of them, located throughout the province to assist case workers in confirming client circumstances. And the public may contact the department at any time to advise of possible fraud and all concerns are investigated.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chairman, another question to the minister, and I hope you can appreciate, Mr. Minister, that we're actually keeping our questions fairly short tonight. There's some areas that I could really delve into a little more in-depth.

But a couple general . . . and I will take the time, Mr. Minister, to forward these complaints directly to you to get a clearer answer in regards to the specific issue. But in generalities, in two questions I have here, one is in regards to assistance. A lady had gone on maternity leave and her maternity benefits didn't kick in, so for a while social assistance did kick in and then her maternity benefits kicked in. And now she finds herself told that while she's not back to work that she should go for employment benefits, but there seems to be a lag.

What does your department do? Will your department assist a person in that case until employment benefits kick in, in receiving some assistance to tide them through that time until those benefits kick in? And I would assume that . . . it would seem to me, and I guess this is something the department should be making very well aware of, if the employment benefits actually trigger and are retroactive to a period of time and assistance has been paid until those employment benefits kick in, if I'm not mistaken those benefits then would either be asked

. . . would then become an overpayment, if I'm correct.

So I think people need to be aware of the fact, and if that's true, we just need to make sure people are aware of, if you're giving them assistance to carry them through, that if employment benefits are retroactive that there may be an overpayment so that people aren't caught and coming to me or to your office and saying, well why am I now being asked for a repayment of these benefits?

And secondly, if I can do two questions at once here, another situation where a person has . . . maybe I'll do that one separate.

A letter regarding an overpayment went out, however there was nothing in the letter to explain exactly what the overpayment was for, and some inquiries had been made as to why this overpayment is requested with no real response from the department. And I wonder exactly, Mr. Minister, what happens in situations where a letter may go out but it doesn't seem to be very clear as to what the overpayment was for. What action is taken by the department to address that concern?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, as I understand it, and again as I mentioned earlier, we do have client matching with some federal government departments, including employment insurance. And so when someone comes to us and says look, I'm eligible for employment insurance, I'm expecting a cheque in a couple of week's time, we can provide him an advance on those funds. And we do have an agreement that those funds will be returned, paid back once the employment insurance benefits are actually received.

With respect to if someone receives a letter about an overpayment, and it's not clearly indicated as to why the overpayment is indicated, there should be a phone number on the letter as to who to call to get information if they're not clear about that. And if that doesn't work, they can certainly write to your office or to my office and we'll make sure that it's looked after by the appropriate officials.

(2300)

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Chair, and Mr. Minister, another situation that was brought to my attention — and again I'll forward more information in regards to this — it's from an individual with I believe three children who are all challenged and trying to send them to camp this summer — and I'm not sure, I don't think she's sending all three; looking at at least sending one — and was told to use some respite funds. And I don't exactly understand all the avenue of respite. I assume that because of challenged children, she has . . . gets some funds for some care for those children so that she gets a break every once in a while.

But her comment is that the respite funds would not cover even the cost of one child going to a camp, and if she did use respite, then she'd have nothing to assist her to give her a break during the year. And I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, what is exactly done? Does your department work to assist people in giving children an opportunity to attend camp, especially children who are challenged, and what avenues do you follow? Or do you require that the few funds that are available to assist in some of the care that may be needed would be used up there for a parent who was forced then to rely solely on benefits and no respite

later on in the year where they may be finding it's very difficult for them to continue on providing that care?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, I'm informed that in-home supports that are managed by parents who receive a financial subsidy are available up to 60 days per year and up to \$28 per day, and that can be used as respite care or, if the family wishes, they could also make arrangements for a recreational camp as the member outlined. But the maximum is 60 days at \$28 per day.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, so what you're basically saying though, your department really has nothing to assist families and assist some young people who are coming from homes where they receive assistance to have an opportunity for any kind of a camp program?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, I'll just point out that where parents are supported by our department and they have a child with intellectual disabilities, the parents do have the option to determine how they will utilize the funds which are available, which is as I indicated 60 days at \$28 a day, and they can use those as respite days or they can use that in part for camps if they so desire; but that's the limit we set. The exception to that because of historical reasons and federal cost sharing, and what was initially deemed to be a therapeutic opportunity is Camp Easter Seal where there would be no charge to the parents if their children attended that camp.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, as well as another area that concern is being raised is the fact that when students of families on assistance when there is student day trips such as during the school year, sometimes they find that what's available just doesn't quite meet the need, or sometimes students don't actually have the opportunity to have the same involvement as students of parents who aren't on assistance. And is there any assistance that . . . I'm not aware of any, but is there is any assistance that would just be kind of a supplement to families to provide for their children to take advantage or be involved in some of the student or the school programs outside of the average school day?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, I would point out that for families who are on social assistance, we do provide support for school supplies at the beginning of the year. For children under 6 we provide \$50, for children age 6 to 13 it's \$85, and 14 and over it's \$130. If there are in addition to the need for supplies, if there are school trips, we do not provide support per se.

It definitely is better off for families to be working and to have the support of the national and Saskatchewan child benefit and the Saskatchewan employment supplement because there's certainly more generosity under that program for low income families.

I would point out though that with the increase, not only of the national child benefit but there's also an increase this year in the federal child tax credit, there will be some small number of dollars, I believe \$7 per child, available for families on assistance as well.

And I also point out that families on assistance will be eligible

now for the provincial sales tax rebate, and I believe they'll see their first cheque, I think, in the month of October. And that's for families on assistance as well. We won't claw that back so they'll have those . . . that additional cash flow during the month of October to assist them with additional needs such as this.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, I'm not sure if I understood you correctly. You mentioned about clawing back some funds if there's some . . . were you talking about some extra additional federal funds that are going to be available and that your department would be clawing back? That word clawback raises . . . certainly raises some red flags, and I'm not exactly sure what you mean by what I . . . I guess the question I would have is if the federal government is going to be kicking in a little more, why would the province then all of a sudden decide they're going to have to cut back on their level of support?

And, if you will, if the cheque has already gone out, wouldn't it be easier in recognition of working hand in hand, of having your income, the provincial income already hit that stage, rather than a clawback? It's easier to just give the appropriate funds rather than trying to clawback something that's already been in people's hands and they've obviously had a need for it.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chairman, this is going to get increasingly complicated. In addition to the National Child Benefit, there's also a federal child tax credit. And in addition to increases in the National Child Benefit that the federal government agreed to do in co-operation with the provinces, and where we would treat any funds received under the child benefit as income when we assess eligibility for social assistance, in addition thereto, there is also a smaller sum under the child tax credit.

And in addition to the increase in the National Child Benefit this year, the federal government also provided for a small increase in the child tax credit. But we do not propose to clawback that increase under the child tax credit, so there will be some small increase for families on social assistance as well.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Chair, thank you, Mr. Minister. I think I have it. But I guess I would just suggest that, as we look at working together, when the federal government is coming with programs, just designing and kind of working hand in hand so that when increases are there and you work hand in hand so you don't find yourself in a position where there may be a place where — maybe clawback is the wrong word — but where an overpayment may result, that we've always got the payments coordinated.

Just one other question I have before the member from Humboldt I think has a couple questions, unless my colleagues and I have addressed all of her concerns. But, Mr. Minister, a major concern for people with disabilities is transportation. And while I'm not exactly sure if this specifically falls in your area — I don't think it does; I think it's municipal — but I think, Mr. Minister, your department still would have some involvement because of the fact that a lot of people on disabilities do receive support from the department.

And the question I would have, Mr. Minister, is what is your department doing in working with Municipal Government to address the problem of accessible transportation for people with disabilities? So that they can indeed get out to some of the services that they certainly do require, rather than being housebound on many occasions because of the lack of transportation.

I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, if your department is doing something to work kind of hand in hand to address these concerns with the minister of Municipal Government?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, the member is correct. The question of transportation for people with disabilities is something that falls under the jurisdiction of Municipal Affairs, Culture and Housing and I think the member would be pleased to entertain any questions on that program. We certainly would have an interest or do have an interest in what happens in that program because we are concerned about people with disabilities.

I might say that people who are eligible for social assistance, if there is a demonstrated need for transportation assistance related to employment or health or things of that nature, we certainly can provide assistance to those families and individuals who require that at that point in time.

Ms. Julé: — Thanks, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, I would like to just issue a question to you in regards to the exploitation, sexual exploitation of children and youth. Mr. Minister, there was a declaration and agenda for action that was presented by sexual exploitation . . . sexually exploited children and youth and delegates that were at the conference in Victoria, British Columbia, in March of 1998. And the declaration that was submitted as a result of this conference in part had in it that:

We declare that the term child or youth prostitute can no longer be used. These children and youth are sexually exploited and any language or reference to them must reflect this belief. We declare this commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth is a form of child abuse and slavery. We declare that all children and youth have the right to be protected from all forms of abuse, exploitation, and the threat of abuse, harm, or exploitation.

That is just in part some of the declaration.

Do you as Minister of Social Services in this province, who initiated our own committee to deal with the prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation of children, do you as minister agree with the declaration brought forward at the time of the summit in Victoria?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, it's fair to say that our approach that we enunciated some, oh I think, two years ago in this area, in part legislative response and working with communities to assist children who are caught up in the sex trade, we took the position, as does the declaration, that children are victims and needed to be dealt with from that point of view. And that formed, I think it's fair to say, the basis for our approach at that time.

But as the member knows, we have questions about whether

that is the right approach, and think all of us do in Saskatchewan. And therefore we've asked a committee of the Legislative Assembly, chaired by the Chair and the member, to delve into these issues and to provide advice to the Legislative Assembly and the government.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, to the minister. Mr. Minister, I am particularly interested in whether you agree with the one statement:

We declare that all children and youth have the right to be protected from all forms of abuse, exploitation, and the threat of abuse, harm, or exploitation.

In adjunct to that, another declaration:

We declare that governments are obligated to create the laws which reflect the principle of zero tolerance of all forms of abuse and exploitation of children and youth.

Do you agree with those two statements?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Well, Mr. Chair, I think that everyone in society would agree with those statements. I guess the question is, how do you implement those statements and give actual effects so that those statements can be turned into effective policy and into effective programs and services to help children.

We put forward an approach in Saskatchewan that we thought was the right approach which is to work with community groups at the street level, to offer up a helping hand to children who are caught up in the sex trade, to help them off the streets.

There have been questions raised by the member herself as to whether that is the right approach, and as a consequence we have asked the Legislative Assembly to strike a committee to investigate this matter and to provide advice to the Legislative Assembly and to the government as to whether or not the statements she makes — which I think we all agree to — have been properly interpreted by the Government of Saskatchewan in translating into not only legislative action but also program and service action at the street level.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and Mr. Minister. Another statement of this document states:

The declaration and agenda for action must be adopted and implemented in its entirety because without all the pieces in place, children and youth in the world will continue to suffer sexual exploitation and its many inter-related issues and impacts.

Now, Mr. Minister, as you well know, I have tabled a piece of legislation entitled The Sex Offender Registry Act, and it seemed to me that that Act would be a major initiative to respond to the declaration, especially the declaration that says that all children and youth have the right to be protected from the threat of abuse, harm, or exploitation.

Now we know that sex offenders do produce or pose a threat when they're released from prison. And I just would ask you to consult once again with the Minister of Justice to see if we can

get that piece of legislation through, because I know that it would be a compliment to all the work that the committee is doing in this province as well as honouring the declaration as put out at the summit in Victoria.

And I thank you, Mr. Minister, for your time this evening for answering the questions so aptly and I thank your officials for coming, and I'm sure that the critic of Social Services would thank you also. They're a little busy in conversation right now. But thank you very much for coming.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — If I can just thank all of the members who asked questions this evening, Mr. Chair. They've raised good issues, some that we obviously need to do more work on, some issues that are simply very difficult in our society and seem to defy the right kind of solution where the member raises questions about custody disputes and so on and children getting caught up in that. We agree that it would be far preferable in our society if there was always a mediated solution and that parents could agree as to how to deal with a question of access and custody for their children and not involve third parties.

But I want to thank all the members for their questions this evening, Mr. Chair.

The Deputy Chair: — Thanks to the minister and to all the opposition members.

Subvote (SS01) agreed to.

Subvotes (SS02), (SS03), (SS04), (SS05), (SS06), (SS07), (SS09) agreed to.

Vote 36 agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, if I might, I also wanted to thank my officials who have been here tonight not only to deal with a couple of Bills, but to help me with the questions that were put by the opposition. And I'd like to thank them for their attendance this evening and for their ongoing good work on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As well, Mr. Chairman, to extend to the minister and to his officials our appreciation for their responses tonight even at this late hour. Thank you so much.

**Supplementary Estimates 1999-2000
General Revenue Fund
Social Services
Vote 36**

Subvote (SS05) agreed to.

Vote 36 agreed to.

**General Revenue Fund
Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs
Vote 30**

The Chair: — I'll invite the hon. minister to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I'm pleased to have with me this evening deputy minister, Brent Cotter; Gord Sisson, Aboriginal Affairs; Ernie Lawton, Intergovernmental; Paul Osborne, and Al Hilton. And the back, Irene Janz from protocol; Glen Benedict from Aboriginal; and also we have Murray Langgard from anniversaries secretariat; and Donavon Young from Aboriginal.

I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman. Also, following from our last day in estimates there was a question from the member for Saskatchewan Rivers concerning administration budget. I now table that. And there was also a question from the hon. member for Weyburn-Big Muddy as to travel costs and I table that.

The Chair: — Minister, I'll request that you send it across as opposed to a more formal tabling.

(2330)

Subvote (IA01)

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Chair, to the minister, the last time we were in discussing the estimates of your department, we were discussing the agreement that was signed between the province and the federal government that dealt with specific land claims and compensation that would be paid to SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) and SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association) in lieu of taxes that would be lost and so on. And the minister felt that perhaps we may be trying to make this a political issue, and I can assure the minister we certainly weren't.

Merely what we were trying to do is raise the concerns of some of the RMs (rural municipalities) that had been talking to us and saying that they are going to be looking at some rather significant tax losses under this agreement, albeit 15 times the assessment certainly will provide more tax dollars than 5 times or whatever. But it is somewhat less, well you know, significantly less than 42.5 times.

And to demonstrate that, I have information submitted to me by the RM of Cupar No. 218, an RM where there has seen some 6,700 acres bought, selected under specific land claims. And to demonstrate the difference in potential tax losses, if all those . . . if the taxes . . . you know, if those lands . . . the tax replacement payments for the land selected under specific land claims would have taken place at 22.5 times the previous year's taxes — this is only on the municipal portion — there would have been a fund of approximately \$180,000 would have been put into this fund to replace taxes in future years.

Under specific land claims that amount of dollars would only be approximately 120,000 so there's a \$60,000 difference in there. So you can see that there's going to be considerably less earnings on 121,000 which means there's fewer dollars to be distributed in the form of taxes. And that's only dealing with the municipal share of taxes on those properties.

And now if you would factor in then . . . and I don't have those figures factored in, the school taxes, that would . . . we were talking considerable dollars in with regards to that land. And I had asked the minister earlier if the province has any intention to help with this deficiency in taxes, and the minister indicated

that at this point in time they didn't.

And I just wonder if there has been any change in, or any rethinking of, that position. And as I indicated earlier, the purpose of these questions is just to demonstrate that on a localized basis there is some serious concerns in this area.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Chairman, first of all I wish to reiterate that all of the tax loss compensation comes from the federal government for the simple reason that reserves are created solely by the federal government. The specific claims compensation was again negotiated solely by the federal government, paid solely by the federal government, accepted by SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities).

This is not a provincial issue. No, the province does not intend to pay tax loss compensation. The municipalities accepted it. And while I agree that if the municipalities had been paid more they would have more money, this is an agreement negotiated between the federal government and the municipalities, accepted by the municipalities. And they were at the signing ceremony — they were all smiles, they accepted their cheques, they said they were happy. This was full compensation, the matter was closed, and that is where I will leave it.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Chair, to the minister. The minister will know that SARM didn't negotiate directly with the federal government. It was the provincial government that negotiated on behalf of SARM. And so that's why we feel that perhaps the provincial government has some responsibility in this area. But nonetheless, we'll leave the negotiating of the agreement and move on to some . . . at least one particular.

I understand that the way the agreement reads is that at the time of purchase, the federal government will put 10 times the previous year's taxes into the fund, and the First Nations bands themselves will put five times the taxes into the fund.

Now will this take place simultaneously or will there be a drag? Will there be a time frame or a time lag in between the two funds . . . payments, the one coming from the federal government and one coming from the First Nations?

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — First of all, I wish again to stress the province of Saskatchewan is not a party to this agreement, was not a party to the negotiations. We did act as facilitator between the municipality and the federal government. We're simply not a party.

And it is very, very strange logic, not to say a legal departure, to suggest that a facilitator becomes liable for paying compensation. It's certainly not something I've heard propounded before this discussion in this legislature.

Now on the other question though, that of the payment of the compensation 10 times by the federal government — that's already been paid; SARM has the cheque. As to the five times that comes from the bands as they make their selections, my understanding is that, as I've already pointed out, the federal government and the federal government alone puts land into reserve status. The bands don't have that right, and of course, Saskatchewan doesn't have that right.

The federal government declares reserves and my understanding is that the federal government will not create reserve lands until the five times has been placed in trust. So they simply won't get reserve status until the five times has been paid.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Chair, to the minister. I'd like to thank the minister for that information. I'm sure that will provide some level of assurance to those RMs who will have land selected within their RM to go into reserve status under this agreement.

What I'd like to do is just ask one or two questions of the minister with regards to some areas that his department does have jurisdiction in, and that is . . . or perhaps can provide a catalyst in developing service agreements between First Nations and municipalities.

As the minister is no doubt aware, the municipalities have certain obligations under Acts such as The Noxious Weeds Act, The Stray Animals Act, and those sorts of things. And municipalities are finding that with the very nature of specific and treaty land entitlement properties — they're dispersed throughout the RMs and surrounded by regular ratepayers' land, if I can put it in that, use that term — and they're really having a problem as to how they can come to some sort of a service agreement with First Nations and that sort of thing. And is the minister's department . . . what work is the minister's department doing in that area to help facilitate development of those service agreements?

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Yes, Mr. Chairman, in response to the hon. member, I would advise that, first of all, in the case of urban reserves, urban reserves are not declared until a service agreement with the contiguous municipality is in place. Rural reserves are somewhat different. In the case of a rural reserve, a service agreement is not required.

And the hon. member referred to municipalities having responsibility. The answer is they don't. When a land goes into reserve status, the municipality has zero responsibility. It's not part of the municipality. And there's the short and simple answer.

However, I would agree with the hon. member that, as a matter of practicality, oftentimes joint agreements on services make good sense. And in that situation, our department is pleased to provide facilitator services and even mediation, if that will assist.

However, I say there is a difference in that service agreements must be in place before the federal government will create an urban reserve; there is no such requirement in a rural reserve for the simple reason there is no obligation on the rural municipality.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Chair, to the minister. I wonder if the minister could explain then why is it necessary with an urban reserve to have service agreements in place and not have the same conditions for rural reserves?

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Yes, in response, Mr. Chairman, it's just the different nature of an urban situation. In an urban situation, that reserve will continue to have to access the typical urban

services of water, sewer, street cleaning, garbage collection, fire, police. That is not the case of farm or pasture land out in the middle of the country.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Chair, to the minister. Many of the land that has been selected — whether it be treaty land entitlement or specific land claims — have building sites on them; there are people living on them. Once they become designated as a reserve, as I indicated earlier that quite often these are parcels of land that are interspersed amongst the rest of the land in the municipality.

There are fire hazards. I mean it's quite common for a fire to start on one piece of property and move across to another piece of property. I know the First Nations people have concerns in that area. Stray animals is another area that is an item of concern, both to rural municipalities and First Nations.

So it would seem to me that there are enough issues there that I think we need to do a lot more work in working towards these agreements. And I realize that these service agreements can only be accomplished by having the federal government involved, the RMs involved, the First Nations involved, and to some extent the provincial government, if nothing else in the role as a facilitator.

(2345)

I have had experience serving on an RM council and working with a First Nations band trying to develop these service agreements. There aren't even any guidelines that these various parties can use to try and establish a service agreement. And I think this is an area where the minister's department really has to look very carefully into, and bring forward some guidelines in that area.

And I just wonder if the minister has any work been done recently in that area?

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — First of all, I would say that the framework agreement is of course the Treaty Land Entitlement Framework Agreement. That was the agreement signed by all parties which provided that service agreements were a prerequisite of an urban reserve but not of a rural reserve.

Nonetheless, the hon. member is of course quite right when he says that it is in the common interests of both the First Nations reserve and the adjoining non-Aboriginal lands and peoples to have common agreements in place as to how both will be properly managed. So both obviously share an interest in making sure that is done. Yes we would be happy to assist. We are available to help.

We have helped. We have provided facilitator and mediation services and will continue to do so. And if the hon. member knows of any specific situations which might be benefited by the intervention or the assistance of our department, we'd be pleased to hear from them.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And good evening to the minister and to all of his officials. It seems like you have quite a delegation with you tonight but we appreciate you staying up this late. It is 10 minutes to 12 and I think the general public

should know that, how very dedicated as legislators we are.

Mr. Minister, I have spoken with you briefly about the allegations of fraud and not only allegations of fraud, but actually charges of fraud and convictions associated with fraud and misappropriation of funds within the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Minister, when this whole issue was brought to my attention, the main concern was funding from the METSI (Metis Education Training Services Inc.) program that was being misappropriated and fraudulently used by some members that were in responsible positions or supposed to be in responsible positions in western region 2A.

Mr. Minister, first of all, I anticipate your answers to some of the questions that I'm going to be putting to you, but before I put the questions to you, I would ask you to relate to the Assembly and to all people of the province what your mandate is in regards to your portfolio as Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. What is your role there and your responsibilities?

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Sometimes, Mr. Chairman, it's easier to say what it isn't, and I think the hon. member's question is almost better answered by saying what my mandate is not.

First of all, she mentions METSI, the Metis education training arm. Now that is an organization which is funded by the federal government and receives no assistance whatsoever from the provincial government. So if there are allegations of funds going astray, that's not my responsibility nor should I be involved in that.

The other thing the hon. member mentions is the possibility of criminal fraud. I'm not the police and I have told certain individuals, as the hon. member knows, if you have evidence of criminal behaviour you should immediately refer same to the RCMP. I'm not the RCMP.

So from both standpoints, first of all the standpoint of law enforcement, that's not me. From a standpoint of funding an organization for which there are certain allegations floating out there, they don't get funds from the Government of Saskatchewan.

So if I may start by answering that on at least two counts, the questions about METSI are totally and completely inappropriate and are not within my mandate.

Now what is my mandate then? The mandate of the department is to promote Saskatchewan's interest through the management of the province's relations with other governments, in Canada and abroad, and to work with Aboriginal peoples in the province and their organizations to develop and implement policies and programs which advance our common interests.

The department also coordinates and manages matters related to official protocol, provincial millennium and centennial events, Government House, French language services, and provides administrative services to the Office of the Lieutenant Governor.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, I've often

wondered what the mandate was, but I understood that your department had a role to play in the management of effective . . . to ensure effective and accountable governance structures. And I think you mentioned something of that when you just read your statement there.

I would really appreciate you reading one more time to me the statement about the management . . . the clause or the line that you've indicated you are to assist or whatever it is with management. If you could read that for me again.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — To work with Aboriginal peoples in the province and their organizations to develop and implement policies and programs which advance our common interests.

Now I might also say though that in matters of accountability, where those come to the fore, obviously are when I am advancing monies on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan, and there of course, I have a very serious responsibility to make sure there is full accountability.

And in that regard if I may read from a letter given to a particular organization we have just recently funded — but this is a standard letter which goes to every single organization I believe that we fund — and if I may just read portions of it I think it will assist the hon. member.

- (1) You shall submit a written report by (a given date) providing details of the project.
- (2) You shall provide to the Deputy Minister . . . receipts and other information relating to the costs incurred by the Project . . .
- (3) . . . (This) grant is made (on the subject of) the following conditions:
 - (a) the statements made in your application are true;
 - (b) that you do not significantly change your intentions concerning the nature of the project . . .
 - (c) that you agree and understand that the Deputy Minister may wish to make a public announcements . . .

. . . It is expressly agreed . . . that the Grant . . . shall, at the option of the Deputy Minister, become immediately repayable by you . . . upon the happening of any of the following events:

- (a) . . . the Deputy Minister determining the any statements made in your application are untrue;
- (b) upon the Deputy Minister determining that the funds advanced . . . to you . . . have not been utilized for the purposes and/or in the manner provided for in this offer.

And then it goes on to list some other requirements as well. But I guess I have to say though I'm not sure that I have any general broad accountability, responsibilities, or rights in regard other bodies and other organizations, except insofar as they are funded by the Government of Saskatchewan. When they are funded by the Government of Saskatchewan, yes, there must be total and complete accountability and it is the responsibility of my department to make sure that there is.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. To the minister, Mr. Minister, part of what you read to me stated that your mandate was to assist in advancing programs and policies of common

interest to the people that are Aboriginal. I guess those weren't your exact words, but that's certainly part of your mandate from what you've told me.

There seems to be a great deal of difficulty with the grassroots Metis people getting any kind of assistance from anyone. They seem to be having a great deal of difficulty getting the attention of you as minister. They are having a great deal of attention of getting accountability and responsibility from HRDC, and they certainly are not feeling that they are getting it from within their own executive of the MNS (Metis Nation of Saskatchewan).

Now, Mr. Minister, I would think that as Intergovernmental Affairs minister, which means to me that you would be a liaison between the provincial and federal governments in matters pertaining to Aboriginal people — their concerns, their policies, guidelines, making sure that there is financial accountability, and those kind of things — would be something taken up by you in your responsibility. You are a liaison and it is your responsibility to do so.

Now, Mr. Minister, you will know who I'm referring to, but I know that you have been the recipient of correspondence, and I'm not too sure with phone calls or letter correspondence or just how the correspondence happened, by members of the grassroots of the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan. And they did bring their concerns to you, and they feel that they're not being addressed. They feel that they're being put off — put off by the federal government, put off by the provincial government, put off by HRDC (Human Resources Development Canada).

Now, Mr. Minister, these are honourable people who are asking for integrity, accountability, and proper government structure to be in place.

One of their requests to you is to help them, and I guess to accept from them a proposal that they had put forward, a work plan that they had issued to you regarding the establishment of an independent Metis ombudsman's office.

Now I know that you have spoken with them, and I would wonder if you would be so good as to comment on what kind of discussion did take place and whether or not you are willing to assist them — even if it is in the capacity of a liaison with the federal government — to bringing about this request, in consideration of the fact that they have no avenue, they have no other recourse for the accountability that they're calling for?

We have \$10 million coming from the federal government every year to deal with youth initiatives. We have money that is in addition to that, in the sum of somewhere in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, coming for Metis urban governance. We have situations where that money that was coming to urban governance is going to establish an office . . . or to purchase an office building, I believe in Saskatoon, which is contrary to the guidelines that they are supposed to be using the money for.

We have a great deal of corruption taking place, misappropriation of funds. And we also have nepotism that seems to be quite rampant, wherein family members seem to have all the control of how money is being used.

Many people are being marginalized including youth that are

Metis people, youth that are needing money and asking for money to apply for different programs under the METSI program. These people are being refused funding because persons in authority are taking it and using it apparently for their own purposes.

Mr. Minister, there have been allegations of slippage — money being taken to use for businesses of people that are in the upper echelons of authority — and no one is checking this, and no one is countering it and no one is answering to it and nobody is assisting by having their request . . . the Metis grassroots people are requesting that you, as Minister for Intergovernmental Affairs, relay to the federal government and HRDC to take over all METSI programming.

They want that done because they believe that with all of this happening it's much better off that HRDC receives applications directly from the regional offices, and they distribute it . . . HRDC distribute it as they have done in the past. They've done this in the past and there were no problems.

They have a great deal of problems now and no one seems to be concerned about this accountability and the funding that should be going to youth and young people for programming as it was designated for in the first place.

(2400)

They are also asking for a forensic audit of all MNS programs, departments, affiliates, and the head office. They're asking for that and they're getting no response from anyone.

Now obviously there's political protection taking place here somewhere. It seems like to these people, they're thinking that HRDC is in bed with the MNS and they have no recourse about how to stop this corruption and they want to see accountability and integrity. And once again I mention, Mr. Minister, that it's quite admirable that these people, for a couple of years now, have been really working hard and not giving up, to ensure that taxpayers' money is being used wisely and rightfully.

One other thing, Mr. Minister, that they're asking for is for the Chief Electoral Officer to fully supervise the next Metis general election because there was 22 ballot boxes, from what I understand, where ballots were somehow tampered with. Election fraud was taking place in many forms. And again, no accountability. No one called them on this sort of happening.

So those are all of very grave concern to me. And I think that it's really incumbent upon you, Mr. Minister, as Intergovernmental Affairs minister to liaison with the federal government to see what they're doing about this.

I ask you, Mr. Minister, have you done that? Have you spoken to your federal counterparts? Have you written letters? Have you talked to them to see that something is being done?

We were told by the grassroots people that HRDC said that they had put in . . . they had issued a directive to MNS, and I think to METSI too, to ensure that their policy guidelines are being adhered to and so on, that all of this was supposed to be taking place. But unfortunately even though that issuance came forward from the federal government, there still seems to be

problems going on and on and on.

So, Mr. Minister, have you spoken to your federal counterparts about the very grave concerns being put forward here by grassroots people of the Metis association?

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Yes, Mr. Chairman, first of all I would advise the hon. member what we have done. We have approached the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan and the federal government with a proposal that we participate in the establishment of a Metis ombudsman position. And I advise that we are open to that, the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan is open to that. To date we have received no indication of interest from the federal government. So in terms of what have I done, that's what I've done.

I have to come back to it, though. The hon. member has used words like corruption, fraud, and political protection. I gather she considers me to be a part of that. However, she also talks about the Metis Education Training Services Inc., METSI. It receives not one penny of provincial funding. She talks about the need for me to do a forensic audit. Why would I audit money that doesn't come from the provincial government?

She talks about fraud and corruption. Again, I'm not the police. I don't audit money that is paid by the federal government. So there is not one cent of provincial money going to METSI, so why would I audit it? And if there are allegations of funding going astray, they should talk to the funding agency which is the federal government, HRDC.

If there is talk of criminal behaviour, and the member has made several references to criminal behaviour in her talk tonight, go to the RCMP. I can't believe you're talking to me about money that has nothing to do with me, nothing to do with the Government of Saskatchewan, and . . . (inaudible) . . . criminal behaviour. Phone the police . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . you're worried that I'm not going to start a criminal investigation. You're absolutely right — I'm not. You're worried that I'm not going to conduct an audit, a forensic audit of federal funds. You're absolutely right — I'm not.

Ms. Julé: — Well, Mr. Chair, to the minister, if the minister will just review in *Hansard* tomorrow, what I did say to that jumping Jack over there was that . . .

The Chair: — Order, order, order. Order. Two issues come up. One is to use a member's name, first or last, is not appropriate.

The other issue is that of METSI, HRDC, and MNS. The minister has twice indicated that these are federal programs for which he has zero responsibility, and I ask the hon. member for Humboldt to direct her questions to the issues in Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. To the minister, my apologies for using your first name, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Minister, if you will check *Hansard* tomorrow, I'm sure there will be a clear indication to you that I asked you as Intergovernmental Affairs minister to act as a liaison with the federal government to check into the possibility of a forensic audit. I did not ask you to do that yourself.

So, Mr. Minister, let's get back to the issue of the request for a Metis provincial ombudsman, an independent one.

Now I know that there was consultation with your office, and you have indicated that there was with some of the Metis grassroots people on this issue. I also understand that — from my understanding, I want to be clear with that — that there was some deliberation with yourself and the person who drew up a plan for the ombudsman's office, this Metis ombudsman's office, and that you encouraged that he continue working on that and that he issue it to your department and also to the federal government. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Yes, Mr. Chairman, the hon. member is correct. We have, as I indicated, received a suggestion for a Metis ombudsman. We support that. We have discussed it with the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan. They support it. We've discussed it with the federal government. To date they do not support it.

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Chair, to the minister. Mr. Minister, in my talks with the Metis grassroots people — many of them that have brought these issues forward — they've indicated they're getting the runaround with this issue of the ombudsman's office. They have indicated to me that the federal government tells them that the province will not cost share 50/50. The province says the feds are not talking to them, just as you have mentioned here tonight. So which is it, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Chairman, my understanding is that the federal government has written to these individuals to say no, they're not interested in an ombudsman. In terms of the position of the Government of Saskatchewan, you have it on record. I've said we would support the creation of an ombudsman. We have had indications of support from Metis Nation of Saskatchewan. We have been told no by the federal government.

And, of course, again the monies we're discussing, the funding of METSI is federal money. So it's a non-starter without the federal government because there isn't provincial money in it. But in terms of you asking is someone giving these friends of yours the runaround — you've got it on the record, you've got it on *Hansard* — I have said we support the establishment of an ombudsman.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, did you or anyone in your office, the deputy minister, give an indication to the gentlemen who wrote up this plan that your office would reimburse him for his cost regarding research and organization?

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Chairman, I do confirm that he was told that, subject to the federal government approving the project and it being able to proceed, that he would receive an honorarium for having initially suggested the idea.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, it was indicated to me that in consultation with your office over this issue of reimbursement for expenses incurred in establishing the Metis ombudsman's office that your deputy minister had indicated that possibly there could be some funding extracted from the associated entities fund to pay him

for his expenses. Is that true?

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Chairman, I am informed that that is not correct. But through the internal department, an honorarium would be arranged which is of course different than an account for whatever. So, there would be an honorarium from our department if the project came to a successful conclusion, which means that the federal government agreed to co-operate in the establishment of the position.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you. Mr. Chair, to the minister. Mr. Minister, you had indicated before that your responsibility lies with any funding that the province issues to the Metis association of Saskatchewan and, as you well know, I have posed a written question to you asking for some information as far as funding. And you sent me an indication of an allotment that was given for different purposes to the Metis association. The Metis Nation of Saskatchewan secretariat received a considerable amount of money for different projects, the bilateral work plan and then there was some money, \$285,000 to continue participating in the activities outlined in the 1999-2000 tripartite work plan, including research, policy planning, and other related activities. And then there was, I think a total here of 15, 10, 25,000 in total to carry out activities related to Back to Batoche Days. What I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, is specifically who got that money? Who was the cheque issued to and who ended up getting the money for this planning, promotion, and related activities to do with Back to Batoche Days?

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Yes, Mr. Chairman, the cheques are actually issued to the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan and they're all issued from the department. At present, of course, my department does not administer the associate entities fund so the money comes from my department it goes to Metis Nation of Saskatchewan, and of course we would be making no representations about associate entities fund. That would be quite improper for us to do so.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you. Mr. Minister, I would just encourage you to look into maybe assisting these grassroots people in your capacity as Intergovernmental minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs in the province because I would like to table to you — if you have not yet received it — some photocopies of cheques that were issued to family members. It involves a nepotism — are they allegations of nepotism — and the lack of accountability for how this money is being used?

And I think if you look at this you will certainly understand what has been brought forward here, and the concerns of the people bringing it forward. I will issue to you two documents that I would appreciate you looking at.

In addition, Mr. Minister . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well the police have already been informed, Mr. Minister. They have already been informed, and there certainly are charges that are being laid. Jack doesn't want to have . . . I'm sorry, my apologies.

Mr. Minister, you're saying you don't want to have any part of looking at this and making sure that there is proper procedures and policies, guidelines and so on that are adhered to within the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan? Is that what you're saying, Mr.

Minister?

(0015)

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Chairman, I am definitely saying that if you have allegations of federal money going astray — not interested. I am also saying that if you have allegations about criminal behaviour — send it to the police.

Ms. Julé: — Well, Mr. Chair, and Mr. Minister, I can certainly see why the grassroots Native people are frustrated. We have a minister in this province that has a mandate to ensure that policy is in place that will enhance the life of Metis people in this province. We have a minister that should be looking into the accountability of these things and making sure that there's proper reporting mechanisms.

I don't think that you have to do that alone, and obviously you don't see it as your mandate. You see it as the federal government's mandate — so be it. But you are the liaison with the federal government and so it is my belief that you have a responsibility.

I will at this time . . . at this time I think I'll go on with a bit more questioning, because I'm really finding that this whole issue is being treated with a great deal of disdain and dishonour by members on that side of the House.

Now, Mr. Minister, I would also ask you if you have received any of the correspondence, any of the press releases and so on that have gone out that many people are putting forward. They would like to see something done about this whole issue.

Have you reviewed any of these news articles, Mr. Minister?

The Chair: — Just before I recognize the minister. Is the member dealing with the same issue, this METSI, MNS, HRDC issue or is it another one? The Chair is unclear.

An Hon. Member: — MNS.

The Chair: — MNS? Which is federal . . .

An Hon. Member: — Well there's money given to the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan by the provincial government.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — I wish to inform the hon. member, Mr. Chairman, that no allegations have ever come to my attention of provincial monies going astray. So if she has anything to that effect, obviously I would be very, very interested. I have seen a number of letters, newspaper articles, interviews, telephone calls, to the effect that federal money has gone astray. I think I'm on the record as to my interest on that. I have received a number of allegations — again tonight — allegations of criminal behaviour. I think I'm on record pretty clearly as to what I think ought to be done when there are criminal allegations and request for criminal investigations.

So those I've seen them — do I personally take an interest? The answer is no, because I'm not the proper authority. Send it to the police if it's criminal. If it's an allegation of federal money going astray, take it up with the funding agency. I have never seen anything suggesting that provincial funds have gone astray

... (inaudible interjection) ... Yes, and neither have my officials.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you. Mr. Chair, to the minister. Mr. Minister, once again I want to refer you to your mandate, and your mandate as was posed to me this evening. You are here to advance programs and policies that would enhance the lives of Metis people. That seems to me like it encompasses a great deal of responsibility.

And I am not asking you to look into any allegations of fraudulent use of money if that is for the RCMP. That stands to reason, we all know that.

But there is a great deal that you could do in reference to election procedures and so on, that obviously if there has been some accusation, and certainly by a number of people, that ballot boxes have been either tampered with or ballots themselves have been not validated. There are a number of things like that that you as minister could do to ensure that these people are having some just and accountable procedures taking place when they are calling for an integral government structure.

Mr. Minister, is it within your mandate or your jurisdiction to ensure that there is a proper and just electoral process taking place within the Metis Nations of Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Certainly we do have a very serious interest to make sure that elections are properly held and that the leadership of the Metis Nation reflects the wishes of Metis people.

There are processes in place to ensure that happens, and that of course is the third piece in the puzzle that I neglected to point out earlier, but the hon. member is absolutely correct. I pointed out that if it's federal money, it's a federal concern; if it's criminal allegations, it's a police concern; and the third is that I have not said before but the hon. member is absolutely correct, I have had allegations brought to me that the leadership doesn't represent the true wishes of the Metis people and that is for the democratic process to work out.

I dare say the hon. member would probably say the leadership of this province doesn't represent the feelings of the people in the province and I may disagree with her on that.

But we have a democratic process and that's how we determine these things and that's how the Metis Nation also should determine these things. I again am not going to sit in judgment as to whether the Metis Nation executive represents the true wishes of the Metis peoples of the province. That's to be done by the democratic process and certainly we are concerned the democratic processes be respected.

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Chair, to the minister. Mr. Minister, you are concerned that the democratic process be respected. Are you doing anything to ensure that there is a just democratic process taking place?

I'll give you an example of what has happened just recently. On June 15 in Prince Albert, which was just this last Wednesday, there was to be an election for the new president of local 7.

Now there are 1,000 registered voters for local 7. Forty people were admitted into the doors. So many people were not being let in ... the doors were being locked on all the others other than these 40.

Now this is what has come to me and I'm just wondering if something like this has been brought to your attention in the past other than the ballot boxes that were missing, where ballots were spoiled, or not validated, etc. We do have this kind of an issue now. Is that within your mandate to ensure that this kind of thing does not happen? Is it or is it not, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Chairman, there are as I indicated, processes in place for someone to bring complaints of an electoral process that did not go right. I would advise that the individuals aggrieved are welcome to contact my office to be advised of the exact and precise legal steps that are required.

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Minister, so from your comments just now, Mr. Minister, I take it that yes, you do have a responsibility; because if they're going to come to you to be advised of proper steps and process to ensure democratic election, then I take it that that is part of your mandate, and would you take that responsibility, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Chairman, my office will be pleased to provide the information as to the steps that are to be taken to follow the proper process for an aggrieved party who believes an election was not properly conducted.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you. Mr. Chairman, and to the minister, I want to close with some remarks that are a reflection of the frustration that grassroots Metis people are feeling in regards to the many issues they have brought forward. And after I make these comments, I want to tell the House that my colleagues will be presenting you with further questions this evening.

Well, Mr. Minister, this is a press release that has been put forward on March 12 of the year 2000, this year, by Gordon Robert Dumont of Prince Albert. He says:

The time has come for the institution of a Metis ombudsman who will take our complaints seriously and who will have the jurisdiction and authority to provide a remedy.

I am tired of taxpayers' money going to an organization like the MNS that merely pays lip service to reform and continues to flaunt due process, flaunt their own guidelines and the Metis constitution for their own personal gain.

I again urge the federal government to protect taxpayers' money by suspending all funding to the MNS until they finally abide by their own rules.

That's the end of Mr. Dumont's quote.

And, Mr. Minister, I would ask you and urge you also to correspond with the federal government to ensure that the wishes of these people come to fruition so that they can have just and democratic governance within the Metis association.

I thank you in advance, and I'll turn the questioning over to my

colleagues.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, and colleagues, what other parties have to be adhered to besides the urban municipalities or town councils in finalizing a land treaty entitlement agreement?

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Chairman, there of course has to be agreement or consultation of the municipalities and all third party interests and ownership. And I'm sure the hon. member is aware that treaty land entitlement is satisfied solely on the basis of willing seller, willing buyer. There is no expropriation in the process.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, or Mr. Minister. What happens when one or more of the parties . . . because in other words what you're saying is if third parties don't agree with the agreement, what are the steps that must be followed in order to get this agreement finalized?

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Chairman, my department does provide mediation services to attempt to achieve unanimous agreement of all third party interests. But if the hon. member is asking what happens if there's a holdout and agreement is not possible and what do we do about the holdout, the answer is nothing. This is willing seller, willing buyer. There is no expropriation. And so there is absolutely no force or compunction in the process. If mediation doesn't work, there is no sale.

Mr. Allchurch: — Mr. Minister, in other words what you're saying, if the school division does not come to agreement with a First Nations band, then the agreement is off?

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Chairman, I'm not exactly sure I'm following the question. If the school division owns land, then it's willing seller, willing buyer, if that's the question. If a school owns land, they're not required to sell it. If he's talking about, if a school division doesn't want any reserve land within the school division, that's not a third party interest.

Mr. Allchurch: — Mr. Minister, you said that third party interests have to be addressed. Well if the town agrees or comes to a service agreement but the school division doesn't, that doesn't mean to say they have to own the land. The third party is that the school division and the band have to come to an agreement regarding the taxation of school taxes. What happens if they don't come to an agreement?

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Well, if a school division is the owner or has a third party interest, then they have to come to an agreement or there's no sale. But if you're just saying that a school division doesn't want reserve land in its school division, like I say, that's not a third party interest.

(0030)

Mr. Allchurch: — The question I'm asking, Mr. Minister, is regarding the taxation, collecting of taxes. And that's the big issue when it comes to either dealing with the town or with a school division, is the collecting of taxation. What happens if that school division and the reserve do not come with agreement in collecting of the taxation? Is the agreement off the

table?

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Chairman, as we discussed earlier this evening and quite a lot the previous time we were present, there is the tax loss compensation agreements: 22.5 in the case of treaty land entitlement; 15 in the case of specific. And it's out of these funds that compensation has been achieved for municipalities and school divisions, which is the only interest they have here is compensation for taxes.

However I would advise the hon. member that if there is a specific situation that is concerning him, I would invite him to contact officials in my department to discuss the specific situation and certainly we'll provide whatever information or assistance we can.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and through you, Mr. Chair, I'd like to welcome the minister's officials and wish them good morning. My question is for the minister. Have you been in contact with or has there been any consultations with Chief Perry Bellegarde with respect to the controversy currently surrounding the Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority?

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — I understand that I and the minister will be meeting with them later today. I have not spoken to him since the present controversy began.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Minister and Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, what is your position in regard to Chief Bellegarde's assertion that the province has no jurisdiction over the board of directors of SIGA (Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority)?

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Yes, Mr. Chairman, I wish to advise the hon. member that my view is that section 207 of the Criminal Code gives jurisdiction to the province. The province does have jurisdiction. And I am confident and expect that compliance will be achieved.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Will you and your department be involved in or part of any decisions or recommendations to dismiss the board of directors of SIGA, or any other kind of sanctioning of SIGA?

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Chairman, I believe the answer to that is, no, in that that would be a decision of the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority which is a quasi-judicial body, which is a regulatory body operating outside of the political process.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, I have one question that I wanted to put to you, and I will do so at this time. I'd like to ask you who is reviewing and monitoring bank statements and, you know, funding that's been distributed to the MNS?

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Yes, Mr. Chairman, I'm pleased to advise that the grants are all monitored by my department in line with the conditions and requirements that I outlined when I read from a letter to one funded authority, and I'd be pleased to go into some of these specifics again if the hon. member would wish that. But, anyway, the monitoring is done by officials of my department.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, I appreciate that. Just one final question. Mr. Minister, how many failed NDP candidates are consultants with the MNS?

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Chairman, I'm not aware of . . . oh, yes, I'm aware of one. And beyond that, I may say that if I listen to hon. members on the other side I suppose I may need another career before long. So I thank the member for that.

Ms. Julé: — Well, Mr. Minister, I think that probably there's going to be an issuance to you from a number of people of being more accountable and responsible in your own role because there's a need for a liaison with the federal government, and I think that's part of your responsibility.

So I thank you, Mr. Minister, and I thank your officials for coming this evening.

Subvote (IA01) agreed to.

Subvotes (IA02), (IA14), (IA15), (IA16) agreed to.

Vote 30 agreed to.

The Chair: — It being well past the normal hour of adjournment, the committee will report progress and ask for leave to sit again.

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Yes, Mr. Chairman, I just wish to convey my thanks to my officials for all the help they have been to me since assuming this portfolio and especially for coming out this evening to assist in answering the penetrating and thoughtful questions of my friends across the way.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — I think it's probably time that we move we rise, report progress, and ask for leave to sit again.

The Chair: — That is already taken care of, it being well past the hour of closing.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 12:40 a.m.

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