

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present many petitions on behalf of residents of Hudson Bay and surrounding communities who are concerned about the shortage of long-term care beds in Hudson Bay. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to make the necessary changes that would allow for an expansion of at least five long-term care beds in the community of Hudson Bay to meet the needs of the citizens of Hudson Bay and the surrounding area.

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

These petitions are all signed by citizens of Hudson Bay.

I so present.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I stand today with a petition from citizens of Saskatchewan opposed to the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance 2002 grasshopper spray penalty. 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 take the necessary steps to have Sask Crop Insurance reassess the grasshopper spray penalty assessed to farmers in 2002; and further, that the government review the definition of viable farming practices as outlined in present Saskatchewan Crop Insurance policy.

And the signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from the community of Hanley.

I so present.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with the deplorable and dangerous condition of Highway 58. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take immediate action and make necessary repairs to Highway 58 in order to avoid serious injury and property damage.

This petition is signed by individuals all from the community of Shamrock.

I so present.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of people in my constituency concerned about the Sask Crop Insurance 2002

grasshopper spray penalty. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to have Sask Crop Insurance reassess the grasshopper spray penalty assessed to farmers in 2002; and further, that the government review the definition of viable farming practices as outlined in the present Saskatchewan Crop Insurance policy.

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

And this is signed by my constituents, namely from Estevan, Lampman, and Benson.

I so present. Thank you.

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

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take the necessary actions to protect our province's economy by working to halt the federal government's intent to sign on to the Kyoto accord in its current form.

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

And this petition is signed by residents of Swift Current.

I so present.

Mr. Wall: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again on behalf of citizens concerned about the state of the hospital in the city of Swift Current 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 share of the funding for a new regional hospital in Swift Current.

And, Mr. Speaker, the petitioners today are all, and there's many pages, but they're all from the city of Swift Current.

I so present.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I rise with a petition from citizens from rural Saskatchewan that are very concerned with the lack of cellular telephone coverage in the rural areas and the petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause government to provide reliable cellular telephone services to all communities throughout the Wood River constituency.

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

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by citizens of Aneroid, Kincaid, and Meyronne.

I so present.

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, I have a petition opposed to possible reductions of services in 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, with 24-hour acute care, emergency, doctorial services available, as well as lab services, public health, home care, and 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 citizens from Davidson, Unity, and Simpson.

I so present.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again to present a petition from citizens concerned about the impact of . . . the Kyoto accord will have on the Saskatchewan economy. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take the necessary actions to protect our province's economy by working to halt the federal government's intent to sign on to the Kyoto accord in its current form.

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

Signed by the citizens of Cando, Landis, and Biggar and district. Thank you.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present on behalf of constituents. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to ensure the best possible health care coverage for the communities of Govan, Duval, Strasbourg, and Bulyea by placing those communities in the Regina Regional Health Authority as opposed to the Saskatoon Regional Health Authority.

Signatures to this petition, Mr. Speaker, come from the communities of Bulyea, Strasbourg, and Regina.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and are hereby read and received:

Petition concerning long-term care beds in Hudson Bay;

Petition concerning the removal of government funding for abortions; and

Addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper nos. 18, 169, 174, 437, and no. 438.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING, SELECT AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the end of my remarks I will move the following motion:

That the eighth report of the Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills be now concurred in.

As the Chair of your committee I would present the eighth report as follows:

Your committee held a public hearing on private Bill No. 304 — The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool Amendment Act, 2002. The committee received petitions and submissions from 10 individuals during consideration of this Bill. Your committee has agreed to report Bill No. 304 without amendment.

So, moved by myself, seconded by the member from Arm River:

That the eighth report of the Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills be now concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

Ms. Jones: — Mr. Speaker, by leave of the Assembly, I move pursuant to the seventh and eighth reports of the committee:

That private Bill No. 304 — An Act to amend the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool Act, 1995 be considered in Committee of the Whole later this day.

Motion agreed to.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to all members of this honoured Assembly, I would like to introduce Jim Hillyer, seated in your gallery.

Jim is the Sask Party candidate for the Regina Victoria constituency, soon to be Regina Douglas Park. And this constituency is my buddy constituency and I'm so proud of the work Jim and the executive does there. And it will be nice to have this bright, young man as a member of our government caucus.

Please join me in welcoming Jim.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr.

Speaker, seated in the east gallery are a number of individuals from all across Saskatchewan who represent the concerned citizens for a safe healthy environment. These individuals have been outspoken in their concerns around water quality and air quality as they are impacted by mega hog barns.

I'd like to introduce the following people from my constituency: Ms. Isabel Muzichuk, who has been here a number of times; Jack Maluga; Henry Norlin; Henry Neufeld; Joyce Neufeld; Steve Suderman; Jan Norris; Amanda Davies; Marilyn Gillis; Catherine Verrali; Kathy Kivol; and Cathy Holtslander.

I'd ask all members to welcome these people to the Assembly this afternoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to members someone seated in your gallery who served my office well, and who has served the people of Saskatchewan very well also. He worked as a ministerial assistant in my office and he's here to observe the proceedings today. And I'd like everyone to welcome Kirk Brown.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I take pleasure in introducing to you in your gallery, John MacGowan. I'd ask him to stand.

John is president of the Regina Sherwood Liberal Association and he was meeting with me today because of his interest in the Diefenbaker Homestead, the boyhood home of John Diefenbaker that was so callously closed by the government earlier this year.

I'd ask all members to join in.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly two people sitting in the gallery, Brad and Deanna Amonetti, who are from Salem, Oregon, and they're with their niece, my chief of staff Jamie McCormick. And I'd ask you all to welcome them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Prebble: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to also add my words of welcome to the Deputy Leader from the Official Opposition to members from the environmental movement who are in the gallery this afternoon, Mr. Speaker. And I particularly want to welcome three people who I know very well: Isabel Muzichuk, and Jan Norris, and Cathy Holtslander who lives in Saskatoon Greystone constituency, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to thank these members for the work that they are doing, all the members from this group, in terms of increasing public awareness about some of the hazards that can be associated with the hog barn industry in the province. So I hope

all members will join me in giving them a very warm welcome on behalf of members on this side of the House.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I'd like to introduce at this time also to members a person who ordinarily you don't see in the gallery because he's usually back in the dark room in the back part of the legislature keeping an eye on the computer system that we have here, and that is Jeremy Phillips who is here with us today.

And I notice . . . I want to extend a welcome to Jeremy and to his father who's accompanying him here today. Would you welcome him please.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Moose Jaw Centennial

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a special centennial is quickly approaching. The kickoff of this year-long celebration will take place on Wednesday, January 1, 2003 at the Sheward Trade Centre on the Moose Jaw Exhibition Grounds.

The afternoon will be . . . this will kick off a year-long celebration and it will begin on the first day of the new year. There will be entertainment, food, drinks, sleigh rides, festivities for children, and events for seniors that will run for the afternoon. The day will come to a dazzling end with a spectacular fireworks display.

Over 2,000 people are expected to attend. And, Mr. Speaker, it's the kickoff of Moose Jaw's 100th birthday.

(13:45)

In addition, Mr. Minister, it was recently announced that Prince Edward and the Countess of Wessex will make a stop in Moose Jaw in June of that year as part of their Saskatchewan visit. This will coincide with the centennial celebrations and will add greatly to the excitement and another feather . . . and will be another feather in the cap of the city of Moose Jaw.

From our meagre beginnings as a prairie settlement, through some very colourful years along with the usual ups and downs of every prairie community, thanks to its citizens Moose Jaw has come through this all with a . . . a community with a wide open future.

I'd invite everyone from across our province to come to Moose Jaw in 2003 to participate and help to celebrate our 100th birthday.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Remembering Bill Hunter

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Western Hockey League, the Edmonton Oilers, and the city of Saskatoon owe much to a man we remember today. One of

Saskatchewan's greatest sports celebrities, Wild Bill Hunter, passed away yesterday in Edmonton at the age of 82. It would be difficult to recap Bill's sports legacy in the 90 seconds allowed, Mr. Speaker, but I'll do what I can.

Born in Saskatoon, he organized his first sports team in high school. In fact the Saskatoon Hilltops can trace their roots back to Wild Bill himself. Furthering his education at the Notre Dame College in Wilcox, where Bill credits the school's founder, Père Athol Murray, as being one of the most important influences on his life.

After returning from the Second World War and over the next 60 years, Bill owned, managed, and coached a number of hockey teams throughout Saskatchewan and Western Canada. He was instrumental in the foundation of the Western Hockey League and the WHA (World Hockey Association), Mr. Speaker, the WHA, which saw three . . . four teams — the Edmonton Oilers and three other teams — be accepted into the NHL (National Hockey League).

If Regina has the Riders, Mr. Speaker, why wouldn't Saskatoon have the Blues, was Bill's call. Bill went to work hard trying to bring the St. Louis Blues to Saskatoon. In fact he even went so far as selling more season tickets to a rink than it actually had seats. The NHL unfortunately was not convinced, though.

Wild Bill Hunter was a Member of the Order of Canada and the Canada . . . Canadian Sports Hall of Fame. He taught Saskatchewan people how to dream, the potential that this province . . . great province has. And he also believed in the city of Saskatoon — that it was big enough to do anything, Mr. Speaker.

We all give our sympathy to the Hunter family. And have a great, merry Christmas.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Grey Cup Celebrations Planned

Mr. Harper: — Mr. Speaker, mark this date on your calendar — November 16, 2003 — the day, Mr. Speaker, when I predict the Roughriders will trounce its opponent in the most successful Grey Cup in the history of this great national event. The most successful cup till then of course was in 1995, when more than 40,000 people crammed themselves into Taylor Field.

We'll be doing the same . . . we'll be at the same place and doing the same thing next year, Mr. Speaker, because everybody knows that Regina will once again host the cup and all its week-long activities. We had a great time in '95 and we're going to have even a better one next year.

And, Mr. Speaker, planning for an event of this importance doesn't just start the week before. And I'm happy to recognize the excellent planning underway by the Regina Grey Cup Committee under the presidency of Marty Klyne.

And I am very proud to recognize the partnership announced this month between SaskEnergy and the committee. SaskEnergy will be hosting the offices of the Regina Grey Cup Committee, providing them a home at SaskEnergy Place on

Victoria Avenue. Later as we approach the game, the lobby of SaskEnergy Place will become a public venue for a number of Grey Cup activities.

Mr. Speaker, SaskEnergy and TransGas have a very proud history of supporting the Riders and the Canadian Football League, and this is just one more proud chapter in that association. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

New Regional Hospital for Southwest Saskatchewan

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The residents of southwest Saskatchewan have not given up their fight for a new regional hospital, Mr. Speaker.

Last spring the government was asked by the Southwest to change its funding formula to make it easier to raise the local share of funding for a new facility. The government said no, Mr. Speaker. So the people of the Southwest and the partners involved went back to the drawing board and what they did do is come back with a plan to put in place the local commitment that was needed to build a new hospital. All that was needed was the government to commit its share, its 65 per cent share of the funding.

There's also a very active health care foundation ready to raise money. The Dr. Noble Irwin Healthcare Foundation has a superb fundraising track record. Local municipalities such as the RM (rural municipality) of Swift Current have also thrown their support behind a new hospital, Mr. Speaker.

But the government maintains the cupboard is bare. They have money to invest in Australia, in Chile, in Mexico, in Georgia, in Tennessee, but they have nothing for a new hospital in Swift Current.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to that, the provincial government since 1998 has taken nearly \$100 million in oil and gas land sales out of the Southwest. Now the Southwest asks that they reinvest some of that money back and put some money back into southwest Saskatchewan and a great start would be a new regional hospital. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Tourism in Moose Jaw

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, wherever I go around Saskatchewan and beyond, people tell me that Moose Jaw is a happening place and they're right.

There are lots of reasons why the future is wide open in Moose Jaw but a growing tourism industry is right up there at the top of the list. Everyone knows about our recently expanded world-class spa, downtown murals, and mysterious tunnels. Historical River Street has been restored and Casino Moose Jaw is doing very well with the staff in 1920s garb.

What many don't know is that the early century Capital Theatre is being restored to the new cultural centre on heritage Main Street, and that a new tourism centre is opening near the

Trans-Canada this spring. Mr. Speaker, the '80s were tough on Moose Jaw but the '90s brought a big time attitude shift and a spirit of partnership between the private sector and all levels of government.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of my city and I'm looking forward to Tourism Moose Jaw's news conference on Thursday. Stay tuned, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Dallas Bessey in Rodeo Finals

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the House today to talk about a young man from my hometown of Bladworth. Dallas Bessey won the Canadian Cowboys' Association rodeo finals held on October 24 to October 22 at Sask Place. Dallas had the best total score in the bareback, with a total score of 83. A very, very good score on the circuit and on the weekend.

To qualify for these final competitions the riders are chosen from those who make the most money during the rodeo season. Dallas qualified in the top 10 in second place for a good position going into the final.

Dallas had started riding bareback at the age of 17. He's always been involved in cattle and with horses, which is something he wanted to do ever since he was a little kid.

Over the past several years Dallas has been steadily improving his skills in the rodeo circuit. He said most of the rodeos he took part in this year have been Saskatchewan, but he's also rode in Manitoba and Alberta. He rode bareback in the national finals held in Gillette, Wyoming during his high school days and also in the Canadian finals rodeo in 2000, and the Calgary Stampede 2001. And I fully expect to see him in the national finals someday in Vegas.

I would ask that all members join me in congratulating Dallas on his remarkable achievements on the rodeo circuit in 2002, and the best of luck in the upcoming years. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Campbell Team in National Improv Competition

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to rise today to tell the Assembly about the accomplishment of some students in my riding. I'm of course very happy to have Campbell Collegiate in my constituency of Regina South and I'm pleased to announce that another Campbell team has yet again distinguished itself.

The senior Campbell improvisational team recently won the Saskatchewan section of the Canadian Improv Games. And they will be going to Ottawa in April to represent the province at the nationals. Campbell won out over 21 other teams.

I should mention, Mr. Speaker, that last year we were very fortunate that another Regina high school, LeBoldus collegiate, won at Ottawa, and this year we hope to repeat again for Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, improv is a theatre sports competition in which teams of eight players take suggestions from the audience and use those suggestions to improvise skits during which they demonstrate their wit, intelligence, and teamwork.

The Campbell team is comprised of Tara Jacobson, Tom Hill, Nena Rodenbush, Dan McCrae, Nicole Olszewski, David Poon, Hillary Sametz, and Justin Van Mulligen.

Mr. Speaker, I might note that it is now clear to us all that the member for Regina Victoria clearly inherits his wit from his son.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to congratulate the coaches, Ted Stewart and Karen Miliokas.

And I just want to say once again, on behalf of myself and all members of the legislature, congratulations to the team from Campbell.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Relationship Between Sask Water and Microgro

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today the NDP (New Democratic Party) shall be visited by three ghosts: the ghost of investments past, the ghost of investments present, and the ghost of investments yet to come — each spectre, Mr. Speaker, each spectre more frightening than the last. Let us begin.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday I read from a Sask Water Board of Directors' information item, dated October 5, that outlined a strategy that was approved directly by the then minister of Sask Water and the current minister for CIC (Crown Investments Corporation). And here's what the strategy said about a company, Microgro, with whom Sask Water had a long-term commitment. I'm quoting from the item now:

Create some financial expediency for Microgro through impacting . . . (the) cash flow.

Mr. Speaker, this appears to say that Sask Water had a deliberate strategy, approved by the minister, to sabotage a company.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister, he approved this strategy. Could he tell us exactly what that strategy meant?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well it's very clear, Mr. Speaker, while we're doing wonderful things — government is, across this province, revitalizing rural Saskatchewan — there's a bunch of Scrooges on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, I stood on my feet many times, Mr. Speaker, and said I can't comment specifically about the court case. But, Mr. Speaker, I am going to quote — because I can — from a news article, the *Leader-Post*, June 9, 1999, in response to the member's question. And here's what it says, Mr. Speaker. It says:

The official receiver (referring to the Microgro, the official receiver) confirmed Tuesday that there had been a dispute between Microgro and Spudco.

But Bob Meldrum, a vice-president with the accounting firm PriceWaterhouseCoopers, also said its information since taking over supports the potato Crown's claim that it paid, it paid its full share.

"We've looked at it and I have to respectfully disagree with (Microgro)," he said.

Neither the amount owed by Spudco — if any — nor a crop-sharing agreement for 1999 would have saved Microgro, he said.

"Whether or not that contract was in place, I don't think it would have mattered a hill of beans whether or not that company was going to go down."

I can say . . .

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

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, people are going to look back . . . people will look back on this session and say, it was the worst of ministers, it was the worst of ministers, Mr. Speaker. It's answers like that, Mr. Speaker, that are going to result in this government getting the dickens beat out of it at the next election campaign, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the coincidence in all of this is that . . . just shortly after that minute, Mr. Speaker, the coincidence is that that's when apparently Sask Water slowed its schedule of payments to this company. So the minister has read from an article. Fair enough. Here's the quote from the strategy that he approved:

. . . create some financial expediency for Microgro through impacting their cash flow.

Will the minister just simply stand in the House and say, if that doesn't mean that they were setting out to sabotage this company, what does it mean, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, I will read it more . . . perhaps more slowly this time than, Mr. Speaker. It says, Mr. Speaker, the receiver says, Mr. Speaker, he says:

"We've looked at and I have to respectfully disagree with (Microgro)," he said.

Neither the amount owed by Spudco — if any — nor a crop-sharing agreement for 1999 would have saved Microgro, he said.

"Whether or not that contract was in place, I don't think it would have mattered a hill of beans whether or not that company was going to go down."

Mr. Speaker, for that member to stand up here and make all kinds of allegations, as he does on a daily basis, Mr. Speaker, is inappropriate. He should look at the facts, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, these aren't our allegations. They're from that minister's memo. They're from an information item and a strategy that that minister approved, Mr. Speaker. And they're from a government who we know, Mr. Speaker, from the last week, has done anything but tell the truth on the whole spudgate issue, Mr. Speaker.

They're his words. We're going to give him one more chance. If that strategy doesn't mean . . . if it doesn't mean that the government set out to sabotage that company, tell the House what it means.

(14:00)

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, I've read it twice so I hope that's enough. I hope they understand. Mr. Speaker, I am going to say though on a daily basis that member trots in here with information that he suggests are not . . . often suggests that they are not documents that are part of a court action. And surprisingly, Mr. Speaker — and I say to the House and to the people of Saskatchewan — when we go outside of the Chamber, Mr. Speaker, we discover in every case so far they have been documents that have been part of the court action.

Mr. Speaker, he misinforms the House, Mr. Speaker, about the facts, Mr. Speaker, on a daily basis.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the principals of Microgro are not a claimant in any court case with Sask Water or this government. If they are, if this government is being sued now by the principals of Microgro, they ought to come clean with that information, Mr. Speaker.

Investment in FarmGro Organic Foods

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I have a new question for the minister. Mr. Speaker, CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) has invested about 5.4 million taxpayer dollars in a company called FarmGro Organic Foods — about one and three-quarters million in equity as we understand it, Mr. Speaker, and 3.7 million in loans.

Mr. Speaker, what is the current status of that company and CIC's investment?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I want to just have a conversation briefly about FarmGro and investments in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, because again the member from Swift Current stands on his feet and today he says we're going to have three ghosts from the past.

And I say, Mr. Speaker, today we have only from Swift Current, Mr. Speaker, we have only from Swift Current the skeleton from the past, Mr. Speaker, the skeleton from the past. Because this member is back again. He was in this legislature working for the previous government, Mr. Speaker, in the '80s. And so the skeleton's back, Mr. Speaker.

And it's this man, Mr. Speaker, who talks about and should talk about what the Crowns in Saskatchewan are doing. We know what the Saskatchewan Party would do with the Crowns, Mr. Speaker. They'd take every one of our Crowns, Mr. Speaker, and they'd put them on the chopping block and they'd sell every one of those Crowns, Mr. Speaker. That's what this exercise is about and that's what this debate is about. It's about discrediting the Crown corporations of Saskatchewan in preparation for if they, God help us, would ever be government, would sell every Crown in the province that we have, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, we shouldn't be surprised that the Deputy Premier just stood up and talked about the three ghosts of Christmas past. It shouldn't be a surprise. They haven't read *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens, Mr. Speaker, and of course they haven't read the other great works of fiction over there, which are the cabinet documents that come out of that government, Mr. Speaker. They ought to read one or the other.

Mr. Speaker, we asked the specific question to the minister responsible for Crown Investments Corporation about an investment they made in FarmGro, an organic flour mill. This is a multi-million-dollar investment of taxpayers' dollars in this business. We're simply asking for an update. What is the current status of the taxpayers' investment in FarmGro Organics?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I want to say to the member opposite that under attack over the last couple of days have been all of the investments that the Crown Corporations have been making in this province, Mr. Speaker — all of the investments that the Crowns have been making, Mr. Speaker.

And FarmGro was an investment, Mr. Speaker, by this government because we saw an opportunity with private partners, Mr. Speaker, to grow the organic flour industry in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And so that's why we invested initially with FarmGro, Mr. Speaker, because there was a need to develop a flour . . . organic flour industry in Saskatchewan. And we chose, Mr. Speaker, to be involved.

What I say, Mr. Speaker, why is it today that the member opposite aren't attacking, Mr. Speaker . . . They attack the hog barns, Mr. Speaker, that we're growing in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. They're attacking ethanol that we're growing, Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan. Today they're attacking the forestry, Mr. Speaker, that we're growing in Saskatchewan, because this Saskatchewan Party, Mr. Speaker, is not satisfied until they dispose of the Crown corporations in Saskatchewan fully, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Broe Participation in Ethanol Industry

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Industry and Resources. Over the last several days we've learned all about how the NDP government presented the SPUDCO (Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company) deal as a public-private partnership when it wasn't. We learned that the NDP gambled and lost 28 million taxpayers' dollars on this potato fiasco.

Well there's another deal that the NDP are promoting as a significant public-private partnership these days, and that's the deal with American-owned Broe industries to build ethanol plants in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, will the NDP government be forthright with the taxpayers this time? Will the minister table the full terms of their financial deal with Broe industries?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it's very clear, it's very clear where members of the Saskatchewan Party come from. You know, I can remember in 2001 when we had some difficult job numbers, the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party trotted out every day talking about what an economic development plan failure we had going on here in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, and you know what? He believed it then. So I'm going to ask the same Leader of the Saskatchewan Party whether he'll stand in his place, given the job growth in this province in the last seven months, and if he will endorse the economic development plan of this province, Mr. Speaker, which plan is working.

Now his members can stand up and attack every company. They can attack every business deal that goes on in this place, Mr. Speaker, because they believe it serves their own political needs.

But I'll tell you this, Mr. Speaker. We're going to work with investors. We're going to work with the business community. We're going to build a stronger economy in this province in spite of those guys over there.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, the NDP are saying that Broe industries will have a 60 per cent equity in the Belle Plaine plant and CIC will have 40 per cent. But as we learned with SPUDCO, Con-Force was given a majority equity position in the potato sheds for a whopping investment of \$153.

Now the Minister of Industry says the total investment for the new Belle Plaine plant is \$55 million and that Broe was going to have a 60 per cent equity. Clearly, taxpayers are questioning whether or not we can believe anything this government says any more.

It's time for details, Mr. Speaker, so the people of Saskatchewan can be assured we aren't going to see a repeat of the NDP's SPUDCO failure with ethanol, only on a bigger

scale. The taxpayers have a right to know and I ask the minister, exactly how much cash — actual cash — is Broe contributing to receive the 60 per cent equity position?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I'm going to say to that member, in spite of his opposition to ethanol development, in spite of the fact that Broe group of companies is going to be creating jobs in his own riding, in spite of the fact that it's going to be offering some jobs and some opportunities in intensive livestock, Mr. Speaker, that member stands up and attacks a good business deal for this province.

Mr. Speaker, they're opposed to anything that creates positive opportunities and a positive investment climate, Mr. Speaker. And what do they offer in alternative? In alternative, they've got a slogan instead of an economic development plan.

Mr. Speaker, they attack this government on ethanol. They attack when we put in the most competitive mining incentive package in the history of this province, the most competitive in this country. They attack when we put in place the most progressive royalties as it relates to oil and gas.

Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you what. We're going to continue in spite of them because it's what's right for Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stewart: — The Saskatchewan Party is in full support of an ethanol industry in this province. What I'm trying to do by asking the minister these questions is to protect the people of Thunder Creek from a fiasco like the SPUDCO.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, there is good reason why people should be very skeptical about this deal with Broe industries, given the NDP's track record. We've learned over the last week that deception runs deep over there.

The minister told members of the media that Broe would be contributing \$8.2 million in equity investment and 26.7 million in debt financing for a total of \$35 million investment in the Belle Plaine plant. The NDP government is contributing the other 20 million. But what taxpayers deserve to know, Mr. Speaker, is that the NDP government is not helping Broe industries finance any of their \$35 million investment in this plant as they did with the potato sheds.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister stand in this Assembly and guarantee today that the NDP government, through any department or Crown agency, is not helping Broe finance any of their debt or equity financing in the ethanol plant?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, that member talks about protecting the people in his riding. And I tell you what, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what this government is doing and that's exactly what people on this side of the House are doing. We're going to protect the people of his riding from himself,

Mr. Speaker.

You know the day Broe came, announced he's putting equity into an ethanol plant in Belle Plaine, in that member's own riding, he's out whining and he's complaining because it just isn't what he wants to see, Mr. Speaker, because it's positive. People feel positive about ethanol development in this province. They know it's going to value-add agriculture.

But you know what, Mr. Speaker? It doesn't fit into the political agenda of the Saskatchewan Party because jobs don't fit into their agenda, Mr. Speaker. The only thing that they've got going for them is the most negative role, the most negative attitude of any group of men and women in this province, Mr. Speaker. The people of Saskatchewan see through them and I would say to you, they'll have none of it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Government Information Technology Arrangements

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the people of Lucky Lake and Outlook that went bankrupt with SPUDCO can't afford any more of the government's protection.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, my question is to the minister responsible for information technology.

Two weeks ago, the Auditor General of Canada uncovered one of the largest cost overruns in the history of Canada. In 1994, the federal government estimated the net cost of its new firearms registry at \$2 million. Now the Auditor General is saying the gun registry will cost taxpayers between 800 million and \$1 billion. The federal government has already spent \$227 million on a computer system that is being scrapped because it doesn't work.

Mr. Speaker, the company hired to develop much of the gun registry system was Electronic Data Systems — EDS. That's why . . . that's the same company hired, Mr. Speaker, the same company the NDP in Saskatchewan has chosen to privatize the government IT (information technology) services.

Mr. Speaker, what steps is the NDP government taking to ensure its plan to privatize 325 IT jobs in Saskatchewan through an exclusive, untendered deal with Saskatchewan doesn't result in a massive cost overrun as was in the case in EDS's involvement in the federal gun registry?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Normally I don't have to start way, way, way, way, way back in the question list, but let me start by assuring the member opposite that we do not run a gun registry, we are not planning on running a gun registry, and we will not run a gun registry. If he wants, he can direct his questions to the Alliance in Ottawa and perhaps they can ask the question.

Second of all, I've already clarified that there's not going to be privatization of jobs. I gave that assurance a week ago Monday.

I have said that. I've repeated it outside the House. That is a core component of what we are taking a look at.

Third of all, Mr. Speaker, let me assure the members opposite that we have not yet made a decision on the EDS proposal. We are not going to get pushed into making the decision. We are going to take our time. We are going to make sure that we understand the impact and that we have the protections in place to make sure that price guarantees are there. That is an assurance I've given the public; that is an assurance I'm giving this legislature.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, after the government's record with Microgro and other companies like SPUDCO, it's comforting to know the government's not going to be involved in a gun registry.

Mr. Speaker, federal Justice minister, Anne McLellan, said the technology chosen for the federal gun registry was inadequate. Ms. McLellan said, and I quote:

I think it's fair to say that the technology that was in place could not deliver all aspects of that system as originally designed.

On December 5, the NDP Justice minister in Saskatchewan told the media that the big problem with the federal gun registration system was, and I quote:

It's using a computer system which apparently simply doesn't work.

Mr. Speaker, the company that was contracted to lead the development of the federal gun registry was EDS and that's the same company the Justice minister hired to build the computer system for the NDP's Information Services Corporation . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. I would like the member to put the question.

(14:15)

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, so would the member.

ISC (Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan) has blown more than \$80 million on its computerized land title system. Is the NDP at all concerned about entering into an untendered contract to privatize government IT services with a company with a track record of losses in both Saskatchewan and Ottawa?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a few questions for the critic of government efficiency across the way, the member who supposedly is interested in looking for a more efficient way to do government.

Is the opposition telling us today that they do not support this government when we look for ways to reduce the cost? Is the opposition telling us that we should not be pursuing economic

development approaches that will attract potentially \$63 million a year in new economic GDP (gross domestic product) growth, that will attract millions of dollars in new economic direct investment, that will create 1,000 new direct jobs and create 600 indirect jobs? Is that what this opposition is saying?

Is EDS on their blacklist just like the Broe Companies, and are they going to make that list public so Saskatchewan people know who need not apply?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on the list are the current cabinet ministers that have created this debacle in Saskatchewan's economic development. They need not apply, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, EDS may be fully capable of handling the privatization of the 325 jobs in Saskatchewan.

But the facts are that both the land titles project and the gun registry system are significantly over budget. And the Justice minister has concluded that the failure of the computer system was in large part the problem with the federal gun registry. The Justice minister also acknowledges that there has been significant problems in the development of the computerized land titles system in Saskatchewan. In both cases, EDS was the provider of that technology.

Mr. Speaker, has the minister contacted the federal government to ascertain whether the massive cost overruns with respect to the gun registry were in any way related to the services provided by EDS; and what steps is the government in Saskatchewan taking to ensure the cost of any untendered contracts with EDS do not balloon?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to assure all people in this province I will, under no circumstances, be seeking the advice of the federal Liberals on how to handle anything in the computer systems.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Absolutely not.

But let me ask the member opposite this: the first two questions that the member asked accused EDS of being responsible for the gun registry. Now the third question the member asks is, oh no, they don't think EDS had anything to do with it. Let me say that he has finally got it right. EDS is not responsible for the problems that they are having in Ottawa's gun registry. They are not responsible.

And I need only refer to them the interview yesterday that was done on the John Gormley show. They needn't take my advice. They need only listen to the former Tory MP (Member of Parliament) who's on CKOM radio everyday. Listen to what John Gormley had to say about it. He recognizes that EDS is a competent provider, the second biggest provider of IT services, after IBM (International Business Machines Corporation), in the world.

This is a company that has come to us with a proposal that looks like it'll reduce the cost to government, that'll create jobs, it'll provide us with a better platform, and it is fundamentally different than anything else we've looked at because it is not about developing a new system. It's about implementing what they already know how to do very, very well. The member opposite should welcome this proposal.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Investment in Saskatchewan Wheat Pool

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. A private members' Bill is before this legislature, and it will allow the board members of the Sask Wheat Pool to potentially change the ownership structure of their company.

The legislature's Standing Committee on Private Members' Bills has been meeting and discussing this legislation over the past few days. And although this question was asked in committee, it did not receive an answer.

We have just reviewed this NDP government's long and dismal record of using taxpayers' dollars to become involved in private business. Will the Premier assure the people of Saskatchewan that his NDP government will not use taxpayers' dollars to purchase shares, or take any debt or equity position in the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, what we've seen over the last couple of days in the legislature is a demonstration by the Saskatchewan Party about how it is that you invest and grow Saskatchewan communities, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, from the onset in this legislature this fall, Mr. Speaker . . . or this spring, we had the ACRE Committee (Action Committee on the Rural Economy) that were here. And they made a presentation, Mr. Speaker, to the members of the Legislative Assembly. And what did they say, Mr. Speaker?

They said to us, Mr. Speaker, that in order to grow Saskatchewan what we need to do, Mr. Speaker, is that we need to invest in rural Saskatchewan in order to grow it. And, Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, we have the litany of examples of investments that we've made in Saskatchewan today to make a difference, Mr. Speaker.

We made a difference on the ethanol piece which we talked about today, which the members opposite are saying we shouldn't. We make loan guarantees, Mr. Speaker, today, and we assisted in the growing of the ethanol industry at Lanigan, Mr. Speaker. And we've helped in the past, Mr. Speaker, with the building of the grains and transportation sector in Saskatchewan because this government and this Premier are about growing Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, not taking it apart.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Why is the member from Cannington on his

feet?

Mr. D'Autremont: — Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, over the last two days the member from Swift Current has repeatedly asked the minister for CIC to explain the meaning of a Sask Water Board of Directors decision item dealing with the company called Microgro, today with FarmGro.

The Minister of Agriculture has responded to these questions but his responses have had absolutely nothing to do with the questions asked. Mr. Speaker, section 417 of Beaudesne's says, and I quote:

Answers to questions should be as brief as possible, deal with the matter raised and should not provoke debate.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that the practice of this Assembly has been to give ministers a great deal of latitude when answering questions. And I think that's a good practice, one the Saskatchewan Party will continue when our ministers are answering questions in a few months. However, according to Beaudesne's, the answer given must have something to do with the question asked.

Over the past two days the member from Swift Current has repeatedly asked about Microgro and Sask Water's strategy dealing with Microgro. The Minister of Agriculture has never so much as mentioned agro grow in any of his answers. Mr. Speaker, according to Beaudesne's the government is perfectly within its rights to have the Minister of Agriculture answer these questions. The minister is also within his rights not to answer the question. However, what he is not allowed to do is have a long-winded response that has absolutely nothing to do with the question.

Mr. Speaker, section 417 of Beaudesne's has been cited on numerous occasions by the Speaker of the Manitoba legislature, and here are some examples. I will also provide these to the Speaker for his review. On August 8, 2002 an opposition member asked about a contract with Manitoba gaming commission. The minister responded by asking the opposition to withdraw a previous accusation from another contract. A point of order was raised by the opposition and the Speaker ruled, citing Beaudesne's 417 that, quote:

The minister should deal with the question that is raised.

On December 3, 2002, the opposition asked a question about counselling for children. The minister responded by talking about the government's healthy child initiative. The Speaker ruled, citing Beaudesne's 417 that, quote:

Answers are expected to be responsive to the question, . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. Order. I invite the member from Cannington to continue.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, over the past two days the Minister of Agriculture have not

dealt with the questions raised and have not been responsive to the question.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I would note that by agreement tomorrow is expected to be the final day of this fall session. That means we only have one more question period to try to get answers out of this government. I would therefore ask the Speaker to rule on this matter, either before the Assembly adjourns today or prior to question period tomorrow. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to respond to the point of order raised by the Opposition House Leader.

I find it kind of interesting that the Opposition House Leader objects to, he says, answers which are not brief. He says answers should be brief and should not be long-winded. Mr. Speaker, earlier in this question period we had the marathon of questions from the hon. member opposite, and if there's anybody who's the champion of long-windedness we've just heard from him in raising the point of order.

Mr. Speaker, that is frivolous and irrelevant and the hon. member knows it. The traditions of parliamentary use of question period also understand that, Mr. Speaker. The rules of question period are very clear. The opposition has the right to ask the questions that they consider to be appropriate. Those questions are directed to the Executive Council of the government of the day. It is the jurisdiction of the government of the day to determine which minister is most appropriate to address the question and to address the question in the way that the minister considers to be most appropriate.

There is no obligation in the House, Mr. Speaker, there is no obligation in the House for the ministers when responding to questions to have to satisfy the opposition. Mr. Speaker, if we were having to satisfy the opposition, we would be here forever because they are incapable of being satisfied. That's the bottom line on the matter and it can be — as a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, it is frequently — a technique used in debate of the issues of the day when members of the Executive Council respond, to also challenge the positions of the members of the opposition.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I can understand why the hon. members would object to that. It is also, Mr. Speaker, it is also a responsibility, it is a responsibility of members of the Executive Council when accepting questions to respect and honour the parliamentary traditions of *sub judice*. I know that that is a tradition which is honoured and respected on this side of the House but is a very, very mild respect, at best, on that side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you to make the rulings and to make them consistent with the traditions of question period, not only in this House, but in the Houses in the nation, in the House of Commons. Mr. Speaker, I think upon review and reflection you will find that the objection raised by the House Leader is nothing more, nothing less than frivolous and grandstanding.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I would thank both members for the comments regarding the point of order. I will strive to review and bring back some guidelines for the members at an appropriate time.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased to stand on behalf of the government today and respond to written questions no. 459 through 481 inclusive.

The Speaker: — Responses to questions 459 to 481 inclusive have been tabled.

(14:30)

PRIVATE BILLS

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 304 — The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool Amendment Act, 2002

Clause 1

The Chair: — Order. Committee of the Whole. The first item before the committee is consideration of Bill No. 304 — An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool Act, 1995. And I see there are no officials so we'll proceed directly to the Bill.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I want to thank the member for bringing this Bill forward for discussion.

I feel that I would be remiss if I didn't forward some concerns that have come from constituents and from other Pool members throughout the province.

The Wheat Pool has a significant presence in rural Saskatchewan and has for a number of years. The elevators have been somewhat of an icon of rural Saskatchewan and there's a lot of even sentimental feelings towards the Wheat Pool and what it's meant to our history.

The elevator closures, the concerns that have come before me — I would say not even just recently, but over a number of years now — is the speed at which the closures take place. There are communities that have producer groups who would be interested in purchasing the elevators but before they could get their financing or business plan in place, the Wheat Pool has the elevator taken down and the opportunity is gone at that point.

The other concerns are, many of the elevators, before the sale is made, the Wheat Pool puts stipulations on rail cars not being able to be loaded from that elevator and therefore the elevator is of no use other than a large storage bin.

When we look at growing Saskatchewan and revitalizing rural Saskatchewan, I think abandoned elevators do have a lot of

opportunity in a lot of communities if there are producer groups who are willing to grab that opportunity.

And we need look no farther than St. Gregor, which is very close to my home, where a fellow by the name of Bruce Bornhorst runs a very successful business of cleaning seed, pea seed, in an elevator and he employs five or six or more — I'm not even too sure where he's at for employees — and he is an important contributor to the St. Gregor community.

So that's an issue that's brought forward from a number of producers in Saskatchewan and they feel that if the Wheat Pool goes to a more corporate-type structure that these closures will be given even less consideration — that they will be, you know, happening more quickly. The elevators will come down more quickly. So that is a huge concern.

The other concern — and I'm a little concerned about this one as well — has come from members who feel that there has been a real lack of consultation from the delegates to the members. And I brought this concern up to Mr. Wiens while we were at committee and he assured me that the delegates did consult their members, but he also said that that was up to each individual delegate's discretion as to how they wanted to go about that process.

It was lacking in some of the districts. Some were great and they did let their membership know that this was potentially going to happen and therefore those members were well informed, they had the information in advance, they could give an opinion, and it worked very well. But there were delegates, a number, who did not do that. And those members are quite upset and taken by surprise actually.

But the problem then lies with the Bill, of course. What is my responsibility as a legislator? And one of the members on the committee proposed that the role as legislators is to be a facilitator and a regulator but not anything beyond that. Mr. Wiens explained in committee that the Bill before us:

... is not asking the Legislative Assembly to change our corporate governance or share structure (of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool). It is seeking (the) Assembly support to move final authority for selected provisions pertaining to governance and share ownership from the ... SWP Act into our company's bylaws, thereby giving ... (the) delegates final authority to make future changes as desired or ... (requested). The intent (of the Bill, or the changes to the Bill) is to maintain or indeed enhance the responsibilities of (the) Wheat Pool delegates and streamline the decision-making process in these particular areas.

I do recognize that the Wheat Pool has faced a number of challenges and quite possibly may need more flexibility in order to stay financially viable.

And so with that, the question that I would ... You know, another further concern that I have and a question that I would like to pose to the member who's brought this Bill forward ... I observed that after question period that the member was consulting with the Premier quite considerably. And so, during question period, I asked a very, very pointed question. I would

like to re-ask that question now that she's had an opportunity to discuss the Bill with the Premier.

Will she, on behalf of the NDP government, assure the people of Saskatchewan that this NDP government will not use taxpayers' dollars to purchase shares or take any debt or equity position in the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool?

The Chair: — Before the member ... Order. I listened very carefully with the preamble and with the questions and just to remind hon. members that this is a private Bill that is sponsored by a private member and there is no ... irrespective of whether that member is a member of the government side or of the opposition and so ... and it just as easily could be being sponsored by a member of the opposition.

And just as it would be not fair for a member of the opposition to be answering government policy within ... as a sponsor ... Order. It would not be appropriate for a opposition member to be answering government policy nor would it be appropriate for a government member answering government policy questions as a sponsor of a private Bill. So I rule that question out of order.

Ms. Harpauer: — I apologize, Mr. Chair, and I'll rephrase the question. Does the member know if the NDP government has any intentions of purchasing shares or taking any debt or equity position in the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, which is outside of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool's policy?

The Chair: — Again the item before the committee is Bill No. 304, An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool Act, and that questions and comments and debate should be specifically related to the Bill that's before us on a clause-by-clause basis and limited to the specific Bill and not directly regarding government policy.

So again I would rule that that question is out of order.

Ms. Harpauer: — Generally from the public and from Wheat Pool members in large, the assumption is that the Wheat Pool is asking for changes to allow changes to their structure because they intend on doing so. So that is why these questions become important because if they intend on making those structure changes within the company, that means there could be a potential buyer. The concern, of course: is that potential buyer going to be the Saskatchewan government?

The Chair: — I want to be very clear that the Chair makes no determination or conclusion as to whether these are important questions or valid questions or worthwhile questions. I'm only ruling as to whether they're relevant to the Bill and to the committee and to the process that's before us.

So I just want to reassure the member that there's no judgment as to the quality of the questions, the importance or whether or not these are relative or whether they're important. I'm just ruling whether they're relevant to the item before the committee. So I hope that reassures the hon. member and that if she would direct the question specifically to the Bill at hand and then we can proceed with the committee.

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Chair, with leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

(14:45)

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. To you and through you, to the rest of the members of the Assembly, I'd like to introduce two people sitting in the east gallery there, Meghan Wankel and Myoyng Sung Lee, who are here from Toronto. They attend university in Toronto.

Meghan is from Saskatchewan and is here, back for Christmas. She is taking law at the U of T (University of Toronto). And Myoyng is from Seoul, Korea. It's her first trip to Western Canada. She might have a real opportunity to see some snow come down tonight as they're forecasting a big snowfall. She's attending the U of T and taking some English classes. So I'd like all members to welcome Meghan back home for a while and to give Myoyng a hearty Western Canada welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

PRIVATE BILLS

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 304 – The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool Amendment Act, 2002 (continued)

Clause 1

The Chair: — Why is the member for North Battleford on his feet?

Mr. Hillson: — I was going to enter into the debate, so I'll yield to the member from Watrous. She was continuing her questioning.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Would the member please explain to the Assembly how the proposed amendments to this Bill will allow the Wheat Pool to change their share structure?

Ms. Jones: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and to the member opposite. My understanding of the process of the Bill is that the Bill will enable the Pool delegates to increase the current limit on share ownership to a higher level at some time in the future if it is deemed necessary and if it's deemed advisable or required. The Act does not directly change anything. It allows for the Pool to enter in a process to allow that to happen without them coming back to the legislature for further approval.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you. Would this allow a change in the status of non-voting shares to become voting shares? And further to that, would it allow non-shareholders to become part of the board?

Ms. Jones: — Perhaps the most advisable course of action — although I think that these questions were answered in committee — but perhaps the most advisable course of action would be if I take note of their questions, forward them to the Pool, and ensure that the member receives the appropriate response.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Chairman, if I may first say, just as preamble to my questions, it seems to me a rather strange procedure that the sponsor of the Bill suggests that we pass it first and find out what it's about afterwards. That seems to me a odd procedure for responsible legislators.

I think that for anyone who was raised in this province, we obviously remember the days when the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool was the largest corporation in Saskatchewan, one of the most successful co-operatives in the entire world, when there were 1,100 delivery points across this province. And that number now, I believe, is down to 47.

We remember the days when the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool handled something like two-thirds, I believe, of the Saskatchewan crop and today I understand it's something like a third, or that number or lower.

My question for the sponsor of the Bill is that if we approve these amendments, if we approve these amendments, does the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool remain, in any sense of the term, a co-operative?

Ms. Jones: — My understanding, Mr. Chairman, is that the amendments proposed do not change anything except those outlined — and the member is free to read those — and that the clause that says that the Wheat Pool will continue to abide by co-operative principles remains intact.

Mr. Hillson: — In that case I wish to ask, Mr. Chairman, if the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool remains a co-operative, in what sense is it a co-operative? If another corporation is free to own controlling or all the shares of the company and to name the board of directors, in what sense would that be a co-operative then?

If it is her contention that the Wheat Pool will still be a co-operative after we pass this — I've read over the amendments; I can't see how that is — but if it's her contention that it's still a co-operative, I wonder if she would be good enough to explain to the Assembly in what sense it is still a co-operative.

Ms. Jones: — Mr. Chairman, I'm making no contention. The hon. member's questions are on the record. I'll make sure that they're forwarded to the Wheat Pool for their reply.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Chairman, I don't think any member of this Assembly wishes to stand in the way of the Wheat Pool raising more capital for whatever . . . from whatever source in an attempt to stay in business. However, I think there is a feeling in this Assembly that we would hope that that additional new capital wouldn't come from the taxpayers of this province.

I note that when the share value of the Wheat Pool was at \$20 a share, that gave a capitalization of the company of 740 million. Today I understand the shares are trading at approximately \$1, which gives the capitalization for the company of only 37.4 million.

Now that is a small amount for any international grain

companies, like say ADM (Archer Daniels Midland). And indeed, in view of the money that CIC has invested in Australia and other places around the world, that's small change for them as well. So I think hon. members are right in asking.

But before I get to my next question I would like to ask the hon. sponsoring member, is she seriously saying to this Assembly that the correct course for this Assembly is to pass the legislation today and get answers for our questions at some future date?

Ms. Jones: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The process for a private member's . . . a private Bill sponsored by a private member is . . . And we've gone through those right up and including the public hearings that we had yesterday, which is . . . The major difference between government Bills and private Bills is that there is a hearing where members are free to advocate both for and against the proposed Bill, and to ask any questions of the individuals, of the entity bringing the Bill forward. And that process took place and the questions were answered.

The answers are on the record. Any further questions that were not posed or answered, I commit to forwarding the transcript of these proceedings to the Pool for their response.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Chairman, could the sponsoring member be good enough to tell us whether, in her opinion, if we make these amendments today, there would be anything preventing, first of all a private corporation such as ADM to buy the total assets of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool?

Ms. Jones: — Mr. Chairman, in response to the hon. member's question, I refer him to item no. 6 of the explanatory notes and it has to . . . I will read it into the record, or at least part. It says:

The amendments to the Act have been approved by the requisite majority of the delegates of the Corporation and also by The Toronto Stock Exchange. Clause 12(5)(e) of the Act requires that the change to the share ownership cap be approved by the Class B shareholders. As a result, the assent to the amendments to clause 12(5)(e) and section 15 of the Act would be subject to filing a certificate with the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly confirming that such amendments have been approved by the requisite majority of the Class B shareholders.

And so the Bill, after receiving . . . after being passed in the House and receiving Royal Assent still must go back to the shareholders for their two-thirds majority approval before it can . . . before those sections of the Act can be proclaimed.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Chairman, may I then ask the hon. sponsoring member, if we pass these amendments, will there be anything preventing CIC or some other arm of the provincial government from making a direct equity investment or purchasing all of the assets of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool?

Ms. Jones: — Mr. Chairman, the member had an opportunity to be briefed as well as to ask questions. Investment policies are not the specialist of a private member. He knows the process. And again I will offer to forward any transcribed questions to

the Wheat Pool, and I'm sure they'll make available . . . make themselves available to him to answer any questions that he has.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Chairman, Mr. Chairman, I think I'm going to ask for a ruling. I take enormous offence at any suggestion from the hon. member that I'm doing anything other than my duty as a member of this Assembly.

For the record, I was not invited nor even informed of the meetings of the Private Members' Committee. I was not . . . I'm not a member of that committee. I was not invited to attend the meetings of that committee, nor was I informed. And so I take . . . I take enormous offence at any suggestion from the member that I or anybody else in this Assembly is doing anything more than the duty to which he or she was elected.

The Chair: — Order. I didn't quite catch what the member said at the tail end . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Okay, so it's not a point of order? Could the member clarify what he said? I didn't quite catch what you said.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think it is a point of order that the hon. member is suggesting that I am not doing my duty and I am acting improperly to ask questions about the import of this Bill and the significance of what it says and what we are actually being asked to pass this afternoon.

And by asking what this Bill says, what it does, what it will do to the largest corporation in Saskatchewan — a part of Saskatchewan's history — that in asking those questions she is suggesting I'm not doing my duty as a member of this Assembly. And I think that's offensive.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Chair, the hon. member has put a point of order to the Chair and on that point of order, Mr. Chair, if I may simply remind the committee of the process and of the opportunity that the hon. member has had.

The hon. member shouts from his seat that he hasn't had any opportunity. Well, Mr. Chair, I remind the hon. member, I remind the committee that there is a standard process for private Bills.

Private Bills need a sponsor in this House and the scrutiny on private Bills takes place in the committee where hon. members have the opportunity to receive information, to put their points of view, and to get responses to their questions if they have them.

I also point out, Mr. Chair, that in addition to that process — which has already occurred — that the member who has sponsored this Bill has said, more than one occasion, that additional questions that are put here on the record this afternoon will be forwarded. She will ensure that they are forwarded to the Pool for a response.

I do point out as well finally, Mr. Chair, and perhaps most importantly, to the hon. member who shouts from his place that he didn't have any opportunity, that there was a posting of the committee meeting on the bulletin board outside the door entering into the Legislative Assembly chambers. The same place, Mr. Chair, that is standard in this House for the posting of information about committee meetings — available to all

hon. members.

Mr. Chair, there is some strict requirements that are put in place regarding the advertising of the committee meetings. They have been followed. If the member didn't read the notice, that's his problem but it's certainly not . . . it is not the responsibility of this committee now to make up for his failure to have used the notice that he was appropriately given and could have followed.

(15:00)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — On the point of order, Mr. Chairman, the hon. member knows perfectly good and well I'm not a member of that committee and have no right to ask questions in that committee.

The Chair: — I thank the member for the point of order and also the member for speaking to it. From this Chair's opinion that the questions that the member has put are in order and that the answers are in order, and I would refer to the member to rule 75 which said:

No committee on any Private Bill shall begin consideration of the same until after notice of the sitting of such committee has been affixed for two days in the lobby, and appended in the *Votes and Proceedings*.

And I notice that they have been in the *Votes and Proceedings* since Wednesday, December 11 and the notice of meeting was posted. So the point of order is not well taken.

Mr. Hillson: — Is there anything in this legislation that once passed would prevent CIC from buying up the whole of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool?

Ms. Jones: — Mr. Chairman, I'll ensure that the member's question is forwarded to the Pool and they will answer.

Mr. Hillson: — Is the purpose of this legislation before us today — coming before us by unanimous leave rather than the normal course at our spring session — is the purpose of this legislation today to allow sale of the Pool to the Government of Saskatchewan or to some other private corporation?

Ms. Jones: — Mr. Chairman, it's not in my purview to answer that. I'll ensure that the question is forwarded to the Pool and they will I'm sure respond.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Chairman, does the hon. member, does the hon. member believe it is acting responsibly for us to pass these amendments prior to receiving answers to these questions?

Ms. Jones: — Mr. Chairman, we . . . this Bill is following a normal process for private Bills sponsored by a private member. Ample notice was given. This was dealt with in part in committee yesterday and forms part of the record. And any other questions that were not answered to the member's complete satisfaction can be forwarded to the Pool through our transcript and responded to by them.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Chairman, I thank the hon. member for her

assurances that the Wheat Pool will be forwarded these questions from the hon. member from Watrous and from myself. I thank her for those assurances.

But would even she herself feel comfortable in passing something and then finding out what it's all about afterwards? Or would she think it prudent to find out what a Bill is and what the full ramifications are and what we are actually approving in . . . especially in an institution which has been so much a part of the fabric of our province and had such a signal role in the building of this province that if we are, if we are going to put it on the block, should we not be perfectly clear as to what we are doing prior to passing it? Or does she think that it would be acting responsibly to pass it first and figure out later what we are doing?

Ms. Jones: — Mr. Chairman, I'm sorry that the hon. member didn't attend the meeting and take the opportunity that was afforded to him and to all hon. members to ask these questions of the Pool directly at that committee hearing. That is the reason that private member Bills have committee hearings, is so that questions and answers can be put to the person who is requesting the Bill. And I'm sorry the hon. member didn't take advantage.

Perhaps the best course of action would be for him to ask all of the questions, put them into the record, and then they will be forwarded to the Pool for their response.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Chairman, I understand the Hon. Deputy Premier has said that there are ongoing negotiations with the Pool. Now does the sponsoring member think it might be important for us to know what is the tenor of these discussions and whether or not these discussions are about taking an equity position before we pass these amendments?

Ms. Jones: — Mr. Chairman, I believe I've already answered that question.

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Chairman, I certainly feel myself and I believe other members of the opposition feel that if the government wants to delude itself into thinking this is still a co-operative, if they still want to dwell under that illusion, I guess that's their business and that doesn't do us any harm — although it is clearly an illusion, I think, to anyone who reads the Bill, that the company is in no sense a co-operative after the passing of this motion. But I say if you wish to believe it's still a co-operative, then so be it — go ahead and believe it. So we have no reason to stand in the way of it.

If the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool wishes to explore new opportunities to raise capital, it is not for me or I think any other member of this Assembly to try and prevent that. If that amounts to some or all of the Pool being sold to a third party interest, then again I don't think that is something that I should be standing in the way of.

If however the Government of Saskatchewan is going to take advantage of these new provisions so that it can take an equity position in the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, then I think that is something that hon. members will want to be firmly aware of prior to approving this legislation. But I think we all in this Assembly are of the view that it's really not for us to decide to whom the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool might wish to sell some of

its shares, and I wish to put that on the record.

But in view of the fact we can't get answers as to whether that potential buyer may be the Government of Saskatchewan, I think that many hon. members will be very uncomfortable in passing amendments to lead to that sort of equity investment. And I do wish that we could be given some assurance on that before proceeding.

The Chair: — I would indicate to the member that I think the assurance that he's requesting is an appropriate question, but it's not relevant to this forum and specifically to the Bill. I believe what the member was saying is he wants assurance of what the government policy will be. And that's perfectly appropriate, but not in this forum. So I just wanted to make that comment to the member.

Mr. Hillson: — I accept Mr. Chairman's ruling. I think it is correct. But may I then ask the sponsoring member, does she believe that this Assembly is acting responsibly to proceed with these amendments until we have received an indication of government policy?

Ms. Jones: — Mr. Chairman, the appropriate process for the introduction and passing of a private Bill sponsored by a private member has been followed. It is now in the hands of the House and the House will decide. And if the member . . . the member will make his own decision. It's not up to me to judge.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I attended the committee meeting yesterday with great interest. My family has had a position in the Pool for a long time. Both . . . all four of my great-grandfathers were founding members of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. Both my grandfathers delivered the vast majority of their grain there and my father is currently a delegate.

I feel that there were a lot of serious issues raised before the committee, and first and foremost of those was what is going to happen, what potentially can happen, if the amendments are approved. In lieu of what we've just heard from the Minister of Agriculture outside, I think it does bring serious questions to this Assembly which were not made apparent yesterday.

Yesterday, as *Hansard* would show, when asked by the member from Arm River if the Crown Investments Corporation was considering a investment in the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, his question was ruled out of order.

The real concern I have focuses twofold. Firstly, it is with the financial viability of the Pool. The president of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, Mr. Marvin Wiens, spoke at length at the need in a global environment to be able to position itself, be that by raising equity from markets or whatnot.

But the second point that I'm concerned about is the social implications for rural Saskatchewan with regards to the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, and specifically with regards to the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool and its demise.

We heard a little earlier the member from Watrous speak about the concerns around rural elevator closures. The father of the member from Nutana yesterday spoke up and pointed out some

statistics of thousands of kilometres of branch lines which have been closed since the change in 1995 to The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool Act, of the hundreds of elevators which have also closed and the problems that this has caused for those communities. And I can assure you the people in the Kindersley riding have felt that and it has been very serious indeed.

It seems to me that there has been a direct correlation between the changes in 1995 and the subsequent project horizon that the Wheat Pool ventured into and the diminishing of the value of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool shares on the Toronto Stock Exchange. And I would postulate that the demise of that share price occurred by and large because customers of the Wheat Pool, when local elevators were closed, did not appreciate the way that they were being treated.

I would also bring up to the members opposite the share price I think is a very good indicator of the financial viability of a company and its in direct correlation to their response to customers' concerns.

And the members opposite, since their tenure in government, have closed rural hospitals. We continue to see the possibility of rural school closures. And I think that that's proven out in the number of seats that they're holding in rural Saskatchewan, that again the customers or the constituents are not pleased with this situation. We continue in rural Saskatchewan to struggle forth. We don't want to see the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool diminished any further.

And I'd like to speak with regards to The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool Act in 1995, and how in essence I will claim that it didn't go far enough. In 1990 in Berlin, the wall came down and two different global economies went to battle. And one has clearly won and one has clearly lost. The winner of that battle has been the free enterprise system, not the centralized economy.

(15:15)

And members opposite somehow have not grasped this. And it is to the detriment of the persons of Saskatchewan, and to all taxpayers, to recognize that centrally planned economies with monies from governments being invested in the market do not return profits.

It didn't work anywhere else in the world and it's not working here in Saskatchewan. We've seen that it hasn't worked in SPUDCO. It hasn't worked in their failed computer system with regards to the land titles. It's not working. It didn't work at Channel Lake.

And with the comments which we've just heard outside the Chamber, where the Minister of Agriculture says that we're possibly . . . the Government of Saskatchewan is in negotiations with the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, I fear that this could be the final nail in the coffin for a company that has suffered a great deal in the last number of years due to some of their own restructuring and whatnot.

So the first question that I would have is, the changes that would be brought about, could the member comment on whether the delegates will have a say or not — if these amendments are passed — on who invests in the Saskatchewan

Wheat Pool company?

Ms. Jones: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thanks to the member for the question. I refer him to item no. 5 in the explanatory notes that accompanied the Bill and what it explains in there is that:

The reason for the amendments to clause 15(1)(c) of the Act is to allow the delegates of the Corporation, through bylaw amendment and without the need for further legislative amendment, to (alter) . . . the share ownership cap on the Class B shares to a percentage higher than 10 %.

The addition of . . . 15(1)(d) clarifies that Class B shareholder approval would be required to decrease the share ownership cap following an increase in the share ownership cap above 10 %.

So as I read the explanatory notes, the amendment deals with the cap and any policy of the Pool is not addressed in these amendments.

Mr. Dearborn: — I'd like to thank the member opposite for her answer to that question. I appreciate that.

I would like to say in summation, I believe that the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool should take control of its own destiny. The final powers should be left in the hands of its board of directors, its delegates, and, at end, its members who make the company financially viable and the important part of Saskatchewan which we all know that it has been and hopefully will continue to be.

I would say that with regards to direct equity investment by the Government of Saskatchewan into the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, that will be going against the wishes of any delegates. Delegates spoke to me just on Sunday evening, and expressed this concern directly.

The final question that I would have to ask has to do with the returning of The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool Act to this Assembly at any time in the future. I feel that the Pool, as the largest company in Saskatchewan, is very much capable of setting its own destiny and needn't come to the taxpayers or elected members of this Assembly, at great cost, to have its business decided for them or parts of its business decided for them.

So my final question, sir, is: can the member opposite tell me, upon passing these amendments, would this in her mind be the cessation of having The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool Act brought before this Assembly and will it allow the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool to conduct its business without having to ask leave of this Assembly? Thank you.

Ms. Jones: — Mr. Chairman, I'm certainly not aware of any future requests that the Pool may have to bring any amendments before this House.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you. Soon to be government, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Chairman, the Pool initially came to this Assembly to make changes to its structure back in 1995 which allowed it to actually go out to the marketplace and seek

financing. Now this . . . the financing that the Pool was seeking at that time did not allow those investors, though, to take an equity . . . a direct equity position in the main course.

What it did do, though, was allowed the Pool to transfer what was classified as debt or liability — which were the dividends built up by the membership at that time, which were a considerable amount of money, Mr. Chairman — transfer that from a liability over to an asset which allowed the Pool then to borrow against that asset and to expand their business.

And this was a move at the time, Mr. Chairman, to try and allow the Pool to grow as well as to preserve it, because the Pool was in some financial difficulty at the time and not being able to grow to meet the competition from the other grain companies. That was a partial step, Mr. Chairman. The Pool was never a fully fledged co-operative in the sense that one would normally view co-ops. It was a quasi co-op, Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Chairman, not a full-fledged co-op.

This change as proposed by the Wheat Pool now and as approved by the delegates, asking for a change in the bylaws to allow the Pool to gain more control of their own operation, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Chairman, moves them even further away from the concept of a true co-op. It becomes more of a new generation co-op, if someone would like to use that term.

But now, Mr. Chairman, if you allow them to change the percentage of ownership of the voting shares — which is not a bad thing — if that allows to change, you move it further away from that co-op concept.

If you allow the change then from the class B non-voting shares to be restructured and become voting shares, you allow those investors that have provided, have bought the class B shares, to become voting shares, you now completely move away from the concept of a co-op with one member, one vote regardless of the number of shares.

And, Mr. Chairman, that allows the Pool to become basically a corporation in the sense of the word that we utilize it in Canada and moves it away from the Pool . . . from a co-operative. And, Mr. Chairman, that also is a good thing.

The Pool needs to have the ability to grow its business and its corporation after some very difficult years for it. It's had to divest itself of a number of its enterprises to try and salvage its main core business which is the purchase and transport of grain. And it is, I think, close to turning the corner on that. This, hopefully, will be a step that allows it to be successful.

The Pool needs to be able to go into the marketplace to gain equity from the market to salvage its business. The difficulty though that we have on this side of the House is not with that. The difficulty is with the Government of Saskatchewan turning around and then buying into the Pool which is a separate issue, Mr. Chairman, than this Bill. It's a different issue.

We asked the minister that question — he didn't answer it in here — what the Pool policy was. Outside of this Assembly this afternoon though, Mr. Chairman, the Minister of Agriculture has said that they are indeed in negotiations with the Wheat Pool. About what? Not exactly sure. About whether or not the

government is going to take an equity position? We don't know. About whether or not the government is going to provide loans? We don't know. Whether the government is going to provide loan guarantees? We don't know.

The government's track record in these kind of investments, Mr. Speaker, I think should scare the Pool away from talking to the government because their success record is notable in its failure, Mr. Chairman.

So, Mr. Speaker, while we have these concerns, the place for their discussion is not in this committee. This committee is to decide whether or not to pass the Pool Bill. And that's what needs to be allowed to happen in this case, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just very, very quickly. The member is suggesting that should anyone have concerns she will forward them on to the Pool for response, and I would ask her to provide that response to the town of Hudson Bay. And, Mr. Chair, I will just read a letter that I received from that community, read it into the record, and then I will leave it to the member to forward that on to the Wheat Pool for their response to both myself and to the community of Hudson Bay.

The letter reads as follows, and I am quoting:

I am sure that by now, you have heard that Hudson Bay will soon be losing its elevators. This is an added hardship imposed on our farming community and a direct impact on our economy. Our farmers will now have to travel an extra 150 kilometres one way to ship their grain.

Saskatchewan Wheat Pool . . . keeps closing elevators in the Province, destroying the livelihood of the farmers and their families. Our elected politicians seem to have . . . (and) taken the ostrich position and have buried their heads in the sand ignoring the erosion of Rural Saskatchewan. It is time that someone reminds . . . (the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool), that they are as strong as their membership and without members to support them they will soon find themselves out of work.

Farming is the number **ONE** industry in Saskatchewan and I don't see any elected member in the government, . . . (taking) a stand to save the industry. Saskatchewan's population is dwindling . . . and soon we won't be able to feed the people that are left behind and our politicians are left sitting there looking "impotent."

It is time for you, as our elected representative, (to) stand up and be counted and demand the . . . (Saskatchewan Wheat Pool) cease immediately its pilferage of rural Saskatchewan and become accountable for its actions.

This letter is signed by the economic community development officer for the community of Hudson Bay, Mr. Roger Lacoursiere, and I would ask the member to forward that to the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool on my behalf and on behalf of the community of Hudson Bay, for their response. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Jones: — Mr. Speaker, I assure the hon. member that I will

forward the entire transcript of proceedings, once they become available, to the Pool for their appropriate response.

(15:30)

Preamble agreed to.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 6 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 304 – The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool Amendment Act, 2002

Ms. Jones: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 304, The Saskatchewan Wheat Pool Amendment Act, 2002, be now read a third time and passed under its title.

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

The Assembly adjourned at 15:34.