

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand today to present a petition on behalf of the good citizens from the city of Humboldt. And these people would like to ensure that their Humboldt territory operations office for Saskatchewan Housing Authority stay there in Humboldt. And so they send forward this prayer, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately reconsider the proposed closure of the Humboldt territory operations office for Saskatchewan Housing Authority and to renew their commitment to rural Saskatchewan and maintain a full, functioning territory operating office in Humboldt.

And the signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are all from the city of Humboldt.

I so present.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition today on behalf of citizens concerned about the overfishing at Lake of the Prairies. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to work with the federal government, First Nations representatives, and with other provincial governments to bring about a resolution in the Lake of the Prairies situation and to ensure that our natural resources as a whole are used in a responsible manner by all people in the future.

The signatures, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Bird's Point, Round Lake, Whitewood, and Stockholm.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of citizens of Saskatchewan who are concerned about the crop insurance premiums. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to halt its plan to take money out of the crop insurance program and hike farmers' crop insurance premium rates while reducing coverage in order to pay off the provincial government's debt to the federal government.

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

And the petition is signed by residents of Weyburn and Ogema and Pangman.

I so present.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here from the citizens of Elbow to improve Highway 42.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to make the necessary repairs to Highway 42 in the Arm River constituency in order to prevent injury or loss of life and to prevent the loss of economic opportunity in the area.

As in duty bound, your petitioners ever pray.

I so present.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition from citizens concerned about the condition of Highway No. 15. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to use a portion of its highway budget to address the concerns of the serious condition of Highway No. 15 for Saskatchewan residents.

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

Signed by the citizens of Watrous, Imperial, and Simpson.

I so present.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it'll be no surprise I have another petition today with citizens concerned about Highway No. 15. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to use a portion of its highway budget to address the concerns of the serious conditions of Highway 15 for Saskatchewan residents.

And again, the signatures demonstrate how well travelled the highway is because they're from Simpson, Watrous, Vanscoy, Imperial, and Saskatoon.

I so present.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the Assembly today to bring forth a petition signed by citizens of Saskatchewan and British Columbia that are concerned about the fishing at Besnard Lake. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to work with the federal government, First Nations representatives to bring about a resolution in the Besnard Lake situation and to ensure that our natural resources as a whole are used in a responsible manner by all people in the future.

And the signatures, Mr. Speaker, on this petition are from Spiritwood, from Candle Lake, and from Kelowna and Vernon, BC (British Columbia). Thank you very much.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and are hereby read and received as addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper no. 7, 18, 23, 24, 132, and 157.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice I shall on day no. 63 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Social Services: how much did it cost to move each home that was relocated in the year 2000 under the housing authority program?

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker:

I have the same question for the year 2001.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I shall give . . . or I give notice that I shall on day no. 63 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Industry and Resources: what are the details of any cost-benefit analysis or any other type of economic study conducted in regard to the pending government deal with Broe Companies of Denver, Colorado in relation to the ethanol industry in Saskatchewan; when was each report commissioned; and what are the entire contents of any such report; what are the details of any other such report conducted by or for the government regarding the ethanol industry; when was each conducted and what are the contents of each?

And while I'm on my feet, I shall also give notice on day no. 63 that I will ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of CIC: what are the details of any cost-benefit analysis or any other type of economic study conducted in regard to the pending CIC deal with Broe Companies of Denver, Colorado in relation to the ethanol industry in Saskatchewan; when was each report commissioned; what are the entire contents of any such report?

And also, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 63 ask the government the following question:

To the minister of the Public Service Commission: what are the salary level classifications for government employees, both in scope and out of scope; and for each level, what is the salary range and how many people are employed at that level?

Mr. Peters: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 63 ask the government the following question:

To the minister of SPMC: how many aircraft are owned by the province of Saskatchewan? For each aircraft, what is its year of manufacture; what is the make and model; what was the year it was acquired by the province of Saskatchewan; what's its mark; where is it based; and for

what purpose is each aircraft primarily used?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 63 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Labour: how many workers receiving WCB benefits in the year 2001 were at the top end of the \$48,000 wage replacement capitation?

And also the same question for 2000 and 1999.

I so present.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to and through you to all members of the Assembly, a group of 38 grade 8, 9, and 10 students from Arborfield. They are in the east gallery, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, I know that you will remember some of these as being once again the group of students that responded so enthusiastically to your outreach visit in Arborfield.

They are joined today by two teachers: Rhonda Edwards, Warren Jacobson. And they also have with them five parent chaperones. I trust that they will enjoy question period and that they will note how well behaved their MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) is, Mr. Speaker. And I look forward to meeting them after that.

Thank you. Would everyone please welcome the group from Arborfield.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Legislative Assembly, 22 students from grades 7 and 8 at Holy Rosary School. They're seated in the west gallery. They're accompanied by their teachers, Ryan Forrest and Mona Diewold.

It's my pleasure to introduce them today because sometimes as you get substitute teachers, so too you often get a . . . you can on occasion get a substitute MLA. So it's my pleasure to introduce you to the assembled, and it'll be my pleasure to meet with you later on to ask any . . . answer any questions you might have.

It's also my pleasure to inform you that the Minister of Learning is a proud alumnus of Holy Rosary School, so maybe you can catch him later on. But I look forward to meeting you, and thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Addley: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce some very special guests in the west gallery. They're responsible for someone near and dear to my heart and the best thing that's ever happened to me,

and that's my wife's parents.

Neil and Marilyn Unruh are in the west gallery there, and they're just in town visiting Neil's . . . Yes, Neil's sister's daughter's husband has just been sworn in as a newly minted RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) officer. There should have been an easier way than doing that.

But would all hon. members please welcome Neil and Marilyn to the Assembly today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly, in the west gallery, Mr. Speaker, we have the vice-chief of the FSIN, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, Mr. Greg Ahenakew.

And Greg is from the Ahtahkakoop First Nation, which is Sandy Lake. And it should be noted that my mother's maiden name was Ahenakew and that was where she was from originally as well. Her grandfather of course migrated to Ile-a-la-Crosse.

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

I would ask once again, Mr. Speaker, to have all members of the Assembly send a very kind welcome to Vice-chief Greg Ahenakew.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

National Public Service Week

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You can't run an organization without good help. That's true for the CPR (Canadian Pacific Railway), for the local co-op, and it's true for governments. Fortunately for us, we have the finest civil service in the world, Mr. Speaker.

That is not just my opinion, Mr. Speaker, but also that of noted British public servant and author, C.P. Snow. Mr. Snow says that this is a fact and, quote, "recognized by civil servants elsewhere in the world."

Because we in Saskatchewan are fortunate to have a highly skilled professional government workforce, I am happy to announce to the Assembly that this week has been designated National Public Service Week — a week to recognize the many ways that public servants at all levels of government contribute to the quality of life for all Canadians.

Public servants are vital for the effective delivery of programs and services to the people of Saskatchewan and Canadians, Mr. Speaker. Consider, Mr. Speaker, that right now firefighters are battling flames in Saskatchewan's forests, agronomists are working with our farmers during this difficult period, highways workers are fixing the roads, and child protection workers are doing just that.

And across the province in all departments, Mr. Speaker, public servants are working for us with professionalism and dedication. They do their work quietly and well and they deserve our thanks. And I know all members will join me in expressing our gratitude to our excellent public servants. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise in the Assembly today to join with the members opposite in recognizing June 9 through to the 15 as Public Service Week across Canada. This week is an excellent opportunity to say thank you to the many civil servants whose dedication and commitment help to make our lives easier.

Mr. Speaker, here in Saskatchewan our civil service are among the most hard-working in the country and we are pleased to honour their many contributions during this week that has been specifically set aside to honour them.

On behalf of members of this side of the side House, a warm thank you to the many members of the public service who work daily to improve the quality of the life for all of us. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ride Along with Saskatoon City Police

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Friday evening and Saturday morning I had the opportunity to participate in a ride along with Cst. Schriemer of the Saskatoon city police. While it was not described as a busy night, we packed in a lot between 7 p.m. and 4:30 a.m. I saw first-hand how the 911 systems works. I observed how police officers on patrol cope with the myriad of calls that may vary from potentially violent incidents to noise complaints to concerns with alcohol and drug impaired people.

During the night's events, I saw arrests being made, a stolen car recovered, and young women of the sex trade given counsel. Like most police forces, the Saskatoon city police do not have the number of men and women they need to meet the needs and expectations of the public. In spite of the fact that the NDP (New Democratic Party) have failed to hire 200 more police officers in Saskatoon, the police force I witnessed in action do their best to maintain public safety and protection with scarce resources.

I would like to thank Cst. Schriemer and the Saskatoon city police force for the excellent job they do. And I would encourage other MLAs to also go on a ride along so they too can have a better understanding of police work, both in Saskatoon and across the province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Provincial Results of Standardized Testing

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order please, members. Thank you.

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, “Something is going on in Saskatchewan that the rest of us . . .

The Speaker: — Order please, members. Would the member . . . Order. Would the member start over again, please.

Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker: “Something is going on in Saskatchewan that the rest of us should pay attention to.” These words appear in an article entitled “An Overlooked Success in an Under-Appreciated Province” in the May edition of *Phi Delta Kappan*, one of the top three educational publications in North America.

What author Heather-jane Robertson is referring to is Saskatchewan’s results from the last fall’s Organization for Economic and Co-operative Development’s release of its PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) report on standardized testing of math, science, and reading in secondary schools.

In her article, Robertson states, and I quote:

The province of Saskatchewan is achieving better equity outcomes than any other province — and better than any of the other 31 countries in the OECD study.

Better than Japan, Sweden, the United States, and Germany. And better from Ontario, British Columbia, and Alberta.

What this means, Mr. Speaker, is that in Saskatchewan, a pupil’s success does not depend on whether he or she comes from a wealthy family or a disadvantaged family. In Saskatchewan, all students have an equal opportunity for success. And Saskatchewan will continue to improve upon our record with the implementation of such initiatives as School^{PLUS} and Kids First.

Something is going on in Saskatchewan. We have good teaching, good teachers, good universities, good government, and a continued investment in Saskatchewan children in education and in our province. It’s more good news for Saskatchewan people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

First Annual Youth Business Excellence Awards

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this last Saturday, June 8, I attended the first annual Northeast Saskatchewan Youth Business Excellence awards held in Tisdale at the Tisdale Civic Centre.

The first category was individual business plan award. And this category, Mr. Speaker, was to have clearly described and developed a business idea and to have demonstrated ingenuity and effort. The first place winner was Natasha Cochran for Nat’s Noteable’s, Music with a “Note”Able Difference, Gronlid High School. The second place winner was Easton Kapeller, Pasquia Hills Farm Sales and Service from Porcupine High School.

The second category, Mr. Speaker, was the Group Business Plan award and the first place winner there was Chassidy Kohl,

Troy Gabel, Dustin Wasyliw, Chris Johnson, for their business, SYP Rock Climbing, and they are all from Porcupine High School. The second place winner was Chad Bohachewski, Colin Wasylyk, and their business was C2 Mini-Golf Adventure. They are also from Porcupine High School, Mr. Speaker.

The Special Achievement awards were based on submissions for any kind of special achievement where they have demonstrated exceptional effort and outstanding achievements in one or more areas. The first Special Achievement award went to Amber Martin of L.P. Miller High School in Nipawin; the second Special Achievement award to the grade 11 class at J.W. Head Memorial Education Centre, Red Earth; and the third Special Achievement award, Amanda Klimm and Wade Lebel, Tisdale Middle and Secondary School; and the fourth award to Joshua Richer, L.P. Miller High School in Nipawin.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask everyone to join with me in congratulating these winners and on congratulating the Newsask Community Futures Development Corporation for doing a wonderful job of organizing the first annual YBEX Awards. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Construction Career Project

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Ranch Ehrlo Society is headquartered near Pilot Butte in my constituency and runs a number of remarkably successful programs for youth at risk, both near Pilot Butte and in other venues throughout the area and Regina.

Today I want to tell the Assembly about one especially successful program which recently has been twice recognized — once nationally and once provincially. The Ranch Ehrlo Society’s construction career project in conjunction with the Saskatchewan Construction Association was honoured last week by the Saskatchewan Labour Force Development Board at its annual Training For Excellence awards, which I was happy to attend. The project received the Recognition for Prior Learning award, one of six given out at the ceremony.

Previously the SCA’s (Saskatchewan Construction Association) construction career project, in which Ranch Ehrlo participated, was recognized at the Conference Board of Canada’s National Partners in Education awards.

Mr. Speaker, this project was coordinated by Monica Rivers at Ranch Ehrlo. It takes young adults in the community and trains for work in construction. So far two groups have gone through and a sign of the program’s success is that currently 10 out of 11 students are currently working in construction jobs — working in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Some have already been promoted. A third group is just beginning the six-month course and I’m sure we’ll expect similar results.

This is a positive program and a successful one, ably led by Monica Rivers. I am proud to have Ranch Ehrlo Society in my constituency and I congratulate Monica, the SCA, and all of the young adults who have successfully completed the program.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Proposed Hospital for Swift Current

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this year representatives from area health districts in the Southwest, the city of Swift Current, the RM (rural municipality) of Swift Current, and the Dr. Noble Irwin Healthcare Foundation, along with regional partners, came together to map out a plan to achieve a new hospital for the Southwest, located in Swift Current.

They asked the government to consider changing its funding formula for such projects to increase the provincial share from its current 65 per cent of the construction costs to something closer to the 100 per cent funding provided for projects in the two largest cities. Unfortunately the answer from the government was no.

Undaunted, Mr. Speaker, the city council of Swift Current voted unanimously last Monday to approve a local levy to complete the local 35 per cent obligation to fund the new hospital. Mr. Speaker, a new regional facility in Swift Current is clearly needed if Swift Current is truly to be a regional centre in the current government's regional model.

Mr. Speaker, the local health district has come up with a workable plan for a new facility, the city council has provided a means for local funding, regional governments and partners are coming on side. There is no question that when it comes to a new hospital for Swift Current and area, the health district, the city, and the region are prepared to make their commitment.

The question, Mr. Speaker, is: is this provincial government ready to make their commitment? On behalf of the constituents of Swift Current, I urge them to do so.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Financial Support for Agriculture

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Premier. Speculation is building that the federal government is poised to announce a new farm aid package by the end of this week, based on a complete overhaul of federal agriculture policy.

Mr. Speaker, there is also much speculation in the media about the financial size of the package for Saskatchewan producers, and whether or not it will adequately provide trade injury compensation and drought relief.

Mr. Speaker, has the Premier been informed by the federal government when the announcement of a new farm aid package is expected? And will it include trade injury and drought relief as well as a new agriculture policy framework?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I have not been informed by the federal government, either the Prime Minister's office or the Minister of Agriculture's office, or for that matter the Minister of Trade's office, of any impending announcement or details of that announcement.

With the Leader of the Opposition and other members in the House, we hear this speculation. Let me say this, Mr. Speaker. Some months ago the federal government was saying very clearly there would be no more money for Canadian producers.

I believe because of the work that's emanated from this legislature and the work that's being done with the premiers across the country and farm leaders, we have moved the federal government. We have moved them in their thinking to an understanding that support needs to be provided for Canadian producers.

But, Mr. Speaker, if I may say, there may be yet battles to be waged. We do not know detail, but we hold to that position which says there must be trade injury support for Canadian producers. And that support must come 100 per cent from the national government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, we were hoping the Premier would have some knowledge as to when this announcement might be made. We are also counting on the Premier and those in the provincial government to be arguing hard with the federal government that trade injury support will be part of a package announced. And also there will be compensation in light of the drought that Saskatchewan is experiencing.

Concerning new farm assistance and a safety net package for grain and oilseed producers, we want the new program to be better than the AIDA (Agriculture Income Disaster Assistance) and the CFIP (Canadian Farm Income Program) programs, their predecessors.

So I would ask the Premier, Mr. Speaker, has he been informed by the federal government as to how much financial help will be provided in any new farm aid package? And can the Premier, in particular, assure Saskatchewan farm families that the program will be delivered in such a way that the assistance will be of more benefit to Saskatchewan producers than the help they received — or lack of help is perhaps a better way of framing it — under AIDA and CFIP; programs that were designed in which the provincial government did not have enough input and didn't benefit Saskatchewan producers?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, again I inform the House that I do not . . . am not privy to any details that the federal government may be planning to announce.

And on the second point, we share the view of the Leader of the Opposition that the programs that are being developed need to be of greater benefit to Canadian, and particularly in our case,

to Saskatchewan producers.

Now we have been . . . The Leader of the Opposition, if he would just remain quiet for a moment, I can answer the question. The fact of the matter is this Minister of Agriculture has been working with ministers of Agriculture, farm leaders from across Canada, particularly with the farm leadership from Saskatchewan in working towards better and new programs for Canadian producers.

The fact of the matter is this, Mr. Speaker. We are at a very, I think, important — important — moment in this discussion with the federal government. And what is absolutely crucial is that the farm leadership of this province, the farm leadership of Canada, governments, and oppositions stand together.

I was able, Mr. Speaker, last week to sit down with the premiers of Western Canada and the Territories and forge a unanimous consensus position that in the need of trade injury for Canadian producers that need needs to be met by Ottawa 100 per cent. We need to continue that consistent voice.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Resources for Law Enforcement

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question's for the Minister of Justice or his designate. According to media reports Saskatchewan is sending as many as 400 police officers to assist with security for the G-8 Summit in Kananaskis at the end of this month.

Mr. Speaker the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association has written the Minister of Justice expressing concern about the pressure that losing 400 police officers from Saskatchewan will put on police services in this province.

Mr. Speaker, what steps is the government taking to ensure Saskatchewan communities are not left short of police protection as a result of the loss of 400 police officers to Alberta for the G-8 Summit?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the minister, I'll take notice of that question and provide the information for the member opposite. But what I would say is that our . . .

The Speaker: — Order. If the member's taking notice, we'll wait for the response.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, communities across this province know full well that funding for RCMP and policing services has been low from this government for many years, and the cuts to municipalities have shown through in that lack of funding. So concern is out there in all communities in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan communities are already short of police as a result of the NDP's failure to honour its election promise to hire 200 new police officers. Now communities are being asked to cope with fewer police officers for two weeks at

the end of June.

How much will it cost to send Saskatchewan police officers to Kananaskis for security at the G-8 Summit; and who's going to pay for it, Mr. Speaker? Will the minister assure SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) and the cities and towns of Saskatchewan that the cost of sending police officers to Alberta for two weeks this summer will not be dumped once again in the laps of Saskatchewan municipalities already struggling with high policing costs, and a shortage of police officers?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, there are many comments that the member has made about the funding for police officers that are totally inaccurate. Because what we have done in this province is increase the amount that we're spending on policing. And in fact, in this past . . .

(14:00)

The Speaker: — Order, please. Just want to be able to hear . . . I want to be able to hear the answers. I ask members not to interrupt the response.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, in the past budget year there was \$83 million spent on policing out of the provincial budget, and we've increased it from last year.

I guess what I would say to the member opposite around the issue of participating in some national policing issues. We know that, when in Quebec City, there were some real challenges when the local municipalities were asked to participate in that policing effort; and as a result, the municipalities across the country have been very wary about this.

Our people are aware of that particular issue, and they will be working closely with the federal government to make sure that these are federal government expenses.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister might be well aware that over the last number of years downloading of RCMP and policing costs has been dramatic to a number of communities. For example, RMs out there, Mr. Speaker, are now being asked to pay \$15, over \$15, per capita for policing when they paid nothing before.

Communities under 500 are being asked to pay the same thing — in some cases more, Mr. Speaker.

Where is the 200 new police officers that in the last election this government promised to hire for the communities of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has been working very carefully on that commitment of more police officers, and I'm pleased to report

that this year they were finally able to make sure that there were police officers in every RCMP position throughout the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The information that I've been provided from the commanding officer for the RCMP in Saskatchewan shows that what with cancelling all leave and working together with the federal government, we will be able to provide the full policing in Saskatchewan as well as assist the federal government in their international responsibilities as it relates to the G-8 conference.

So, Mr. Speaker, we continue to work very closely with communities, with the policing communities, to make sure that there are safe communities right across our province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Film Industry

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation.

On Friday, Edge Entertainment and an American television company announced a multi-million dollar deal to produce as many as 22 episodes of a new TV drama in Saskatoon.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. The member will continue.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that is good news for the industry and great news for Saskatoon.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Huyghebaert: — However, Mr. Speaker, one may recall the NDP spent \$4.5 million last July to buy 30 per cent of a Regina movie company called Minds Eye Pictures.

Will the minister tell the legislature how the government's movie company is doing? Will the minister provide a list of the productions that Minds Eye Pictures has completed or is currently doing in Saskatchewan and the total value of those projects?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With respect to Minds Eye, I think I understood the question correctly. With respect to Minds Eye, he's correct, there was a \$4.5 million investment in that production, Mr. Speaker.

Saskatchewan has shown itself to be doing very well in the motion picture industry, Mr. Speaker. They've become highly competitive, Mr. Speaker, and there are many, many productions now that are made here in Saskatchewan. And the member accurately reflects what is about to take place in Saskatoon and I think that's something we should all be

tremendously proud of, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question was pretty simple and straightforward and I think the minister had some problems with it.

Last July the NDP decided they wanted to become movie moguls so they put \$4.5 million into a movie company — Minds Eye Pictures. And the taxpayers have a right to know how that investment is doing.

So I'll give the minister another chance to answer the question. How many productions has Minds Eye Pictures done in Saskatchewan since the NDP bought 30 per cent of the company, and how many productions has Mind Eyes Pictures done in Alberta over the same period of time?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll gladly give the member some sense of how they're doing, Mr. Speaker. In the 1980s they used to do about \$5 million worth of productions, and now, Mr. Speaker, in the year 2000 they've done \$50 million worth of productions.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, the sector . . . Mr. Speaker, the sector . . . the sector now employs here in Saskatchewan . . . the sector . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. Order. Order.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, the sector now employs approximately 850 people.

And I want to point out as well, which is very important, most of those people are young people, Mr. Speaker, which I think is much to the credit, Mr. Speaker, of Minds Eye productions themselves who have ensured that we try and hire as many young people as possible. Mr. Speaker, I think this is very exciting for Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister is obviously avoiding the direct question but he does see that the film industry is doing great in this province, thanks to tax credits. Now if tax credits work so great in the film industry, just think what it would do for the rest of the province. Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Speaker, the NDP's dream of becoming movie moguls didn't end with just the purchase of Minds Eye Pictures. The NDP government also decided to spend millions of taxpayers' dollars to build a sound stage. Now we understand the sound stage construction is complete and the taxpayers deserve to know how things are going.

Mr. Speaker, how many taxpayers' dollars has the NDP government spent so far on the new sound stage? How many production projects has the NDP booked to use the sound stage as of today? And will the minister table the business plan for the government's new sound stage so his taxpayers can see just how the NDP plans to generate a return on their multi-million dollar investment?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Well, Mr. Speaker, if they're doing auditions, I wouldn't say the member shouldn't go for auditions, but I think that it would be highly suspect if he actually went for them, Mr. Speaker.

The point is, Mr. Speaker, the real point is that that member says, on one hand . . . one day he stands up here in the Assembly and says you should have tax credits and the next day he says you shouldn't have tax credits, Mr. Speaker. They're never on the same page, on the same issue, Mr. Speaker.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that we have an industry here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, that a few years back, in the 1980s, was just a very small business in our province.

Now it's grown into something that I think is exciting for the people of Saskatchewan. I think it's an industry that has a real future here in Saskatchewan and we should be proud of that rather than criticize it, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, I can't make my questions much more simple for the minister to answer. And he's answering them in the same fashion that he answered the questions about SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) last week.

Mr. Speaker, once again my questions are very simple. To the minister: will the minister table a business plan for the NDP's new multi-million dollar sound stage? Will the minister give taxpayers a list of the productions the government has lined up to use in the new sound stage? And will the minister give taxpayers a list of all the projects currently using their new sound stage?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well again I'd say, with respect to the sound stage, there are great opportunities here in the province, and we're . . . (inaudible) . . . I know the Premier when he was out on the Canada trade mission, Mr. Speaker, signed a number . . . signed an MOU (memorandum of understanding), I believe, that will bring, we believe, a number of investments here into the province.

It should be something, Mr. Speaker, that we should be excited about. It's going to bring lots of jobs to Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and has a tremendous future here in our province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Investigation of Claims by Government Agencies

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister responsible for SGI. Last week we raised the question of SGI conducting video surveillance on Saskatchewan people who have no-fault insurance claims with SGI. And after days of denying the obvious, the minister finally admitted that SGI does conduct video surveillance on insurance claimants.

Mr. Speaker, in the year 2000, SGI claims they conducted 72 in-depth investigations. Will the minister tell us how much those investigations cost SGI, and out of those 72 cases, how many resulted in either charges or the cancellation of the claim?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, again it's interesting that member at least alludes or suggests in the question that somehow maybe these investigations shouldn't even be taking place, Mr. Speaker.

The point is, Mr. Speaker — let me make this point, Mr. Speaker, and let's be clear about this, Mr. Speaker — the coalition against broad . . . against . . . the Canadian coalition that talks about fraud as it respects to . . . as it pertains, I should say, Mr. Speaker, to insurance fraud says that on an annual basis there is a loss to people who buy insurance of about \$1.3 billion annually, Mr. Speaker. It rates second only, Mr. Speaker, to drug-related criminal activities, Mr. Speaker. It's something that is a concern, I believe, for taxpayers of Saskatchewan. And certainly it's a concern for people who buy insurance and they want to be absolutely sure, Mr. Speaker, that the people who are receiving benefits under insurance are absolutely not defrauding the system, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Out of those 72 cases, how many resulted in either charges or the cancellation of the claim?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Well, Mr. Speaker, again let me say to that member that on an average number of claims when you've got 140 to 150,000 claims and 6,500 of those claims, Mr. Speaker, are injury related, and whether the number is, as I indicated several days ago, is 9 or 10, or whether it's 70, Mr. Speaker, that represents a fairly small percentage of the total amount of claims.

Again I say to that member . . . And I know from the scrums that took place in that rotunda out there on Friday afternoon, Mr. Speaker, he refused to answer the question about whether or not people should be contacted in advance of whether or not there was a belief that they were defrauding the public, Mr. Speaker. I think that he again should stand up in this Assembly or out in the rotunda and answer to the people of Saskatchewan whether or not people should be investigated if they're ripping off the system, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Again, Mr. Speaker, the minister's refusing to answer and ducks the questions. Last week he didn't do it in the House. He had his officials out in his vestibule. He went out in front of the media and he still didn't know.

So let's make it a little simpler. Let's bring it close to today. 2001 the minister said there were nine investigations. What did those nine investigations cost and how many charges were laid or claims cancelled as a result of those investigations that took place in 2001?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure that specific answer will be given in the review but, Mr. Speaker, those are some of the questions that I've asked to have answered in the review, Mr. Speaker.

But surely . . . again I say to that member, Mr. Speaker, is he willing to stand up in this House or is he willing to stand up in the rotunda, Mr. Speaker, and suggest as he's suggesting here that somehow these investigations shouldn't take place irrespective, Mr. Speaker, of what those investigations cost.

He's saying that and I think he's suggesting that if those investigations somehow surpass a certain threshold, that if they cost too much, Mr. Speaker, that the investigation should not take place. I think, Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what he's saying but I wish he would stand up here and be direct in the House, Mr. Speaker, and say that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:15)

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister's penchant to go ahead and try to get answers and ask the questions, he will get that chance soon enough. We will oblige him; we will give him an opportunity very shortly to be on this side of the House. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, that member won't even make it into the House after the next election.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, SGI has said that PricewaterhouseCoopers will be charged with the task of finding out how come the minister was so completely lost on the issue of SGI surveillance on insurance claimants.

Mr. Speaker, will PricewaterhouseCoopers be looking into why SGI rep in Weyburn lied to Virginia Cook about being under video surveillance? Will PricewaterhouseCoopers ask the minister why on May 27 he said, in this Assembly, that SGI did do surveillance but on June 6 said SGI didn't do surveillance and never would? Will PricewaterhouseCoopers find out why SGI vice-president in charge of special investigation unit was as misinformed about his department's activities as the minister was?

Mr. Speaker, what exactly are the parameters of the accounting firm's investigation and when will that report be released?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, order. Before I ask the minister to answer the question, in his statement, the member from Rosthern, I do believe, used the word lied as it applied to some particular person. I'll have to check the record . . .

An Hon. Member: — Not in the House.

The Speaker: — Not in the House. Well, I will check the record, but I wanted to bring it to his attention at this time in case the minister . . .

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thanks again, Mr. Speaker. Well in my statement in the House the other day, Mr. Speaker, I said that I would ask the president of SGI — and I'm looking right at the statement — that I asked the president to review the circumstances of the case which were raised in the House yesterday in question period referring to the question period of last Thursday, Mr. Speaker. So absolutely they will review that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, but let me say again to that member, if that member is somehow suggesting that there should not be investigations in cases, Mr. Speaker, where we believe and where SGI believes or any insurance company for that matter, Mr. Speaker, believes that the system has been ripped off or defrauded, Mr. Speaker, he should stand up in this House and be categoric about it or he should stand out in the rotunda and be categoric about it.

Mr. Speaker, I suspect that he holds that position, he will be in opposition for years to come, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my next question is for the Premier. Mr. Speaker, if PricewaterhouseCoopers finds that SGI officials misled the minister over the two weeks the surveillance issue has been discussed, we assume disciplinary action will be taken. The minister intimated as much last week.

So if PricewaterhouseCoopers finds out that the minister did say and did know on May 27 that SGI did surveillance on insurance claims, yet told the Assembly on June 6 that SGI did no such thing, will the Premier fire the minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, in this circumstance, the minister stood in this House on Friday of last week and made apology for comments that he had said.

Now the fact of the matter is, he has appointed Pricewaterhouse to find out precisely what has happened within SGI and to look at the whole situation of surveillance. But, Mr. Speaker, I stand here with this minister and I intend to stand with this minister a great long time on this side of the House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — I stand here today with this minister and I want to know, since the member of Rosthern won't answer the question, I would like to hear from the Leader of the

Opposition: is it the policy of the Saskatchewan Party that those who are suspected of committing fraud against the other motorists of Saskatchewan, is it the policy of the Saskatchewan Party that these people should, one, not be investigated; or two, not be . . . or be told in advance of being investigated?

Would the Leader of the Opposition today stand in this House or stand in the rotunda and give us the policy of the Saskatchewan Party?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order. Order, please. Order, please. Order, please.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased today to stand on behalf of the government and table responses to written questions no. 282 through 286 inclusive.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Responses to questions 282, 283, 284, 285, and 286 have been tabled.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 3

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Thomson that **Bill No. 3 — The Correctional Services Amendment Act, 2002** be now read a second time.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand today and refer to Bill No. 3, The Correctional Services Amendment Act, 2002.

Mr. Speaker, it has been noted many times over that Saskatchewan has one of the highest crime rates in the country and this concerns all citizens of our province. And there has been a great deal of debate and discussion around this very issue.

Mr. Speaker, we have that dubious distinction; it's one that we're not very proud of, but . . . and this has been mentioned a number of times . . . (inaudible) . . . also of being the car theft capital of North America.

It seems, Mr. Speaker, that just about every day, in talking with people in Regina and throughout the province, as we do move throughout the province taking care of our duties, that people are talking about that very concern that they have about the theft of their vehicles and/or damage of their vehicles.

Mr. Speaker, this crime rate that we're experiencing, the high

crime rate that Saskatchewan now has is not limited just to urban areas, but it's also in rural communities. And we've seen an increase in this activity over the months, over the past few years that is very, very alarming.

Regina and Saskatoon have two of the highest per capita crime rates in Canada. And the Bill that we have before us today is referring to correctional services and some of the things the government is going to do to try to ensure that there is flexibility as far as dealing with people that would be involved in these crimes in our province. And so it's a good Bill; we are happy to see this kind of a Bill put forward. But it's going to do very little to reduce the province's high crime rates because, Mr. Speaker, there's chronic underfunding and a lack of priority on the part of the NDP where it comes to staffing all police departments in the province.

A recent report to Regina City Council has indicated that members of the Regina Police Service have the highest workload of any major western Canadian city. And so this is a major concern. This workload indicates that our crime rate is on the increase and that we're not doing something correctly.

There are other issues other than having the police staffed properly; certainly there are, Mr. Speaker. And the other issues are we need to address the many other issues that lead people to crime, like poverty and unemployment, homelessness, and particularly I think in this province, Mr. Speaker, it's been noted that substance abuse is quite rampant and also leads to citizens involving themselves in crime.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, car thieves have said repeatedly that one of the things that they would like to see is better access to substance abuse programs. And there is a problem with access to these programs. This has been brought up in the legislature a number of times.

The Saskatchewan Party opposition has presented on many occasions to the NDP government the need for a detox centre, for instance, in Saskatoon. We have also brought to the attention of the government a need for a youth treatment centre for alcohol and drug abuse. And these things are not being addressed, Mr. Speaker.

In Saskatoon we give credit — a great deal of credit to the city of Saskatoon — who is seemingly trying to do something about the detox centre but, Mr. Speaker, this government doesn't seem to be working with them in that aspect, and so we are quite concerned about it.

Mr. Speaker, it's very, very sad when the youth of the province are in need of detox centres, of substance abuse treatment centres, and we have seen nothing of the government acting on this need throughout the years that we've sat in this legislature as opposition.

And, Mr. Speaker, in a province that has a relatively high percentage of seniors, the crime rate is a concern for them. Women and children are also often the victims of crime and StatsCanada, a report of StatsCanada, indicated that 55 per cent of all the female homicide victims were killed by someone that they knew and that compares with only 6 per cent of male victims. But nonetheless, Mr. Speaker, there is a need to have

some changes made.

Mr. Speaker, I've been looking through this legislation and I noted that there is a reference that is made to correctional camps. And although the legislation is not absolutely clear, I'm wondering if it's possibly an indication that the government is thinking of having something equivalent to boot camps. It's talking about correctional camps here. And, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to just mention that it's really very, very important that our young people have some disciplinary action in the form of good rehabilitation.

Mr. Speaker, I was really very impressed . . . This past week I was at Wakaw for a ceremonial annual review of their air cadets. Their Squadron 888 there was going through their annual review and clearly the discipline and the respect that these young people are learning through the cadets is very, very commendable. I have to give a great deal of credit to the many adults who took it upon themselves to ensure that this squadron is in place and that there is a sense of accomplishment and achievement by the cadets and also rewards.

And so I think that we need to look to that kind of programming more often and if we want to call them correctional camps or boot camps or whatever we call them, I think we need to recognize that there is value in that kind of discipline and training.

And there are many, many rewards also for the young people that are a part of cadets. And many of them have, I guess, have been directed in that way in order that they would have a purpose for their lives; a sense of belonging to a group of people who are doing some very, very honourable achievements.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I think it's really worthwhile . . . a very worthwhile activity that's taking part across — or taking place, rather — across the entire province wherever we see cadet corps. And so I think that in looking at the value of those squadrons throughout our province we can take a lesson from some of the very basic principles that are in line for young people.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there have been two of my colleagues in the past days of this session that have addressed this particular Bill. And so we would like to move it to Committee of the Whole where we can look at the Bill, ask questions of the minister a little more in depth. And so I do move this Bill on to Committee of the Whole at this time.

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

(14:30)

Bill No. 9

The committee resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Axworthy that **Bill No. 9 — The Real Estate Amendment Act, 2002** be now read a second time.

Mr. Huyghebaert — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to enter into the debate on Bill No. 9, The Real Estate Amendment

Act.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill seemed like it was primarily a housekeeping Bill with some basically inconsequential amendments. But one of the major issues that's been identified in this Bill speaks to one of the problems we have that's actually facing the province.

In the housekeeping amendments, the NDP has theoretically taken care of updating legislation that deals with confidentiality and information sharing within the real estate industry. There's also amendments that allow for interprovincial agreements between bodies of regulators, especially when you have brokers and salespeople moving from one jurisdiction to the other.

Of course, we're very familiar in this province with people moving from one jurisdiction to the other. It's something that members opposite know a great deal about because we have one of the highest out-migrations from this province to other jurisdictions than any other province in the country. And one of the reasons, obviously, we have out-migration is people go to where the jobs are and when our job creation record is extremely poor from this government, we have . . . we have people that . . . that are moving out of the province.

We have created one of the least friendly business environments in Saskatchewan, and again, this causes people to move out of the province and into other jurisdictions where jobs are being created at a horrendous amount and while we stay stagnate or go downhill in this province.

Mr. Speaker, realtors represent a group of people who know how serious the issue is from out-migration. They are the ones who literally make their living in the buying and house-selling market, so they know first-hand, when you've got more people moving out of the province than moving into the province, that there's a huge, huge problem.

Mr. Speaker, overall we don't take issue with those amendments that talk about confidentiality and information sharing. And we also support the sections that strengthen agreements reached between regulating bodies and representatives. Changes that require errors and omissions coverage are in themselves not negative. In fact, the real estate group has indicated that they actually prefer this. It would only make sense that they should have this kind of protection. Changing the requirements regarding disclosure and reporting are also things we don't take issue with.

But the one thing, along with the real estate community, that we do not like is the section that deals with specifying one insurance carrier. And this is very typical, Mr. Speaker. It almost appears that the government tried to sneak this one through and nobody would pick it up. But in fact it was picked up very early on and that's why it's being entered into debate, about this one particular aspect of dealing with one insurance carrier.

In fact during the second reading speech, the Justice minister said that they consulted with Saskatchewan Real Estate Commission, the Saskatchewan Real Estate Association, and the Superintendent of Real Estate. Yet we, Mr. Speaker, have received numerous letters all outlining concerns that realtors

and insurance brokers have about dealing with one specified insurance carrier.

It seems the real estate community had not even seen this Bill. So if the minister or the NDP had consulted with the entire real estate community, they would have found that not everyone was in fact supportive of this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, the members on this side of the House are wondering, though, what precipitated these amendments, especially the one dealing with specifying one insurance carrier. There are no reasons given for this.

Specifying one insurance carrier means funnelling more business to the Crowns. Allowing a monopoly in this area would not make things easier or more economical. In fact, it would have the reverse effect.

When you consider the hundreds of millions of dollars, taxpayers' dollars, that have been lost to ill-planned business ventures, it really makes one wonder why would we . . . would be talking about again one insurance carrier and putting taxpayers' dollars at risk.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to read into the record a letter from . . . parts of a letter from the insurance brokers of Saskatoon. And I think it accurately describes their feelings to this Bill. And in the letter, I'll paraphrase: they have good support for the compulsory errors and omissions insurance, however, and I will quote:

Our strong opposition is to mandatory errors and omissions insurance which dictates to the registrant with which insurer the registrant must be insured. Our association believes the quality and value of insurance is best served by an open marketplace. Registrants should have the choice of insurance providers.

It goes on to say, Mr. Speaker, and I quote:

The only single insurer model our association has seen provided 80 per cent less coverage at 30 per cent higher cost to the registrant. This certainly cannot be in the interests of the consumer or the real estate industry.

The Saskatoon Real Estate Board strongly recommends that the suggested amendment to The Real Estate Act, section 83(1)(q.1)(ii) be repealed.

Mr. Speaker, on that note, I would like to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 4

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Sonntag that **Bill No. 4 — The SaskEnergy Amendment Act, 2002** be now read a second time.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a few comments that I would like to make on this particular Act as it applies to SaskEnergy. I think at the end of my comments,

we're certainly prepared to move this into Committee of the Whole because there's a number of questions that keep coming up and we're having difficulty in trying to rationalize what they might . . . what the answers might be and why these amendments are putting forward in the first place.

We've consulted extensively with members, industry members regarding this Act. And generally we find that the Act is supported and going in the right direction, but some of the comments that I have pertain to some of the questions that I referred to just a moment ago.

One of the things that we have to be aware of, Mr. Speaker, in these particular Acts is what will be coming in the future and in the near future, and I'm talking specifically about deregulation within the industry.

Deregulation is often considered a negative word when it's applied to energy sources, through some of the experience . . . perceived bad experiences that happened with deregulation.

This Act doesn't pertain directly to deregulation, but one of the things that we have to be aware of is we're setting the fundamentals in place for an Act in the future that will cause deregulation.

When we first deregulated the energy in Manitoba . . . deregulated telephone rates for instance in Manitoba, when I lived there, we experienced both the ups and down sides, but at the end of the day, deregulation became quite an important factor in our particular use of the service.

Right now I'm experiencing, in my home in Lloydminster, deregulated pricing on gas and energy as it comes and is supplied to my side of the city from ATCO Energy . . . ATCO Gas in Alberta. That of course has been deregulated. And while it made quite a spike and caused us some concern for a short period of time one winter, the price that I've been paying for gas in my home certainly has been considerably less than my neighbours that have to use SaskEnergy gas.

So what I'm saying is that when we put the fundamentals into these Acts, they have to be . . . we have to be prepared that the consequence will eventually affect the deregulation of an industry that will happen probably sooner than later.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, there is some positive things in this . . . in the amendments that I think I should comment on, because if we can be of any assistance as legislators in trying to make this . . . make the industry more friendly to development, I think we should go in that direction.

Therefore one of the clauses that I'm referring to is supporting the utilization of a company's own pipeline when they are transporting the natural gas from their . . . from their own source to be utilized on their particular property.

And also I noticed that this is expanded even further so that a company might be able to use their own gas and transport it through their own pipelining to other property that may not be adjacent, but is not sold anywhere else.

I think that is a positive move for the industry because industry

doesn't want to wait for regulation, doesn't want to wait for decisions to be made when they can move ahead quickly and do what has to be done under their own budget and their own business plan as they see fit. If it doesn't affect the monopoly position of SaskEnergy, I think that is a positive move, and I'm pleased to see that amendment in this Act.

A couple of the questions that I referred to earlier, Mr. Minister, really are I suppose housekeeping in a way, but one has to ask oneself why were these amendments put into this Act.

One of them is, a quorum has now been taken out of the legislation and is now to be defined, not by the board of SaskEnergy, by the Crown board. It is defined by an order in council. That is . . . makes me wonder what the purpose of that particular minutia or attention to detail that is required in order to set quorum of SaskEnergy board meeting with an order in council by cabinet.

That seems to me that is an overkill and that is a question that defies explanation from my point of view. And that's why we want to move ahead and we should be able to respond . . . get responses to these kind of questions when we get into Committee of the Whole.

One of the other questions that seems unanswered, and seems to be very odd to me, is when we refer to, in the existing Act, as the executive committee, any time there was a reference to executive committee of the board, that now under these amendments has been reduced and in fact eliminated — removed entirely. Again the question is why, why is that so? What is the advantage of doing this? What will be entered in place of removing reference to executive committee? Those are the questions that we need to ask on behalf of the people of the province that in fact are the owners and shareholders of SaskEnergy.

(14:45)

Maybe the . . . one of the more contentious clauses in this particular Act relates to the acquisition and disposition of real estate or capital assets. It's been referred to in the debate so far, and I just wanted to summarize it again by letting the people know that there is a limit up to which the board of SaskEnergy can make an acquisition or a disposition and that number has been established earlier at \$200,000. Now as time goes on and the corporations enlarge and change, certainly those numbers have to be flexible.

What the Act goes ahead with, or the amendments purport now, is that this . . . the 200,000 will not be the figure that will be the cap of acquisition and disposition, but in fact that limit will now be set by again the Governor in Council. That will be set by a cabinet decision.

I think when we get into the large-scale acquisitions that need to be made, or dispositions, I think the government of the day should have some clear understanding of what these limits are and what is allowed. Because they in fact — the government of the day — is in fact the ones that are responsible for the ultimate success or failure of that acquisition or disposition.

The question that will be asked in the Committee of the Whole

is: why would a limit that is not listed in the legislation be allowed to be given to cabinet discretion to be set? The question is: on what basis would these numbers be set? Why is that a preference to something in the legislation? Why is that better in terms of transparency? Should the people of Saskatchewan not know what the limit is that their company, their energy company, is doing or will be allowed to do? At what level, over which the government of the day needs to be involved? That is a question that needs to be also brought up in Committee of the Whole and we're certainly prepared to ask those questions and look for responses.

One other provision that I think is a fairly positive amendment in the Act would be to make sure it's very clear that a third person or a contractor that is hired to do a particular job is going to be responsible for the work that is done. And the example that might be used would be where digging is done around another pipeline or dynamiting or some other kinds of activity that needs to be done. The Act now, with these provisions, should make it very clear that the contractor, as a third person, is also responsible and the person performing that work also is equally responsible.

Once it's clear and established, people know what their parameters are and that risk can be adjusted for in the bidding process and it becomes much more transparent. And no questions at the end of the day — who is going to pay for the cost of the particular problem that might be created.

So again, Mr. Speaker, talking about these regulations, I can see some positive regulations moving forward for clarification. I think that we need to make sure that the amendments are in fact in the right direction to lay the correct fundamentals for future development of SaskEnergy and the deregulation of our energy in this province.

The questions that I've already talked about need to be addressed. The answers aren't apparent, and I think the people of the province deserve to have answers to those questions; and we will endeavour to pose those questions and endeavour to get the appropriate responses.

Mr. Speaker, we're prepared now to let Bill No. 4 move forward into Committee of the Whole.

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

Bill No. 20

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Axworthy that **Bill No. 20 — The Consumer Protection Amendment Act, 2002** be now read a second time.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand again in the House today and to address Bill No. 20, The Consumer Protection Amendment Act, 2002.

Mr. Speaker, the minister outlined for the Assembly the intent of this particular Bill. And the Saskatchewan Party opposition certainly was very, very pleased to see that this kind of a Bill would be coming to the table because there is definitely a need

for a Bill like this with the changing face of commerce today in our world.

We have many, many people that are purchasing items through the Internet and through e-mail and so on. And we need to have protection for these people to ensure that they're not being taken in one way or the other.

Internet commerce is a growing force, Mr. Speaker, and it's going to keep on growing despite the recent meltdown in Internet base business. But in the bigger scheme of things we have only just begun this type of business. And it's certainly one that a lot of people in Saskatchewan are using.

Just as consumers have certain protections when they make a purchase in downtown Saskatoon, Regina, Humboldt, or anywhere else, they need certain protections when they're making Internet purchases also. And this Bill does put in place some of those protections. It's certainly . . . rather, it requires certain things of the seller, as we understand it from the Minister of Justice. Certain things of the seller, such as providing a purchase agreement within 15 days and a window of opportunity for buyers to cancel any of their purchases. These are necessary features, Mr. Speaker. And in principle we do support this Bill.

We are having some question though about whether or not the Minister of Justice has spoken with the federal minister about how this sort of protection may be applied throughout the entire North American continent. It is really very necessary that we take that kind of a step and ensure that we've got a harmonized system in place when it comes to the protection of our consumers.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill also has . . . speaks, rather, of some changes that are going to be made in relationship to stolen or lost credit cards, and some limits are put also on the liability of cardholders in those cases. And I believe this is really very good, very necessary. Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that anyone that has travelled throughout North America, throughout the world, has experienced someone they know or possibly themselves losing their credit cards and what kind of an anxiety that may cause. And we certainly agree that, you know, putting some limit . . . some liabilities on the cardholders in those cases is a good thing. We agree with this.

We're looking forward to seeing this Bill play out. It sounds very necessary and very good on paper. We would encourage the minister to . . . in his discussions with the federal government Justice minister, to look at possibly taking some initiative in speaking with the governments of other jurisdictions in North America and in South America also, Mr. Speaker.

The Bill must — must — have enforcement mechanisms internationally. We realize that enforcing any rules internationally can be difficult, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to e-commerce but we will want to question the government very clearly on how he intends . . . or the minister intends to address that issue.

Mr. Speaker, this sort of Bill in the day and age, as I've mentioned, that we're in right now with so many people making

purchases over the Internet, is important. And I'm sure that as time moves on we're going to be finding that there is going to be other things that come to light that the consumer of this province, consumers of this province as well as throughout our country, are going to be bringing forward to different governments to look at and to address.

It's really getting more complex as I see it, Mr. Speaker. We're seeing large, large items that are being sold through the Internet and we're seeing this happening at long distances. And many times there are questions on the behalf of the buyer about, you know, what would happen for instance if I did not receive my purchase? Who would I go to? Do I know if there's a legislation in place; a piece of legislation in place that would protect me and direct me? There are many, many questions.

There is often, you know, a lot of literature and that kind of thing that is sold through the Internet for instance that may, may or may not, be conducive to the will of the people.

We talked many times, Mr. Speaker, about pornography as well as just information that's really very illicit passing on from one consumer to the other through the Internet. And we have certainly a long ways to go to ensure that what's happening through the Internet is conducive to the values and the sort of moral, I guess, caring of the people within our country.

So, Mr. Speaker, I have very little more to say regarding the Act to amend The Consumer Protection Act, except that I am very pleased that the government has taken the step that it has to bring this Bill forward and it seems that it could have been looked at I guess some time ago. Because right now we have a number of our citizens that have expressed their concerns that they have needed something like this and we probably should have been ahead of the game before this time, but nonetheless it's on the table now and it's an important piece of legislation. Our members are looking forward to seeing what, what comes of this, to asking the minister more in-depth questions and we are, I guess, quite heartened that we have seen that the ministers of Justice from across the country have agreed upon this kind of a thing.

The harmonization of laws throughout the country are key since the Internet is really not contained by provincial boundaries, and so it's very, very important that we move ahead with this kind of legislation and try to ensure that our consumers are protected when they are making Internet purchases.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to move this Bill forward onto Committee of the Whole.

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

Bill No. 25

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Axworthy that **Bill No. 25 — The Cost of Credit Disclosure Act, 2002** be now read a second time.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand once again to address a Bill of this Legislative Assembly, Bill No. 25, The Cost of Credit Disclosure Act.

Mr. Speaker, our caucus committee has looked at this Bill very closely. We have recognized that it gives . . . puts forward, rather, a greater requirement on lenders of all sorts to give those people to whom they're borrowing money more details about the actual cost of the borrowing of money.

For instance, Mr. Speaker, many times we hear on the radio or on TV that something is going to be offered to the general public for sale at zero down, zero per cent financing. We hear that a lot of times at car dealerships. But we recognize from speaking with a number of people in our province, who are purchasers of vehicles for instance, that the zero down, zero per cent in fact does come at quite a great cost.

(15:00)

So this Bill, as I understand it, will require dealerships, for instance, to disclose the cost — all the costs associated. Whether or not consumers are hearing these captions on TV, on the radio, making it sound as though there is going to be no cost at all in financing a car, as far as finance costs go, there is going to be a requirement on the part of dealers now to disclose what the entire cost is.

This Bill, Mr. Speaker, affects all banks. It affects all credit unions and credit cards, as well as all retailers. And the Act also sets out the type of information that must be disclosed for different types of credit. For instance, it sets out how and when disclosure statements are made, the way finance charges are to be calculated, and the kinds of charges that can be imposed on borrowers. This is certainly a very, very important step that's being taken.

Some other features of this Bill, Mr. Speaker, are that it allows borrowers to purchase insurance, if it's required, from any agent. Another feature is that the borrower may cancel optional services attached to the loan and the borrower may pay off non-mortgage credit at any time without penalty. Only reasonable penalties can be levied.

Mr. Speaker, credit card application forms must clearly state the interest rate, whether it is a floating interest rate on non-interest financial charges — that's on all non-interest financial charges. So this is also a very good step, Mr. Speaker.

Many citizens that I've spoken of — or spoken to rather — in the province have expressed their dismay, I guess, and their surprise at finding out what kind of a rate, an interest rate is connected to owning a credit card, and possibly even different interest rates for different banking organizations that they . . . the credit card companies deal with. So there's a variance in these rates and many people are very confused as to why this is happening. They're also, as I mentioned, very surprised when they recognized the interest rate that they have to pay. So it's an exceptionally good move when you have a credit card, when you make your credit card application, that you know at that time already what the interest rate will be.

This Bill, Mr. Speaker, also affects lease payments with requirement for more explicit information. That is especially necessary also, Mr. Speaker. And this Bill will bring Saskatchewan into line with the 1994 Agreement on Internal Trade.

It's due time that this has happened. It's important that Saskatchewan be right up there with everyone else when we're talking about internal trade. And we have to recognize that we have a global community out there now, and certainly global transactions are taking place so we have to be . . . we have to be with it when it comes to these things and make sure that we're not in a spot where we're facing a great deal of exasperation by the people of our province because we're not in line with what's happening in the global world.

So this legislation, Mr. Speaker, I understand is uniform legislation, and it has been passed already in several provinces. And that is excellent. We're looking forward to hearing the rest of the provinces are going to be also passing legislation that's going to be addressing this issue.

There is one loose end that remains, Mr. Speaker, and our caucus is a bit concerned, that there's nothing in this legislation that speaks of lending for the purposes of, you know, farms — farm lending and so on. And so we would like to question the minister a great deal more on that aspect of this Bill.

If this Bill is going to go into effect on July 1, 2003, and supposedly it is in order to give affected parties time to deal with changes, then we want to make sure that everything is contained in this Bill that is necessary, and that it's a complete and certainly a comprehensive Bill that addresses all of the needs that the people of Saskatchewan would require.

So, Mr. Speaker, this Bill is a very, very good step towards transparency — towards transparency. It's an excellent Bill that I think certainly people of the province would have liked to see in times past with many, many, many other pieces of legislation.

People need to know exactly what is happening when they are making transactions. It doesn't matter what it is they're purchasing or selling, they need to have transparency. They need to have and require to have very succinct directives on what is going to be in place for them so that they don't need to be questioning a great deal.

Mr. Speaker, when that happens, it is a very good and fortunate thing for a society. Any country in the world would recognize, people of these countries would recognize that it's important to have this transparency and very, very distinct details about what the law is that protects them and what the law requires of them when making transactions.

It's extremely important because people are really tired of having to go through the court system, hiring lawyers, and goodness knows what in order to get some of these things straightened out. That is very, very costly — unnecessarily costly. And I believe that when you have legislation that is quite specific, like this is apparently going to be, that it's going to be helping consumers overall in the long run.

And the Saskatchewan Party opposition believes in this kind of action. We believe that it's really very important that people do know what is happening with any of their transactions before the transactions take place so that there is very little question about what's going to happen along the road.

Mr. Speaker, there is a number of areas, for instance, with SGI, I have a friend of mine who was a little bit concerned that when insurance was purchased through SGI that there was very little information, for instance, given out about whether or not he was covered for this, this, or this. There was very little information given out at the time of purchase of that insurance.

And some of it is in the smaller detail, but there is a great deal of very minute detail when you purchase that insurance. And it's really very important, I think, for consumers of anything to be able to have boldly put in front of them what exactly they are covered for and what they are not. And I think that's an area in our province that we could improve upon.

I think it's very important as I've mentioned before that there is very distinct, clear-cut indications of what kind of transactions are taking place. There needs to be transparency; there needs to be honesty and integrity in all of our dealings.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I . . . looking forward, as some of my Saskatchewan Party colleagues are, opposition colleagues are, to looking at this Bill in Committee of the Whole and questioning the minister in more detail on it at that time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Bill No. 32

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the Hon. Mr. Axworthy that **Bill No. 32 — The Land Surveys Amendment Act, 2002** be now read a second time.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to be able to participate in the second reading debate on Bill No. 32, An Act to amend The Land Surveys Act. And, Mr. Speaker, as other speakers before me and more specifically the minister has noted, the . . . this Bill, Bill No. 32, is very much related to the LAND (Land Titles Automated Network Development) project more commonly known as the Information Services Corporation and the government's attempt to automate our land titles here in the province of Saskatchewan.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, these next two Bills both relate to that particular effort on the part of this NDP government. And we certainly have a lot of questions and comments with respect to these Bills, especially as they relate to the automation of the land titles system in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, by way of history, of course, it was some years ago that the NDP government announced that, while Saskatchewan was the last province to automate its land titles, that it intended to go down that path. And in typical fashion of this government, Mr. Speaker, it rejected any number of ways to accomplish that including, oh, perhaps contracting it out or having a look at existing technology that was on the market and bringing into the province of Saskatchewan. And they rejected that, Mr. Speaker, in favour of setting up yet another new Crown corporation called the Information Services Corporation to, among other things, automate the land titles system here in Saskatchewan.

And we have . . . It's a matter of the public record, Mr. Speaker. We have had a number of concerns about that process. Some of those concerns I think are born out in the fact that, well, many years into this process we're now introduced . . . we're now facing the debate of these two specific Bills and Bill 32.

Because it strikes us, Mr. Speaker, as we read the Bill and we read the minister's second reading speech, that the Bills are intended to clean up some difficulties or at least if not mistakes of commission, then mistakes of omission that have taken place with respect to this automated land titles file and the establishment of the Information Services Corporation.

And certainly the efficacy that this . . . the ability of this system to function in an effective way for Saskatchewan people has been a concern of the opposition. Whether it be with respect to the land surveys themselves or whether it happens to be with how parcels are now dealt with in the new system, we have had concerns about the functionality of the system and the number of bugs that seem to be there, understanding that any new automated system that is a green field approach, in other words a from-scratch approach to develop a whole new software, is going to have some bugs. And I think that's reasonable to expect of software.

But, Mr. Speaker, we are seeing a — frankly in our opinion — a plague of bugs with respect to this system, almost of Biblical proportions. And some of them really go to the heart of the ability of people in the surveying business and people in the land transaction business and just homeowners to have a land titles system that functions on a timely basis as has been promised by the government in respect of these, not only of this . . . of ISC (Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan), but also of this Bill. That's what these Bills speak to.

So that's one set of concerns that we've had, Mr. Speaker. The other concern of course was simply the principle of setting up yet another Crown corporation to do this, to do this work, to automate the system. And the projected cost of the system, of the land title . . . the new automated land titles system, which was between 20 and \$30 million was the projected costs years ago, and we're well over 60 million and climbing, the taxpayers' dollars spent on this.

And I think you see these costs rising because the problems are being identified with the system, they're having to fix the problems as we see here with Bill 32 and the next Bill that we're about to consider, Mr. Speaker, Bill 33. So it's no wonder why the costs have increased with ISC almost three-fold over what this government had forecast.

And we're not alone in our concern, Mr. Speaker, and certainly it's not been a partisan concern because I think one of the first members of this legislature — and she's now a former member — but one of the first members of this legislature to fully understand the problems with the government's approach in this regard was Janice MacKinnon, the former member for Saskatoon Idylwyld, who clearly stated in a memo that we were able to . . . that we received a copy of last session, clearly stated in her memo her concerns about what ISC was doing about the fact that it would be elbowing out a burgeoning and growing IT (information technology) sector here in the province of

Saskatchewan.

(15:15)

And you know I think Ms. MacKinnon has certainly a fair amount of credibility, not just here in the legislature but around the province, because certainly it was under her tenure that some improvements were made in the province's fiscal position. And I think that as . . . in her last portfolio of minister responsible for Crown Investments Corporation, she raised some very, very specific concerns about ISC.

Now the minister, the current minister responsible for Information Services Corporation, and the then minister, the member for Saskatoon Fairview, just wrote those concerns off, Mr. Speaker; wrote the concerns off that the thing was . . . that ISC was out of control and that it was having a problem even delivering the basic function.

And as we have seen ISC, I believe — and this with the approval of the NDP cabinet across the way — as we've seen them expand far past the mandate of simply automating our land titles system into all manner of other activities, that's where we seem to have seen the problems with the land titles system.

The original intent of the government was laudable — to automate our land titles in the province of Saskatchewan. We were the last province and are the last province to have automated our land titles. So it was certainly the right thing to do for us to go down that road.

The problem again came with the process: the establishment of another Crown; the fact that expenditures got wildly out of control — and remember that we're talking about taxpayers' dollars when we talk about expenditures — and then the functionality of the system, whether it was working or whether perhaps they were so behind schedule and so in a hurry to get something out there to demonstrate that it hasn't been a complete failure that they introduced it, I believe first in the Moose Jaw district, and there were a number of concerns.

And the government has said and ISC officials have said well, you have to expect that, and I've addressed that very briefly this afternoon. You have to expect that. It's a brand new . . . it's brand new software that we've sort of bootstrapped or greenfielded, that we've built from the ground up, and you're going to have these bugs. And I think we would even accept that as well, Mr. Speaker.

But we've seen just more than a few bugs with the system. And we've seen some fundamental flaws with the system and I think even the government is recognizing that there are fundamental flaws with the system, and therefore we have before us Bill 32.

You know, the minister in his second reading speech, he pointed out that the changes to The Land Surveys Act, part of which changes the Act by authorizing the controller of surveys to refund fees in whole or in part as to allow on-line searches of plans, to access plans that were formally maintained by the chief surveyor's office. Those are some of the . . . some of the changes that we're talking about here in this particular Bill, Mr. Speaker.

And in the minister's second reading speech, as well, he went on to indicate, Mr. Speaker, and I'll . . . I'll just paraphrase because certainly I don't need to repeat what the minister said, but he . . . he basically admits, Mr. Speaker, that the proposed amendments also provide other minor enhancements to the Act.

Now they highlight the need for these enhancements, Mr. Speaker, as a result of the . . . I believe anyway what the minister is getting to is they've rolled this system out and there's clearly some major problems with it and now we're asked here, in the legislature, to clean it up.

Well I believe we were sitting in this Legislative Assembly when the rollout in Moose Jaw occurred last summer and I'm not sure why we would be waiting until now to start proceeding with those changes, Mr. Speaker, so that we wouldn't have put both the legal community and just . . . and those people who simply wanted to do their land transactions, what we . . . through what we put them through last summer.

I think you'll recall, Mr. Speaker, that . . . maybe this was shortly after the session wrapped up, a lady in Moose Jaw highlighted the fact that she was waiting very patiently for some considerable period of time for her mortgage transaction to go through, to be approved by ISC. And ISC has always claimed that it be a 24- to 48-hour turnaround and it was weeks this lady was waiting and she couldn't get title to her new home. And I think in her case she was forced to pay some sort of rent until the transaction could go through.

Now that could be one of the bugs that the government characterizes as normal and sort of something you'd might expect from a brand new system. But you know, there are more stories like that than there should be for these just to be bugs and we've certainly been alerted to them, Mr. Speaker.

And you know, the Bill doesn't speak to all of those problems which certainly bears out the concern that we continue to have. And that is why, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of members on this side of the House that want to speak to Bill 32 and I'm sure they'll want to speak to Bill 33. So that's why, Mr. Speaker, at this time, I would move that we adjourn debate on Bill 32.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 33

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Axworthy that **Bill No. 33 — The Land Titles Amendment Act, 2002** be now read a second time.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Much the same comments here for this particular Bill, Mr. Speaker, Bill 33, the amendment of The Land Titles Act.

You know, and again if we go through the comments from the minister at the time of the second reading speech, he himself notes here — and I'm going to quote very quickly here, Mr. Speaker, because it's already in *Hansard* — but he notes that they're going to provide for in this, in this amendment:

. . . clear definitions for each new parcel of land after a new plan has been approved.

Again that's a pretty fundamental change that you'd think the government would have made properly and effectively prior to the rollout of this system. One of the . . . He goes on to say, and one of the key amendments . . . He goes on to say:

In addition, some housekeeping amendments have been identified internally that will make the legislation more precise, such as a provision clarifying that the land titles registry includes its data as well as its documents; (and) provisions to allow corrections to a title to be properly recorded against the title and maintained as a permanent record . . .

Again, Mr. Speaker, these are some seemingly pretty fundamental changes that we're being asked to make now in the legislature, well long after the system has been rolled out and forced onto the people in the Moose Jaw district, into the Regina district, I believe the Saskatoon district, as well as, Mr. Speaker, the Humboldt district which is next.

And you know we continue to hear concerns about the rollout. So we're playing catch-up here in the legislature today, Mr. Speaker, in this session, trying to fix the holes in their ISC plan, well after the people, the legal community, people that want to do land transactions, have had to put up with the holes themselves, to put up with the failings themselves.

And now we understand that in the Prince Albert district the government has chosen one of the busiest times in the land titles season, if you will, to go ahead and automate the system there in the Prince Albert district.

And we understand — and if we're not correct here, we hope the government will clarify this — but the legal community in the Prince Albert area understands that the land titles office will now effectively be closed for up to four weeks. Right in the middle of the land titles season.

They have asked already in a letter that we received, Mr. Speaker, they've asked why . . . they asked the rhetorical question, why wouldn't the government wait, if it involved shutting down the land titles office there, the process that they rely on, why wouldn't they have waited until the winter, for example, when the transactions are fewer? Or, more to the point, why wouldn't they have done it in the winter?

The truth of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, there just seems to be mistake after mistake after poor judgment after poor judgment on the whole automation of the land titles system by this particular government.

You know, Mr. Speaker, a lot of the concerns that people have with the new system is how they do treat multiple parcels within one transaction. And it looks like at least the government half realizes — half realizes — they have this problem. And so they've introduced this Bill — actually reintroduced the Bill, because we had it last session and they didn't get it quite right then and now we're doing it again here in the legislature today.

So as I say though, most of the concerns that people have with

this system, especially in rural Saskatchewan, is the treatment of this system, is the treatment of the new land titles system of specifically rural, and even more specifically agricultural transactions, that involve multiple parcels in one particular transaction.

There are other significant concerns that have been raised, including the fees, Mr. Speaker, that the industry and that landowners are looking at. Again, a lot of the concern comes from the rural area — even rural communities, small urbans if you will, where many of the lots of course are non-conforming. Many of the lots in any one given parcel, or any one given yard, shall we say, Mr. Speaker, there could be four or five lots because as you will know, Mr. Speaker, in those smaller centres many of the lots are non-conforming. So one particular homeowner may have a home on a 25-foot front lot, but have three or four other 25-foot lots to form his yard.

And the problem is with the system is they seemingly didn't anticipate that, if you can believe it. Automating land titles in a very rural province such as Saskatchewan, you would think that the government would ensure that there would be a great sensitivity to the realities that exist in rural Saskatchewan — both with respect to residential lots as well as agricultural purchases.

You know the other concern that we raised in the legislature is as a result of their treatment of these multiple parcel yards, for example, it also has an impact on industry. And this government claims to be a friend of the energy sector, but again you would never know it by how they have gone ahead and automated land titles in the province of Saskatchewan.

And we introduced in this legislature an alert that was sent out by a Calgary based law firm to its clients that operate and have investments in the province of Saskatchewan. And it has to do with the new land titles system. And I quote from this, Mr. Speaker. They advise their clients in this alert and update:

There are significant increases in registration costs, in converted LRDs that must be considered (in these) in (your) transactions. In a midsize (southeast) Saskatchewan transaction involving a modest number of surface and mineral caveats, expect registration fees to increase from hundreds to thousands of dollars.

Well that certainly isn't another . . . isn't an incentive for those companies to continue to operate and be active in the province of Saskatchewan.

So we've asked that question of the minister earlier this session if he would sit down with the energy sector and try to solve that. And we don't have an answer to that yet, Mr. Speaker, but we hope that we will. We hope that we will. Especially those of us that represent the energy sector in our constituencies.

This is an important, this is an important issue, because, Mr. Speaker, what we don't need, what we don't need are any more barriers for investment in the province of Saskatchewan by the energy sector. We have enough of them as it is. And they ought to be doing whatever they can with this . . . with the information . . . with the automation of the land titles to ensure that doesn't happen.

Now there are several members that wish to speak to this Bill. And I know they are going to have those concerns. And we're going to ask questions, continue to ask questions about whether or not these Bills represent the government fixing some significant problems, very significant problems with the LAND project in the province of Saskatchewan. We are not certain, Mr. Speaker, that that's the case.

Mr. Speaker . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well the hon. member for Regina South just chirps from his seat about why would . . . why we would ask questions about Information Services Corporation. Well we would ask questions of Information Services Corporation, Mr. Speaker, because this government and that member promised the people of Saskatchewan an automated land titles system that would cost the taxpayers 20 to \$30 million.

And when the smoke cleared and when the NDP got through with their usual mismanagement and when they got through with adding yet another member to the family of Crown corporations, the cost wasn't 20 million, it wasn't 30 million, it wasn't 40 million or even 50 million. The cost today is \$60 million and rising. In fact they got another credit limit on the taxpayers' credit card, did ISC, from this government that will take it up to over \$80 million if it's all spent.

That is exactly why we ask questions of ISC and why we will continue to ask questions of ISC of this government, Mr. Speaker.

But I'm grateful for the member for Regina South for letting us clarify why we would ask those questions. And at this point, because other members wish to speak to it, I'd move adjournment of the debate.

Debate adjourned.

(15:30)

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Industry and Resources Vote 23

Subvote (IR12)

The Chair: — This is the fifth time for a total of five hours that this has been before the committee. And I would invite the Minister of Finance . . . pardon me, the Minister of Northern Affairs to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm not as handsome as the Minister of Finance but I'm the Minister of Northern Affairs so I'll just correct that . . .

An Hon. Member: — You're a better hockey player.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Better hockey player though, Mr. Speaker.

I just wanted to point out . . . I'd like to introduce my officials. To my immediate left we have Alan Parkinson who's our

deputy minister. Directly behind Alan, more to my left in the back, we have Cheryl Stecyk who's a business manager. And directly behind me we have Dean Desjarlais, acting director of the Northern Development Fund administration.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair of Committees. Mr. Minister, welcome to your officials this afternoon. And I want to thank you for giving us the opportunity for an hour and a half of your time. I know your officials have many irons in the fire and it's a pleasure to be able to get this amount of time to go over the many subject areas that we need to go through, Mr. Minister.

So I think it's appropriate that we get some appropriate amount of time today. And maybe we can get some more, a little more time in early July to be able to finish things up, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Minister, four weeks ago when you and your officials were here in Committee of Finance, we wound up the day discussing the issue of monies on the table brought forth by the federal government to enhance forest initiatives, forestry initiatives in northern Saskatchewan.

We received certainly, and you sent a letter to the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood outlining provincial initiatives that are going on in northern Saskatchewan, but you still did not get to at that point, dated May 29, give us any indication as to the monies on the table that we have heard of on this side of the House, Mr. Minister, some \$45 million — \$15 million a year for three years — a project that should have already been ongoing.

And I'm wondering if you have any further update on the availability of those monies and what kind of initiatives are taking place for forestry initiatives in northern Saskatchewan in regards to this \$45 million.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much for the question. I would ask that member for clarification on the \$45 million that he mentioned — if this is related to training or if this is part of the investment.

I would point out that forestry as a whole is something that we have been putting a lot of effort into. And most recently we've announced a partnership that spoke about investment into the OSB (oriented strand board) mill in Meadow Lake. And we're talking about the Beauval saw mill; we're talking about the Buffalo Narrows post treatment plant; we also speak about the Peter Ballantyne Band — like we're talking many more millions of dollars at stake here.

But the \$45 million in connection with the federal government, I'm just trying to get clarification as to what you understood that money to represent and what it was supposed to mean. Because we don't have any \$45 million figure from the federal government in any of our books or records. Thanks.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair of Committees, to the minister, certainly we have received some understanding that there was monies that could be accessed from the federal government for forestry initiatives by First Nation peoples in northern Saskatchewan.

Maybe it might be more appropriate, rather than to continue to question you on this at this time, we could bring this up the next time that you and your officials are back. It will give you an opportunity to meet with federal officials to try and to find out just where this program is at in regards to this issue.

Mr. Minister, continuing on this same line in the area of forestry development in northern Saskatchewan, we certainly understand on this side of the House the relevance and the importance of expanding forestry initiatives in northern Saskatchewan. We also have a clear understanding that at this time of course the bulk of Saskatchewan's forest products are sold into the United States of America.

They have some trade distortion tariffs that they have on our products at this time. But we also understand that, you know, as markets shift in North America — and of course on this side of the House we also understand, Mr. Minister, that the American economy is starting on an upswing; the economy across Canada is also on an upswing — that the prices in the future for forest products are certainly going to move upward which will eat up in an appropriate manner the trade distorting tariffs that the American forest industry has lobbied for and managed to succeed getting placed on Canadian forest products.

So I'm wondering then, in your initiatives in northern Saskatchewan for forestry development, if you can help the members of the House today, Mr. Minister, explain to us what kind of initiatives are taking place in the forestry sector that the Department of Northern Affairs is involved in to help encourage new initiatives in northern Saskatchewan.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — I think that's a very good question. What I'll do, Mr. Chairman, just to — and I'll try and be as brief as I can here — but to basically explain the training comment or good training question that you asked about.

First of all, forestry and training initiatives are led by the forestry training subcommittee (FTSC) of the Northern Labour Market Committee. It includes industry representatives, First Nations and Métis interests, as well as post-secondary organizations and other stakeholders. So this forestry training subcommittee supports both formal academic programs and on-the-job training.

And a year ago, June 2001, this subcommittee formalized a forest sector memorandum of understanding. This MOU was to address human resources planning and to secure stakeholder support for forestry training initiatives. The MOU is modelled after the multi-party training program plan in the mineral sector, whereby responsibilities and funding are shared between the various stakeholders, including the province.

And the efforts of the forestry subcommittee are guided by two critical elements: partner contributions, both financial and in kind; and the support training, as long as the training is being directly linked to employment in the forestry sector.

The province, through the Department of Learning, provides \$859,000 to the forestry subcommittee. These funds, combined with other financial and in-kind contributions, are expected to assist in delivering approximately \$3.5 million of training in 2002-2003 to about 230 people. This is similar to 2001 and

2002 activities.

Over 2001 and 2002 academic years, approximately 500 participants have been involved in forestry training and the total training value is about \$6 million. And for the participants of last year's academic year, 83 per cent were Aboriginal people which is First Nations and Métis or non-status. And participants were from throughout the commercial forest region with over 80 per cent from the northern administration district, NAD (northern administrative district) line. And this certainly goes on for quite a bit but clearly I think last year that . . . this year is about \$3.5 million and that is directly associated to some of the training plans that we have.

At this stage of the game as well, in terms of forestry initiative, we have a number of issues we're working towards in terms of training. We train, you know, people to . . . how to build roads, silviculture, harvesting. We're trying to get many more businesses of course moving in this direction. We're working with many of the First Nations and Métis communities. A lot of the Aboriginal people are also part of the ownership structure, as you are aware. So there is an exciting opportunity for us to build on forestry.

I'm very familiar with the northwest part of the province that talks about having Buffalo Narrows and La Loche now become part of the Northwest Communities. Eventually what we hope to see happen is an FMA (forest management agreement) forming part of the base of the operations with the communities of Green Lake, Pinehouse, Patuanak, Beauval, La Loche, Buffalo Narrows, all work in tandem and working together to develop the forestry sector.

So Northern Affairs has been very actively involved with trying to develop that forestry file. Again I could be corrected on this but I believe we have well over 8 million acres of land that we are going to be dedicating to these communities to form their FMA.

And as we speak, the Northwest Communities Wood Products is the company that's representing all these communities' interests. And Northern Affairs works with the Northwest Communities. We work with trying to provide them with as much support as possible. They're partners in this . . . in the larger projects, for example the OSB project, the Meadow Lake Tribal Council. They have 13 years of experience, they have technicians, they have an office staff, they have revenues from their saw mill, and they have the capacity to certainly be a very valuable partner in all these forestry initiative that we speak about.

So the Northwest Communities are beginning. They're starting. So La Loche and Buffalo Narrows and all the communities that we spoke about, in their initial start-up phases, there's a lot of work that needs to be done. You've got to get a board of directors established. You've got to travel to meetings. You need legal counsel. You need business plans. You need some staff members. You need to make sure that, you know, you have some ongoing consultation with the parent company and, in this instance for example, Tolko is one of the senior partners in OSB and they got to have those talks.

(15:45)

So it is a lot of work that is being undertaken. They have a lot of need. And this is certainly where Northern Affairs in the province is trying to help.

So clearly, I think, in one hand you have some very solid partners like Peter Ballantyne and the Meadow Lake Tribal Council. But you also have some junior partners, if you will, in this whole exercise of trying to come on stream. And the intent is not to make them junior partners but they're junior in the sense that they're just starting off. They will be equal partners eventually, but this capacity building phase that they're in certainly requires some support and certainly requires a lot of dedication of time and staff and effort to make sure that they're well positioned to take part of this opportunity.

Now because they're well positioned, we tell a lot of folks some of the challenges we have in terms of accessing the American market is they have these softwood duty taxes that are attached to the price of lumber now coming from Canada going into the States.

And it's kind of a tricky act because we don't . . . we, as you know, that's a fairly big market for softwood. The American economy needs our softwood. We have better products, in my opinion. We have better wood. And over the years, many Saskatchewan-based companies have been able to sell that wood to the States, and despite some of the levies, they still need our wood and still demand our wood.

So over the years we've built up a client base and we've had that kind of, you know, relationship with some of the American consumers.

Now obviously this tariff that they put on recently is very disappointing in the sense that we don't know where this is coming from. The relationship has been good. The product has been good. The service has been good. The prices have been fair. And then, bang, you get this softwood trade dispute that is really putting a lot of people, you know, in some very tough positions.

Well as time goes on, as you know, we've tried the negotiated route with the American folks and they simply didn't feel that we're doing anything to try and address their concerns. This is obviously a trade issue. So that was the first track that we tried to pursue on in terms of trying to get some resolution to withdraw that unfair export tax.

And of course the next track, of course, is going to the World Trade Organization to try and appeal that through their court system.

So I think that the WTO (World Trade Organization) is where we're going to continue fighting this whole unfair trade law, and we'll be certainly trying to make sure that we protect Saskatchewan's interests and especially make the northwest communities aware that we're fighting for their interests as well.

So I imagine, Mr. Chairman, I could go for a number of hours here, but I want to make sure that we walk before we learn to run on some of these issues.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair of Committees, to the minister, and certainly on this side of the House, Mr. Minister, we recognize clearly the effects of the trade distortion tariffs that the Americans have put on, the effect it's having on the Saskatchewan softwood lumber industry. But equally important, the . . . of equal importance, Mr. Minister, is that the effect it's having on the American consumer because they're the ones that are going to be forced to eventually have to pay for that.

But, Mr. Minister, you mentioned — and it's certainly a company that I am quite familiar with — the Northwest Community Wood Products Limited. You mentioned that the northern communities of Buffalo Narrows and La Loche are not part of that limited company now. And you spoke that your department is working diligently to have them as part of the big picture, that there's approximately 8 million acres of forest management area there that you'd like the northwest communities to be able to access and to make it . . . take advantage of as they work towards increasing economic development in that area, in the northwest part of the province, Mr. Minister.

Is that then, to my understanding — I need to get a clear understanding of this, on this side of the House, Mr. Minister — is that the FMA, the forest management agreement, is going to be contingent upon communities being a part of the Northwest Community Wood Products Limited; or is there going to be opportunities for communities to have their own FMAs, Mr. Minister, and to be able to create economic development for their own communities, through their own initiatives, through their own ability for . . . to develop capacity?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much for the question. What I'd point out is that we have made a conscious effort of trying to make sure that we get as many communities involved with this whole process as possible, and giving the economies of scale. If you're to certainly have a larger area in which you could manage, a large area in which you could harvest, and a larger area in which you can plan, that would make the whole notion of having a very viable forestry industry for all the communities within that area as being a sound manner in which to proceed with the forestry strategy.

I would point out that it's very clear that many communities will say, well give us our own little allocation. And it's much better to manage one FMA as opposed to 10 little ones, because there's got to be exchange of wood, there's got to be exchange of best practices, and it's much . . . probably wiser that we have the communities become a partnership in a larger FMA.

And I think that's the direction that the people wanted to go as well. It's not something that we forced upon them, but it's something that we spoke to them about in terms of the value. And this is kind of basically the thought behind making sure that if we are going forward with a forestry project, that the larger the land mass, the better and more viable your forestry opportunity and planning will be. And that certainly makes a lot of sense.

What we've also done is that we've had other contractors that were working out in the field prior to this new forestry strategy. Well we have begun to address their issues as well. Because it

didn't make any sense putting one business . . . or putting somebody out of business, you know, to establish another business.

So we've been working with the contractors. We're still not completely done with working with a number of them to make sure that they are part of the forestry industry build out. And our logic there is right now you're harvesting X amount of cubic metres; perhaps you can find a market for your wood that gives you a better return for your harvesting, but we also want to see three or four other people from your home community also do harvesting.

One of the things we've been working with the Northwest Communities is to also ensure that they look to the private sector to make sure that they engage in a small business, folks that are able to, not only manage your forest but to harvest, and truck, and so on and so forth. So I think the Northwest Community appreciates that the role of the private sector, so they're engaging them as well as we begin to have this forestry build out, and we begin the process of capacity, and eventually working our way to an FMA.

I think it provides great opportunity. So while there is some merit in small community allocations, we and certainly when I say we, I'm talking about the northern communities, feel that it's wiser to have a large area with more wood to manage as opposed to 10 smaller FMAs. And certainly I think in the long run certainly the people of the North will prove that this was the best way to go.

Thanks.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair of Committees, to the minister, certainly you spoke about the advantages to having larger scale operations where all the communities would be better off if they performed under one organization. The entire 8 million acres then would be harvested in a prudent manner. Everyone then would not be just operating next to their own little community.

But obviously, Mr. Minister, there must be some problems with that theory because you haven't got all the communities buying into it. And I don't think in northern Saskatchewan we can afford to wait.

What if La Loche and Buffalo Narrows continue to negotiate for the next three years? Unemployment levels in La Loche cannot remain at 90 per cent while we continue to negotiate. In the meantime, there's lost opportunities.

A couple of weeks ago, Mr. Minister, I spoke about an opportunity that was going on in northern Saskatchewan that was lost, where a small operator was taking out birch, turning it into hardwood flooring. That opportunity was taken away from him in order to accommodate this new initiative.

I think when we lose something to create something new we don't gain anything. All we're doing is shuffling the deck around. So, Mr. Minister, I think we need to move at a much quicker pace than what we're moving at.

This initiative was first announced prior to the 1999 election.

This is 2002 and you spoke earlier about, you know, we still need to work towards creating a board of directors. Well in three years you haven't got a board of directors yet. Where do we go from here? If it takes you three years to get a board of directors, it's going to take you 30 years to get a program in place.

And certainly on this side of the House we don't want to be having just meetings. This doesn't create economic employment in the North. Certainly it may help out a few people a little bit, but the fact of the matter is, is that there's a lot more people involved than that, that need to be addressed. And we're hoping that you can move on this issue a lot quicker than that.

I see also in your letter to the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood you spoke about the Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation and that they're working towards some opportunity on the northeast side of the province. And certainly there's some challenges in that area with infrastructure that's going to be necessary for the expansion of economic development in the forestry area.

And I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, do . . . is there a clear forest management agreement now in place for the Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation and does it allow them the freedom then to simply start operating business and get into forestry operations, or what stage is that at now, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — What I think is very important is that certainly from our perspective we have a lot of confidence and we have a lot of proven success in forestry.

And earlier this week I understand . . . or earlier this month, people spoke to the opposition about a \$800 million development in forestry. And that's a fairly aggressive agenda. It's a very proud record. And I think the area that you particularly come from, the Big River area, we're seeing the forest economy move. We're seeing that people are making a great amount of progress and certainly profit. And profit is a good word.

And we certainly want to undertake that effort and make sure it happens further north as well. Because while Big River is clearly in northern Saskatchewan, La Loche and Buffalo Narrows are further north. So we want them to be part of that economy; we want them to be part of the \$800 million success story that we often talk about.

And on this side of the House, we're going to make sure that we incorporate the Aboriginal people in every sector, in every industry, in every economic plan that we as a government have. Unlike that side, where constantly and time after time, the northern and the Aboriginal people have been excluded from being part of the resource economy of northern Saskatchewan.

Now on this side, we have said forestry is just the beachhead, it is just the beachhead to get the communities together, to get the capacity moving, and to build on bigger and bolder things. We want to expand, Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Chairman, into outfitting.

And when your provincial cousins were in power, the Tories in the '80s, there was not one allocation in the North given to

northern Aboriginal people when it come to outfitting. And today now we're try to get outfitting done for northern Aboriginal people, and you know what we're told? Sorry, Grant Devine and company gave away all of the outfitting allocations to non-northern people. And we have been trying to fix up that mess since day one.

And I can tell you that work has been very thorough, that has been very thorough in the sense that you tried to remove opportunity from the northern people when it comes to outfitting. You have tried to remove opportunities from the northern people when it comes to commercial fishing. You have tried to remove opportunities from people when it comes to forestry. You have tried to remove from the northern Aboriginal people when it comes to tourism.

(16:00)

Well I say shame on you. And I say today on this side of the House, we are going to build that economy that's going to involve northern Aboriginal people, not like . . . unlike that party on that side of the House, Mr. Chairman.

And I would highly suggest, I would highly suggest in the future that if you're going to make charges against this government, turn around and look at your track record. It is not impressive. There's a big, fat F for effort in trying to make sure the northern people are part of the economy. You enjoy a great economy in Big River; northern people want that economy as well.

So I'd be very careful, Mr. Chairman, when you start talking about northern people and not trying to support northern people. It is on this side of the House and certainly Northern Affairs and many other departments are working very hard to make sure that northern Aboriginal people are part of that economy. And, Mr. Speaker, we'll stand on our record any day compared to yours.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Chair: — Order. Order. I would advise all hon. members that in Committee of Finance and in Committee of the Whole, there's general lessening of the rules of putting it to the Chair and through the Chair because the goal is to get things done. But if it gets to the point where it is actually hindering achieving the work, then I would insist that the comments be directed to the Chair and through the Chair. But I hope that won't be necessary.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. To the minister. I believe, Mr. Minister, I was speaking about the arrangement, the forest management agreement you have with the Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation. And I'm not sure what the tourism harangue had to do with that. In fact it has nothing to do with it, Mr. Minister.

And certainly you have been in government since 1991 and there has been absolutely nothing in this province, Mr. Minister, to prevent you, to prevent this government, Mr. Chair of Committees, from having more tourism licences in northern Saskatchewan. Instead, they're going to blame the days of Grant Devine.

But I didn't see any initiatives from this government. And they certainly could have stepped forward, Mr. Chair, and opened up tourism in northern Saskatchewan. But instead they blame Grant Devine for their lack of initiative.

Now, Mr. Minister, Mr. Chair, I want the minister to answer the question that I brought forward the first time. How is the forest management agreement going with the Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation? And what kind of initiatives is the Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation taking at this time through the encouragement of the Department of Northern Affairs?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I would point out that we work very closely with SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management). And SERM has all the information on all the activities to date when it comes to where Peter Ballantyne is.

And certainly as Minister of Northern Affairs, we're intimately involved. But the allocation process, the planning process, and certainly the FMA process is clearly within SERM. And SERM is now, of course, the lead in terms of making sure that the objective of government's are followed when it comes to the sustainability of forestry. And certainly, as I mention out in my opening comments, is they are intimately involved with allocations. And I would ask the member to look at possibly deferring that question to SERM estimates when they're up next. Thank you.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, and, Mr. Chair. I want to move on to the fishing sector of northern Saskatchewan. Certainly we're aware on this side of the House, Mr. Minister, that in the fishing industry that the Department of Northern Affairs has some involvement with allotments for the different lakes in northern Saskatchewan, how much is to be harvested, and who gets those opportunities.

And I wonder to begin with in this sector, Mr. Minister, if we could just get you to give an overview of commercial fishing in northern Saskatchewan and some rough details, Mr. Minister, of the Department of Northern Affairs' involvement in the commercial fishing sector of northern Saskatchewan.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much for the question. One of the reasons why we're trying to have a industry build out in commercial fishing is to make sure we do two things.

Number one is you want to be able to respect the traditional business opportunities that the northerners associate themselves with. And commercial fishing, as you know, is one of the industry that people have been doing for many, many years and they've been working the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation for many years. And they've been saying, we are stubbornly and steadfastly going to believe in our industry.

So as a province we should not be fighting them; we should be supporting them. So clearly it is a respect for the commercial fishing industry that we're trying to achieve.

And secondly, as the mining sector will tell you, the mining sector themselves have reached a capacity to create employment opportunities for northern Saskatchewan people. They've reached a plateau, if you will, for awarding contracts to northern

contractors.

So the mining sector themselves have asked us, as a province, we can do our part but what we'd like you to do as a province is to work with northern people to make sure there's other corresponding activity in other sectors of northern Saskatchewan to lessen the pressure on the mining sector so the mining sector can do what they do well and begin to mine.

So one of the things we're trying to do is look at the tourism opportunity, as I mentioned. And the commercial fishing industry is one industry that we're trying to build from a \$4 million annual industry to an \$8 million annual industry. We're trying to double the industry and what that means is not trying to double the harvest. We're trying to double the amount of lakes that we're able to access so that we can have that harvest level to really stimulate some of the northern economies and some of the northern commercial fishing opportunity.

Last year, for example, Northern Affairs spent 700,000-plus-dollars on trying to modernize and trying to repair and expand lakeside facilities for packing fish. And more recently, they have been looking at a number of options which include fish processing here in Saskatchewan. We've also looked at opportunity to work through Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation to have a special export dealer's licence so we're able to market some of our fish.

So these are some of the things that are being looked at and being considered when it comes to commercial fishing. And there has been a great amount of work being undertaken by a great number of people to make sure that this commercial fishing industry is part and parcel of our northern development strategy.

And I'd point out as well that one of the most important things is that there isn't conflict between the sport fishing industry and there's not conflict with the outfitting association. I think these two organizations represent the two other interests when it comes to fishing in northern Saskatchewan. They recognize that the commercial fishing industry is very valuable. I think they recognize that it's not going to go away. I think they got to have a coexistence, so they've accepted commercial fishing as a very viable part of our economy. And naturally, many more people will want to see commercial fishers begin to evolve into sport fishing opportunities. Well we certainly see the merit in that as well.

What you don't do is you don't force things on people. You allow that transition to take its time and to take its direction. So that also is being fostered.

So if you consider the lakeside facilities 700,000-plus, consider the fact that we're protecting some of these lakes and deem them as commercial fishing lakes, you look at some of the opportunity we have working with Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation, look at the 4 to \$8 million expansion that we want to see happen — and the list kind of goes on as to what we think that the commercial fishing industry should do in order to make itself a very viable entity and a very valuable part of our economy. That work is continuing.

And so again, this is clearly a response to create more jobs,

more opportunities for northerners.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, welcome to your officials. I was glad that my colleague from Prince Albert brought up the questioning regarding commercial fishing. I understand that there's two cities or towns that are looking at creating a commercial fishing plant. One is Prince Albert, and one is also La Ronge, and they're both bidding for that same project.

To date, Mr. Minister, what's happening in regards to the commercial fishing plant that is going to be proposed in that area?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much for a very good question. And I would point out that Mr. Peterson and Mr. Morin are getting their birch allocations. They are going to be doing wonderfully well, that was the business that we're speaking about. And that I think that we've had discussions with Mr. MacLeod of Buffalo who of course is trying to help these two gentlemen establish the business and has been very happily helpful to the two young gentlemen to make sure that they do get part of their forestry opportunity afforded to them.

Now in commercial fishing what is paramount to me, as a minister, is to see the commercial fishing entity and the value-added process for the processing plant put more money in the commercial fisherman's pocket. In fact, there's three communities that are fighting for that fish processing plant — one other is Buffalo Narrows. Buffalo Narrows, La Ronge, and P.A. (Prince Albert) want the fish processing plant.

And as a minister working very closely with the Economic Development minister to try and develop this opportunity, and people in Buffalo Narrows and La Ronge have said, we would like it here. And as the minister I said, well obviously as the Minister of Northern Affairs, I would like it north.

And then what the fishermen's co-operatives have told us is that please don't jump in and interfere, the fishermen themselves will be figuring out this process on their own. We want to make sure that we look at the contract, we look at the business plan, we look at the whole economy as a scale argument, and see where we're at when it comes down to deciding where this facility should go.

And certainly they like to have the government's opinion. And what I've said often in my travels is I've said well there's . . . could be a merit in having three locations. Perhaps La Ronge could serve the east side of the province and make sure it's a central place to get the fish, and to prepare the fish, and to fillet the fish to a certain standard. And perhaps Buffalo Narrows could do that on the west side of the province and acts as a central location to pull the fish together, to be able to fillet the fish, and to pack it in ice, and to sort the fish, and do a number of other things. And then perhaps collectively La Ronge and Buffalo Narrows could then send their fish out to P.A. for further processing and for distribution and for marketing.

There's a credible opportunity to do these things in a cohesive plan. But as a minister, of course I'd like these opportunities further north. I'd like every opportunity to be in the North.

But perhaps there is merit in the fishermen saying to us — the commercial fishermen — don't interfere with our plan. Paramount to them, is putting more money in every commercial fisherman's pocket, which is a good idea.

If we can do the extras, Mr. Minister, we certainly will. If that's your advice. And my advice is absolutely, do what you can for Buffalo Narrows because at one time Buffalo Narrows had three processing plants or filleting plants; perhaps we can have that entity back in place. La Ronge should take care of the east side. And much like the wild rice development, you do have collection points all over and that's how you could have that balance.

So there is no question, from my perspective, Buffalo Narrows and La Ronge being two areas that have expressed interest, they could play a very valuable role. They could create employment. But above all else, the result of any commercial fishing exercise will result in more money in the commercial fisherman's pockets and that's what this whole exercise is about. Thank you.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, and, Mr. Chair. I didn't say that Buffalo Narrows was part of this three-plan operation for the simple reason Buffalo Narrows already has a fish plant in its town already. I thought it was just between Prince Albert and La Ronge.

Now I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, when you were talking about that the northeast side, which is Buffalo Narrows on north — or pardon me — the northeast side is La Ronge, the northwest side would be Buffalo Narrows, getting into the commercial fishing operation, where would Prince Albert fall into line in regards to that?

Now you mentioned that they could send that product down to Prince Albert and it could be diversified into different operations there and then packaged and sent out. Why can't that operations be done right in the North as where they're catching the fish and doing the processing already? Why does it have to come down to Prince Albert? Why is Prince Albert in the picture at all? Why can't it be done in the North where it's going to create jobs and wealth for the northern people?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Well as I mentioned before, it is the commercial fisherman's co-operative that are doing this strategy up. They would not want the politicians to interfere.

They have said, and as I've said, that they're trying to put as many benefits in the North where they should belong. And as I mentioned, one of the things that the commercial fisherman have said is that perhaps there is merit in your argument, Mr. Minister, that more of these facilities should be north. But if we do a business plan that says yes, the facilities should be in the North, but the distribution centre, the marketing centre for the northern fish could be in P.A.

(16:15)

Now that's not up to me, nor is it up to the opposition to decide how the industry is going to look. It is up to the commercial fishermen.

Now we can advise them, I could tell the commercial fishermen I would like to have all these facilities in the North, as I would. I've been very clearly stating that I would. But it is not up to me to interfere with the commercial fishermen's activities. Nor is it up to me to interfere with their business plan. Nor is it up to me to interfere with their industry.

We take their advice. We can certainly give them advice back. And we support them no matter what they do.

Now as I mentioned, I would like unequivocally to state that I'd like more of these opportunities in the North. But I'm not going to interfere. Paramount to us is to put more money in the commercial fishermen's pocket. That's what this whole industry is all about; that's what this whole exercise is about.

Now if they decide to do exactly as I suggest, then of course I would look brilliant. But perhaps they'll say no, Mr. Minister, we're going to do this our way. And I would appeal to the opposition to allow the commercial fishermen's co-op to design this thing and to figure out the best way to serve their industry because they know it better than all of us put together here.

And one of the things that's paramount to them is a better revenue base for their members, and I think all they ask in exchange of us is support and to not interfere. And that's what we're trying to do.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, Mr. Speaker. To the minister, you just made comments that you don't want to interfere with the commercial fishing association in what they want to plan and do with the operation.

But I think, Mr. Minister, if you go over to La Ronge and talk to La Ronge fishermen — the commercial fishermen — they are stating clearly that this should be in the North and that Prince Albert should have nothing to do with this operation.

And the same focus is on Buffalo Narrows, and Buffalo Narrows already has an operation going where they do all the processing of the fish and then they package it and send it off to Winnipeg

La Ronge can do the same thing, but if they're going to do a one plant operation it should be in La Ronge where it's, like I said, going to benefit the people from the North.

I don't think that Prince Albert should be involved in it whatsoever. And I find it ironic when you're stating that the commercial fishermen are looking at where's the best place to put it, well there is . . . or there isn't, very many commercial fishermen from around Prince Albert. The base part of the commercial fishermen come from the North and La Ronge is a perfect area for the commercial fishermen's plant — complete plant.

So why is the minister second-guessing the fact that maybe Prince Albert should have a chance at this? Why not go with the fact that La Ronge is the ideal place for this commercial fishing and that's where it should take place?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Well what I would — thank you very much, Mr. Chairman — what I would again urge that member,

is to point out the fact that I believe that . . . Many times people ask me for advice and the advice I give is sound. But it may not be — I may be wrong many times, and there's probably a million times I'm wrong.

Now what's very important here today is to not interfere with the process of the commercial fishing entities doing exactly what they think is right, to add value to their industry. Now that's a fundamental . . . that is a fundamental point that I make.

Now what I find ironic, what I find ironic, is on one hand we often hear members of the opposition say, don't interfere with business, don't interfere with business; government get out of business's way. And then today talk about commercial fishing. And the interests in commercial fishing are saying to us, don't interfere; we don't want any interference; we want to be able to use our judgment and our plan to develop this industry.

So as a minister I say fair enough, we won't interfere. Now the opposition's saying, oh hold it, let's interfere, let's go to La Ronge now.

Now I'd like an explanation of the member why you would not interfere with Weyerhaeuser's plan and why you'd want to provide advice to the commercial fishing industry. It's kind of a conflicting signal here, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I would point out that it's confusing as to what the motives are.

But I would say this, I would say this, is Buffalo Narrows does have a fish-packing plant. It's not processing. They have a fish-packing plant where they pack fish for shipment off to Winnipeg. Now I have a very good idea for you. Why don't we not just pack fish. Suppose we fillet that fish now in Buffalo Narrows and we sort that fish and we can value add as much as we can in Buffalo Narrows, and then we send it off to P.A. for marketing and distribution. That's better than Winnipeg.

And that money that we make extra, not only in saving the freight of having to ship all that raw product out, but value as much as we can, and then we go to P.A. and we distribute it there would make sense, you know, according to the business plan. And then that puts more money into the commercial fisherman's pocket. So what is wrong with that picture?

So I would point out again, I would point out, that that's a very good idea that the commercial fisherman may implement. So that's my point, is that you're going to go to La Ronge and out of all the commercial fishermen out there . . . or perhaps 75 per cent of them are happy with the deal, perhaps 25 per cent are not.

But I would suggest that you don't approach the 25 per cent to create trouble for the other 75 per cent because that is clearly interference. Let the commercial fishing industry do what it does best — make the right decisions for their industry with their interests in mind and they not ask you to interfere with that process. As the minister we're saying, we're not. We'll support you. We'll support you. We'll advise you. But at the end of the day, it's your decision.

And I think you will find that primary to them is putting more money into the commercial fishermen's pocket and this is their way of doing it. Mr. Speaker, I think we should respect their

wish. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, Mr. Deputy Chair. Mr. Minister, you made comments regarding Weyerhaeuser. What's Weyerhaeuser got to do with fishing? Weyerhaeuser's with forestry, not with fishing.

And in regards to fishing, Mr. Minister, the people of La Ronge are asking you to look at their proposal for a simple reason — that's jobs for them in the North. Why can't La Ronge do it on their own there without having to send it down to P.A., and then from P.A. send it to Winnipeg? Why can't it all be done in La Ronge and then sent to wherever it's got to go? But why does it have to be sent to P.A.? Or unless it's the minister from P.A. that would like this.

So that's the question I'm asking you, Mr. Minister. The people up in the North are asking you to intervene and help them with this proposal because they want it. They don't want the government to sit back and do like you guys constantly do — study and study and study it. Do something and get it set up.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I would point out one of the things that when I talked about Weyerhaeuser, I have said that Weyerhaeuser is forestry and you guys don't interfere with Weyerhaeuser. You say business . . . let business do what they want to do. Weyerhaeuser, we don't interfere with, you know, the Weyerhaeuser plants. That's what you guys often say, get out of business's way.

Well we are working with business. So the same principle I'm saying today applies to commercial fishing. I would ask that opposition . . . You got a whole pile of advice. I would say to you today, as you do at Weyerhaeuser, don't jump in there and interfere, don't try and politicize the process because you're confusing the people. And I've maintained all this time that the problem with the opposition is you guys vote right and you spend left, and you end up confusing a whole whack of people.

And I would challenge that member today, Mr. Deputy Chair, I would challenge that member today to give me the names of the people in La Ronge that he supposedly spoke to and asked for their political interference by the Sask Party.

And all I will do, Mr. Speaker, is I will forward to the co-operative association, to the Commercial Fishermen's Co-operative, and I would say to them, these guys have concerns, could you decide for us as to what you'd like to do to make sure this industry works. And that's what we're after, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Leave to introduce guests, Mr. Chair.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's my pleasure to introduce to and through you to all members of the Assembly, three individuals seated in your gallery. We have with us today Pete and Tracy Darmokid and their 18-month-old son, Cole.

Pete and Tracy are originally from the Chelan/Porcupine Plain area and, in fact, they owned the Chelan Hotel for six years. They have since relocated to Minton and recently acquired the hotel that they are operating in Minton.

So I would ask everyone to join with me and welcome Pete, Tracy, and Cole to the Assembly this afternoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Industry and Resources Vote 23

Subvote (IR12)

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — As I was saying, Mr. Deputy Chair, I think it's very important that we recognize that the commercial fishing industry is a very valuable opportunity for northern Saskatchewan people.

And I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of Economic Development has been very helpful. He has not created any problems with the commercial fishing file. He understands the economics of having a sport fishing industry being very, very . . . a big part of our economy and perhaps a bigger part in the future.

But I think the Minister of Economic Development also understands that the Aboriginal people have to make these choices on their own. They choose commercial fishing as one of the entities that they believe in and he has not in any way, shape, or form interfered. And I would point that's very wise, Mr. Speaker, because \$700,000 in trying to assist many of these lakeside facilities becoming better is not a study. It's actual money spent. The Centenary Capital Fund was one of the areas that . . . One of the areas we spent that money on was to support the commercial fishing industry.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have also identified lakes out there that are deemed commercial fishing lakes. And what we're trying to do there is to make sure that these lakes are recognized and protected as commercial fishing lakes. Now we don't do that against the sport fishing industry. We do that in concert with them. So the commercial fishermen know if they don't bother a lake . . . I'll tell you one of the policies that we did change.

When your cousins were in government, they had a policy and they were saying that if a lake is not commercially fished within two or three years, then that lake gets lost to commercial fishing. And the commercial fishermen would say to me, well that's got to be the silliest idea in the world; the reason why we don't fish a lake for two or three years is to allow the lake to

rebuild — that's why we leave it alone for three years.

But then all of a sudden the Tory government comes up with rules like this that say, we're taking it away from you guys because you're not using it, we want to maximize our opportunities, so bring somebody in from Idaho or bring somebody in from Quebec and then they'll have that lake. Well excuse me. And that's what I've told, that's what I've told many people out there is that you have worked hard against the commercial fishing industry. I give you good credit for that.

But on this side of the House — and that includes the Minister of Economic Development — we are going to work hard to make sure that the northern Aboriginal people are part of every economy, of every resource industry, of every sector of that resource industry that they're intimately involved.

And not just as guides, Mr. Speaker, but as owners and people that can operate businesses and people that make decisions about FMAs, about forestry and so on, and about fishing. They can make that choice. We're going to position them to do that. The success of that particular industry depends on how well they manage that, but the positioning is being done by this government in concert with their demands for fairness after all these years.

So again, Mr. Deputy Chair, I think there's been some good work being done. If it is going to be in La Ronge and if it's going to be in Buffalo Narrows, so be it. But it's the commercial fishermen's decision. We can advise them as much as they want, but it's their choice.

And I think if you want to build an industry, you recognize their decision-making ability, and above all else you respect it and you don't interfere with it. Thank you very much.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. That's quite a rant. What I take from that, Mr. Minister, is that you're looking for somebody from the United States to come up and invest in the commercial outfit. You've done it with ethanol and everything else.

Mr. Minister, you made a point that some of the commercial fishermen don't fish in some lakes to give the lake a rest. That brings up a lake that I've been presenting petitions on for some time and that Besnard Lake. Now that's one of the commercial fishing lakes in the somewhat North that commercial fishing is taking place.

Now the numbers of the fish in that lake have depleted drastically, and it's not only just the commercial fishermen . . . or the sports fishermen that are complaining about the numbers of the fish in that lake; even the commercial fishermen themselves are complaining about the fishing in the lake.

Now as you made a point, Mr. Minister, that the commercial fishermen sometimes leave the lakes for one, two, three years or whatever to let the population build up. Now there has been restrictions on the sport fishing aspect of that lake, but there hasn't been on the commercial fishing aspect of it.

Now, Mr. Minister, have you heard from people fishing on Besnard Lake or from the commercial fishermen regarding that

lake as to what precautions could be taken in regard to that lake to bring up the commercial fishing aspect of it and also give more benefits to the sport fishermen?

(16:30)

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much for the question. I would point out again, this is . . . SERM would be responsible for the fish allocation processes. I can't make any comments as Minister of Northern Affairs. The SERM officials have all the information as to how they allocate lakes and how they deem the harvest of that lake as being the right, you know, the right levels and so on and so forth. So without the officials being here from SERM to be able to elaborate on what I think is happening, I would ask that you defer that question when SERM estimates are on. Kindly, of course.

But I would point out that your seatmate sitting right next to you, the member from Saltcoats, gets up here and presents petitions on Lake of the Prairies where the same problem . . . But your associate thinks it's that of the sport fishing, and says the First Nations don't have any rights; they should listen.

Once you give an allocation of fish to the First Nations — Well nobody gave the First Nations the right to fish. First Nations have always had that treaty right to fish and hunt for sustenance. And that's — we got to be very careful there — and that's why I warn you today, is be very careful when you choose between the commercial fishing industry and the sport fishing industry. These are both very powerful lobbies for the right to access that resource that everybody enjoys.

And I'll just ask that you, again, don't interfere with the process. We have some very good commercial fishermen on file and the last thing you want to do is heighten tensions between the sport fishing industry and the commercial fishing industry as is witnessed in the Lake of the Prairies or, in your case, Besnard Lake. I think in the long run, if you engage them in the management, you respect their role, you're patient with the process, you begin to build on that success, that you will see that the . . . many of the commercial fishermen, First Nations and Métis commercial fishermen, will indeed become part of the solution. If you try and push them off and you try and not recognize their rights to some of that lake, that's when the problems erupt.

So again, I don't have all the allocation stats and all the allocation processes when it comes to fish. But I can tell you, make very certain that you incorporate all the needs and don't try and alienate one particular group. Thank you.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well I just wonder if the minister, seeing as he brought my constituency into this, Mr. Chair, would like to answer questions now on Lake of the Prairies or would he also like to answer those questions in SERM? Because he's actually brought up this issue once again which we were going to ask the questions in SERM. If he would like we can ask them right now, whichever he prefers, Mr. Chair.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Well that member was, the member was sitting there not more than two minutes ago when I said when the SERM estimates are there, we will answer the

question on the allocation process. But as I mentioned before, the fundamental principle here, folks, is we would want to make sure we involve as many of the people involved in this whole process to make sure that their rights or their industry and their access is also part of the whole process.

So I would ask the member from Saltcoats to defer his questions to SERM and then I'll look, surely look forward to answering them then in the event that I still occupy that capacity in the acting ministerial role. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Mr. Minister, maybe this is a question for SERM when the department comes up but you brought the point up about commercial fishing in regards to Besnard Lake.

And the question I want to ask is the fact that sport fishermen have been cut back on their limits in that lake but yet the commercial fishing part of the lake hasn't been. And that's where the concerns are and that's where the petitions are coming from in regards to the concerns on Besnard Lake. But we will revert back to Environment when that position comes up to ask questions there.

One more question in regards to the commercial fishing and the whole idea of commercial fishing regarding the two northern states or cities of Buffalo Narrows and La Ronge. Will the minister stand today and say that he will look seriously at La Ronge or even go up to La Ronge and talk to the commercial fishermen in La Ronge?

And there's a number of commercial fishermen — he knows this better than I do — and if he doesn't know the names I'm sure if he talks to his colleague, the previous minister for Northern Affairs, or even Harry Cook, the Chief from Kitsaki Reserve at La Ronge, they will give you names of the commercial fishermen that are looking at you taking a stand and getting the proposal for a fishing plant up at La Ronge established and up going in the immediate future.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Chairman, again I point out that this is the problem with the opposition is they're clearly confused. Every time they get up and put forward an opinion they contradict themselves the next minute, Mr. Speaker.

This is a serious case of flip-flop once again. Not only did that member get up a minute ago and say, well the commercial fishermen are not cutting back on their harvest and yet the sport fishing are, and then he turns around and says why don't you try and build it up and put it in the North.

Well I wish, Mr. Speaker, we'd have some leadership from that side and decide whether you're going to go to the dance or you're not. The bottom line here is that if you want to support the commercial fishing industry the best way to do it is to make sure that you involve them and you don't interfere and that you make sure that their abilities and their rights to exist under the economic front is certainly protected.

And that's what we're trying to do on this side. We're trying to develop that opportunity.

Now you mention, now you mention that the . . . the former minister of Northern Affairs. Well, Mr. Speaker, the former minister of Northern Affairs took over Northern Affairs when guess what, Mr. Speaker? They had, they had, 500 people working in the northern mines from the North, Mr. Speaker. And I believe when the Tories were in power, your provincial cousins, there was 500 people working in the northern mines and I think the contract, all the contracts for the North, was 20 million bucks, Mr. Speaker — 20 million bucks.

And now you look at it, Mr. Speaker, after 10 years of good, solid work and effort, now they have over 1,000 people working in many of these northern mines from northern Saskatchewan. And not only that, there's 200-plus million dollars in contracts for northern people.

So any day of the week I'll put your record against the former minister's record when you talk about northern Saskatchewan. So when you bring him into your debate, sir, I would ask, Mr. Chairman — sorry — I would ask that he not bring the minister of Northern Affairs into the debate because he has no way, no way, to compare their record to his.

And we have done a tremendous amount of good for northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and we're going to continue doing a tremendous amount of good despite their opposition, despite their howls.

So I would say to that member, make up your mind. Either you're on . . . part of this effort or you're not. Don't try and confuse the issue. Don't try and play politics. And above all else, don't try and be an instant commercial fisherman for the sake of elections, Mr. Speaker.

The Chair: — Order, order. I am having difficulty hearing the speakers and the person doing the questions and the person doing the answers. I'm also having a hard time hearing myself. So if hon. members could please come to . . . Would hon. members on both sides of the House please come to order. We've got lots of work to do so . . . Thank you.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Chair of Committees. To the Minister of Northern Affairs, and certainly I can understand, Mr. Chair, why the minister got upset. It's certainly in the past we've had lots of compliments for the former minister of Northern Affairs. And maybe sometime in the future we'll be able to do the same for the present one.

But just to wind up this area in the fishing, Mr. Chair of Committees, certainly on this side of the House we received a significant mixed message from the minister today. The minister on one hand said that he would like the decision around the fish-packing plant to be left in the hands of the people of northern Saskatchewan, and more specifically, the commercial fisherman. We applaud that effort.

He also, quite clearly — very clearly, Mr. Chair of Committees — indicated that they would agree with their decision as long as they agreed with the minister. As long as they agreed with the minister, then he would agree with their decision. We're not sure which minister, whether it's the Minister of Northern Affairs or whether it's the minister . . . one of the other ministers in the department who are going to be making that

decision. As long as the commercial fishermen in northern Saskatchewan agree with the government, then everything will be just fine.

I'm wondering, Mr. Chair, what will happen in the future, in the very near future, if the commercial fishermen disagree with the direction that this government wants to go in with the establishment of a fish-packing plant in Saskatchewan.

In the wrapping up of this area of fishing and commercial fishing in northern Saskatchewan that the Department of Northern Affairs is involved in, one of the concerns that has been raised is that because you . . . and you've talked about it very clearly, Mr. Minister, that you want to double the amount of take in commercial fishing in northern Saskatchewan. When you do that, of course, there's a price to pay. Fishing lakes will be depleted to some, to some degrees.

What role does the Department of Northern Affairs play in the re-establishment of fish stocks in northern Saskatchewan when you talk about a plan to double the commercial fishing capacity in northern Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Again, as I pointed out, one of the things that Northern Affairs has done is they would work to the Centenary Capital Fund to try and make sure that some of the lakeside facilities that are throughout the North are upgraded and are able to serve the commercial fishermen better.

We also work very closely with them. It takes a lot of staff time and travel to make sure that their issues are clearly worked on in terms of making sure that SERM is aware of some of their challenges.

And when we said we were going to double the industry from a \$4 million industry to an \$8 million industry, that's not an overnight allocation process. What you have to do is, to build capacity to harvest more fish, you have to open up more lakes. And what you don't want to do is just harvest fish — you want to value-add. And thus you talk about the argument of the fish-processing plant.

And I would point out that absolutely when the commercial fishermen come forth with a concept and they come forth with their idea as to how to make this commercial fishing facility work, this fish-processing plant work, and as a minister, I'm going to support them. I'm not going to work against them. I've said that time and time again. And of course, we want to encourage them to look at northern facilities as much as they can. But the final decision has to be theirs. And I've stated that about five or six times.

So this clearly, through the process of protecting their industry, fixing up their lakeside facilities, working with SERM, identifying new lakes, not having silly policies of taking away lakes after three years of non-use of the commercial fishing industry as a reason to pull out that lake.

So I think there's been a lot of good effort being undertaken. And I would point out further that one of the fundamental problems, and I've often asked the opposition questions of this, and I would ask you in terms of a question is: is do you support Northern Affairs work with the commercial fishing industry?

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, Mr. Chair of Committees. Mr. Minister, it's certainly interesting that at this time of the day you've decided to take on the role of asking questions of this side of the House. We would suggest that you wait probably until . . .

The Chair: — Order, order. Order. I would ask certain members on both sides of the House to please come to order and stay in order. Thank you.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair of Committees. Certainly we'll have to go back and start over again. It's unfortunate that the members on the other side of the House weren't paying attention, because certainly it's important that the minister understands clearly that he'll get ample opportunity to ask questions should he be re-elected after the next provincial election, which we're anticipating in the very near future.

Because certainly, Mr. Chair of Committees, there won't be that many of them left over to ask questions. There's an outside chance that the Minister of Northern Affairs might be back, and so we'll give him ample opportunity to ask questions at that time. In the meantime, Mr. Chair of Committees, I'll ask the questions and the minister can answer them.

The question I asked was, and I'll repeat it again, and I hope I don't have to repeat it a third time. What role does the Department of Northern Affairs play in the re-establishment of fish stock in northern Saskatchewan to ensure that commercial fishing will remain viable for the decades in the future?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Well, Mr. Speaker, as we mentioned time and time again, we have put \$700,000 in lakeside facilities, as Northern Affairs has done, and we have worked very closely with SERM. We have afforded much time and many staff to making sure that we stay in collaboration and concert with the commercial fishing industry.

So Northern Affairs clearly is the lead when it comes to the province of Saskatchewan to ensure that this industry's concerns are being heard, and certainly are being met, and certainly as the finances permit, some of these issues being settled.

(16:45)

And I would point out that we don't lead the industry but we lead industry's activities within government. Industry is being led by the commercial fishing industry themselves. They have a co-operative. They have a very large support base.

And I would point out today that again, yes, you have the right to ask questions and I have to give the answers — that's fair enough. But in the scheme of things, again I ask a question of you now. And if you don't give me an answer, what that clearly implies to me — and I would suggest to the commercial fishing industry — that you don't have an answer or the answer you have is not going to be of any benefit to them so you might as well not give one.

So the question that I have: you were very open and we're very clear as to what we've done and what we support, so going back

to the member of Saskatchewan Rivers, I would ask that member, do you support what Northern Affairs is doing to support the commercial fishing industry? Yes or no? Don't be evasive; answer the question. Yes or no?

Mr. Wiberg: — Mr. Chair, to the Minister. I asked a very clear . . . I thought, I assumed, Mr. Chair, a very easy question for the minister. His original answer in the previous response was that they were going to open up more lakes and certainly that's a good . . . I think that's a very good idea that they're talking about an expansion of the commercial fishing industry.

Now what the minister is asking is he wants, he wants me for policy for the government. The government, Mr. Chair, has no policy in regards to commercial fishing in northern Saskatchewan, so now they're coming to the opposition to seek policy so that they can go North and tell them this great policy that they have invented. Well, we're going to disappoint the minister once again.

Now, Mr. Chair, to the minister. One of the pitfalls, one of the pitfalls of expanding the commercial fishing industry is that there is going to have to be future fish stocks, not only for the commercial fishermen of today but for their children and grandchildren. And on this side of the House, Mr. Chair, we believe that it is a responsibility of a government with good stewardship, very good stewardship, Mr. Chair, that the fish stocks be protected and insured past the next about three years, as this minister appears to be looking at. He's looking at about a three-year window.

What we're saying, Mr. Chair, is to the minister, can you assure commercial fishermen in northern Saskatchewan that you have a plan in place today to re-establish fish stocks so that fish stocks will be there for not only the present expansion that this government is looking at, but maybe even future expansions of the commercial fishing industry in northern Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House I will say that I support Northern Affairs doing all that it can for the commercial fishing industry and we'll continue building on that.

In terms of the fish stocking, had you taken about five minutes to try and realize the answer, you would know in certain lakes fish restocking does not work as well as people think it can.

What you have to do is allow the natural buildup of the commercial fishing stock to be able to have it done naturally. And there's some lakes that are adept at doing that and sometimes fish stocking really does work. But sometimes it doesn't work as well as people think it does. So we have to incorporate that balance to make sure at the end of the day we have healthy fish populations, which we have.

And I would point out to all the people that may be listening to this, your non-answer, in my opinion, is really a non-commitment to the commercial fishing industry. You refuse to answer the question because the ulterior motive here is to get rid of the fishermen and put in sport fishing and again sell out northern Saskatchewan.

And I've pointed out, I've pointed out that a new slogan we

have on this side of the House is not Saskatchewan Party, it's sell Saskatchewan Party, or sell out Saskatchewan Party. And you guys done it once in the 1980s and we ain't going to allow you to do it again. This side of the House is not going to allow you to do that again, Mr. Speaker.

And secondly, when it comes to economic building, when it comes to economic building, well we're not going to ask any advice from the opposition — absolutely not. We're going to ask a lot of hard questions of the government, and the government's going to work very . . .

The Chair: — Order. Order. Order. I'm having difficulty hearing. I'm having difficulty hearing the minister finishing his answer. And I would appreciate if all hon. members would come to order.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much. And what I would point out, Mr. Speaker, when they talk about . . . The reason I asked Northern Affairs . . . The question they asked of Northern Affairs today — oh come on, Northern Affairs, do something, do something for the commercial fishing industry. And they were crying crocodile tears across the way, Mr. Speaker.

Because what happens at the end of the day when their great leader, the one-page economic wonder, travelled to La Ronge and the La Ronge people asked the Leader of the Opposition — your leader — and they asked him, well, what would you do if you were in government? Would you do away with Northern Affairs? Would Northern Affairs exist? And I believe the quote, Mr. Deputy Chair, was, probably not.

So I would suggest the reason why I've been asking you, do you support Northern Affairs and the commercial fishing industry — you wouldn't give an answer. And the reason why you wouldn't give an answer is you're across the way crying all these crocodile tears and the bottom line is you have no interest in supporting the commercial fishing industry.

You don't even have interest in supporting the North through Northern Affairs. You leader was unequivocal when he said, probably not. We interpreted that in the North as no, Northern Affairs would be cut. Northern Affairs would be slashed. It would be gone.

And all the activities in mining and forestry and ecotourism, and oil and gas exploration, and protecting the land and commercial fishing, all these industries would come to a standstill because Northern Affairs is assisting many of these industries.

So when you get up and you cry crocodile tears for the North and you say commercial fishing, the one entity that has been doing wonderful work for the North is Northern Affairs. And your leader has said, he has said, no, Northern Affairs is going to be cut.

So I would ask that member, before you get up and pretend to be concerned, maybe you should talk to your leader first and get your leader to withdraw his comment about chopping off Northern Affairs thereby killing any hope for commercial fishing, for tourism, for mining, for training, and all the other

activity that northern Saskatchewan people want.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Chair of Committees, to the minister: again we've asked the question . . . Three times, Mr. Chair, I've asked the same question. It was a rather easy question. He should have been able to have the answer on the tip of his tongue, I would assume. After all he is the Minister of Northern Affairs.

Northern Affairs has talked about having strategies in many areas and . . . but he doesn't know what they are. Mr. Chair, he doesn't know what the strategies are. Instead what he's done, Mr. Chair, is he's looked at this side of the House and asked us to help him develop a strategy for northern Saskatchewan.

Well, Mr. Chair, we can do that — we'll have a strategy for Northern Saskatchewan. And the people of northern Saskatchewan are going to have that strategy right after the next election, Mr. Chair. So what we need to have happen . . .

The Chair: — Order. Order. I would ask all hon. members on both sides of the House to please allow the minister to answer the question and the member to ask the question. That is how it's supposed to work.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I would suggest to the minister that what he needs to do is he needs to poll his colleagues on the other side of the House, go through them one at a time and ask them, are you ready to fight an election today. Because if they are, we'll, over on this side of the House, we'll have the plan ready for economic development in northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Minister.

Because what we have seen today, what we have seen today, Mr. Minister, is that time and time again questions have arisen — they've come from the member from Saltcoats; they've come from the member from Shellbrook-Spiritwood; a month ago, there was a member . . . a question from the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood — and time and time again, Mr. Chair, what happened? The minister would get up and ask questions about what we would do about this issue.

Well somewhere along the line, Mr. Chair, that minister is going to have to explain to the House the strategies that his department has for economic development in northern Saskatchewan.

He stands there time and time again. I asked the same question three times, Mr. Chair. Three times I asked him, do you have a strategy to expand . . .

The Chair: — Order. Order.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Obviously on the other side of the House, Mr. Chair, we've, we've hit a nerve. They want to talk about economic development in northern Saskatchewan but in order to talk about it, they have to have . . .

The Chair: — Order. Order. Order. Order. This button isn't an on/off button for heckling. You're supposed to stay . . . Stop heckling when I turn the button on.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair of Committees. And certainly it has generated much enthusiasm here late this afternoon when we talk about economic development in northern Saskatchewan. And again, the minister has said over and over again that we need to provide answers on this side of the House so that they can develop policy on the government side of the House.

We have a suggestion, Mr. Chair. We have a very good suggestion for the Minister of Northern Affairs. We have a very good suggestion for all the cabinet ministers on that side of the House, Mr. Chair. Why don't they develop policy and then call an election and we'll go out and discuss those policies and match them up against our policies on this side of the House, Mr. Chair, in a provincial election, a general provincial election.

And, Mr. Chair, they should, they should call an election instead of standing over there and asking us questions about what has to happen for economic development in . . .

The Chair: — Order. Would the Government House Leader please stay in order? All hon. members please stay in order.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Well maybe I seem to have hit another nerve over there. Maybe it's not his own, his colleagues, that he needs to poll; apparently maybe what the Minister of Northern Affairs needs to do is have a discussion with his boss, Frank Hart, and ask him if it's okay, if it's okay for him to call an election.

Because that's what needs to happen. If we're going to have economic development in northern Saskatchewan this government needs to call an election and the members on this side of the House will then have the capacity to develop economics in northern Saskatchewan and that people up there will have jobs and there will not be any more 90 per cent — 90 per cent, Mr. Minister — of unemployment in La Loche.

Mr. Chair, that's what needs to happen and the members on this side of the House are ready to fight that election tomorrow. We're ready to fight that election tomorrow. So what they should do is go across the pond, ask permission from Frank Hart to call an election, and we'll show them how to run the province. That's what's going to happen.

In the meantime I've been asking the question over and over and over again when, when, is this minister going to tell us the strategies that his department has developed for the continuation of commercial fishing in northern Saskatchewan? And what have we received, Mr. Chair? We have received absolutely nothing.

He has said over and over again he wants us to tell him how to continue, how to continue commercial fishing in northern Saskatchewan beyond the next five years. Well, Mr. Minister, what we have a clear indication on this side of the House is, you're going to get that answer when the next election's called and you're going to see that policy developed after the next election, when the member who normally sits in this chair . . .

The Chair: — Order, order. It now being 5 p.m. this House . . .

the committee will stand recessed until 7 p.m. this evening.

The Assembly recessed until 19:00.