

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**PRESENTING PETITIONS**

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of citizens of Saskatchewan very upset with the government's decision to transfer the surplus from the Fish and Wildlife Development Fund to the General Revenue Fund. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to refund the \$1.6 million intended for the Saskatchewan Fish and Wildlife Development Fund and discontinue its present policy of using this money for other government purposes.

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

This petition is signed by citizens of Regina, Corning, Naicam, Langham, and Regina Beach, Mr. Speaker.

I so present.

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I stand today to present a petition from citizens of Saskatchewan who are concerned about the component of the Saskatchewan EMS (emergency medical services) development project that calls for provincially run and centrally operated ambulance services. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to not implement the consolidation and centralization of ambulance services as recommended in the EMS report and affirm its intent to work to improve community based ambulance services.

And the signators on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from the community of Cudworth.

I so present.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition today to present on behalf of citizens concerned with 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 signators, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Langenburg and Marchwell in Saskatchewan, and Russell, Manitoba.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here

with people opposed to possible reduction in services, Davidson and Craik health centres:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Davidson and Craik health centres be maintained at their current level of service at a minimum of 24 acute care, emergency, doctoral services available as well as lab, physiotherapy, public health, home care, long-term care services available to users from the Craik and Davidson area and beyond.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens from Kenaston, Davidson, Bladworth, Elbow, and Holdfast.

I so present.

**Ms. Bakken:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of residents who are concerned about health care in the Davidson area. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Davidson and Craik health centres be maintained at their current level of service at minimum with 24-hour acute care, emergency, and doctoral services available as well as laboratory, physiotherapy, public health, home care, and long-term care services available to users from the Craik and Davidson area and beyond.

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

And the petition is signed by residents of Kenaston, Bladworth, and Davidson.

I so present.

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege today to rise on behalf of still more residents of the Southwest who are concerned enough about the hospital situation in Swift Current to sign a petition. And the prayer of their petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to commit its 65 per cent share of funding for a new regional hospital for the city of Swift Current.

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

Mr. Speaker, the petitioners today are from the great city of Swift Current as well as the communities of Waldeck and Gull Lake, Saskatchewan.

I so present.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition from citizens concerned about reasonably priced telephone service hookup. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to modify the exorbitant rates of telephone hookup to these cabins and provide reliable cellular telephone coverage.

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

Signed by the citizens of Leask, Saskatoon, Edmonton, Paynton.

I so present.

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of constituents who are very concerned about the detrimental changes to this year's crop insurance program. The prayer reads as follows:

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.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signatures to this petition, Mr. Speaker, come from the communities of Raymore, Wynyard, and Cupar.

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 concerned with the fishing on Lake of the Prairies. 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, 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.

And the signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are all from the centre of Langenburg.

I so present.

**Mr. Peters:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition signed by residents of the province that are concerned about the high-price hookup costs for telephone service. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to modify the exorbitant rates of telephone hookups to these cabins and provide a reliable cellular telephone coverage.

Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by people from Leask, Saskatoon, and Martensville.

I so present.

## READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

**Deputy Clerk:** — According to order a petition presented July 8, 2002 regarding claims being denied by the Workers' Compensation Board and Saskatchewan Government Insurance has been reviewed and pursuant to rule 12(7) is found to be irregular and therefore cannot be read and received.

According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and pursuant to the same rule are hereby read and received as addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper nos. 11, 18, 22, 157, 168, and no. 174.

## INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to point out two gentlemen that are sitting in your gallery. I'd like to introduce Franklin Asapass. Franklin is the director of the senate council of FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations). Franklin and I had a very productive meeting this morning. And with Franklin is his friend Don Johannesson, who is a businessman from Saskatoon.

I would ask all members of the Legislative Assembly to give these two gentlemen a warm welcome.

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

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You may have noted that today again I think we have a second wave of visitors from Week in Wascana. And I'll just mention again that this program gives a huge opportunity for young people to experience some of our finest landmarks and facilities: the Science Centre, the legislature, the Royal Saskatchewan Museum. And to think about whether they might be interested in working in any of these places when they get older as well as having fun like they're doing today.

So thank you for coming to visit and I hope you have a good Week in Wascana.

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you and to you to the rest of the Assembly, I'd like to introduce two constituents of mine in the west gallery, Edward Hoffman and Trevor Klein. They are from Tyvan and Francis respectively.

They were in town and came by my office and had the opportunity to discuss the ethanol and the future of ethanol production in our province, because they are very interested in the province doing well. And so it was great to hear and see their ideas and hope you look forward to the rest of the proceedings here in the Assembly.

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

**Hon. Mr. Melenchuk:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In your gallery this afternoon, I have Mr. Scott Fellner, accompanied by my chief of staff, Marv Schultz. And Scott will be working in my office over the summer. He is a Master of Arts student in

sociology at the University of Regina. And he's working on his thesis in addition to working in our office as a summer student.

And I just want to talk about some of the research he's doing. He's researching the impact of national and transnational music entertainment corporations on the artistic practices and production of local Saskatchewan musicians/songwriters. And I also understand that he's a very accomplished musician — bass player — and was in the Flatland Festival on the weekend.

And I'd ask all members of the Assembly to welcome them here today . . .

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

**Ms. Bakken:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you today, seated in your gallery three gentleman. Denis Cyrenne, who is an accountant, an investment portfolio manager in Regina with McNamee Financial group. This is Denis's first visit to the legislature, so welcome Denis.

Ken Miller who is a farmer and a rancher from Avonlea. And Ken is associated with the Canadian Belgian Blue Association and just is back last week from being at the Calgary Stampede where he placed third with his Belgian Blue.

And accompanying them is Lorne Ridgeway who is a frequent visitor to the legislature and is also a farmer at Avonlea. So I'd like to welcome them.

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

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and to the Assembly a fine young student that will be working in my office for the next couple of months. "Working with tomorrow's leaders today" is the motto we have in SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management) and we're certainly going to continue doing that.

Sheldon Dean is a university student at the University of Regina. He is currently in his third year of the administration program and is working to receive a degree in accounting and marketing. Sheldon has been married for one year and has a three-year-old son. Once Sheldon has completed the admin program he will continue to work towards a certificate in certified management accounting.

And with Sheldon today is another friend of mine working in the staff, is Dale Robison. I'd ask Sheldon to stand and ask all the Assembly members to please welcome Sheldon here today.

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

**Mr. Prebble:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in your gallery in the front row I'd like to introduce somebody who's very well known to all members of the Assembly. And that's Jessica Waiser, who's been working with me as a student in the internship program over the last three months, Mr. Speaker.

I know that we've all benefited a great deal from the four interns that have been working with both our caucuses over the session. I want to say that Jessica's done just an excellent job in

the work that she's done for the hon. member for Saskatoon Nutana and myself. She's been a regular attendee at question period.

But this afternoon I'd like all members to join me in expressing both a very warm welcome to the question period and this afternoon's session, and also our appreciation to her for the work she's done.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

### 2002 Canadian Special Olympics Summer Games

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. After five long yet exciting years of planning, planning, and more planning the city of Prince Albert is all set to host the 2002 Canadian Special Olympic Summer Games from July 8 to July 14.

Mr. Speaker, Prince Albert is no stranger to Special Olympics. The city hosted the Saskatchewan Special O Summer Games in '97, an experience which no doubt put them in very good stead for hosting the national edition of the games this month.

Special Olympics is a worldwide program providing sports training and competition for people with mental disability. The athlete's oath states: "Let me win, but if I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt." An oath, Mr. Speaker, that we all can take something from.

Come July 8, over 1,000 athletes will converge on the city of Prince Albert to take part in the games. The host committee expects some 5,000 people from coaches, support staff, families and fans to come out and show support for the athletes.

(13:45)

And then, Mr. Speaker, there are the volunteers. The mission statement from the games for Prince Albert this month is "We're here for the athletes." Games Chairman Phil Fredette is confident that this will be evident in the course of the games this week. Mr. Fredette says, and I quote:

You will come to see a community the size of Prince Albert that has the people and the resources to host a national event of this size and make these games the best ever.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that Glen Scrimshaw, a Saskatchewan artist, has made a special contribution to Special Olympics with a \$200,000 gift-in-kind in the form of a new painting entitled *Shining Bright*.

Mr. Speaker, I want to extend congratulations to the city of Prince Albert, all of the athletes, the volunteers, and the stakeholders for what will be a very exciting special Canadian summer event. On with the games.

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

### New Museum Opens at Blaine Lake

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to congratulate Billy, Vivian, Jenna and Weslie Nemish on the grand opening of their museum, the General Store Memories, on this past July 1. It was a pleasure for me to officiate the ribbon-cutting ceremony that attracted 400 visitors from three provinces and one US (United States) state.

Hubert Smith of Marcelin held blacksmithing demonstrations and Albertown church group provided lunch for the day. A variety of items were also supplied by three vendors for viewing and purchase.

Billy began collecting antiques three years ago and eventually the whole family was involved. The Nemishes decided they would like to preserve the community's and the province's history by opening up a two-storey museum on the family farm northwest of Blaine Lake. Their goal is to collect enough local heritage items to offer local school tours through the museum.

Visitors to the General Store of Memories will be rewarded with an array of articles that will spark memories for those old enough to have seen or used them, and educate younger visitors as to what their parents and grandparents grew up with. They will also be able to take part in frequent weekend flea markets.

I encourage anyone that is travelling in the Blaine Lake area to stop in at the General Store of Memories and take a trip back in time.

Again, congratulations to the Nemishes for their efforts in preserving the past and educating the future.

Thank you.

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

### Saskatchewan Seniors Fitness Association 55 Plus Games

**Ms. Junor:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pleasure that I rise in the House today to talk about some excellent role models we have in this province.

This week almost 800 Saskatchewan residents will participate in a variety of sport, cultural and recreation activities at the SSFA (Saskatchewan Senior Fitness Association) Summer Games in North Battleford.

And what is so unique about this group of Saskatchewan citizens, you might ask? They're all over 55, Mr. Speaker, and their athletic ability and skill would put most of us to shame.

The SSFA, Saskatchewan Senior Fitness Association, has put on the games every two years since the inaugural games were held in Melville in 1988. This year seniors from eight zones across the province will descend on North Battleford from July 9 to 11, to compete in 18 different events.

The games should not be categorized just as sporting events, Mr. Speaker, as they span a wide range of physical and mental challenges from slow-pitch softball to contract bridge, from darts to lawn bowling, and from snooker to track and field.

These events bring together amateur competitors who participate for the sheer joy of competition, for the opportunity to visit another part of the province, and for the camaraderie and social interaction that are an integral and essential part of the games.

The SSFA 55-plus games ultimately promote wellness. That is the spiritual, mental, and physical well-being among Saskatchewan residents 55 years of age and older. Through both active and passive activities the games mission is to influence personal behaviour and social supports that encourage healthy, active living for adults in Saskatchewan.

I'd like to invite all members of the House to join me in wishing all participants the best of luck in North Battleford, and in thanking each and every one of them for their energy and enthusiasm for physical fitness. They are an excellent role model and motivating factor for the rest of us. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### 90th Birthday Festivities for the Village of Strongfield

**Mr. Brkich:** — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to stand in the House to talk about the celebration and 90th birthday of the village of Strongfield this past Saturday. I had the honour of being invited to take part in the festivities which included a parade, a family supper, and a wonderful fireworks display.

This community event was attended by over 700 people including local, out-of-province, and even some people from outside of Canada. This attendance speaks volumes for the spirit of this small rural community and its strong history — community building over nine decades.

I must congratulate the mayor, George Bristow, through his remarkable efforts and those of the many volunteers throughout the community which hosted this event and which made this event very well run, and came off without a hitch.

The parade contained over 50 entries and was so long that it spilled outside of the village limits. Later on that evening the crowd was treated to a display of fireworks which would rival anything that you would see in the larger centres such as Regina and Saskatoon.

This is organized by Dale Norrish who put together the awesome display of colour and light which dazzled children and adults alike. Hat's off to Mr. Norrish for his great work in getting this colourful display in the evening sky. Overall the event was very successful with the weather co-operating to its fullest extent.

I know I speak for everyone in attendance that day when I say that this event was enjoyed by all.

I would like all members of the House to join me congratulating the village of Strongfield on their 90th, and wish them a happy birthday and many more to come.

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

### Legislative Cafeteria Staff

**Ms. Lorjé:** — Mr. Speaker, we all know Trent Brears, manager of the Cafeteria Board and captain of the Saskatchewan culinary team. We've been in awe of his fantastic ice and chocolate sculptures. We complimented him when he brought home two silver and one bronze medal from the Cooking Olympics in Germany a couple of years ago. And we all know that we can expect friendly and efficient service and great food whenever we drop into the legislative cafeteria.

But did you know, Mr. Speaker, that Teodoro Linatud, who has been learning on the job over the past couple of years and is just halfway through his first professional cooking course successfully competed against other apprentices to represent Saskatchewan in the national apprentice cook-off in Vancouver last month.

Teo was crowned best in Saskatchewan and went on to take seventh place against competitors from all across Canada. Small wonder, with his quiet culinary creativity and intensely focused work ethic.

I'm sure all members of this Assembly join me in saying, well done, Teo, and best wishes for future competitions.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to share with you one other little known fact about staff in the legislative cafeteria. We all know Joyce, the cheerful, quiet, and efficient woman who dishes up our meals and takes our money. Joyce is taking a few days off right now. Last week she moved, she got married, and she's off on a honeymoon this week.

Fellow MLAs (Members of the Legislative Assembly) please join me in congratulating Joyce and her new husband and wishing them all the best in their life together, and in congratulating Teodoro Linatud and Trent Brears.

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

### Humboldt Summer Sizzler

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Humboldt Summer Sizzler, Humboldt's brand new summer event, will take place from July 12 to 14 on the Humboldt Uniplex grounds.

The event gets underway Friday evening, July 12, with Humboldt's annual parade. Following the parade, everyone is invited to participate in the Summer Sizzler's Summerfest beer tent beginning at 8:30 p.m. Entertainment will include Humboldt's own Beer Tent Gang and the Little German Band.

Saturday is a busy day with the cultural circle which will showcase many aspects of culture in the Humboldt area including local exhibits, a local talent show, quilt displays, fine arts entertainment, and other entertainment.

As well, Mr. Speaker, on Saturday there will be the sheep and goat shows, the local amateur horse show, and the Wild on Wheels automotive swap. There will also be a grandstand show featuring a heavy horse show along with gymnastic competitions followed by a cabaret. Sunday will start off with a

pancake breakfast followed by more exciting activities all day long.

I would like to take this opportunity to invite everyone to come out to Humboldt to enjoy the Humboldt Summer Sizzler. It's sure to be an enjoyable time for all. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Wanuskewin Heritage Park Celebrates 10th Anniversary

**Hon. Mr. Melenchuk:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed a pleasure for me to rise and inform this House of a great moment being marked in my constituency this week.

On Thursday, Wanuskewin Heritage Park celebrates its 10th anniversary. The official opening date of the park was June 27, 1992 and Wanuskewin has decided to celebrate on July 11 when NHK Japan Broadcasting Corporation will be broadcasting a live program from Wanuskewin to over 35 million viewers in Japan.

Ten years ago, Queen Elizabeth II opened Wanuskewin Heritage Park to visitors from around the world to learn more about the place where First Nations met newcomers in a spirit of sharing and hospitality.

Wanuskewin is recognized worldwide as a major archaeological site of Northern Plains Indian culture. Hundreds of thousands of visitors, including Prince Charles who visited last year during his provincial tour, have visited and marvelled at the sights.

The park's mandate is to create awareness, sensitivity, and knowledge of Aboriginal culture to both First Nations and non First Nations people.

I would invite all members to join with me in congratulating Wanuskewin on its 10th anniversary.

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

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### Drought Assistance For Agriculture

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Agriculture. The second year of extreme drought is gripping large areas of northwest and central Saskatchewan. The NDP (New Democratic Party) government has admitted that much to be true but yet at the same time has offered no help and no answers to the Saskatchewan farm families.

In fact the minister is quoted in today's *Leader-Post* saying, "there's little that the province can do." All he could offer is more excuses but they are still waiting for the federal government to tell us how the federal farm package will be distributed.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that's simply not good enough. Farm families are expecting more from the NDP government than excuses. They want some answers.

Will the minister explain exactly what drought relief program

the NDP is preparing to deliver in Saskatchewan for farm families this summer?

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

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the members yesterday and again the member today, leading off with the question about what is this government doing for farmers in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

And I say to the members opposite, we have a plan for Saskatchewan farmers. They have no plan for Saskatchewan farmers — no plan, Mr. Speaker, for Saskatchewan farmers. In this province today, Mr. Speaker, we built . . . we're building a crop insurance program for farmers; submitted a plan, Mr. Speaker, in October of last year, and said that we needed for Saskatchewan farmers an enhanced crop insurance program, Mr. Speaker, we needed a new crop sector program, and we needed a marginal gross margin income program for producers, Mr. Speaker. We submitted that in February or October of last year.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I still wait for one scrap of letter from that member opposite saying to me what in fact the Saskatchewan Party is going to do . . . (inaudible) . . . Saskatchewan Party. Not one, not one word about the plan from the Saskatchewan Party for Saskatchewan producers, Mr. Speaker — not one.

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

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again it's rather sad that the minister's answer shows that they have no plan, no program, no idea of how they're going to assist the Saskatchewan farm families at a time of a drought.

And the minister keeps asking the Saskatchewan Party what we would do, what are our solutions. Well the Saskatchewan Party did offer solutions, Mr. Speaker. For example, we proposed that the provincial government commit \$10 million for drilling wells, for digging dugouts, and for pumping equipment to . . . for water supply. We proposed the program would help farmers now when there is a drought right now.

But did the NDP listen to this suggestion? No. And they're still not listening to the Saskatchewan farm families who have asked for help time and time again. They've asked for direction, they've asked for leadership from this government.

Mr. Speaker, will the NDP today commit to funding a water program such as the one that we have proposed for the livestock producers of this province?

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

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Speaker, I just want to quote from a radio interview that the member had in Yorkton, with the Yorkton GX radio, Mr. Speaker, where the announcer there asked the member from Watrous, what is it that you would do if you were going to advance a plan for Saskatchewan agriculture? She said:

I think if you're unhappy with the plan that you've got (quote), you've got to make . . . (changes to the plan, Mr.

Speaker). And yes I do. I think we should . . . (go) East with a proposal and then adjust it from there (Mr. Speaker).

So what they're going to do, they're going to take their plan and they're going to take it to eastern Canada, and they're going to adjust their agricultural plan, Mr. Speaker, in eastern Canada.

Well, Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan our producers and this government have not even seen what their plan is, Mr. Speaker. So what they have, Mr. Speaker, is obviously an invisible plan that they're going to take to eastern Canada and they're going to try to adjust it.

Advise us, Madam Member, what it is that you're . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. I would ask the member if he wishes, I'll give him five seconds to repeat his statement through the Chair, because he is not on record.

(14:00)

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, I would ask the member from Watrous to tell us what is her plan. What is she taking to Eastern Canada, Mr. Speaker, to propose for agriculture for this province?

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

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Mr. Speaker, I would like the minister to tell the producers of this province how successful he was going out east without any plan, with no plan.

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

**Ms. Harpauer:** — He came back with absolutely nothing for the farm families of this province.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP government keep on shirking their own provincial responsibility for helping the farm families of this province. They keep on blaming the federal government for cuts to crop insurance when the minister himself has slashed millions of dollars out of our own provincial budget.

The minister claims that he can't come up with \$10 million for the drought assistance program to help the livestock producers of the province. Well if there's a will, there's a way, Mr. Speaker. The NDP has \$10 million for pie in the sky in Australia. They've got \$40 million for cable TV. They've got \$60 million for a land titles system that doesn't even work. And yet, they can't find \$10 million for farm families in Saskatchewan.

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

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Mr. Speaker, it's a question of priorities. When is the minister and the NDP government going to get their priorities straight and put Saskatchewan farm families ahead of Australia?

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

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — . . . and to the House, Mr. Speaker, that in this budget we added additional money for crop insurance. We

added this year programs, Mr. Speaker, for the . . . to enhance the transition program. We have the grazing land program . . . (inaudible) . . . haying. And we have the water pumping program, Mr. Speaker. We have a host of programs that we've developed for farmers this year.

But I want to say, Mr. Speaker, to the members opposite what we have here, Mr. Speaker, is a collection of Saskatchewan Party members who represent, Mr. Speaker, disenchanted Liberals. They represent the old Canadian Alliance and the old . . . (inaudible) . . . and the old Tory . . . reconstructed Tories, Mr. Speaker. You have a smorgasbord of men and women, Mr. Speaker, who haven't had an original idea in their head since they began this session, Mr. Speaker, two years ago, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Information Services Corporation

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party represents the largest portion of the popular vote in the last election and growing.

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

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Mr. Speaker, I have a constituent in Stoughton named James Turner. Perhaps you have one in your constituency.

Mr. Turner and his wife Earla were re-registering their mortgage on their home in Stoughton so they contacted Information Services Corporation to get a copy of their property title. They were quite surprised to learn that a maintenance order judgment had been placed against their property.

So they contacted ISC (Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan). ISC told them the maintenance order had been issued against someone named James Turner somewhere in Saskatchewan. But since the new \$80 million computer system can't distinguish between two people of the same name, the maintenance order was applied against the James Turners in Saskatchewan.

Now Stoughton's James Turner has to prove that he's a different James Turner than the one with the maintenance order against him and go through the legal process to have the judgment removed.

To the Minister of Justice: why can't the NDP's \$80 million LAND (Land Titles Automated Network Development project) registry tell the difference between two people with the same name?

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

**Hon. Mr. Axworthy:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, this might come as a big surprise to the member, but no computer system and no human system can tell the difference between two people with the same name unless there's something else attached to it.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is not an issue which adversely reflects on ISC. It just happens to be the way that systems work when

matters are attached to persons' names, Mr. Speaker. And I'm sure the member's . . . the person the member spoke to got this matter clarified very quickly at ISC. And it is something that unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, when two people are called the same name, a computer and a person can't tell them apart.

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

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Mr. Speaker, it would seem to me that an \$80 computer system . . . \$80 million computer system paid for by the taxpayers should be able to tell the difference between two people with the same name from their middle initials and from their land descriptions, Mr. Speaker.

James and Earla Turner have now spent weeks trying to clear up this matter, to say nothing, Mr. Speaker, of the emotional stress that they have been put under by this. And they continue to do their jobs, Mr. Speaker. They've had to hire a lawyer to get this maintenance order removed. They have to pay the legal fees for this government's mistake.

Why can't the \$80 million computer tell the difference between two people with the same name? Why should James and Earla Turner have to pay the legal fees out of their pocket for this government's mistake?

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

**Hon. Mr. Axworthy:** — Well it's good that not everybody has the same name, Mr. Speaker. I don't know where we would be if that were the case.

But, Mr. Speaker, let me say that I'll look into the legal costs incurred by the person who contacted the member and see what we can do.

But I would remind the member that no system can distinguish between two names which are exactly the same. And it just so happens that in this particular interest that he's talking about, that interest attaches, the maintenance enforcement order attaches to a person's name and the computer can't tell if there's more people with that name, Mr. Speaker.

But let me assure the member that I'll look into it and see what we can do about compensating his client or his . . .

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

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, computers can store a lot of information but I gather the one at ISC can't.

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

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Mr. Speaker, once James and Earla Turner finally received the title for their new property, they discovered that Earla's name had been spelled wrong. So again their lawyer had to contact ISC to get this corrected. Again, it's going to cost them money. When the Turners' lawyer, Mr. Speaker, contacted ISC he was told it was going to take two weeks to two months to correct this situation.

Mr. Speaker, this is absolutely unacceptable and serves only to

disrupt what should be normal business of a land transaction in this province.

Mr. Speaker, is it too much to ask that the \$80 million new automated land titles system does not cost Saskatchewan people extra legal fees, significant delays, and emotional stress to conduct a simple land transaction. Mr. Minister, will you fix it or will you get a . . .

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

**The Speaker:** — Would the member care to put his question on record through the Chair.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Mr. Speaker, will the minister get a quill and parchment that works?

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

**Hon. Mr. Axworthy:** — Mr. Speaker, not only does the Sask Party draw upon its . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, please. Please, not everyone at once.

**Hon. Mr. Axworthy:** — Mr. Speaker, not only does the Sask Party draw upon 19th century philosophy for its policies, Mr. Speaker, but now it's suggesting that we go back to 19th century practices for dealing with land transactions, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it's one thing to be in the Dark Ages, Mr. Speaker, but they're so far back in the Dark Ages they can't even see their way out.

Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that this is a system that works. It has flaws; we fix them when they come along, Mr. Speaker. As the member will know, as the member will know, Mr. Speaker, Microsoft has called this system a world leader, Mr. Speaker. That's what it is and, Mr. Speaker, that's what it will be.

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

### Ethanol Industry

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Economic Development minister. Last night during debate on the NDP's mismanagement of ethanol expansion in Saskatchewan, the minister admitted its negotiations with Broe industries on the construction of four new ethanol plants were falling apart because the NDP first said it would deal exclusively with Broe industries and then changed its mind.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP should never have considered direct ownership of ethanol plants or any exclusive ethanol deal with Broe industries or any other company because it scares away other private sector companies from investing in the ethanol industry in Saskatchewan.

Will the minister finally admit that the NDP has botched the expansion of the ethanol industry in Saskatchewan and, in the process, created a major setback for ethanol projects at Belle Plaine, Shaunavon, Tisdale, or Melville?

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

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** — Mr. Speaker, I want to say I find it strangely interesting that members from that side stood up and attacked Broe's proposal to build four ethanol plants in this province day after day after day. And after they were done their attack on his proposal to build four ethanol plants, they attacked his ability to run them, to manage them, to put them together. So that's one; that's number two.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to say to that member and I want to say to his colleagues, you've been on both sides of the issue with respect to public investment. You've been on both sides. They have been, Mr. Speaker, on both sides of the issue.

And people of Saskatchewan clearly understand what's going on here, Mr. Speaker. This is not a plan for people of that side to grow Saskatchewan. It's a plan to snow Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** — They have been, they have been, they have been on . . . they have been on both sides of every major issue in this session. On the ethanol issue they've been on both sides. On health care they're on the side of private and they're on the side of public, Mr. Speaker. On crime they're on the side of a hard-nosed . . .

**The Speaker:** — Member's time has elapsed.

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

**Mr. Stewart:** — Mr. Speaker, our message on ethanol has been clear and consistent right from the start. Mr. Speaker, the NDP hired their old political buddies at Points West communications for \$200,000 plus to make an exclusive deal with Broe industries.

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

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. But massive pressure from the public and the Saskatchewan Party forced the NDP to reconsider. We told the NDP that direct government ownership was the wrong way to go in expanding the ethanol industry. We told the NDP that government should not be picking winners and losers, dictating the size and location of ethanol plants, or entering into any exclusive deal with Broe or anybody else to build ethanol plants.

But the NDP wasn't listening. And now the expansion of the ethanol industry in Saskatchewan is in chaos.

Mr. Speaker, given the apparent breakdown in negotiations with Broe industries, what is the status of the ethanol projects at Belle Plaine, Tisdale, Shaunavon, and Melville?

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

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm going to begin by telling the member opposite that I'm led to understand that negotiations with Broe industries are continuing, progress is being made, and announcements may be made shortly.



I want to say, Mr. Speaker, and I'm going to quote from *Hansard* because it's really important that members opposite, if they can't clarify . . . if the leader . . . if the members can't clarify a position, maybe the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party can.

On June 5 the member from Swift Current gets up and says, we just fundamentally disagree. We fundamentally disagree that venture capital, the equity, the risk capital should come from the taxpayer, Mr. Speaker. That's what he says. That's on June 5.

And then on June 12, the member from Cypress Hills gets up and says:

It's an organization that provides money when every other opportunity has been exhausted, when every other lender has been checked out, when every other source of funding has been considered, applied to . . . or refused.

Mr. Speaker, he refers to it:

A lender of last resort ordinarily does not get involved unless the equity is already in place.

But he says, if we would accept the lender of last resort position, Mr. Speaker . . .

**The Speaker:** — The member's time is up.

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

**Mr. Stewart:** — Mr. Speaker, with answers like that, no wonder the NDP's management or mismanagement of the ethanol industry has been so screwed up. Every day, every day we get a different story.

Last Friday, last Friday the minister told the legislature there could be no government ownership of ethanol plants. But on Saturday, the next day, the minister told the *Leader-Post* the government had to be a 40 per cent owner of ethanol plants.

First the NDP led Broe industries to believe they would sign an exclusive agreement and then they changed their mind. Is it any wonder that ethanol expansion in Saskatchewan has come to a grinding halt?

Mr. Speaker, will the NDP finally admit its plan to own ethanol plants and dictate winners and losers is failing miserably? And will the government finally do the right thing — get out of the way and let private sector investors and local communities drive ethanol expansion in Saskatchewan?

(14:15)

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** — Mr. Speaker, what I am saying to the people of Saskatchewan and what I'm saying to the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party who sits right across here today, Mr. Speaker, would he have the courage for once to stand up and enunciate their policy as it relates to ethanol? Is the member from Cypress Hills right or is the member from Swift Current right, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, I also want to know if he would stand up and articulate, the member from Rosthern, which one of his positions is the right one — get tough on crime or soft on crime.

Mr. Speaker, they haven't taken one position, not one position in this session. This is no Grow Saskatchewan option over here; this is snow Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. They are ashamed of who they came from and who they are. They're ashamed of where they would lead this government and that's why, Mr. Speaker, people of Saskatchewan don't trust them and that leader of that Saskatchewan Party will never be the premier of this province.

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

#### Investment in Hanson Lake Sand Corporation

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There is one cold, hard fact that belies the yarn that we just heard from the minister and that cold, hard fact is that this Saskatchewan Party is beating that party in the polls hands down, Mr. Speaker. Hands down.

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

**Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, that party, that NDP Party, Mr. Speaker, is . . .

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

**Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, that NDP Party, Mr. Speaker, is folding faster than Superman on laundry day, Mr. Speaker. That's what's happening in the province.

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Crown Investments Corporation. On October 6, 2000, SOCO (Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation), now under the control of CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan), announced it was investing \$1 million in the Hanson Lake Sand Corporation, Mr. Speaker, a company that owns large pure silica sand deposits in northern Saskatchewan.

Will the minister inform the Assembly the status of that million dollar taxpayer investment in that particular company?

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

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm appreciative that that member got up to ask a question. I was a bit worried before the end of session I might not get a question.

And may I say, while we're on the subject of polls, that member can recite statistics about polls from the opposition benches for as many days and years as he wants to Mr. Speaker. We'd be thrilled with that.

Mr. Speaker, let me say in response to the question, SOCO has reviewed this file in detail, Mr. Speaker. We're working with the company to try and find resolution as best we can so that we can maintain jobs in northern Saskatchewan.

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

**Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, in the press release from Daren

Industries, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Hanson Lake Sand Corporation, dated May 1, 2002, it says, and I quote:

By order of the Court of Queen's Bench of Alberta, Daren Industries Ltd. and Hanson Lake Sand Corp. have been placed into receivership. Ernst & Young Inc. has been appointed receiver-manager. The receivership is the result of an indebtedness to the Plaintiff . . .

Mr. Speaker, it would appear that this company that they have invested 1 million taxpayers' dollars in is in receivership.

Will the minister confirm for the Assembly that the government, the NDP government, have lost up to 1 million taxpayer dollars on this venture, a short two years after it was announced.

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well the member will know that the role of SOCO is to invest into areas, Mr. Speaker, that oftentimes are higher risk. It is clearly the agenda, or the mandate I should say, of SOCO to create jobs in our province, Mr. Speaker, it's to create opportunities for businesses in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to the particular investment that he is speaking of, there is a mineral there, Mr. Speaker, that is unique, I should say, and creates many, many opportunities. It's unique to our province and there is some tremendous potential there.

What we're trying to do, Mr. Speaker, is to ensure that we maintain jobs in northern Saskatchewan, provide many more economic opportunities for people in northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Wall:** — The minister didn't answer the question. The question's simple. This government invested 1 million taxpayer dollars in this company in October of 2000, and on May of 2002, the company announces that they're in receivership. This minister should stand in this Assembly and account to the taxpayers where their \$1 million is, Mr. Speaker. Those are the questions that we're asking.

Now so far it looks like he's . . . the government's only lost 1 million taxpayer dollars. You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that when the minister, on behalf of taxpayers, lost 28 million in the potato business, he called it a success.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the taxpayers, the Saskatchewan Party would like to know just how successful has this investment been. How much taxpayers' dollars have been lost on this particular decision?

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

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Before I answer the question, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to know whether he would characterize the Country Music Hall of Fame as a success, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Mr. Speaker, let me say that we should be incredibly proud. I look back at the month of May where there was job increase numbers here, Mr. Speaker — 11,000, May over May. I looked just recently at June — job number increase of over 12,000, June over June, Mr. Speaker. Incredibly good news, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Mr. Speaker, let me say to that member: he . . . just a few minutes ago, he and his colleagues say, Mr. Speaker, that we should not invest in investments like in Australia. They say, don't do there. Now we invest here in Saskatchewan, create jobs in Saskatchewan — they say, don't do that, Mr. Speaker. What would they have our government do?

I think the job numbers show that we are doing the right thing here in Saskatchewan, for the people of Saskatchewan. And that's what we will continue to do into the future, Mr. Speaker.

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

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order, members. Order. Order. Order. Why is the member from Melville on his feet?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — To see if things will quieten down. No. With leave to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

## INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you, my colleagues. We have some special guests here from the United Kingdom. But first of all, I'd like to introduce to you Dr. Nick Perry and his wife Darla; Katelyn and Kendra Perry who are from Regina and seated in the east gallery.

I'd also like to introduce Mr. Perry's father, Capt. M. Perry, OBE, (Officer of the Order of the British Empire) who's from Wales in the United Kingdom. Along with them is Dr. Perry's sister Judith; nephew and niece, Robert and Libby McCrick from Scotland. As well, Ben Perry, the godson, and Colin Sanders who are travelling around the world before commencing university in the United Kingdom.

And I might say that not only is Dr. Nick Perry a very fine gentleman, he's also a very good podiatrist.

So please help me welcome them to the Assembly.

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

**The Speaker:** — Why is the member from Regina Qu'Appelle on his feet.

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Leave to introduce a guest.

Leave granted.

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you to the rest of

this Assembly a guest who is seated in the west gallery, Walter Logan. Walter is a retired United Church minister. He was at St. John's for a number of years. He was in my congregation at St. James. I see him as a mentor and guide.

He's been involved with the Regina anti-poverty ministry, has a deep commitment to social justice, and has worked hard and long for the good of the community. And I would like all members to join me in welcoming Walter to this Assembly.

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

**The Speaker:** — Why is the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood on his feet?

**Mr. Hart:** — With leave to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, seated in your gallery is a constituent of mine Mr. Lou Coderre.

Lou has been a long-time observer of the political process and his family roots go back in the Liberal Party. He's — Lou — a teacher in Wynyard and is currently on leave taking studies at the University of Regina. And I'd ask all members to join with him in welcoming him.

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

**The Speaker:** — And why is the member from Kelvington-Wadena on her feet?

**Ms. Draude:** — Introduce a guest.

Leave granted.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I'd like to introduce a very special person in my life, my youngest daughter Jeannette Draude is here. She just came home from Bermuda and she's looking for work in Saskatchewan. So I'd like all members to welcome her to the Assembly.

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

#### TABLING OF REPORT

**The Speaker:** — Before orders of the day, members, I would like to advise that today I have received from the Provincial Ombudsman, the Saskatchewan Ombudsman annual report for the year 2001. And I hereby table this report.

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### WRITTEN QUESTIONS

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the government, I stand today to convert written questions 441 through 444.

**The Speaker:** — Responses . . . Pardon me. Questions 441 to 444 converted to orders for return (debatable).

#### MOTIONS

##### Second Reading of Bill No. 203

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. By leave of this Assembly I move:

That this Assembly move to second reading of Bill No. 203, The Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Awareness Day Act.

Leave granted.

Motion agreed to.

#### PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS AND ORDERS

##### SECOND READINGS

##### Bill No. 203 — The Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Awareness Day Act

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud to stand today to give second reading to a Bill that will proclaim September 9 as Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Awareness Day in Saskatchewan in perpetuity.

At this time I would like to thank all my colleagues for supporting this Bill. More importantly I'd like to thank them for remembering the real reason each of us chose to be part of this profession, a profession where daily decisions affect the lives and the futures of every person in this great province.

We must remember, Mr. Speaker, that together, the 57 honoured members in this Assembly have been entrusted with a great responsibility by the people of this province. The people of the province have hopes and dreams and goals, and it is our duty to help them realize and achieve them. Our decisions have a direct impact on making this province a better place to live, not just for those of us here today, but for our children and the children of tomorrow.

There have been some very serious debates in this Assembly over the past 76 days as we've passed many Bills and discussed the most beneficial way to utilize precious tax dollars. Let me be the very first, Mr. Speaker, to acknowledge that we are very often in disagreement on most issues.

But today, Mr. Speaker, things are different. Today we stand united in our sincere hope that what we are doing will have an impact on generations to come. They are . . . The children are the future of this province and they must be the priority of all governments.

Mr. Speaker, today we are taking a small step towards the important goal of protecting completely innocent children from a condition that is completely — 100 per cent — preventable. It is a condition that when present, can literally stop a child from living a life that he or she is entitled to, and from making a meaningful contribution to society. Quite simply this condition prevents an individual from reaching his or her unknown potential.

(14:30)

This condition impairs judgment and causes behavioural problems, not just for a short time or for a few years, but for a lifetime. This condition, Mr. Speaker, can impact all of us directly and indirectly. The condition is fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) or fetal alcohol effects (FAE).

Fetal alcohol syndrome is 100 per cent preventable — no alcohol during pregnancy, no FAS. There is no cure for the condition and there is no simple diagnosis. There is no magic wand that can be waved that will alleviate the symptoms once the damage has been done. Yet in this 21st century, in this world of information overload, FAS and FAE have become a very real and very troubling aspect of our society.

FAS and FAE causes an impairment to the brain not unlike that which happens to someone who's suffered brain injury from a car accident. Someone afflicted with FAS or FAE does not have the capability of determining right from wrong. They do not understand the consequences of their actions. They cannot process information in the same way that you and I do. They cannot logically reason, if I do this then this is going to happen.

Babies born with FAS have little ability to connect emotionally with others. They are locked in a world where they are not capable of forming strong emotional bonds. They are incapable of understanding how their behaviour affects others. Theirs is a cold and lonely world. They are detached from themselves and from others. As a society today we don't have the capability of connecting to them and they are alone forever.

The only answer is prevention. And prevention can only happen through education. Every young person must know and they must understand that drinking alcohol during pregnancy can result in a child being born with FAS or FAE. All young people must know that there is no evidence to suggest how little or how much alcohol will affect the unborn child. They must know that there's no information available to say when or if drinking during a certain stage of pregnancy is less harmful than during another stage.

They must know that the incidence of FAS or FAE is as high as 1 in every 200 children born, depending on which study is used. We do know that at least one child is born every day in Canada with FAS or FAE. We'll never know what that child could really have achieved had they been given the same opportunity as other children.

And regrettably that child may also cost society anywhere from 1.5 to \$3 million over his or her lifetime through education, justice, health, and social services programs. It's a sad fact of life, Mr. Speaker, that over 60 per cent of those incarcerated in our prisons are victims of FAS or FAE. Yet those individual costs can be from 80,000 to \$120,000 a year.

Mr. Speaker, proclaiming an awareness day for FAS is just one step in the education process of our citizens and it's a first step. So much more has to be done. We need education and information in the school system from the early years through the high school years. And since so many of our young people are electronically and technologically advanced, corporations and media should be encouraged to play in a responsive role in this area as well.

We need co-operation between government departments — specifically Justice, health care, and Social Services — to ensure those individuals most at risk are given the information they need to make decisions that will affect their unborn children. We must work with the Aboriginal leaders to ensure their government undertakes the same type of intensive educational information campaign. The public and hospitality industry must become involved. We need their input and their ideas on how to better educate our young people.

While we know that FAS is preventable, we must also be realistic and recognize that alcohol is part of our society. In that regard we must pursue prevention activities on every front to safeguard children.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill we are discussing may seem fairly insignificant compared to some of the more complex legislation that's been presented in this Assembly this session. But there is nothing more important than doing everything in our power to help prevent FAS or FAE from ... for our ... from our children.

There is nothing more important to the future of our province than healthy individuals who are emotionally, physically, and psychologically equipped to take on the opportunities of tomorrow. We need the combined strength and talents of all of our children to build this province. There is simply no excuse for a society with the standard of living we enjoy in Saskatchewan where we see a troubling increase in a handicap condition that is preventable.

Some things are just plain not acceptable, Mr. Speaker. Eradicating a preventable condition affecting a child is a laudable goal. Passing this Bill today is part of that goal.

I move that Bill No. 203, an Act to ... a fetal alcohol syndrome awareness day, now be read a second time.

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

**Ms. Junor:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak on the very serious topic of fetal alcohol syndrome. Today our government is passing legislation that will demonstrate our commitment to preventing and treating fetal alcohol syndrome.

I had the privilege of being responsible for the FAS issues while I was the Associate Minister of Health. We worked closely with communities, individuals, organizations, and other provinces and territories to raise awareness of FAS and FAE and to find joint solutions to these issues.

The Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Awareness Day Act establishes September 9 as Fetal Alcohol Awareness Day. This day is symbolic — the ninth day of the ninth month — and is already internationally recognized as a time to remember those struggling with the disabling condition of FAS or FAE.

The legislation we are passing today confirms Saskatchewan's commitment to support and encourage local awareness and prevention efforts. Mr. Speaker, we know the risks associated with drinking alcohol during pregnancy. FAS is recognized in North America as one of the leading causes of preventable birth defects and developmental delay in children.

The good news is that it is 100 per cent preventable. I am proud to say, Mr. Speaker, that our government is working on a number of fronts to develop and provide services to prevent FAS as well as to support those who are affected.

Our province delivers a wide range of mental health services and alcohol and drug services, Mr. Speaker. All of these services are available to help address the needs of those affected by FAS or to help prevent this lifelong disability. For example, when pregnant women come forward seeking addiction treatment they are given top priority for care.

As well our government, through the Department of Health, is helping to fund Dr. Patricia Blakley's program at the University of Saskatchewan. Through this funding Dr. Blakley works with a multidisciplinary team to assess and diagnose FAS. She is also studying ways to reduce exposure to the genetic and environmental causes of FAS, and helping to educate and train other health professionals in FAS assessment.

As well, Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud to tell you about a pilot program in La Ronge that provides home visits and supports for chemically dependent women and their families. The program targets women who are pregnant or who have had a child with FAS and who are at risk of future FAS births.

Mr. Speaker, our government recognizes that fetal alcohol syndrome is a complex issue that cannot be addressed by the health system working in isolation. We are far more likely to find workable solutions faster if we work together with partners and pool our resources, particularly in areas of expertise.

To that end our government works very closely with groups such as the Saskatchewan Institute on Prevention of Handicaps on a variety of initiatives. I'm pleased today to welcome two representatives from the institute, present up in your gallery. Lois Crossman is the FAS program coordinator, and Holly Graham is the FAS educator. I'd like to acknowledge the important work that these two women do to help raise awareness of FAS prevention and treatment.

With them today in the gallery is Leslie Grob from the community care branch with Sask Health. I'd like to welcome them all and ask all members to welcome them to the Assembly to witness the passing of this important legislation.

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

**Ms. Junor:** — Our common goal is reducing the number of FAS births. We want to help individuals and families avoid having to cope with a lifetime of disability. Mr. Speaker, one of the innovative ways we are doing that is with our Kids First program. The goal of this program is to reach out to families facing many challenges to ensure that children get the best possible start in life.

Through prenatal outreach the program identifies pregnant women who need support, education, and counselling to stay healthy and chemical free through . . . during their pregnancies. Community partners help us identify and work closely with these vulnerable women.

Our government is also a member of the Prairie Northern

Pacific FAS Partnership, an alliance between the four Western provinces and the three northern territories.

Together we share resources and our partners are address . . . with our partners and address . . . addressing prevention initiatives, as well as care and support for individuals affected by FAS. As you can see, Mr. Speaker, our government takes this issue very seriously. The legislation we are passing today is one more way we are showing our commitment to preventing FAS.

The bottom line, Mr. Speaker, is that our government recognizes that efforts to promote healthy lifestyles and to stop preventable disabilities will provide long-term benefits for individuals and the health system as a whole. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

The division bells rang from 14:40 until 14:50.

Motion agreed to on the following recorded division.

**Yeas — 53**

Calvert	Addley	Atkinson
Hagel	Lautermilch	Serby
Melenchuk	Cline	Sonntag
Osika	Lorjé	Kasperski
Van Mulligen	Prebble	Belanger
Crofford	Axworthy	Nilson
Junor	Hamilton	Harper
Forbes	Jones	Higgins
Trew	Wartman	Thomson
Yates	McCall	Hermanson
Kwiatkowski	Heppner	Julé
Krawetz	Draude	Gantefoer
Bjornerud	Wakefield	Stewart
Elhard	Eagles	McMorris
D'Autremont	Bakken	Wall
Brkich	Weekes	Harpauer
Hart	Allchurch	Peters
Huyghebaert	Hillson	

**Nays — nil**

The Bill read a second time and, by leave of the Assembly, referred to a Committee of the Whole later this day.

**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

**Bill No. 203 — The Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Awareness Day Act**

Clauses 1 to 3 inclusive agreed to.

Preamble agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

The committee reported progress.

**THIRD READINGS**

**Bill No. 203 — The Fetal Alcohol Syndrome  
Awareness Day Act**

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Speaker, I move this Bill now be read the third time and passed under its title.

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

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Speaker, I request leave to go to government business.

Leave granted.

**COMMITTEE OF FINANCE**

**General Revenue Fund  
Executive Council  
Vote 10**

**Subvote (EX01)**

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. With me today is Mr. Dan Perrins, seated to my left to the deputy minister to the Premier. Behind Dan, Bonita Cairns, who is the director of administration and information services in Executive Council. And directly behind myself is Mr. Jim Nichol who is the acting director of senior management services and executive assistant to the deputy minister.

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the Premier for introducing his staff. Of course we've met his deputy minister, Mr. Perrins and it's good to see the other officials here.

This is an opportunity where we get to take an overview or look at the larger picture of how our province is fairing and how the government, under the leadership of the Premier, is handling the challenges and the opportunities that the province faces.

And I know, Mr. Speaker, that the opposition is supposed to, by its nature in the parliamentary system, oppose. But this opposition also observes things very carefully and we've been observing what has been happening in the province of Saskatchewan. And we've had a lot of help in making those observations.

And despite the bravado from the Premier, and his ministers, and his government, the situation in Saskatchewan is not the positive picture that the Premier would try to paint. And so we have to, then, judge the government on its ability to see whether or not there are actually problems and whether they want to paint them over with words that really don't mean a whole lot to the people of Saskatchewan.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I have a whole slug of clippings here, and I'm not going to obviously read them all. But just to help the Premier do a reality check I am going to read a number of the headlines, because I think he needs to recognize that there are some serious problems in Saskatchewan and that an awful lot of people, in fact the majority of people in this province, recognize there are problems.

The fact that a province has problems does not mean that the province is bad. The province of Saskatchewan is a great province. It's a wonderful province, and for that reason, we need to recognize problems where they exist and deal with them.

And so, Mr. Chair, I would point out to the Premier that *The Melville Advance* notes that, This government has an economic policy — ongoing disaster.

Randy Burton in his column in Saskatoon says, "Bright future optical illusion: call an election." That's a message directly to the Premier. Hugh Arscott wrote an editorial in Saskatoon, "Joint action the only way to oust NDP."

There's an opinion in the *Fort Qu'Appelle Times* that says, "Government repeats its disastrous economic policy."

And then there's a Les MacPherson article in *The StarPhoenix* says, "NDP has perfect track record in job uncreation." There's another Les MacPherson column that says, "Calvert's election call can't come soon enough."

The editor of the Waterford press says, talking about the NDP government says, "The same old show." He says it's . . . "he's tired of watching reruns; it's time for a new show." That's Lucien Chouinard who's the editor of the Waterford press. He also talks about NDP economic policy and calls it voodoo economics in his opinion column.

The P.A. (Prince Albert) *Herald* says, "The government also needs attitude change." That is the headline.

The Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* says, "SaskTel's cable TV foray beyond belief."

*The Globe and Mail* says, "Saskatchewan's love of Crown corporations ill-advised."

The Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* says, "Calvert stands on quicksand." Another *StarPhoenix* article — and these are all in . . . just in the past few months — Les MacPherson says, "Spud flop shows disdain for free enterprise half baked."

Again the P.A. *Herald* says, "Review of government jobs not out of line."

The Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* editorial says:

That the provincial budget has failed in the context of the full resources at its disposal — the government is taking a deserved drubbing for coming up short on election plan to bolster provincial police ranks by 200.

*The StarPhoenix* says, "Job losses sign of government failure." That's a two-page, that's a two-page editorial. That was a large one.

The *Yorkton This Week* says, "NDP policies create poor business climate."

Another article in *The StarPhoenix*, "NDP government decisions border on madness." The list continues and another

story says, from *The StarPhoenix*, “End budget games.” And that’s talking about the provincial NDP government’s budget, the fudge-it budget.

There is . . . I wish I could take time to read all these articles but there’s just too much to read, we won’t have time. Another article says, “Government must shed brewery shares,” talking about the government making incursions into private sector areas.

And, Mr. Speaker, that’s . . . there’s another one here, says, “Creative accounting unsustainable in long term.” That’s a column by Randy Burton in the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix*.

Mr. Speaker, the list is phenomenally long. And one more, “NDP addicted to devil’s television,” And I believe that’s in regard to the additional video lottery terminals that the government approved.

So the tone of the editorial comment and the reaction of the . . . certainly the printed press, as shown here, is one that’s very, very negative towards this government.

The Premier, we believe, needs to rise up in the House, either today or tomorrow, some point in the near future, and actually square his shoulders a bit and make an admission that this government has made a considerable number of mistakes. These mistakes are showing, and if he’s going to create credibility for his government, he’s going to have to recognize that all of these editorialists are not wrong. That all of these people that have pointed out problems in the way this government has acted or failed to act are in fact pretty accurate reflections of the way Saskatchewan people feel.

Mr. Chairman, it is no accident that the Saskatchewan Party, a party at the time that was less than two years old, won the popular vote in the last election. It was a matter of the way the numbers shook out that the NDP was able to forge a coalition government by joining forces with three Liberal members. And they’ve been able to hang on to a shred of power. But that doesn’t undo the fact that because they haven’t changed their policies, the problems in this province that caused them to lose the popular vote in 1999 remain with us.

So I think it’s appropriate for the first question to the Premier to simply be: will the Premier get this whole process off on the right foot? Is he prepared to admit that his government has made a number of mistakes in a number of areas?

If he does that, then in fact we can continue this discussion in constructive terms and talk about how to fix the problem. If he stands up and defends his government, Mr. Speaker, then we still have a long education process to go through to try to show to the Premier very clearly that in fact his policies — the policies of the NDP government — are failing, they’re failing miserably. And in fact, the only solution that Saskatchewan people will have, will be to turf the NDP government at the next election. And people will continue to call for that to happen as soon as possible.

So will the Premier stand up and admit that his government has made a lot of mistakes and needs to change his direction if the province is to move forward in the future?

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Chair, the Leader of the Opposition began his remarks this afternoon in the estimates process by indicating that it is the role of the opposition to criticize. Fair enough.

He also indicated that it’s been the role of his opposition, the opposition that he leads in this legislature, to observe, was the word he used. And now he wanted then to share some of his observations.

What I note, Mr. Chair, in his opening comment, the Leader of the Opposition was very shy about describing that other fundamental, crucial responsibility of any kind of an opposition which is to propose alternatives.

Now he says they’ll criticize and he’ll say they observe, but he didn’t much say about proposing . . . You see, Mr. Speaker, they can try, but they will not shout me down. Not today. Not tomorrow. Not in the next session. And not in the next government, Mr. Speaker. They will not shout me down.

Now the fact of the matter is, a responsible opposition in this legislature and outside of this legislature should be proposing not just criticisms and not just observations — although I’m going to have a word to say about their observations in a moment — but not just criticism and observations. They should be proposing alternatives. And there is a depth of silence when it comes to alternatives here.

Now we’ve had an interesting session, as you know, Mr. Chair, and as all members knows, a session that in many ways has been driven by media comment. In fact, I have not observed a session of this legislature during my time here that has been so driven by media comment and an opposition that has found on a daily basis its questioning and its point of view not from its own research, not from talking to the people of Saskatchewan, but by picking up the morning papers or by listening to the morning news broadcasts to give them their agenda for the day. And not in my experience, Mr. Speaker, or Mr. Chamber . . . Mr. Chair, in this Chamber have I watched an opposition so reliant on media for their . . . for their questioning and their ideas.

And then, if it wasn’t . . . if my point wasn’t just proven in the House today, what does the Leader of the Opposition do? He doesn’t get up with any substantial criticism. He gets up with observations made not by himself but by editorialists and columnists in this province. Driven by the media — not a hint of an alternative plan, no, just observations made by the media.

Now isn’t this interesting, Mr. Speaker, because we could spend . . . we could spend, Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Chair, we could . . . we could spend all of today, all of tomorrow, and who knows how long comparing headlines. If the Leader of the Opposition wants to talk about headlines, I’ll share some headlines, Mr. Chair.

But yes, I want you to know that most of the headlines brought to this debate today by the Leader of the Opposition were headlines from one or two or three columnists or editorialists. Now I’m going to share headlines that are fact-of-the-matter headlines reporting the reality of Saskatchewan.

Let's just take a look at very recent headlines, Mr. Chair. "Jobs keep coming."

For the second month in a row, more people here working in Saskatchewan.

Headline fact: "TD upgrades Saskatchewan forecast."

(TD upgrades Saskatchewan forecast). Just this week TD economics has upgraded the forecast for Saskatchewan's economy to 2.3 per cent this year (and get this, Mr. Chair), to 4.2 per cent next year.

"Outlook gets a boost." That's from . . . these past few days headlines, Mr. Chair. Now this is an editorial piece, Mr. Chair, no doubt about that. But the headline reads — it's written by Dwight Percy: "Job opportunities abound in Saskatchewan."

Now when, Mr. Chair, did you hear the Leader of the Opposition quoting these headlines: "National job statistics, good news for Saskatchewan."

Now here's another columnist piece. This is from the *National Post*, the national newspaper where the writer says: "Saskatchewan: not the biggest, just the best."

From the *Leader-Post*, June 12: "We're awash in good news."

From the Regina *Leader-Post*, June 8: "Regina leading the way."

Mr. Chair, from the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix*: "Manufacturing picks up, rebound in Saskatchewan."

From June 27 *Leader-Post*: "Returned Reginan is glad that she's back."

You get my point, Mr. Chair, that if you take a look at the headlines describing the reality of Saskatchewan today, you're finding a province on the move, jobs improving, manufacturing up, predictions for our economy up, credit ratings up.

But it's not just these economic headlines that are of interest I'm sure to all of us. I have files here of headlines in almost every aspect of the life of Saskatchewan which would tell us . . . which would tell us that this province is a better province today than when this session opened four months ago.

This, Mr. Chair, has been a very good session for the people of Saskatchewan.

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

(15:15)

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Why do I say that, Mr. Chair? It may not have been a good session for the Leader of the Opposition or the opposition members, but it's been a very good session for the people of Saskatchewan.

The Leader of the Opposition wants to talk about headlines. Here's a headline that we are all very happy to see: "Fewer families living on welfare" in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Here's a headline that we should all be very happy to see: "More funds for child care" in this province.

Another very happy headline, this from the *Weyburn Review*: "Welfare numbers down." Here's from the *Prairie Messenger*, Mr. Chair: "Saskatchewan has fewer poor children." Mr. Speaker, from the *Leader-Post*: "Child poverty rate up everywhere but in Saskatchewan."

So, Mr. Chair, if the Leader of the Opposition wants to compare headlines, we'll compare headlines for as many hours as he wants. He asks this question. At the end of his presentation he asks the following question: have we made mistakes? Would we admit that we've made mistakes?

Mr. Chair, of course we admit we've made mistakes. Of course we admit we have made mistakes. The only people, the only perfect people, I guess they all occupy the benches over there. The only perfect people who never make mistakes are people who never do anything, venture anything, or plan or say anything. Of course we've made mistakes.

Mr. Chair, you know in the course of this session we advanced a policy around long-term care fee increases. After listening to the people of Saskatchewan, we understood that was the wrong policy, and we changed. Of course we've made mistakes. We hear the people of Saskatchewan and we're willing to admit those mistakes, and change.

Now I have a question then for the Leader of the Opposition. I go back to my first point. It is the role of an official opposition, it is the role of any credible opposition both in this legislature and outside of the legislature, to propose alternatives — propose alternatives with some detail, with some specificity.

We've heard this, as the House Leader called it today, the snow Saskatchewan plan. We've heard it now for months. But all we know about this plan, all we know about this plan is unsustainable tax cuts, sell off the Crowns, and decimate the public service. That's what we know about the plan.

So in the course of these discussions and debates, Mr. Chair, I think it's only fair I'll answer for this government and our activities, our plan, our successes and our failures. I expect today the Leader of the Opposition will be answering some questions that I know the people of Saskatchewan have about his policy. That's the role of a responsible opposition and I expect that we'll see that role played out today.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Mr. Chair, the Premier has failed the first test. He admitted to one mistake, Mr. Speaker, one of the most glaring errors in the history of the province, the unfair taxing of our senior citizens and disabled people who need long-term, and that was the only failure he admitted to. That wasn't even one of the ones I referred to in the long list of issues.

The Premier went on to try to reverse the roles, and I understand that he may be in fact preparing to be the leader of the opposition, and that's fine. And he may want me to answer the questions, and I'm prepared to do that after the next election if the people of Saskatchewan elect a Saskatchewan Party



government.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — But I will say this, Mr. Chairman. The Premier is rather nervy to be blaming the media for the editorials they write that are actually factual accounts of the way people feel about our province.

And I would point out to the Premier that in fact the Saskatchewan Party official opposition has made a great deal of specific . . . taken a great deal of specific measures and articulated them very well.

We have called for accounting to be done in the form of summary financial statements. Most provinces in Canada do that. The Saskatchewan Party, as a government of this province, would do that. The Premier and the NDP refuse to provide accurate, clean summary financial statements. So score the Saskatchewan Party one, the NDP zero.

Mr. Speaker, when the Fyke Commission was doing its study on health care, the Saskatchewan Party made a submission to the Fyke Commission. We didn't hear anything from the NDP. They were secretly, behind everyone's back, trying to work on a parallel platform on health care, their own plan.

But, Mr. Speaker, the member for Melfort-Tisdale articulated a very clear vision for health care, included a health science centre in the city of Saskatoon associated with the University of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, roundly supported by the health care community, by the city of Saskatoon. And he went on to call for many other initiatives in the health care field that this government has still not yet acknowledged has been made, even though we tabled that document in this very House.

The Premier hasn't read it because he doesn't know that we have made specific suggestions as to how to deliver better health care in Saskatchewan. So the Premier either has to plead that . . . ignorance on this factor, on this issue, or he simply is not communicating accurately to the people of Saskatchewan when he says that the Saskatchewan Party isn't very specific and doesn't present detailed ideas as to how this province needs to be governed. That's just two.

We have articulated a policy on Crown corporations. We started the process of articulating policy on ethanol. We supported the Bill that the government introduced simply because they copied ideas that we had presented six months earlier. Mr. Speaker, I don't know where the Premier was for the last year. We have articulated policy on highways.

Just a few minutes ago we passed a private member's Bill, the first one since I've been elected in the province of Saskatchewan, not initiated by an NDP member, but initiated by my colleague, the member for Kelvington-Wadena, to establish a day to recognize the seriousness of fetal alcohol syndrome. And, Mr. Speaker, perhaps that seems like a small thing but that's about the only thing the NDP would let go through this session of the legislature, initiated by the opposition. They didn't want to lose face by opposing it.

But we have many, many initiatives that if the Government

House Leader would have the courage to allow us to introduce the legislation, it would be good for the province of Saskatchewan. We could do as good and better job than they are doing with the myriads of officials that they have to put their legislation together.

Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Chair, when it comes down to specific things — and the Premier knows this extremely well and I'm surprised he didn't raise this — when we debated the whole idea, the whole idea of having a meeting of Western premiers and leaders of the opposition, where did that idea come from? It didn't come from the NDP government. It came from the Saskatchewan Party.

And it actually happened. In spite of the Premier refusing to answer questions in the House about it, refusing to agree, Mr. Chair, to such a meeting, that obviously the Saskatchewan Party hit on such a good idea that he finally caved in and in fact, that was about the most successful thing that happened in regards to the whole agriculture crisis and the US farm Bill. After the Premier took the portfolio back again, we've had nothing but problems.

Mr. Speaker, one of the crowning pieces of achievement by the Saskatchewan Party is the work done by the member for Humboldt in getting better legislation to protect young people, children from the sex trade. Mr. Speaker, the NDP had 10 years to do it but couldn't seem to get around to it. But under the leadership of the member from Humboldt, it actually happened — even from the opposition side of the House.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Now I will point out to the Premier, simply — I shouldn't have to do this in estimates — he should . . . this is valuable time and he should be using that to explain the vision he has for the province of Saskatchewan. But there is a number of articles that says things like "Sask Party delivers plans to rebuild Saskatchewan." Did the Premier hear that? I'll repeat it in case he didn't. "Saskatchewan Party delivers plans to rebuild Saskatchewan."

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Here's another article. "Saskatchewan Party meetings, a plan to grow a province." Now plans are concrete things. Plans have to have an object and the object of these plans are to grow a province — something the Premier doesn't seem to know very much about.

Grow Saskatchewan meetings — all about sharing ideas. Residents inquire about opposition party's plan, Mr. Speaker. And I might add for the Premier that after we held these Grow Saskatchewan meetings all over Saskatchewan . . . and he makes fun because there was a couple of meetings where we only had four or six people. Now it doesn't matter that they were opinion leaders. That doesn't matter. It doesn't matter that they had nobody show up for a budget consultation meeting in La Ronge.

The fact is that mayors . . . we had board members from health districts, boards of education, mayors, reeves, economic development people, the leaders of the province of

Saskatchewan came to listen to the Saskatchewan Party plan and, Mr. Chairman, they were impressed, not only because we had a plan but because we also invited their input which they gave us, Mr. Chairman, and which made our plan better.

Another article, "Saskatchewan Party makes presentation, planning economic growth for the province". Now, Mr. Speaker . . . or, Mr. Chairman, it's not our fault that that government stands in the road from us delivering our plan. That's not our fault. That's their fault and the Premier needs to understand that.

So, Mr. Chairman, the Premier of Saskatchewan is being ingenuous at the least and could be far more serious when he stands up and says, show us your plan, you don't have a plan. It's simply not factual. And I would ask the Premier not to propose, not to propose ideas for the minds of the Saskatchewan people that are not based in fact which is what he has been doing and he's done that on many occasions. He's been fearmongering.

You talk about somebody being negative and not recognizing the truth. The Premier falls into that category, Mr. Chairman. And we have all kinds of articles, all kinds of evidence that says that the Saskatchewan Party is in fact delivering a plan and the people of Saskatchewan are excited about it.

The member from Saskatoon Nutana doesn't know what the plan is. The plan is an economic plan to grow Saskatchewan by 100,000 people in 10 years. Now just because under NDP government Saskatchewan's population is going backwards — I think 14 or 15 quarters in a row that we've lost population — doesn't mean that the province of Saskatchewan can't grow.

The members opposite . . . the member sits opposite, did not hear a single word that I said when I talked about specific ideas that we have to grow Saskatchewan and to make our province better.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I want to talk about some specific failures of the Premier and his government. I would ask the Premier to explain to the people of Saskatchewan why he allowed his Agriculture minister to bring in changes to crop insurance that are not supported by the people of Saskatchewan? Why did the Premier allow his Minister of Agriculture to change the variable rates or to discontinue the variable rates? I hope the Premier's listening.

Why did the Premier allow his Agriculture minister to discontinue spot loss hail — a very popular part of crop insurance? Why did the Premier allow premiums in crop insurance to increase?

Why did the Premier allow his Minister of Agriculture to claim that the reason why crop insurance was being underfunded was because the federal government hadn't put in their share? When in fact the truth is, the truth is that the federal government loaned \$20 million the year before which the province agreed to pay back but reneged upon. Why will the Premier not communicate the truth to farmers about why premiums, crop insurance premiums, increased?

Mr. Chair, how does the Premier defend his rain lottery? You

know when we've made . . . We actually had some fun here in the legislature about what we called the loopy lottery prior to seeding. Well unfortunately it's no laughing matter anymore because there are a number of producers in a large portion of Saskatchewan that have been shortchanged rain. They had no access to this loopy lottery. You talk about creating an irritant. You talk about an unfair initiative. You talk about something that makes this government the laughing stock of producers — it's that loopy lottery, that rain lottery, that they allowed to slip past their watch.

So, Mr. Chair, why did the Premier allow his Agriculture minister to so severely weaken the crop insurance program which was so badly needed this year?

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Well, Mr. Chair, the Leader of the Opposition took a long time to get to his question and so I guess I'll take a little time to get to the answer. The Leader of the Opposition stood up and made this outrageous statement — an outrageous statement in the British parliamentary system — where he said the only time we're going to hear about their policies is after they're elected to government. That's what he said. They'll only be prepared to answer questions about their policies after they form the next government. Well the fact of the matter is they never will form the next government with that kind of attitude.

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

(15:30)

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — He claims they've had specific plans released during the course of this session. Well interestingly, the Romanow Commission — likely the most significant commission to look at health care in Canada in the last half decade — was here in Regina, invited, gave special invitation both to governments and to oppositions to present. Not a peep at the Romanow Commission from the Sask Party. Why was that, Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Chair?

Why were they not there to present to the Romanow Commission if they have ideas on health? Because, Mr. Chair, I know the problem and the problem is just this: they're afraid a little to speak of their true position on health care.

So since we're asking questions back and forth today, let me pose this question to the Leader of the Opposition today and perhaps he'll want to answer it because his Health critic is not. Is the Saskatchewan Party in favour of private, for-profit hospitals in Saskatchewan's or Canada's health care system? That's the question, Mr. Chair. What is the position on . . . of the Saskatchewan Party on private, for-profit hospitals?

Mr. Chair, he talks about ethanol. He talks about ethanol. Well we know from question period today how divided they are when it comes to a policy around ethanol, where the member of Swift Current said there should never be, under any circumstance, public investment in the ethanol industry. Under no circumstance should there be any equity investment from the province of Saskatchewan in ethanol.

Now the member of Wood River takes a somewhat different point of view. It's rather convoluted. I'm not sure what the position is exactly. So I think, by way of clarity, the Leader of the Opposition can stand up today when we have the opportunity in this forum to be very, very clear about their party's position on the investment of public equity in ethanol. Should it never happen? Should it happen under some circumstances? Or should it in fact happen under every circumstance? What is the position?

Now he asks about . . . he tell . . . amazingly, he said they have a position on highways. Well if they have a position on highways, in the question periods of this session . . . how many days have we had now, 77 . . . 77 days. And in question period, not one question to the Minister of Highways and Transportation. Not one question.

Mr. Chair, we've taken to calling the Minister of . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** — Order. Order. Order. Order. I'd ask members on both sides of the House to keep it down. It's very difficult for the Chair to hear the Premier.

Order. Members on both sides of the House, it's very difficult for the Chair to hear the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I was just going to observe before I come to the more specific questions around crop insurance, I was just going to observe, we've taken, on this side of the House, to describing our Minister of Highways and Transportation as our Maytag man — our Maytag man. He never gets called upon here, which is a testament, Mr. Chair — it is a testament to the work that we've done on the roadways and highways of Saskatchewan.

Last year, Mr. Chair, you know, we committed we're going to fix the roads. We put a plan in place. We're completing now the second year of a three-year plan. We're fixing the roads, we're building the highways because we have a plan and we're accomplishing our plan.

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — And, Mr. Chair, that is another reason why, at the end of this session, the people of Saskatchewan know this has been a good session for the people of Saskatchewan. That's for sure.

Oh, I should just, I should just, because the Leader of the Opposition, I guess, wants to quote, to quote headlines every time he stands up. Well I'll quote just a few more.

This is about the tour that he referred to when he took their snow plan out to the, out to the people of Saskatchewan.

Well here's a few headlines I've collected. "Sask Party preaches to a few on the tour." Maybe I can read some of this.

Although the Saskatchewan Party may have aspirations of winning the next provincial election, they were only able to attract a handful of people to a special meeting in Meadow Lake last week.

Another headline. This is from Indian Head. This is from Indian Head. The member's here. This is from Indian Head. It says here, "Dismal turnout for the presentation." And here you are.

At one point Friday morning there were more politicians than visitors.

Well here's the headline . . . here, Mr. Chair, is the headline from *The Wilkie Press* reporting on the snow Saskatchewan tour. The headline here says, "Grow Saskatchewan or gut Saskatchewan."

Another headline: "The grow Saskatchewan meeting stunted by indecision."

Mr. Chair, we can go on, we can go on for hours quoting headlines. Let me, let me now try and address more specifically the more specific questions around crop insurance.

I think the Leader of the Opposition would recognize and know that per capita the taxpayers of Saskatchewan invest more . . . Mr. Speaker, if the members opposite would like the answer, I'll be pleased to give them the answer.

The members opposite will know and I think would even admit that, per capita, Saskatchewan taxpayers put more support into agricultural programming than any other taxpayers in Canada, on an average of 4:1 to other provinces. And we are twice the amount of the closest province. This government and the people of Saskatchewan through their tax dollars are supporting the farm families of Saskatchewan in a way that no other, no other taxpayers, no other province is doing.

This year, as I think even the Leader of the Opposition would recognize, the federal Government of Canada cut support for crop insurance — cut support for crop insurance. Now if he denies that, then he is truly a friend of the national government. They cut support for crop insurance in Canada.

Let us also understand that when we went into this budget circumstance this spring, we went into one of the toughest budget circumstances that this government has faced since the early 1990s. And that was well recognized.

In that circumstance of perhaps the toughest budget that we've faced in a decade, in a circumstance where the national government is withdrawing support from crop insurance, what did we do, Mr. Chair? We added new resources to crop insurance, \$14 million in new money for crop insurance.

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Now the fact of the matter is, Mr. Chair, that in this year . . . Well let's just compare year over year. With the changes this year, with the new resources last year, 34,307 farmers signed up for Saskatchewan crop insurance coverage; this year, 34,754 more farm families; 24 per cent of insured crops have increased coverage, most of them going to 80 per cent; and 74 per cent maintained the same coverage as last year.

Mr. Speaker the enrolments in crop . . . Mr. Chair, the enrolments in crop insurance have increased, we've increased our funding. Now have we done everything, can we do

everything? The answer is no.

Mr. Chair, the resources are not unlimited. We have to choose, we have to make priority decisions. The luxury of sitting in as opposition is you can do anything, you can promise anything, you can spend anything — totally unaccountable.

In government, that's not the way it is, Mr. Chair. We have to prioritize. We have to look at the resources that are available to us. We have to look at the entire economy.

And, Mr. Chair, I would submit that given the budget circumstance we have, given the cut from the federal government, that we were able to place in crop insurance 14 million new dollars is a record we'll be very proud of.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Mr. Chair, the Premier's logic defies reason. Saskatchewan pays more per capita for agriculture because agriculture is such a large part of our economy. Does he expect us to pay a large portion per capita on an auto industry when we don't have one? Of course not.

I mean does the Premier think he's pulling the wool over the eyes of the people by making these straw arguments that don't stand up to scrutiny? Mr. Speaker, he didn't answer the question about variable rates; he didn't answer the question about spot loss hail; he really didn't answer the question about higher premiums; and he didn't answer the question about the rain lottery. He's belittling the Office of Premier by refusing to answer the questions.

Now I want the Premier to clarify, is the Premier saying that the federal government is lying when they say that they loaned the Government of Saskatchewan \$20 million they expected to be paid back; when the 20 million wasn't paid back, they reduced that as their portion of funding for farm safety nets in the current year? Is the Premier saying the federal government is lying when they said that the province failed to pay back a \$20 million loan?

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Chair, here are the facts; judge them as you will. This year the federal government reduced their share of crop insurance from 96 million to 80 million — \$16 million down. The province of Saskatchewan took its share from 93 million to 108 million — 14 million up. The federal government cut funds; we added funds. It's as simple as that.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I ask the Premier, if the federal government put less in here this year, was that because the province didn't pay back the \$20 million additional that they promised to pay back from the year before?

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Well it's happy that we have an apologist for the federal government sitting in the Leader of the Opposition's bench. You're not going to find an apologist for

the federal government sitting in the Premier's chair of Saskatchewan.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Chair, if I make a financial commitment, I may not like to have to pay back my bills, but I have to. If I buy something and a payment comes due, I have to make it.

Is the Premier saying that the Saskatchewan . . . province of Saskatchewan under his leadership doesn't have to pay back its debts? Is that what the Premier's saying?

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Chair, point number one, I don't know where the Leader of the Opposition gets the notion that the federal government somehow loans money to the provinces. I don't know where that comes from.

Point number two, I might expect this . . . I might expect this line of argument from Mr. Karwacki, Leader of the Liberal Party. I might expect it from the Leader of the Liberal Party or from the member of North Battleford, the Liberal member. I do not expect it from the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party, come past Reformer, come Alliance, now come Saskatchewan Party. I do not accept this apology from the federal government from the Leader of the Opposition in Saskatchewan.

And point number three, if that leader and the party he now leads wants to talk about paying off debt, I'll tell him the debt that the people of Saskatchewan are paying off is the debt that his party ran up in this province to the tune of \$15 billion when they were last in government. That's the debt we're paying off, Mr. Chair.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Mr. Chair, call it a loan, call it an advance. Is the Premier saying that the federal government has lied when they claim that the province of Saskatchewan did not meet its obligations of repaying the \$20 million? Is the Premier saying that the federal government is lying?

I'm not apologizing for the federal government. I'm trying to get to the truth. Will the Premier co-operate and tell this House?

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Here's the truth, Mr. Chair. This year the federal government reduced it's share of crop insurance funding from \$96 million to \$80 million. That's the fact. In this year we've increased funding for crop insurance from 93 million to 108 million, Mr. Chair. That's the fact.

And the fact of the matter is the Saskatchewan farmer, the Saskatchewan producer, the Saskatchewan taxpayer doesn't need an apologist for the federal Liberals sitting in this legislature in the chair of the Leader of the Opposition. We don't need that.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Mr. Chair, a Premier worth his salary would have answered that question. This Premier refused to divulge the truth, Mr. Chairman, and that is unacceptable to the people of Saskatchewan. If he refuses, he refuses, and he will pay for that lack of information at the polls.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Mr. Chair, Mr. Chair, I can't make the Premier answer the questions. He has to voluntarily do that. But I can certainly ask the questions, and then he is accountable for the fact that he refuses to answer the questions for the people of Saskatchewan.

Let's move on to the agriculture policy framework agreement. Now, Mr. Chair, I was involved in some of the meetings that led up to the request to have the federal government put forward \$1.3 billion to offset the hurt caused us by the US farm Bill.

During those discussions I heard our Minister of Agriculture speaking with the Alberta Minister of Agriculture and the Manitoba Minister of Agriculture, and they spoke in glowing terms, and I can describe it in no other way — glowing terms — about this new agriculture policy framework agreement. Now in the legislature, following the presentation of that new policy framework, the Premier says he doesn't even know what the details of that agreement are yet.

The Minister of Agriculture who sits right beside him says he doesn't know what the details of this agreement are. Why was his Agriculture minister going around in these meetings praising the federal government's new policy, agriculture policy framework agreement, when he can't even tell us what's in the agreement?

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

(15:45)

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Chair, I think that the Leader of the Opposition and the party opposite must be the only people in Canada who do not understand the position of this government in this province and the people of Saskatchewan around these matters. We have said for months, for years, that we need to develop in Canada a long-term, sustainable agricultural program.

Mr. Chair, we have been a part . . . If I may say, this Minister of Agriculture has been leading the discussion for Canadian producers, leading the discussion across Canada. Everyone in Saskatchewan, everyone in Canada knows that we've been the province, we've been the government, we've been the leadership that have called upon the national government to come to the aid of Canadian producers in the matter of trade injury. Everyone knows that. It's recognized in the national papers as late as just two days ago.

Now the federal government has described its response. Is it the responsibility of this Minister of Agriculture or this Premier to answer the questions of detail that should be addressed to the federal government, questions of detail that we have, that the Leader of the Opposition has, that his colleagues in Ottawa, I assume have — if they ever asked a question on agriculture any

more — that provinces all across the nation are asking? Does he suggest that we should have the secret workings of the Minister of Agriculture, the mind of the Minister of Agriculture in Ottawa, Mr. Vanclief?

We are supportive of the principles of developing an agricultural policy framework in this country, with long-term funding, with significant funding, with adequate funding. But, Mr. Chair, we are not signing up, we are not signing up until we have much more detail and until we have a national government that will recognize the hurt that's being inflicted on Canadian producers by international subsidies.

Now if the Leader of the Opposition is going to re-enter the debate around agriculture, then I do invite him today. I let him . . . invite him today because his Agriculture critic says she doesn't have a plan. Then let us hear from the Leader of the Opposition today. Let us hear from the Saskatchewan Party some very specific, some very specific detail and plan that they would have put in a national farm security program. Let's hear some detail from the Leader of the Opposition.

I can't answer on behalf of the federal government. Hopefully, he can answer on behalf of himself and his own party.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Well, Mr. Chair, Mr. Premier, why did you allow your Agriculture minister to fly around for the last number of months and years to all these meetings to plan the new framework agreement if the federal government weren't telling you any of the details of the plan? Why were you wasting taxpayers' money?

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Now I see, Mr. Chair. Now it's a waste of taxpayers' money for the Government of Saskatchewan to do battle on behalf of Saskatchewan farm families.

Now we shouldn't have the Minister of Agriculture fighting at the national level, doing battle with his colleagues on behalf of Saskatchewan producers — no, no, no — he should stay home.

Well that of course, Mr. Chair, is never going to be the position of this Premier or this government and I'm surprised the Leader of the Opposition would even suggest it.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Mr. Chair. So is the Premier admitting that his Agriculture minister was going to Ottawa and to Whitehorse or Dawson City, or wherever it was, to do battle with the federal government? He wasn't taking ideas and bringing back input from the other governments that he was involved with? Was all this travel a waste of time?

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Chair, I invited the minister . . . the Leader of the Opposition to submit some of his detailed planning. It's interesting that . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** — Order, order, order. Order. Order, order.

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — The member of Thunder Creek just asked — he can get up and ask questions from his feet some time I hope — but he asked from the seat, have we ever considered having input to national agricultural policy? Well here we are. Just take note, member from Thunder Creek.

I have here documents entitled, *Presentation to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture*, presented by Clay Serby, Deputy Premier, Minister of Agriculture and Food, Minister Responsible for Rural Revitalization, February 19, 2002. A substantive — I'm quoting thank you — a substantive policy document.

I have here *An Option for Future Agricultural Safety Net Programming Within the Agricultural Policy Framework* presented by the Hon. Clay Serby, Deputy Premier, Minister of Agriculture and Food, Minister Responsible for Rural Revitalization, Province of Saskatchewan, January 2002. A substantial policy document presented to the federal government.

I have here, Mr. Chair, a *Presentation to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food* by the Hon. Clay Serby, Deputy Premier, Minister of Agriculture and Food, Province of Saskatchewan, June 2001. Another substantial policy document presented to the national government.

I have here, Mr. Chair, a . . . I have a report here, Mr. Chair, called a report to the premiers, *A Fair Deal for Canadian Farmers* October 2001, submitted by myself on behalf of all the premiers of Canada to the national government, to the Prime Minister of Canada.

That's four substantive policy documents presented to the national government in less than a year.

Now where, I ask, is the substantive policy document presented on behalf of the Saskatchewan Party to anybody? They don't present to the national government. They don't present to our government. They don't present to the people of Saskatchewan on agricultural policy.

Where, Mr. Leader of the Opposition, is your substantive policy presented on behalf of Canadian or Saskatchewan farmers? You're great at shouting from your seat, but you sure don't have an idea on your feet.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well, Mr. Premier, I thank you for showing us that document. There was one paragraph about that long which said the minister's name on one page and then there was another little grey area on the next page. Our critic, the member for Watrous, has read the document. There's nothing in it. It's empty of substance. There's no detail. It's worthless.

It's a waste of paper, Mr. Premier. Just like your agriculture policy has been a waste of paper and a waste of breath. It just . . . That's the reason why every Agriculture minister that's been appointed by yourself and previous . . . your predecessor, Mr. Romanow, has been turfed by the people of Saskatchewan.

You're devoid of ideas. You're a washout when it comes to agriculture policy.

Now when I was at these meetings with Shirley McLellan and Rosann Wowchuk, the two prairie counterparts to the Minister of Agriculture, they were talking about the details of the agriculture policy framework. And your Minister of Agriculture was sitting there going yes, yes, yes, it's wonderful; oh it's a great plan, we can hardly wait; let's get it implemented sooner; let's not wait too long to get this agriculture policy framework passed; we've got to get Mr. Vanclief to get this done immediately.

And then we ask him questions about the agriculture policy framework and he humped his shoulders up and says, I don't know anything about it; the federal government won't tell me what's in it. Why does Rosann Wowchuk and why does Shirley McLellan know what's in the policy framework agreement, but the Government of Saskatchewan doesn't have a clue?

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Chair, the Leader of the Opposition goes into theatrics when he knows Canadian producers . . . Saskatchewan producers know that this Minister of Agriculture has had more input to substantive policy in this nation than I say any other minister in Canada. He meets on a regular basis, on a regular basis, with the farm leaders of Saskatchewan that inform this minister to the policy options that he presents to other ministers and the national government.

Now the Leader of the Opposition seems very unwilling or unable perhaps to demonstrate any substantive agricultural policy that comes from the Saskatchewan Party. Now he says the papers that I display here are thin. I'll tell you, Mr. Chair, they are thorough, they are in-depth, and they are, Mr. Chair, a whole lot more substantive than the invisible policy that I don't see from here.

I challenge . . . Mr. Chair, I challenge the Leader of the Opposition to stand up in his place right now, right now when I sit down, and table the policies of the Saskatchewan Party that they have submitted to the national government, that they have submitted . . . I see their ag policy in the last election; it doesn't fill half a page.

Now, Mr. Chair, the Leader of the Opposition, we all know, spent some time in Ottawa where I believe he served as the Agriculture critic for the Reform Party. Is that the case? He served as the Agriculture critic for the Reform Party. Well he decided in 1998 that with that kind of a background he could just rush down to Ottawa and he'd get it straightened right out. That's what he thought he could do.

Well here's the report of his visit to Ottawa in 1998 from the parliamentary newspaper, *The Hill Times*. Headline, "Saskatchewan Party Leader gets the cold shoulder."

Handshake for you. Saskatchewan Party leader and former Reform MP Elwin Hermanson was back on the Hill last week trying to drum up support for an aid package for Saskatchewan farmers. The former Reform Agriculture critic met with opposition critics, but could not swing a sit down with the Agriculture minister, Lyle Vanclief.

(Quote) "I used to be friends with Lyle when he chaired the Agriculture committee in the last parliament," said Mr. Hermanson, adding that this time he only got a handshake.

Mr. Chair, the Leader of the Opposition can belittle the contribution of this Minister of Agriculture and this government but it's not belittled by the producers of Saskatchewan, it's not belittled by the farmers of Canada because it has been substantive and it will be substantive as we move through this discussion and as we move through discussions in the months and years to come.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. You know, this government is so clued out. I've had meetings with Mr. Vanclief. I had a meeting with Mr. Vanclief for an hour, an hour and a half, since that story has been written. The NDP doesn't know the half of what the official opposition have been doing and they don't recognize how effective the official opposition has been on behalf of Saskatchewan.

But we do have a Premier that hasn't answered more than one question since we started about an hour ago. Mr. Chairman, he has not revealed any details as to the agriculture framework agreement. He has not been able to explain why his minister, who was bragging he knew about the agreement, but can't answer a single question about what might be in that agreement and still doesn't know what's in the agreement . . . When is the province and when are the producers of Saskatchewan going to know what's in the agriculture framework agreement?

That question's being asked to my colleagues and myself all across Saskatchewan — what's in the agreement? Is it, you know, is it worth \$2, \$4 an acre? Is it involving NISA (Net Income Stabilization Account)? Is it crop insurance based? Is there some new program? What's the bridge funding for? These are the questions that are being asked.

They're asking, why hasn't the province signed on to the agreement? Yes we understand it's because the federal government hasn't committed to trade injury compensation. But for the . . . as far as the rest of it's concerned, why hasn't the province signed on to the rest of the agreement? Can't they sign on? Are we not going to have crop insurance next year? Are we not going to have a NISA program next year? Has the minister from Yorkton left the industry high and dry? These are the questions that the people of Saskatchewan are answering and they expect that the Premier of Saskatchewan should know the answer to those questions.

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Well, Mr. Chair, I'm surprised that the Leader of the Opposition doesn't know this detail because this detail has been quite widely known. This is the information that we've been provided by the federal Minister of Agriculture. It's been quite widely known. But I'll repeat it for the Leader of the Opposition if he hasn't heard it.

Here's the following information provided by the Minister of Agriculture Canada, Minister Vanclief. It's a three-point plan that they've introduced. You know, him . . . he and the Prime

Minister stood there and announced it in . . . on the farm in Ontario. Here's the plan they announced — the APF (agricultural policy framework), a five-year commitment. Under the safety nets, \$1.1 billion a year requiring the 60/40 cost split. On this, Mr. Chair, there is no doubt we are there on the cost split. This is for the long-term programming. No doubt about that.

They're talking about some other areas — food safety, environment, research, and renewal — where they're committing \$180 million per year, of which 120 million will be for federal-provincial initiatives requiring the 60/40, and 60 million of that will be for federal initiatives with no provincial cost sharing.

The second, the second plank of their plan is what they describe as federal bridging programming. Bridging. This is 100 to \$120 million a year with a five-year commitment. This is federal dollars only, except for water, and that they're asking one-third/one-third/one-third, federal, provincial, and producer.

That will be used for initiatives they describe as water development, equity capital, biomass support, pesticide minor use program, marketing support, environmental farm plans, and co-op development program. This is what they call their transition, the number of questions left outstanding.

The third is this area they describe as bridge transition funding which, note, Mr. Chair, is only for a two-year commitment, and that's a two-year commitment at \$600 million a year which would amount to 1.2 billion in total. And here, Mr. Chair, is where we have the significant dispute with the federal government.

One, they are refusing to describe this for what it should be, which is trade injury compensation, a trade injury payment. They don't want to call it that. That's what it should be called.

Secondly, it should be for the extension . . . for the time extending to cover the American farm Bill. Until we see change at the WTO (World Trade Organization), that protection to Canadian producers needs to be there. Not two years — it's more likely five or longer.

And thirdly, and thirdly, it's not by our calculation but by the calculation of the federal government itself and producer organizations in our own province that the trade injury at a minimum should be \$1.3 billion a year. Not 1.2 billion over two years — 1.3 a year. So here is where the glaring inadequacy in meeting the trade injury occurs in the plan.

Now there are many questions and detail that affect these other program areas. While we might find some definite agreement on principle, there are many, many areas of detail that are yet to be understood or described.

This is the knowledge of the programs that has been provided to us and provides to provinces across the nation, with the Leader of the Opposition. We would appreciate more detail.

The Minister of Agriculture is working with the farm leaders in this province. He's continuing to work with his colleagues and with colleagues across the country to secure more

understanding of this deal, because the fact of the matter is you don't sign up, you don't sign up for a deal until you've seen the fine print, Mr. Chair. And we're working to get that fine print.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Mr. Chair, it is extremely frightening that the Premier of the province knows no more about this agriculture policy framework agreement than what he can read in a federal release, and we're supposed to be paying for 40 per cent of some of it, or all of it, or two-thirds of it. He doesn't know the details. His Agriculture minister doesn't know the details of this plan.

In fact, Terry Hildebrandt, the leader of APAS (Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan), knows more of the details about this framework agreement than the Premier of Saskatchewan and his Agriculture minister knows. That is disgusting and that is shameful and that is just unacceptable.

Mr. Chair, we're not going to get any more information from the Premier on this issue. He talked about where is the Saskatchewan Party policy on agricultural issues. Well I'll point out a couple.

We called two months ago for \$10 million to be allocated from within a . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . We called two months ago . . . If the member from P.A. Northcote would be quiet long enough for me to speak, I will state that the Saskatchewan Party two months ago stated that within existing budgeting, \$10 million should be allocated by the provincial government to deal with the drought crisis. This is just to deal with water. This is to deal with the watering of cattle, the hauling of livestock, pumping of water, those immediate needs.

Mr. Chair, two months have come and gone. The drought has deepened in a large part of the province of Saskatchewan. This is just one issue. This is already much more than we've heard from the other side, Mr. Chairman. Why hasn't the Premier and why hasn't this government not responded to the needs of the people of Saskatchewan?

Another thing that the Saskatchewan Party has asked is why did the Government of Saskatchewan, in this year when they have cut back funding in the Agriculture department — \$50 million that the Minister of Agriculture has cut from the Agriculture budget — why did the NDP choose this year to end the agriculture property tax rebate that amounts to \$25 million? Why did the Premier hit Saskatchewan producers with a lack of response to the drought and with an ending of the rebate on agriculture property tax?

**The Chair:** — Hon. members, I'm having difficulty hearing the speakers so would you please come to order. Order.

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Chair, again I ask the Leader of the Opposition to provide for this House copies of the policy documents that they've put together, copies of those policy positions which they will have advanced to the national government, copies of the agricultural policy that accompanies their snow Saskatchewan meetings. We have heard in the course of this session a call from the opposition to spend \$10 million on wells and piping and dugout construction. Fair

enough, but I wouldn't believe that that . . . Surely that's not the entire agricultural policy of the Saskatchewan Party?

Well then . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . the leader says absolutely not. Well then let's see the rest. And just on the issue of the program that is suggested around drought, this is of interest, Mr. Chair. Just a moment ago I was reading from the information regarding the federal proposal for agricultural funding across Canada. They are proposing some dollars for water, for dealing with these same issues that the Leader of the Opposition raises.

They propose that it should be funded one-third/one-third/one-third; federal . . .

**The Chair:** — Order, order. Order. The Chair does not want to inject himself into the debate. I'm trying to let the speakers participate in debate but I'm having difficulty hearing the speakers, so . . . Order.

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. The federal government is now proposing that future water programs should be funded one-third/one-third/one-third; federal, provincial, producer. That has traditionally been the case in Canada where much of the water work has been done through the PFRA (Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration) with federal funding.

Now in this session the opposition gets up and said, well we shouldn't even worry, we shouldn't even go to Ottawa and look for money for drought or for waterworks. We should just cough up \$10 million and do it ourselves and just let the federal government right off the hook.

You remember last year, Mr. Chair, how again this Minister of Agriculture lobbied hard and got money from the federal government, put together a program, did some of the work around drought, around irrigation piping, around dugout construction, well drilling and so on. That's what we're at work today doing. What does not assist is when the Leader of the Opposition gets up and said, well the federal government should just forget their responsibility for water in this country; you just do it, you just find \$10 million.

Well, Mr. Chair, that's a fair enough position but I want him now to tell us a little more about their agricultural policy that goes beyond a promise that they have \$10 million to do this drought work.

**The Chair:** — Order, order. Order. Hon. members, I am having difficulty hearing the members that have the floor. And I do not want to inject myself into the debate, but I will. So please come to order and stay in order.

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. You know, the Premier is developing a reputation as being a very weak Premier. And by not answering the questions, he is enhancing that . . .

**The Chair:** — Order, order. Order, order.

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Premier did not respond as to what the province is going to do about the



drought situation. He tried to claim that the Leader of the Opposition said things that the Leader of the Opposition absolutely didn't say, to hide the fact that he has no position on this issue. And, Mr. Chair, he refused to respond to the question about the property tax rebate on agriculture land in Saskatchewan.

Will the Premier quit dodging the questions and tell the people of Saskatchewan what's he doing about the drought? After all he is the Premier — it's fair he can ask me, but this is on taxpayers' time and he is the Premier — what is the Premier doing about the drought and what is the Premier going to do about discontinuing the property tax rebate on agriculture land?

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Chair, as the Premier, we understand — this government understands — the hurt that's being felt by some areas of our province as a result of drought. What have we done, Mr. Chair? More than any other government in Canada is what we've done. And we are working with the municipalities; we're working with the producers. We're looking at options actively today in terms of meeting some of the drought related needs.

What have we done, Mr. Chair, in a budget year when Ottawa, the national government cut our crop insurance program significantly — by \$16 million — we were right there, added new money to crop insurance. That's what we've done.

We have the forage cover program that's been widely subscribed across the province, which this group of men and women made all sorts of fun of when it was introduced, Mr. Chair.

We have been fighting like no other government in Canada on the national level to support Saskatchewan and Canadian producers — like no other province. And we have taken an active role in developing national farm policy and we're not afraid to lay our policies on the table. We're not afraid to lay our policy proposals on the table, as opposed to the Leader of the Opposition who seems very afraid today to lay his policy on the table.

Now he asks about the rebate . . . the rebate on the education tax on farm property. And the Leader of the Opposition will know that two years ago we introduced a two-year program to provide rebate relief for our farm families around the educational tax — he knows that — 25 million in each year if I recall, for a total of \$50 million.

Now the member from Saltcoats wants to know how much. He knows how much. That program is not in existence in this budget.

And the fact of the matter is this . . . Let me go back and just rehearse again with the, with the opposition the circumstances that we've been through in this spring and budget year — one of the toughest budget circumstances to face the province of Saskatchewan in the last decade, if not the toughest budget circumstance till . . . since those folks left government and left the province near bankruptcy.

At the risk of having to go through the entire list, does the opposition not understand that we came through a summer of drought last year? Do they not understand that we've come through one of the lowest commodity prices in years? Do they not understand like the rest of North America we were subjected to the downturns as occasioned by September 11? Do they not understand the challenge that we were under?

Thank goodness, Mr. Chair, we did not take their advice last year when they were telling us, spend every dime in the rainy day fund. That's what they were telling us — spend every dime. Let them loose with the treasury, they'll spend every dime. and they'll put the place straight into bankruptcy again. Mercifully, we did not take their advice last year. We had to face a difficult budget circumstance like none other since the early 1990s.

Now, Mr. Chair, the fact of the matter is you can't do everything. We heard calls from rural Saskatchewan to fix the highways, rebuild the roadways of Saskatchewan. We've heard that call, we've heard it from this opposition; we're doing it, we're fixing the highways, we're rebuilding the roads.

We heard calls from municipal government for greater revenue sharing. We heard that call. Ten million new dollars in revenue sharing in this budget.

We heard calls from education — from school boards, from trustees. We've heard calls from the opposition — more resources for education to take the relief off the property tax. In this budget, more money for education, Mr. Chair.

More money for highways, more money for municipalities, more money for education, and, Mr. Chair, we listened to the people of rural Saskatchewan when they said, we do not want the closure of our small hospitals. We've listened. We've preserved the small hospitals in Saskatchewan. We've listened to the people. More money for health care. Mr. Chair, we can't do everything.

Again I say when you're in opposition, you can do everything. You can promise all the money. You've got . . . you have no reason to be accountable.

But the fact of the matter is, Mr. Chair, in government you have to set priorities. We've set priorities. They are: education, health care, renewal of the highways, economic development, and continuing tax relief and fiscal stability and responsibility in that province.

And the result of the budget, the result of the budget, Mr. Chair, as you well know and the Leader of the Opposition well knows, when reviewed by Moody's of New York city, they gave us a credit upgrade. That's the answer.

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

(16:15)

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Well thank you, Mr. Chair. We need to deal with facts rather than the fantasy world that the Premier is in.

I'm looking at the Premier's own budget delivered by his

Finance minister. (AG08) on page 27, \$50 million less for agriculture in the 2002-2003 year as compared to the previous year — 50 million less dollars to that industry. Now I could be . . . I will be more specific. Farm sector initiatives, reduction in spending by \$25 million. That's the heart of this issue. NISA spending is down. No, NISA spending is 2,000 . . . \$2 million up. Adaptation initiatives is down, and the farm land property tax rebate is absolutely gone; it's down to nil. So there's another \$25 million.

The result is, whereas last year \$175 million was spent, this year \$125 million. That's a \$50 million cut to agriculture. And the Premier says it's all a matter of priorities. So how does he face farm families and say, I'm paying four senior bureaucrats to stay home? How does the Premier tell farm families, I'm spending your tax dollars telling four senior bureaucrats to stay home because we messed up the reorganization of government and we don't have a job for them.

How can the Premier face farm families and say, we're prepared to gamble \$80 million in Australia, we're prepared to gamble \$80 million in Australia, but we're going to cut \$50 million from the Agriculture budget. How can the Premier look farm families in the eye and tell them that? Well the truth is he can't and he won't. He won't tell farm families the truth about what his priorities are.

And that's why he's at about 10 per cent in the polls in rural Saskatchewan. And that's why he won't win a single seat in the next election in rural Saskatchewan. And that's why the member from Meadow Lake is going to lose. And that's why the member from Melville is going to lose. And that is why the Agriculture minister from Yorkton is going to lose in the next election . . . (inaudible) . . . 26 per cent.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — The Premier has made his priorities very clear. And let me tell you, Mr. Chairman, the Premier's priorities are not health care and education like he just said . . .

**The Chair:** — Order. Order. Order. Order.

**Mr. Hermanson:** — The Premier has made his priorities very clear. The Premier's priorities is not agriculture, that's very clear. But it's not health care, it's not education. It's for public servants that he's paying to stay at home. It's playing the Australian stock market. Can you imagine an NDP Premier gambling Saskatchewan taxpayers' money on the Australian stock market? The stock has plunged to 17 cents a share. We've lost money on the deal. And he has the nerve to blame the agriculture situation on the opposition, on the weather, on the Liberals in Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker, that's not cutting it with farm families.

I want to move on to just one more agricultural issue and this is not a specific government initiative. But I would like to know where the Premier stands on the issue of international subsidies. Just a very simple question. Does the Premier of Saskatchewan believe that producers in this province would be better off if: (a) the international trade war was accelerated; (b) the international trade war remains as it is; or (c) there was a reduction or a

de-escalation of the international trade war? Which of those three options does the Premier think would be better for producers in Saskatchewan?

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Oh, what I hear, Mr. Chair, is trying to build a little defence for something that the Leader of the Opposition used to say when he was in the House of Commons. That's what's going on here. He's trying to build a little case to defence his position taken in the House of Commons that there should be no subsidies. We know what's going on here — no surprise there.

Well now here's the fact, here's the facts, Mr. Chair. We were one of two Canadian provinces who had people in Doha at the World Trade Organization. The then . . . the Attorney General, today's Attorney General was in Doha — one of two provinces of Canada represented there — fighting the battle to reduce the international subsidies, fighting the Americans and fighting the Europeans.

The fact of the matter is as a result of that and keeping high pressure on our federal government in Doha — and if I may say with the active co-operation of our federal government in Doha — we believe we saw progress there. We heard the nation of France for the first time say that they needed to move away from subsidies, which would give leadership to the Europeans, which we hoped then would give leadership to the Americans. We believe progress was being made and I believe it was due to the fact that the province of Saskatchewan and the province of Manitoba had people in Doha keeping the feet of the federal government to the fire and making progress.

Then along came the new American farm Bill, President Bush's new American farm Bill, which has not only met the European subsidies but proposes to expand the subsidies into crops now currently not being subsidized, including the pulse crops, which is a direct hit on the farmers and producers of Saskatchewan.

We take the position, as do I believe the national government of Canada, that at the World Trade Organization we need to negotiate lower and lower subsidies on agricultural production. We take that position.

But in the meantime we do not take the position held by the Leader of the Opposition that the national Government of Canada should immediately get out of subsidies. That was the position advanced, that the Canadian government should not subsidize. While our producers are up against the producers of the United States of America and the European Common Market, the national government of Canada has no alternative but to support our producers as they do in the United States of America and in Europe.

Until such time as the WTO can bring down the level of international subsidy, the national government of Canada has but no alternative but to support Canadian producers.

And let me close with this argument, Mr. Chair, this needs to be a 100 per cent federally funded support program — 100 per cent.

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Nobody, Mr. Chair, in Ottawa — nobody in Ottawa when Bombardier was in difficulty over international trade arrangements — nobody in Ottawa asked Bombardier to cough up 40 per cent of the funding, or the province of Quebec, or for that matter the province of Saskatchewan where Bombardier is an active player in our economy. We were not asked in that case.

Nobody asked the provincial government, nobody asked the municipal government, to cough up money when our national airline, Air Canada, was in trouble because of international dispute. In this case it is a federal responsibility — 100 per cent.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to make it very clear to the Premier that his position on international subsidies is exactly the same as the one I hold and the one I have held in my entire public life. And if the Premier continues to present a different case he has done a very bad thing, he needs to pray for forgiveness, and he needs to not do it again.

Mr. Chair, I want to go on to the issue — the Premier has not done well on agriculture — I want to go on to education. Mr. Chair, in the budget that the Finance minister brought down in March he did something that has not been done I believe in the history of the province of Saskatchewan. He decided to fund the capital expenditure for education through a new Crown called the Education Infrastructure Financing Corporation.

Mr. Chair, the former Finance minister of Saskatchewan, Janice MacKinnon, said that this was contrary to the rules that this government, the previous NDP government, had put in place.

Mr. Chair, the Premier and his Finance minister are not supposed to introduce debt financing into a departmental expenditure unless they had made that commitment in an election.

This is a changing . . . this is a changing of accounting. This is a changing of accounting that, according to Janice MacKinnon, is contrary to the rules of the game that have been put in place by the NDP government itself.

Mr. Chair, I'm asking the Premier: how could he countenance the NDP going against its own rules and, mid term, introducing a new Crown called the Education Infrastructure Financing Corporation to try to hide deficit in regards to the capital funding of education out of the Education department?

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Chair, I think the Leader of the Opposition will know — other members certainly know in this House — that we've had for years in this province something called the Municipal Financing Corporation where, through the auspices of the province, third parties, in this case municipalities, have been able to borrow to do their work.

The only question that really needs to be answered here, the only question that really needs to be answered is from the Leader of the Opposition. Are they in favour or are they not in favour of building the schools and the colleges for Saskatchewan's young people to take these young people and to take our province into the future? That's the question.

If they oppose this, then they . . . if they oppose this budget and if they oppose this allocation in the budget, then what they're doing is opposing the fixing of our schools and the building of our schools and the building of our colleges for the future of the province.

If they oppose it, fair enough. But they can oppose this all they want, they can oppose this all they want, and you can take the critics from wherever they want to oppose this, and it's not going to prevent this government for building for the young people and the future of Saskatchewan.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Mr. Chair. Mr. Premier, you again skirted the question. The former Finance minister of Saskatchewan said that what you have done is wrong. The former Finance minister, Janice MacKinnon, said that what you are doing is a changing of accounting practice to try to hide a deficit budget.

I would think that the former Finance minister of Saskatchewan, Janice MacKinnon, would know what she's talking about.

Mr. Premier, will you answer the question? Why did you change the funding structure for education mid term by introducing this Education Infrastructure Financing Corporation to try to hide a large deficit in this year's budget?

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Well I'll tell you why exactly why we've done it . . .

**The Chair:** — Order, order. If other hon. members want to continue their debate, feel free to take it behind the bar. Order. Order.

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Chair, I'll tell you exactly, exactly why we're doing this. We are doing this to provide the tools for Saskatchewan's young people — indeed, for Saskatchewan people of all ages — the tools necessary, the educational opportunities necessary to build a new Saskatchewan and take this province into the future.

Again, I say, as I said during the beginning of these conversations this afternoon, Mr. Chair, as a result of this session there will be approximately \$90 million available for educational capital in this province — \$90 million as a result of this session because we are going to pass this budget against the opposition there. We're going to pass the budget.

As a result of this session, this province will be a better province; the people of Saskatchewan will be better equipped for the future, and much of it is to do because of education.

Why are we doing this, he says. Because the fact of the matter is, the need is there. The fact of the matter is we could not do this without looking at a process of amortization. I expect that the Leader of the Opposition at one time or another has amortized something that he knew was important to his farming operation. Did he never amortize a piece of land or a piece of machinery?

Mr. Chair, we are taking this option, this opportunity to provide

these tools for the young people and the adults of Saskatchewan as they engage in the educational experience they need for themselves, for their families, and for the future of our province. And that's something, Mr. Chair, if there is one thing that I am absolutely proud of in this budget and in the work of this session, it is this investment in education, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Mr. Chair, what the Premier is actually doing is trying to hide the debt those children are going to have to pay.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Mr. Chair, what the Premier is again saying is that it's more important to invest \$80 million in Australia than it is to fund education the way it's always been funded.

Now the Premier can solve the problem by moving, as the Saskatchewan Party suggested, to summary financial statements so the people of Saskatchewan would recognize that he's in fact the leader of a government that's running a rather large deficit this year. He could choose to do that but he's trying to hide the facts from Saskatchewan people and he's trying to make future generations pay for it.

I say that again, this is the sign of a very weak leader, a leader who is not upfront with the people of Saskatchewan.

(16:30)

Mr. Chair, if Janice MacKinnon says it's wrong, then the Premier is disagreeing with a former Finance minister who has been on the inside, knows the status of the finances of the province of Saskatchewan, and knows that the Premier is breaking his government's own rules by changing the way he funds education midstream.

Really what he's doing, it's not so much talking about an amortization of the family home. What he's talking about is more paying for the groceries on his credit card which he never gets cleared off. That's really what the Premier is doing.

I want to go on to the issue of teachers' contracts. Teachers' contracts are currently being negotiated. And his minister of Education has not come clean with the people of Saskatchewan that any increased costs to school boards will be totally covered by the provincial treasury.

I'm asking the Premier today to state clearly, on behalf of taxpayers in the province of Saskatchewan, the additional costs of the funding of education after the teachers' contract is agreed upon. Will it be funded entirely by the province of Saskatchewan or does he intend to pass on some of that cost to property taxpayers in the province?

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Chair, the process of negotiating a teachers' contract has in Saskatchewan for — I'd have to check with the minister of Education but I believe that it's well over

30 years now — well in the neighbourhood of 30 years, has been a very successful process where the trustees, the government, and the STF (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation) have sat down together, negotiated hard, and come up with collective agreements. There has not been a general provincial teachers' strike, I believe, in that whole period of time.

We are going to take this record of success, in terms of negotiating with the educators, the teachers of Saskatchewan, and we're going to work with it.

Now I know the Leader of the Opposition, Sask Party, they don't much care for collective bargaining, they don't care for contracts signed with public servants. We've learned that this week. That's very clear. They want to emulate the British Columbia experience where contracts don't matter.

We place a high value on this process of negotiation with our educators, with our trustees, with the province's partners. The Leader of the Opposition will know that in the process of negotiation it is just that, a process of negotiation, where the sides will present their arguments, where they will present their offers, their demands.

We will do it in the confines of fiscal responsibility. I ask the Leader of the Opposition to review recent contracts and work with the trustees.

And the fact of the matter is, in recent contracts we have met the financial obligations of those contracts as they are negotiated by the province. That's been our record — a proud record, Mr. Chair, a proud record of good negotiations, of collective agreements, of working with trustees.

And I invite again the Leader of the Opposition to look at recent budgets, look at recent expenditures in education. And we have met those with the trustees to settlements before.

It is interesting though, Mr. Chair, that the Leader of the Opposition has introduced into the discussion of these estimates, discussions that were held with, I think, the minister of Education as recent as yesterday; and clearly, throughout this session . . . I'm told that in fact one of the members opposite, the member from Last Mountain, in fact was standing in this House just days ago indicating that he — and I assume he speaks on behalf of his caucus — that he was fully supportive of the educational financing that we've introduced in this budget. Now it's peculiar therefore, today, that the Leader of the Opposition gets up and says he's opposed to it.

So one more time, we don't know what the position is. Which side of the fence are we on? Are we supporting this process of funding educational capital so that we can ensure the future for our children, or are we opposed to it? Do we want to shut this down? Do we not want this capital to proceed in this budget year? Again, I ask the Leader of the Opposition to clarify on behalf of his party.

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Mr. Chair, Mr. Premier, I don't think you heard my question. My question was not, is there a problem with the teachers' contract negotiations. I didn't ask that. Now you spent, I don't know, about five minutes answering some question that I hadn't asked.

I anticipate that there will be a successful negotiation of the teachers' contract. What I asked you, Mr. Premier, was once that contract is settled — and we expect there will be additional cost because, every time an agreement is completed, there is a raise involved and teachers' salaries will go up — that cost has to be borne by somebody. Is it going to be borne out of the General Revenue Fund of your government, or are you going to pass some of that cost on to property taxpayers? That was the question I asked. Would you please answer the question?

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, as the process of negotiations unfolds, we're not going to insert ourselves with . . . into that process of negotiations.

I am, as I said in my answer just moments ago, I remind the Leader of the Opposition of past practice. Look at our past budgets. Every year, they'll call us into question. And the fact of the matter, we have met the obligations to teachers, to the trustees, when they have been negotiated by the province of Saskatchewan. And we'll stand on that record. They might wish they had such a record.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Mr. Speaker, or, Mr. Chair, I want to read a couple of articles. First of all a reader's opinion in *The StarPhoenix*, Monday, July 8 — I believe that's yesterday: "Melenchuk position disappoints boards." This is a letter by Bernie Howe, board Chair, Saskatoon (West) School Division. And I quote:

Learning Minister Jim Melenchuk has advised school boards that the government will not commit to funding the cost of the contract currently being negotiated with teachers.

Melenchuk has said that, when a new collective agreement has been concluded, the government will assess the cost implications and consider whether additional funding can be made available to school divisions in the current fiscal year.

This is disappointing to school boards and, frankly, just not good enough.

While the government has the majority position at the bargaining table, boards need to know the cost impact for them when commenting on the proposals and whether they are prepared to support an agreement.

Boards believe in a fair and reasonable salary increase for teachers, but are not able to fund the negotiated increased cost by themselves. They need the help of government.

Now he goes on to talk about full-time equivalents and some of the impacts that will be felt if the Education minister doesn't make this point clear. It is the responsible thing for the Government of Saskatchewan, either for his Education minister . . . and he's already failed the test, so now the responsibility falls on the Premier.

It is the responsibility of the Premier of Saskatchewan to tell school boards in this province, once a teacher salary negotiation is completed that if there are increased costs they will be borne fully out of the General Revenue Fund or they will be shared between the General Revenue Fund and property taxpayers. It is your responsibility, Mr. Premier, to state clearly what you intend to do.

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Chair, it is my responsibility in the midst of a collective bargaining process to allow that process to reach its conclusion, not in the middle of the process to indicate one or another. Now . . .

**The Chair:** — Order. Order. Would hon. members on both sides of the House please come to order and stay in order.

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Chair, it was sort of quiet in here until the member from Rosthern and the member from Nutana joined the debate.

Mr. Chair, I'll repeat. We're going to let the process of negotiation work its way through. We're not going to insert in the middle of negotiation. I repeat again, in all of my experience in government in this province, the province has met the contractual obligations, provided the funding for the trustees. That has been the history.

I'm told by the minister of Education that only once in the past 30 years, only once in the past 30 years, on one occasion, did the province not meet the financial obligations as they had been negotiated through the collective bargaining process. I repeat again, we've had 30 years of good negotiations. I am not inserting in the middle of negotiations.

And I point the Leader of the Opposition to the history of this government in the last decade that where we have always met the responsibilities that have arisen as a result of negotiated settlements with the teachers.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well, Mr. Premier, let's talk about your record. I also have an article here from the *Kindersley Crossroads* — recent one — May 27, 2002. "Kindersley town council letter protests education grant cut." And it reads, and I quote:

Delegates to a regional meeting last week heard an expression of gratitude for a Kindersley letter protesting funding cuts to education. The West Central Municipal Government Committee decided to await the minister's response before recommending that other municipalities send similar letters.

Debra Gronning, a member of the group's education sub-committee, read the letter at the committee's May 16 meeting in Outlook. The letter, to Education Minister Jim Melenchuk, protests the education department's cutting of its computational foundation operating grant to the Kindersley School Division, which Gronning chairs, by close to \$425,000.

Mr. Premier, I'm not quoting now, I'm speaking. A \$425,000 cut to the foundational grant for the Kindersley School District. That's what your government is imposing upon the people of Saskatchewan. Now I'm going to go on to quote:

Kindersley Ald. Cecil Campbell said that (the) town council, at its May 13 meeting, debated refusing to approve the school division's annual budget and sending it back as a form of protest.

They'd refused the formality at least once in the past "and got a big presentation that was a big waste of time," Ald Mike Hankewich told the council meeting, noting, "They can put the gun to our head and say we have to pay this."

That, coupled with the delay in issuing tax notices which would result, caused (the) aldermen to decide on the letter instead, Campbell said, with the recommendation it also go to municipal delegates with the hope they send similar ones. He suggested waiting until Kindersley sees what sort of a response it receives.

Ald. Bob McTaggart argued to send the division budget back.

"The only way to draw attention to the problem is if 90 per cent of communities refuse to pass these budgets and force someone to come out, explain why we have to pass them, and slow the process down," he said. "It's not the school division's fault. They don't want to (raise mill rates). I think we're supporting them by voting (the budget) down."

Other speakers in Outlook indicated that a senior education bureaucrat either didn't know the facts on a couple of matters, including the length of time some students must spend on buses, or has deliberately misled municipal representatives in meetings. Wilkie Mayor Walter Lorenz said that after many meetings with provincial officials on some topics, "You get to a point with the bureaucracy that you have to go to the minister — or even the premier."

Gronning said that with about 80 per cent of school division costs used to pay teachers salaries, divisions with reduced foundation grants, which choose to cut services rather than increase the mill rate, may lay off teachers or close smaller schools. She . . . noted teacher salaries will increase this year, as teachers are presently in contract negotiations.

Well, Mr. Chairman, the Premier is dead wrong. There is an increased cost because of his government's failure to fund education that is currently being picked up by property taxpayers, and that will increase unless he makes a commitment to pick up future costs.

Mr. Chair, I want to ask the Premier: Mr. Premier, many school divisions in Saskatchewan are already paying 100 per cent of the cost of education. How do you propose — if those costs increase following teachers' salary negotiations — how do you propose that they would get even 1 cent of support from your provincial government since they're already funding 100 per cent of the cost of education in their division?

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, well now this is surprising because one can only conclude from the questioning by the Leader of the Opposition that he would now propose that the government change the foundation operating grant system. Is that what he is suggesting? That we should now change what has evolved and — through many years of practice and experience — proved to be a very effective funding formula for education, is he now proposing that that should be changed?

That is exactly what's behind his final question here. Otherwise, there's no answer to his question. He knows that the grant will change because of enrolments. He knows that the grant is based on a fair, equitable, local resource base.

(16:45)

Is he proposing . . . Well the deputy leader over there, he should know something about this. He was a school trustee. Is he now recommending to his leader that we change the foundation operating grant? Because that's what I'm hearing in the leader's question. Well the . . . Let me just say this. We are not about — we are not about to change the foundation operating grant. We're not about to do that.

Now he wants to know again about funding to education. Well I remind him, in this budget year, against the opposition of this party, we are increasing, we are increasing funding to K to 12 — K to 12 — by 7.2 per cent; to Learning by 7.2 per cent; 7.2 per cent — well, well above the rate of inflation. This concludes three budget years since 1999 where we have now increased the funding to Education, now Learning, in this province by 20 per cent — 20 per cent since 1999.

Now I ask again the Leader of the Opposition: he doesn't want to talk about his future plans. Well let's talk about the plan that he took to the people of Saskatchewan in the last election. Now what did the Leader of the Opposition — he can't deny it — what did he say to the people of Saskatchewan in the last election? They would freeze, at the rate of inflation — freeze at the rate of inflation — funding to health and education. Freeze at the rate of inflation.

Well I don't know what the inflation rate has been since the last election, but let's be generous, a total of 6 per cent — a total of 6 per cent. That's being generous. So where, I ask the Leader of the Opposition, would the school trustees be today if they'd have bought his plan which said freeze at the rate of inflation? They'd now be 14 per cent short in funding — 14 per cent short. That's where they'd be if they bought the Saskatchewan Party plan. Well mercifully, they didn't.

And mercifully, we've had a Minister of Finance and Minister of Learning that has put together a financial package for the trustees of this province, for education in this province that has added 20 per cent new funding since 1999. The money is there, Mr. Speaker.

We've been good in the past in negotiating contracts and standing behind our contracts. We'll stand on our record. We'll stand on our record of funding increases to education. We'll stand on the foundation operating grant principles. And we'll

stand with these negotiators who are working today.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would remind the Premier that under an NDP government in the 1990s, they cut \$350 million from education. They cut, they didn't even keep up with inflation. They actually cut \$350 million from education and they threw that burden either on to property taxpayers or we saw a cutting of services in education. Those are the facts, Mr. Chairman, and the Premier chooses to be very selective in the way he deals with this issue.

Mr. Chairman, the Premier's plan and his minister's plan for education, is to see education decimated in this province with a decrease in enrolment of 35,000 people, 35,000 students by the end of this decade.

That means the laying off of teachers under an NDP government; that means the closure of schools under an NDP government; and that means the depreciation of education under an NDP government. Mr. Speaker, the Premier and the NDP have failed education in Saskatchewan.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — To the Premier, I now would like to move on to the area of health care. Health care has always sort of been that feather in the hat of the NDP. They claim to be the champions of health care.

But under an NDP government, we have a nursing crisis. We have the longest waiting lists in Canada. And we had a government that had so lost its way, it planned to increase long-term care fees by as much as 90 per cent, Mr. Speaker, and in a great deal of embarrassment after the province rose in uproar, they had to backtrack from that position. And they're still paying a large political price for that act of aggression against seniors and people with disabilities.

Mr. Chair, I want to ask the Premier: given recent reports that there is a nursing shortage in the province of Saskatchewan with the average age of nurses as significant, the fact that the number of seats set aside or designated for nursing is woefully inadequate under the NDP, how can he assure the people of Saskatchewan that they are going to have adequate health care under his government if we continue to see the number of nurses reduced and the opportunity for replacements to dissolve away?

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Chair, the Leader of the Opposition raised what is a very, very significant issue — a very, very significant issue for this province, the Department of Health, this government, for the communities of Saskatchewan. But not only for us, for health care across Canada. There isn't a province in Canada who isn't having to deal with — as the leader points out — the upcoming retirement of nurses, the shortage of nurses across Canada. This is by no means a province that's unique to our province. That doesn't make it any less important or doesn't make us any less determined to make solution.

Now I am also very proud of the fact, Mr. Chair, that we were

able to negotiate a contract, a settlement, with the nurses of Saskatchewan — a contract and a settlement which the nurses of Saskatchewan have very, very clearly said is crucial and will be important in both retaining and attracting nurses to practise in Saskatchewan. Very proud of the fact that we were able to negotiate a settlement without a dispute, as we've seen in other jurisdictions.

And it's questionable that we'd have been able to do that again if we'd have taken the Saskatchewan Party policy and plan of freezing funding to health at the rate of inflation. I'm sure we'll compare those numbers before the debate is over, but if we'd have used their plan to freeze the funding to health at the rate of inflation, I'm not sure that there'd have been any potential to get negotiated settlement with our nurses, never mind negotiated settlements with other extremely valuable health care providers in our province, whether they're represented by Canadian Union of Public Employees or Service Employees International Union. Settlement with our doctors, physicians' agreements — these are all very important to the stability of the system.

Now in addition to recognizing the problem, recognizing that it's not a problem only of Saskatchewan, recognizing the fact that we've come to negotiated settlement with a contract that the nurses themselves say will improve the opportunities for retention, we've introduced a plan — the Minister of Health has fully described it in this House — to improve the workplace for our nurses, to improve the training spaces in our province, to work in the development of nurse practitioners and the role of nursing; new bursary programs — \$500,000 for a nursery . . . a nursing bursary program, increase in the number of nursing education seats across the province. Another \$500,000 committed to bursaries for previously licensed nurses to get the education they need to get back to work. We've implemented the principal nursing adviser position. We've established a provincial nursing council. Mr. Chair, I could go on and on. I know the minister has at length in the course of his estimates and the discussion around nursing in this House.

The Leader of the Opposition raises a very significant issue. We are deeply committed to dealing with this issue in the context of Canada, but first of all in the context of Saskatchewan.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Premier acknowledges that other provinces are having similar problems and other provinces are dealing with that problem. We want to know what are you doing about the problem here.

The fact is that if the current trends under your government continue, we will lose 140 nurses a year over the next 10 years. We have to replace, I believe, it's about 4,000 nurses in the near future and we are short the seats of training. That means if we don't increase the number of seats for training nurses in Saskatchewan, we're going to have to buy them — for lack of a better term — from other provinces or other countries.

We're going to have to have some plan in place to compensate for the huge loss in nursing staff that we expect to occur over the next few years. It's not good enough for the Premier to say yes, this is a big problem. That's exactly the response the NDP

proposed for the agriculture problems we faced. This is a big problem.

But by failing to deal with it when other provinces did deal with it, we became more exposed and we became more vulnerable. Now there's an agriculture problem in Alberta and there's an agriculture problem in Ontario, but they're dealing with it and their productivity levels are higher and their incomes are higher in other provinces because their provincial governments dealt with the challenges facing agriculture.

They're miles ahead of Saskatchewan. They have better safety net programs in other provinces. They have more diversification in other provinces because the province, because other provinces recognized that they had a responsibility.

Here in Saskatchewan we're going down the exact same path when it comes to health care. We're saying we have a problem, other provinces have a problem, but we don't propose . . . And when I say we I'm talking about the NDP government over there; I don't want to be a part of it. I shouldn't say we. You are taking Saskatchewan down a road of potential health care disaster. Not only are we going to be short nurses. If current trends continue, we won't have enough doctors to provide adequate doctoring care in the province of Saskatchewan.

So what does the Premier say to the citizens of Saskatchewan who are worried about the fact that the province is losing nurses and doctors and other health care professionals, and they almost stand alone in not putting forward a plan to reverse this problem?

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Well, Mr. Chair, I'll be very interested the next time the Leader of the Opposition's on his face . . . on his feet — sorry, on his feet — to explain exactly to this House and to the people of Saskatchewan which province of Canada is doing so well. Which provinces? He claims there are provinces doing so much better. And I'd like him just to stand up in the next answer and tell us just exactly which provinces. Which are they?

Now he wants to know what we're doing about this. Well then I'll tell him what we're doing about it. And I'm sure the minister . . . I'm sure the member from Rosthern will be very . . . Mr. Chair, the member from Rosthern is very agitated from his seat. I don't know why he gets so agitated.

Mr. Chair, since 1999 we have established a \$500,000 nursing bursary program for students in LPN (licensed practical nurse), RPN (registered psychiatric nurse), and RN (registered nurse) program. We've increased the number of nursing education seats right across the province. We've provided \$500,000 for bursaries to help previously licensed nurses get their education they need to return to work.

Who did that? Who did that? Did the Sask Party do that? No, no.

Since 1999 we have implemented the principal nursing adviser position. Since 1999 we have established a Provincial Nursing Council. And in 2001 — get this — in 2001 we provided \$700,000 for projects related to quality workplaces, casualization, and preceptorship of students.

Mr. Chair, since 1999, working directly to the retention and recruitment of health care providers, we have established a Health Human Resources Council. Who did that? The Minister of Health, the Department of Health, the Government of Saskatchewan, the coalition Government of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Chair, over these years we have worked with the SRNA (Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association) and the Nursing Education Program of Saskatchewan to develop expanded education options for the nursing program. We have continued our contract with Lifestream Development Services to participate in recruiting activities on our behalf. We are recruiting across the country, across the world.

We have supported the efforts of our health districts — and these are not to be overlooked — we have supported the efforts of our health districts for their own campaign to recruit nurses into service in Saskatchewan.

We have advertised nationally and internationally for nurses. We recently launched a new advertising campaign, both in-province and across Canada, where we are promoting Saskatchewan as a place to live and work and exercise the career in health care, the caring career of nursing.

(17:00)

It's difficult when you've got such a negative group of folks across the way to attract people, but there we are. We've signed an MOU (memorandum of understanding) with the SIFC (Saskatchewan Indian Federated College), with the University of Saskatchewan, with SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology), with the Northern Inter-Tribal Health Authority, with post-secondary . . . with Learning, to offer northern health services . . . sciences access program in Prince Albert. The Health department itself provided \$200,000 for the development of this program.

We've signed an MOU with the very same list of partners to development a northern nursing program in Prince Albert to begin this fall, 2002, where we're training nurses for northern Saskatchewan where some of the most difficult retention and recruitment issues have been faced.

We've provided \$37,000 in 2001 to fund the northern access program for nursing here in Regina. And we announced — get this, Mr. Chair — \$3 million additional, \$3 million additional funding for the retaining, recruiting, and training of health care providers.

Mr. Chair, we have a plan. We have a plan to address the shortages. We have a plan to recruit and retain. The Leader of the Opposition says that he has a plan. I ask him to add to this plan. What would he have us do? What would he have us do? Would he have us take his party policy position and freeze the funding to health care at the rate of inflation, or has he now rejected that policy? Would he please answer that question? Would he have us freeze the level of funding at the rate of inflation, as he said in the last election, or has he reversed that position? What specific programs can he offer the people of Saskatchewan to recruit and retain public health nurses, nurses in the hospitals, nurses in the home care?



Mr. Chair, and I asked him earlier today, and maybe it is now the hour where he will finally volunteer, does he share the view of his member from Weyburn? Does he share the view of the member from Weyburn who says that from her point of view — I can quote the quote — from her point of view we should welcome private hospitals, private clinics, into the health care system of Saskatchewan? Does he share the view that for-profit, private hospitals have a role to play in the future of Saskatchewan health care? Is that his plan to address health care in this province?

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's obvious from the Premier's questions that he has a strong desire to become the leader of the opposition, and we'll do our very best to make that dream come true for the Premier.

I've already told the Premier, but he wasn't listening, that the Saskatchewan Party has a plan to build a health science centre at the U of S (University of Saskatchewan) that would train additional health care workers. He didn't seem to hear. He never seems to hear what the Saskatchewan Party says.

I want to tell the Premier about an incident that happened a few months ago. We talked about our plan to grow Saskatchewan and a fourth year nursing grad contacted me and said, you have a plan to grow Saskatchewan; I want to hear about that plan because I want to tell you what we're planning — and she was talking about her nursing graduation class — I want to tell you what we're planning to do under the NDP government. She said there are about 100 . . . It was less than 100, but it was between 50 and 100 students in that particular class and that was half of the total that were involved in that segment of the education. She said three . . . at least three-quarters of us, upon graduation within a year, will leave the province of Saskatchewan.

She said, she said when the nursing recruiters come to the U of S, she said the nurses in Saskatchewan who are part of this recruiting team, they tell us the way it is. They tell us the conditions are not very good in Saskatchewan.

They just came out of negotiations, of course as you know, Mr. Premier, a couple of years ago, where an NDP government not only imposed back-to-work legislation on the nurses, but actually imposed a contract through legislation. You talk about abusing the collective bargaining process. There is no bigger example of abuse than that NDP government over there.

Mr. Premier, you offended the nurses to the point where they're not even encouraging nursing graduates to seriously consider pursuing a profession in the province of Saskatchewan. Meantime, recruiters were coming to the U of S from Alberta and from other parts of Canada and the United States and they were telling nursing grads, come to our province and we'll pay you a signing bonus; come to our hospital and we will . . . we will pay your moving expenses; and come to our jurisdiction and we have a better contract than you will find in the province of Saskatchewan.

And obviously, Mr. Premier, many, many nurses were weighing the options between health-care-unfriendly Saskatchewan and other jurisdictions that were making better offers. And three-quarters of these nursing grads — and we don't have enough to begin with to meet the need — but three-quarters of

these nursing grads were making plans to leave the province of Saskatchewan.

I know existing nurses who have left. There's a nurse from I believe it was the community of Outlook that's currently practising her profession in Minnesota or Wisconsin, and she is encouraging other nurses to leave Saskatchewan and go to that American state because she said we're treated better here than we are in our home province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Premier, the result of this lack of attention to health care and this failure to meet the demands and needs of health care are causing us to have some of the longest waiting lists in Canada. And this is causing people to hurt — people that I know, that have talked to me, that cannot get the health care they need and have no prospects of getting the care they need for months and months, and sometimes even years.

Mr. Premier, what are you saying to the people of Saskatchewan who see health care deteriorating around them because you're not training enough nurses, you're not providing a climate that they want to practise in, and health care waiting lists are getting so long that they're beyond reason?

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Chair, according to the Leader of the Opposition the entire health care policy of the Saskatchewan Party is to build the new health sciences building in Saskatoon. That's the entire health care policy, unbelievably, of the Saskatchewan Party.

I wonder, Mr. Chair, if he has done any consultation with the University of Saskatchewan or the College of Medicine around this health sciences building that he proposes. If that's the only policy that the Saskatchewan Party has with health, then I wonder if he's even consulted with the medical school and the University of Saskatchewan . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . You have. Well that's interesting, because . . . He claims that he has. Well we'll have to . . . we'll have to test that.

Mr. Chair, I have here the very, very recent *Maclean's* magazine that . . . front cover, the question is asked, where we get the best health care in Canada. Where do we get the best health care in Canada? In the group of communities that have medical schools, where do you get the best health care in Canada? Well I admit, number one: Edmonton, Alberta. Number two: Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Now I know, you know, they'll almost say or do anything to try and gain a little political advantage. How did we get to a circumstance where health care in Canada is better in Saskatoon than in London, Ontario, Calgary, Alberta, Toronto, Hamilton, Quebec City, Ottawa, Winnipeg, Vancouver, Montreal, Sherbrooke, Halifax, Kingston, and St. John's? How did we get to this circumstance?

Well we got to this circumstance perhaps beginning as early as 1944, where the government of this province made a commitment to publicly funded, publicly administered health care in this province. Now it took, Mr. Chair, 20-some years — it took 20-some years for the government of that time to realize the dream of publicly funded medicare in this province.

This year, Mr. Chair, we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the founding of medicare in this province.

What we have is a group of men and women sitting across from us today who promote the doctrines of privatized health care. There is no doubt about that. I can quote their own members who promote the doctrines of privatized health care.

They say they would improve health care. They say they would take us from the number two position in Canada. Fair enough, tell us how. And it's not by building just one educational institution.

I'll tell you what they're about. They're about the privatization of health care, there is no doubt about that. They're about the introduction of private hospitals into our system. No doubt they're about the introduction of user fees into this system.

Mr. Chair, how other can they explain their own position? They say that you can improve health care by keeping the public funding to health care frozen at the rate of inflation. They say they can do that. They say that you can come to contractual arrangements with your nurses, with your doctors, with your health care providers by freezing the public funding at the rate of inflation. They say they can do that.

They say they can build hospitals all over Saskatchewan. They say they can do that by freezing the funding at the rate of inflation. It's ridiculous, Mr. Chair, it's ridiculous.

We know that health care costs in Canada are a challenge to every government. We know the rate of inflation in health care is much higher than the rate of inflation in the general economy. How can they claim that they can improve health care by freezing the funding to health care at the rate of inflation?

There's only one way — there is only one way — you ask the client of health care, you ask the patient, to pay. That's how you do it. That's how you do it. And you take services out of the public sector and transfer them directly into the private sector.

If they deny it then explain how you intend, Mr. Leader of the Opposition, how you would have intended had ever been elected, to fund health care at the rate of inflation and retain nurses, and grow the supply of health care providers, and build a health sciences building, and build and maintain hospitals? How would you have done it?

You don't have an answer, because if you'd have had an answer you'd have appeared at the Romanow Commission and shared your answer with the rest of Canadians. No you do not have an answer that you're very proud of unless that answer is, as some of your members are willing to volunteer, it's the matter of privatization of health care and, Mr. Chair, they cannot deny it.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well for a time under the NDP government, if it wasn't for the increased share of federal funding for health care, they would have been below the rate of inflation.

The Premier again is not being level. He is not talking the

straight goods with the people of Saskatchewan. He is talking about a level of delivery that we would have brought forth that's higher than what he delivered himself, for heaven's sake.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — And the thing, Mr. Chair, is that the people of Saskatchewan are starting to realize that the Premier's words just don't add up to what's actually happening in this province, and that's why he's trailing in the polls and that's why he's going to be swept out of office in the next election.

Mr. Chairman, the Premier just acknowledged . . .

**The Chair:** — Order, order, order. Hon. members, would you please come to order. Order. Would you please come to order, hon. members. Order. Order.

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. The Premier quoted from some information that said some health care provider outside Saskatchewan has the best care in Canada, I think in a province that doesn't have an NDP government. And he's showing it to me. It's from *Maclean's*. So that means that governments other than NDP governments are able to provide the best health care in Canada. I hope he realizes that.

Now I talked to a former doctor, a leading doctor who was formerly associated with the College of Medicine at the U of S. And he talked about the outstanding health care performance that was delivered in the city of Saskatoon. He happens to be . . .

**The Chair:** — Order, order. I'm having difficulty hearing the Hon. Leader of the Opposition from members that are speaking overtop of him. So would hon. members please come to order and stay in order.

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. There is a doctor, a retired doctor, who was involved with the College of Medicine who resides in the member for Saskatoon Nutana's riding. And he shared with me that he hopes that we soon replace the NDP government because he said the folks that are holding the College of Medicine together are doing it in spite of this government, not because of it.

He acknowledged the fine work that they had done and he had had a hand in shaping the College of Medicine and making it what it is. But he said the struggles that the college has faced in recent years because of lack of attention and lack of funding from the NDP government is appalling, and he said it won't hold together much longer unless we have a change of government.

So what that means, Mr. Chair, is that if our current Premier stays in office we could actually lose the College of Medicine in Saskatoon.

I want to move on to another area because time is slipping away. I want to talk a little bit about the issue of gaming and the issue of the new SIGA (Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority) agreement that was signed just recently. The Government of Saskatchewan just recently signed a new gaming agreement for our province with SIGA for 25 years.

Twenty-five-year agreements just aren't signed any more. Why did the Premier allow this agreement to be signed for such a long period of time?

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Chair, before we just walk easily away from the health care debate, the Leader of the Opposition says that the College of Medicine has endured a lack of funding over the last several years. Again he will not answer the question.

He simply refuses to stand up even for his own party. Well the member from Estevan says it's up to . . . to answer the questions. That's exactly what I'm doing. I'll answer the questions about the behaviour of government. But don't you think, Mr. Chair, don't you think the people of Saskatchewan deserve an opposition who's willing to stand behind even their own policies made public.

He went out . . . They went out in the last election campaign — I remember it well — he was on television saying that the answer to health care is to freeze the funding at the rate of inflation. What is, what is . . . the Popsicle party some people say. They're going to freeze it at the rate of inflation.

He then comes into this House knowing the kind of increases that we've put into the funding of health over these past years — eight point some per cent in this year alone if I'm not mistaken, eight point some per cent in this year alone. For health care, for health care, 8.2 or so this year alone.

**An Hon. Member:** — 6.8.

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — 6.8 this year — sorry — 6.8 this year. Now the Leader of the Opposition would have frozen it. Well what's the rate of inflation this year? One? One? Two to be generous. Two to be generous.

So if we'd have ever made the tragic mistake of electing that group of men and women to govern, this year's increase to the Department of Health would have been at best 2 per cent. And then they have the gall to stand in here and say, but you're not funding health enough.

I don't understand the logic, Mr. Chair. I don't believe the people of Saskatchewan understand the logic. Unless, as I assume, the way you find new money for health care is to take it directly from the patient, directly from the client, in a pay-for-use operation.

Well, there's the member from Weyburn back. Well that's very good because she's the very one that stands up in the public and says, I think we should have privatized health care in Saskatchewan. And if she's anxious, I'll bring out her quotes. It's very good to have her contributing from her seat. Perhaps she'd like to stand on her feet and contribute to this debate.

Now you know, you know, Mr. Chair, the members opposite have many, many questions. I wish they had the courage to get on their feet and ask them. The member from Indian Head, I'd like to know his position on private hospitals. We already know the position of the member from Weyburn. I think we know the position of the member from Wood River. It'd be interesting to see what the position of the member from Indian Head is on

private hospitals. Does he have the view that the private . . . that the hospital in Indian Head should be owned by a private corporation? Is that his view?

**The Chair:** — Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. I recognize . . . Order. Would the member . . . Order. Would the member for Rosthern please come to order. Order. I recognize the Premier. Order.

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Chair, the Leader of the Opposition asked some questions about the gaming agreement signed with the FSIN. I think his question at the end was: why would we sign a 25-year agreement? We would sign a 25-year agreement because of the respect that we have for the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, for the job that we know that they're going to do over the life of this contract.

You'll know, Mr. Chair, that there are many contractual obligations that we enter into as individuals that will extend 20 and 25 years. There are a significant number of contractual obligations the government will enter into for 20 and 25 years. There are agreements that we will enter into with peoples that will extend far beyond 25 years.

We believe in the partnership that has been achieved with the federation, with the people of Saskatchewan, for this industry in this province. I count this again as one of the substantive accomplishments of this session. And as a result of it, I believe the people of Saskatchewan can be confident, can be confident in a well-managed gaming casino industry operated in partnership with the FSIN.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well, Mr. Premier, just getting back to the issue of policy and standing for what you believe, in the last election in . . . in the last general election in which you didn't run — I believe you were a person behind the scenes helping engineer the NDP campaign — the Saskatchewan Party ran on a platform and on policy positions and won the popular vote. The NDP ran on a smear campaign and lost and had to form a coalition with the Liberals to form government.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Meanwhile, when it comes to health care, the Premier stands in his seat and makes all kinds of unfounded accusations against the Saskatchewan Party while he, as the Premier of Saskatchewan, tries to gouge seniors of their life savings and all of their earnings through 90 per cent increase in long-term care fees.

That is one of the most despicable actions I've ever seen on the part of a premier of Saskatchewan. Had it not been for the opposition and for the uprising of the Saskatchewan people, he would have got away with it, Mr. Chairman.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Mr. Chairman, the Premier who helped engineer a smear campaign in an election, the Premier who tried to take away seniors' entire life savings, has no business

whatsoever lecturing the opposition on health care policy.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Mr. Speaker, that Premier should be ashamed of himself. That Premier needs to get up and answer for his government. He needs to answer for his record. He needs to act like a premier, not like the Leader of the Opposition.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Now, Mr. Speaker, the Premier said — and let's get back to the issue of gaming — the Premier said that a 25-year agreement is a good thing. He says he just thinks that everything is going to work out fine.

That is another indication of a weak leader. A weak leader would sign a 25-year agreement rather than putting forward an agreement of a reasonable length of time that demands that things be done right so that they can be successfully renewed.

Mr. Speaker, or Mr. Chairman, the Premier also agreed to this 25-year agreement while his Justice department was not prepared to bring forth a police investigation that reported on some of the problems that SIGA and his government had had under the previous agreement.

Now, Mr. Chair, we have anticipated that that would be released in the proper time — that would have been released before the signing of the new agreement. It's actually not fair to SIGA and to FSIN to not release the results of that agreement, or that investigation, before the new agreement was signed.

It looks like cover-up. It looks like lack of accountability on the part of his government. Perhaps he's again protecting some of his colleagues on his side, as he has in the past, from proper scrutiny. It leaves more questions unanswered that shouldn't have to be unanswered.

So I ask the Premier: why would he show such poor judgment, sign a 25-year agreement — agreement that's far too long — before the police investigation is made public and proper actions can be taken because of wrongdoing on the part of his government just as much as on the part of SIGA? Why has he been so irresponsible?

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Chair, the Leader of the Opposition, when he attended the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, in that forum he stood up and he praised the FSIN and SIGA for addressing the governance challenges of their authority. He praised them.

Then he has his MLAs stand up in this House questioning them on a daily basis. Now the member from Wood River asks exactly the right question: what is wrong with that? When you've got the leader of the party saying one thing in the context of the FSIN and the rest of the party in the legislature saying something quite different, I don't think it's very hard to answer the question, what's wrong with that.

I'll tell you, it's the height of hypocrisy, that's what it is.

You've got the leader trying to pretend that they're supportive of the First Nations people, and supportive of the First Nations people involvement in gaming when we know doggone well they don't support them. That they come into this House, and through innuendo and question would challenge the First Nations people of gaming. And they know it. They know what they're doing. And that's what's wrong. That's what's wrong with it.

And you know what, Mr. Chair, they've been caught. They've been caught because here it is, here's the kind of headlines: "Sask Party flip-flops on the casino talks." It's one position here and one position over here. He says . . . he says that he accepts they've made improvements in governance. He praises them. But then he says to me right now we should not sign a 25-year agreement. We should not do that because, he implies, there's something wrong.

Mr. Chair, we respect our Aboriginal brothers and sisters and neighbours in this province, and we will work with them as we have in the past, and we will work with them in the present, and we will work them in the future, whether it's in gaming, whether it's in education, whether it's in health care or self-governance.

And it may very well be, it may very well be that the First Nations of Saskatchewan are going to listen very, very carefully to their chiefs. Here is the comment from one of the chiefs of the First Nation on this party's position on gaming, quote:

It seems to me every one of these people (Sask Party MLAs) have a different line, a different story to tell. If Hermanson is the premier-in-waiting, he should bring his people into line.

Mr. Chair, invite the member from Wood River to get on his feet, ask the questions from his feet, and I'll be very, very glad to get him on the record.

What is the position of the Saskatchewan Party when it comes to First Nations and gaming? In fact what is the position of the Saskatchewan Party when it comes to working with First Nations people generally?

The position of this government is to work with our First Nations brothers and sisters and neighbours in partnership. That's what we've done. I and this government are very proud of a 25-year agreement negotiated, signed, that will take us forward in that aspect of First Nations activity and in many aspects of the life of this province.

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

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Chair, I move the committee report progress and, as agreed, move to Labour estimates.

(17:30)

**The Chair:** — Order. Why is the member on his feet?

**Mr. Weekes:** — Leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

## INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you. I'd like to introduce a gentleman in the Speaker's gallery by the name of Ken Finlynson. He is a constituent of mine. He lives near the Battlefords. I'd like to welcome you to the House today.

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

## COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

### General Revenue Fund

Labour

Vote 20

### Subvote (LA01)

**The Chair:** — I recognize the minister to introduce her officials.

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Seated to my right is John Boyd, acting deputy minister; directly behind John is Dawn McKibben, director of human resources and administration; and sitting behind the bar is Glen McRorie, acting executive director, labour services division; also Jan Joel, acting director, Status of Women office. Then we have Allan Walker, executive director, occupational health and safety division; Pat Parenteau, policy analyst from the Department of Labour; and Gail Kruger, vice-president, budget and finance, Workers' Compensation Board.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you. I'd like to thank the minister and welcome her officials to the legislature today. This is the fourth time that we have met in estimates.

I have in my hands approximately 300 petitions, signatures on petitions from the Voice of the Blue Rose Advocacy and I was unable to present them in the legislature because the wording wasn't quite right. So I'd like to present these petitions to the minister this evening. They're from people that are concerned about citizens that have been cut off WCB (Workers' Compensation Board) and SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) benefits.

Also the other item I'd like to discuss with the minister is a letter I just received, and I'd just like to read a bit of it. The letter says:

As (I) requested . . . (in) writing . . . in hope that you will be able to find . . . (some way) I have been refused access to my W.C.B file.

And it goes on to say that she's given written permission from an advocate to access this file. And the file has been given in part to this person, but a large part of it has been blocked out and much of it is missing. And she says the information from the doctor is missing from the file and so on.

I would like to also send a copy of this letter to the minister, but could you . . . I'd like to ask the minister, what is the government's position on requests for their files from WCB?

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Mr. Chair, I'd like to thank the member

opposite for the petitions on behalf of Blue Rose Advocacy and also the letter. A client has access to their complete file but it has to be a written request to the board. But they have access to their complete file.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you. In that letter — you haven't had a chance to read it of course, I understand that — but they have written in writing to access the file and they received parts of the file. The problem is that it's incomplete and portions of it is blacked out. So I was wondering . . . You know, technically they did receive the file. They just don't have all the complete information in the file and parts of it have been blocked out. And I was just wondering if . . . is that standard procedure of the department and Workers' Comp?

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Mr. Chair, to the member opposite, it's . . . when you look at the WCB deals with about 38,000 cases in a year, it's pretty tough to comment on one individual case. So if you can pass over any information we can look into it further for you.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Well thank you. That's really the intent of the letter and I'll leave that with you. If you could look after this situation . . . The person has given the WCB client number as well as her phone number and address, if you would look into that.

At this time I'd like to turn over questioning to my colleague.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Madam Minister, and to your officials, I have a number of questions on what area . . . the area that used to be the Women's Secretariat. And I received the global information from your department earlier and they talked about . . . I think it's 11.5 employees that were in that department and yet when I look through the actual personnel report I see names that I don't believe I . . . were part of the secretariat. Can you explain to me why there is . . . why these people are listed in the globals as members of the . . . working for the Women's Secretariat?

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Sorry for the length of time. I'm trying to figure out how the best way to explain this.

But with the Women's Secretariat changing and moving as a unit within the Department of Labour, with the structure change, these positions . . . some were maintained, some were posted, and we're in the process right now of filling the vacant positions and establishing the unit within the Department of Labour.

**Ms. Draude:** — Madam Minister, there's 11.5 personnel that were employed, I believe your globals say, as of March 31. And when I look through the information I see that there is a gentleman who is on your personnel report, a senior ministerial assistant — I don't even see the deputy minister. And I believe earlier, just before the budget came down, there was a lady that had been appointed as the deputy minister of the Women's Secretariat. I don't see her name on this information sheet. I don't know where that person has gone to.

And the 11.5 people that were basically let go when the secretariat was moved into the Department of Labour as of budget day they, unless somebody filled in for them overnight,

they should . . . there shouldn't have been anybody there, I believe.

Can you please clarify the number of personnel that was in the Women's Secretariat position as of March 31?

(17:45)

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Thank you very much for your patience, Mr. Chair.

As of March 31 of this year, there was 11.5 FTEs (full-time equivalents). Two of those positions were vacant and there was one that was off on . . . it was an educational leave. It's not positive as to the type of the leave, but we think it was an educational leave.

Moving into the new structure, into the Status of Women office within the Department of Labour, there is a director position, senior policy analyst, a pay equity policy analyst, and also a senior administrative assistant. So those four positions were moved over from the Women's Secretariat. Plus there was a communications person from the Women's Secretariat that was moved into the Department of Labour's communication branch. And also a position from the secretariat that was absorbed into our . . . or administration within the Department of Labour.

Also when we look at the . . . the deputy minister of the Women's Secretariat has moved into Executive Council. And that is part of the overall strategy of the changes in the Women's Secretariat, that along with the advisers and policy analysts within . . . that have been designated within each of the departments, we also have Joan Pederson that is in Exec Council and also serves that role at that level.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. So there are five women that have moved from the Women's Secretariat into the women . . . status of women area within the Department of Labour from what you just told me.

But, Madam Minister, many of us are aware of the fact that as of budget day I believe there was eight or nine people were basically sent home with pay for 60 days until they — or laid off — until a position could be found for them within Public Service Commission. And I think as of today there's still four of those people that are actually on a contingency layoff right now or are waiting for another position to be filled.

So there are . . . you've hired new people to take . . . some new people to take the place of some of the people that were in the secretariat. Other people have been shuffled around. And we are actually paying through your department for a number of people to be staying home, waiting for a job . . . a position to come up for them. Is that correct?

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — There is a couple of positions that are still going through the hiring process, and there is still some positions that are going through the bumping process and looking for appropriate positions. I'm not sure if the definite number is four in our department, but there is still some from the Women's Secretariat that are in that process of finding a spot.

**Ms. Draude:** — Madam Minister, so there's four or five people that have been paid since budget day, March 27, and they were laid off at that time. So how much money has been spent by your department for people who have basically been home since budget day?

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — First off, just a couple of comments in clarification. As soon as budget day came those people were not laid off. There was a period of transition where the Women's Secretariat carried on. They didn't move, physically move, into the Department of Labour until — it was later on in April, towards the end of April — by the time the space was rearranged for them to move in and the shifting was done.

So it wasn't like budget day the job's ended. There was that transition period that has carried on.

**Ms. Draude:** — Okay then, defining it in a different way, there are some people who had to . . . weren't actually working within the building until the transition period was . . . until the actual locations for them were set out and a job description was fulfilled. But they were paid even though they weren't working. How many of those employees are we talking about, and how much money did it cost us, and is it still costing us for people who are either stayed home during that time or are still at home right now?

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — To the member opposite, I don't have a breakdown of that right now. And we would have to look at notice, when notice was given, severance, all the other things that go along with the agreements that they would have been working under. But I can get that information for you and pass it along to you.

But I don't . . . We have yearly salaries but we don't have it broken down here with us.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. It's an issue that I know you're aware of because it's in the news right now and there's a number of people discussing how many people are actually at home and being paid. So tomorrow we have the end of Executive Council and I'm sure that the information could be available and I'll have our leader ask the Premier that tomorrow.

And just one other issue. I'm very hopeful that the people that are still maintained within the Status of Women have the training and the education that goes along with gender equity and goes along with the issues that are going to be affecting women of this province. And I'm sure that when this department was put together, it was put together in a way that these issues are going to be at the forefront and that was the important part of issues in your mind when the plan was developed.

So maybe when you're getting this information, you could also tell me the names of the people that are there and what their qualifications are. Thank you.

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — We'll try and have this ready for estimates tomorrow afternoon, for Executive Council.

And I just want to say to the member, it's not quite as cut and

dried. We always try and give consideration. Many of these employees are long term, have been with the Secretariat for a while. So there's always consideration given that we are placing them in a job that is appropriate and try and make the best match possible for their skills and the jobs that are available. So it's not always a quick process.

But thank you for the questions and we'll get the information for you for tomorrow.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair, to the minister. Since The Construction Industry Labour Relations Amendment Act, 2000 came into force, how many workers of non-union construction companies have been forced to pay union dues?

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — None would be forced that I know of.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Mr. Chair, well I understand that the whole point of the labour relations amendment Act was to make employees that were not unionized have to pay union dues and follow the union contracts. So I am surprised. I find that difficult to believe that there were none. Any company that was bidding on any jobs, on a Crown job, that was not unionized would . . . the employees would have to pay the union dues accordingly, unless you're saying that no non-unionized company got any construction jobs.

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — The CCTA (Crown Construction Tendering Agreement) is gone, so that no longer exists. And The Construction Industry Labour Relations Act that was amended last year, the changes that were made that did away with double breasting of companies and spinoff companies, there is a number of those applications that are currently before the LRB (Labour Relations Board). But to my understanding the companies would be as is or as they were previously because there hasn't been any decisions come forward that I'm currently aware of from the LRB.

**Mr. Weekes:** — The budget of the labour support service has increased dramatically. Going back to '98-99, it was 1.67 million; '99-2000, 1.941 million; 2000-2001, 2.315 million; and estimated this coming year, 2.507 million. Why are the . . . has that budget been increased so dramatically?

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — There's no significant additions or any functions that were taken away from labour support services during the first couple of years that you had mentioned. So that would account, increases in salary. I mean there may be some minor staffing changes in there but nothing major.

In the last budget, the last budget year, it would have been the bringing in of the Women's Secretariat into the Status of Women office because that's the category that they would fall under.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Chair, to the minister, the number of employees in '98-99 was 26. In '99-2000, 27; and 2000 to 2001, 29.5. I was wondering, has the introduction of The Construction Industry Labour Relations Amendment Act have anything to do with the increased number of employees in the labour support services?

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — No, nothing to do with it at all.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. To the minister, what policy does the government follow for construction procurement?

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — That would be a question that you would have to address to the minister of SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation).

**Mr. Weekes:** — Madam . . . to the minister, through the Chair, do you have the information on the fee schedules concerning tendering?

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — I'm a little bit surprised here. The Department of Labour really works in the regulatory area and OH&S (occupational health and safety), that type of thing. But when it gets into procurement and tendering through the government and through the arms of government, you would have to direct those questions to the Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Property Management. That's where it would be handled.

(18:00)

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you. To the minister: how many court cases are there pending right now concerning applications, well over the whole issue of The Construction Industry Labour Relations Amendment Act? I understand there is some legal action being taken concerning the Act. And I was wondering is the minister aware of how many and what is the intent of these court actions?

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — There is no court cases that I know of. But there is seven applications before the LRB right now, the Labour Relations Board, but no court cases as your question asked.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you. I'd like to turn my next question to Workers' Compensation Board. As we know there is a \$69 million actuarial adjustment made. I would just like to ask the minister, how is the WCB planning to replenish the injury fund that was depleted by last year's actuarial adjustment?

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — The shortfall that occurred last year, the \$55.8 million, the . . . and also accounted for in . . . with the loss in investment revenue, and the \$69 million actuarial adjustment which were covered out of the injury fund and the economic stabilization fund. There's still 50 million in the stabilization fund and we're keeping close tabs on this year how things are progressing.

We're just barely out of or coming to the end of the second quarter. So what we're going to have to do is wait until later in the summer and early in the fall, that's when the calculations are done, to see if there will be a need for any increases or not. The board has made a commitment that there will be no mid-term or mid-year premium adjustments in 2002. They will stay as is.

**Mr. Weekes:** — What is the minimum amount of money that is . . . that is needed to . . . Well obviously, there's none left in the injury fund, but what is the minimum amount of money that has to be kept in those associated funds to keep the WCB in operation?

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Mr. Chair, the reserve funds — and there is a few of them — through the legislation it's left to the board to determine the amounts that are kept in each reserve fund. So it's board policy that regulates those, and they each have a different formula that they follow or different percentage that they keep in there depending on the reason for that fund. The only requirements by the legislation is that the WCB remain 100 per cent funded for future liabilities or liabilities in the future.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you. Well the injury fund is zero now, so I don't know what the board policy is on the minimum amount that has to be kept in that fund because it is zero. The other item, what this all speaks to, is the distinct possibility of major increases in premiums to the employers who fund WCB. And the CEO (chief executive officer), Peter Federko, has told the CFIB (Canadian Federation of Independent Business) that business owners can expect a double digit increase in premiums next year. He's on record saying that. Just like the minister's comment on that.

Given the circumstances of what's been happening, how could there not be increases in WCB premiums and also taking into account the effects of Bill 52 which will add extra cost to WCB?

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Mr. Chair, I know going through the material that we have it's really premature to speculate on what the premiums may be in 2003. The WCB actuary will get into more detail as the summer progresses, and early in the fall there will be a series of rate setting consultations with stakeholders, with talks towards next year. And better financial information will be available by then.

And again I'd like to say that there is no mid-year premium increases scheduled for the WCB in Saskatchewan. And I know there's other provinces . . . I know we sometimes sit and look at the situation that we're in and with the costs with . . . you asked of Bill 72, it will be a one-time cost of \$33 million. I know there's been figures batted around anywhere from 33, 35 to \$100 million but the cost will be a \$33 million one-time cost.

And when we look at that the WCB is still sitting quite well. They are still 100 per cent funded. And you can look to the provinces on either side of us. Alberta's premiums in this year have rose 27 per cent and their premiums are subsidized and they're still raising . . . rose the 27 per cent. And Saskatchewan's average increase and the premiums is one of the lowest in Canada. And the increase in this year was the 2.4 per cent increase, so that's quite a bit of difference. We've managed well and managed through some tough times in the '90s. Rebates were paid out, the last one being in 2001 when there was large revenue from investment income and it was felt that it should be paid back to the employers, which it was.

So I think we've managed through some very difficult times. And when you look at the other WCBs, BC (British Columbia) had a \$286 million deficit in 2001 and they're expecting that to reach nearly \$1 billion by 2005. So we're sitting quite well. The board has managed well and I'm sure we will continue to do so.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you to the minister, through the Chair. Again your CEO, Mr. Federko, obviously has a better feel of

what's happening in WCB and he has said that he expects double-digit increases next year. I understand there won't be any increases this year but in 2003 he's saying there will be increases. Besides a \$69 million shortfall in the actuary, you also have the injury fund being reduced to zero.

Looking back in the introduction to the annual report it basically . . . in 1992 the same introduction put WCB basically in a state of crisis. And today I think we're probably worse off than we were in 1992 as far as how Workers' Compensation is being run. So I just have to say that it seems that possibly WCB is not being run quite as soundly as the minister would like to leave the impression, and your CEO already has stated that there will be double-digit increases. And it's something that the employers of this province need to know in advance and be able to deal with, because this obviously is paid by the employers 100 per cent and affects their businesses quite a bit.

(18:15)

A government press release dated March 25, 2002 stated that an objective evaluation of the performance of WCB's early intervention program was carried out. Could the minister tell me what were the findings of this early intervention program review?

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — When you're talking about the early intervention program, Pricewaterhouse is doing the assessment and the committee isn't expected to report until mid-2003.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you. I assume the purpose of the early intervention program is to decrease the time an injured worker is laid off. And as we see from the annual report, the length of time for injury claims has increased. Again, Madam Minister, it seems that 2003 is too far away to make changes in order to improve this problem that WCB is having.

The Dorsey report pointed out that injured workers who have had their injuries exacerbated or complicated due to professional negligence on behalf of their caregivers while receiving health care have no common law remedy against that professional . . . profession.

And I understand that the minister has reviewed this before a decision would be rendered on correcting this. Has the minister completed that review?

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

**Mr. Forbes:** — With leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

## INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you very much. I'd like to welcome two guests in your gallery, the Speaker's gallery, to our proceedings tonight.

We're talking about Labour, the Department of Labour. And I'd like to ask all MLAs to give them a warm welcome.

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



## COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

**General Revenue Fund  
Labour  
Vote 20**

**Subvote (LA01)**

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Thank you, Deputy Chair. For the member opposite, I want to make some clarification. The Pricewaterhouse work is more of a research project on the effectiveness of the early intervention program. That's the one that won't come till later, in 2003.

But there is a series of work being done by Schubert and Schwartz and it's more to do with caregivers and it's more the practical side of the early intervention; working with the physio, the therapists, how we can speed up the process and the access that clients currently have and what they need. And those recommendations will be coming forward at the end of the summer, early into the fall. So that may be the one that you were referring to.

And also, when you were talking about the recommendation that is contained in the COR (committee of review) report — that was COR, not Dorsey, I believe — the common law and dealing with medical practitioners, was in committee of review. That's an ongoing . . . has been a long-standing concern in many areas and it's going to be ongoing consultations with the medical community over the next little while. With session, there hasn't been a great deal of work done on it currently.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you. Minister, if you . . . if the minister has been doing a review, I would like to know who she has . . . she has been consulting with concerning that issue.

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — As I said to the member opposite, there hasn't been a great deal of work, as you can understand, with the committee of review being given to me early in January.

And the work that was done — laying out the steps that we wanted to take to implement the recommendations or the number of recommendations that were being implemented through policy and with the board, things that went back for further consultation. And there was a portion that was housekeeping and a portion that was set aside for further consultation. This is one of those.

So once the session has ended, we will have to get into discussions with the SMA (Saskatchewan Medical Association) and also the College of Physicians and Surgeons to get their feedback on this, and to look at it more closely.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you. To the Chair, the College of Physicians and Surgeons has already publicly said that they . . . that there's a flaw in the Act and it should be remedied.

I believe it's just not acceptable that just because it's a WCB claim, that if there's a doctor has been negligent in an operation that that person cannot sue that doctor for damages. And I believe considering that even the physicians and surgeons are wanting this Act changed, that the minister should move quickly in that area.

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — While the member is correct that in the recommendation the College of Physicians and Surgeons was very supportive of this recommendation, the SMA is not, so there's going to have to be some consultations done.

Also we have to look at the scope of the recommendation. There may be more areas that would fall into this same category where an employer by virtue of being an employer, even though he is giving . . . or he or she is giving medical care is immune from any kind of prosecution or malpractice, I guess it would be called, because they are an employer under the terms of the legislation and the Act.

So it's not quite that cut and dried, but it is something that we have to do more work on.

**Ms. Bakken:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair . . . Deputy Chair, and Madam Minister. If an employee of the government takes a full-time job with the union, who pays their salary?

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — I would assume it would depend on contracts but you would have to talk to someone in the Public Service Commission. It's not something I would cover.

**Ms. Bakken:** — You would have no information or . . . I mean this is not a practice across government that is consistent, if an employee of the Government of Saskatchewan takes a full-time job with their union, whether they continue to be paid by the government or are they paid by the union?

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Just going by my own experience, and it's not that great deal with taking leaves of absence when you're working for the government, with any job anywhere in the province or anywhere probably in Canada, if you took a leave of absence to go do another job, your new employer would be the one that would pay your salary and benefits.

**Ms. Bakken:** — So, Madam Minister, am I to take from what you said then that if someone employed by the Government of Saskatchewan went to work for the union they would take a leave of absence and the union would then pay their wages?

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — This isn't an area that the Department of Labour would be involved in but I'm told that it is . . . it would be paid by their new employer, benefits and all.

**Ms. Bakken:** — They would be paid by the employer. Madam Minister, it's been brought to my attention that within the Government of Saskatchewan there is an employee of the government that has gone to work for the union full-time, in fact I have the documentation, and the Government of Saskatchewan is continuing to pay this employee but they are working full-time for the union.

Not only are they working full-time for the union, they are also receiving several additional perks, I guess you would call them, from the government and they are a parking pass, a cell phone, a CVA (Central Vehicle Agency). They have an office that is paid for by the government that is fully equipped with a phone, computer, filing cabinets. They are also paid for their travel time as it's included with their work hours.

I'm wondering if you could comment on this and how the

Government of Saskatchewan justifies paying an employee that is working full-time for the union and still being paid by the government?

(18:30)

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — I'll actually need more information on the job to be able to give you more appropriate . . . or find out. I know in some cases if you are on a leave of absence what will happen was your salary will be continued and it will be billed out to the new employer who will pay back the government. It would be done in a roundabout way if it's not a permanent job, may be a temporary.

I don't know the circumstance so it's tough to give you a flat out answer when I don't have the details of the job. In fact it's just about impossible. And especially being it isn't even in . . . it isn't covered by the Department of Labour. That would be the Public Service Commission.

**Ms. Bakken:** — Madam Minister, could I just ask you then for a commitment to meet on this issue and to have it resolved?

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — That's not a problem. Any time. If you want to get together sometime in the House or tomorrow, not a problem, and then we can find out for you.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. To the minister, I'd like to thank the minister and her staff for coming out. Possibly if your House Leader and our House Leader can make another agreement I'd gladly come back and go for another hour or two tomorrow, but you never know. So thank you.

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Well I'd like to thank the members opposite for their questions and their interest in the Department of Labour. Working people are everywhere in this province and the topics that we discussed tonight touch on all of us throughout the province, so I'm glad, pleased at the interest. I'll get the information that I promised, tomorrow hopefully, and would look forward to meeting with you on any other issues that may be a problem.

And also, Mr. Deputy Chair, I'd just like to thank my officials for coming out. And it's been a busy session and they have worked hard so I'm really appreciative of all their support over the last few months.

Subvote (LA01) agreed to.

Subvotes (LA02), (LA03), (LA05), (LA04), (LA07), (LA06), (LA08) agreed to.

Vote 20 agreed to.

**General Revenue Fund  
Social Services  
Vote 36**

**Subvote (SS01)**

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think the officials who are here today have been here before, but let me introduce them to you and the members of the committee. To my

immediate right is Deputy Minister Bonnie Durnford, and behind her is executive director of income support, Phil Walsh. And beside Mr. Walsh is executive director financial management, Mr. Don Allen.

Behind the bar, Mr. Chair, are Larry Chaykowski, executive director of housing operations; Craig Marchinko, director of social housing; Marilyn Hedlund, associate executive director income support; Deborah Bryck, director of child care; and Dorothea Warren, associate executive director of family services; Larry Moffatt, executive director of community living; and finally Peggy Buckley, acting executive director of Saskatchewan career employment services.

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and good evening to the minister and his officials. Mr. Minister, I just would like to start by asking you to clarify, I guess, for the people of Humboldt and area what your department's rationale was in making a decision to close the Humboldt territorial office for the housing authority. We have had a number of petitions put forward in this Assembly from people throughout the area and even from Saskatoon to try to keep that territory operations office in Humboldt.

We've also had the mayor of Humboldt, town council, and chamber of commerce and so on, petition your government to maintain it and with some very good rationale behind it. We have heard from two different officials, I guess, from your department and each of those officials had sort of a different story as far as cost savings go.

And from one of the documents that we received there would be in fact an increase of \$22,000 a year if that office is moved from Humboldt into a central area which is Saskatoon. So in view of the facts that there's going to be added travel costs for different service providers to go out of Saskatoon and to go extensive, extensive miles, I guess we could say, and when we look at the whole picture, there's going to be an increased cost of \$22,000 per year.

And it seems to me that if we're trying to ensure that rural Saskatchewan has an opportunity to grow in a very vibrant fashion and if we consider the fact that Humboldt is one of the fastest growing cities in Saskatchewan — and has been stated as only one of the three cities that has grown — I'm really very disappointed in fact, and I know the people around Humboldt are, that the minister has, I guess, refused to consider or reconsider this decision to close that office. So if the minister could please comment for me I'd appreciate it.

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Chair, I thank the hon. member for her question. And first of all, related to the figure that she refers to in terms of the saving, what she describes as the figure that has been identified and communicated to those who have inquired of the difference in saving between two options — the closing of the Humboldt territory housing operation or the closing of the Saskatoon territory housing operation. Mr. Chair, I think to put it into perspective, maybe I'll give just a bit of background and then summarize, I think probably most efficiently, by just reading into the record the answer to the hon. member's question that she put to me in a letter and that I responded to her on June 17.

But the decision to close one of our territorial housing operations was driven by the desire to reduce the operations of government as was announced by the Premier at the beginning of the session, and that was encompassed in our budget that is before the legislature now.

In doing that, we followed the guidelines of trying to maximize the reductions in downsizing. And I know that the hon. member and her colleagues have been critical of the downsizing effort, claiming that, as we heard earlier today, that it wasn't large enough, didn't go deep enough.

However one of the facts of the matter is, Mr. Chair, when you're downsizing then it affects people. We strove to, as much as possible, to downsize with the management positions and also to maximize the use of vacant positions. And that's in fact what happened here.

As we reduced the number of territorial support offices from seven to six, geographically the one that was the easiest to accommodate by distributing it to other territories was the Humboldt territory. And it also had the advantage of minimizing the actual effect on real people's lives.

The decision was made, Mr. Chair, to reach an annualized \$342,000 saving for the operations of Sask Housing. And I think I can probably summarize the total decision in a copy . . . by reading into the record the response I wrote to the hon. member in regard to her letter asking this precise question. And which has also, as she pointed out, has been asked by the mayor and the chamber of commerce, and to whom I have already responded sometime ago.

The key reason for implementation of this initiative is the province's continued search for internal efficiencies and reduction of administration costs. Of all the options considered, the consolidation of the Saskatoon and Humboldt territories is the most practical restructuring option.

Consolidation maintains reasonable travel times to the majority of housing authorities within each territory. Other options that were explored would have entailed a massive reorganization of housing authorities and/or the movement of several territory housing operation locations.

Mr. Chair, this option as well has the least human impact. Of the five positions in Humboldt, two are currently vacant. The three remaining staff will have the option of filling the two positions available for the ongoing management of the Humboldt Housing Authority as well as other opportunities within the housing network.

All three employees can be accommodated with employment in Humboldt. And, Mr. Chair, I think that summarizes the rationale for the decision that we took in order to increase the operational and management efficiencies of Sask Housing.

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. To the minister, Mr. Minister, your explanation I guess is your explanation. And from the information you have, you have provided the Assembly and the people of Humboldt with the rationale for your decision.

However, when I spoke with the people working in the operations office, the territory operations office, there was some, I guess, conflicting information that they had on, first of all, the numbers of people that are presently working there.

There was also a different understanding that they received when they were told about the closing of the territory office that some of the information they had was that, for instance, one of the personnel there would have to be moving out of Humboldt in order to maintain a job the same status that they had in Humboldt. So if they would remain to work for the Humboldt office, they would not in fact have a job of the same status or salary.

I guess when you look at the number of people working in Saskatoon and you look at the number that probably, you know, should be working in Humboldt, I would think that probably even maybe more than two or three should be working there and one more in addition to have a full complement of services. We could, I think, be more effective and more efficient in serving the people in the large area that now exists that are being served through the Humboldt territory operations office.

It seems to me, Mr. Minister, when there's such a very close margin, a close margin as far as costs, that this kind of a very unsettling move for the staff there may not be worth it. I can understand and I do agree that government should look at where they can cut back, but I think the efficiency should be to make sure that people that are working in the system are doing their job competently and fully. And in this case, the people in that territory office were certainly very efficient and effective, and I think that they served well and certainly served the government well.

So I continue today, Mr. Minister, to ask you and your department to please reconsider this because I don't think . . . I think the costs of doing it are too high, both human cost . . . and we're going to incur certainly more financial cost because of the high travel costs that are associated.

(18:45)

The office is already there; it's being maintained in a building that's going to be used anyhow. There isn't a great deal of costs other than for the personnel there and I think that it's . . . when you look at things like utility costs and that kind of thing to keep the building open, well some of that is already being borne by having the Humboldt office in place.

And I think when we weigh that against the high travel costs that are going to be incurred, sending different people, personnel out of Saskatoon, it certainly is going to be more than what you in fact are looking at right now.

So I'm asking the minister if he would seriously reconsider this move. As I mentioned, it's going to be very detrimental. When something like this happens and families have to move, it has a ripple effect on the community. There's an uprooting of children from schools. There's also just a great cost to the community.

And many of these people have certainly plugged into different areas of the community in different service organizations and

service groups that really allow the community to function well. And this is the place they call home. And I think it's something that I would like to see the government reconsider very seriously.

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Chair, I appreciate the hon. member's point of view and she has the luxury of looking at it from a single point of view. My responsibility as minister responsible for Sask Housing of course is to look at the operations of Housing and its obligation to meet the needs of the province.

First of all, as I pointed out before, the objective here is to find some operational efficiencies, which was the whole objective in the downsizing as announced by the Premier, and that we were able to do it in the most humane manner because of the fact that there are two vacancies.

I also understand that three other people who are employed with Sask Housing with the regional operational office, the territorial operational office, whose service I deeply appreciate, Mr. Chair, and I'm very pleased that it would appear that all three will have opportunity to continue to be employed in Humboldt. So I'm pleased that it works out that way.

As the hon. member points out, for somebody to move — wherever it is — is upsetting. And in order to achieve the operational efficiencies, it would involve making changes somewhere. And this is by far the . . . involves the least amount of uprooting of people who work. And I'm sure that the hon. member would be just as sensitive about, say five people in Saskatoon having to uproot as she would for three in Humboldt. However, Mr. Chair, at the end of the day what we are achieving through the system is a saving of some \$342,000 annually when it's fully realized. And that will enable us in order to assist us in our objectives of providing housing for Saskatchewan people which is by no means, Mr. Chair, a small task.

I do remind the House that Sask Housing, through its various means, supports some 32,000 households through housing supports in various ways, shapes or forms and that we currently identify through the help of Stats Canada some additional 56,000 households that are in need of housing support. We announced just a week and a half ago, about 10 days ago, our agreement with the federal government which will enable us, we believe, to address about a thousand of those, and that's a big step but still by no means does it address all of our housing needs.

So it is with regret on the impact it has on individuals or on any community but also with the responsibilities that come with administration of Executive Council that we make the operation in the interest of serving the housing needs of the province and finding the greatest amount of efficiency we possibly can in order to meet that important responsibility we have to those who are low and moderate income in the province of Saskatchewan.

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and Mr. Minister. I'd just like to change my line of questioning right now and draw your attention to the recommendations from the Special Committee to Prevent the Abuse and Exploitation of Children through the Sex Trade. There are a couple of recommendations that I would

like to talk to.

Recommendation no. 10 spoke of the Attorney General setting up a joint RCMP- (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) city police unit in Regina, Saskatoon and P.A. (Prince Albert) to investigate and lay charges against johns and pimps. And this would be I guess equivalent . . . it was suggested it be sort of an equivalent to the integrated drug unit that was set up a couple of years ago and that the provincial government take responsibility for setting that up.

Mr. Minister, I'm just wondering if your government has considered getting on with this recommendation. It seems to me to be one that's really very necessary and that would immediately net some really great results as the integrated drug unit has. But it needs to have special funding by your government, and I want to know today if your government is looking into that.

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Chair, we had discussion about that recommendation as we did about all the recommendations provided by the all-party committee of the legislature. And on that particular one, the advice that we received was that it would be more effective in the long run to enable the expertise of police operations who were currently in existence and are patrolling in communities that they're responsible for, of course including the stroll areas, and that it would be . . . the advice we received that it would be more effective to enable and enhance their ability to deal with problems as they come across them than to have a special unit that would be focused on that task exclusively or primarily.

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, the recommendations of the committee recommended that there be safe houses in all the major cities, as well as the consideration for safe houses in smaller cities throughout the province where it was evident that they could be very useful — for instance, North Battleford and even Kindersley.

I'm wondering why, Mr. Minister, your government's decision to put money towards a safe house in Regina . . . you know why particularly Regina was chosen and Prince Albert for instance was not? I understand and know that there is a safe house in Saskatoon, a voluntary safe house. And I've understood from the presenters to the committee that there was a need for a safe house in Prince Albert and Regina also, and your government chose to announce one in Regina. Why not P.A.?

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Chair, the advice we received when dealing within the department, those who are dealing with kids who are being sexually exploited, and in the context of the budget that monies that we were able to make available, was that the clear priority was to provide the safe house in Regina specifically, because that's where the need was the greatest. As the hon. member correctly points out, Mr. Chair, there is a safe house in Saskatoon and there is \$300,000 in the budget that we are dealing with right now for establishment of a safe house here in Regina.

That safe house is designated to be operated by First Nations. We see that as very important in the operations of it in order to be as sensitive as possible to the needs for kids who are at the safe house to feel secure and protected and to begin the healing

process.

Mr. Chair, in terms of Prince Albert, there was a stronger sense from those who are providing the services in Prince Albert now that the coordinated community programs are doing a fairly effective job of meeting the needs of kids. And certainly comparing the needs in Prince Albert to Regina, there was no question that the Regina need was more extensive.

I would also point out to the members of the committee, Mr. Chair, that in the strategy there are also 31 designated spaces to provide care for young people who come to the attention of the department as children who have been sexually exploited, and those will be distributed around the province. So by no means are the safe houses the only resources that are available to these kids. But there is, I'm pleased to say, that — in spite of the difficult budget that in the circumstances that everyone understands, we don't need to repeat here — that we are able to designate a new \$300,000 for a safe house to be established in Regina.

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. To the minister: Mr. Minister, another one of the recommendations — and I think that probably I should have or could have put this question to the Minister of Justice; however, there is always time limitations on budget estimates so I didn't get to ask it of him — but there was a recommendation on the publication of offenders' names. And the recommendation stated that, if necessary, the government should help with the costs associated with publication of offenders' names in newspapers and that it should not necessarily be left up to the media to do that or the newspapers to do that.

I'm wondering again, in your deliberations with your different cabinet ministers regarding these recommendations, if you are considering putting forward that recommendation and getting it into action.

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Chair, under the circumstances of the extreme demand that we have for resources to deal with this and other social programs, I'm simply not prepared to remove monies from programs directly in support of kids in order to pay for publication of names.

I do have a sense of optimism and I think a fair degree of confidence that, given the profile that this issue has in our province at this point in time, that I suspect we can count on our good friends in the media to be fairly responsive, I think, in terms of bringing publicity to individuals who would find themselves officially determined to have been involved in the sexual exploitation of kids.

So I think we can count on the news media doing what they do to bring attention and publicity, unwanted publicity, to those offenders, Mr. Chair, and that I don't think . . . in my judgment, it would not be a wise expenditure of the public purse to take money away from programs in support of the kids in order to do that. And that's simply one of the priority decisions that you make when you're Executive Council and I made it.

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, again I'd like to just change the line of questioning here just a little bit. I'm somewhat concerned because of information that has been

brought forward to me about the effectiveness of programs at places like the Paul Dojack Centre.

It's been brought to my attention that a lot of youth that are in the Paul Dojack Centre are suffering from FAS and FAE, and that oftentimes there are rules put to them that they may not understand or that they have no concept of how to follow them. But nonetheless, the same sort of procedure goes on and on and, you know, it may be a merit system that cannot be achieved because of a lack of ability to understand how to meet these objectives that would give them merits, merit points.

Is your department cognizant of that or aware of that and have you been able to find any, I guess, more effective programs that might deal in a better manner with youth that are experiencing FAS or FAE?

(19:00)

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Chair, as the hon. member is most likely aware, I think, Paul Dojack Centre is no longer within the jurisdiction of Social Services and is in the Department of Corrections and Public Safety. So that all of corrections are now — both adult and youth — are under the one department of Corrections and Public Safety. But having said so, it would be inappropriate to talk about what they are doing now or what they're planning to do.

However, having said that, Mr. Chair, I certainly can comment that prior to . . . it was under Social Services before making the move the beginning of the month, of beginning of April. And at that time we were certainly sensitive to the need to have a relationship between the capacity of young people who understand the responsibility and the kind of programs that they receive in order to encourage and support being a responsible citizen when they return to their communities.

And there certainly was some effort being put into that, some careful looking at program that I understand that nothing has changed, that that initiative is continuing and in a priority kind of way. However I'm unable to be specific and don't have an official here who can assist me in responding in a specific way as Paul Dojack Centre is under the jurisdiction of Corrections and Public Safety.

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, welcome to your officials. Mr. Minister, the other day we were talking a bit about housing since your department is now responsible for housing, and I would take that that includes seniors housing as well.

One of the concerns that was raised recently with me, and we raised it actually in the Assembly I believe about a week ago, regarding the increase in fees. And I believe it was talked about 4 per cent this year, 4 for . . . over the next, and 4 per cent over the next three years, a total of four years; which simplistically you could say would be a 16 per cent increase. But in reality it's probably going to be a little larger than that because if we got 4 per cent this year, and that increase comes into effect, and then another 4 per cent next year, it's going to be on that increase.

And the concern is that it may drive up the rental fees to the point that it'd be difficult for Sask Housing to even fill some of

its seniors housing as other units may now be available that may fit the need. Now I know we've discussed this and Social Services has a policy — Sask Housing had a policy as well — of charging according to the ability to pay. And we don't have a problem with that, but if these fees come into effect, Mr. Minister, there's some real concerns that there's going to be a lot of housing units sitting somewhat vacant.

So I'm wondering what your department is doing or what it has been contemplating in view of the increases and some of the concerns being raised by Sask Housing reps around the province . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Mr. Minister, I'm just wondering exactly what your department is doing in relationship to the increases that are being announced and the concerns being raised by housing authorities around the province as to the fact that they might drive the rental property, Sask Housing rental properties up to a point that people start looking elsewhere for housing opportunities.

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Chair, again, we're kind of covering, retreading ground in our previous time that Social Services estimates were before the committee, but let's just go back and re-cover it again. In the interests of clarity, I appreciate the question.

Just to put it into a context, in the Sask Housing provided housing, there's two categories: affordable housing and social housing. Affordable housing is housing that's made available when there's limited available rental markets and to assist low- and moderate-income people to have access, and at low end of the market rental rates. That's affordable housing.

The question that the hon. member raises, Mr. Chair, is on the other category; it's social housing. And in the social housing units, then the rental rate is determined by one thing and one thing only, and that's a percentage of income. So it is entirely dependent on the income and then the percentage applied.

The national standard in Canada, Mr. Chair, is 30 per cent. There would be several provinces that are either at or moving to 30 per cent of income as their social housing standards.

Here in Saskatchewan, we're currently at 25 per cent of income. And over the next four years, starting with this year, we are moving by 1 per cent of income over the course of four years so that at the end of the fourth year then, it will become 29 per cent of income . . . will be the rate at that time.

The way it's been implemented is that it comes into effect for someone who is coming to a social housing unit somewhere in Saskatchewan effective July 1, if they're coming in brand new. But because it is the policy that anyone whose rent is changing is that they must be given three months notice, then notice was provided then on July 1 for those who are currently living in Sask Housing social housing units, which means that the first increase would actually come on October 1 and the last increase would actually be September 1, 2003. So that means that people who are social housing tenants are given at least three months notice and possibly as high as 14 months notice of a 1 per cent of income increase.

So it's based on income. It's not a 4 per cent increase in rent; it's an increase in 1 per cent of income. And so in that way, Mr.

Chair, it's not a compounding increase because it is totally related to only one factor, that's income.

Now the other thing that comes into play for an individual then of course, because the formula is based on household income, is that if the household income itself either goes up or down, then that will affect the rental rates. So you may have someone, for example, whose household income has gone up substantially, they would experience correspondingly then an increase. However, it's entirely possible, depending on personal circumstances, that it could go the other way as well and that even though the rate schedule is increased from 25 to 26 per cent of income in the coming year, it is possible that there will be some cases where in fact the rent may actually go down.

So it's totally dependent upon the bump, which is 1 per cent of income for each of the next four years, a minimum three months notice, and then the household income of the family or individual who is in the social housing unit.

**Mr. Toth:** — Mr. Chair and Mr. Minister, so . . . And in my comments before I did acknowledge the fact that rental rates are based on income, so . . . the thing that you pointed out is that you're moving from a 25 per cent up to 29, whereas other jurisdictions have moved to 30. What about the affordable housing units? If there an announced increase in rental fees in those units?

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Chair, what the hon. member is then asking about is the affordable housing rates, to put it in the proper categories. And the answer is yes, in most cases there will be some rental rate increases.

The guideline in affordable housing is that under no circumstance can it increase by more than 5 per cent in any given year. But there will not be a guideline that is true across the province because the purpose of affordable housing again is to make accessible to low- and moderate-income households, at the low end of local market rate, decent housing. And so the actual rates that are charged are determined by the local housing authority in co-operation with Sask Housing, and they'll be influenced by what's happening in the local housing rental market.

I'm advised that probably on average this year, those Saskatchewan people who are living in affordable housing rates will experience, on average, 2 to 3 per cent, something in that neck of the woods. But under no circumstance would anybody experience an increase of more than 5 per cent.

And as I say, it's driven by the local housing market demand.

**Mr. Toth:** — Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, so basically what you're saying is then the housing authority has the ability to take a look at what the situation they're facing in the community, let's say for Regina, and housing . . . and rental of properties in general are in a neighbourhood of so many dollars, and the housing authority currently is charging . . . And while you're calling for an increase, if it should put . . . if that should actually put that — an increase in Sask Housing units — all of a sudden put them past what the going market rate is, they have the ability to make some adjustments?

Because the biggest concern is — that was at least brought to my attention — and the sense was that they didn't have any . . . didn't have a lot of say or involvement. They were just supposed to implement it, that that rental property would then go beyond what the local market might be bearing and would be difficult to rent those properties. And I think that's the biggest concern out there.

And so I'm not exactly sure where the individual was coming from in raising that, but I just want to have some clarification.

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Again, I reassure the hon. member, Mr. Chair, that it's the local housing authority assessing the local market. So if it's in Regina, for example, it's the Regina Housing Authority which will look at in the city of Regina what's the going rates, and the affordable housing rates then will always be at the low end of market. So that it will ensure that there is, within the marketplace, competitive but low-end competitive pricing that will set the rental rates that those affordable housing tenants will experience.

So that will not be dictated by policy, province-wide policy. It sounds to me as though the hon. member may be getting sort of social housing and affordable housing messages combined that you're bringing into the House here, because it certainly would be true if someone was saying that there's a provincial policy to increase by 1 per cent of income this year, province-wide. In social housing that's true. Is there a provincial policy about movement on affordable housing? No, there isn't.

And so it sounds, from the hon. member's comments, Mr. Chair . . . if he wants to press this further, we'd be happy to try and clarify but you may . . . it may very well be that you're getting two distinctly different messages at the same time that are getting kind of blended together here, and contributing a bit to some confusion.

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And, Mr. Chair, I'll do some follow up on that in regards to the conversation I had recently regarding those numbers, just to get a clarification and pass on the information that we've shared tonight and see if that's the understanding. And like I say, maybe part of the problem is we've got the two areas being . . . a conflation going on there, resulting in not totally understanding what is coming down the pipe.

I want to go to the Child Benefit Program for a minute. Last year we raised the question — and if I'm not mistaken, I believe that it's the right one — the federal government has actually made a commitment over a period of years to actually move and pay that, if I've got that program right, the Child Benefit Program, completely.

I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, and I raise this question with some consternation, I'm a little concerned about the federal government. They say something . . . they've in the past said a few things and then as a province we've been left out to dry when you've designed a program — a national type of program — and you feel that you're going to get some assistance.

And I want to first of all ask, Mr. Minister, is the federal government actually increasing its support of this program? And if it is, what's the anticipated time level when the federal

government will actually take over totally the Child Benefit Program? How many people would be receiving child benefit and how much would they receive on a monthly basis, whether it's per child or just a family?

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Chair, while we just take a moment to pull out the information to respond to that specific question, just on the first half of the hon. member's comment regarding the housing information, I would certainly encourage him to provide the information to the party that he got it from as we've talked about here today and would commit to the member if he want . . . if he would like specific information about a specific housing authority area, that my office would be very, very happy to provide clarification on that as well.

We'll just take a moment and we'll pull out the numbers to provide the response to the hon. member's specific question about the child benefit.

(19:15)

Mr. Chair, we're going to try and keep this as simple as possible, and I think I'm responding directly to the question the hon. member raises.

First of all, it should be pointed out that here in Saskatchewan what we have chosen to do is to supplement the National Child Benefit with the Saskatchewan Child Benefit so that when it was introduced, when the National Child Benefit was introduced, we decided here in Saskatchewan to take the benefit for Saskatchewan families to that point right away.

So that also has a corresponding effect on our budget. As the National Child Benefit increases each year, then we have a corresponding reduction in the provincial budget, but assuring that Saskatchewan families have been able to enjoy the National Child Benefit level of benefit right from the very beginning.

Specifically, to respond to the member's question . . . Oh, by the way, the national government has committed to the National Child Benefit till 2004 is their current time that they've made the commitment to and then there needs to be discussion regarding the extension beyond that point in time. So we can only speak with absolute certainty about the National Child Benefit until 2004, although I don't have any reason to expect that it wouldn't continue.

Now what this means is that in Saskatchewan the maximum benefit available for one child — and this is combining both the National Child Benefit and the Saskatchewan Child Benefit together — one child, \$221.33 per month; two children, \$472.99 per month. I'll just keep going and when you want me to stop, I'll stop. We are up to 10 kids here that we can give you. Three children . . .

What's that? Okay. Well the hon. member can just tell me when to stop when we've got enough kids here and then we'll stop there.

But we've got \$664.41 a month for three kids; four kids, 885.82; five kids, \$1,107.23 a month; six kids, \$1,328.65; seven kids, \$1,550.06. We might . . . what the heck let's go all the way here. Eight kids, 1,771.47. I see the hon. member for Last

Mountain Touchwood now he's getting excited. He's kind of seeing this as a money-making prospect back there. But I think . . . I know he's a dad and he will know that this is not a money-making prospect, this is just helping to cover the costs.

But a family in Saskatchewan with nine children would have a maximum benefit of \$1,992.89; and with ten kids, \$2,215.30 per month. So that's the monies that are available to Saskatchewan families as a result of the national child benefit combined with the Saskatchewan Child Benefit. And there are 110,000 beneficiaries in the province of Saskatchewan.

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Well, Mr. Minister, I was kind of anticipating so much per child. And 221, actually that's not bad, but as you started increasing I can see why and maybe wonder why families in Saskatchewan are down to about — what is it? — under 2 children per family or getting close to that if there's an avenue, a benefit, through the child benefit. But at the same time I think you said 110,000 — is that individuals or families, Mr. Minister?

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Chair, families.

**Mr. Toth:** — So basically that takes in any one who may . . . my assumption is that they would qualify based on income. And I guess the other question that came to mind is the child tax benefit is . . . Do you find that there is more people qualifying as a result of the child benefit coming in and not qualifying for child tax benefit? Or would this program actually just supplement and most people who would qualify for the child tax benefit would actually qualify for this child income benefit as well? You understand the question?

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — I'm not sure if I understand the question, Mr. Chair, but I do have an answer here. And if this . . . if this doesn't answer the question, then I'm sure we'll take another run at this, Mr. Chair.

The benefit is when . . . I'm describing this as inclusive of the child tax benefit, the National Child Benefit and the Saskatchewan Child Benefit. So it's all three combined.

**Mr. Toth:** — I guess the question was in a roundabout way, it was also if you would qualify for the child . . . national child tax benefit, you'd automatically then . . . basically saying your income is down, you would qualify here. If you don't qualify for the child tax benefit, would you qualify for this child income benefit?

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Chair, the child tax benefit benefits the largest number of families and then there will be a smaller number of families that benefit from the National Child Benefit and then a smaller number of families that will benefit from the Saskatchewan Child Benefit. And they're all income related.

**Mr. Toth:** — Mr. Minister, just to move along here, recently you announced again and I think there was an announcement that there was a further reduction in the number of people on assistance in the province of Saskatchewan. And I'm not . . . I just don't remember right offhand what the . . . what the reduction was. There was another . . . I think you bragged about . . . how many months? Can't even remember that. Ninety months. Man.

However, we have to ask ourselves exactly what that involves and whether or not there's other avenues people are pursuing or have given up on the department as far as assistance. However, I'm not promoting people on assistance. I'll compliment you for that.

I would assume that you believe it's important that people have . . . be given the opportunity to find employment and work to provide employment. But of that number, Mr. Minister, what's the most recent statistics as far as people on assistance? And, Mr. Minister, I would like to know then of that current number and if there's a correlating percentage, how many of those individuals would be considered as fully employable and partially employable and how many people would just be considered that it would really . . . wouldn't be able to really have full-time or even partial employment?

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Chair, first of all I do appreciate the opportunity to report to the committee that in June of this year that the caseload in Saskatchewan is down for the 90th, nine zero, 90th consecutive month. Month after month after month after month, for seven and a half years, the caseload in Saskatchewan has gone down.

And I know that the hon. member and I . . . we've probably talked about nothing more often during these estimates than that. And I think it is a record about which our province should take some pride.

Why is that happening, Mr. Chair? I think it's . . . if I could just take a moment to expand on this because this is not just pure coincidence and people are not disappearing into space or something. These are real people who are not requiring social assistance.

In many ways, Mr. Chair, I think there is a direct relationship between the June drop in caseload year-over-year by some 2,389 people. Our caseload is down over 7 per cent. That's phenomenal. Over 7 per cent from last year.

And here in the city of Regina, the caseload, if I remember correctly, is down 12 per cent, and in the city of Yorkton, down 17 per cent from the year before.

And, Mr. Chair, I think there's a direct relationship between some of the things that we've just heard in the last few days about the job numbers. When we talk about here in Saskatchewan, the jobs year-over-year being up 12,800, I think is a big part of the explanation as to why the welfare numbers are down by nearly 2,400.

And the fact of the matter is that people couldn't be leaving welfare to go to work unless there was work to go to. Or correspondingly, people may be requiring welfare for assistance if there wasn't work that was available to them that our employment supplement, the family health benefit, child benefit support them being in.

So, Mr. Chair, I think just in a nutshell, I know we've been there before and I don't to belabour the point but, jeppers, I just couldn't pass up an opportunity to report to the committee one more time that this is 90 — 90. Can you believe it, Mr. Chair — 90 straight months, month after month, that the caseloads have



gone down here in Saskatchewan.

Now of the caseload that we have in Saskatchewan, of the 30,185 in June of this year, then just over 39 per cent, just under 40 per cent, are employable; and then the remainder are not fully employable. I don't have that 61 per cent broken down between unemployable and partially employable.

**Mr. Toth:** — Well, Mr. Minister, is part of the reason people are off of welfare because your offices are now pointing people to jobs and suggesting that maybe they should get a job rather than just come in and expect to receive welfare?

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Well, Mr. Chair, first of all let me point out that nothing has changed in terms of the expectation. It has always been the expectation that people who are applying for social assistance and capable of working will work if that's possible for them to do. So that's always been the expectation; nothing has changed.

But what has changed, Mr. Chair, is that I think we've been doing a substantially better job of helping people be where they want to be, which is working. One of the things that I expect is true for the hon. member, for the Social Services critic, and I know it's sure true for me and I hear it all the time — for those of us who live in the world of economic development and investment — when people talk about coming to the province of Saskatchewan, they will oftentimes refer to the work ethic that exists in this province as a very attractive reason for investing in Saskatchewan.

And when we've talked to people who are unemployed and receiving assistance or applying for assistance and understand where they're coming from, Mr. Chair, I have absolutely no reason whatsoever to believe that their attitudes about the desire to be working, and self-supporting, and independent are any different from anyone else. That is in fact their first choice, is to have their form of income security come in the form of job.

And when we've introduced the Jobs First program in a pilot project here in Regina and in the city of Yorkton in May of last year, I think we're on to something, Mr. Chair, that has much more effectively enabled those who are applying for assistance and capable of working to be where they want to be, which is in the workforce. And the good news is that the work is there for them to get to.

So what we've introduced is a system by employing the good work of the staff at the Career and Employment Services centres, who I'm pleased to say are now under the umbrella of Social Services, working together with the income security staff to provide an orientation to the work application process that we have at our Career and Employment Services centres in Saskatchewan — state of the art, best in the nation.

(19:30)

I don't hesitate to say that — best in the nation — 20 centres around Saskatchewan. And taking advantage not only of the expertise of the staff in those places to provide personal counselling when that's necessary, but using technology to the advantage of the consumer, which is what we should ought to be doing when we're combining the resources of the federal and

provincial government, Mr. Chair, in putting these Career and Employment Services centres in place.

And as we've done this, Mr. Chair, what we've found from the pilots in Saskatoon . . . or sorry, in Regina and Yorkton, is that 30 to 40 per cent of the people who come to the Jobs First program, they phone in, apply for assistance, determine that they're employable. Their way of applying then is to come to Jobs First. Thirty to 40 per cent go to work. Another 40 to 55 per cent don't end up applying for assistance. Now I think that a good number of them are working, but we don't know that for sure because they're not required to tell us. If you don't apply for assistance, then you don't have to tell us why you're not applying for assistance.

But what we do know, Mr. Chair, is that somewhere between . . . as I've been around to the centres in Saskatchewan, that somewhere between 50 per cent — and oftentimes they'll tell me it's closer to 75 per cent — of those Jobs First participants who are coming in to the Career and Employment Services centres are coming there for the first time. They've never been there before.

In other words, there is this best resource in all of Canada to connect people who are looking for work to employers who are looking for workers here in our province that they just didn't know existed. And as a result of applying for social assistance, they got connected to the resource that is not only there for them now, but what I'm particularly excited about is it's going to be there for the rest of their life. The best resource in the nation right here in our Saskatchewan, for them and anyone else that they know. Young people are finding out about it as they're going through school and seeing it as a good source of information.

So, Mr. Chair, there are jobs there, there are people looking for jobs, and what we're doing is improving our system.

We're also looking at some other investments in this budget to assist people who are disadvantaged, including people with disabilities, to make the connection to the world of work and then to support them in that attachment to the world of work. That's what our policy is all about in our battle against poverty. And included in that I want to see us make progress in terms of, to assist people with disabilities to be able to attach themselves to the world of employment as well, because they want to be there too.

So, Mr. Chair, I appreciate the opportunity to touch on this. And I think it's probably a little longer answer than the member wished for, but I do admit to getting a little excited about this because I think we have reasons to feel pleased for the people of Saskatchewan who are the benefactors of this program.

**Mr. Toth:** — Mr. Chair, thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I think one of the biggest changes that has taken place over the past number of years is that we have a number of members sitting on that side of the House who have all of a sudden realized — and the mentality in regarding Social Services has changed considerably — because a few years back, it was what, that awful government that would suggest people should find a job, to all of a sudden, the minister just gave us a five-minute exhortation of how good it was for people to actually have the

opportunity to find employment and assist people to get on employment.

It's something that since being elected to this Assembly I've felt all along we need to work at working with people to find employment and also encouraging people to . . . about the fact that there is nothing wrong with getting a job versus assistance. And a number of years ago, one of the problems was some of the opportunities may not have been that . . . or the opportunities that were there, the employment opportunities and the income just didn't quite match up to what social assistance was providing so people looked at it and said, well I can't make it where we are today.

So I would have to suggest changes that have come about such as the child income benefit program, the Saskatchewan income supplement have certainly gone a long ways. While it still has some cost at the feet of the taxpayer, the realities are, rather than covering 100 per cent in some cases, many cases we're down to 25 per cent or less; 75 per cent of that income was coming outside personally . . . people individually making that income.

And, Mr. Minister, you've heard me compliment your department before for the fact that we've started to . . . we've really looked at that aspect. And we're starting to look at now expanding on that and how we can really work with people to find not only full-time employment but quality employment.

And the reason I asked the question a moment ago was I just recently had a call in from an individual who suggested to me that the department was being a little harsh when a special friend of hers went to ask about employment and was handed the phone number to an employment opportunity. Unfortunately it wasn't locally.

The realities are there may not be a lot of jobs at the local level, but there may be opportunities and they may be a couple hundred miles away. That's the realities of our day. And the individual was a little annoyed and I really couldn't disagree with the fact that a job opportunity was not handed for that person to follow up on. I think that's important.

And I guess that's one of the concerns that people have raised in the past is why is this person over here — and you get in the small communities because people get to know individuals — they look as able-bodied as I am, and yet I'm out here slugging away, paying taxes so that person can live on welfare. And I think we need . . . it's a whole educational format of saying, listen, there is nothing wrong with the job and the more we do to get people into the job opportunities . . . And I found that people themselves feel much better if they're out working and bringing in . . . then all of a sudden they're bringing in a paycheque that is theirs. It's not just something that was handed to them by someone in an office to keep them going while they're just taking it easy for the day.

So I will compliment your department on that; we'll compliment you, Mr. Minister; I will compliment your government for finally seeing the light, that it's important that we really work and there is nothing wrong with being able to find a good, quality job. And I think that's important.

I do have a question on the other side, though. And that is when a complaint is raised by an individual about a person collecting welfare, and that maybe someone says, well why is that person on welfare when they could be working, they seem to have all the physical abilities that I have, what does your office do?

Also, if a complaint is raised in regards to someone collecting welfare, but as well it appears they've got a job on the side, what steps does your department take to determine or . . . and to make sure that there isn't an abuse of the welfare program?

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Following in the pattern of the question, let me respond to the first part of the non-question before getting to the answer to the question. First of all, I want to compliment the hon. member for getting on the program, and I do authentically appreciate the compliment that he extends to our government and to the department's approach and to the good work that the officials in the Department of Social Services have done as well.

However I do want to make it very clear, there was a time, a long time ago, when I sat on that side of the House and was the Social Services critic and in fact I think right about this desk, if I'm not mistaken. There was a Minister of Social Services, Grant Schmidt. And I make it very, very clear the program that we're implementing here is not the . . . is not a program that would have been initiated and supported by Minister Schmidt, I suspect.

I make it very, very clear that our approach to support for people to attach themselves to the world of work, as the hon. member correctly identifies, for the purposes of independence and self-sustaining income, but also in support of the dignity that comes with that, is a very, very positive kind of approach. It's based on a belief that people have the entitlement to work for wages, not to work for welfare, and I make a clear distinction about that.

And I do appreciate that the structural changes that were implemented back in 1998, Mr. Chair, and are being looked at across Canada and other parts of Europe, do put us in a favourable position, as other jurisdictions will say, how do you do what they're doing in Saskatchewan?

It is all based on two things: the belief that what people want first and foremost is to have their income through their job security through the form of employment, and that that is the dignified way of people enjoying their income in our world; and secondly, it also depends on the ability for people to find that employment. That's got to be real in order for the system to work. And we have the fortunate circumstance that our economy is bumping along really not badly here in Saskatchewan as we hear these days increase in 12,800 jobs, year over year, from a year ago. And that's the combination of the dynamics that assist people, individual citizens, to benefit from the policy and program implemented by their government.

Now on the matter then of protecting the integrity of the system, because that's the question the hon. member asked, and having to do then with people bringing complaints. Because obviously it is a system that is supported by the taxpayer of Saskatchewan and I feel honour bound, when we provide programs and support vulnerable individuals and families in our

province, that contribute to their income security to protect the integrity of that. And it's a very, very important, legitimate question the hon. member asks.

When somebody would contact the Department of Social Services with a complaint about an individual, those are always followed up.

Now I do have to say as well that there is an obligation that is paramount on myself, as well as the hon. member, and I know he understands that, as well as the staff of the Department of Social Services to not violate confidentiality of citizens. And that includes, of course, citizens who are receiving social assistance.

So it is possible — in fact I'd say it's quite likely — that someone will make a complaint, what they believe to be a violation of social assistance entitlement and that they would not get a report back as to what the investigation told them because it is not appropriate, clearly not appropriate for individual information about a citizen who's receiving — of Saskatchewan — receiving assistance to be passed on to another citizen. So sometimes people will feel frustrated about that.

I understand that, and I simply ask that as good, responsible citizens they take the action they see as appropriate and trust — and we're certainly prepared to defend that, of course — that we're just as interested as anybody, if not more, about protecting the integrity.

We do the follow-ups on complaints and if they're found to be accurate then that's addressed and oftentimes monies can be gotten back. Sometimes there may even be charges. And we do have verification workers across the province of Saskatchewan, some 40 . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . 30 verification workers across the province of Saskatchewan who do follow-up checks. And in addition we have here in the city of Regina and in the city of Saskatoon agreements with the city police to do investigations related to fraud for social assistance.

So I would say in terms of social benefits, the social assistance program quite frankly would be among the top in the nation in terms of the protection against fraud, quite frankly, and about that it is important because we're protecting the integrity of a system that is very important to those who are vulnerable.

In addition to that, Mr. Chair, we do some proactive checks as well. For example, we will do some checks with Revenue Canada, just random checks to see if we've got people claiming eligibility for social assistance when there is in fact available information to determine that they should ought not to be. So it is not entirely a complaints based system. And we take this very, very seriously.

We're not in people's face. It is not my intention, it is not our intention that people should be demeaned because their circumstances in life cause them to be in financial need and to be entitled as citizens of our province to the social income . . . to the income security that is provided in this province. So we should ought not to be demeaning people. We should ought to treat them with respect and provide them the opportunity to maximize their sense of dignity and full participation as citizens

of this province.

And I think that outlines the criteria that we use in dealing with complaints investigations.

**Mr. Toth:** — Mr. Chair. Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I happen to remember your earlier comment about a former minister and sometimes you can say same paths, different goals . . . or same goals, different paths, pardon me. But on the other hand, I also remember is a lot of the criticism at that time.

I remember a television interview, going out and talking to a number of employees who were employed at a job site. And I also remember the fact that the media personnel, while they really tried to find somebody who would criticize the program, had nothing . . . heard nothing but positive comments and the fact that it felt better to be out working as to just sitting at home.

(19:45)

So while that may have happened at that time, I think, Mr. Minister, at the end of the day you will have seen there was a significant move to really work to start finding ways of assisting people and helping people move from the welfare situations, or dependence on assistance, to actually find full employment. And I'm going to get into another question there in a minute.

But one of the questions I do have — and we talked earlier about people considered employable, fully or partially employable — I'd like to know what the criteria is to determine whether you consider a person employable. And do you have it broken down on fully, and do you have a criteria for partially employable, what the percentages . . . but how do you arrive at what would be considered as fully or partially employable?

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Chair, this is a very credible question. It in fact is one about which we are currently — now what's the proper term — we're currently reviewing the appropriateness of it. The definition of somebody who is fully employable is someone who is determined to be capable of working 36 hours a week or more. So that's fully employable; partially employable, if capable of working at all, but less than 36 hours per week.

However, Mr. Chair, at this point in time what we're finding as we talk with people who are receiving assistance, and I certainly know in the — goodness gracious, I guess it's been about nine months here that I've been Minister of Social Services — that I've had opportunity to talk with people who are recipients of social assistance or advocates of people who are recipients of social assistance.

I've certainly come to strongly believe that there is a strong desire to gain, as much as possible, income through employment. And I think it's fair to say that we're being sensitive to the desires of people themselves when we're becoming more and more hesitant to say that someone is not employable at all. It may be that people will have different definitions of what they consider to be a desirable employment, interesting employment. And thank goodness we're not all the same.

And it is certainly my experience as I've encountered a lot of good folks across the province in the last few months that when they've . . . when we've talked about the vision for the future of Social Services in this province, I've said to them very clearly that when I understand what is the desire of people themselves for their own purposes and desire to be as independent as they possibly can, to know that dignity of employment that is true for many; and also when I put that beside the marketplace reality that is being so significantly influenced by the retirement of the baby boomers that's going on around this province and in this nation, in fact on the continent, and the opportunities for employment that realistically just weren't there as recently as five years ago, it says to me for those of us who truly believe in the correctness, in the justice of a representative workforce, that there is opportunity today that I have never known before in my professional lifetime and the professional lifetimes of many who are working within the system in support of people who are vulnerable or disadvantaged.

And so, Mr. Chair, I apologize for being a little lengthy in the answer but the straightforward question is fully employable is capable of working 36 hours a week or more. But we also want to be sensitive to the realities of the desires of Saskatchewan people to maximize their incomes through earned employment. And it is with some optimism that I look forward, and in some ways with some particular enthusiasm, for those who are from the disabilities communities for the potential to find themselves involved in mainstream employment.

**Mr. Toth:** — Mr. Minister, I guess one of the follow-up questions, when we talk about fully or partially employable people, would . . . I guess I use the term, single mother — lots of times we use single parent but — would a single mother be, with one or two children or three, be considered employable? Is that one of the criteria or the aspects you look at?

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Chair, a parent of any gender would not be considered unemployable by virtue exclusively of the fact that he or she has children.

**Mr. Toth:** — Mr. Minister, how many single parents are on assistance today?

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Chair, we have 8,605 single-parent households receiving assistance and that makes up 28.5 per cent of our caseload.

**Mr. Toth:** — Mr. Minister, what if any efforts are being made to, while that person is providing care to a child, to assist them in furthering their education? Are there a number of those? Just from what I know in our area, a number of those parents do not even have a full grade 12. So that when an opportunity arises that they will have been able to complete even their grade 12 diploma and maybe some other training so that they can actually move into the employment field once the child has become old enough to allow them to do that.

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Chair, I think the hon. member will be encouraged to know that when we look at the single-parent caseload and compare progress over a period of time, comparing March of 1994 when there were 11,826 to March of this year 8,357, that means a reduction of 3,469 — just about 3,500 fewer single-parent families receiving assistance, a drop

of 29 per cent.

And that occurs for a variety of reasons, Mr. Chair, because again I remind us of our earlier discussion here in estimates. The introduction of the employment supplement, the family health benefit, the Saskatchewan Child Benefit provide incentive and security for any parent, including a single parent of course, to gain their income through employment.

So some of that movement off of the social assistance caseload is simply because policies have facilitated being able to make the move to at least partial employment, maybe not necessarily full-time employment, and at the same time maintain the family health benefits which in the real world is often a very important criteria, a factor. Because as we all know it is not uncommon for low-income families to have kids who are having health problems and therefore the significance of the family health benefit.

But there will also be then the, I guess, part of the discussion related to a little bit more to my former responsibilities, Post-Secondary and Skills Training. There will be the supports to enable individuals to acquire either their basic education or their post-secondary education to make the transition to employment. So these are not programs that will exist in isolation from one another of course and it'll be a combination.

But I firmly believe that, as has already been pointed out, that it is the income benefits which support people moving off of assistance but just as importantly — we sometimes are inclined to forget about this — just as importantly that enable a parent or parents to avoid having to come into the welfare system in order to be entitled to the protections that enable them to raise their kids with a decent standard of living, even though they may not have the top-paying job or maybe not a full-time job but are able to be in that labour market, and that enable families, therefore parents, to be good role models for their kids, the kind of mom and dad that they feel good about being and for their kids to feel good about seeing, and that model as kids look forward to make their own choices about values in life and that sort of thing.

So, we've seen some short-term benefits I think in this province since 1998. I am totally convinced that it's because of the generational impact that in fact we're going to continue to see these benefits for the well-being of Saskatchewan families over a long period of time.

**Mr. Toth:** — Mr. Chairman. And thank you, Mr. Minister. And we've certainly discussed it somewhat before, the concern that some individuals have brought to my attention and we've discussed with your office, regarding the benefits as well. And low-income families, and especially when they move from assistance and started employment and found themselves on the edge, and yet dealing with medical situations that really made it difficult.

So I think what your department has done in that regard . . . and I think what that basically shows is that we're showing the fact that there's some compassion as well out there recognizing that there may be people . . . yes they're employed, but there are certain financial obligations especially with children and health benefits, that I think it's imperative that we at least have some

bridging until their income may move to that point where they don't require that any more.

Just going on a little further in regards to support programs, recently we met with both the Regina and the Saskatoon food bank. I believe some of your caucus did as well. The Regina Food Bank talked a little bit about an educational program I believe they're adding especially on . . . almost like the adult basic education. They're finding a lot of the people coming to utilize their services are lacking some of the abilities to actually find employment, and now they're introducing some training opportunities. I suggested to them as well that maybe looking at talking to some of the business community, see whether or not they could work with them as we move . . . And when we talk business community, we're talking of moving beyond just a basic grade 12 diploma, once you've received that, and maybe getting some training.

I know the Marriott hotels, I believe in the United States, has offered, has worked out a training program with welfare programs in the States, and it's worked out very well. In fact about three years ago, I believe something like 85 per cent of the people that came into their training program had now . . . were actually fully employed in jobs.

So I compliment the food banks for moving beyond just handing out food hampers and realizing maybe there's another avenue that they can work together with . . . and I think . . . I'm just wondering, Mr. Minister, what your department is doing in looking at organizations of this nature and maybe working hand in hand, rather than starting a totally new program to assist people in not just receiving some assistance in food but as well receiving some educational benefits that may assist them in moving from the need to access the food banks into a fully employable situation.

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Chair, first of all I want to acknowledge, as I think we have earlier in the estimates as well, the good work that food banks do here in Regina and in other places around this province. And the hon. member, in my judgment, is quite correct when he identifies the food banks themselves. In fact I think I remember a similar question, in fact making a response very much to that effect last time we were here or the time before.

And it will be through, again aided by the reorganization that we've done in Social Services here. We talked earlier about bringing housing to Social Services and support for low- and moderate-income families and households, and also in the Career and Employment Services coming to Social Services and its place in the Jobs First program. The Career and Employment Services offices also do have then some contracts with food banks that are used here in the province to provide life skills training.

And so this is, I think pretty much as the hon. member represents it, Mr. Chair, in support of people developing skills that lead towards independence. Sometimes that's with a work orientation to it. Sometimes it's a pre-employment orientation to it. It is also true that here at the Food Bank in Regina, there is some funding from the Department of Social Services that's related to child care, and being provided there.

(20:00)

And so at first glance, if you didn't know what was going on in a food bank, you'd say, what in the world does a food bank need a daycare for? Well the answer is because a food bank is much more than a place for low-income people to go and get some help with the food. There are other things that contribute, eventually I think, to what many would see as a nucleus of community supports, and certainly training is among them.

And I compliment the boards and the staffs of the food banks who see themselves as a comfortable place for low-income people to get access to counselling and services and training in a comfortable way that will assist them in developing their own independence.

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, there's . . . I'd certainly like to pursue it even a little more but in view of the time constraints we're kind of working under right now, we're going to have to kind of move along. And I look at all the officials sitting back there and I think to myself, some like to think, oh, we're getting let off the hook.

We don't want them to feel that they didn't come here in vain, but, Mr. Minister, I have in my hand a — I think it must have been an election platform 1999 — it's got an individual smiling; I think he had a broader smile here when he drew up this document than as the election results rolled in on that day in 1999. However, part of the platform was to increase daycare spending by something like \$500,000 a year to help pay for increased spaces.

The part was under entitled "Help for Families" and it finished off by saying:

. . . review tax rules that penalize families with a parent who chooses to stay at home with children.

I guess that's the area I'd like to focus on somewhat, not the greater spending but what have you done or have you done anything to actually recognize the families where the parent has indeed chosen to stay home and be a parent rather than to putting a child in a daycare spot?

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Chair, this in the budget that's before us now in the world of child daycare, the budget initiatives involve a . . . it says right here on the document that I have, lo and behold, what a coincidence, Mr. Chair.

It says in the 2001 throne speech the government made a four-year commitment of \$500,000 per year to enhance the quality of child care services for children in the licensed child care sector and to improve access to services for vulnerable children in the families — just like we said in the election and there it is. That's the plan and it's happening.

And, Mr. Chair, in this budget year, the increase is not \$500,000 but \$1.7 million in child care. That's dedicated by the means of \$750,000 to create 150 new licensed child care spaces, \$450,000 dedicated to support kids with special needs. That's above and beyond the seven-fifty and also another half a million dollars for child care staff wages to support the recruitment and retention of the staff in these important child

care centres. A grand total of \$1.7 million in support of licensed child care.

**Mr. Toth:** — Mr. Minister, the actual question at the end of the day was, what has your department done to review the tax rules that penalize families with a parent who chooses to stay at home with children?

It's fine to just put money into child care spaces but it appears that you've heard from as many people as I have that there are many, many families where a parent chose to stay home, in many cases the mother, and provides that care rather than sending their child to a daycare centre.

And you indicated that you were going to look at how we could address that concern. And I'm just wondering, Mr. Minister, what have you done or has your department or your government done anything to look at that avenue to recognize the benefits of the stay-at-home parent?

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Chair, the question the hon. member asks, unfortunately our officials don't have the specific response to it because it falls in the area of Minister of Finance.

The hon. member will be aware that we've undergone a significant reform of the income tax system here in Saskatchewan, I would add the largest single income tax reduction in the history of Saskatchewan. And included in that has been a shift in the tax benefit for families, but also including in that specifically affecting in a positive way families where spouses are . . . you may have one working parent and one parent at home that do a system that way. I don't have that specific detail with me but let me undertake, Mr. Chair, to commit to the hon. member that I'll respond in a specific way to describe that benefit. And it certainly is true that in Saskatchewan today there is a substantially more attractive income tax system as a result of the reforms that have taken place over this term of office.

The officials also point out to me, also not in Social Services but through Department of Labour legislation, that the maternity/paternity benefit leaves that are entitled to mothers or fathers has been extended; which will be very, very helpful to some families in terms of having that leave from employment in order to be involved in the raising of a new child or a newborn.

**Mr. Toth:** — Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister. I think, Mr. Minister, we certainly can thank the electorate — and the electorate spoke very well in 1999 because I don't remember the current government really talking about major tax reductions — and we thank you as well for recognizing that the populous recognized that point and we have actually seen a move in that regard. However, Mr. Minister, you didn't indicate you'd get back to us. I think it's important also just to point out what has been done.

While we've talked about major tax reductions, we've seen tax reductions that affect everyone on the personal income tax side. I just want, Mr. Minister, if you can point what would be directly related to the family where one parent has decided to stay home and care for the children versus while the other parent is working — if you could point that out as well.

And going on to another area, Mr. Minister, community-based organizations. We have many of them across this province. We have many of them providing services to handicapped or disabled people. And we've got a major concern amongst these organizations. And, Mr. Minister, I think you will have also attended the reception that these organizations had about a month ago.

And a number of them pointed out the fact that they're dealing with employees who are at a lower wage scale level, and one of the difficulties they have is they nicely have a person trained to work in their group homes or in their organization, only to find that with the training that they qualify to move on to higher paying jobs in special care homes or in care homes of that nature. And, Mr. Minister, I'm wondering what your department is doing to address the inequities and the requests from these organizations for . . . actually increases in the wage levels so that they can maintain or at least hold on to a number of the employees that they have trained.

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Chair, first of all in . . . the hon. member has finely tuned . . . Mr. Chair, you will note, I'm sure, because you're kind of a foxy sort of fellow yourself, that he'll ask two questions but just end with one. So let me answer both of them, but the first one first, and remind the hon. member that during the last election campaign, at the end of which the coalition government represented 60 per cent of the electorate, Mr. Chair.

**An Hon. Member:** — I don't think so any more.

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Well the hon. member may be of the view that it's gone up since then. I don't know if it has or not. But let's just assume, for argument, that the government still only represents 60 per cent of the electorate like it did at the beginning of the term. But let's . . . although I quite . . . would accept the hon. member's argument that it's higher than that, but, Mr. Chair, let's not distract ourselves from there.

But I will . . . I do remember very clearly, Mr. Chair, going door to door during that election, talking to the good people of Moose Jaw North and committing to them a significant income tax review and reform in the . . . I think in the amount, if I remember the figure correctly, that it would result in the reduction in income tax. And I think as a result of the reform — the Minister of Finance can correct me — as a result of the reforms that have been implemented for the average Saskatchewan family, a \$1,000 a year reduction in income tax payable here in Saskatchewan . . . Saskatchewan income tax.

So I'm very, very proud that the province has made progress for many Saskatchewan families in that regard. And regarding the specific additional information the hon. member wants, we'll provide that to him.

In terms of funding for community based organizations, which are very important for the Department of Social Services, the fact of the matter is, Mr. Chair, that the majority of the people who deliver social services in the province of Saskatchewan take home a paycheque that doesn't have Government of Saskatchewan on it, but take home a paycheque of their organization. And related to social services, there are some nearly 1,000 community based organizations.

It is with a high degree of sensitivity to the needs of community based organizations to recruit and retain competent staff to deliver the services, which is a growing issue across the piece in the province in which we live. Same reasons we talked about earlier that provide opportunity for a representative workplace are challenges in the recruitment and retention.

And, Mr. Chair, I'm very pleased that in this budget, as a result of the sensitivity to that, that funding to community based organizations for the salaries for their staffs was increased by four and a half per cent. And that brings, Mr. Chair, over the past six years to increase in funding targeted to salaries of people who work in community based organizations, an increase in their funding of twenty-seven and a half per cent.

So, Mr. Chair, that has been a very conscious decision of this government to support community based organizations in recruiting and retaining staff and dealing with that very important issue of payment of salaries and benefits.

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Minister, there are a number of families throughout this great province of Saskatchewan — and particularly the families that have contacted my office live in rural Saskatchewan, some of our towns and villages and so on — these families have family members with special needs. And your government has a number of services that these families can access, but one of the concerns that these families have is that there seems to be a lack of coordination of the services.

And I know some of the families have met with the Child Advocate's office in the hopes that that office would advocate on their behalf with government to take their message forward and so on. And I would hope that . . . I believe some of that work has borne some fruit and so on, but some of the more immediate needs, I guess, are the need for group homes, for respite care, and that sort of thing.

I'm wondering, has your government, and I would think your department would play an integral role in that area, do you . . . Is there a program within your department that would help parents in establishing group homes in certain communities? I realize that in particularly rural Saskatchewan that you can't have a group home in every other community but perhaps in regional areas so that families could access those type of things.

(20:15)

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Chair, we certainly do have the ability to respond to that kind of request. Any interested family or party, or parties preferably, who identify a family need for support through a group home, should be in touch, I would recommend, with the community living division, the closest available. If the hon. member, Mr. Chair, wants to be specific, and I don't want to discuss specifics here in estimates, and I won't, but if he wants to know who's the closest contact, I'd be happy to . . . if he wants to identify then to recommend that.

I should add, Mr. Chair, for the benefit of the hon. member, that currently there aren't any current requests for a group home in rural Saskatchewan, so we haven't had that identification need come forward to us in consideration of the current budget that's before us right now.

**Mr. Hart:** — Mr. Minister, did I understand you to say that there are no new requests or there are no group homes in operation at this time in rural Saskatchewan? Is that what you're saying?

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Chair, currently all of these would be through community living division. There currently exist in Saskatchewan today, 110 group homes. In addition to that, there are 500 approved homes, but there are no current requests for additional homes in rural Saskatchewan today.

**Mr. Hart:** — For families that live in the community or in an area where there aren't any group homes, is there a respite program or some financial and perhaps facility assistance for those families, whether it be perhaps even the local nursing home and that sort of thing, where the families can take their family member and have them looked after while they have a small break from the constant care that they give their family member?

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Chair, currently for a family with the . . . Now when the person that the family is wanting to have the respite available for is under the age of 18, is a child then, there is respite available for up to 60 days. So community living division again is the appropriate contact for the pursuit of inquiry about that, their eligibility and arrangements. And it can be in a variety of arrangements that would be what's ever best and specific to the needs of the individual.

Of course then if the person is over 18, then they're no longer a child, they're an adult, and then by their own means would be eligible for social assistance and the social assistance system to possibly provide support for access to services.

I would also add, Mr. Chair, that I have had some discussions with groups in more than one community in Saskatchewan where families are coming together, they're identifying each other, who have . . . and what they have in common are needs for respite care. And they're identifying that available to them in their community now doesn't exist the resource that they would like to have.

But they're also recognizing then, by working together with the health district — and the health district should be part of this picture as well — that, and by pooling in an identified way, pooling their common needs, they're looking at perhaps the creation of a community based organization or tapping into currently existing systems, but enabling the system to more capably predict the need for respite and therefore make it available.

So it is very important from my point of view that families do what they can to empower themselves and to take advantage of the good folks of the community living division who are always willing to talk with them and to help facilitate these kinds of contacts. We have what we have now. By no means does that say that we've maxed out or we see it as a limit. We just don't currently have any requests for a group home per se. But group homes are not always necessarily always the resource that's most desirable either.

And my advice would be, if the hon. member is talking to his own constituents or others, that they recommend contacting

community living division but also . . . I think it'll be common that families will know other families who have got similar kinds of needs, and my advice is band together, communicate that with the department, and we'll try to . . . we'll be part of that. We'll try to facilitate finding the community based solution that best serves the needs of families.

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister, for that answer to that question and that information. In fact that's what has happened. I was contacted by a constituent in Wynyard and there are families in Wynyard that have met with families in Lanigan and Watrous and that sort of thing, and I believe they have contacted community living.

And I would hope that this process is moving along, and I'm sure that if it isn't that we will be talking and helping to move it along. Just one other comment that these families had and I guess, as you indicated in your answer, that there is a division between children and adults, and yet quite often they require very similar services as such. And I think there is some frustration in that area and I think from what the families are telling me that there needs to be more coordination between various agencies of government.

And one other . . . or a couple of other concerns I guess, and I just raise them just for the record and so that you are aware of their concerns, particularly with the children that are in school. Come this time of the year, the families have made arrangements and, with the help of schools and so on, the special needs children are looked after. But there really is nothing for them in the summertime and they see that as a void. They're doing as much as they can on their own but they're just not being successful, at least not to the extent that they would like to see. And they really feel that perhaps there needs to be something in that area.

And then the final concern that they raise is that I understand that for certain activities and needs there is some financial assistance, but as with many other things, they seem to feel that it's not adequate in many cases. And in fact some families are left with the difficult decision of perhaps, if they can't cope financially and also just because of the stress involved and all the extra effort that's required by parents, that sometimes they're faced with a very difficult decision of perhaps placing their children as a ward of your department. And I mean families don't make that decision easily; that's the last resort. And I think we all want to work towards helping families so that they don't have to make those sorts of decisions.

So, Minister, I just would like to raise those concerns on behalf of those constituents, and as I said earlier, if that process isn't moving along, perhaps we'll help it move along.

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Chair, just very quickly in response. First of all I appreciate the hon. member bringing it to my attention, and I know I can count on him alerting me further if it doesn't appear to be evolving as it should ought to, and I would welcome that.

I do want to remind him that, as we're looking at means for providing services, we always strive to have age-appropriate services so kids' needs are not always the same as adults'. And one of the things that is true about adults, regardless of their

abilities, is that there is always the desire to be living as independently as possible and as self-sustaining as possible. And that's not the same for all of us. We're not all the same, thank goodness. And also those desires and realistic possibilities can change over a period of time as well. So we want to be sensitive to that.

Regarding the summer response for families with kids with special needs in school, I do point out again . . . I go back to our previous question about the respite, that it may be that that's an appropriate time of the year when it's most helpful to the family to look at requests for respite support, funds for respite services to be used in summertime.

And I do point out as well that through another portfolio hat that I wear as the Minister Responsible for Gaming, for the Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation and the revenues that are generated there from the profits through Casino Regina and soon Casino Moose Jaw, that there are funds made available through the Community Initiatives Fund. I'm aware that a good number of organizations around the province will apply for funds specifically for summer recreation activities, oftentimes for kids with special needs.

So I would urge the hon. member, Mr. Chair, if this is not something his constituents have made themselves aware of . . . This summer we're into now, so it's too late now. But they should be in touch with their local, regional intersectoral coordinator, the RIC, R-I-C (regional intersectoral committee). And if you don't know who that is, get in touch with the Department of Social Services — that's probably where they are — in order to make application, get the forms for making application for that. So that's another resource that's available to Saskatchewan families that many are using around the province of Saskatchewan specifically for that reason.

**Mr. Toth:** — Mr. Deputy Chair, Mr. Minister, how many individuals today in the care of your department would be recognizing as having FAE or FAS?

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Chair, I'm not able to specifically answer the hon. member's question because we just don't collect data that way. What I can tell the hon. member, Mr. Chair, is that we have 2,900 children in the province of Saskatchewan who are under the care of the minister, 1,100 of whom are long-term care children and the other 1,800 of whom then would be temporary care.

When children come to the care of the province then, of the minister, they do have an assessment regarding their needs and their disabilities, and FAS/FAE may be one of the factors that is identified. But it's not always that clear, as I think the hon. member understands. There may be disabilities that a child will have that you may suspect FAS/FAE but not be certain, and we do not keep statistics to be able to know how many children in care, of those 2,900, specifically do have FAS/FAE.

**Mr. Toth:** — Mr. Minister, some information I have from . . . regarding neuro-educational development and FAS/FAE says:

Of FAE individuals, 95 per cent will have mental health problems; 55 per cent will be confined to prison, drug or alcohol treatment centres or a mental institution; 60 per



cent will have a disruptive school experience; 60 per cent will have trouble with the law; 52 per cent will exhibit inappropriate sexual behaviour; 82 per cent will not be able to live independently; 72 per cent will have problems with employment.

(20:30)

In your department, if you have children in your care and you're . . . I would assume that your department is always looking for homes to place children in. And if there is a concern that there may be, a child may be exhibiting symptoms of FAS/FAE, what does your department do to . . . is an assessment made of that child?

And then if an assessment is made, if it varies, it appears there is certainly a strong indication that there is maybe some of these problems, what steps are taken to inform the adoptive parent of the fact that this child has some symptoms and there's precautions that need . . . maybe should be taken or avenues should be pursued in regards to educational opportunities that may assist in helping that child develop in view of the restrictions as a result of FAS/FAE?

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Chair, it would not be the case that every child who comes into care would be thoroughly assessed for FAS/FAE, but if the indications are there, then the thorough assessment would be done.

Now the question that the hon. member asks has to do with the information provided to the potential home. Before going there I would like to say as an aside, now this . . . if the child is in temporary care the first priority would always be to assist the child returning to their natural family. That's first and foremost, the number one objective.

If it is a child in long-term care then, where that's no longer a possibility, then it may very well be that foster home placement or adoptions would be among the options that would be considered. And foster parents would be provided the information about the disabilities, whatever the nature of that might be including FAS/FAE. And foster parents then would be provided opportunity for training in order to accommodate that.

When the question . . . it relates to adoption as I think the hon. member asked, Mr. Chair, then there would be a very thorough history of the child that would be made available so that the prospective adoptive family would be fully aware of the disabilities that the child — that they're considering bringing to their home — of the disabilities that that child may have and, Mr. Chair, then there would be in that case as well there would be supports provided to the adoptive family in support of their care and nurturing for the child that they've brought into their home.

**Mr. Toth:** — Mr. Minister, I think in view of some of the problems that we are now seeing coming to the forefront re: FAS/FAE . . . And I think over the past number of years it hasn't been an issue that we've really understood a lot about and maybe we're still in the dark in a lot of ways in regards to FAS/FAE.

And unfortunately I think we find in our First Nations

community there tends to be . . . has been a number of situations. I know the First Nations community is trying to deal with some of the problems regarding drug and alcohol abuse, especially by an expectant mother.

However, about a month ago, and I'm not sure if anyone in your department happened to catch it as well, or you yourself, Mr. Minister, there was a bit of a program. I believe CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) ran a special regarding FAS/FAE.

And on that special they talked about music as . . . working with music to address some of the problems, actually not addressing the problems as much as the involvement of music and how it can assist a person who may have some FAS/FAE problems and just working with them and helping them to overcome, and maybe using that format, to overcome some of the problems and help develop character of that individual.

And I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, if your department has been doing some research as to what can be done or how it can be used, what avenues can be used to address the emotional problems that result as a result of people with alcohol syndrome or effect?

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Chair, I think there is some accuracy when the hon. member represents FAS/FAE as an issue about which, as time goes by, we're increasingly becoming familiar. And in that, learning how to more effectively support people, mostly kids I guess is where we're identifying it, but people with FAS/FAE in order to adapt to the demands of living in the community as independently as possible.

The department is not conducting research per se. And on the specific question of the music therapy, although I am aware that music therapy is used in some circumstances, I'm afraid I'm just not in a position to comment during estimates this evening about the effectiveness of music therapy related to FAS/FAE.

I would however want to give Saskatchewan people the assurance that we continue to work with professionals to increase our understanding as well as to expand the training — first of all the awareness, the understanding, and then the training — in order to deal with the disabilities really to FAS/FAE.

We should also note when the hon. member made some references to some of the characteristics of life experienced by people with FAS/FAE that, as it is in the case of so many disabilities or illnesses, there are ranges of degree. And not everyone with FAS/FAE is in the extreme circumstance.

So it is with the . . . in some ways the inherent wisdom of the people at the Abilities Council that I think guides us to focus ourselves more on identifying abilities and building on strengths in order to be able to live independently. In the long run, that's the more helpful kind of process for individuals than to get hung up on simply identifying FAS, FAE, and saying, there we know it is, and isn't that a problem. So it is important for us to move forward as best as we can.

And in that regard, although I don't want to diminish for a second the importance of providing support and care for people

with FAS, FAE, it is also . . . I draw attention of the members of the committee to the Kids First program that's been implemented here in Saskatchewan, which is a mechanism by which — in communities which have identified families, the highest percentage of families of at-risk parents for children — to identify prenatal programming needs. So that not only is Kids First focused on the early childhood development support for at-risk, particularly high-risk families, but also in a preventive way in the prenatal world.

So, Mr. Chair, I think it's fair to say that as we approach the often complex and extremely difficult circumstances related to . . . for someone with FAS and FAE to deal with the world around them, and others to deal with them as we must, we must also at the same time be zoned in on trying to do as good a job of preventing as we can. And I think the Kids First program here in Saskatchewan is a strong step forward in that regard as well.

**Mr. Toth:** — Mr. Minister, I know we're really squeezing the time clock here in some cases. An issue I'd like to raise and I want to pursue it just somewhat, it's an issue that you've received a number of letters to your office from. It's an issue that I've received a stack of letters here. It's regarding a family up in the Melfort area, and I have some major concerns.

Mr. Minister, you were here about nine years ago when the Martensville case hit the floor of the Assembly. You were here when I debated that case with the former Minister of Justice. You were probably here when the Minister of Justice at that time suggested I should make some comments outside the Assembly. As lawyers always do, they like to be able to sue.

I think you may have remembered the fact that I suggested to the minister that there were a number of things in this case that were very irregular and some day he may live to pay for that. And we've seen what's happened in that case, the number of lawsuits that have arisen.

Now I have a young gentleman here who says . . . he asks a number of questions, and you would have this letter in your possession:

Why was I removed from my family against my will? The police (and I won't name the social worker or the interrogation person) informed me that sexual abuse had taken place in my house. I know this is not true. They interrogated me to the point of emotional collapse, trying to force me to agree with them.

Why was I denied access to my family and friends while in the foster home? Why did this individual on September 25 say that I could go to my Aunt Isabelle's and then deny me that small privilege? Why did my family have to hire a lawyer to get me away from Social Services?

And then we have the family basically saying as well, Social Services provided them with no care, didn't take the time to even talk to them, just came in, removed the children. They didn't take the time to do a risk . . . a home study or risk assessment.

And these people were looking after, had taken these children

in, and while one psychologist would suggest you shouldn't put more than one individual who may have an FAS or FAE problem in a home, this family actually asked for the individuals because they were all of a family. And we've had this discussion before about keeping families together, children, rather than putting them in three different homes.

And I've got a major concern here. And I realize as well, Mr. Minister, you're going to stand up and say, well that's in the legal process now, I can't say much about it. In general though, I'm approaching it on the basis of how your department investigates and the work that is done and assessments are made before a decision is made to just jump in and move . . . remove children from a home.

One letter from a psychologist talks about:

While it is obviously crucial to investigate allegations of sexual abuse and to ensure that every child is safe, it is equally crucial that when assessing the situation we understand the larger FAS/FAE picture I listed above. It takes a person with special character, commitment, and selfless love to choose to adopt an FAS/FAE child rather than just foster them with the financial remuneration that provides.

Mr. Minister, I am concerned about what may happen. We've got a family here that's been sitting in limbo for almost a year now. There's supposed to have been a report done by the department. To my knowledge, that report has not been done.

And while we talk about possibly staff people maybe not being well, in the meantime we have children . . . And I want to read into the record a letter from one of the children affected, who is one of the foster children. And this is what it says, and I read it because the Child Advocate in a report last year talked about listening to the children. And I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, if your department has taken time to listen to the children.

Maybe you'll listen to this letter:

I miss my family a lot and would like to go home. I don't want to go to a different foster home in the summer. I wish I could see my mom and dad again. I can see Aaron, but not too often. I'd like us all to be a family again.

Mr. Minister, it's a family situation that I'm really concerned about. I'm concerned about the way it's been handled. I'm concerned about the way everyone moved and I wonder if a proper assessment was done before the decision was made. And I'd like to know what your department is doing, what it does.

(20:45)

And I guess all I can say I hope, Mr. Minister, at the end of the day, that this one doesn't come back to haunt the Department of Social Services as well. We've given a lot of authority to social workers as a result of the Karen Quill situation and I hope we've got — I hope we've got some checks and balances in so we don't put other families through. And that case unfortunately was a tragic, tragic death of an individual but this is a tragedy . . . this can be a tragedy as well when people's lives are disrupted for a long period of time.

And so I'd like to know, Mr. Minister, what has . . . what is done. And in this case I hope we're not just waiting for the Department of Justice now to complete an investigation. If there's things that need to be done or can be done to address this situation today I hope, Mr. Minister, we've got an avenue that we can follow up so people's lives aren't just put in limbo for a period of time.

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Chair, well as the hon. member correctly understands, I believe, two things. First of all, I have a strong respect for the law and the rule of law which on the one hand requires that I and he not make comments on matters that are before the courts. And certainly when I come to this Chamber as a legislator that is a principle that is paramount and must be preserved.

I think the hon. member does not take issue with that and doesn't say that in a critical kind of way but recognizes that's one of the restrictions when you live in a free and democratic society in which you value the rule of law. Secondly, Mr. Chair, it is a requirement of the law that not only the Minister of Social Services but in fact the hon. member himself not reveal confidential information and specifically related to individuals or families who are under the care or the support of the Department of Social Services.

And that is certainly true when it comes to the child welfare circumstances and so, Mr. Chair, I think the hon. member will understand why it is I will . . . I cannot and will not make comment which would in any way remotely identify any individual or family who may or may not be under the . . . dealing with or under the care of the Department of Social Services.

However let me say about the approach of the Department of Social Services, that it is the law of the land in this province that if anyone, anyone, suspects that a child is abused that that individual has the responsibility to report that. That's the law of the land. Teachers will be well aware of that. People in the medical profession will be well aware of that and will often be the source of the report. The report can go to Social Services to a social worker or it can go to the police, and it does — people do both.

Social workers, Mr. Chair, do not for a second act unilaterally. Social workers are obliged by law, by requirement of their profession, that when they receive a report of suspicion of abuse they must investigate, because their first obligation is to act in the protection of the child.

It is also high on the list of priorities that in dealing with children they're a whole child welfare system. And I would also add when the hon. member refers to the Children's Advocate's involvement and the comment about the Child's Advocate — or sorry, the child welfare system in Saskatchewan — I do remind the hon. member, I don't have it here with me tonight, but in her recent report the Children's Advocate did indicate . . . she was very positive about the response of the Department of Social Services regarding the recommendations that she made because of her review done not many years ago.

But it is, it will always be, Mr. Chair . . . The first objective is to ensure that if there is substantiating evidence, including

interview with the child — him or herself — that is reported to be a victim of abuse, that if the social worker's of the view that for temporary purposes, in order to ensure the safety of the child that the child must be removed, then that decision with great hesitation will be made.

The social worker does not have the legal authority to make a permanent decision — doesn't exist, can't be done. Ultimately if circumstances do evolve to such time as we talked about earlier that a child becomes eventually say a ward of the province under the care of the minister, that can only happen by virtue of a court decision, not a social worker's decision.

And it must be pointed out that is a high priority for the department, and the social workers who deal with these sometimes — well virtually always — highly emotionally charged — sometimes, and I think usually very complex — very rarely would it be black and white — kinds of decisions to act in the interest of protecting the safety of a child. It is always a high priority to ensure, if at all possible, the child will continue to remain in the family, or if there is a temporary removal, to return to the family with appropriate supports for the family in order to accommodate what might be needed in order to support raising a child in a nurturing kind of way.

Mr. Chair, I think that probably, I think, is in a nutshell how the department approaches these kinds of matters. They're taken very, very seriously. It is considered to be very precious in our province, the relationship between a child and his or her family, and it is considered to be sacred that children in Saskatchewan must be able to grow up feeling protected from abuse. And it is that line that social workers are charged with the responsibility, and it is those social workers, Mr. Chair, who I deeply appreciate the very important work that they bring to the Department of Social Services in support of Saskatchewan families, kids.

**Mr. Toth:** — Mr. Deputy Chair, Mr. Minister, I appreciate the comment. But in view of the problems that can arise . . . And when it comes to the law of the land, who makes the law of the land? People that are elected in this room. People that are elected in Ottawa. Bureaucrats will give us their opinions and views and we'll look to them for our views. But at the end of the day, you and I are responsible. Right now we are. Somebody else will be elected tomorrow; they'll be responsible.

And I think it's imperative that we, as legislators, really not only recognize . . . and as the Child Advocate said, to listen to the voices of the children. We need to do that. We also need to listen to the voices on the other side as well. And I think we need to really . . . I think there's some real serious questions we're going to have to ask ourselves because I believe, to be honest with you, Mr. Minister, the pendulum is swinging too much the other way. We're giving too many opportunities, and it's too easy when someone makes a flippant comment. And I'd like to know that we really have some guidelines in place that we don't put families in a real, tumultuous circumstance as a result of maybe a flippant comment made on the playgrounds or whatever because just the way . . . through television, whatever, we have all these . . . we have these play out scenarios of abusive situations. And it's quite, very conceivable, that a child in anger could say something because they're trying to get back at . . . and certainly a part of the behavioural patterns of

FAS/FAE children can be of this nature, just getting back at someone.

So I think it's imperative, Mr. Minister, that as lawmakers — and certainly the bureaucrats deal with this everyday — we need to start taking a careful look. So that we don't . . . there's an equal balance, the pendulum, so we're treating the children with the respect. We're helping children to grow up in a vibrant society and life, and they've got that family to grow up with.

But it's as well . . . I think it's important that we look at protecting families as well and making sure that we don't get ourselves caught in situations where as a result . . . you know the courts system, the legal process. I know it. It doesn't happen overnight . . . so that something can be dealt with, and it's addressed, and people get on with their lives. It can drag on for years, unfortunately. And so I guess what I'm suggesting is that we really be very careful as to how we set up . . . and guidelines so that we aren't putting people's lives in jeopardy because we're trying to be . . . now being overprotective of a certain segment of our society because we maybe weren't quite as protective in the past.

And while I'd like to pursue this and certainly we could pursue other avenues, Mr. Minister, I'm going to have to close it there. But I want to thank you for the time we've had over the past few months and your officials for their attendance and the assistance they have provided in addressing a number of the concerns.

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Chair, I thank the hon. member for his concluding remarks, and I appreciate them deeply. Before similarly thanking the officials and acknowledging the important exchange that we've had here, I do want to comment on our final subject here.

It is a sobering thing to know that as Minister of Social Services, at the end of the day in this democracy, that there are 2,900 kids who are officially your kids. And, Mr. Chair, it is, I think, Mr. Chair, true that there will be no single responsibility that will feel more onerous to any minister of Social Services than that.

I want to be very clear to the members of the committee and to the House that this Minister of Social Services feels comfortable with the legislation that we currently have. It is my view that it is properly balanced. And that is why it is absolutely imperative that no social worker would ever intervene in the relationship between a child and the family on the basis of a flippant comment. It just . . . it couldn't, it wouldn't happen, it couldn't happen. That kind of conclusion can only occur when there is substantiating evidence and some . . . including discussion with the child, him or herself, before a social worker would reach that point.

So I want to give the assurance to the hon. member, recognizing the seriousness with which he makes his comment, that in my judgment the current legislation that we have doesn't permit for that to be able to happen in our Saskatchewan, which is one of the reasons that I feel comfortable with that.

Having said that, Mr. Chair, I do also want to thank the hon. member for . . . the Social Services critic of the opposition and

his colleagues for their questions. It is my view that these have been a good review of the Department of Social Services. We had some questions and factual responses. But we've also, I think, engaged in some discussion/debate about important social issues that confront us in our Saskatchewan.

And I do want to join with all of the members of the committee in saying thanks to the officials of the department. It is my judgment that this department is blessed with some very dedicated professionals, hard-working professionals who serve their province well and who contribute to the building of a better world by the way that they carry out their responsibilities as public service employees. And I want to join the members of the committee in expressing thanks to the officials in the Department of Social Services for their good work, including in assisting in these estimates. Thanks, Mr. Chair.

Subvote (SS01) agreed to.

Subvotes (SS02), (SS03), (SS04), (SS05), (SS09), (SS06), (SS07), (SS10), (SS12), (SS11) agreed to.

Vote 36 agreed to.

(21:00)

**General Revenue Fund  
Lending and Investing Activities  
Saskatchewan Housing Corporation  
Vote 143**

Subvote (SH01) — Statutory.

**The Deputy Chair:** — That concludes the estimates for the Department of Social Services. Thank you very much.

**General Revenue Fund  
Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization  
Vote 1**

**Subvote (AG01)**

**The Deputy Chair:** — I would recognize the minister and ask the minister to introduce his officials.

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I have with me tonight Mr. Hal Cushon, who is the assistant deputy minister just on my right here. Directly behind me is Ms. Louise Greenberg, who is the assistant deputy minister of programs and services division; Mr. Jack Zepp, beside her, behind Mr. Cushon, director, administrative services branch; Mr. Ross Johnson, who is the budget officer just seated next to Mr. Zepp. And in the back row, Dave Boehm, who is the director of financial programming branch; Mr. Ken Svenson, who is the manager of customer services and field operations with Crop Insurance; and Mr. Al Syhlonyk, who is the Crown branch resources from lands branch, Mr. Chair. Those are my officials who are with me this evening.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I welcome the minister and his officials here tonight.

I want to begin with discussing how I realize that Sask Ag and

Food and Rural Revitalization provides funding to various organizations for different projects and initiatives. And in the Public Accounts book 2000-2001 there were two women's agriculture organizations that received funding under the subvote of AG06. And that subvote's objective is to provide funding to support research into the development of new agriculture technology and to facilitate diversification and value-added opportunities in the agri-food industry.

SWAN, Saskatchewan Women's Agricultural Network, received \$5,598 and the Saskatchewan Women's Institutes received \$6,000. Could the minister tell us the nature of the projects that these two organizations were conducting for which they received their funding?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Chair, to the member, the very first question you asked me I need to go back to the department to get some additional information for you because they don't have any information with them handy. It's TAD (Technology Adoption and Demonstration) funding, and one will be for a conference where my staff tell me that . . . the one will certainly be for a portion of a conference. SWAN, the 5,598 on that one I expect some of it will be for some policy work that they likely did in relationship to developing policy around some support services for agricultural farming women. But I don't have that detail with me this evening. I'd certainly be happy to get that for you as quickly as we can.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — I thank the minister, and I hope this isn't going to start our evening with how the questions are going to be answered.

I received a number of letters from members of the Saskatchewan Women's Institutes requesting funding assistance, and I'm quite sure the minister's receiving those letters as well. The Saskatchewan Women's Institutes is a very well-established organization here in our province, having a presence since 1911, and they have a number of objectives, one of which is to promote the improvement of agricultural and other rural communities and to safeguard the environment. And so it's interesting to note that the Saskatchewan Women's Institutes has other provincial affiliates and together they form a national organization that also has a link to the Associated Country Women of the World.

So again going back to the Public Accounts, I noticed that SWAN had received funding each year through subvote (AG03), including the year that they also received funding through subvote (AG06). In '98-99 they received \$14,000 and '99-2000 they received \$12,836 and then in 2000-2001 they received \$12,000 in addition to the 5,598 that we mentioned earlier.

So that subvote, the objective is to provide financial assistance and compensation programs to support development, expansion, and diversification of the agriculture industry. Would the Saskatchewan Women's Institutes not also qualify for funding support under the industry assistance subvote (AG03)?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Chair, to the member, what we have is, we have two of the women's organizations that you've identified and they both do very valuable work across the

province. Certainly the Saskatchewan Women's Institute, I too, as you have, have received some correspondence. I think the issue and the concern here is that, as you know in reviewing the estimates, have seen that the TAD funding has now made its way from the department to, from the Department of Agriculture and Food now to the department of industry and resource development. And I expect that what's happening here is that some of the, that organization in particular is concerned about what the lifeline for its funding will be.

There's no question that in the work that the Saskatchewan Women's Institute has done in the province it's been most significant and our task will be, in my view, to try to encourage into the future the Saskatchewan industry and resource development to continue to provide the kinds of support dollars that will be important for them to continue not only their work in Saskatchewan but some of the international work, and the Canadian work at the national level that you talk about and I know that you're aware of as well.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — I'm just going to get the minister to clarify that. I believe what he just said is now they have to apply for funding under a different department, not under Sask Ag and Food?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — That's right, Mr. Chair. The TAD funding this year in the reorganization of government, the Department of Agriculture and Food transferred the responsibilities for TAD programming to industry and resource development. And into the future that funding would be directed through industry and resource development as opposed to our department. And it would be under that auspices which they would make their applications.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, we're going to move on to the farm land property tax rebate. And when your government first initiated this program, what was the intent of the program?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Well, Mr. Chair, and to the member, the initial intent as you can appreciate in the onset was to try to address the issues that rural property owners, farmers, were experiencing in terms of trying to deal with some of the operating costs of operating their farms. One of the questions of course that has always been an issue for producers of rural Saskatchewan, as you can appreciate, is the fact that they are looking for some mitigation in relationship to the costs of paying the education property tax.

Two years ago it was the decision of this government, and certainly through the work with SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) to look at how we might begin to initiate some way of mitigating some of the costs that farmers were experiencing in terms of the education property tax.

And so we implemented the two-year program of \$25 million a year to assist farm families across the province to absorb some of the cushion on the education tax side. I know that the program has met with overwhelming success across the province. Farm families have used the program to assist them with some of their operating costs and so the idea of the program was to reduce some of the operating costs for farm

families in the province.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Mr. Minister, I'd like to point out that the intent of the program, if it was to reduce in the costs for the producers, it's more than obvious that those costs are still there. If anything it's become more critical than ever because we are in a drought situation, the second year of it.

The producers are somewhat . . . well they're in dire straits in most regions and you admitted that the program was successful, and yet that's one that you've cut. So I fail to understand the logic in that. But moving on, according to your answer to a written question asked by the member from Saltcoats in 2001 for the 2000-2001 program, approximately \$21.5 million of the budgeted 25 million was actually paid out to the property land owners. So can you tell us how much has been paid out for the year 2001-2002?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Chair, to the member, the number for this year . . . the amount for this year paid out is \$23,035,024.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Could the minister please tell us where the surplus of the budgeted 25 million each year, that's not paid out, where does the surplus go?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Chair, the money goes back to the consolidated revenue fund.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — What efforts have been taken by the department to make the producers aware that this farm land property tax rebate program is available and when the deadline is?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Through the course of both developing the program on an annual basis we had a very extensive media campaign advising producers when in fact the program was enacted, for what periods of time the producers had an opportunity to collect the rebate, and then what the official deadlines were.

I believe in the first year of the program we extended the deadline from the January 31 date to the middle of February, and then of course had the same timeline in this year as well. So it was, I think February 15 was the timeline in which producers across the province had the opportunity to submit their applications.

And we have made that information extensively available through a variety of the medias that we have in the province, both provincially and . . . *The Western Producer* — we carried an article in there on a couple of occasions to identify for producers what the timelines were.

(21:15)

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Again I'm sure that the minister is hearing from the same number of people that the opposition's hearing from. But there's been a large number of phone calls and letters that I and my colleagues have received from producers who have missed the application deadline. And it would seem that, you know, there wasn't adequate awareness because it seems like there is a large number of producers who missed the deadline. Could the minister tell us how many late applications

there were?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — We had this year I believe, my officials tell me 95,000 applications. There were 1,300 that were late filers. So about 1 per cent of the applications were late filers.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — What process does the department have in place to deal with the late applications?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — When we established the program we also established an appeal mechanism and had an appeal committee that was in place. This appeal committee would receive the information.

If in fact somebody was a late filer, they would advise us that there was a circumstance as it relates to why they late filed. That information would make its way then to the appeal committee. If the appeal committee found that there was an extenuating circumstance, then in fact what they would do is make an exception for that particular individual or family.

I should say to you that . . . Your next question might be how many of those extenuating circumstances were in fact dealt with. Of those 1,300, if my memory serves me correctly, there were about 300 I believe that were in fact approved by the appeal committee when they reviewed the applications.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — I thank the minister for the answer and that sort of did cover indeed my next question. It seems like a very small percentage of the applications that go through the appeal process is granted an exemption. And so that explains why I'm not very surprised that I haven't heard of one exemption that's been granted.

One particular letter that I received was a copy of a letter that was sent to the Premier from Mr. Riviere. And in this letter he states, and I quote:

A copy of the rejection letter is enclosed and you will note that it states that the review committee carefully reviewed my letter of extenuating circumstances, but I was never asked for such a letter, nor did I send one.

So it would appear that the review process is severely flawed when they are basing their decision, in this case, on a letter of explanation that wasn't even sent; it didn't even exist.

So I would like to point out to the minister that there appears to be a great number of applications that were late, and very few of them are granted exemptions for being late. And yet the money is available. It's budgeted for and the property landowner really, truly is entitled to that rebate.

So the rebate is a fixed amount of money that can be calculated in advance. It's not a matter of only being able to allocate a fund once we know how many claims there will be.

So can the minister tell us what circumstances are considered to be acceptable in order for an exemption to be granted for a late application?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — I think there were, Mr. Chair, sort of two questions that the member asked. One is that the importance,

the necessity for the timeline. The necessity for the timeline would be that when you establish a program of this magnitude, where you have the responsibility of disseminating public taxpayers' money and being accountable to the Provincial Auditor, the Provincial Auditor requires that you set a specific timeline at which a program would end and that there would be a set of circumstances that would be set in place to ensure that there would be a process of due diligence if in fact there was exemptions that needed to be granted.

The appeal committee has used primarily the issues of death or illness in relationship to when somebody might be exempt from not having . . . from having late filed, sorry. And so those appear to be the two sort of areas that they have been using primarily.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, I want to join with my colleague from Watrous because I've had a number of letters sent to me with exactly the same issue, where they were either late by two days, a week, two weeks, whatever. Some of them have gone through the process of appeal, and all of them, from my understanding, have been turned down. If the budget was bare and all the money was used up by the ones that were in time, I could understand that, Mr. Minister.

If my addition is right here, between the first and the second year of the \$25 million, you've put back into general revenue very close to \$5.5 million. You extended the timeline on the first year, and we had dollars left in the pot. Why wouldn't we take time to extend it, put an extension of a month on there because the money is there? These farmers definitely need this money. And because of late applications, they're turned down. And once again, Mr. Minister, you've approved I believe about 25 to 30 per cent of the appeals but turned down the rest. So once again here we go picking winners and losers.

Wouldn't it be simpler, when the money is sitting there, to extend the deadline for a month or whatever it would take to catch these up and pay that excess money out instead of quickly returning it into general revenue?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — I appreciate the member's concern, and clearly I, like you, have received some letters as well. And partly when we established the program, as I'd said earlier, there's an importance here of making sure that we have a timeline because it needs to meet with the expectations of the Provincial Auditor. And so we need to set the timeline.

And we found that in the first year that there needed to be an extension, and that's why we extended the program by six weeks from the time of which the deadline of tax payment was due. And we should also remember here that there were 95,000 applications that were filed in the province. In some of those cases that I've had an opportunity to review personally because they came to me, there are people who got a return last year and were on time and this year filed their return late which says to me that there needs to be some responsibility here by the individuals because they know, because they got the payment last year.

Now the reality here is, is that because it's taxpayers' money that we administer, we set up the rules in relationship to the way in which the public accounting system in this province works,

the expectation of what the Provincial Auditor is. That's why we have the timeline.

And we set up an appeal process in Saskatchewan. We have two individuals who sit on the appeal who in our view . . . sit on the appeal both for C-SAP (Canada-Saskatchewan Assistance Program) and sat on the appeal for CFIP (Canadian Farm Income Program). These people are at arm's length from the government. They're producers in the province. And so it's my view that you need to have a process.

And at the end of the day, it's unfortunate that we have these kinds of circumstances, but I mean we need to live within the guidelines.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair, Mr. Minister, and to your officials. Mr. Minister, I think that process is always important, but really what the important thing is is the end product. And the end product is what happens to the taxpayer and the people who have filed their application and have been banking on this money to be part of their farm income.

Mr. Minister, you indicated that there was 95,000 applications, and from our information I believe there's only 55,000 farmers in the province, so maybe you could clarify that number for us.

And also, Mr. Minister, we all have letters from constituents, from farmers who've had, for extenuating circumstances, have had their applications rejected. The member from Saltcoats and Watrous both indicated that there's money left over, the money had been set aside for paying to the farmers. It's not that you're going to have to go back to Treasury Board and ask for more money. That money could be given to these farmers who are banking on it.

In the last few years the burden of paying for education tax on farm land has become extremely high. It's just an added burden in this last year when drought has been a real problem in many areas in the province. There's farmers who are constituents, citizens of this province, are saying that there should be some way of looking at this and adjusting the process or the guidelines if it means that these people who have paid their taxes and help pay for education in this province can actually get some type of a rebate.

Is there any way you'll reconsider your deadline and give these farmers an opportunity to get the funds that you're already budgeted for that's in the budget, the money is there, give it to the people that you had actually planned on them having it in the first place?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Chair, to the member, I don't disagree with you that the money was available and that the money could have been paid out to the producers. The reality is is that we had a deadline. And if you were to say to me that producers in Saskatchewan didn't know that there was a deadline and that we didn't do a very good job of advertising the issue, that if it was only a one-year program and not a two-year program, then I think we could easily make the case that we should be extending the deadline or making sure that we pay out the money. The reality is that the money makes its way back to the General Revenue Fund.

And that when I said to you that there were 95,000 farmers in Saskatchewan, I thought for a minute you might have thought that we're growing the number of farmers in Saskatchewan within a year. And the truth is that we are growing the number of the farmers in Saskatchewan, but we haven't grown them by twice as much. That 95,000 is about two years, it's two years of the program, and so that's for that period of time of which that's covered off.

The money today that we . . . or the farmers who haven't received their applications or haven't received the funding, in my view we've provided the kinds of due diligence on and it's unfortunate that we are in this kind of circumstances that we are with some of those families.

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Minister, I too have a handful of letters from constituents who received the Dear John letter and were rejected for a number of . . . basically because their applications were too late.

And these constituents had a variety of reasons. A couple of constituents that raised this issue with my office were away, working out of the province so that they could support their farm and one was I believe five days late and another one was approximately 10 days late. Another constituent went into the hospital and had surgery in late December and wasn't able to do the administrative duties that were required to apply for the rebate and that constituent was also turned down.

So there's a whole variety of reasons. And that's our thing as to why some of the producers applied after the February 15 deadline, and, Mr. Minister, a lot of . . . in fact all of this could have very easily been solved and these problems could have been anticipated and dealt with in a much easier fashion.

If you ever have the opportunity to apply for the grant, you realize that all the information you need to fill out the application comes from your tax notice and your tax receipt and all that information is generated at the RM office.

And, Minister, I know SARM made a proposal to your department that they would administer the program for you, and it would have been a simple thing for the producers, and I would suspect for your department, to have gone that route and would have alleviated all these problems that we're dealing with here tonight.

And my question to you is, why wouldn't you have taken SARM up on their proposal and had it done right at the RM office? Because as I said all the information you need to apply for this rebate comes from your tax assessment form and your tax receipt.

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Deputy Deputy Chair, to the member, I say we did have a conversation with SARM about them administering the program and would have liked for them to administer the program. In fact we had numerous conversations for them to take it on.

The problem that we had, both which they identified and we identified, is that we had the home quarter exemption in the first year of the program which made it very difficult for RMs (rural municipality) to administer it because you have people who

have farm land all over the province, and so that they weren't able then to track from a central location where in fact the home quarter that would be designated would be exempt from. And that was a real, huge issue for them.

(21:30)

Because we could do the central administration and the management through the central program that we had established, that's the rationale for in and which we built the program around.

This year we changed the home exemption issue, and that would make it far easier then for them to administer the program. But it was in the second year of the program, and that's the rationale for why and which we did it.

I know the member might be somewhat concerned about the issue, but there was a great deal of dialogue with SARM around this particular issue. They couldn't find a resolve on the home quarter exemption, and that's why we administered the program in the way in which we did.

**Mr. Hart:** — Mr. Chair, the minister said that you have a problem with identifying the home quarter because some number of farmers farm land in different municipalities and so on. Well for one thing, you could have a farmer sign a declaration saying that this is his home quarter, and the other thing is, if you've got an \$80 million system in land titles that's supposed to be able to provide all of these services, you would think that \$80 million system could provide you with the wherewithal to administer this program at the RM offices, Mr. Minister.

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — I just want to say to the member that we did offer the program to SARM in the first year. We did offer it to them. And based on the criteria which we had — and I have correspondence that relates to the discussion that we had — it was very difficult for them to do it and that's why we set up the administration to operate it.

Had this program had a longer life, it's my view that this would have been a responsibility that we would have provided to SARM to do into the future.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to let the minister know that SARM offered to administrate that program actually. And they didn't foresee the difficulties that the minister just made out.

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

**Ms. Harpauer:** — We're moving on to a totally different topic again which is the Conservation Cover Program. And the Sask Ag and Food Web site states that it is a four-year, \$26 million initiative that will contribute to the cost of converting crop land to perennial cover.

Can the minister tell us where the program can be found exactly in the budget Estimates book, because I had difficulty finding it, and if it is 26 million for each of the four years or 26 million in total to be divided by four years?



**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Deputy Chair, the estimate can be found on page 27 of the Ag and Food Rural Revitalization under the farm stabilization and adaptation area, and it's within the adaptation Initiatives, and so it's within that category. And the announcement of the program last year was for 26 million over a period of four years.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Could the minister tell us how much was paid out in the program last year?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — It was 7.6 last year.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Could I ask the minister if he could tell us how many applications were received, and did they all receive funding, or were some applications turned down?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Last year, Madam Member, we received approximately 11,000 applications, and as I mentioned to you, we paid out 7.6 million at the \$15 per acre at the maximum of 50 acres.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — In 2001 as the minister mentioned, they received \$15 an acre for a maximum of 50 acres, and I remember the press release explaining that very well. But in 2002 I noticed the applicants will only receive \$7.50 an acre. Why did the government make the change to the program?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — We made it, Mr. Deputy Chair, this year a two-part payment, so in the first part of the application we will pay out the \$7.50. Then upon the completion of the program, what we'll do is we'll pay out the remaining portion to the allocation that we have this year in our budget.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Could the final payment then be less than \$7.50?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — It could be, Mr. Deputy Chair. It could be less than the seven fifty.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — What ceiling is the minister looking at for allocating for this year? Is he looking at allocating only 7.6 million and he'll divide that by the number of applicants, or is he looking at 8 million? How much money does he plan on spending on the program this year?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Based on the information that my officials have provided me this year to date to June 12 — or not to date, to June 12 — we had 1,170 applications. So there is a good chance here that we'll pay out the entire 7.50 in the remaining portion of the program.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Again I'm going to ask the minister, is there a ceiling for this year? Are we looking at spending a maximum of 8 million or a maximum of 7.5 million this year? You must have some total money in your mind in order to know how to divide it.

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — The member is asking what our budgeted number for this year is, I believe, and it's 3.9 million. And that's why I'd indicated that based on the number of applications that we have to date, the second portion of the payment will likely meet those expectations of paying out the \$7.50.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — The minister will have to cope with my re-asking a question again then. Last year you said you spent 7.6 million. This year you're budgeting 3.9 million, which is significantly less. Why are you making that decision?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — As I'd indicated on my earlier response that we had budgeted 26 million to be paid out over the period of four years, we anticipated that this year what we would see is a reduction in the number of seeded acres in the Cover Program because of how dry it was last fall — as the member would know — and anticipated that we would be in a situation again this year where producers would likely seed down less cover, and so budgeted a smaller amount this year to anticipate that there would be a lesser seed down in the province.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — I thank the minister, and I have to admit I'm very taken . . . surprised that there is less . . . or you're looking at less applications this year because I'm sure the minister answered one of my questions during question period by saying that this program was such a success that there was many more acres this year going under permanent cover. However, I don't have that in front of me, so perhaps I'll look it up and maybe I was mistaken and he didn't actually say that to me during question period, but somehow I remember that.

Are there any other changes that were made from the 2001 program to the 2002 program?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Only the two-part payment was the only change that we made to the program.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — I thank the minister, and we're moving on to another topic. Sort of a marathon session tonight.

The minister is well aware of the concerns of the non-quota egg producers, and in particular those of Terry Motz and Curtis Jensen. Saskatchewan has a very small percentage of our country's egg quota — I believe we only have about 3 per cent — which is quite frustrating considering that we have the resources in our province to produce so much more than that. That 3 per cent of the country's quota is owned by I believe 68 producers, and the non-quota producers remain on the waiting list to obtain quotas for years. And some I believe have been on there for well over 10 years.

Some of the issues that the non-quota producers have raised surround the practice of the Saskatchewan egg board, and in particular how they allocate and transfer the quotas. It is my understanding that the minister has hired an agrologist by the name of Eugene Bendig to investigate these allegations and to ensure that the egg producers board is complying with the Act that regulates the board.

Has Mr. Bendig completed his investigation; and if so, would the minister table a copy of his report for us; or in the future, are we going to be able to see that report?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — I have not yet received the report, but I expect to receive the report very, very shortly and will have it then available for review.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Will that be available for the public to see as well as the opposition members to see, or is that going to be a

report that will only be for the eyes of your department?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — The only rationale for not releasing the report would be if there is personal information as it relates to one of the producers or to the producers that would put them in jeopardy if we were to release the information. Otherwise, certainly I'm intending to make that available to you.

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Minister, I have a constituent who is planning on increasing his feedlot so he can accommodate 5,000 head of cattle, and he's now learned that he's going to have to not just get a permit, a livestock operations permit, but he's also going to have to have a hydrologist's study which is going to cost him between 10 and \$15,000 or up to \$20,000.

Can you tell me what kind of . . . first of all what number is required to . . . what constitutes an intensive livestock operation?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Chair, Madam Member, the number is 300. So as long as you operate your livestock operation under the 300 limit, then you aren't expected to be exposed to the kinds of work that you're talking about that needs to be done here. If in fact you grow that operation beyond that limit then the expectation is that you would then need to — as the owner/operator or as the community feedlot would then need to — go through the kinds of work that you're talking about to expand the permits, the hydrologist's study, to ensure that there is appropriate manure management, that there isn't any effect to the water sources or the drainage sources.

In some instances as it relates in more particular to the hog industry, where there appears to be by people who live within areas more concern about the stench or the smell that comes from the hog barn as opposed from a livestock feedlot, there is always concern about air quality as well. So the hydrology report tries to take into account all of the environmental issues that need to be addressed here, and that's when it would engage itself beyond the 300 limit.

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Minister, then are you saying that this individual who will have this feedlot with his own cattle in it, is he going to require the hydrologist's report?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — I'm told by my officials that the hydrology report in some cases is only, is only needing to be done if in fact the feedlot is attaching . . . is nearby a water source, or in fact the feedlot may be sitting near an aquifer. And I'm familiar with one that's being developed in our area of the province of which they are requiring a hydrology report because the feedlot is very closely located to an aquifer of which the town receives its water source from. So it's primarily due in instances where there is a water source that's nearby or that might be affected by the establishment of an intensive livestock operation in that area.

(21:45)

**Ms. Draude:** — So, Mr. Minister, then your department will come out to determine if a hydrologist's report is required for that specific operation?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Deputy Chair, it would be Sask Water

that would be the people who would be responsible for doing the work.

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Minister, is the hydrologist that can be hired, is he through Sask Water, or through your department, or are there private individuals that will be doing the work?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — I think I would say, Mr. Deputy Chair, that the hydrologists are provided either by Sask Water or they certainly are within the private sector, and it would be from those sources of which the people would make themselves available.

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Minister, this specific case that I'm talking about, I'm wondering if I can just talk to you about it and we can get some of the details ironed out to see if this constituent actually will require the hydrologist's study?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Deputy Chair, I'd be happy to take a look at that individual case at your convenience.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, my questions are surrounding intensive livestock operations, as you are I'm sure very much aware. Mr. Minister, in my constituency we have a number of barns that have been built, specifically hog operations that rely on open air lagoons. A number of barns in the Preeceville, and Sturgis, and Rama, and in fact near Theodore, Mr. Minister, which I'm sure you're very familiar since that is close to your land.

Mr. Minister, lately in the last couple of months I've heard from not only people who have been opposed to the expansion of intensive livestock operations, but also the people who have been supportive. And as you've mentioned tonight already, many people understand that there is a need to address air quality, there's a need to address water quality, there's a need to ensure that there isn't pollution of the land.

And as a result of those concerns that have been raised I would like to find out from you, Mr. Minister, that I believe it was about a year ago the provincial Department of Agriculture along with the federal department put forward some, I'll call it research money or pilot project money, to a corporation in Saskatoon that was going to implement a pilot project at one of Quadra barns at Broderick and that was going to be a pilot study that was going to look at anaerobic digestion of the hog waste and look at production of the methane gas as well as a power source.

Mr. Minister, could you inform us as to the state of that pilot project. Is it fully implemented already and are we seeing research data that is being compiled from that project?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Chair, to the member, you are absolutely right that it is about a year ago now that we provided some additional resources with the federal government and the province to look at this particular type of manure management. We yet do not have the kind of information that we think is important here to analyze to see whether or not into the future, when we're seeing the expansion of the hog industry, that you could use this kind of technology to ensure that we can do the kinds of . . . particularly air and water-source management that we need to do as it relates to the hog industry.

The minute that we get that kind of information we're certainly going to make it available because it will have impact, in my view, in terms of what we do in the future as we build this industry because there's all kinds of potential as you know for it. And we need to be sure that we can not only protect the environmental . . . and be good environmental stewards here, but also it provides some discomfort and some inconvenience for people as you've said, and not only those people who today are not necessarily proponents of the hog industry but are folks who support us who understand the importance of what this industry is doing in our regions. And it's for that purpose that we need to also build a better understanding of what's available today and we're waiting for that research to make itself available.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister, for your answer about being able to share that data.

Mr. Minister, my question still is, is the pilot project actually underway in Broderick? Like if there was to be a tour of the Quadra barn, would we see an active project where there is generation of power and the like?

And, Mr. Minister, also in conjunction with the Broderick operation, I saw in the media just not too long ago an article that SaskPower was also considering a pilot project that sounded very similar, Mr. Minister. They were talking about the generation of methane gas and the ability to produce power also from an intensive livestock operation . . . a pilot project was going to occur in the pork industry. Is this the same project that's going on at Broderick or is SaskPower considering alternate testing and an alternate project as well somewhere else in the province?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — My officials, Mr. Member, tell me that these are two separate projects. These are not the same projects and that the first project of which we made the investment last year, we don't have the detail yet that we need to have.

Can we make the tour? I expect that shortly we'll be advised by the partners who are involved that they'll be prepared to allow us to see some of the work that they've done there and to have also a tour of the facility. Today much of what we can see is from the outside and that's really not what we're wanting to see at the end of the day. We want to see the results of the data that they're analyzing for us.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And I would appreciate, and I'm sure that many people in the province would appreciate knowing where the SaskPower project is going to go as well. Because, Mr. Minister, I'd like to sort of conclude by indicating to you that . . . and I know that you've heard from many people in the province about intensive livestock operations — both the positive things and the negative things.

And while people understand the benefits that may occur from the ability for farmers to sell grain, for the ability that there will be maybe job creation, the concern that I've heard very, very strongly from, from not only the very strong opponents to the intensive livestock operations but supporters who are saying that air quality is of utmost importance.

And, Mr. Minister, I can tell you that I have a barn that is located about four miles from where I live in my home community of Invermay. And when the actual direct application of the waste product occurred from that barn not too long ago, everybody in the neighbourhood knew for a week, and more than a week, that indeed this had taken place and the odour was not very good.

So we have had a number of people that are saying that it is time to stop expansion of the livestock industries through the method of open-air lagoons. And I know, Mr. Minister, that you've been involved in discussions with I believe the company is called Pure Lean which uses a different method which is not the water method and the lagoon method but uses a dry compost and relies on something different. And I understand that the odour is not as bad and indeed the air quality is improved.

So while we're looking at the Broderick project, while we're looking at the SaskPower project, and we're going to, I understand from you that we'll be seeing data in the course of this year and probably into 2003.

My question, Mr. Minister, if the information that comes from these projects is such that the open air lagoon would be a situation that needs to be changed and we would need to move to the system that you have put some dollars into in Broderick to allow sort of a different plan to occur, what will you do with projects like the Big Sky operations in my constituency, of which the government is a significant shareholder in those projects? Will you be looking at retrofitting those fairly new sites, those operations that have been put into those communities, or into those areas near the communities, to correct what obviously will be a weakness in the system, if that is indeed what is proven at these pilot projects?

Is there going to be a commitment from Sask Ag and Food to encourage retrofitting of existing open air lagoons to move to whatever will be determined at these pilot projects if indeed that is deemed to be more beneficial for all concerned?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Well, Mr. Chair, to the member, you ask a very, very important question because, as you know, as we're moving along in developing the industry, we're also looking at ways in which we can enhance the environmental standards across the province and are looking at data that other people are working with today in the areas of which you've already described, those operations that are in place.

Today when I speak and meet with the hog industry as you do, particularly those who are the large producers in Saskatchewan . . . and we have another one that's just being built in the Leroy area, a very, very large project, and they are using the earthen pit manure storage facilities. If in fact and when we find — and I know that we will — some environmental standards of which you can process the waste in a far more efficient fashion, we'll eventually need to get to the decision about, what do we do with those that are already established in the province? Will there be some additional resources that will need to be provided to those operators in the province because today . . . They built those operations on the margins that they have, without adding the significant infrastructure costs that would be required here to meet the kind of standards that we're talking about.

Today we're suggesting that when we get there, and I expect we'll get there sooner than later, we'll need to look and evaluate that with the industry, in developing the kinds of environmental standards that we're going to want.

And I can appreciate your comments about the way in which, in the area of the province of which you live and from time to time when the prevailing winds are coming in the right direction, you get the full impact of what the earthen pits are giving off.

I'm told that you live somewhere between the barn and where our cottage is. And so I've often wondered whether or not you're contributing to any of that that's coming from that part of the province. But I know that that's not the case.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. Well, Mr. Minister, I hope that I'm not contributing to your air quality at all.

Mr. Minister, my final question is, while we're studying the examples that you've identified with SaskPower and with the company at Broderick, are there examples that are similar in nature that are successful in other provinces, in other countries, that your officials have had an opportunity to study to enable you to put forward a plan for the future?

And I understand where you are today in terms of moving the intensive livestock operations in the pork industry, you know, into the future and you've expanded that industry rapidly in Saskatchewan, but I'm looking at protecting the people of this province, protecting the air quality, the water quality. Are there examples in the world or in some part of Canada that would lead you to say that we will be able to copy some particular intensive livestock operation that indeed is exhibiting the kinds of quality controls that you need here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Minister?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Chair, to the member, what we're certainly doing on a regular basis is making sure that we stay close to what the industry is developing, not only in the country, in Canada or in the US and North America, but we've also been speaking and working with the young man from Saskatoon who has done a fair bit of work in this area. He has been studying the Dutch models because they have some very good proficient technology in Holland. And so when you ask the question about whether or not we're trying to be close to that, we absolutely are.

We have, my officials tell me, a tri-provincial conference coming up this summer of which the three Prairie provinces are coming together looking at the whole issues of manure management and trying to enhance and improve our technology on a regular basis to try and alleviate some of the issues that we're having today as it relates to the environmental future.

(22:00)

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Deputy Chair. Mr. Minister, according to the new 2002 policy on crop rotations, there's no insurance coverage for loss if chickpeas are seeded more than once in four years on the same land. In cases where loss is caused by drought, hail, or flooding, it seems that crop insurance should cover the loss even if the rotation has been

shortened from one crop in four years on the same land.

These days with vigilance and timely spraying, it's certainly possible to grow chickpeas on the same land, more than one crop in four years, very successfully. It may be understandable if crop insurance were to refuse coverage for disease damage in cases of shortened rotations. However, why does crop insurance refuse coverage for crop loss due to the other causes that I have listed?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Deputy Chair, to the member, when we go to develop crop insurance programs particularly for new commodities — and in 1998 the chickpeas would have been a new commodity — we spend a good deal of time with the industry trying to ensure and determine whether or not . . . or what the criteria should be when we're actually providing the insurance coverage.

And I should say to you that in our consultations with the industry, the policy of which we've adopted at the crop insurance is really the policy driven by the industry. Through their work over the years, they've had an opportunity to test this with us, and they've said to us that they do not wish for us to insure crops outside of the four-year rotation because of the problems from time to time that they will cause with their neighbours, the concern that they have about ascochyta, and certainly sort of the disclosure loss that would occur to the industry itself.

So this policy is not one that's been determined in isolation by the Crop Insurance Corporation. It's been really the direction that the industry has provided for us, and that's how we've arrived at the position that we have.

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, there's been some concern over the level of coverage for chickpeas. Has any consideration been given to individual coverage for chickpeas?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Deputy Chair, we are looking at providing the individual coverage. We don't yet have sufficient data, but we're certainly intending to go in that direction.

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Do you know if sufficient data will be available for the next crop year?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Chair, to the member, we're just developing some of the area yield averages today. If the question is, will we be . . . We'll be in a position to have the program available next year, my officials tell me that with the industry we're probably not prepared yet to have the coverage available next year, but we expect that that will happen for us within very short order.

What's happening, of course, is that we're seeing larger numbers of acres that are being seeded across the province. We're finding that as the crops are being produced in other parts of the region, that the industry wants to be sure that when we're going to the individual averages that we've established all of that data.

So I expect that we'll have that fairly shortly, but my officials tell me that likely not yet in the new year.

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, could you tell me what the total cost of operating the crop insurance program is? That's the federal, provincial, and farmer or producer contributions.

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — On average, Mr. Chair, to the member, it's about 25 to \$26 million a year.

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And can you break that down as to what portion would be producer claims and what portion would be administration?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — The 25 million or \$26 million is the administration portion. I'm just getting the producer claims from my official as we're speaking now.

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. What portion of the total costs of the program would be federal, provincial, and producer payments?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Deputy Chair, if the question is what percentages we contribute to the program, the province contributes 35 per cent, the federal government 28 per cent, and the producer 37 per cent.

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Then if the 25 or 26 million is administration, what is the total cost of the program including all contributions?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Deputy Chair, the total premiums last year were 225.226 million and then you would need to add to that the \$25 million of administration costs of which the \$25 million administration cost would be cost shared 50/50 with the federal government.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, you will remember, I'm sure quite well on Monday, where a number of the opposition members that represent a large area of the province talked about the serious drought condition that still exists in our province. And in particular the livestock producers are becoming more and more desperate for feed and water, and sadly it appears that massive livestock has already been sold at fire sale prices. And I fear that many more of the livestock in the province will be sold this fall, before winter, because there isn't the feed available to carry through to be able to keep the livestock over the winter.

One example of one area, I just received a phone call today from a fellow from the RM of Connaught, and they apparently were one of the driest areas last year already, and this year the fellow told me that they've only received 32 millimetres of rainfall since April 1. Beside the fact that the crops are finished, the livestock producers have absolutely no hay land.

And I notice in my own area, and I'm rather on the edge of what is severe drought, there is bodies of water that I've never seen in my lifetime dry. They're totally dried up.

And, Mr. Minister, your government has identified the need to increase livestock in this province. We have fallen drastically below the numbers of livestock in our two neighbouring provinces, and it's largely due to a lack of vision and a lack of policies, I might say, that would attract the livestock sectors to

our province.

But now I believe that your department and yourself recognize that we need to change that, but the instant that there is a hurdle such as this drought, again I feel that your department has dropped the ball. The drought started last year, and in my mind that would be the time to at least give some consideration to what type of programs you could implement the following year to address a drought situation, should it happen a second year and indeed it has.

And yet your particular department not only has no programs to address an additional year of drought, but you cut your own budget so that it doesn't have the flexibility that's needed to address the drought, although I would like to point out that you obviously have a surplus from the farm land property tax rebate that could have perhaps been put into a water program.

We need to address the disaster that's occurring right now in the livestock industry, and the most immediate and the one that we're hearing from the most is the cattle producers. And APAS last week, it's my understanding, asked for the province to change its crop insurance policy to allow for a total write-off of drought ravaged crops that are either too thin or meagre to provide a higher income than what the costs would be just to harvest it.

Or there are other crops that are out there, and I know there is quite a few in my area, that's far too late. It's not going to make the season. It's going to freeze before the crop is ever mature enough to harvest. This would allow the producers the opportunity to write off their crops and then allow their cattle or their neighbour's cattle — they themselves may not have livestock — but if they could write off their crop, would allow another producer to bring their livestock on to the land. And it's my understanding that at one time during the '80s, crop insurance did indeed do this, and they allowed farmers to graze cattle on fields and cut it for forage.

So I was wondering if the minister is even considering doing such a thing, taking such an initiative, to try to address the feed difficulty that we have in our province.

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Thank you very much. Mr. Deputy Chair, to the member, I appreciate your concern, and I do recall the conversations that we had on Monday, and I am most aware of the kinds of pressures that some of our livestock producers are faced across the province.

And I was surprised, to say the least, that when I reviewed some of the data just recently that what happened with our livestock numbers over 2001 to 2002, and I was looking at the total heifers and cows on farms as of January 1 and in the year 2001, we had 1.296 million head. In January 1 of 2002, we had 1.331 million head. So in spite of the very, very difficult year that we had in the livestock industry last year and the serious, serious drought that we had in the province, we actually saw our heifers and cow herds in the province grow slightly over that period of time.

Now the reality is that we're now into year two of the drought, and fortunately we have a larger tract of the province this year of which the hay crop and the grain crop will be far better than

it was the last year. And that will be most helpful, in my view, to address some of the shortages that parts of the province are going to experience this year.

Now what we did last year, or late last year, is a number of things. We got the additional water money — not only from our own budget but we got some federal money — for wells and dugouts which producers said were important for them. And we're prepared again this year, as I've said before on a couple of occasions, I think to you and to other members across the way, that soon as we hear what the federal portion of the \$589 million for water will be, and that \$100 million that they've set aside this year for a variety of different programs of which water will be cost shared with the provinces, we're prepared then to put our share into that because it'll be 60/40 and to do the kind of work across the province that's necessary.

(22:15)

Last year I attempted, as you know, in October/November, to get the federal government to increase its crop insurance contribution to producers across the province because what we wanted to do, of course, is we wanted to enhance the crop insurance program that would provide better coverage for the . . . not only the grain producers across the province and oilseed producers but also for livestock. And so then we made the changes that we did this spring, with some criticism I can appreciate, where we took the spot loss hail, took that chunk of money and put it into the grass and into the forage program — difficult decision for us to have made over here, but for sure the right decision when it comes today to looking at what's happening in the various different parts of the province where it's dry again.

We got the tax deferral extended for yet another year which will be very helpful for our producers in the livestock industry, and they've told me about how important this is. I meet with the, as you know, the farm organizations and farm groups, I meet with them every six or seven weeks. And what they have said to me now, unequivocally again, is that we shouldn't be putting any additional money into transportation either of feed or livestock because it's by and large a business plan which livestock producers have included in their cost of doing business every year.

We also extended, as you know, some additional grazing land and land for haying — both SERM lands and Crown lands; we've opened it up this year, just recently announced an additional 10,000 acres of wildlife land so that producers could make their livestock available to them. And just a couple of days ago, we announced the additional equipment from Sask Water for water pumping.

We continue to have our feed and grain forage listing service so that producers have access to the information, and I can say to you, in the area of the province that I come from and the member from Saltcoats comes from, we will see a relatively good hay crop which will make itself available, I know, as it did last year for other parts of the province.

And then of course, as much as we don't agree with the fact that the NISA or the CFIP program was not very beneficial for many producers across the province, those two safety nets are

still in place this year: both NISA and the CFIP program. My hope, of course, is in our conversations in the next several weeks that we're going to be able to find for Saskatchewan producers a far better crop insurance program where that crop insurance program can provide the kinds of coverages that you and I will both want for our producers across the province, and it will be, certainly, determined by the level of funding, at the end of the day, that gets put in by the national government, which we're waiting to hear. Not only here in Saskatchewan are we waiting to hear, but we're waiting to hear as Agriculture ministers across Canada what the federal government's participation in that is going to be.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — The minister touched on a number of issues that I would like to address. He mentioned additional funding for water, and I think there can be no doubt in this House where the Saskatchewan Party position has been on additional funding for water and how desperately we need that to be addressed. So I'm hoping when the minister says that fairly soon he will have an announcement for additional funding for water, I hope that is very, very soon. And I hope it gets into the producers' hands in a very timely manner.

The other issue that the minister mentioned was the number of head of cattle that's in the province and how it's increased. And I cannot explain in detail how those statistics are found, but I know I have had it explained to me by the cattle producers of how that number is very inaccurate because the tracking system is inadequate, and often the number of head of cattle that are in the province is a deceiving number.

And you'll have to pardon me if I question those statistics and how realistic that they actually are. The auction marts tell the story. I mean we have Heartland that's saying that their sales is up four to five times what a normal year would be, and they're not the only auction mart that is recording those types of increases in sales. So the two don't jibe obviously, where we have more livestock in a province but we're not selling it. Of course we are. The producers are not lying to us. They are not trying to be deceptive by any means. They are selling their cattle.

The minister also mentioned the listing that he had. And by no means, I don't discourage his department from having a Web site available that has listings of feed. However I have checked that Web site on an ongoing basis to see it it's increased. The last time I looked I think there was 22 listings. A lot of the bales that were available were straw bales. They're not adequate feed to sustain livestock. So therefore the amount of listings on that Web site might be helpful for some, but by far isn't going to be adequate to address the difficulties that many producers are facing.

So I want to return to the question, and the question was the call that APAS made last week on changes to crop insurance. I believe it's been done in the past. I know of one producer in my area whose crop is particularly poor. He had sprayed it once for weeds. The dry conditions meant that the crop didn't come up. It's extremely sparse. He had an adjuster come out to write off his crop. The adjuster told him that he would not be covered for crop insurance unless he sprayed it yet again. So the farmer's in a dilemma. He either just takes the loss and doesn't collect the crop insurance or he has the additional cost of the spray.

It's just a ridiculous decision that was made. This is a crop that could be allowed to a livestock producer and the livestock could be turned on to this field. It is a very poor looking crop but that is the decision the adjuster made. And that's decisions that's being made far too often.

So I'm going to return to the question that I asked originally. Is the minister and his department even going to consider the request made by APAS?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Well, Mr. Chair, to the member, we have had the conversation, and I know that APAS has also had the conversation at the national level with the federal government. The federal government is not prepared to change its program this year. And as a result of that they are not prepared to cost share in the program. So in this given year we're not in the position to go back to change the program and the kinds of requirement that APAS has asked.

Clearly this year's issues would be easier or far easier resolved had we got the appropriate amount of dollars at the beginning. And that would have meant by putting the additional funds into the crop insurance program this year as we asked in October and November of last year, because we realized that there was a need here for an enhanced crop insurance program. The national government was not very accommodating as you know. And as a result of that we needed to make the kinds of changes to our own program as we have this year. And . . . I can stop there, Mr. Chair.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — I thank the minister and I really question his answer. I know the crop insurance programs in the provinces are conducted differently. It was my understanding that the provincial government administrated the crop insurance program. I could be mistaken and corrected here but I'm sure a phone call to the federal government will help clarify that for me. If indeed the federal government is the controlling factor in how the crop insurance in this province is run, has the minister even asked the federal government if they could make these changes?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Well, Mr. Chair, to the member, the member would know that the crop insurance program is cost shared, and it's cost shared, as I think I mentioned earlier to the member from Thunder Creek, on the percentages this year of which I identified. We sign on a three-year agreement of which is just expiring now, the percentage of involvement that the federal government makes with us. And it's within those parameters of which we operate the program.

We administer it here in Saskatchewan, absolutely, and we cost share the administration costs, but we're fixed in terms of the amount of dollars that the federal government puts in. Less so fixed as we are, because as you know, this year we put an additional \$14 million into the crop insurance program.

The federal government is moving right along in its last year of the agreement not putting any additional money into the program. So any time that a province makes a decision that they want to change the makeup or contributions of the program, certainly within their own purview a province can add additional dollars as we did this year. But the federal government did not add any additional dollars this year.

And because it's a tripartite agreement wherein which producers contribute, and provinces contribute, and the federal government contribute, we can't just make a decision unilaterally on behalf of the federal government and say, well this is what we're going to do here and, ladies and gentlemen in the national government, you're going to participate.

Because this year is a good example of how they chose not to participate both . . . from two fronts — not by putting in the additional \$200 million that we asked for last fall and not by topping up the crop insurance program this year as we did, matching our \$14 million in a year in which producers across this province are facing yet again, in some parts, very, very severe drought of which crop insurance in my view would have been most helpful.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Again I question the minister if these crops are going to be a high claim. I'm not talking about the good crops that are going to yield extremely high or the crops that are already at an average rate of maturity. We're talking crops that are basically going to be a write-off. Could we get them written off and allow cattle to go on the land or allow it to be cut?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — I have . . . my officials have provided for me, and I think what might be helpful here is for me to provide a copy of this for you as well, because it really is the options for what producers need to do. And it states here and there are five quick bullets of which I can address and it says here that:

If the original insured crop has failed, the producer can take the establishment benefits and reseed to green feed. Insurance coverage may be purchased on the reseed green feed until July 15, the seeding deadline for green feed.

And then the second bullet says this:

Producers may graze, they can bale, they can silage, or they can summer fallow and insure crop. If the crop is put into any use other than harvest, the salvage value of the crop is appraised at the time the crop is put to its alternate use.

And thirdly it says:

Appraisals are based on the yield estimates determined by plant and kernel counts.

And fourthly it says:

Alternatively if the crop is grazed or baled the salvage value may be assessed based on the actual harvest green feed value. Bale or clipping weight of the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance insured price for green feed is \$76 a tonne.

And then finally it says:

If the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance were to deem the yield to be zero, when fields are grazed or baled the extra cost must be reflected in the premium rates. (And then) producers who do not have livestock, they may not be willing to pay extra premiums or insured incentives that benefits only livestock producers.

So I can make this note available for you because I think,

Madam Member, it would address the issues that you have as it relates to this specific producer.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — I thank the minister. Around the year of 1989 there was a program that was in place to encourage livestock production in our province that was called FeedGAP (grain adjustment program). And it cost the province, going back in the estimates of that time, it cost the province between 5 and \$10 million a year. And from reading different articles and news releases on the program, it was well received by the livestock producers of this province. And without going through the detail of the program in itself I found it very, very interesting that there was initiatives in place to expand the livestock production in the province, and yet in 1992 this government scrapped it.

It sort of sounds like GRIP (gross revenue insurance program). Again it was a program that was in place. Had the government had vision, had they had a plan for the building the province for the future and not toss this program, perhaps there would have been funding in place that would've addressed years such as what we're facing right now. And as long as we continue to talk about future programs but never put anything into place, every time there's a wreck we're going off the rails, because we will have nothing in place that's going to address the issues.

There's an article that was written at the time that the government chose to scrap the program and the article was called:

FeedGAP end may ruin cattle industry, says ag economist. University of Saskatchewan agriculture economist, Hartley Furtan, estimates the loss of FeedGAP will mean an export of 117,000 cattle — more than half the industry. It would also mean the immediate closure of one packing plant, he said.

(22:30)

Another article, "Livestock industry working to revive FeedGAP" states:

In the May provincial budget the government ended the FeedGAP program that paid producers \$13 a tonne to help offset the cost of feeding livestock in the province. Saskatchewan producers say they can no longer compete with producers in Alberta, who have a similar program.

Now we all know . . . I know your members have said it in the House. Our members are well aware that the reason why Alberta has considerable more healthy or a healthier cattle industry is because of policies and programs that they put into place to encourage it in their province. The reason why Manitoba has a healthier hog industry is for those same reasons, and yet every time we've had something that's working well that can address years where we run into difficulties, this government has scrapped the program.

Are you even considering putting a program in place that can handle these situations when they occur?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Chair, to the member . . . or Deputy Chair, to the member, I very much appreciate your support

today because this is how I would recognize it . . . is that I hear you suggesting that we should be taking some public dollars and investing public dollars into growing the primary industry in Saskatchewan, and this is a refreshing position for someone from your side of the House to take because much of what we've been hearing from members of your side of the House is that we should not be investing in the public growth of the primary industry.

And I very much appreciate you recognizing how, in fact, Alberta grew their feed industry because their livestock industry in Alberta — and everybody knows this — was bought in 1972 where the Government of Alberta took a large chunk of public taxpayers' money and dumped it into the livestock industry in the same way that Manitoba took a large chunk of their public dollars and dumped it into the livestock industry on the hog side.

So clearly, we're making that investment today in Saskatchewan. We're going to do it in the . . . we've already done it in the pork industry. We're going to do it in the ethanol industry, as you already know, and we want to attach ourselves to the feedlot industry in Saskatchewan as well. And when we go there to provide that kind of both technical support and possibly financial assistance, it will be helpful for you to repeat what you've just said to me tonight because that will be most useful when I travel the province and say to producers across the province when we're developing the feedlot industry, that the opposition party is most interested in investing public dollars into the development of those programs.

We certainly will look at and have looked at the FeedGAP program. I've had some conversations with the industry about that. The industry is very, very concerned about how quickly we would move in that direction given that we had a US countervail just a couple of years ago through R-CALF.

And there's a great deal of hesitation here to move rapidly down that front. So if the question is, are we looking in some of those fronts, absolutely we are. Are we going to build a livestock industry in Saskatchewan? Absolutely we are. We're doing it already on the hog side. We're going to work closely with livestock producers and we're going to grow it on the beef side as well, and on the cow-calf.

And the support of this government and this ministry and this department in investing in the primary production in Saskatchewan is critical because it's one of the areas that we're going to see our quickest and fastest development. So I appreciate your comments and support as we move ahead on this front.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — I would just like to remind the minister that we're not going to play the game as to what I meant in what I had to say or the question. We're not talking equity positions here. We are clearly not talking equity positions. We're talking good policy and good programs that have a vision. So let's not get too excited about my comments playing into your hands.

I would like to read from a document that states clearly:

This is a major commitment for the government but it is also an opportunity. First and most important it sends a



clear signal that we are committed to agriculture and to farmers.

That document is the minister's own document. It's one that he put together for the federal government, presentation for the federal government. The words I left out was Government of Canada but it also applies to the Government of Saskatchewan. It's time that we started to look ahead. It's time that we started to put meaningful programs in place. And you know clearly what I mean when I talk about programs and policies.

And we're not going to play the game whether or not I mean equity position. With that I'm going to turn it over to the member from Cypress Hills.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Now, Mr. Minister, we've raised the issue of Crown grazing lease rates in private discussions with you, in correspondence with you, and I believe even in estimates at one time last year we raised that particular issue. And I'd like to go back there again because from everything I have been able to read and from the answers you have provided for me on previous occasions, I have not been able to satisfy myself yet that the Crown grazing leases are arrived at in a manner in which you have suggested is the means by which those lease rates are set.

I think that the experience in the area of Cypress Hills and in other dried out areas last year, where ranchers could not make full and adequate use of the Crown grazing leases that they have under their control, where in many cases there was no water of any kind on the leases, where cattlemen were being forced in large numbers to sell off their herd because of inadequate grass supplies, their lease fees went up. And when we raised the issue with the department the explanation was that calf prices had gone up. Cattle prices generally had gone up; lease fees were going up proportionately.

Well, Mr. Minister, I've looked at the Crown grazing lease rates in several independent and different instances. And the increase in lease rates has been substantially higher than the cattle market has increased in the same period of time. If you're talking about a four-year history, many of those producers who have grazing leases have seen their Crown grazing lease rates go up by 30, 40, 50 per cent, and in some individual and specific cases higher than that.

You and I both know that calf prices have been good but they haven't increased up to 50 per cent in the last four years.

So, Mr. Minister, could you delineate for us tonight exactly what factors are worked into the formula? Can you walk us through the formula, item by item, to give us a clear understanding why Crown grazing leases have escalated at such a dramatic level?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Chair, to the member, I might start by saying that what we have . . . what I'm reading from here is the history from 1998 to 2002. And what we would take here, we would take the weighted average per pair of cattle sales. And in those years, and I'll just give you these numbers, in 2002 the weighted average price of cattle sales is \$137.11 — that was in 2002. And then the formula rent per annum was \$6.41 and the actual rent per annum was \$5.78 in 2002.

If you were to take the 2001 year, the weighted average price of cattle prices that year was \$133.80, and then the formula rent per annum was \$6.28, and then the actual rent per annum was also 6.28.

For 2002, that price was — the weighted average price — was \$117. The formula per annum was . . . animal unit was \$5.51 and the actual rent per animal unit was \$5.42.

In 1999 the weighted average price for cattle was \$100, the formula for rent per animal unit was 4.72, and the actual rent per animal unit was also 4.72.

And then in 1998 the weighted average price for cattle was \$1.03, the animal rent per unit was 4.87, and the actual rent per animal unit that year was 4.59.

When you take a look at what's happened over that period of time, you will see that the actual rent per animal unit in the last two years has in fact gone down — this year by I believe about 9 per cent for 2002. And it has actually to do with the price of the animals and then taking the rental per animal unit based on the formula that we've established, not in isolation, with the livestock industry.

On a regular basis our staff meet with the livestock industry. In fact I think this year there has been a change to the period of time that we use to determine when the price of the livestock, or the weighted average price of cattle sales, I think we moved the date — I believe to November, for four months, for a four-month period — in order to assist us with reducing the level of the actual rent per animal unit this year.

**Mr. Elhard:** — For the reduction, Mr. Minister, in rent this year might represent a 9 per cent, if I understood you correct, total. But when you look at the figures from approximately 1998 to 2002, you had an increase on your figures from \$4.72 to \$6.41 which is awful close to \$2. That's almost a 50 per cent increase as I indicated earlier. And calf prices, I don't believe, saw that kind of an increase in that four-year period. So there's something else; there's got to be something else in that formula that accounts for that dramatic increase in the rates that you've established.

May I suggest that the other possibility that might come into play here is the province's determination to get a return on investment as part of that formula which is exceptionally and unnecessarily high. My understanding is that last year, the provincial government deemed its value of land to be returnable at a rate of twelve per cent, and this past year, that rate was deemed to be twelve and three-quarters per cent.

Now Mr. Minister, I don't know any place where an investor can get that kind of return for their investment, and I would think that we're almost reaching credit card proportions when you have that kind of an interest factor built into this particular formula.

You know, at a time when farm incomes are being hammered, when producers are facing drought, when they're selling off their herds and trying just to salvage something of their lifelong endeavour, maybe we should look at how much money the provincial government takes out of the pockets of producers

based on the type of interest rate they're charging in this formula. I don't think that you could justify that level of interest in any other area of business. I don't see why the provincial government should assume they have a right to that level of interest on the backs of producers. Would that be one of the factors that makes these lease rates so incredibly high?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Well I'm most interested in the member's sort of assessment of what's happening here with the formula because if he were to look at the weighted average price of livestock sales over that same period of time, you can see that the price of the animal has gone from \$103.80 to \$137.11 over a period of five years.

The member should know, and I'll say this, that the formula here hasn't changed at all for years and years and years. This formula and the way in which it's calculated has stayed exactly the same as it has and that there has been no . . . there are no interest rates that are charged in the formula. So I would caution the member to not sort of strike out on an analysis of how the formula works today, draw some analogies or hypothesis on his own as to, you know, the fact that the formula has changed in some way, because the formula has not changed in any way.

(22:45)

And currently the way in which the practice works today is that the rental rates are based on only 80 per cent of the actual cost to ensure that when we have situations where it is dry, as we have had in the last year or two, that there is a compensation here that's provided over that period of time — over a five- or six-year period of time.

Because you can be assured in a province like Saskatchewan that we're going to have a drought and that we're going to have droughts on a regular basis in a province of this magnitude. And certainly for those people who produce and raise livestock inside the province like you do, it's not uncommon for us to have droughts on a fluctuating basis.

So I would caution the member when he reviews the information that I'm providing for him, that he would not draw the analogy at all that the formula has somehow changed here because it has not changed over that period of time. And clearly there are no interest rates that are built into this formula whatsoever.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Madam Chairman, to the minister. What is the 12, the figure 12 represent in the formula from last year?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Madam Chair, it's a percentage of the share or percentage of the gross that represents a fair return to Saskatchewan. And that's at 12.75.

**Mr. Elhard:** — The 12.75 is the figure for this year, the 12 per cent was a figure used in the formula, as I understand it, last year. Why is there a difference of three-quarters of a percentage point from last year to this year?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Madam Chair, my staff tell me that there has not been a change to the percentage share, that it remains at the 12.75.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Mr. Minister, has there been a change in the last several years? Because I'm informed that the rate of percentage was set at 12 per cent some time in the recent past, if it wasn't last year.

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Madam Chair, my officials tell me that that percentage share has been there for several years but what we'll do is . . . the member's asking specifically over what period of time it's been there and we'll provide that information for him, from when there was a change.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Madam Chair, through you to the minister, just recently I was made aware of the range assistance program that your department has provided information on for producers that have been affected once again by drought, especially in the areas of the southwest, west, and maybe the northwest of the province.

I don't know if this plan has been made available to other producers or not, but I've had several calls to my office since the information has arrived in share . . . I'm sorry, in leaseholders' mailboxes. And the general response from these individuals has been that while this program might have been well intentioned, it will be of most benefit to those leaseholders who intentionally mismanaged their leases during drought conditions through overgrazing during the past year or two or three of exceptionally serious drought.

Now the problem as I had it explained to me by my constituents is that for those leaseholders who were very conscientious about good husbandry and good management of the resource on those leases, they often paid the lease to the provincial government but did not graze cattle on those leases or substantially under-grazed those leases. Maybe, instead of stocking rates of seven or eight head per quarter, cow-calf pairs per quarter, maybe they reduced it to half of that. But whatever the case they managed very carefully the limited resources they had.

Now that this program has come out, those individuals who were careful about managing those resources will have re-established grass or grass that is adequate for returning to normal stocking numbers, but those producers who did not take care of their lease to the extent that others might have, will benefit substantially from this program even though they may have exhibited very poor management practices in the years of drought.

I would like the minister to explain if he can why they have decided to go to a range assistance program that has a very difficult set of criteria to allow anybody to qualify — it's going to require substantial personnel to manage, it's going to require a huge burden of paperwork for everybody involved — when there might have been much simpler options available, one of which I might explain to the minister in a few minutes.

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Deputy Chair, I just want to say to the member, and I'm reading now from the policy document of our own department. The member indicates that this is somehow a new program. The range assistance component has been in place since 1991. So this is about 11 years now that this program has been around and the program's key elements are like this:

The qualifying lease signs a range improvement agreement that reduces the stocking and the result rental to reflect the actual productivity of the resource.

It goes on to say that:

The range improvement agreement covers a term of five to ten years in which the lease agreement does three things: to stock at appropriate levels including not use where appropriate; submit an annual return to the department indicating the actual stocking levels that occur; make the necessary management changes that are recommended by the department to improve utilization.

Well if we have, in the case that you speak about, an individual who is not utilizing the resource to the degree of which they are . . . have signed the agreement for, then the individual should be clearly making it known to the department. The department would then provide the kinds of reductions that would be necessary within the agreement.

So if that's the situation that's occurring with the individual whom you're referring to or groups of individuals whom you are referring to, clearly the policy here permits for there to be adjustments made for good stewardship, I expect is what you're speaking about and clearly the department would be in a position to do that.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Through the Chairman to the minister. I'm quite aware that this is not a new program and in fact I know of people who said that they have been made aware of the terms of this program in years substantially past. But in the estimation of producers this program is a little bit like closing the gate after the horses run away.

This is a program that addresses an issue after the damage has been done. And the problem is that the more damage that has been done the more this program benefits the leaseholder. This, I don't believe, will adequately address the individuals who have managed their resource very carefully — the individuals who have paid their lease fees, who have reduced voluntarily the stocking rates, and who have tried to save and salvage whatever grass might have been on that particular lease.

So what you've got is a situation now where the people who abused their lease will actually qualify for more assistance through this particular provision than those who provided good management capability. I understand too that this is going to be very complicated and difficult because, aside from the completed application that requires quite a bit of detail, also a detailed copy of an aerial photo or map that clearly shows the location of fences, water sites, and corrals will be a requirement.

Now there aren't many producers who have those types of information readily at hand. It's not the kind of thing you keep in your desk drawer, and there will be some substantial cost associated with providing that. And then a completed self-assessment of range land form provided by the department that will provide information about water, moisture conditions, stocking practices, and range conditions and so forth.

I guess, Mr. Minister, what I'm saying is that this is a lot of paperwork. It's going to require a lot of hours on the part of department personnel. It's going to be an imposition on the leaseholders to meet all these qualifications.

Wouldn't have something much simpler been available? For instance, when we first raised the issue of drought last spring, early last spring . . . I think my first letter to your department, your ministry office was dated March 9, last year, warning of impending drought. Wouldn't it have been better to look at the possibility of just taking a percentage of lease fees and reducing it by a fixed amount to address the concerns of leaseholders who were caught in this particular set of conditions?

Now you might argue that you wouldn't know which leaseholders would be affected. Well I think the response to that is that somebody knows that. The PFRA certainly knows that. They determine which RMs are drought affected in fairly timely fashion. By November, they already provide that information to the federal department that's going to allow for tax deferrals in drought affected RMs.

So that particular information would have been available to your department. You could have seen from that information that leaseholders in X number of RMs are going to be drought affected, and in recognition of the problems that drought is creating for producers, just done an across-the-board reduction of 10 per cent of their lease fees would have been adequate recognition of the problem and probably would have satisfied a lot of the leaseholders. Something quite simple, direct, and immediate would be preferable to another program that requires a lot more management time and initiative on the part of producers.

Would the minister consider something a little less stringent in terms of these kinds of requirements?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Well, Mr. Deputy Chair, I think that in my earlier comments I indicated to the member that, on an annual basis, we already recognize that in one in every five years that we anticipate that there's going to be a drought or that the pastures will be at such a level of which you wouldn't be able to obtain the full capacity for grazing your herd on. And that's why we already make an adjustment on an annual basis of 80 per cent as opposed to charging the 100 per cent that I think I hear the member say we should be doing. We should be charging the 100 per cent on an annual basis, and then when we have a drought, we should be then trying to find a program that would adjust the rates downward or we should not be involved in the rangeland practice that we're using today with the program that we have in place which, by the way, happens to meet with the approval of the livestock producers.

So the formula that we're using today is not one that the Department of Agriculture and Food dreamt up in the last two years. It's been a program that's been around now for the better part of 11 years or going on 12 years. And it meets with the approval of the livestock industry today and those people who have grazing leases with the department.

This is about being good stewards of the grazing lands of which, by and large, I would say to you we have an excellent relationship with those people who are already utilizing the

property for maintaining their herds. If in fact we have a situation where the land base of which somebody is leasing today is not able to manage or handle the stock that's on it, clearly we're in a position to make the kinds of adjustments downward. And it would only be the responsibility of the leaseholder to advise the department. The rangeland agrologists are available for all kinds of specialized work which they do with the industry today. So I'm not sure that I'm understanding the member's request here.

If you're saying to me that we should be taking the lease agreements today, charging the full rate of 100 per cent, and then trying to mitigate them in years of which you have a drought, which we're saying today you'll see one, one in every five years, and the current formula seems to address that. It seems to be working for us.

And so if there's a different direction that the member opposite thinks that we should be moving down and is interested in bringing that forward with the industry, I'd be happy to look at it. But I should say to you that this particular formula and the way in which we've been managing it over the last number of years seems to meet quite nicely with the producers from whom I'd had conversations with.

(23:00)

**Mr. Elhard:** — Well, Mr. Minister, if you'll excuse me for being just a touch cynical, you know I've had more conversations with producers who have Crown grazing lease who express a very clear dissatisfaction with the formula and the way the rules are applied than I have had people who express complete satisfaction.

I mean, you can stand there and indicate that you've got a good working relationship with the industry and that everybody seems happy. But frankly that's not the experience that I've had in the Southwest. And I know you can discount it as anecdotal, but the reality is that public policy is made up of one anecdotal experience after another, ultimately.

And I think that you've indicated several times that the current formula is based on a one in five year drought scenario. You're only charging 80 per cent of what the deemed value is of the land, and so forth.

But you know, a one-size-fits-all formula in terms of grazing leases doesn't work. The grass production in the Southwest is significantly different than the grass production in other areas of the province. And to talk about normal capacity and normal growing rates and volumes and tonnage and all the rest of that just doesn't simply apply equitably in the Southwest. And I think that the 80 per cent figure, while it sounds completely justifiable when you explain it that way, in practice, in reality, it is not working adequately in the area that I represent.

But having said that about the Crown grazing lease formula, this particular range assistance program, if I can take what you said at face value, you say that the industry supports this. Well you know, sometimes the industry is just about willing to take anything that the government provides because they get sick and tired of beating their head against the wall. There is a point at which some people are not prepared or able to continue the

fight.

And if you took this set of conditions, as outlined in this range assistance program, and took it to most producers, they'd say, what the heck is this? Who dreamt this up? What kind of a nightmare is this? Do I have time to fool with this kind of stuff — an aerial photo or a map, not to mention a long application form and a self assessment that's going to be managed by the department personnel, on and on and on — when these people are interested in providing the best possible management techniques themselves.

Why don't we recognize the leaders in the industry, the ones who take good care of the Crown grazing leases that they have, and reward good management practices, as opposed to putting a program together that basically will reward poor management practices?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Well, Madam Chair, to the member, I want to just say that in my conversations with my officials there's a couple of things that they say to me. And I don't know that every producer in Saskatchewan today who has a Crown land lease is happy with the form of the arrangement. I can't speak to that.

But we do have a forum in which we go through the process on a regular basis, twice a year. My officials tell me that they meet with the Crown land grazing forum, they review the formula and they review the issues that we're speaking of tonight, and talk about whether or not there should be adjustments made to the package.

And within that environment from which they have the conversations they do not hear the kinds of things that you're raising today, where producers are feeling inconvenienced by the process. In fact it's quite to the contrary. We have more demand today for Crown land leases than we can provide, far more demand for Crown land leases than we can provide.

In fact many producers, and some in your part of the province, think that this is a pretty good deal today in terms of what we're able to provide. And furthermore that when you make the comment that there is disparity within the graze lands across the province, it's true. There is disparity amongst the grazing lands across the province.

But you should know that the capacity from which the grazing land can support a herd, adjustments are made. So a particular piece of land in my part of the province would have a different rate attached to it than it would in your part of the province, given the capacity of that piece of property to support a herd of livestock.

So as much as you may stand in your place and talk about how it is that producers today are inconvenienced, are not necessarily happy with the process that's in place, I'm told that it's a far different scenario in terms of the people who represent the grazing forum when they meet with us twice a year.

And so if this is a similar scenario that we painted when we did the horned cattle, then you should bring for me those people who are not happy with this process. Or you should direct them to this particular group of men and women today who support

the industry and look after the Crown land lease on behalf of producers. And if there are adjustments that we need to make through those people then I'd be happy to try and fix them.

But that's not the direction from which I'm hearing we're getting any kind of pressure today for changes. And so I'd ask you and invite you, that if you have those kinds of concerns or you have producers who have those kinds of concerns, we can direct them to provide for you the name of the people who sit on the grazing forum, whom we meet with on a regular basis. And you might direct them through that process to make sure that we get the kinds of things that are issues for you resolved.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have to say thank you after that introduction.

I would like to ask the minister, for C-SAP programs I and II, how are they cost share funded?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Chair, to the member, the cost share on the 19 . . . or the 2000, sorry, the 2000 program was 80 million for the province and 180 million for the federal government. C-SAP II was 60 million for the province and 138 million for the federal government.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Now the minister had said actually in estimates on April 13, he stated that of the 190 million, but I think he meant 195 million, that the federal government had last year . . . and he was discussing the year 2001. The minister said they didn't use it all in the crop insurance program. They didn't use it all, so they put it into the C-SAP II program. So they took their money, and they transferred it into a different account.

So if that was the case then, and C-SAP II, the minister just told me that their contribution provincially was 60 million, the federal government was 138 million; was the federal government portion supposed to be in actuality 108 million, and in fact the C-SAP program was increased in funds by 20 million?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Chair, to the member, I believe that the last time we were together and the member from Thunder Creek — no, I think not from Thunder Creek, from Last Mountain-Touchwood — the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood corrected me where he said it wasn't 190 million, it was actually 195 million.

And so when you take a look at what the federal government's contribution has been over the last three years — and we don't have any dispute about that — it's been 195 million, 195 million, and 195 million. The province's share over that same period of time was 130 million, 130 million, and 143 million, where this year we put more money into the crop insurance program because we knew that this year we would have a problem on the crop insurance file.

And so when the federal government says that they took a portion of their money and they redirected it — yes, they took a portion of their money and they redirected it — but the province has lived up to its commitment on the safety net fees for the entire three years and added additional money yet again this year so that we could enhance the crop insurance program in Saskatchewan.

And that's exactly the position that I've taken with the federal government in not signing the agreement today, because it's going to be imperative for us to know what portion of that money that's in the risk management package will make its way to crop insurance, because if we're going to build a strong crop insurance program in Saskatchewan for producers we need to be sure that we have enough money in that pool. And today that pool has \$1.1 billion in it.

And we need to know what kind of flexibility we're going to have if the two safety net programs that we're going to have are going to be NISA and crop insurance, how much of that will we be able to build on the crop insurance program?

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Mr. Minister, I'm going to try and ask what I just previously asked in a different way perhaps, because in my mind the answer didn't begin to cover what I was looking for.

Prior you said that in C-SAP I the province contributed 80 million, the federal government contributed 180 million. In C-SAP II the province contributed 60 million and the federal government contributed 138 million.

Now when we return to the 195 million which was an agreement — it was a three-year agreement, I fully understand it. And the federal government took 20 million of that and moved it into the C-SAP program. Did . . . was their commitment to the C-SAP program supposed to be — and I'll correct the number that I gave earlier of 108 to 118 — was their contribution to C-SAP II supposed to be 118 million while the provincial government was 60 million?

Then when they added the 20 million from the \$195 million agreement, they increased the funding available for the C-SAP II program or — and I will let the minister know what Mr. Vanclief has told us — is that the 20 million was to make up for a shortfall that the provincial government couldn't put in. Was the provincial government's portion supposed to be 80 million or was it supposed to be the 60 million they put in and did they indeed put that all in as the minister previously stated?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Chair, to the member, I listened carefully to your question today and I listened carefully to your question I think in April when we had the conversation. And I listened carefully to the leader, your Leader of the Opposition who also talked about the fact that somehow you're of the view or of the belief that the federal government provided a loan to the provincial government over a period of last year.

In last year's contribution or programming that the federal government invests in Saskatchewan, they had a reserve of \$20 million left that they didn't expend and they put it into the CFIP program which meant that Saskatchewan . . . C-SAP program of which . . . in the C-SAP program of which Saskatchewan producers got the benefit of the money that the federal government could have easily put into crop insurance program.

But you should make no mistake — there should be no mistake here in this Assembly or to any producer in Saskatchewan who is paying attention to this discussion that we're having tonight. The federal government's contribution over the last three years has \$195 million and not an additional penny more or less —

195 million.

The province's contribution over that same period of time to match the federal government's share was 130 million for two years and this year \$143 million. There has been no loan provided to the provincial government. There has been no loan provided to this administration to assist us in any fashion or form.

This is the federal government's contribution to Saskatchewan producers and, if I might say, underfunded this year in a year in which we should have got an enhancement to the crop insurance program when in fact they said to us, well that's the amount of money that you get. Our budgets are fixed, take it or leave it, that's all you get.

And so in this given year, we have \$195 million from the national government to run a crop insurance program and to run a NISA program.

(23:15)

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, I find your answer to the member from Watrous' question rather interesting. But I would suggest another scenario that maybe more factual as to how this all unfolded under the two programs, C-SAP I and C-SAP II.

I suggest, Mr. Minister, that your government and the federal government determined that for C-SAP I, that a figure of \$260 million was the amount of money that both levels of government would put into this program. And then you went on for the following year to . . . you arrived at a figure of \$200 million.

And the mechanism to administer this program, Mr. Minister, you used the NISA administration to do the calculations based on a maximum of \$125,000 of eligible sales for an individual and then took a percentage of that. And in order to actually cut the checks and distribute them to the producers, you used the crop insurance to administer the administration of the delivery of the funds.

So in essence, to simplify this whole picture, what each level of government decided to do was to deposit their funds with crop insurance so that those cheques could flow . . . that money could then flow to the producers.

And in C-SAP II, your government came up short by \$20 million and you went into the federal people and said look we're short \$20 million. The Government of Canada made a . . . under the safety net agreement, provincial safety net funding agreement, said that they would provide \$585 million over three years. So therefore that money was there. You were short \$20 million so they put it in for you.

Now this year, in a letter that you sent to me dated April 17, you indicate that the federal government put in \$20 million under C-SAP II. There's nothing here in the letter that says that there was any money by your government or the federal government that came out of this particular agreement for C-SAP I.

So then for the program year of 2000, the crop insurance program year of 2000, you have to repay that. In other words that money wasn't there. That portion, that \$20 million, that portion of the 585 million you've already used for part of your requirements for C-SAP II. So therefore you're short the \$20 million that the federal government had committed for this program, Mr. Minister.

And so therefore as a result, it just happens to be that by your own admission in the estimates earlier in this session, that the provincial requirements for spot loss hail would have, by your own estimation, would have come to \$20 million this year. And I suggest to you, Mr. Minister, that that's more of an accurate picture of how this whole funding arrangement worked — that for C-SAP II you were short \$20 million, the federal people put it up for you, and this year it's not there to meet the federal requirements because you used that money for part of your commitment of C-SAP II, Mr. Minister.

I would suggest, Mr. Minister, that that is more accurate as to how this whole funding arrangement has evolved in the last two years.

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Well I say, Mr. Chair, Mr. Deputy Chair, to the member, you can draw your own conclusions and your own hypotheses as to how you think it is that the federal government provided a loan to the province of Saskatchewan or to producers for that matter.

But the reality is that yes, the federal government had sitting from its three-year commitment to the province, \$20 million of the \$195 million. And they could have just as easily made C-SAP II last year \$118 million. You're right about that. They could have just as easily made it that. But instead they made it \$138 million and then shorted us up this year and made the commitment, still filled their commitment this year on the crop insurance, because they assumed that a crop insurance program, I expect this year, wouldn't have the additional load that it had or that it wouldn't have the kind of difficulty that it had this year.

Last year, as you know, we paid out \$350 million in crop insurance payments in Saskatchewan. And when we got this year to develop our new crop insurance program, we found that in order to make sure that we didn't load the premiums to 27 per cent or 28 per cent — which the federal government did — and to sustain ours at the 35 per cent which we have for historically now, we needed to put additional money in.

So when we went to the federal government and said to them your \$195 million, you've met that kind of commitment, but why is it that you don't grow the crop insurance numbers and match ours? Well I'll tell you why they didn't. Because they spent the money in the previous money that they had the commitment. They could have just as easily made that \$118 million and paid it out to C-SAP, kept the \$20 million and pumped it into the program this year. That they didn't do.

**Mr. Hart:** — Mr. Minister, why would the federal government assume that crop insurance is going to cost them less for 2002 when all indications were that commodity prices were on the rise? Ag Canada does quarterly, if not more often, projections on prices. And I'm sure the record will show that they were

projecting a slight increase in price and thereby they would know that the premiums . . . their share of the premiums would be more costly. So I would take issue with your statement that the federal government thought that crop insurance was going to cost them less money.

I suggest to you, Mr. Minister, that your agreement was \$585 million of federal funding for a period of three years. And what happened is because your government didn't have the \$20 million — they came up short, instead of having the 60 million, they only had 40 million to put in C-SAP II — you used some of the federal money, knowing full well that at the end of the three-year period you're going to be \$20 million short for the . . . in the areas of NISA, crop insurance, and the other areas that were covered by the agreement. So you had no alternative but to have . . . and you had less federal dollars to put into this year's crop insurance program because you didn't have your own dollars to put into C-SAP II, Mr. Minister.

And therefore, we saw the loss of spot loss hail which is, by your own admission, is adding an additional \$50 million to farmers' costs this year. And I would suggest to you, Mr. Minister, that that is more . . . closer to the reality in this whole situation.

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Well, Mr. Chair, I just want to say to the member, when you have an opportunity to review the budget and the financial statements of the Department of Agriculture, you should demonstrate for me and for Saskatchewan producers where it is that this government has shorted producers on the crop insurance program or investment and our share in the 60/40 in both the CFIP or the C-SAP or the NISA and the crop insurance program. Show me where it is.

Because our numbers are these: they're \$130 million, they're \$130 million, and they're \$143 million. The national government's contribution has been 195, 195, and 195. So there should be no mistake here. And Saskatchewan's producers understand that this government, this year, enhanced its crop insurance program by an additional \$14 million when, in fact, the national government should have matched that as well.

There has been absolutely no determination here or, for that matter, has there been any agreement that either one of the C-SAP programs in the last two years have been 60/40 because they have not been 60/40.

And so when you take a look at this particular scenario that we've put the dollars in, I say to you again, as the Premier said to your leader this afternoon, as I've said on other occasions to you, you just need to check the financial records of this government and you'll see that not only have we met our commitments on the 60/40 cost share for crop insurance and NISA, we've exceeded them by an additional \$14 million.

**Mr. Hart:** — Mr. Minister, I just heard you say that the federal contributions over the three-year period was 195 million, 195 million, and 195. And your contributions were 130, and 130, and 130 or more in this last year.

In your letter . . . you should really look at the letter that you sent me, Mr. Minister, because in fact in your letter you state very clearly that under the funding agreement that the federal

contribution was 200 million in the first year, it was 205 in the last year, and this year it's dropped to 181, which seems rather unusual except for the fact that in 2001-2002 the federal government contributed \$20.1 million to C-SAP II.

That's the only unusual figure in this whole table that you provided me with. And I would suggest, Mr. Minister, that going back to my earlier explanation is that under the three-year agreement the federal government committed \$585 million to this funding agreement. And because . . . so how do you explain the \$20 million under C-SAP II? There is nothing under this program where the federal government contributed anything to C-SAP I.

I understand that both those programs were funded outside of this agreement, that this agreement covered . . . on the provincial side of the agreement, it covered the province's contributions to NISA, to crop insurance, and to some companion programming.

And the federal obligations were to NISA, crop insurance, unseeded acreage in one year, and cash advance except for C-SAP II, Mr. Minister. And is it a mere coincidence that as I said, \$20 million was your estimated cost for providing spot loss hail? And why would the federal government anticipate lower obligations under this year's crop insurance when they knew full well that commodity prices were rising and that their share of the premiums would be higher, Mr. Minister?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — I want to, Mr. Chair, say to the member that in my correspondence to you, what I did is I used the actual numbers over that three-year period. And this evening what I've been doing is I've been rounding it out to the \$195 million because that's exactly the amount of money that the national government has put in.

But when I hear you and other members and your leader talking about the fact that we shorted crop insurance — and this is the position that you've taken again tonight and this is the position that you've been speaking from for the last couple of weeks or months — and when I take a look at the contributions that we've made to the crop insurance program and that the federal government has made to the crop insurance program over the three years, the federal government has contributed 195.8 million on average and the Saskatchewan government has contributed on average over the three-year period 136.2 million over the three-year period.

So when you stand up in your place, or other members or your leader stand up in their place, and you say that we've shorted the crop insurance program over the last, over this last year, you couldn't be further from the truth. You couldn't be further from the truth because when you take a look at the average that we've made over the three-year period, it's \$136 million. Our commitment to this program on a 60/40 cost share was 130 million annually.

And so you should stop telling Saskatchewan producers, which you've been doing, that somehow the crop insurance program this year has been underfunded by this government, because it's not accurate. It's not accurate for a minute.

We've made an investment that exceeds the \$130 million on

average over the last three years. And that's why last fall when I was in Ottawa, and wrote Ottawa and said to them we need to grow the crop insurance program in Saskatchewan because we're headed for another disaster in parts of Saskatchewan again — and we were right about that — and we never got one additional penny of new money over the 195, not last year from our request, and we haven't got any in this budget year for our request.

And so we made the kinds of adjustments that we made to the crop insurance program because we didn't get the federal money that we needed to help us do that, to build the crop insurance program that will strengthen in the province.

**Mr. Hart:** — Mr. Minister, then can you explain to me why did the federal government put \$20 million into C-SAP II under this funding envelope?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Because, Mr. Chair, and I've said this before, because they thought they had a surplus in the 195 and so they put the money into the C-SAP program. They could have just as easily put it into the 118. They could have just as easily given us 118. But they gave us 138. And this year they underfunded us on the crop insurance program.

(23:30)

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess, since the minister and obviously this side of the House can't come to an agreement on this, I was quite pleased to see that the minister provided an answer to a written question that I submitted earlier and hadn't got the answer to, which was the breakdown of the federal and the provincial contributions to the C-SAP I and II programs. Did he also bring the numbers for the breakdown of the federal and provincial contributions to the AIDA (Agricultural Income Disaster Assistance) and CFIP programs for the last two to three years?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Chair, to the member, I do have the numbers here, and the 2000-2001 program, AIDA/CFIP, that combination, the province's share was 73 million, almost 74 million, 73.8 million. And the share from the federal government was 114.4 million. For the year 2001-2002, AIDA/CFIP, the provincial share was 81.5 million, and the federal share was 126.4 million. And those are estimates.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — I thank the minister for that answer, and I would like to move on to the topic of the recent federal government announcement, and the announcement obviously had two components to it. One of it was a six-year component, and one was a two-year component. And there has been a lot of difficulty in understanding what the funds are allocated towards.

Has the minister been able to acquire a breakdown of . . . let's start with the six-year component of that announcement. Does he have a breakdown of how the federal government is going to allocate that money? And by allocation I mean, what is going towards safety net? What is going towards food safety? What is considered bridge funding, etc. It looks as though the federal government is rolling out some of their agriculture policy framework, and yet my understanding was that that has not been agreed upon or negotiated.

I know the very week that the federal government made their announcement of this particular program, they had only that Monday met with producers in our province to discuss what the agriculture policy framework should look like and yet it looks like they're unrolling it before that consultation process has been able to have any effect.

So do we at this point have a breakdown of the six-year component of the federal government announcement?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Chair, to the member, I'd just like to provide some information because I think it would be helpful, and this is the only information that we have. Agriculture producers in Saskatchewan would have this same package of information because I shared this with them. And those who were at the briefing with Mr. Vanclief from the Canadian Federation of Agriculture would have the same numbers. And there has not been an update to the current numbers. Not only have we not received an update in Saskatchewan but my colleagues across the country haven't received an update either.

The federal government has announced a six-year package because they've taken the 1.2 billion and they're making the \$600 million payable in this year, and the second \$600 million payable next year.

So they're including in their six-year package, the \$600 million this year and then the five years of the agricultural policy framework which kicks in in March of next year. So they're taking the five years of the agricultural policy framework over the next five years starting April 1, 2003, onwards for five years. And they're counting this year as a contribution of which they're going to roll out the \$600 million of the trade injury. That's how they get their six years of funding, that's how they get their package.

Of the \$600 million, we're not sure yet today whether or not we're going to get the Fredericton formula applied to that or whether there will be a formula based on hurt of which hurt for Saskatchewan — the federal government tells us or told us, about two months ago, of which your leader was also a part of, that Saskatchewan hurt should be somewhere in the neighbourhood of 35 to 40 per cent.

And that makes a huge difference in terms of what we would get of the 600 million. If we get the Fredericton formula we get about 22 per cent, which means that we'll roll out about 135 to 138 to 140 million, would be Saskatchewan's share of the 600 million. On a 40 per cent share we would get about 250 million which would be a larger share than we got even on a cost share in the past on C-SAP.

This is an important piece of data that we need to learn because it will affect the agricultural policy framework. In the agricultural policy framework, as you can see, we got 1.1 billion which will be 60/40 shared on the risk management file.

And risk management today we think will be crop insurance and NISA only. CFIP will disappear from the face of the earth and we'll have only two programs. What we don't know is whether or not the CFIP money will be used to load and enhance NISA program or whether the CFIP money will be able to be used to enhance the crop insurance program. And we



don't have that detail today.

And the federal government hasn't released that detail right now because their intentions are to possibly increase the NISA program to a higher percentage contribution, and if that's the case it may take the largest portion of what that CFIP money is available for. So that's a very important piece of decision that we need to get from the national government.

Finally on the four other envelopes which aren't funded at all today — transition, life sciences, safe food, and environment — there's \$120 million that's going to be attached to that . . . or \$180 million of which \$120 million will be matched 60/40 for those envelopes and \$60 million the federal government is going to keep and then decide that it's going to roll it out in whichever fashion it wishes to roll it out, into any one of those four programs. Of which we're asking the question, where will that money go?

And finally in the bridge funding, which is the \$589 million, the federal government now has said they're going to contribute \$120 million a year for five years. And that money, they're going to decide how it will flow on their own. And it will go to things like water development; it will go to things like equity capital; it will go to things like marketing support and environmental farm plans and co-op development.

So that \$100 million, none of us know yet how they're going to roll it out: which provinces will get the largest share of that \$589 million; what formula they're going to use to dispense it; and what portion of that money will make its way actually to producers in Saskatchewan. So today we're waiting, and I wrote the minister, as I've said to you, immediately after I got back last Tuesday, asked him how he is going to disburse this funding that he's made available to us.

And to date I can report to you and to the people of Saskatchewan that we don't have a response from the national government yet on what that is. Not only don't we have a response in Saskatchewan, nowhere in Canada has there been a response from the Agriculture minister to the provinces.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — I noticed that the minister, when he spoke of the 600 million that would be available for two years and he called it a trade injury payment. However, there's been no indication that that's what it is. In fact the federal government has been very obvious in saying that's not what it is. They are not going to address trade injury.

They're calling it bridge funding. My understanding is that the reason we need a bridge funding is to go from what we have now, which many of the programs are expiring such as CFIP and the 195 million per year agreement that we had that we were speaking about earlier. All of those programs are coming due so this is a bridge to get us from where we are now into the new agriculture policy framework.

So if the province was to participate, if the province did choose to do that, what budget year would we be looking at having to find the funding to participate in the bridge funding?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Well, the . . . Mr. Chair, to the member, the 600 million is going to flow this year and the 600 million is

going to flow next year. Now I know that the federal government isn't calling this trade injury, but I'm calling it trade injury because it should be called what it is.

As you know, last year when we asked the national government for additional assistance to bridge us, the national government said to us that there wasn't one penny — not one penny of transitional money from November of last year when they did their budget to March of this year coming up in 2003. Eighteen months nearly that we're going to have a national budget without any money. And they said to us, get lost. There is absolutely not one additional penny today that we're providing for transition. Go away.

And then we had a concerted effort where we brought about the notion that we have trade injury in Canada. And lo and behold, the national government then says to us, you know what, we do have a trade injury issue. And all of the provinces and opposition parties across the country were able to convince the national government that we have a trade injury issue, and they've been very successful in the last couple of months to convince us that they're not going to fund it.

They're not going to fund it as trade injury, but they're going to fund it as transition. And over the next several months we're going to work out a deal about how they're going to share with us on trade injury. And I can say to you, and I said to farm organizations and to my colleagues in Halifax when we met last, that when this window closes, when we sign the agreement, there will not be one red cent from Ottawa for trade injury for the next six years — not one penny.

So when you sign this deal, ladies and gentlemen in Saskatchewan and in Canada, this is the package. This is your trade injury, this is your transition, this is your bridge funding, this is your new safety nets. This is the full meal deal for five years. And it don't cut it from where I sit. This is a shortfall to Saskatchewan producers, in my view, of about \$500 million a year for the next four years.

And we can build a Saskatchewan economy and an agricultural industry, and I've heard other members from your Assembly . . . or your side of the House stand up and talk about what's happened in Ireland. And I can tell you, you take a farm package and dump \$1 billion a year into a farm economy like they did in Ireland, subsidized money, you'll grow a Saskatchewan industry and agricultural community like you've never seen.

And I'm sick and tired on this side of the House to be having my federal government jam down our throat a national policy where they don't support the agricultural community, and every day we're out there competing in the international marketplace in a subsidized community and getting beat up every day in the marketplace. I'm sick of it.

And so I don't sign this agreement today because my producers in Saskatchewan sent me to Halifax and said, don't sign the agreement till we know what you get. And so I'm back home now. On Tuesday I wrote the federal minister. Didn't sign the agreement on the direction and the wisdom of my farm organizations which I've been meeting for for 18 months.

And if we sign this agreement at the end of the day and take what's in this package today, it's not only the agricultural policy framework that we buy into, we buy into the funding agreement. And that, my friends, will hold us for five years in a situation that will be not unlike what we've just come out of with AIDA and CFIP and crop insurance.

And this lets the national government off the hook in a major way, like it's not going to have any more commitment for years.

This is a very, very important question that you asked tonight, and this is a very important issue for our Saskatchewan producers, and we need to find a way to make our national government more accountable for what they have in here to date.

(23:45)

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Mr. Minister, I would like to say that I will not be championing the federal government our . . . their initiative for agriculture, because I feel that what they have done to agriculture in this entire country is appalling, and in particular to the Western provinces.

The new APF I find quite concerning. A number of the envelopes in that framework is very concerning. Anything that I've read on it, it talks a great deal about, you know, making the industry more profitable, but in fact there is really nothing in the whole entire framework that's going to make the consumer pay more for the commodity. So therefore with less money and the consumer not paying more for the product, how do you make the industry more profitable?

And I believe it's a program that will . . . is a conservative program. It will make the food safer and it'll make the environment better. And I'm not saying that's not all very good things, but unfortunately it's to the detriment of the producers. The producers are being expected to pay the price for doing that, and yet the consumers is not willing to pay more for the product, nor is the country willing to compensate the producers for being outstanding stewards of the land.

So therefore I will not be by any means championing, championing — whatever that word is — the federal government on their agriculture policies, but we do need to understand what their announcements will mean. And, for example, if we do remain, you know, firm, that we're not signing this agreement, what happens to our NISA and crop insurance programs next year, because the 195 million per year agreement expires?

So are we going to be giving those programs up? Are we going to be looking at having to run those programs entirely funded by the provincial government? Is that what we're going to be facing?

And I know the minister said that if we sign the trade injury now, there will be not one more penny towards trade injury. But I would suggest to him that in this announcement there is not one penny to trade injury. The federal government has totally ignored that plea. They have totally ignored that argument and there is not one penny to date, there hasn't been in the past, there isn't in this announcement. Nothing will have changed as

far as trade injury.

The federal government is choosing to totally ignore that difficulty. So what happens to our crop insurance and NISA programs if we choose not to sign any of this agreement?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Well I want to say, Mr. Chair, to the member, I very much appreciate your position as it relates to the agriculture policy framework and to the underfunding on the trade injury. I want to say as well that when I get the numbers, which I anticipate I'm going to get fairly soon — at least that's my hope — I'll be inviting my farm groups and my farm organizations back because that's the commitment.

And the member points to herself, to invite her to that meeting as well, and certainly I'm going to make the numbers available to the member as well. No question about that. And I want to say to you that I'll be directed by the wisdom of my farm groups because they too, like I and you, will be expecting that we'll want to have a new safety net program for next year. We need to have a new safety net program for the kick in of April of next year.

And our job, in my view, will be to try to take that \$1.1 billion and build it into the strongest safety net that we can build for the next five years for Saskatchewan producers. I'm hoping that there might be some flexibility in the \$589 million that the federal government is going to be providing.

Maybe there'll be some flexibility in the agricultural policy framework in the other chapters because environmental stewardship, as much as it's important to the broader agricultural policy, it doesn't have the same kinds of application as it does in eastern Canada — in Ontario or Quebec.

So we might get some flexibility in terms of what we might be able to use with those dollars. And I'm hoping then that we might be able to take some of that and build a stronger safety net program.

So my commitment will be to make sure that for the new year, the new crop year of April 1 we'll have a new safety net program for producers.

Will it be as good as we'd like it to be? Will it be as strong as we'd like it to be? Well we'll see how much resources we can commit to it in concert with what our responsibilities will be with the national government. And I will give the undertaking tonight to you, Madam Member, that when that information makes itself available that I'll also provide it for your intelligence as well.

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, I listened with interest to both the questions and the answers dealing with the recent federal government announcement on the agricultural policy framework and funding and all those sorts of things.

I have a couple of concerns and questions as a result of some of your answers, and I'd like to present to you.

The ag policy framework has been under discussion and you've been part of that for I believe it's well over a year. And I understand that part of that framework discussion is

redesigning, as you'd indicated, perhaps redesigning crop insurance and NISA. And my concerns are that, if I heard you correctly, that you know very little about what these programs are going to look like. And it would seem to me, seeing that they are funded jointly by both levels of government, that it would be imperative that the provinces would be part of the discussion as to . . . when these programs are being redesigned. And I find that very concerning that you know very little about that.

So are you telling us that the federal government is redesigning those two programs in isolation, without any provincial input?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Well it certainly . . . the case is this, that we provided our document, as you've read, back last year where we said we wanted to have an enhanced crop insurance program. And enhanced meaning that we would take the percentages that we currently have at 80 per cent and try and grow that to 90 or 95 per cent in terms of coverage. But that requires additional dollars, additional funding. So that's the position that we've taken to the federal government and said this is what we want in enhancements.

The national government has said, well that's a nice idea, but we think we should do an expansion. Not an enhancement of the program, but we should do an expansion — meaning that they want to cover more crops.

In Saskatchewan we already cover a very broad range of crops and so an expansion of the crop insurance program is not of great value to us. An enhancement is what we're looking for. And so we're in that debate today.

Now what the federal government is wanting to do of course is that they want us to sign the agricultural policy framework and then they are going to get into bilateral conversations with each of the provinces, of which we say, if this is about developing a national program, why wouldn't we all be at the table developing a national program collectively instead of developing a bilateral with every one of the provinces which is different. We don't do that in health care today. We have a national health care program. We don't do it in Social Services. We have a national social services program. But in agriculture, where we share 60/40 on most fronts, we don't have that same kind of opportunity.

And so as much as it's a joint-shared responsibility and delivery, the reality is is that they hold 60 per cent share of the dollars, and they're catering to some degree, in my view, to what other expectations are from other provinces across the country, and that's where I think part of our difficulties are today, and we're going to develop our program.

Now are we working for an enhanced crop insurance program? Darn right. Some provinces want to see an enhanced NISA program, so where the load isn't 3 per cent contribution, it might be 6 or 7 or 8. If at the end of the day that becomes the consensus of the other departments or the other governments across Canada, we could find ourselves in a situation where the NISA program will require a contribution of higher than 3 per cent. And if that's the case and if it were to go to 7 or 8 or 9 which the national government is talking about, it would take all of our CFIP money that we have today in the program, and it

would get loaded into a NISA program and would do very little for crop insurance enhancement which we're looking for.

So it's that kind of debate we're entering into today and partly why we don't sign the agreement. I mean how is it that you sign an agreement today when you don't know what the parameters of your expectations are going to be? And that's the point I put to my colleagues when we were in Halifax. How is it that we're signing an agriculture policy framework when you don't know what the parameters are?

And it sounds unusual that you're involved in this kind of a process, and yet we don't have the information. It's an interesting question that you ask and one that we ask too. What kind of a partnership is this where we share 60/40 on most everything that we do, but at the end of the day we don't have an opportunity to negotiate at a national table. How does this work?

**Mr. Hart:** — Well certainly, Mr. Minister, I share with you the opinion that it is very disconcerting that you are involved in negotiations and being asked to sign an agreement that you really don't know a whole lot about, yet it seems that a number of other provinces have done that, and perhaps they have more information or perhaps they have more trust in the federal government; I'm not sure which one.

But I think there's some realities that we in Saskatchewan, as a province, and particularly farm producers are grappling with and trying to come to terms with. And a couple of those . . . and one of the realities is that up until a couple of months ago, prior to the signing of this latest US farm Bill, I think there was a perception, in some farmers' minds at least, that eventually the world is going to come to their senses and US and EEC (European Economic Community) and those countries that are subsidizing heavily are going to quit doing that, or at least bring their levels of subsidy down where we can thrive in that sort of an economy.

Well as we all know it doesn't look like that's going to happen. So that's reality number one that where the new reality we're operating in as farm producers is that our main competitors are going to continue to subsidize for quite some time. And I guess the second reality that we're staring at and looking at is that really when it boils down to it our government in Ottawa really doesn't care a whole lot about the grain and oilseed sector, in particular, in western Canada and that impacts very heavily on Saskatchewan.

And so therefore we're faced with these two realities and this whole agricultural framework policy is part of that reality. So I guess at the end of the day the question that we have to ask ourselves is when we look at these two realities and stare them in the face we have to say where do we go from here? How do we deal with those sorts of things?

And, Mr. Minister, I think . . . you are the Minister of Agriculture and it's incumbent upon you to present, to develop and roll out a plan that will tell this province and particularly the producers of this province and will answer that question. Where do go from here faced with these two realities that we are looking at this year, Mr. Minister?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and you're absolutely right, Mr. Member, that at the end of the day it will be our responsibility on this side of the House, it will be my responsibility to bring to my cabinet and to my colleagues and to producers in Saskatchewan the ultimate package that we'll have to work with for the next five years or six years based on the \$600 million that's made available this year.

And there will be some really tough choices. There's no question about that. At the end of the day there'll be some tough choices. But it will be through the same process that I've used to get me to where I am today, because I have taken this debate on a regular basis to my producers in Saskatchewan that represent grains and oilseed people, that represent specialized livestock, that represent the livestock industry in Saskatchewan, and I say to them this is what we have to work with.

So that this time when we're developing an agricultural policy long-term safety net for the next five years that nobody will accuse me of having done this in isolation, that nobody will accuse me of not having people involved in the process. Because at the end of the day people are wide open and they know full hand what they're getting involved in today.

Many of the people who sit at my table sit on the Canadian Federation of Agriculture. They're at the very same table that I am, with Mr. Vanclief talking about what these numbers are. And so they know what the impact on Saskatchewan producers are going to be at the end of the day.

And so in the next two or three weeks we're going to get all of the detail. And I'll be sitting down with my producers in Saskatchewan and we're going to be developing what the long-term safety net's going to be for Saskatchewan, how we're going to invest in the other pillars or chapters of the agriculture policy framework.

(24:00)

And then we're going to take up the cause again, I suggest to you, on the trade injury. Because if this is not trade injury, then trade injury is alive and well, is a concept. And then we need to try to find the additional dollars that we need to find over the next five years.

But I can tell you that that will be a very difficult political debate because the federal government has stepped away from that responsibility already because they don't understand the issues, as you've put them nicely, that happened in Western Canada on the grains and oilseed side. They don't understand it.

And for them to say to us that we should be diversifying our agricultural economy today to a greater degree than it is, is bafflegab, because today we've diversified our economy, today we grow 60 different crops or 65 different crops in our province, where 10 years ago we had about 25 or 28.

We've diversified in Saskatchewan in a way in which we haven't seen. This is a wonderful challenge for us and I expect that as we move ahead we'll work together and try to find the result.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I want to thank

the minister and his officials for their patience at this late hour. And there are no further questions.

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Chair, and I too just want to take a moment to thank the member opposite for her questions, not only today but through the course of the session. We've been able to, in my view, come together on a number of issues that have been most difficult to address and I appreciate the level of debate that we've had in the House and also the opportunity for us to work together on a couple of other pieces that were important to advance the agricultural file; and to other members on your side of the House who've asked some questions, which always enhance the ability to develop new policy in Saskatchewan to enrich the agricultural community, the agricultural file in Saskatchewan.

I too want to take a moment, Mr. Chair, to thank the members of my department. This is not an easy file, as you can appreciate. Not that many are in government, but there are tireless and long hours that my officials work in preparing ourselves for our negotiations at the national level, working with producer organizations and groups in Saskatchewan. And I very much value the relationships that they have with the very broad range of stakeholders that we have in Saskatchewan.

And it takes special men and women in many instances to do the kind of work that they're doing. So this evening and to the department officials who aren't here, who've helped us through this very difficult time, and we've got some additional weeks and months ahead that we need to develop additional policy, to thank them for the good work that they do.

Subvote (AG01) agreed to.

Subvotes (AG02), (AG07), (AG03), (AG08), (AG05), (AG06), (AG09), (AG04), (AG12), (AG10) agreed to.

Vote 1 agreed to.

**General Revenue Fund  
Lending and Investing Activities  
Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization  
Vote 146**

Subvotes (AG02), (AG03) agreed to.

Vote 146 agreed to.

**Supplementary Estimates  
General Revenue Fund  
Agriculture and Food  
Vote 1**

Subvote (AG08) agreed to.

Vote 1 agreed to.

**General Revenue Fund  
Lending and Investing Activities  
Agricultural Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan  
Vote 147**

Subvote (AG01) — Statutory.

The committee reported progress.

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Speaker, before I moving adjournment of the House, I think it's appropriate for us to acknowledge that over the course of this day that we've just ended, the Minister of Health has not only gotten wiser; he's also gotten older. And it would probably be appropriate that we finish off with a snappy little rendition of "Happy Birthday" to the Minister of Health.

(Hon. members sang.)

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Now, Mr. Speaker, when we said to John, we meant to the Minister of Health, the hon. member for Regina Lakeview. And having said that, Mr. Speaker, I move this House do now adjourn.

**The Speaker:** — Before I take the motion, I will just remind members that they are not to refer to other members except by their titles.

The Assembly adjourned at 00:10.