

The Assembly met at 10:00.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise again today to present a petition on behalf of people who have great concerns over the condition of Highway 47 between Estevan and the Boundary dam resort. And the prayer reads as follows:

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 47 South in order to avoid serious injury and property damage.

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

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by folks from Estevan, Bienfait, Torquay, Regina, and Lignite, North Dakota.

I so present. Thank you.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of residents of the city of Swift Current who are proposing a constructive alternative to the government's plans for a permanent CT (computerized tomography) scan in the Swift Current Regional Hospital to serve the Southwest. 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 reconsider its plans to allocate the used CT scanner to Swift Current and instead provide a new CT scanner to Swift Current.

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

Mr. Speaker, all of the petitioners today are from the city of Swift Current.

I so present.

Mr. Harper: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition signed by Saskatchewan people who are concerned that deregulation and privatization in the electrical industry is causing electrical rates to increase very dramatically in other jurisdictions. And the prayer is as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the Government of Saskatchewan and the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan to assure the people of Saskatchewan that deregulation and privatization of the electric industry in Saskatchewan, including SaskPower, will not be allowed.

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the good folks from Coronach, Fife Lake, Assiniboia, and Rockglen.

Thank you and I so submit.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, once again I rise with a petition from citizens from all over Saskatchewan that are very, very concerned about the deplorable condition of Highway 43. And the petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to repair Highway 43 in order to address safety concerns and to facilitate economic growth in rural Saskatchewan.

And as duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And, Mr. Speaker, this literally is signed by a number of areas in the province, including Assiniboia, Vanguard, Wymark, Pambrun, Swift Current, Stewart Valley, and Ponteix.

I so present.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on behalf of the citizens from west central Saskatchewan concerned with the alarming rate of rural school closures. And this 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 retain schools in rural communities such as Denzil and supply adequate education for rural families of our province.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition today is signed by the good folks from the town of Denzil.

I so present.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to be able to present a petition on behalf of citizens of the province who are very concerned with this government's inaction in dealing with the issue surrounding the Qu'Appelle lakes. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to do everything in its power to work with First Nations people and the federal government to bring a prompt end to the dispute so that the water level of the Qu'Appelle River system can return to its normal level and end the economic harm and uncertainty that this dispute has caused.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signatures to this petition, Mr. Speaker, come from the area of Pasqua Lake.

I so present.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise

in the Assembly today to bring forth a petition signed by citizens of Saskatchewan that are concerned with the government's handling of the Crown land leases. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take the necessary steps to ensure current Crown land lessees maintain their first option to renew those leases.

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition are from Lloydminster, Spiritwood, and St. Walburg.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — According to order the following petitions tabled yesterday have been reviewed and pursuant to rule 12(7) they are hereby read and received and tabled as addendums to sessional papers no. 12, 35, 36, 100, 120, 124, 126, 140, and 141.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 68 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs: how many status Indians are presently registered within Saskatchewan; and how many non-status Indians are there in Saskatchewan?

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 68 ask the government the following question:

To the minister of Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming: during the fiscal year 1999-2000 when then SIGA CEO took many out-of-province trips at SIGA's expense, did any of the individuals now sitting on the SIGA board, the current SIGA CEO, or any other current employees of SIGA, any current members of the Legislative Assembly, or any current employees of SLGA go on any of these trips; if so, who went, where did they go, and for what reason?

I so present.

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 68 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Environment: in view of the extremely dry conditions in the northwest part of the province will the government open wildlife habitat lands to temporary grazing by local ranchers?

I so present.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In

your gallery this morning, Mr. Speaker, are three . . . four Saskatchewan families, Mr. Speaker, who are being recognized as outstanding young farmers. Three are being recognized as outstanding young farmers. One, of course, is an alumni, Mr. Speaker.

Today in your gallery is Lionel and Melody Ector from Elbow — I'll just ask them to give a little wave here if they could; Melody's not with him this morning as you can see, but we met this morning — Ryan and Christine Melsted from Wynyard and Cam and Cyndi Seidle from Medstead.

Mr. Speaker, these young farmers have been selected for Saskatchewan. They're our regional representatives. One of these families will be selected to the national finals in Vancouver which is happening in December. Carla and Warren Kaeding from my part of the province, from Saltcoats, were the outstanding young farmers in 1999. And Peter and Shirley Voldeng are the current outstanding Saskatchewan farmers from Naicam.

And so this morning, Mr. Speaker, I want, I want the Assembly to recognize these families. These are the future of our province, Mr. Speaker, who not only are building our industry but are innovators and developers and making a difference in agriculture in our province.

So I ask all members of the Assembly to join with me in welcoming them to Saskatchewan and to the legislature, and the very best in your work towards the national finals and thank you for making a difference in our province.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I, on behalf of the official opposition, I would like to join the minister in welcoming these outstanding young families to our legislature. I know that a lot of work has already been done for you to get this far in this particular competition. It takes a lot of effort.

And I was personal . . . or am personal friends with Peter and Shirley Voldeng, who were winners last year, and was very proud to have them represent our province.

And I'm sure any one of you will also represent our province in the nationals extremely well. So we thank you for your efforts, and welcome to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Lorjé: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In the west gallery is a gentleman, a Saskatoon-based gentleman who works for . . . is the business representative for the Sheet Metal Workers' International Association. I'm referring of course to Gunnar Passmore. And I emphasize the Saskatoon base because while Mr. Passmore has an apartment in Saskatoon, he actually has his principal residence in Sedley, Saskatchewan where his wife and 12-year-old son live, and where he has restored a gorgeous home — a 1903 home.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when I questioned Gunnar about this, and I said: isn't it difficult conducting a long-term marriage and family? He said, well no actually because in the building trades

we get used to it you know; we journey a lot. And that is actually where the term journey person came from.

And I think it is an important bit of information for members of this Assembly to have to reflect just for a moment on the sacrifice — the personal sacrifice — that the men and women in construction and the building trades have given to build this great province and this great country of ours.

I ask all people to welcome Gunnar Passmore to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to point out to all members in the gallery, Member of Parliament for Cypress Hills, David Anderson. David Anderson happens to be my Member of Parliament. He has a large area to serve and we're happy to see that now that the summer session has broken in Ottawa that he is able to get out into the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, when I'm in the Rosetown-Biggar constituency I always tell my constituents that I represent them; that means they're the boss. So it's nice to be able to turn the tables and say that since Mr. Anderson is my representative that perhaps in this case I'm the boss. I hope he would accept that in the proper way.

We wish him well and ask all members to welcome him to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to take a moment and introduce a visitor in the gallery, in your gallery, Sherry Leach. Sherry is with the Southeast Regional College's educational foundation.

But in particular I wanted to introduce Sherry because of the excellent work she's been doing in helping move IT (information technology) forward in the post-secondary sector. She of course recently was host of the E-World Conference that was held here in Regina that brought together the educational partners and vendors from around the province.

Sherry, of course, is also the member-in-waiting for Weyburn. And I notice that when she was last here she was seated at the back row of your gallery. I know she's working her way down. I think a couple more weeks, Sherry will be able to take her seat rightfully here on this side of the Assembly.

So I would ask all members to join with me in welcoming her.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure this morning to introduce to you and through to all members of the Assembly, 12 students sitting in the west side of your gallery, Mr. Speaker, from the town of Wilkie.

These students are from the St. George School in Wilkie. They're accompanied by their teacher, Mr. Gary Boechler. They're also accompanied by a couple of chaperones, Mr.

Speaker, Mrs. Sittler and Mrs. Bachman.

Mr. Speaker, I want to have all members of the Assembly please join me in welcoming these young people to your gallery today and to watch the proceedings in the House. And, young people, I will be able to join you about 11 o'clock, and we'll be able to go through what happened here this morning a little bit and have some discussion around the operation of the House. Welcome.

Everyone please join me in welcoming the people from Wilkie.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

National Aboriginal Day

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I'm sure many of the members of this Assembly are aware, tomorrow is the first day of summer. While celebrating the summer solstice, many Canadians will be joining together to celebrate National Aboriginal Day.

This day gives us an opportunity to reflect on the heritage and culture of our First Peoples and to celebrate the many past and present contributions of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people to the province of Saskatchewan. We must also look to the future and the important role our Aboriginal people will continue to play in shaping that future. Aboriginal people enrich our province with their culture, traditions, spirituality, the arts, knowledge, and their wisdom.

(10:15)

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan can be proud that it is home to the First Nations University of Canada, the only one of its kind in the nation. It is only fitting that we celebrate the grand opening of this institution on National Aboriginal Day. This breathtaking feat of architectural excellence is a reality today because of the elders' desire for an Indian institution of higher education.

This college will play a unique role amongst Canada's many post-secondary institutions and it is my hope, Mr. Speaker, that all members will participate in the many celebrations for National Aboriginal Day around the province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, tomorrow, June 21, is National Aboriginal Day, a day set aside for all Canadians to acknowledge and celebrate the cultures and contributions to Canada of the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. It was first celebrated as a national event in 1996 and has been growing ever since.

Mr. Speaker, June 21 was chosen as the date for National Aboriginal Day because of the cultural significance of the summer solstice as the first day of summer and the longest day of the year. It's a day that many Aboriginal groups mark as a

time to celebrate their heritage.

Setting aside a day for Aboriginal peoples is part of the wider recognition of Aboriginal people's important place within the fabric of Canada and their ongoing contributions to the country. As Governor General Adrienne Clarkson has said:

(It's an important) It is an opportunity for all of us to celebrate our respect and admiration for First Nations, for Inuit, (and) for Métis — for the past, (for) the present and (for) the future.

Whether it is the First Nations University of Canada, Gabriel Dumont Institute, Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, or Dumont Technical Institute, there is no question that Saskatchewan and First Nations and Métis people have made great strides in their contributions to education in Saskatchewan and across the country.

Leadership is also being taken in mining, forestry, telecommunications, and other areas. The respect for language and culture is now being addressed in the context of modern-day science and technology.

The future is indeed wide open in the partnerships with Aboriginal peoples in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Centre

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On June 10, I attended the annual meeting of the Regina Community Clinic and was pleased to hear their proposal to establish a fetal alcohol spectrum disorder centre.

The purpose of the centre is to assess, diagnose, and coordinate plans for the care of children, youth, and adults. They will have an integrated team approach to meet the long-term needs. The centre will also provide education and training for community agencies that provide services to FASD (fetal alcohol spectrum disorder) victims, their families, and caregivers.

Experts have concluded in many studies that the key to minimizing the secondary effects of FASD is early diagnosis. The human costs are immeasurable. Recent estimates for the lifetime financial costs to social programs for FASD victims are \$7 million. These costs span extra health care, social assistance, education, and justice.

Dr. Jo Nanson of Saskatoon found that nearly 50 per cent of young offenders appearing in provincial courts were born with FASD. These individuals are moving undiagnosed through the criminal justice system. How many of these people, with proper diagnosis and early intervention, could have been steered down a different path?

Again, Mr. Speaker, I want to applaud the Regina Community Clinic, not only for their past service but for their courage to take on the worthy project of establishing an FASD centre for Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Moose Jaw Beef Sale

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today Roberge Transport of Moose Jaw, along with our local cattle producers, will be holding a very special promotion to support the Canadian beef industry.

Beginning at 9:30 this morning, producers, along with Roberge, will be at the Moose Jaw Civic Centre with 45,000 pounds of Canadian lean ground beef. This beef will be offered for sale to consumers at \$1 a pound. The Shriners will also be there to help out this event by cooking hamburgers with meat donated by this promotion, and the money will go to supporting the Shriners burn fund.

Mr. Speaker, this past month has been a very stressful one for the beef industry in Saskatchewan and right across Canada. And it's been felt quite immediately within Moose Jaw in the transport industry where Roberge, with offices in Moose Jaw and Lloydminster, is one of the largest livestock hauling operations in North America, employing 150 people.

But, Mr. Speaker, what's happened over this time is that the testing and the extensive work done by the CFIA (Canadian Food Inspection Agency), the departments of Agriculture, beef producers, and our ministers of Agriculture, has confirmed that Canada has one of the best systems of checks and balances to maintain food safety for our consumers.

Mr. Speaker, I'll be very pleased, along with my colleague from Moose Jaw North, to attend the promotion this afternoon. And it's important that everyone get behind the men and women involved in the beef industry during this very challenging time and turn out at the promotion.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Radville Benefactor — Frank Rak

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there was a unique announcement at the Radville Long Creek Rodeo last weekend. The announcer asked the crowd to observe a moment of silence and remember one of Radville's long-time citizens, Mr. Frank Rak.

A few weeks ago the 88-year-old Mr. Rak passed away and left his money to the community. With the money he left there is enough to buy a new ambulance. And the remainder of the money will be put into the Father Yandeu Foundation to purchase much needed equipment for the Radville health care facility.

My understanding is that Mr. Rak was a very good-natured person who through the years lived a very humble life. I did not personally know Mr. Rak, but this Scripture speaks to the kind of person Mr. Rak must have been and I quote:

Take care! Don't do your good deeds publicly, to be admired, because . . . (they) will lose the reward from your Father in Heaven. When you give a gift to someone in need, don't shout about it (to the hypocrites) as the

hypocrites do — blowing trumpets in the synagogues and streets to call attention to their acts of charity! Give your gifts in secret, and your Father, who knows all secrets, will reward you. Matthew 6:1-4.

May we all remember Mr. Rak for his generosity and his kindness to the community of Radville.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatoon's Broadway Theatre

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you. As everyone knows, the Broadway Theatre is the crown jewel of the most vibrant street in the province, Broadway Avenue, in the constituency of Saskatoon Nutana — a street everyone should visit at least once a year to get a taste of what's hip and what's happening.

The Fringe Festival from August 1 to 10 is one good time to come but any day, any time is worth it.

I want to talk about the Broadway Theatre. The theatre was built in 1946. It has served our neighbourhood in the city of Saskatoon as an independent movie theatre, as home of the Saskatoon soaps, as a place for live variety shows, and a home for a number of other events. Today it is Canada's only community-owned, non-profit repertory cinema. It has been run for the last nine years by a volunteer board known as the Friends of the Broadway. Like so much along the boulevard, the theatre is unique.

I'm pleased to tell the Assembly that the friends of the theatre, along with their friends, have raised \$1.4 million, including \$300,000 from our province's Centenary Fund, during the past decade. This work has been done to restore the theatre to its former glory. I am pleased that our publicly owned electrical utility, SaskPower, has just contributed \$25,000 to the reno fund giving financial support back to our community which SaskPower serves.

So, Mr. Speaker, and to the members of the Assembly, take a 110 kilometre per hour trip up to Saskatoon, make sure you stop at Broadway, and you'll be glad you did.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Order of Military Merit Awards

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today Canada's Governor General will appoint 42 members of the Canadian regular and reserve forces to the Order of Military Merit. Created in 1972, the Order of Military Merit recognizes meritorious service and devotion to duty by members of the Canadian Forces.

There are three levels of membership in the Order of Military Merit: commander, officer, and member. Today's ceremony will recognize two commanders, 13 officers, and 27 members.

Mr. Speaker, there is a Saskatchewan connection to those being honoured today. Lieutenant-Colonel Harley Rogers is being appointed an Officer of Military Merit. He is from Moose Jaw and is currently posted in Ottawa.

Also receiving the Order of Military Merit are two friends of mine: Dave Bashow, Lieutenant-Colonel, who hails from Fredericton, New Brunswick and is currently posted in Kingston, Ontario. Dave is a fighter pilot and we had the opportunity to fly the CF-104 at the same time.

Also receiving the OMM (Officer of the Order of Military Merit) is Commander Anne Gourlay-Langlois from Halifax. Anne is another individual that I was privileged to have worked alongside many years ago in Edmonton.

Of the two individuals receiving the Commander of Military Merit, I'm very honoured to say that I know and have worked with Major-General Ric Findley.

As a 1987 recipient of this award myself, I know how much this award means to those being selected for it today. I ask all members of the House to recognize the many years of service and dedication of the 42 members of the Canadian Forces who are being honoured with the OMM (Order of Military Merit) today in Ottawa.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Compensation Program for Beef Industry

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Agriculture.

The federal Minister of Agriculture announced the BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy) compensation package for the beef industry two days ago. The Saskatchewan government will be administering the program in this province. At his news conference on Wednesday, the minister indicated that people affected might see some financial compensation in their hands in 10 to 14 days, or approximately the first week in July.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister explain how his department is planning on administering the program and where people affected by the BSE situation can go for more details?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, what I did yesterday is met with the financial institutions in the province for the second time since the BSE issue has been presented to us. And we had a discussion about how and when we'll get the money out to the producers directly. And the Leader of the Opposition Sask Party is right. I said to the media that it would be two to three weeks before the money actually makes its way, the provincial and federal supported money. In the meantime the financial institutions have again agreed that they would provide the backstop to the industry until such time as the subsidy money comes on its way.

We've established, Mr. Speaker, already, the toll-free line. The toll-free line will have three components of it. It will have a production, a program component to it to describe the program. It will have a marketing component to it so that the people will know who to phone if in fact they want to get their livestock to the processors. And it will have the stress component to it as well because there will be issues that people will have to deal with that will be traumatic to their families.

So the line's in place. The inquiry information will be going out within the next day or two to all producers in Saskatchewan to advise them on all the details.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well the minister just went from making a two-week commitment to making a three-week commitment to provide this compensation.

Meanwhile the Alberta government officially announced their part of the BSE compensation package yesterday. And their Agriculture minister, Shirley McClellan, said that their application forms would be ready today. She also indicated there would be very quick turnaround as payments would be available to the applicants within days. Now this is quite a difference from what was said yesterday, 10 to 14 days; and today, two to three weeks, Mr. Speaker. Why the delay?

Mr. Speaker, early on in the BSE crisis, June 6 was offered up by the minister as the day when many feedlot operators would find themselves at the financial breaking point, after two full weeks of trade restrictions due to the BSE discovery. Now he's suggesting, Mr. Speaker, that they might have to wait even longer. He's saying now another two to three weeks, and we're at June 20.

Mr. Speaker, when will the people of Saskatchewan who have been affected by the BSE crisis have access to application forms from the federal-provincial program and might when they actually expect compensation? Why are we so far behind Alberta on this one?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, we are exactly at the same place as Alberta is, Mr. Speaker. And we've been working with Alberta on developing the information package; we've been working with Alberta on developing the application form; and we've been working with Alberta on developing the information piece that will go to producers. In the next day or two we'll have the application form in the mail to the producers so that they can make the application.

The member opposite, the Leader of the Opposition Saskatchewan Party, asked when will people receive money. Well as soon as we receive the application forms back, we'll have established a program within our program department and we'll manually cut the cheques when the information comes back to us.

(10:30)

But, Mr. Speaker, to have all of the money administered and all of the application forms and all of the compensation back to producers across the province will take a couple of weeks; there's no question about that. Because in Saskatchewan today and in Canada today we know who the large feedlots are — over 1,000 head — and we know who the packers are.

What we do not know, Mr. Speaker, in an accurate way across Canada, is those producers who have small herds today that will

also need to be compensated. And it is they, Mr. Speaker, who we're most concerned about today in making sure that there's equity.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Agriculture: are our forms ready today?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I'll advise the Leader of the Opposition if our forms are ready today or not; I'll provide that information to him later today. I expect that if they're not ready today, they'll be in the mail tomorrow or they'll be in the mail Monday.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Industry representatives are anxious to see the BSE compensation package begin to reach those who need it so that there is some resumption of beef marketing as soon as possible.

But the critical issue is still getting the US (United States) trade restrictions lifted. Unfortunately it appears that with Japan's comments on future beef imports and the fact that the US say they will be using extreme caution in their decision as to what to do with trade action, it is looking more and more like the USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) will be sticking with its July 28 date after all.

The compensation package as it exists to date cuts off the same day as US trade restrictions are lifted. And this is definitely a concern to the beef industry, especially anyone needing to move a large number of animals to market.

Mr. Speaker, what is the minister planning to do to address their concerns with this part of the program?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well, Mr. Speaker, what we have said, Mr. Speaker, is that if in fact the borders get opened within the next day or two or within the next week or two, what will happen is that the ministers of Agriculture and the federal minister will come together immediately. And the reason for coming together immediately is to have the discussion about whether or not there is opportunity here to extend the compensation package in . . . after the opening of the border.

The huge concern here, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that if you extend the compensation package you could be exposed to countervail or to anti-dumping. And that issue we need to have absolutely clear in our minds to see whether or not we can extend the compensation piece.

But I say to the member opposite, what you should be doing is you should be having a conversation with the Canadian Alliance. Because, Mr. Speaker, it's that party that you support and that you work with closely. And what have they done, Mr. Speaker? They've adjourned and agreed to adjourn the national government House right in the middle of one of the biggest issues that's facing Canada today.

Why doesn't the Leader of the Opposition get on the phone to his friend the Canadian Alliance leader and say to the Canadian Alliance leader, why aren't we reconvening the House, Mr.

Speaker, in order to deal with this issue and deal with trade, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, I'm appalled that the Minister of Agriculture's criticizing the federal government when his own colleagues, Mr. Speaker, are asking for this House to adjourn. Where is this minister's head? Where is he?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, it's unbelievable. The president of the Canadian Cattlemen's Association says that they are very concerned about a quick cut-off to the program. Neil Jahnke . . .

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

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know there are members on both sides that are involved with the royal visit that's currently undergoing . . . being undertaken, but we have some questions on BSE that we want answered.

Mr. Speaker, the president of the Canadian Cattlemen's Association says that they are very concerned about this quick cut-off to the program. Neil Jahnke says if the aid, if the aid package winds down once the US starts accepting some beef cuts, there could be some real chaos.

The concern about the potential countervail action by the US should be alleviated by the NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) agreement — and I want the minister to take note — which allows consideration for support payments for emergency situations. I would suggest that the Canadian government should be able to successfully argue how much of an emergency the BSE case has created for the beef industry in this country.

Mr. Speaker, the industry wants some answers about this and believe that the threat of countervail action is very, very weak. Does the minister have any indication from the federal government that they are looking at ways to offer the industry some transition period from this program when the US does allow some beef imports?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday when I answered this question to the critic from Watrous, I answered this question to the critic from Watrous, obviously the Leader of the Opposition didn't hear it, Mr. Speaker, so I'm going to repeat it again to the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker.

But I said yesterday, Mr. Speaker, that we have this as a plan nationally for this issue, that if in fact the US border opens in the next couple of days — as we hope and anticipate that it will — we'll call all of the Agriculture ministers together immediately to make a determination on the evidence, Mr. Speaker, that's been provided by federal trade lawyers for us that say this: we have the option of doing one of two things, by extending the subsidy into a . . . into a period beyond, Mr.

Speaker, or the damage beyond, Mr. Speaker, the opening of the border.

If we do that, Mr. Speaker, the federal US government may in fact not open the border — may not open the border. And the issue is, Mr. Speaker, should we deal with that issue when in fact the US determines to open the border as opposed to dealing with it in advance and jeopardizing the opening of the border? The advice of the trade lawyers is not to proceed with the compensation until the border opens and then have that discussion at that point.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Lifting of United States Import Restrictions on Canadian Beef

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, for the first time in a long time I'm encouraged because the minister says he anticipates that the US will lift its trade import restrictions within the next two or three days. I ask the minister upon what basis he makes this prediction, and can he give the industry the positive information and more detail?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, I've said to the member from Watrous a couple of days ago when she asked me the question and the Leader of the Opposition may not have heard it — and I'll say it to the Leader of the Opposition again, Mr. Speaker — we sent a letter, the federal government sent a letter to the national government of the US last Thursday. They're anticipating to have . . . or we're anticipating to have some response this week from the national government out of the US. And they said, Mr. Speaker, that that may happen. The opening of the border may happen next week, within a few days; it may have happened on Friday of this week; or it may be delayed for a couple of more weeks, Mr. Speaker.

That decision, Mr. Speaker, is not being made by the Canadian government. That decision, Mr. Speaker, is going to be made by the US government. That's who's going to make that decision. And all of the pressure that we put on from this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, as Mr. Klein said the other day from Kelowna, won't make a hill of difference. Because who will decide, Mr. Speaker, will be Veneman. Secretary Veneman and the US Congress will make this decision, Mr. Speaker.

And we anticipate that this will be an early opening. We hope it's an early opening and we're working through our federal government to make those kinds of conditions present so that we do have an early opening, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Grasshopper Control

Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Minister of Agriculture. Mr. Speaker, many crop producers across Saskatchewan are fighting a real battle against grasshoppers which are causing serious crop damage. Chemical to control the insects costs from 4 to \$8 per acre for each application, and some producers have already sprayed three

times, so the expenses are mounting.

Earlier this month the Alberta government announced a grasshopper program that will provide \$10.5 million to help their farmers control this pest. This is a program the province has offered in years past. Under the program, producers can qualify for \$4 per acre to help cover the costs of chemical control. It is interesting that this year, Mr. Speaker, the federal government is sharing the cost of this program with the province of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, the grasshopper infestation is a serious situation in Saskatchewan, as it is in Alberta. Has the minister contacted the federal Minister of Agriculture about also offering a similar grasshopper program here in Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, what we did in this province this year is that we took additional money and put it into the Crop Insurance Fund, Mr. Speaker. We added to our Crop Insurance Fund this year. And we put an additional \$100 million into our crop insurance program. The federal government topped up their share by an additional . . . they now have \$150 million in that pool, and producers are contributing about \$100 million, Mr. Speaker.

Our crop insurance pool went from about 225 million this year to well over 350 million. That pool of new crop insurance money, Mr. Speaker, is intended to cover off issues as they are with grasshoppers and wheat midge and flea beetles and drought or flood disaster. It's anticipated to cover that bigger chunk, Mr. Speaker.

And it's interesting today, Mr. Speaker, that the member from Watrous stands in here, stands on her feet and says, you know what? That Alberta has signed an agreement with . . . Alberta's signed an agreement with the federal government and that's why they're getting the cost share, when that member stood and gave a speech in this House and said, we should not be signing the implementation agreement, Mr. Speaker; we should be staying away from it.

So what is it? Should we be signing the implementation agreement or should we moving off the implementation agreement?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, maybe the minister doesn't know it because obviously he didn't know whether or not our . . . or the applications were out for BSE. But he should know — the producers know — that the Alberta crop insurance makes ours look sick in this province, and they have a grasshopper program.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, the minister's department published a grasshopper report for this crop year last December, predicting significant increases in grasshopper population. And that report is right on the money. The crop damage report published by the department for June 15 indicates a majority of

the RMs (rural municipality) in the province reported crop damage due to insects. And a good portion of that is directly related to grasshoppers.

Mr. Speaker, some of the producers are finding as many as 80 grasshoppers per square metre when the economic threshold for cereal crops is only 12 grasshoppers per square metre. This is a serious and growing problem in our province.

Mr. Speaker, why isn't the minister prepared to help Saskatchewan crop producers fighting the same war against grasshoppers as Alberta?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I may not know whether or not the application forms for the new program will go out tomorrow or the day after, but I know this, Mr. Speaker, for sure. I know that as the member for opposite has said on many occasions, that our crop insurance repayment program is not 8 or 9 years — it's 15 years; and that's what she said, Mr. Speaker.

I said, Mr. Speaker, I know that our NISA (Net Income Stabilization Account) program from the national government goes to producers and it doesn't come to the province, Mr. Speaker. I know that and the member opposite should know that.

And I know that, Mr. Speaker, that we should not, Mr. Speaker, we should not be cost sharing in trade injury as the member opposite, led by her leader, Mr. Speaker, who thinks that we should be participating in trade injury in a 60/40 . . . Why, Mr. Speaker? Because he doesn't believe in subsidy programs for farmers today.

And he'd toss money to Saskatchewan farmers on every occasion, I know that, Mr. Speaker, but we were there for producers when it came to herd retention programs; we were there for farmers when, Mr. Speaker, it came to hog programs; and we'll be there for producers when it comes to deal with grasshoppers in this province as well, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Harpauer: — Do you know what the producers in this province know, Mr. Speaker? The producers of this province knows that that minister's going to be looking for a job as soon as the Premier has the courage to call an election.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, it's quite interesting that the Alberta government and the federal Department of Agriculture would announce the cost sharing of this grasshopper control program the very same week that Alberta signs on to the new agriculture policy framework agreement.

The new APF (agricultural policy framework) program falls far short of what farm groups in this province are looking for in safety net funding, yet the federal government wields a big stick and we know that they've used the BSE situation to leverage . . . as leverage to convince provinces they must sign on.

Our minister has indicated that he intends to . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please, members. Order. Members are just a little louder than the questioner, and I want to be able to hear the question.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And our minister has indicated he intends to sign on to the APF in July. If he is going to do this despite the concerns of Saskatchewan farm groups about the program's deficiencies, will the minister at least commit to trying to leverage further assistance from the federal government for farmers battling grasshoppers, just like Alberta did, before he commits Saskatchewan to the new APF?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(10:45)

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, not only am I going to be lobbying the federal government for additional resources for additional programming in specific areas, Mr. Speaker . . . And I don't need to get my policies from the newspaper, Mr. Speaker, or from Alberta, as the members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, we've been four years in a mandate, Mr. Speaker, and I have yet to receive a letter or correspondence from the Saskatchewan Party that says anything about farm policy. And you have 25 or 26 men and women who sit there from rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, and not one response in terms of public policy on agriculture — not one, Mr. Speaker.

And not only are we going to . . . Not only, Mr. Speaker, are we going to deal with specific issues as they relate to crop insurance programs, but we're going to fight, Mr. Speaker, for improved trade money from the federal government in the future before we sign this agreement.

I'm going to say that, Mr. Speaker, that the \$600 million that's going to disappear this year, we should get. We should see indexing, Mr. Speaker, to the program, to the APF agreement into the future. Because how do you build a five-year program without having indexing to it?

Those are all the things that we're going to be arguing for, Mr. Speaker, and the opposition has been mute on all of it, Mr. Speaker. And it's time to get off your duff and to provide some farm policy for Canadian and Saskatchewan producers, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Workers' Compensation Board

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last year the Workers' Compensation Board lost \$93 million last year. Employer premiums are going up and workers that we hear from are having trouble receiving benefits. But that didn't stop John Solomon from renovating the Workers' Comp building at a cost of four and a quarter million dollars, Mr. Speaker.

That's absolutely outrageous. How can the NDP (New Democratic Party) justify spending over \$4 million on

renovations when Workers' Comp last year lost over \$90 million?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased to get up and rerun some answers from yesterday's estimates that we spent a great deal of time on.

Yesterday I explained to the member that the WCB (Workers' Compensation Board) building has never been renovated since it was built in the early 1990s. The renovations were done to accommodate occupational health concerns for the workers in the workplace. They were also renovations done to accommodate the team-based case management system that has been initiated in the WCB.

Mr. Speaker, what this has done, it has allowed . . . This rearrangement and renovation is a yearly cost of \$280,000 per year, which has been amortized over 15 years; but it has also allowed the WCB to end the lease on the 12th floor of this building, which saves them \$250,000 a year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, this is unbelievable. The NDP has no money to build safe houses to help children trapped in the sex trade, but they've got over four and a quarter million dollars to create primo office space for NDP defeated candidate John Solomon. And it's ridiculous, Mr. Speaker.

When I asked the minister yesterday, and she then repeated it again today, when was the building last renovated — only 10 years ago. It was built less than 10 years ago and they're putting over \$4 million worth of renovations. That's ridiculous, Mr. Minister. WCB has lost over \$93 million last year and over \$50 million the year before, but that sure didn't stop them from spending businesses' money in renovating John Solomon's office at a tune of \$4.25 million. How can you justify that when business premiums are going up in Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, I explained to the member that this is a savings of \$250,000 a year because of the change in the lease and the less requirement for space. The team-based case management team is doing great work across this province with employers and employees that are receiving WCB benefits. Mr. Speaker, to accommodate and change workplaces for new occupational health and safety is a benefit.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would say to the member opposite, not only is this a saving but, Mr. Speaker, this falls under the costs of administration for the WCB. And administration costs have been reduced over the last year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's absolutely amazing that the minister can try and justify the renovation at WCB by getting out of a lease. They're moving people from one office space into the next office space. They're not expanding their office space; they're renovating at \$4.25 million, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, that comes right out of the pockets of business owners across this province. Mr. Speaker, it's more than a little ironic that the newly hired John Solomon is the one that initiated this. WCB for the last two years has lost over \$130 million. John Solomon was hired at that time and now WCB needs a renovation of \$4.25 million, Mr. Speaker.

How can you go out and justify that to business owners across this province, to workers who aren't getting their benefits paid properly, and you're spending \$4.25 million on a renovation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, the members opposite have confirmed exactly what members on this side of the House have been saying. I sat in this legislature yesterday and listened to the minister explain that the savings in terms of the changes in terms of the workplace at the Workers' Comp were actually saving the people of Saskatchewan money.

He had that answer yesterday, but do you know what it is, Mr. Speaker? It's recycle, regurgitate, repeat. He knew the answer because he got it just yesterday afternoon. But they stand in here wasting tens of thousands of taxpayers' dollars recycling, regurgitating, repeating.

Mr. Speaker, it's a blue box question that the member answered . . . or asked. And I tell you the answer today is the same as the answer was yesterday.

Why don't they do the right thing — wrap up the session and go home?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. Order. Order. Order.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

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

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased today to stand and try to speak over the noise in the House, and table a response to written questions no. 751 and 752.

The Speaker: — Responses to 751 and 752 have been submitted.

Order. Order, members. Order. Order, members. Order.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization Vote 1

Subvote (AG01)

The Deputy Chair: — Order. Order. I recognize the minister

and ask the minister to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Chair, this morning with me is Mr. Gord Nystuen who's to my right here, who is the deputy minister. Directly behind me is Mr. Hal Cushon, who's the assistance deputy. Next to him is Karen Aulie, who's the director of corporate services branch. And Mr. Russ Johnson, who's next to Karen and he's the managing operator of corporate services branch.

And then, in the chairs in the back row, Mr. Speaker, we have Dr. Louise Greenberg, who's the assistant deputy minister; Maryellen Carlson, who's the assistant deputy minister; Doug Matthies, who's the general manager of the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation; and Mr. Greg Haase, who is the director of lands branch; and Mr. David Boehm's the director of financial services branch; and Laurier Donais, who's the senior manager of services systems corporate services branch with the department.

(11:00)

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. As the minister knows, a great deal of the crop was left unharvested last fall and some time ago already that crop would have either been harvested or worked under because it wasn't economically viable to harvest it. Can the minister tell us if all of the 2002 crop claims have been adjusted?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Chair, we're nearly finished our work. There were about 9,000 claims that were left. The majority of them, Madam Member, are in the northeast part of the province. We're completing those now, and there's still some grading that's being completed too on some of the grains. But my officials tell me that within the next couple of weeks, we'll be finished all of the work.

Ms. Harpauer: — I thank the minister. Was there any particular reason why there was a delay? It should have been harvested some time ago now. Was there any reason that there was a delay for adjusting the 2002 crops that were harvested in 2003?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Chair, some of the dilemma I expect here, or is, — not expect but is — is that when you have a spring as we had this year where farmers are having to combine first and remove the crop before they're able to seed, what's happened is that in many of these instances farmers also have to accompany the field inspectors to the sites. And, accordingly, what we've been asked by many of the farmers on several occasions that they should . . . if we could wait and hold off until they finished their seeding because they had to harvest; then they had to seed. And then they'll be accompanying the inspectors now onto the field.

And it's partly to do with that rationale is that farmers wanted us to wait a bit until they were finished with a very, very busy spring, which as you know on many fronts in the northeast, has been both the combining and also the seeding.

Ms. Harpauer: — It's obvious from the minister's answers that the indemnities have not all been paid on the spring harvested 2002 crop.

Are any of the payments, or will any of the payments that producers will have coming to them be applied to the producers' 2003 crop insurance premium?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — No, Mr. Chair. The answer is no to that question.

Ms. Harpauer: — I thank the minister for that answer and I'm going to move into a different area. And this is, again it's a specific case concerning Danny Showers who has a land lease, and David Shortt who I believe is at the North Battleford land office. And I'm just going to read into the record the letters that have gone between these two parties. The initial letter was from Danny Showers, and it says:

Further to my letter of April 21, 2003, I have not yet received the Schedule "C", indicating the number of livestock to be pastured this year. As you are no doubt aware, the north west area of Saskatchewan is still drier than normal. Although the pastures are starting to show some growth, they are in need of moisture. The one slough on this pasture was totally dry this spring, that is the first time that I have seen this in the past 30 years. This, together with present uncertainty of the livestock industry due to the threat of the Mad Cow Disease, makes it very risky to purchase any livestock at this time. If the pastures continue to show improvement I would like to rent it to a neighbour who has already indicated that he will require additional pasture. If I am unable to rent the pasture to the neighbour, I plan on leaving the pasture empty (for) this year. Please advise . . .

And the response that he received was, from Mr. David Shortt, was:

Subleasing is not permitted this year. You must purchase some cattle in order to retain your lease. If you wish to purchase less than the number stated in your LUP, you must meet with me on site and come to an agreement on the number of cattle to be put in. Your LUP requires that you require a minimum of 35 cattle to be purchased and put on the . . . (land).

The letter that I've received from Mr. Showers, and that Mr. Showers has also sent to Mr. Shortt, is basically saying . . . or asking for some flexibility in this decision; and he's not very satisfied with the answer that he's been given.

Apparently Danny Showers has been leasing this parcel of land for approximately 10 years now and his father-in-law had been leasing it for an unstated . . . or not stated amount of time before that. And in many areas he is correct, that many areas where . . . that were faced with drought last year still don't have an abundance of moisture. And if this land is in the Humboldt area, I can testify that we don't have an abundance of moisture. So the land probably is somewhat depleted.

There's also the situation of the BSE. And as the minister has said, we're on uncharted waters here. It's extremely unusual circumstances. So I can understand where Mr. Showers perhaps doesn't want to purchase or may not . . . I mean I'm not even too sure if there's anyone selling at this point in time the 35 required head that's needed.

So would the minister agree to look into this matter and take the drought situation and the BSE crisis into consideration when making his decision?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Chair, I want to say to the member that we'll — and if she'll accept this answer, I'd appreciate that we go this way — that we'll continue to work closely with Mr. Showers, and also Mr. Shortt, through our department. I'm hesitant to get into the details on this case today given that there are circumstances here that I think we should both protect in terms of the individual, and I'm talking now about your constituent, or maybe not your constituent, but certainly in your area.

What I would suggest here is that — if you'll agree — that we'll work confidentially on this matter through your office and my department officials so that we do not have to, sort of, disclose some of the, I think, unusual circumstances that might exist around this case. And we'd prefer to do it that way if it would be satisfactory to you.

Ms. Harpauer: — I thank the minister for that answer and I'll be looking forward to hearing from him further on that particular case.

I have another specific land lease issue. I received a copy of a letter from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business that was sent to the deputy minister, dated June 5. And it was written on behalf of Brady Wobeser of Hi Gain Ranching, and it too expresses concerns about a land lease.

But rather than, you know asking the minister to respond, because I do believe this probably is a fairly in-depth issue, I would like to take this opportunity to forward my copy to him so he can reference it with the original. And then if I could get an update on what's happening with this particular one as well, I would greatly appreciate it.

And with that, I'm going to turn the questions over to my colleague from Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Minister, earlier this morning my colleague from Watrous asked you whether you were going to be contacting the federal Minister of Agriculture to see if we can put a program together to help with the cost of controlling grasshoppers in our province. And your answer, as I listened carefully, was that you've taken . . . enhanced this year's crop insurance program and that's the emphasis that you were placing on this issue.

Well, Minister, I don't think that's a good enough answer. I don't know whether you realize it or not, and obviously by your answer I don't think you do realize that parts of our province have a very, very serious grasshopper problem. In fact in the 30-some years that I've been farming I haven't seen such a high infestation of grasshoppers in parts of my constituency as we have right as we speak.

I have constituents on the west side of my constituency who have re-seeded entire quarter sections because of grasshopper damage, and they are battling and trying to save the second crop. And, Minister, they're losing it. They're losing the battle. I have constituents who have sprayed their entire farms at least

once — some fields up to three times — and they're going to have to continue spraying. And each time that they spray the field they're looking at an average cost of approximately \$5 an acre, and that's for the chemical costs alone, not including application costs.

And we're looking at a situation here where it's kind of like the FRAM oil filter commercial, you pay me now or you pay me later, and I'm fearful that if these producers don't receive some assistance in this battle that they're waging against the grasshoppers that they're going to walk away from some of these fields. And then crop insurance which already, your crop insurance program already has a half a billion dollar deficit; it's going . . . you're going to be looking at making some significant payouts in parts of this province.

And this grasshopper infestation and this problem, the area is growing. If you look at a forecast map that Alberta Agriculture has on their Web site, you will see that the area of severe infestation is larger in Saskatchewan than it is in Alberta, and it's growing on a daily basis. With weather like we had in the last couple of days this grasshopper problem is exploding in areas of our province, Mr. Minister.

So I would urge you to look at this problem very seriously and pick up the phone and talk to the minister . . . federal Minister of Agriculture.

In fact, last year Alberta had a program and they funded it entirely on their own. And I think maybe we need to do something like that in this province. I heard some of your colleagues chuckle when the question was asked in question period because they thought . . . they think it's not a significant problem. Well I'm telling you it is a very significant problem.

And in fact if I was the Minister of Finance, I'd be somewhat worried because he's basing his projection on 6.8 per cent economic growth in this province for this year, based on a normal crop. Well with some of the things that are happening within the last few weeks as far as crop reduction in this province — and that area is growing, the grasshopper problem is growing in the province and it's a serious problem, Minister — and I would ask you what are you prepared to do about it?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well I want first, Mr. Chair, to indicate to the member opposite that there is certainly no signal on this side of the House that this is a flippant question that you ask — either now doing estimates or was asked earlier today in question period. And no one should assume for a minute that I don't understand what it is to have a grasshopper infestation in your area because we have had that in our part of the world in the past as well.

I'm old enough to remind you that I too farmed through the late '60s. And in the late '60s in our part of the province, we had a very serious, very serious grasshopper infestation that destroyed not only our crops but also destroyed our forage for our livestock.

So we should not for a minute assume that on this side of the House I don't have any familiarity with this piece because I understand it very well, in the same way that I understand that we have had in this part of the province . . . in parts of the

province over the years, serious infestation of the wheat midge, which not only destroyed people's crops, but also reduced the level of compensation that you get for the kernel when in fact it's destroyed by wheat midge. And we have serious, serious infestations of wheat midge in various different parts of the province.

Accordingly, we understand that from time to time, through the course of the province, we have a flea beetle infestation — particularly on canola crop, of which the flea beetle can do great damage to the leaf of the canola crop — that in fact causes producers to spray on more than one occasion in order to control them.

And further the ascochyta that was in the chickpea a couple of years ago in the southwest part of the province where they had a tremendous problem with it, of which farmers were having to spray.

So we have in Saskatchewan a whole host of issues on an ongoing basis annually that affect the way in which we produce crop here. And because of our climate conditions, we'll get the kinds of things that you're talking about today. And the grasshopper issue is a huge issue in various different parts of the province. And there is some compensation today that's being provided in Alberta, as they have in the past.

(11:15)

We chose last year and again this year to load more money into our crop insurance program to pay producers to a larger degree than what we have in the past. Now is that compensation package sufficient today in the crop insurance program? It may not be. It may not be. And I am exploring, through my federal minister, ways and options that we might have available to ourselves now that we're entering into a new agricultural policy framework agreement and soon needing to sign the implementation agreement.

There are very strict positions which we can take and conditions of which we can enrol, particularly a compendium program, because the entire notion of the new APF implementation business risk model is to do away with the compendium programs. It's to do away with them.

Now is there a process or is there a method today in which we might be able to provide some kind of a assistance package for a particular sector or a particular insecticide . . . or insect in this particular case? That option, we're pursuing. Is there ability for us to do that outside of a crop insurance program? I don't know that for a fact today. But we haven't abandoned the issue. We've not neglected dealing with it nor are we of the mind of understanding what it's about.

But be reminded that not only do we have grasshopper issues in Saskatchewan, we can take you through a list — as you know being a farmer in Saskatchewan and probably have experienced from time to time all of the issues of which I've explained to you a couple of minutes ago that many of us on our farms experience. And will we be there or should governments be there on every occasion, on a one-off, on a whole host of different difficulties that are faced on the farm?

And that's why today we're trying to build a comprehensive agricultural policy, business risk management policy, of which producers contribute to and federal and provincial governments contribute to, and try to deal with issues of this magnitude when in fact they occur. And so that's what we're trying to build here. But I'm not discounting for a minute the importance of this issue or the need for us to examine it in a more detailed fashion.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Chair, to the minister. Minister, farmers in this province are fully aware of the risks associated with the business and all the risks that you mentioned — whether it be wheat midge or ascochyta in chickpeas and various lentil diseases. And diseases and insects are part of the problems that farmers face on an annual basis, and they know that full well.

But this is a situation this year with grasshoppers, is way beyond anything that farmers have experienced in the past and shouldn't be expected to experience without some sort of a backstop.

Farmers of our province are getting tired and looking to the west and seeing what's being offered to their producers and seeing what's not being offered to them. In fact generally it's very minimal when we are facing these exceptional cases. All we have to do is look back to last year's drought. Alberta put up \$324 million of actual cash to their farmers. What did Saskatchewan do? A paltry \$20 million.

Farmers in Saskatchewan are prepared to and, I guess, have become to . . . have acknowledged that your government isn't able to offer the backstops and support that the Alberta government is able to offer to their government. But they are saying, look, when we're faced with these exceptional situations and our neighbours are given some aid in combating this serious situation and we're left out on our own again, they're just getting a little tired of it, Minister.

We hear from you on a regular basis that a provincial government can't compete with international subsidies on the income side of the equation. And frankly that's true. A provincial government can't compete with the US treasury or the European treasury. But a provincial government can do some things to help with the cost of production and this is one of these things that a provincial government can do.

How is it that the Alberta government is able to negotiate a companion program over and above the APF and Saskatchewan is not?

And, Minister, and as I said earlier, this is a situation where when farmers are looking at spraying four and five times, the costs are mounting on a dramatic basis and eventually they have no choice but to walk away from the problem. And what'll happen is there'll be yield loss; you'll be paying a much higher payout in your crop insurance program then would be necessary. And not only that, if we don't control the pests, we'll have the same problem next year.

So again, I would urge you to look very carefully at what Alberta has done and see if we can't come up with something for our producers in Saskatchewan this year. And we need it now, Minister, because the problem . . . As that sun shines and the temperature goes to plus 30, that's ideal grasshopper

weather. And there's literally, Minister, an explosion of grasshoppers out there. And so I urge you to address this problem today.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I appreciate the member moving on a . . . (inaudible) . . . of what Alberta does versus what we do and what the rest of Canada does in comparison to what we do in agriculture, because that's debate I am pleased to have with you and anybody else who wants to have it.

By the national numbers alone, in contribution to agriculture — which I want you to hear and this House to understand — is that on per capita Saskatchewan leads the pack in contribution to agriculture by a country mile. We're at \$406 per capita for every man, woman, and child in this province that we contribute to agriculture. Alberta's is \$150 per capita that they contribute to agriculture. And PEI (Prince Edward Island) is larger than Alberta is in terms of per capita contributions to agriculture. We're at \$406. Our federal government, to the provincial . . . Our federal government, Mr. Member, is contributing \$85 on average to the . . . \$85 per average, or per capita, to agriculture in this country.

And so for you to stand in your place and say that, per capita, we as a province are not making a significant contribution, simply is not true — simply is not true. We make a huge contribution to agriculture per capita today in terms of men and women. Now you could argue that we should be putting more money into that pool, and I argue on a regular basis with my treasury that we should be putting more money into agriculture as well. But when you have a fixed amount of dollars today to operate and manage a province, which you understand, I'm pleased to be able to say that we have this kind of a contribution to agriculture as it relates to everybody else across the country.

And you shouldn't say to the people who pay attention to this, to this debate today and any others that we have in the future, is that we haven't been there for producers. I mean, remember what we had last year when we had a herd retention, where we had livestock people who were saying to us that they didn't have enough feed and that they needed money to assist them with grazing programs. What did we do in this province last year? Well we provided a \$25 million program for herd retention.

Now you might stand in your place and say it's not enough, some people who should have got it didn't get it, and that the application wasn't appropriate. But you know what? We were there for livestock producers last year on a herd retention program on our own, without any support from the federal government at all. Saskatchewan taxpayers paid for that program last year.

In 1998 and again this year we had a problem with the price index with the hog industry. And what did we do? We put some additional loan guarantee for the hog industry in Saskatchewan today. That loan guarantee that we approved was around \$25 million. There's a brand new loan guarantee today for the hog industry in Saskatchewan. We did it in 1998 when the hog prices were in difficulty and we did it again this year.

And last year as much debate as there was in this House, where you said that the federal government put their share of the

money into crop insurance when in fact we demonstrated on many occasions that they had shortchanged the Saskatchewan government in its Crop Insurance Fund, we put in an additional \$10 million last year to crop insurance.

And we exceeded, we exceeded the 95 percentile of which we . . . or the \$95 million on an annual basis by \$10 million over that three-year period, of which you still don't appreciate and won't acknowledge in this House. So we go ahead and provide additional funding to the crop insurance pool when in fact they were underfunded or not matched by the federal government. And so a contribution that we made that wasn't made by our partner from the . . . federally.

And the changes that we made this year to the agricultural policy framework we should get some credit for on this side of the House. And that is that we negotiated this year the Fredericton agreement out, which gets for our producers 31 per cent of any trade money that we're going to get here in the future. Last year we negotiated \$183 million on a new formula for our Saskatchewan producers. This year we get \$193 million of new money for our Saskatchewan producers. Why? Because we stood in front of the federal government on every occasion that we could and said we are affected in a major way by the trade injury in this province by a large tune, and that number should move from 32 . . . 22 per cent to 31 per cent, of which we've been able to achieve.

And so, have we gotten more money for Saskatchewan farmers and provided more money for Saskatchewan farmers over the last couple of years? Absolutely we have.

Now the new agricultural policy framework talks about farmers protecting themselves through programs that are in place today. We have today in the crop insurance enrolment, of somewhere in the neighbourhood of 74 per cent, about the same amount that we had in the program last year.

And the members opposite say that we're going to be here for a long time, and I don't mind being here for a long time talking about agricultural policy because I like to talk about agricultural policy in Saskatchewan because we're building agricultural policy in Saskatchewan, and we have been leading it across Canada. And so we don't mind talking about it and we're prepared to stay as long as we need to stay.

And I say to the member opposite, we have an issue today with grasshoppers, we had an issue with drought last year, we'll have an issue . . . we had an issue with hog prices, and on every one of those occasions we were there for Saskatchewan producers — alone in many instances. And I can say to the members opposite, Saskatchewan producers and Saskatchewan farmers know what we've done for them across the province in the last five years and they're going to be supporting, and they support the positions that we've taken. Sometimes not enough, I can appreciate that, but at the end of the day Saskatchewan producers know what this government has been able to do for them in a major way.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Chair, this current Minister of Agriculture uses the same foolish comparisons as the last two ministers of Agriculture used when it comes to this NDP's government's support for agriculture. He uses the term of dollars per capita

which is meaningless, Mr. Chair, because Saskatchewan has 47 per cent of the arable land in Canada and we only have a population of 1 million people.

So if that minister wants to continue using that type of comparison, saying look what wonderful things we've done for agriculture, he will suffer the same fate as Eric Upshall and Dwain Lingenfelter. They're no longer members of this Assembly and I predict if that minister continues to use that same foolish comparison that he will suffer the same fate after the next election.

When we look at the real numbers, the total numbers, Alberta's drought program last year was \$324 million of actual cash payments to its producers. What was Saskatchewan's — \$20 million plus a \$200 million loan which needed to be repaid. That's Saskatchewan's answer, is a loan. Every time we turn around they look at a loan.

We're talking of a small program that will assist in the rising cost of controlling a problem that if it's not controlled this year will be a problem next year. And if you don't take some immediate action now, if you don't pay me now, you're going to pay — as the ad says — you're going to pay big time in the fall when the yields aren't there, Minister.

And if you don't understand that, as I said, you certainly will not be around here after the next election. Because the producers of this province are getting fed up with those feeble excuses from your government and those foolish comparisons that they see right through. Nobody believes that kind of a comparison . . .

The Chair: — Order. Order. As members know we have different relaxed rules in committee and when work is being done, as to not going to the Chair and through the Chair. But if I do find — and I do find — that the attacks are beginning personal on both sides, that I will begin to enforce that rule and I'm doing that now. So I would ask the member, put comments to the Chair and through the Chair.

Why is the member for Estevan on her feet?

Ms. Eagles: — With leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, to you and through you to all members of this Hon. Assembly, I would like to introduce 25 grade 4 and 5 students from the Midale Central School.

They are seated in the east gallery. They are accompanied by teachers Jana Epp and Gayle Prawdzik. And I notice that there's several chaperones with them as well, and I do recognize one of the chaperones from here, and that's Jan Sjostrand.

And I would ask all members to join me in welcoming the students and adults from Midale School. And I look forward to meeting with them shortly. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(11:30)

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

**General Revenue Fund
Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization
Vote 1**

Subvote (AG01)

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, the minister talks about and says that he is putting more emphasis on this year's crop insurance program and he's enhanced it. And we all know that farmers are looking at significantly increased premium costs. And granted some of that is due to the higher coverage levels and so on, but if we do a comparison . . . And I'm somewhat reluctant but there comes a time, a point in time when you need to look at what's happening around you, and I think we need to look at what's happening to the west, Mr. Chair.

The Alberta program, crop insurance program that was announced early in . . . or late January, has a number of interesting new components to it, for instance, the spring price endorsement. It says in their news release that this is a new crop insurance option available to their producers. Another new feature is a revenue insurance coverage, which is again a new component that is something that we do not have in our crop insurance program. They talk in terms of cushioned yields to deal with insurable perils and those sorts of things. An interesting feature is a variable price option — something that we had in the past and that minister saw fit to cut from the program — is now a part of the basic package of crop insurance in Alberta.

And so when the minister says that his government is stepping up to the plate, he hasn't even made it on to the ball diamond, Mr. Chair. He's not even in the batter-on-deck circle, Mr. Chair. And I think this minister, he could step up to the plate and do something in a small way. Alberta has been able to come with ten and a half million dollars to address this immediate problem. And what does this minister say to the producers of this province? Well go ahead, you handle it; we're not concerned about it, Mr. Chair.

I will turn the questions over to my colleague from Spiritwood.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I just want to respond briefly to the member because I heard him say a couple of things that are extremely important.

One is that I heard the member say that we should not be concerned about fiscal capacity. Well I think we need to be concerned about fiscal capacity. I think that when we're talking about an investment today by Saskatchewan people to the tune of \$400 or \$406 per capita by every man, woman, and child in investment in agriculture, why would we discount that investment, Mr. Chair — why would we discount that investment? And why wouldn't we pay attention to fiscal capacity?

You see it scares me, Mr. Speaker, when I hear people talk about — who are in politics, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Chair, — and people who are . . . who have ambitions to be government, Mr. Speaker, when they stand up in their place and say they aren't concerned about fiscal capacity. Because we've had a lesson in this province through the '80s where we acquired in this province huge, huge fiscal debt, Mr. Chair — huge fiscal debt.

And we dumped in tons of money into the agricultural file — and tons of money into an agricultural file — through programs that had absolutely no accountability for themselves.

And the member opposite stands up and he says to me that Alberta drops in a whole bunch of money into their program for drought assistance last year — and yes, they did. And you know what? They paid producers last year who were not even in drought situations, who were not even in drought situations? And is that what the member opposite is advocating? That we should simply take a pool of money and we should provide that holus-bolus across the piece?

Well I say to the member opposite, I am extremely concerned, Mr. Chair, about fiscal capacity, and I am extremely pleased that this government is able to contribute the \$406 per every man, woman, and child to the agricultural pool. And we will continue to be there for agriculture into the future as we have been in the past, because that's why we on this side of the House have a working relationship and good public policy on agriculture. And we've not seen much from the other side, Mr. Speaker, if anything at all.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Chair, the minister talks about the investment that other province have made in agriculture. He talks about the investment in agriculture in some of the Maritime provinces. Well my question to the minister is, how much do we on a per capita basis invest in fisheries? I mean we're talking apples and oranges here.

Agriculture, I think all members of this Assembly, and particularly your Minister of Finance agrees that it's the primary industry in this province. And he talks about 400, \$400 per capita investment in agriculture and yet this government invested \$100 per capita in a land titles system that doesn't work. Now it seems to me there's something out of sync here, Minister.

And what type of a return on investment do we get out of the land titles system? We get delays, additional costs to the users, and they waste money in SPUDCO (Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company) . . .

The Chair: — Order. Order. Order. Order. Would the member for . . . Would the member for Prince Albert Northcote and the member for Estevan please come to order. Thank you.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Chair, if this government was a little more frugal in their investments outside this province and within this province and stop investing in some of the foolish things that they've done, they may have some extra money, the \$10 million to help with this grasshopper situation that we have.

So, Mr. Chair, the minister's comparisons and when he talks about a per capita investment, let's total up the per capita losses

that this government has incurred in the last number of years and I would suspect that they probably are higher than what they've invested in agriculture, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, at this time, I think I've concluded my comments and questions in this area and I would like to turn it over to the member from Shellbrook.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Chair, the member and I have an interesting debate going on in terms of fiscal capacity because if we could just have back, Mr. Chair, if we could just have back the \$700 million that we pay every year in interest payments that were accumulated in this province by the previous Conservative government in Saskatchewan, we could pay for grasshoppers, Mr. Chair.

We could put more money into health care. We could put more money into education. We could put more money into agriculture. But no.

It's exactly the same philosophy that I hear from the member from Thunder Creek . . . not Thunder Creek, sorry, from Last Mountain-Touchwood stand on his feet and say, don't be worried about the fiscal capacity. Don't be worried about that he says, because you know what? We'll be able to look after that if we were in the chair. And we know how they looked after fiscal capacity in this province, Mr. Speaker — \$15 billion worth of debt in capacity, Mr. Speaker, and it will grow.

And we have to talk about the capacity of our province, Mr. Speaker, in terms of what we can provide. And I wish we had the \$700 million today that the member from Estevan would know something about and the member from Swift Current would know something about and the member from Moosomin would know something about. And I expect the member from Wood River would know something about too because he's been a Conservative for a long time, Mr. Chair. And so there's lots of people, lots of people over there who would know how we got the debt.

And I say, Mr. Speaker, we're concerned about capacity. We're concerned about capacity in this side of the House and good, wise public spending and building good, strong public agricultural policy, and we'll continue to do that, Mr. Speaker, on a regular basis, to make sure.

And the member from Wood River chirps from his chair that we should be ashamed of saying . . . The member from Wood River says we should be ashamed of ourselves because we're talking about good, responsible fiscal policy.

Of course he says that we should be ashamed of ourselves because he was on the team, Mr. Speaker, who ran this province into the kind of debt that we are going to be in. And he's advocating as being a leader of the previous . . . of the current party, Mr. Speaker. He ran as the leader of the current party. And I hear him chirping from his chair that we shouldn't be concerned about the fiscal capacity. That's why at least the people on that side of the House had enough wisdom not to pick the member from Wood River as their leader. They picked somebody who had at least a bit more capacity about looking after the future of Saskatchewan.

And I say to the members of . . . say from the member from Touchwood, we're concerned . . . Last Mountain-Touchwood. Last Mountain-Touchwood. We're saying to the member from Last Mountain-Touchwood, we're concerned about fiscal capacity and we'll continue to make investments into the agricultural file in the way in which we have in the past and will continue to do.

Mr. Allchurch: — Well thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you. Mr. Minister, welcome to your officials here this afternoon. I have a few questions. Basically the questions are some clarifications.

And the route I want to go down is dealing with Sask Ag and Food land in representation of the answers given by your colleague, the minister from SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management), on Tuesday night. And at that present time, Mr. Minister, I was asking questions regarding TLE (treaty land entitlement) process on critical habitat wildlife land.

Now there is a section of critical habitat wildlife land in the RM of Meeting Lake and there . . . or may not be a TLE on it. And it also attends regarding the licensing of an outfitter licence. And I would like to read a quote from the statement from the Minister of SERM that night. And I quote:

Again as I mentioned . . .

This is from the Minister of Environment, Mr. Belanger:

Again as I mentioned, we wouldn't have jurisdiction to issue an outfitting licence on this . . . (agricultural) leased land . . . (The) Agriculture would be the ones that would issue . . . (this) licence. Where we would have influence is on the sustainability argument in reference to how many animals . . . (in) particular (the) outfitter could harvest.

He also goes on to state:

The licence . . . (is) a layered approach. The licence would be issued by (Sask) Ag and Food . . .

To the minister: is it your jurisdiction as Ag minister to issue outfitting licences on Crown land that is deemed critical habitat wildlife land?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Chair, what I'd want the member to clarify for me, would this be on occupied land or on vacant land?

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. This land is occupied land. There was a landowner that owned the lease on that, and I don't know what the terms are of it — was it a 33-year lease or a 50-year lease or whatever — but it was occupied land. But the map from the RM of Meeting Lake states on that land that it is Sask Ag and Food land. In fact, the new map that just was distributed that I got a hold of also still states that this land is still Crown land — Sask Ag and Food.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I'll answer the first part of the question first and then have the member ask me again, if he says it relates to the licensure.

We provide the letters of authorization, my officials tell me, for access. So we actually do provide the letters of authorization for access on to the land. That would be the role of Sask Ag and Food here initially.

Mr. Allchurch: — Mr. Minister, I understand and I know you're correct that you give access to the land. My question is, because you give access to the land, do you allow and give out outfitting licences on that land? Is that part of your jurisdiction from your department or is that from the SERM department?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Chair, the actual licensing that is required to be given out is — for outfitters — is really provided by SERM as opposed to being provided by the Department of Agriculture and Food.

(11:45)

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister. Thank you for that answer. I know you know, and I know I know that that is a correct process and procedure in regarding outfitting licenses; it has to come from SERM.

I just want to mention to you, Mr. Minister, that somewhere along the line there's been some misleading for the simple reason the minister from SERM has stated that it comes from Sask Ag and Food. It does not come from Sask Ag and Food as you've mentioned, it comes from the department of SERM.

Is there any regulations that you, Mr. Minister, have in regards to this land being Sask Ag and Food that would adhere to the regulations of an outfitting licence?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I think, Mr. Chair, to the member, the member would understand that because he's very . . . The member's familiar with the relationship as it exists between Crown land and leased land and outfitters, given that you have all of these responsibilities in your riding, so you would have a good understanding of this piece.

And from time to time what we do have here is an overlap of responsibility between Agriculture and Food and SERM, and from time to time it's difficult to have, in my view, all of the details at your exposure.

And so I say to the member opposite that we should not be assuming here for a minute that on all occasions we would have all of the detail at our exposure, particularly doing an exchange in debate, doing question period. But what is important here to realize is that Ag and Food does have in regulation the responsibility to authorize use, and so we would be providing some information, detail, recommendation to SERM if and when they're making a . . . they're making a decision about what it is that land would be used for.

So there is a very close working relationship on this front, and from time to time the areas get a bit fuzzy and grey. And when you go make decisions about how land is going to be used or purposes it's used for, it does have some overlap that from time to time causes consternation both in you asking the question and those who are making application for its use.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Mr.

Minister. Thank you for those answers. I know it was just a clarification but I needed for you and your department to state that for the simple reason we both know that the outfitting licensing on Sask Ag and Food land is a total, the total responsibility of SERM. And therefore I will be asking the SERM minister later in regarding the licensing of that said land and does the Mosquito Band have jurisdiction as to an outfitting licence on that land? Do they operate it under the agreement of a outfitting licence and does that licence come from the provincial government through SERM or does it come through the federal government?

And thank you once again, Mr. Minister, for your clarification and your answers. I'll turn it back over to the critic for Ag.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. The questions that I would like to turn to right now are dealing with the bovine spongiform encephalopathy and the trickle-down effect of the one reported case of BSE and the subsequent border closure has no doubt began and before too long it will be more adequately described as a flood.

The Canadian Renderers Association lobbied the federal government for assistance and not surprisingly, considering how inadequate the federal government has responded to this whole entire issue, their proposal was rejected on June 10.

As a result the Saskatoon Processing Company has found it necessary to inform its customers that it has no other alternative but to introduce a charging system for picking up any fat bone and mixed ruminants. This is a service, Mr. Chair, that they have offered for free for the past 40 years now and they made their profit from selling the rendered product. This is going to affect a lot more than just the beef industry.

Mitchell's in Saskatoon, I was told, is one supplier that Saskatoon Processing Company paid for the waste products and if my information is correct, they won't be charging them for pick up, but they won't be paying for the product either. So it still affects Mitchell's . . . or it affects their business economy.

But in the other businesses, for example, the cost to Drake Meats for the pick-up service will be \$70 per bin which will add up to approximately \$75,000 of added expense per year. And I'm told — I have not confirmed this — but I have been told that Big Sky will be charged \$100 per bin and they have an average of about 53 bins per week. So that calculates to approximately \$5,300 a week or \$21,000 a month.

So with this, all the livestock sectors will be affected, along with the beef industry.

Has the minister had any discussions with his provincial counterparts, the federal government, and/or the industry in ways that this particular difficulty can be addressed?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well, Mr. Chair, to the member, the answer is we have had a considerable amount of discussion about the issue as it relates to renderers . We understand the kinds of pressures that renderers are going to be experiencing and are experiencing across the country. And in Western Canada the issue was on the table when the Western premiers made their request through the industry for the compensation

package that was initially highlighted. We had renderers as part of that discussion.

In the consultations over the last week, renderers have been set aside as an area that we are going to continue to talk about because it's not only a Saskatchewan issue, but for sure an Alberta issue and a very large issue in Ontario.

And so collectively what we've been working with . . . And we have a working committee that's federally-provincially in place right now trying to find some solution to this very issue that the member raises.

So we know that as the system begins to untie itself from the way in which it's been stricken by the initial closure of the border and now with the compensation package being provided, we know that we need to deal with the renderers in a fashion that would be supportive to ensure that we can keep the system moving. Because without any doubt, the renderers could in fact clog, get clogged, or clog up the movement of livestock in the country.

And so our task force is in place, industry is tied to it, and our work is continuing. So our hope is we'll have some solution, a recommendation to this, in the next while.

Ms. Harpauer: — I thank the minister for that answer. Presently to my knowledge, the rendering plants aren't rendering or if they are, they can't move the product. So what are they doing right now with that product? What's happening to the remnants?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Chair, to the member, they are rendering. The rendering plants are currently rendering. Now the fact is, is that they have lots of product to render but they are working.

Ms. Harpauer: — Does the minister know what they are doing with the rendered product, because to my knowledge they can't market it right now?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Currently what's happening with the ruminant in Saskatchewan it's simply being stored, given that we are not sure what we'll do with it into the future. And we're looking also, Mr. Chair, for alternate market currently for the ruminant, not only from Saskatchewan but across Canada.

Ms. Harpauer: — The Saskatoon Processing Company has expressed concerns that there will be a total ban on the use of meat, and bone meal, and all non-ruminant animal feed, and in particular that this may be a condition in getting the border opened. Has there been any indication that this will be a condition of the border's opening?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Chair, there's not yet been a recommendation from the US that this would be a condition. But it's one that has been on our page now for a couple of weeks, recognizing that it might be one of the conditions that the US might make of us in opening the border. But it, to date, has not been.

Ms. Harpauer: — If it was a condition that the US could give us to open the border, can the minister tell me if then the US

also has to ban the use of ruminant in their country as well?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Chair, that's a very important point because the US continue to use the ruminant in their system and so in order for us to ban it here in Canada, it would be an interesting scenario for them to find themselves in.

Ms. Harpauer: — I thank the minister. Inevitably what could happen here . . . And I know the larger processing plants and butcherers and livestock operations will pay for this service, but the concern of course comes with the smaller operations where it isn't economically viable to pay large dollars to have their waste products picked up.

So there is a concern out there that this waste product will be dumped and we're going to be faced with all other kinds of health issues and of course rodents, flies, and you name it. So in the discussions that the minister has had with the industry and with other, you know, with other counterparts in other provinces, is there a long-term plan that they're trying to put together that will deal with that particular issue?

Because if it does become too costly, your smaller abattoirs and your smaller farming operations may dispose of it in a less than desirable manner.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — The Agriculture ministers are meeting at the end of June . . . early in July, sorry — and on the agenda for Agriculture ministers is this very issue with the federal minister.

Clearly our hope is that we aren't going to find ourselves in a situation where you paint the picture in the way in which you have because it will be a very difficult area for us to try to sort out in terms of what you do with animal ruminant and how that affects then the US use of animal ruminant.

But it is on our agenda. We have a working committee right now that are working away at it and my hope, at the end of the day, is that it will not be a condition as part of the opening of the border.

Now will we need to be more cognizant about how we deal with animal ruminant, to whom does it make its way in the future? I think the answer to that is that it will be the case. But at this point in time it's a process under extreme review and discussion.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Good afternoon to the minister and his officials.

Mr. Minister, I have a couple of questions for you in reference to the herd retention program that was in place due to the drought for the last couple of years. And there was an announcement of \$220 million for producers in drought-stricken areas. I was wondering, Mr. Minister, was the money that was targeted for that herd retention program all used up?

The Chair: — Why is the member for Watrous on her feet?

Ms. Harpauer: — With leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm very honoured to have the opportunity to introduce 16 grade 6 students from Muenster School seated in the east gallery. And they're accompanied by their teacher, Peter Penrose. So I want to welcome them all to the Assembly this afternoon and I hope they enjoy the proceedings and I will be meeting with you shortly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization Vote 1

Subvote (AG01)

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Chair, in response to the member, we budgeted 17.2 million and we expended 13.6 million.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, to the minister. I was just wondering if you could tell me, Mr. Minister, in reference to applications from farmers for some of that money, how many late applications were received by your department?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Chair, there were about 180 that were late applications.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, how many known lost applications were there?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I think the member is asking the question about how many applications came in late that people said were lost, and I think there were five or six that fall under that category.

Ms. Julé: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. There may be a bit of a differentiation between lost and late. I mean sometimes people just apply after the deadline, which was, I believe, December 31. And I think those would be dealt with in a different manner than people that are claiming that their application . . . or claiming to your department their application they believed that was received by your department just was not received. According to your department officials, some of them were lost.

And so I just need to know how many . . . that your department claimed two applicants were lost. And the applicants got back to your office because they didn't receive their money and they were told that they never received . . . the department did not receive their application; and therefore it was deducted by your department that the application must have been lost.

And so that's why I'm asking you how many of those type of applications were dealt with. And in regards to that, if your department deemed that obviously some were lost because the applicants didn't get their payment, I'd like to know how many reapplications there were in the event that an application was lost. Because that would most likely mean that people would

have an opportunity to apply again and to have another opportunity to access some of this funding.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I think what's important, Mr. Chair, to clarify here, for me anyway, is that my officials tell me that there were actually about five or six applications of which people, when they called back, said these applications were lost somewhere in the system. So it was not the department saying that we lost them; it was the individuals who were making the application that would say that they were lost.

Because I mean if they were lost we wouldn't know where they are, clearly. And the best way that we would only know that is if the individual would tell us that they in fact were lost.

So of those five or six applications we simply advised the people to reapply and that what we would do is take those applications and forward them on to the appeals panel, and the appeals panel would attempt to determine whether or not they were actually lost or whether or not they were late. But we dealt with them as being applications that in fact were lost and never made their way to us, and accordingly people were asked then to reapply.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Well, Mr. Minister, we'll just get to the crux of the matter. There is definitely a situation with one of my constituents that we're dealing with this whole process.

The application for the herd retention funding was sent in by a gentleman in his mother's name and the process went as such: he sent the application last December; in the beginning of March he called asking when the cheque for the herd retention program would be coming, and he was told that his mother's name wasn't in the computer. He was told that they did not have a record of receiving her application. And so they were sent out another application and they reapplied again. At the time this gentleman did attach a note explaining that he was reapplying because his application was lost.

Now he has called the minister's office often but he's not getting much satisfaction. He seems to be getting the runaround on this issue.

Now, Mr. Minister, the application that this gentleman re-sent, he sent by registered mail. So there's no doubt that the department would get that letter.

It was received in Regina and this gentleman talked to someone from your office, from the minister's office, who told him that his application would go to the review committee. And so again there was no call back to this gentleman after the review committee met — or possibly they didn't meet.

So the applicant's son, who was doing most of the work trying to get this process initiated, he called after he knew that the review committee had met. And he was told again by someone from your office that he had to explain why their application was late. So the gentleman told the person in your office that the explanation was attached to the reapplication. And a person from your office admitted that there was an oversight and that this gentleman's mother . . . the reapplication was not given to the review committee. So there seems to be a bunch of mixed

messages going on here, Mr. Minister.

But anyway, following the review the committee did meet by conference call and the reapplication was denied because the reason was it was late. You know, it seems in view of the fact, Mr. Minister, that the very fact that this application was late was obvious. It was late possibly because it was lost in the first place and a reapplication was necessary. This is what my constituent was told he should do, was to reapply — reapply. So naturally it would be late.

So the very fact that the response from your department officials that it was late and that was why it was denied was . . . It doesn't seem to be to me a very good explanation. So I wonder if you can respond to this, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — When we set the program up, we also established a panel of people who would be the appeals committee. And it is their judgment that we've been using to deal with the appeals.

It sounds to me that, in this particular case you're talking about, that there was a recognition by the department that there should be a reapplication. And there was a reapplication because they assumed because they had no record of it, the application had clearly not arrived there because it had not been registered like the several other thousand application forms that we dealt with and actually got money to people. So the . . . At the end of the day, they got her a new application form.

It sounds to me like the new application form was returned back to the department, went to the appeal committee; the appeal committee examined this and said that the individual doesn't qualify — not the department and not the minister's office, but the appeals body. And so it is their wisdom of which we're using the response to the individual of whom we are talking with, or about.

And so it can be said, I think, that there has been some time here that's expired, or transpired from the time in which the people say they initially applied to when they actually got a final answer on this issue; there's been some time here. And there can be certainly said that there's some concern about what happened here with the file. But at the end of the day, the decision made by the appeal committee of whom we've been using has been the decision that this individual's received.

Now I've asked my department whether or not there have been other appeals of which this kind of nature is applied. And the answer is that there is and that there have been decisions that have both worked in the affirmative and to the negative on a reapplication.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, the official in your office that was dealing with this was Mark Folk. Mark admitted that there was an oversight and that this woman's application was not given to the review committee.

So then there was obviously a review by the committee. They met by conference call. The result of the committee's deliberations was that this woman's application was denied because it was late. This seems like a really . . . To me . . . I don't know. I mean, I may not know the ins and outs other than

the information that I've been given, but it seems to me to be very . . . like a very weak response. It was late but it was still valid because of the fact that this woman was told that she had the right to reapply. So if the minister would respond I'd appreciate it.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well my officials tell me that the individual whom you're speaking of, Mr. Folk, actually does work in the department. And when the application arrived the first time to the committee it did not have sent with it the letter. And so what happened is when they received the letter, the letter was then attached again to the reapplication and went back to the appeals committee for yet a second occasion for the appeals committee to look at. And on the second review of the file by the appeals committee, they denied it yet one more time.

And so as I said earlier, I think that it's unfortunate that there's been this much time that that's transpired on this particular file, and that there has been I would say some confusion about, you know, who's been dealing with it and whether or not it's been . . . was most expediently dealt with. But at the end of the day the appeals committee has examined it on two occasions, once with the letter of explanation . . . or without the letter of explanation, the second time with the letter of explanation. And on conclusion of the appeals committee, they still make the same recommendation of this, of this qualification.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, and officials. One of the initiatives that took place I believe with the Department of Agriculture last year was to change the way that the Department of Agriculture was operating its IT system internally. And I believe that the Department of Agriculture sat down with the Department of Highways to get together to work on a project to coordinate perhaps their hardware, their software, I'm not exactly sure.

I wonder if you could explain what was happening in that area and what you had envisioned for the future in that area, what your goals were.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Chair, my officials tell me that it was our . . . our own IT was requiring some update of course and enhancement. What we did within the Department of Agriculture is recognized the significant . . . or the significant improvements or enhancements that were made in the Department of Highways IT area and felt that because of the expenditures that they've made to upgrade their hardware system, that in fact we would just simply become a user of their system. And so that's what we did.

(12:15)

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. When you're talking about using their system, are you talking about using software systems that they're using; are you talking about using hardware systems that they're using; are you talking about the servers that you would normally have for coordinating within Agriculture; are you now using the servers that Highways department has? When you say using their system, what do you mean?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Chair, what my officials have attempted to do here is to make it simple for me, and so I'll try

and make it simple for you because I'm not as hardware and software illiterate here as I'd like to be. And so what's happened here is my officials tell me that we've moved the software onto the Highways hardware. So this is what's been accomplished here.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Are you using then the servers that Highways department has and provides? Are you using CommunityNet to connect to the Highways department servers and so Agriculture no longer utilizes their own servers but rather uses the Highways department servers and you're using CommunityNet to make those secure connections?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — This is a very simple answer, Mr. Chair. The answer is yes.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, in transferring your IT services, or coordinating with the Highways department, just what kind of service are you merged with the Highways department? Are you simply utilizing their servers or are you utilizing their purchasing procedures as well, that the Highways department, you give them an order that you need 25 desktop units or terminals and they purchase it so that you get a better bulk buy?

Do they also determine what software you're going to be using so that it integrates with what their servers are using and that it integrates with the Highways department program so that you can have an exchange of information back and forth so that you're not using different databases, so that the databases talk to each other, so that the . . . your word processors talk to each other, etc., etc. Even though you may be keeping your information separate, within government at times there is a need to have a coordination of information that you can cross-reference and be able to talk to each other. Is this kind of service also being provided?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — The member asked about the issue of common purchasing and the answer is that we are doing common purchasing. We're also doing common software development for integration of the information but we are not using a common database.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. What was the purpose of this merger? Was it an attempt to coordinate government services in IT or were there some cost savings to be realized by going in this direction?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — So it would be, Mr. Chair, on the two issues, that . . . or the two concepts that the member outlines, that there would be some cost savings here and that we would have a higher quality of development and really service as well.

Mr. D'Autremont: — What kind of cost savings was the department projecting for this merger of IT services?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Last year the cost savings were 150,000. This year they're about 450,000. It's really been redirected to improve on some of our own software development.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. So you're saying that actually the IT budget didn't change, you just

redirected the monies that you had saved in say a purchase of a hardware package, you've now redirected to some other area within the IT such as software or connectivity.

Mr. Minister, does your department do a projection of what your IT costs for both hardware, software, and services are on a long-term basis so that you have an idea that in year one, it's going to be this much; two, three, four, five years down the road you have an ongoing stream so that you have built into the system an understanding of what your replacement costs are, what your service costs are going to be as they either grow or shrink as the case may be? If so, what are your projections on an annual long-term basis?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Chair, to the member, the IT piece is really broken down, my officials tell me, into three baskets. They would be into software development, hardware replacement, and operating costs. And over a period of four years, that budget will be about \$3 million.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you, Mr. Minister. I'm not sure *Hansard* got it but the minister stated that it would be \$3 million per year for the IT package of software, hardware, and operations.

Mr. Minister, on an ongoing basis is this an increase or a decrease in spending, a projection of \$3 million a year?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Chairman, my officials tell me it's, that's really the status quo.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. So prior to the merger with Highways for IT services, was your IT expense higher or lower than, than the projected \$3 million?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well, Mr. Chair, when I said it was a status quo, what I'd like to explain this on, from this perspective, is that because we had old technology and we needed to do replacement of old technology, this is where most of our spending in the future would have been directed to. And we couldn't do the kinds of program development that will be important in order to stay current with the kinds of work that's happening in agriculture across the piece.

So within that tent of money, it's simply been redirected so that we can get better utilization. Instead of putting new, good money into old technology, we could use that money to then do better program replacement or better program update and development.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. So you're saying, Mr. Minister, that previous to the merger you had a budget of roughly \$3 million going into IT. Post-merger you have a budget of approximately \$3 million going into IT.

It's a question then within that \$3 million budget how it's been allocated between software, hardware, and services. And that changes from hardware to what? To services or to software, or where is the change going from and to?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — The member describes it accurately where, Mr. Chair, it really is into software development and the sort of renewal of program efficiency within the software net.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Within the CommunityNet program, who administers the needs of the Department of Agriculture? Is it the Department of Agriculture who is the systems operator? Is it the Department of Highways? Or does some other entity deal with the needs and the administration of the Department of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Chair, SaskTel delivers the package and ITO (Information Technology Office) really manages it on our behalf.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So, Mr. Minister, if SaskTel provides the system and ITO manages it for you, how do you establish, for the Department of Agriculture, your secure needs?

How do you ensure that crop insurance information is not available to some other entity within government or outside of government? How do you ensure that your loan portfolios, through ACS (Agricultural Credit Corporation of Saskatchewan) or the financing arm of Agriculture remain in place? How do you ensure that the agriculture research being carried out for Agriculture remains secure? And how do you ensure that individuals within the Department of Agriculture are not accessing information that is not required for their duties?

(12:30)

Hon. Mr. Serby: — The security envelope that the member talks about is really in the Highways hardware. We have a firewall system obviously that would protect the system or the information. And then you would have a password access which people in Agriculture then would have the password to get the access of the information as required.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I think it's a little more complicated than that, but I'll let that particular item go there.

Mr. Minister, what was the actual cost of the merger between Agriculture and the Department of Highways, not necessary the purchase of new equipment for the Department of Agriculture, but the cost of merging the systems together?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — So within the, Mr. Chair, within the actual cost of the \$3 million, there would have been the merging of the system. There would be the costs then of operating the system and there would be also then the cost of the new software development. So it would be all of those areas of which the \$3 million would cover it off.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Are you saying then that the cost of the merger was \$3 million or the total cost for IT within the Department of Agriculture was \$3 million, or are they the same number?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Chair, all of this work that I described earlier, which is the merger and the running of the system and the new software development, are all within that \$3 million package.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. But do you have a breakdown of what the actual merger cost was for the project between Agriculture and Highways? What would

the cost have been had you not merged then? Was there any additional costs related to the merger, or were funds reallocated within the department to accomplish the merger? So what was . . . I'm interested in what the cost for the merger was.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — What I think I said in my earlier response to the member is that the \$3 million did a number of things. It did software development; it did software replacement, or . . . yes, software replacement; and it did . . . and there were operational costs involved in that. All of that was accomplished within the \$3 million. What we don't have with us immediately here is the cost of specifically what each of those areas, if that's what the member is asking for us to define.

But when we did the merger, we also changed the technology. And so when you change the technology, and the reason for doing the association with the Department of Highways is to allow us to improve our capacity to enhance the technology, and so that was all accomplished within that \$3 million envelope.

Now if the member is asking specifically for each of those financial associations, we could get them over time. We don't have them with us today.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I think it's important to understand how the merger changed the structure with Agriculture and Highways and how that impacted the costs. If there had been no merger in place, how the department would have dealt with its IT services — you know, the purchase of hardware, the purchase and development of software, and the services required to operate and maintain that system — compare that to the program that's in place now, the project of the merger, what the costs are associated with that and how that cost structure has changed; where the savings may have occurred; where the savings are being eaten up because you say the cost is the same, it's \$3 million.

So you need to be able to break those costs down to determine whether or not the merger actually has any value to the department — to both departments, to Highways and to Agriculture — and whether it has a larger application across government in general.

We saw the government try to proceed with a program with EDS (Electronic Data Systems) to provide an overall umbrella of government services to . . . and the government program between Agriculture and Highways seemed to be a precursor to that and perhaps gave some idea as to what the government wanted to do in the IT field.

So to understand whether or not there's any value in it, you need to be able to determine where the cost savings were, what those cost savings implications were, and where you needed to spend more money. Because you haven't saved any money. You've reallocated money but you haven't saved any money. And so what's the value? Is there a value to the merger? Is there not a value to the merger? Does it provide you with better service for the same cost? Or are you simply spending the same amount of money in a different manner?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I think the member, I recognize now, has a huge passion to understand exactly how the IT works within the

Department of Agriculture and whether or not it is in fact working. And I want to say to the member opposite he's exceeded my expertise in this front by a substantive amount because I have not the same kind of passion to understand the detail of the equipment that's in the Department of Agriculture to collect information and to provide data.

But in a simplistic fashion it would . . . it's been explained to me this way. If in fact I have the option of needing to buy a new combine, which you'd understand and I understand, and I require a great deal of finances to repair my old combine, and the pot of money is this much, the combine's only worth about \$5,000 and I need to put 10 into it, I'm apt not to do that. I'm apt to then go to somebody else and say to him, why don't I just take a share in your combine and over the years what we'll do is we'll figure out how it is that we'll pay for it.

And that's what we did here. What we did is we simply went to the Department of Highways and said, you know, you have a new system, we kind of like your new system, what we'll do is we're going to join your system. And instead of spending an additional \$2 million a year to try to old . . . to run this old system here, we're going to take that money and put it into making sure that we get a better quality product, which is, in this case, software and program development which are words that I don't often use on the farm.

But the reality is, is that this is what's happened here. We've avoided spending \$2 million additional dollars on an old system, stayed with the status quo of the \$3 million. Took that \$3 million and redirected it or restructured it within the IT sector to make sure that we got better . . . a better system today and better access to information and better programs today that the Department of Agriculture is able to offer to our agricultural constituents across the province.

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

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Well with leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and thank you to the members for allowing me to introduce guests.

In the east gallery we have 13 students from the Lafleche Central High School that I would like to welcome here this afternoon. And accompanying them is teacher, Ray Morissette, who happens to be a relative of mine, and chaperones, Aline Dumont and Clayton Lethbridge.

And what we're doing here now is considerations of estimates for Agriculture where we're asking the Minister of Agriculture questions back and forth and he's providing answers . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Sometimes, I'll get to explain that to you afterwards. I'll be meeting with you as soon as you're ready to leave the gallery and we'll have a little further talk about it.

So I'd ask all members to welcome the group from Lafleche here to the Assembly this afternoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization Vote 1

Subvote (AG01)

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, actually software and program development are becoming very common words on the farm these days as they're in . . . more and more management is needed. And I think it's important that agriculture do be in contact with the world and CommunityNet is one of the ways in which they are accessing and utilizing that.

Mr. Minister, though, when I take your example, and it has some value, but you need to take a look at your \$5,000 combine and determine whether or not to spend the \$10,000 on it. But if you're going to spend \$7,500 a year renting your neighbour's — or as my colleague says in your particular case you'd probably just borrow it — you need to determine whether or not the \$7,500 per year is going to give you value over the long term.

And so I guess that's the real question with the merger. Is it going to give you value over the long term versus having an in-house system that the Department of Agriculture would have?

And, Mr. Minister, perhaps you could also ask the question as to how the merger was accomplished, in the sense was it done all in-house by Department of Agriculture and Department of Highways personnel, or were you assisted from outside sources to develop the merger project?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — The upgrade that was made really did improve the new technology, as the member has asked, and gave us better security — is what my officials tell me — under the new system.

And to your second question about whether in fact . . . how the work was accomplished, it was accomplished through one contract person who came to do the work and the rest of the work was all done in-house. So we just had one contract program manager.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay thank you, Mr. Minister. Will you now be taking your merged efforts, your merged project, and expanding that throughout the rest of government or bringing other departments into it as well or is this simply going to be a project between Agriculture and Highways? Are you bringing other departments into that or are other departments, let's say Social Services and Health, working to merge their IT services?

And are we going to go from a large piecemeal package within government, where each department is an individual silo to fewer silos, but still not being able to readily and easily communicate back and forth and share the necessary information that they need to be able to share back and forth?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I think it would be fair to say that in the world of IT you will have governments, as you have private sector people, always examining how you can find the most efficient ways of doing work. And it would be prudent for me to say that within government — where we operate too in a very prudent, cost-effective fashion — that other departments are always examining on an ongoing basis how it is that they can continue to provide IT services within the government's scope.

And we have the Department of Information Technology. It is through that process of which the government's IT is coordinated and collectively would be working on looking at ways in which we can enhance both efficiency, also performance, upgrading on a regular basis to make sure that you're current with technology and where there are cost savings, you can capture them as well.

(12:45)

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. I have just a couple of questions on the APF that I didn't have an opportunity to ask the last time we had Agriculture estimates.

The minister stated that he was probably or going to be considering signing the APF in July. Can he tell me who will administer the risk management program in the APF?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Under the APF agreement, NISA will continue to be administered by the federal government. And crop insurance will continue to be administered by the province.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 12:48.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Eagles	1821
Wall	1821
Harper	1821
Huyghebaert	1821
Dearborn	1821
Hart	1821
Allchurch	1821

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk	1822
-------------	------

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Julé	1822
Bakken	1822
Hillson	1822

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Serby	1822
Harpauer	1822, 1839
Lorjé	1822
Hermanson	1823
Thomson	1823
Wiberg	1823
Eagles	1834
Huyghebaert	1843

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

National Aboriginal Day

Julé	1823
Goulet	1823

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Centre

Hillson	1824
---------------	------

Moose Jaw Beef Sale

Higgins	1824
---------------	------

Radville Benefactor — Frank Rak

Bakken	1824
--------------	------

Saskatoon's Broadway Theatre

Atkinson	1825
----------------	------

Order of Military Merit Awards

Huyghebaert	1825
-------------------	------

ORAL QUESTIONS

Compensation Program for Beef Industry

Hermanson	1825
Serby	1825

Lifting of United States Import Restrictions on Canadian Beef

Hermanson	1827
Serby	1827

Grasshopper Control

Harpauer	1827
Serby	1828

Workers' Compensation Board

McMorris	1829
Higgins	1829
Lautermilch	1830

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Yates	1830
The Speaker	1830

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund — Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization — Vote 1

Serby	1830
Harpauer	1830, 1837, 1844
Hart	1831

Allchurch	1836
Julé	1838
D'Autremont	1840