

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I stand to present a petition on behalf of constituents in the Cypress Hills area and other areas around the province pertaining to the renewal of Crown grazing leases. 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.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by individuals from Estevan, Glentworth, Kisbey, Swift Current, and Big Beaver.

I so present.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with the dangerous and deplorable condition of Highway No. 43. And the prayer reads:

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.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by individuals from the communities of Gravelbourg, Eastend, and Lafleche.

I so present.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure again to rise on behalf of the residents of, in this case, the city of Swift Current, who have a constructive alternative for the government's plan to install a permanent CT (computerized tomography) scanner in Swift Current. And the prayer of their petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to reconsider its plan to allocate the used CT scanner to Swift Current and instead provide a new CT scanner for the Southwest.

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

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned all the petitioners today are from the frontier city, the city of Swift Current.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I rise with a petition from people who've had the unfortunate experience of travelling on Highway 43. And the prayer 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 is duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed in total by citizens of Swift Current.

I so present.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here with citizens concerned about the high cost of prescription drugs.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately reinstate a reasonable annual deductible amount for prescription drugs in Saskatchewan.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by citizens from Davidson, Hanley, Kenaston, and Imperial, Liberty.

I so present.

Mr. Lorenz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on the concerns of Highway 14. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to recognize the deplorable condition of Highway 14 from Biggar to Wilkie and to take the necessary steps to reconstruct and repair this highway in order to address safety concerns and to facilitate economic growth in rural Saskatchewan.

And as duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by citizens of Wilkie and North Battleford.

I so present.

Mr. Hart: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to be able to present a petition on behalf of citizens that are very concerned about the inaction of this government in addressing the issue of the water level in the . . . of the lakes in the Qu'Appelle Valley. And the petition 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 the First Nations people and the federal government to bring a prompt end to the dispute so that the water levels of the Qu'Appelle River system can return to normal levels 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 communities of White City and Regina.

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 all over the province of Saskatchewan that are concerned with the education tax issue in the province. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly urge the provincial government to take all possible action to cause a reduction in the education tax burden carried by Saskatchewan residents and employers.

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition are from Shellbrook, from Unity, from Regina, from P.A. (Prince Albert), Saskatoon, Mayfair, and Spiritwood.

I so present.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise again today on behalf of people in my constituency who are concerned about the shape of Highway No. 23.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to repair to Highway No. 23 in order to address safety concerns and to facilitate economic growth in Porcupine Plain and the surrounding areas.

The people who have signed this petition are from Weekes, Chelan, Porcupine Plain, and Carrot River.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — According to order the following petition has been reviewed and pursuant to rule 12 is hereby read and received, and it is a petition regarding a request to the government to repair Highway 23 near Porcupine Plain.

And a number of other petitions are received as addendums to previously tabled sessional papers no. 13, 18, 35, 100, 114, 116, 120, 124, 140, and 141.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that on day no. 70 I shall ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of the Environment: what were all the dates for the meetings and/or correspondence between the minister and/or his officials and the federal government officials regarding the dispute involving water levels in the Qu'Appelle Valley lakes?

And, Mr. Speaker, I also have another question:

To the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs: what were all the dates for meetings and/or correspondence between the minister or his officials and the federal government officials regarding the dispute involving water levels in the Qu'Appelle Valley lakes?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sitting in your gallery today, Mr. Speaker, is Mrs. Bernice MacDougall, widow of Ian MacDougall who passed away in April of this year.

Bernice, Mr. Speaker, like Ian has been very active in the Saskatchewan Liberal Party throughout the years. She has also been very active in the field of health care. While living in Estevan, she was a member of the South East Health District. After moving to Regina a few years ago, she became a member of the SAHO (Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations) board.

We want to welcome Bernice to the legislature today and offer our sincere condolences to her and her family on the loss of her husband.

And sitting with Mrs. MacDougall in the gallery is Irene Lamothe. Irene is a long-time friend of the MacDougall family, a friendship that goes back to the 60s when Irene worked in the Speaker's office in this legislature and Ian was, of course, a member of the Legislative Assembly. Irene is now retired but I might mention her daughter, Michelle Kobayashi, is a ministerial assistant to my colleague, Minister Wartman.

We welcome you both to the legislature this afternoon on this occasion and want to express again our grateful appreciation for the contribution Ian made, both in this legislature and throughout the great communities of this great province of ours.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with my colleague across the floor in welcoming Bernice MacDougall to the Assembly, and Mrs. Lamothe.

I've known Bernice for quite a few years. Ian and I worked together for the same company for many years and we had many get-togethers at barbecues and such at the company picnics where we argued politics, of course — that and the Roughriders, Mr. Speaker.

So on behalf of the official opposition, I would like to welcome Bernice and Mrs. Lamothe to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the legislature, a number of people who are present in your gallery from the Do It With Class Young People's Theatre company. And if they would stand when I introduce them, then we can acknowledge them.

First is Andorlie Hillstrom, who's the artistic director for

musical theatre; Rob Ursan, who's the music director; then students Amanda Gorchinski, Tess Degenstein, Michael Dorma, Benjamin Stueck, Jacqueline Burtney, and my daughter, Ingrid Nilson. And accompanying them is also Linda Tiefenbach, who's a proud mother of one of the other participants who couldn't be here today.

Let's all give them a warm welcome to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly, 12 grade 7 students seated in your gallery. They come from Lipton School. They are accompanied by their teacher, Rebecca Gel, and chaperones Lynae Kuykendall and Bob Mitchell.

I'll be meeting with them after question period, Mr. Speaker, and I'm sure they'll find the proceedings very interesting. And I would ask all members to welcome them, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you, Mr. Speaker, and through you to all members of the Assembly, four guests covering three generations who are visiting us in the gallery, and seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, visiting us from Seattle, Washington.

Seated in the top row of the gallery, Mr. Speaker, we have with us today Mr. Frank Walters, who is a former Moose Jaw resident. And he's accompanied here today by his daughter, Sandra Walters, and her husband, Tobin Darrow. Sandra and Tobin, I'm told, are both public prosecutors for the state of Washington. And completing the group and bringing the third generation, their daughter, Tara Darrow.

I would ask all hon. members to extend a warm welcome and welcome back to the group visiting us from Seattle, Washington.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Members of the Assembly, I want to introduce to all members another person who is seated in the Speaker's gallery. The face will be familiar to many of the members because she served as a Page in the year 2000 here in the legislature. And I'm referring to Charla Borowski who is now in training for being a chiropractor in Portland, Oregon. And we welcome her back to her home city of Regina.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

New Deputy Leader of Canada's Official Opposition

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Upon reading the front-page headline in today's *StarPhoenix*, I noticed that a constituent of mine was named as the deputy leader of Canada's official opposition. Saskatoon-Rosetown-Biggan Member of Parliament Carol Skelton is a resident of Harris, Saskatchewan, and was elected to parliament in the year 2000. The former

deputy Health critic stated that as a woman, grandmother, and mother, she has a vantage point that allows her to, and I quote: "look across our country and see a lot of things that I would like to have changed."

Before entering federal politics, Ms. Skelton was active on the family farm with her husband, Noel, and their children. Also among her many activities, she worked for the Red Cross.

Carol Skelton was active in getting the Saskatchewan Party established because she believed provincial Liberals and Conservatives should join forces along with federal free enterprisers to replace the tired and failing NDP (New Democratic Party) government in Saskatchewan. To that end, she became the first Saskatchewan Party president in the Rosetown-Biggan constituency and played a major role in our victory in a riding held by an NDP cabinet minister.

Now I know that that fact does not please my colleagues across the way, but I am sure that they are pleased that Carol Skelton has moved on to a successful federal political career and will join with us in congratulating her on her new role.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(13:45)

Do It With Class Young People's Theatre

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to call attention to one of our city's finest performing arts companies, Do It With Class Young People's Theatre. This non-profit group of young singers, dancers, and actors was formed in 1993 by artistic director, Andorlie Hillstrom, who is well known for her work in drama and musical theatre. She is ably assisted by Rob Ursan as music director and Ana Maria Campos as dance director.

The group was formed to give enhanced training and performing opportunities for young people, and I can speak from personal knowledge in saying that it has been a smashing success. It began with 12 students and now has grown to over 90 young people from ages 8 to 19. It now has junior and senior musical theatre companies and junior and senior dance companies.

Each year, Do It With Class stages a minimum of four major performances. Perhaps some of you were lucky enough to have seen *The Nutcracker* last Christmas or *Les Miz* in the winter. They have also performed at the Children's Festival, the Cathedral Arts Festival, and the Teddy Bear Bash. This fall, I am told, they will recreate the '60s musical *Hair* for which I am nostalgic in more ways than one.

This is a great group of kids, Mr. Speaker — one of whom is my daughter, Ingrid — and I encourage all who are interested in the performing arts to offer their support. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Swift Current Chapter of Students Against Drinking and Driving

Mr. Wall: —Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to salute the hard work of the Students Against Drinking and Driving chapter in my hometown of Swift Current at the Swift Current Comprehensive High School.

Back in May the provincial awards banquet was held in Weyburn, where three of the six RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) Leadership awards were won by students from the Swift Current Comp High School. Congratulations, Mr. Speaker, to Jenna Wanner, Nikita Horvey, and Brooke Gloeckler for receiving this award. And I'd also like to congratulate one of their teacher advisors, Mr. Speaker, Sarah McDonald, who is a co-recipient of the Stan Dyck Memorial Award, which acknowledges the advisor of the year.

They put a lot of effort, Mr. Speaker — the SADD (Students Against Drinking and Driving) group does in Swift Current — into raising awareness on the issue of drinking and driving. They participate in various events, organizing them — such as the Red Ribbon campaigns at RCMP checkstops, staging mock crashes at the Comp High School, and volunteering their time to various charitable groups and non-profit associations.

They're currently involved in a letter-writing campaign which supports the changing of drinking and driving laws, such that it would be made easier for police to order blood samples in serious accidents where it's believed alcohol may be a factor.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to be able to join every year as a judge in the mocktails competition that the group has at the Swift Current Comprehensive High School.

Mr. Speaker, the Swift Current SADD group works tirelessly to promote such an important cause, not only just in Swift Current but across the province, and I'd ask all members to congratulate them on their achievement and encourage them in their continued efforts.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Loon Lake Student Wins Scholarship

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am extremely pleased to take this opportunity to congratulate Michelle Corbeil, a grade 12 student from the Ernie Studer School in Loon Lake who was recently honoured with a local excellence award by the Canadian Millennium Scholarship Foundation.

Ms. Corbeil was awarded the \$4,000 scholarship for her academic achievements and for her leadership contributions to the community and her commitment to innovation.

Mr. Speaker, as well as being a very successful student, Ms. Corbeil has been extensively involved in her community and in her school. During her last year at Ernie Studer School she served as president of the Student Representative Council, was involved in the environment and the recreation club, volunteered for Meals on Wheels, Telemiracle, and World Vision, was also actively involved in the 4-H, and somewhere

in there also had time to do some curling, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, active, committed, caring people like Michelle Corbeil are a big reason why the future of this province is wide open, and I want to congratulate her on her achievement so far — and I emphasize so far — and I ask my colleagues on both sides of the Assembly to join me in wishing her every success in the future.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Community Spirit Alive in Oxbow and Alida

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, as you know over the last decade or so that the NDP have been in power, it's been tough times across . . . in rural Saskatchewan. It's been hard to keep community facilities open.

Well on Saturday night a couple of the communities in my constituency decided to do something about it and so I had to spread myself a little thin. It didn't work, Mr. Speaker, and that may have been because there was two suppers to go to.

In Oxbow they put on a lobster supper, Mr. Speaker, lobster and steak for the community. They had to have good Canadian beef, and they raised \$17,000, Mr. Speaker, for their new golf course at Alameda.

The community of Alida, Mr. Speaker, not to be outdone by Oxbow, put on a supper as well where everyone in the community participated, and they had an auction as well as a supper.

Mr. Speaker, the Alida community and area raised over \$47,000 for their new rink, Mr. Speaker. That, along with the contribution from the NHL (National Hockey League) Players' Association of 55,000, means that the new floor, new boards, the fixing up of the rink is almost paid for, Mr. Speaker. And they haven't yet played a hockey game.

Mr. Speaker, I think both of those communities deserve a good round of congratulations and applause for the hard work and effort they've put into maintaining their communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Her Majesty's Canadian Ship *Regina*

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, Her Majesty's Canadian Ship *Regina* is homeward bound from the Persian Gulf and due to arrive at Esquimalt, BC (British Columbia) on Canada Day.

Throughout *Regina's* time in the Gulf, she was a proud ambassador for our capital city. When allied nations' helicopters landed on her flight deck, they saw the Regina International Airport sign. Visitors onboard walked the passageways and saw the street signs for Dewdney, Albert, and Victoria.

For those sailing past, the RCMP horse and rider emblem on *Regina's* bridge wings spoke of the ship's proud association with the city of Regina and the RCMP. Gunner the Gopher, Gainer's seagoing cousin, and their call sign, Roughrider, used during operations further reinforced the close ties between the ship and her namesake city.

Once home the crew will have the opportunity for some well-deserved leave. In August, Commander Bill Truelove will turn over command to Dan Sing, and a delegation of *Regina's* crew will visit our city this fall to take part in Remembrance Day services as well as our Grey Cup festivities.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in wishing HMCS (Her Majesty's Canadian Ship) *Regina* fair winds as she continues her journey home. In the words of the ship's official motto, Floreat *Regina*, Let *Regina* Flourish!

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan History Book

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have always known that Saskatchewan's history is a rich and colourful one. There's a new book out this month, Mr. Speaker, that serves up a series of vignettes from our past and demonstrates just how fascinating that history truly is.

University of Saskatchewan historian, Bill Waiser, and CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) producer, Paul Dederick are in Regina tomorrow to promote their book, *Looking Back: True Tales from Saskatchewan's Past*. Based on the popular five-minute history series created by the authors and broadcast on CBC for 60 episodes, the book brings to life little known and often bizarre stories that celebrate real people of our past.

From the counts at Whitewood and their failed beet distillery, to the Willow Bunch giant and his tragic end, to the wonder of the Debden miracle, and even how Melville's population jumped from 4,000 to 60,000 in a day during the royal tour of 1939, this book offers readers a taste of the smaller events, both lighthearted and heartbreaking that have shaped our past.

Waiser and Dederick breathe colour and life into the pages of this book and encourage us to get in touch with the stories that have shaped us. I would encourage all members to pick up a copy of *Looking Back: True Tales from Saskatchewan's Past*.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Support for Beef Industry

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are now beginning the sixth week of the BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy) crisis in Canada after the discovery of one cow in Alberta that had BSE, and that has virtually paralyzed the beef industry due to trade restrictions placed on Canadian beef.

The media headlines today describe all too clearly the situation the industry finds itself in: "Future bleak for ranchers"; "Scare may cost more than \$650 million"; "Alberta county dubbed feedlot alley declares economic disaster from mad cow."

Yet, Mr. Speaker, the minister yesterday said he intends to go out . . . he intends to out-and-out reject a Saskatchewan Party common sense motion that has been proposed to have the Standing Committee on Agriculture meet regularly this summer to monitor the situation and developing government contingency plans in the face of the worst-case scenario — continued trade restrictions.

Mr. Speaker, why is the minister putting his own political interests above working together to help meet the beef industry in the province through this crisis time?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, I said yesterday and reiterate to this House again today that the Leader of the Opposition today asked the question himself, which is only to promote his own political interests. That's the only reason why, Mr. Speaker, that he does. Because I said yesterday, Mr. Speaker, I said yesterday to the media and to this House that we have, we have connected today across Canada all of the players that are going to be involved and have been involved in finding a plan on various different fronts.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, we decided across Canada that we needed to find the solution to first the BSE and the issue about where in fact the cow was sourced. We were able to do that, Mr. Speaker, collectively across Canada, not because the House was sitting, Mr. Speaker, because provincial governments, the industry, and the federal government worked closely together to develop a plan about how to do that.

The second piece, Mr. Speaker, that we worked on collectively, not because the House was sitting, Mr. Speaker, or any help from the opposition across, was to deal, Mr. Speaker, with the compensation. And we found the compensation piece for Saskatchewan and Canada, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The finest history of this place is when we come together to solve problems and to work together for the province of Saskatchewan.

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I would ask members not to be throwing . . . Order. Order. I would ask members not to be throwing personal remarks across the floor.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I related earlier, the headline said that the future is bleak for ranchers. That's the major story in today's *Leader-Post*. Survival of the Canadian beef industry is a matter of weeks or days instead of months and weeks, industry leaders are now saying.

Mr. Speaker, the minister told the media yesterday that he wouldn't support having the Standing Committee on Agriculture meet as proposed by the Saskatchewan Party, but if the border isn't opened way off in August or later, it might be

worth getting the committee together then.

Mr. Speaker, the story says and the industry knows that August will be too late to be working together to save the industry. The provincial government needs to be proactive and co-operative now and plan together and work together so that trade restrictions can be discontinued and this will happen more quickly.

Mr. Speaker, the beef industry and the people of this province expect members of the government and the opposition to work together. Why won't the minister agree to have this committee of the legislature, the Agriculture Committee of all things, meet through July to deal with this crisis?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, this minister and this Premier and this government has in the past called the Standing Committee on Agriculture together on a variety of different fronts. And this is not one of the issues, Mr. Speaker, that the Standing Committee on Agriculture in fact would have a great deal of benefit today immediately.

And I said that yesterday, and I have not ruled out the notion that into the future we may need to call the Standing Committee on Agriculture together to deal with the broader issue if in fact, Mr. Speaker, the national plan that we have today and the national strategy that we have today doesn't work and we all need to come together then as a Saskatchewan people, of which the standing committee I think might be an appropriate way of doing that. And I said that we would do that if we need to into the future.

But I want to say this, Mr. Speaker. I have here two letters or two pieces of correspondence that I wrote back to the Saskatchewan Party way back in January, Mr. Speaker, January 4, 2002 and then again on March 5, 2002. And on both of those occasions, Mr. Speaker, I asked the Saskatchewan Party to provide me with some information as it related to the impact . . . or to the improvement or enhancements to the APF (agricultural policy framework).

And you know what, Mr. Speaker? I have not received one piece of correspondence or one iota from that party in better than two years, Mr. Speaker, and they want me to . . .

The Speaker: — Time has elapsed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't know what the minister is talking about — something about 202. He needs to get back to agriculture 101.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — We've got a job to do, Mr. Speaker. We need to be working together on behalf of the beef industry in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the industry itself acknowledges that the crisis time is right now, and the Minister of Agriculture knows that

the opposition critic for Agriculture, the member for Watrous, has been working diligently on this case, working with the industry, working with the government side, working on the national scope to try to bring resolution to the problem.

Mr. Speaker, we have done our part and we will continue to do our part on this side of the House. But there is more work to be done and there is more work to be done together with the government.

(14:00)

Even the minister admits that if the US (United States) border isn't open by August, the issue won't be about compensation; he says it will be about rationalization. Mr. Speaker, we don't want to get to that point.

Will the minister and the NDP government agree to support the Saskatchewan Party's motion for the Standing Committee on Agriculture to meet through July with the option of recalling the legislature in August if the situation is not resolved?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, I said yesterday to the media that that option remains open to this government into the future. The Premier can recall the legislature at any time, Mr. Speaker. He does not need the Standing Committee on Agriculture for a meeting.

And I say, Mr. Speaker, as I was saying a minute ago, I have asked on two occasions, in writing, to the Saskatchewan Party to provide me with some options as it relates, Mr. Speaker, to enhancing the agricultural policy framework in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Serby: — . . . and I've asked the Saskatchewan Party, Mr. Speaker, on a number of occasions now.

And I can table the two letters if the member from Rosetown doesn't understand who got them or where they went to. But I have not received, Mr. Speaker — and I've said this on a number of occasions in this House — I have not received from those 25 men and women one scrap of paper, Mr. Speaker, that will give me any idea about what they believe in or they think in terms of developing agricultural policy in this province.

And today the Leader of the Opposition stands in his place and says, please invite me to the Standing Committee on Agriculture so I can be updated in terms of what's happening in BSE in Canada over the next several months, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Car Thefts in Regina

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well it's pretty clear that the Agriculture minister doesn't know how to run the shop and if he wants advice from us, it's very easy. All he has to do is talk to his seatmate to call an election and then we can provide our information to them.

Mr. Speaker, last month the Minister of Corrections and Public Safety made a statement bragging about his plan to fight car thefts in Regina. But according to new figures released today, it isn't working. There were 330 cars stolen in Regina in May. That's an increase of 6.5 per cent from last year.

Mr. Speaker, Regina is once again the car theft capital of Canada with more than 10 cars being stolen every day. What is the NDP going to do to address the car theft epidemic in this city?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, once again the member opposite has it wrong. Regina's not the car theft capital of Canada; it is not seeing an epidemic. What we are seeing is what I had indicated in the ministerial statement was the reason that we would embark on phase 2, which is that we have seen a small spike in the number of auto thefts largely related to the fact that we have moved from young offenders over to more adult offenders.

This 6 per cent increase is there; we were aware of it. It's one of the reasons that we have put into place the second phase of the program, and Mr. Speaker, I have every reasonable . . .

The Speaker: — Order, members. Order.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Well that's a shocking admission by the member from Watrous that she's sitting there laughing at this situation and how this affects Regina people.

I was interested to read a pamphlet from one of the Sask Party candidates here who says their solution is that they're going to start up boot camps. Well, Mr. Speaker, our approach to dealing with young offenders, our approach to dealing with this has been much more effective. We've brought down the auto theft rate. That solution by that mean-spirited Sask Party does not work, will not work, and is not going to be implemented.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Well, Mr. Speaker, it's very interesting to listen to the minister that a 6.5 per cent increase is actually bringing down the numbers, and that 330 car thefts is a small spike. I'm amazed that the minister would have the gall to say that.

Mr. Speaker, much of the problem kind of alluded to by the minister is our revolving-door justice system for young offenders. Police report that the same 18 or 20 young offenders are responsible for most of these car thefts. The police catch them, lock them up; the car theft numbers go down. Then the justice system lets them out again; the car theft numbers go up.

Mr. Speaker, the Young Offenders Act is not working. Mr. Speaker, what is the NDP government doing to change the Young Offenders Act so there are meaningful penalties for these repeat car offenders?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Well typical of the Sask Party if you

ask me, Mr. Speaker, that they have always got to go to the extreme solution. Their solution as put forward by their candidates, as put forward by their critic, is to do nothing more than get the youth together and yell at them.

That might work at a caucus meeting, but that is not going to work in terms of how to deal with the auto theft strategy. And I think that's what the members opposite need to understand, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Order, members. Order.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, the fact is, is that the auto theft strategy has been very successful. There are a number of chronic repeat offenders that we have identified. They are in fact dealt with as according to the law. There's a point at which they have gone through the system; they were released back to the public as the courts have ordered.

Surely no member opposite, no member of the Sask Party, is suggesting that we should be intervening where the courts are clearly responsible.

The programs we have in place are working with alternative measures. I had indicated there was only a 10 per cent recidivism rate which is a truly successful number if you think about it — that 90 per cent of the young people involved in auto theft that go through the alternative measures program do not reoffend. And that is something the members opposite should understand as we look at the overall numbers for auto theft declining in the city of Regina.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, it's amazing the minister can stand up and say that their system is working. Why are we talking about a 6.5 per cent increase in car thefts over last year if it's working? I'm amazed the minister will stand up and say that publicly.

Mr. Speaker, the other part of the problem is the shortage of police officers on the street and the fact the NDP has broken its promise to hire 200 new police officers. Mr. Speaker, according to figures we've received from the Regina Police Service there are only 19 more police officers on the force today than there were in 1999.

In fact, if you take the Regina police, Saskatoon police, and the RCMP combined, there are fewer than 80 new officers compared to 1999 — nowhere near the 200 new officers the NDP promised.

Mr. Speaker, fewer officers on the street means more cars are being stolen. Why has the NDP broken its promise to hire 200 new police officers?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Well, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — . . . interfering by hollering across the floor.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I

guess we could either take the word of the member opposite or we could take the word of the police chief here.

We could listen to police officials across the province who say in fact the strategies that we have in place to fight crime — whether it's in terms of SHOCAP (serious and habitual youth offender comprehensive action program) and the additional funding we provided there, the new strategy we've got in place in the Battlefords, the auto theft strategy that's working here — we could take the word of the police chiefs and the police officers of this city or I guess we could take the word of the retired member or soon-to-be retired member from Wood River. That's the option.

For my purpose I'd just as soon trust the police, take their word. They indicate that the strategy is working. They appreciate the new resources that have been put in place and the numbers will demonstrate that as well.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well it's just amazing that the minister can get up and answer in a puerile manner of how it's working when in fact the numbers are going up.

Mr. Speaker, because of the NDP's broken promise, the police just don't have enough resources to deal with all the crime in Regina. It's not just car thefts that are up, contrary to what the minister is just talking about.

According to figures we received from the Regina Police Service — and who are we going to take the advice from now, or the numbers, Regina Police Service or the minister? — but break and enters were also up in May. The number of break and enters jumped by 38 per cent, from May, from 289 in May 2002 to 400 in May 2003.

Again, Mr. Speaker, a large part of the problem is the shortage of police officers on the street and the NDP's broken promise to hire 200 new police officers. Why has the NDP broken this promise?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I've indicated this time and again, that with the approach that we are taking, it is a targeted approach dealing with crime. And I have here a statement, as we had indicated with phase 2 of the auto theft strategy, that we were continuing with a targeted approach, we were putting additional resources in, and it was working.

Well the members opposite seem to know a lot more about policing than obviously the city police force do because here's what Clive Weighill says, who is the deputy police chief of this city. He says — understanding that yes, there has been a bit of a blip of an increase; we indicated that, that's why we implemented phase 2 — what does he say? It's a concern but we're making progress.

Why won't the members opposite support the Regina city police in recognizing we're making progress, that we have an approach that's worked between the province, the city, the

police, the Justice officials, and continue with the progress that's been made, rather than stand up and attempt their cheap partisanship, as they do, to promote their boot camps and other extreme views?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan Investments

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Crown Investments Corporation. Will the minister confirm that a special committee over at the Crown Investments Corporation, including the president, Frank Hart, have met recently with two companies — one a Toronto-based company — to discuss the potential privatization of the management of the \$900 million worth of CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) investment portfolio, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well as I've indicated before in many of my answers, we are always exploring options, Mr. Speaker. But I can assure that member, Mr. Speaker, that we have no intention — if he's referring to the CIC III (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan Industrial Interests Inc.) portfolio again — of privatizing that whatsoever, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Saskatchewan Party has acquired a confidential NDP government document that recommends the privatization of the management of the Crown Investments Corporation investment portfolio. According to the report from CIC, entitled Portfolio Management Options and Conceptual Recommendations, privatizing the management of CIC's money-losing investment portfolio would, quote:

... improve clarity, transparency, accountability, organizational effectiveness, and investment performance (Mr. Speaker).

It would pretty much fix everything that was wrong over at CIC. That's what the report says.

Mr. Speaker, does the minister agree with his own NDP government's report that CIC's management of more than \$900 million in taxpayers' assets lacks clarity, transparency, accountability, organizational effectiveness, and investment performance?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well first of all I would say that we have learned in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker, that we need to take what that member says with a grain of salt, first of all, to be sure that what he's saying is correct.

But let me say . . . And he holds the document up, Mr. Speaker,

he holds it up as if it's some revelation, waving his arms around, Mr. Speaker.

Let me say that it is absolutely consistent with what I have said every day that that member has asked the question. Obviously we have explored many, many options as it pertains to the CIC III portfolio investments, Mr. Speaker. And let me say that there have been over the years many recommendations.

Let me be clear. Amongst those recommendations, Mr. Speaker, this government has no intention of privatizing the CIC III portfolio, unlike what is apparently the proposition of that Sask Party if they were ever to become government, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What this report amounts to, Mr. Speaker, what it amounts to is a deathbed confession by the NDP that their Crown corporation policy has failed, Mr. Speaker. What does it recommend? It recommends the separation of the government from the management of CIC III's investment portfolio. Because according to the NDP's report, the CIC III portfolio needs better direction.

It recommends replacing the current board of directors with, and I quote, "a competent and credible private sector board." Who's on the current board of directors, Mr. Speaker, for CIC III? The hand-picked president, Frank Hart, and the minister, Mr. Speaker.

The question to the minister is this: does he agree with his own report that the current board of CIC III is incompetent and lacks credibility?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:15)

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all let me say that based on that member's record in here, I wouldn't trust him to quote anything accurately, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there is nothing, there is nothing — if the members opposite would listen, Mr. Speaker — there is nothing inconsistent in that question that he asked and in my reply, Mr. Speaker. Our government, our CIC officials have, over the years and will continue into the future, Mr. Speaker, continue to explore options as it pertains to the CIC III investment portfolio, as it pertains to our subsidiary Crowns.

Mr. Speaker, it is the prudent thing to do to have continual ongoing analysis of all of our investments whether it's CIC III or our subsidiary Crowns, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, there's still more. There is something called phase 1 which is the recommendation that says you ought to separate the management from the government, move it over to a private sector or at least separate it from the government . . .

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

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, recommendation no. 7 under phase 1 of the plan in the NDP's report is called branding. The report tells the NDP government that they have to change the name of CIC III to something less associated with the NDP government and its dismal record, presumably. They want to separate the CIC III from its money-losing investments in SPUDCO (Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company), the movie business, and stock market gambles.

Mr. Speaker, does the minister agree with the conclusion of his own report that there needs to be a rebranding of the NDP's Crown corporation policy in the province of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well unlike that Sask Party opposite, Mr. Speaker, we stand by our record, Mr. Speaker. Talk about rebranding. They might change their name to try and hide from the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. They might try and rebrand themselves to hide from the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, after the by-election they may want to rebrand themselves one more time, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there is nothing inconsistent in what I have said about this investment, none whatsoever. Mr. Speaker, it is the prudent thing to do.

And on a fairly regular basis, Mr. Speaker, that Sask Party opposite says they want independent analysis because they don't trust the officials, Mr. Speaker. They want independent analysis. Well he holds up an apparent document, Mr. Speaker, that has some independent analysis, apparently. What's wrong with that? We will continue to explore options as it pertains to CIC III and our subsidiary Crowns, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What this report is, this is a deathbed confession, Mr. Speaker, by a government in its dying days that recognizes that its Crown corporation policy has been a dismal failure in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Let's review what the report says. The internal report says, and I quote, there needs to be, quote:

. . . improved clarity, transparency, accountability, organizational effectiveness, and investment performance.

The NDP report says the current board, the minister, and Mr. Hart should be replaced by a competent, credible board, Mr. Speaker. And finally the report says that CIC will be best served if it is rebranded or disassociated from the NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, it couldn't be more clear. The only possible rebranding that will give this province solid Crown corporation policy is to switch from the NDP brand to the Sask Party brand.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — So, Mr. Speaker, to the Premier . . . The Premier wants to get up. Will he stand to his feet today and announce the next election and let the rebranding begin, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I am drawn into this debate by the discussion of rebranding and seeking new image and so on. A most amazing thing has appeared in the *Tisdale Parkland Review*, the weekly newspaper. It appeared on Friday, Mr. Speaker — an ad here that says the new Carrot River Valley constituency, the Sask Party will be holding its nominating meeting for the new Sask Party candidate in the Carrot River Valley constituency.

Now listen to this. You want to talk about rebranding and switching? Here's what it says. Mr. Richard . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite seem very interested to see what their own ad says. Their own ad says that Mr. Richard Hildebrand will be contesting this nomination. Now get this, Mr. Speaker. They've got a candidate in the Carrot River Valley by-election promoting their doctrines of privatization. Already they want rid of the candidate before they've even . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — You talk about rebranding selection, Mr. Speaker. We will stand behind the principles of public ownership, public utilities, and public investment in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Order, order. Why is the member from Regina Dewdney on his feet?

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With leave to introduce guests.

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

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, 23 wonderful students from W. F. Ready School in the constituency of Regina Wascana.

I had the opportunity to meet with them earlier and they asked a number of questions about the legislature and they proved to me, Mr. Speaker, that they are by far the best students and the very best school anywhere in the province. They're intelligent and very eager to be here today. And they have one or two more days of school left. So I'd like to introduce to all of you the wonderful students from W. F. Ready collegiate.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, before orders of the day I would ask leave of the Assembly to move a motion of condolence.

Leave granted.

CONDOLENCES

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, after a few brief remarks I would make the motion of condolence, seconded by the Leader of the Opposition, the member from Rosetown-Biggar; a motion of condolence to recognize the passing of a former colleague of ours in this House, Mr. Ian Hugh MacDougall.

Mr. Speaker, many will remember that Ian MacDougall served this House for an extended period of time in the 1960s, in fact right from 1960 to 1971. Mr. MacDougall spent much of his private career working in the oil industry. He began as a supervisor with the Producers Pipeline Ltd. and later after leaving elected office, Mr. MacDougall again worked in the industry; worked as a land man and a consultant in the Estevan area until his retirement in 1998.

In his private life, Mr. MacDougall was an active participant in his community. He devoted many years to working with children in the local air cadet squadron. He was instrumental in establishing the woodland regional . . . Woodlawn Regional Park in Estevan. Mr. MacDougall was also a dedicated lifelong supporter of the Saskatchewan Roughriders football team and served a considerable period of time on the Riders' executive, and I'm sure would have been extremely pleased with the Riders' performance in Toronto last week.

He was involved with the Elks, the Canadian Legion, and the Knights of Columbus, all organizations in his community that benefited from his involvement and leadership.

Ian MacDougall's first foray into elected office was as an alderman in the city of Estevan. He was elected to this Assembly in the 1960 general election, retained his seat in the 1964 and 1967 elections.

Mr. MacDougall remained interested in politics after leaving this Assembly and continued to be involved in his local party activities. And as a former member of this House, many of us will remember that Ian MacDougall was a long-serving associate member of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

And in recording its own deep sense of loss and bereavement, this Assembly will express its most sincere sympathy with members of his bereaved family.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I would move, seconded by the Leader of the Opposition, the member from Rosetown-Biggar:

That this Assembly records with sorrow and regret the passing of a former member of this Assembly and expresses its grateful appreciation of the contribution he made to his community, his constituency, and to the province.

So moved, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And it's indeed an honour to rise and second this motion, which was put forward by the Premier of Saskatchewan.

Although I didn't have the pleasure of knowing Mr. Ian Hugh MacDougall, I along, I believe, with all my colleagues in the legislature have the utmost respect for those men and women who are prepared to give service to their province by standing for election — whether it be local election as Mr. MacDougall did, or whether it be at the provincial level and which Mr. MacDougall served for three terms, or even should it be at the federal level.

Obviously for Mr. MacDougall's record of achievements he was involved in his community, and that has always been a tradition of Saskatchewan people, and Mr. MacDougall has held that tradition to its highest level. And the people of this province are indeed grateful, and the opposition is grateful, for the service that he provided to the people of Saskatchewan as an MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) for the Estevan constituency from 1960 until 1971.

Mr. Speaker, as the Premier mentioned, Mr. MacDougall worked with children. He worked and supported the Saskatchewan Roughriders, the team that all Saskatchewan people love dearly. He was involved with the Elks, the Canadian Legion, and the Knights of Columbus.

Mr. MacDougall was also a working man and contributed to the economy in one of Saskatchewan's brightest industry, that being the oil and gas industry, as a supervisor with Producers Pipelines Ltd. And, Mr. Speaker, in that regard his legacy also lives on as the oil and gas sector is performing in southeast Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we also want to record our sense of sorrow at Ian MacDougall's passing. We wish to express that sympathy and our best wishes to the family, particularly to Mrs. MacDougall who is present in the legislature today, and we want to assure the family that our prayers and best wishes are with them, and that we do truly stand in appreciation of the work that Mr. MacDougall has done for the province of Saskatchewan.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Mr. Speaker, it's certainly a privilege and a pleasure for myself to join with my colleagues in honouring the memory of Ian Hugh MacDougall.

It was a pleasure and a privilege for me to meet and know Mr. MacDougall, a man with a great sense of humour and a man with a great deal of devotion, not only for the Liberal Party here

in this province, but for the people of Saskatchewan and our very, very own Saskatchewan Roughriders.

Ian MacDougall was a man who was proud of his Scottish heritage and, according to his wife Bernice, counted among the great moments of his life a gathering of the clans for the MacDougalls at Grandfather Mountain in West Virginia, and I understand a good time was had by all.

Senator Davey Steuart remembers when election day came around, Ian MacDougall would put on his kilt and his Scottish outfit and show up at the committee rooms to put in the hard work, but also to boost the morale of the troops and to help get everyone over the top.

Senator Steuart remembers Ian as a good friend, a faithful attendee in the legislature, and a member who took part in many debates and more than held his own, putting his points across forcefully and with clarity. He worked hard for his constituents, and even after he had finished serving in the legislature, he took an active interest in politics and what was going on in his community and indeed in southern Saskatchewan.

Bernie Collins, former Liberal MP (Member of Parliament) for Souris-Moose Mountain, said Mr. MacDougall never forgot the people who supported him. Bernie remembers when Ian and his wife, Bernice, moved to Regina, Ian would call Bernie to let him know he was going to a funeral or an event for a friend or a former constituent wherever it was in southern Saskatchewan. He never forgot his roots or his friends.

(14:30)

Of all the people I came across in Estevan, Mr. Collins said, he is one of the five to whom I owe a tremendous debt of gratitude. He went out of his way for people and to help them in any way he could. Bernie said: as dedicated as Mr. MacDougall was to politics, he was equally as dedicated to the Saskatchewan Roughriders. If the Roughriders ever had to suit up another man to go in, Ian would volunteer to be that man, remembers Mr. Collins. Mr. MacDougall never got the chance to suit up but he did the next best thing and served with distinction on the Roughrider executive for many years.

Mr. MacDougall's greatest passion though was for his wife, Bernice. They loved to dance. So much so that they went on a cruise with the Emeralds band and ended up dancing, not only every night but sometimes twice during the day the entire cruise.

Mr. MacDougall was a great family man and a man with a great sense of humour. Over 400 people attended his funeral in April with the eulogy given by Senator and former Saskatchewan lieutenant governor, Jack Wiebe. It is difficult to sum up the man with such a record of public service but perhaps it is best fitting to let Bernice have the last word — he had a great sense of humour, he had a great loyalty to the Liberals, and he was a great family man.

Mr. Speaker, he will be fondly remembered and sadly missed by all who knew him, and I wish to join with my colleagues in this Assembly in extending my sincere sympathy to his wife, Bernice, and his bereaved family.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege as well to rise today to talk of Ian MacDougall.

I first met Ian in 1977 when I went to work for, at the time, Dome Petroleum down in the Estevan and southeast area. Ian had started work many years before with the — you might say on the same job but with a different company because the name seemed to change quite often — and he started off with Producers Pipelines Ltd. which after Dome Petroleum became Producers Pipelines Inc. again, which was a Saskatchewan company, Mr. Speaker.

And my first couple of days on the job I met Ian. I had to go into Estevan to do interviews and get all the paperwork done, and Ian was one of the people that I met with and talked on that particular day in April.

Mr. Speaker, there was . . . You found out very early about Ian's political interests. He made no bones about it that he was a passionate Liberal and professed that and defended it as well. And you have to remember in 1977, Mr. Speaker, the Liberals were still in power in Ottawa and Mr. Trudeau was certainly a very controversial figure in Western Canada but Ian defended him nevertheless, Mr. Speaker.

Ian's job with Producers Pipelines was dealing with people. He went out and dealt with the farmers. He worked at consulting and supervising some of the construction projects. But he was always dealing with people, dealing with the people in the communities. And you could certainly tell that he had a very good rapport with all of those that he dealt with and that was of benefit to the company, Mr. Speaker.

When we would go to a company function — be it a company meeting such as a safety meeting, or what was called the JIC, the Joint Industrial Council, which dealt with employees and management, Mr. Speaker — Ian was always there. And the discussion after the meeting was over always turned to either politics or to the Roughriders.

And Ian worked for many, many years as a volunteer for the Roughriders; he served on the executive. But around Estevan, everyone knew if you wanted to talk about the Riders or you wanted to find out how to get tickets, Ian was the guy you talked to. And he worked extremely hard in southeast Saskatchewan to make the Roughriders a successful entity that people wanted to support, and was instrumental in bringing a lot of resources from southeast Saskatchewan in support of the Roughriders, Mr. Speaker.

While I didn't always — or hardly ever in fact — agree with Ian's political views, we certainly had some good discussions around the table after our meetings or at the barbecues, Mr. Speaker. And they were always enjoyable, at least for myself and for Ian. We never changed each other's minds but we certainly had an opportunity to express ourselves, and I think the rest of the people around sort of enjoyed the show as well, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to offer my condolences to Bernice and family on behalf of myself and my family as well as the member from

Estevan, who today is doing business of the House in the cattle industry, Mr. Speaker. And she expressed her desires to offer her condolences as well. So on behalf of our members, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, by leave of the Assembly, I would move and again seconded by the Opposition House Leader:

That the resolution just passed, together with a transcript of oral tributes to the memory of the deceased, be communicated to the bereaved families on behalf of this Assembly by Mr. Speaker.

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to stand on behalf of the government and table responses to written questions nos. 759 through 762 inclusive.

The Speaker: — 759, 760, 761, and 762 have been submitted.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Motion No. 9 — Future Actions Relating to Occurrence of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to make a few remarks about the cattle industry in this province and then I'll be moving a motion concerning the BSE crisis in Saskatchewan and in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, the beef industry is a leader among agricultural industries in Canada. In the past four years beef exports have increased by 55 per cent nationally from \$2.7 billion in 1997 to 4.2 billion in 2001. Canada is the third largest beef exporter in the world, with 76 per cent of our exports going to the United States.

Since beef consumption in Canada is expected to remain relatively stable, the export market will become increasingly important to us if we are to continue to expand the industry, and Saskatchewan is the one province best equipped to expand our cattle sector.

Beef is a regular part of the Canadian diet with 89 per cent of Canadian households purchasing beef. The average Canadian consumes 50 pounds of beef each year.

Out of our total Canadian exports of beef, Mr. Speaker, 76 per cent go to the United States, 8.8 per cent to Mexico, 6.3 per cent to Japan, and 8.9 per cent to other destinations.

Convenience is becoming a big market. Heat-and-serve beef entrees have grown to an \$84 million category in just over three years, and this is an area where Western Canada is equipped to create some real value-added spinoffs.

Consumers are demanding safe, high quality, and consistent beef products that take the environment and animal welfare into consideration. Mr. Speaker, the industry's responding to consumer concerns with on-farm quality assurance programs as well as branded, case-ready, and certified products. Emerging new markets like Japan, South Korea, and China, Mr. Speaker, offer new opportunities in retail food service and processed beef sectors.

In Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, the value of our Saskatchewan beef exports has grown from 58 million to almost \$70 million over the last four years. These figures do not include the export of live beef cattle which are processed elsewhere. Saskatchewan does account for approximately 27 per cent of the beef cows in Canada, although only a portion are processed in the province.

The value of Saskatchewan beef exports show an increase of 20 per cent between 1998 and 2001, and an increase of 14 per cent from 2000 to 2001. In terms of processed beef products, Mr. Speaker, there was an increase of 35 per cent between 1998 and 2001, and an increase of 123 per cent from 2000 to 2001.

The majority of Saskatchewan beef processing companies acquire their carcasses locally, with a limited number coming from Alberta. Of Saskatchewan's total beef exports, Mr. Speaker, 96.6 per cent go to the United States of America, with 2.3 per cent going to Mexico, and 1.1 per cent to other destinations. There are eight federally inspected and seven provincially inspected beef processing plants in Saskatchewan as of January 2002.

Statistics Canada semi-annual survey estimates the number of cattle and calves on Saskatchewan farms at 2.44 million head on January 1, 2003, up 1 per cent from January 1, 2002.

Exports of Saskatchewan cattle were up 14 per cent in 2002 compared to last year. Fewer animals were shipped to Alberta and more were moved into the United States due to feed shortages caused by the 2002 drought. And that market absorbed all of those cattle, Mr. Speaker.

The survey reported the number of beef cows in Saskatchewan at 1.25 million head, up 2 per cent from January a year earlier; beef herd replacement heifers at 160,000 head; heifers for slaughter at 47,000 head, up 104 per cent from 2002; steer inventories of 57,000 head, up 73 per cent from 2002; and the number of calves at 828,000 head.

Western Canada's total inventory of cattle and calves was estimated at 9.61 million head, January 1, 2003.

Mr. Speaker, for the year 2002, the number of cattle and calves marketed through Saskatchewan auction markets and to Saskatchewan packing plants and abattoirs totalled 1.74 million head, 15.7 per cent above the previous year of 1.5 million head. Marketings were 24.3 per cent above the five-year average and 31.3 per cent above the ten-year average, Mr. Speaker.

373,580 head of cattle and calves were marketed for slaughter, 9.1 per cent above the previous year. Slaughter cattle marketings were 14.4 per cent above the five-year average and 9.7 per cent above the ten-year average. And cattle shipped to Saskatchewan plants totalled 166,860 head, 5 per cent above the

previous year.

Cattle shipments to Saskatchewan plants were 2.8 per cent above the five-year average and eight-tenths of a percent above the ten-year average. Slaughter cattle shipments out of province totalled 206,720 head, 12.6 per cent above the previous year. Slaughter cattle exports were 26 per cent above the five-year average and 11.4 per cent above the ten-year average.

(14:45)

Mr. Speaker, surely members of this Assembly — at least every member who is paying attention — can see from these industry statistics that the beef sector is one of the sectors in our economy that has actually been growing and one of the great engines for growth for the whole economy of this province, not just rural Saskatchewan.

If something doesn't happen to open the US border to trade in cattle and cattle products very soon, this government will preside over the demise of the beef industry in this province that we have come to know . . . (inaudible) . . . all members, Mr. Speaker.

Now for the representatives of the beef industry, Mr. Speaker, have described the current situation as the worst crisis to hit agriculture in our province's history. Yet we hear those members over there acting as if there is nothing more important than their summer vacation plans.

Last week we heard the Minister of Agriculture for Saskatchewan stand in this Assembly and decry the federal government and opposition for adjourning the House of Commons in the middle of the BSE crisis. And not more than five minutes later, Mr. Speaker, the Government House Leader stood two feet away from him and demanded that this Assembly be shut down.

Mr. Speaker, since this crisis began, we have heard our Ag minister declare on an almost daily basis that the border to the US is about to be opened — this despite precedent and evidence that suggests that it may be closed for some time to come, which would cripple our industry. The future of the industry is now measured in days and weeks — not months, Mr. Speaker. There is no time to waste.

It is important that this Assembly and all members be seen to be . . . remain engaged on this issue. The entire beef industry remains at risk and I don't believe it's too much to ask that members of this Assembly — or at least members of the Standing Committee on Agriculture — give up some of their summer to remain in touch with this issue on behalf of their constituents. We will be held to account by the industry and the people of Saskatchewan to do no less.

I recognize that the official government agenda is almost complete. However the issue of BSE is so important, elected members in this province simply cannot turn our backs on the ranchers and feedlot operators as well as other sectors of the industry that are adversely affected by this crisis just simply because of a weak government legislative agenda.

If this Assembly is to adjourn in the next week or two, it is

incumbent upon the Minister of Agriculture to keep all legislators informed through the Standing Committee on Agriculture. That is his job and it is our job.

There's great concern that Japanese and Korean worries about BSE may cause the US to close its border to Canadian beef for the foreseeable future. The US exports much beef to Japan and Korea and may not be willing to risk that market by reopening the border. The US government is taking comments on the current border closure until July 28 and rarely do they ever waive the period of comment. It is imperative that we are seen by our neighbours to the south to be doing everything possible to solve this problem, and it is even more important that we do everything possible to solve this problem, Mr. Speaker.

Hopefully, Mr. Speaker, the leadership shown by Ralph Klein will pay off. But in case it doesn't, I think this legislature has to be prepared to come together to discuss the issue and to question the minister further.

Further, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that if the borders are not reopened by August 5 it is our responsibility to reconvene. Again it may put a crimp in the member from Regina Victoria's summer vacation and other members' on that side of the floor summer vacations, but it is our job.

All members, Mr. Speaker, as government members and opposition members, must be seen to be proactive in this issue. We must be seen to be doing all that we can to help the situation. It doesn't seem too much to ask to direct the Standing Committee on Agriculture to meet weekly throughout the month of July to monitor the issues related to BSE. And, Mr. Speaker, it is the very least that the industry should be able to expect from this government and from us as their elected representatives in this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, almost every rural seat in this province is represented by a member from this side of the floor. And since the official opposition has standing on the Standing Committee on Agriculture, it is only proper that this be the tool to monitor the BSE crisis in this province, at least through the critical month of July.

I truly hope, Mr. Speaker, that this government will do the right thing for the cattle industry and the people of Saskatchewan and support this motion. It really is the very least that we can do.

Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to move this motion and I anticipate the full support of the government in this endeavour. Mr. Speaker, the motion reads as follows:

That this Assembly directs the Standing Committee on Agriculture to meet weekly throughout the month of July, 2003 to monitor issues related to BSE, should the Assembly stand adjourned at that time, and that, if the US border is not reopened to Canadian beef exports by August 1, 2003, that this Assembly reconvene on August 5, 2003 to receive a report on the BSE issue from the Standing Committee on Agriculture.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this motion will be seconded by the member from Watrous.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The closure of the US border to Canadian beef due to only one reported case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy has the potential to very quickly become the largest economic disaster that this country has ever seen.

I was reading last night, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the June 16 issue of the Canadian . . . or *Cattle Buyers Weekly*. And I was particularly impacted by an article entitled "BSE uncertainty weighs on market." And the article states, and I quote:

The longer the ban continues, the more desperate the financial crisis becomes for the Canadian industry. One Canadian analysis says that a one-month ban will cost the industry \$550 million. A four-month ban will cost it \$2.5 billion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the border has been closed for six weeks now and even though the minister has stated week after week that he believes that it will be opening very soon, the reality is that there has been absolutely no evidence that the border will be opened any time soon.

The science has been completed and the US doesn't appear to be any closer to opening the border because the fact of the matter is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is no political will on their part to lift the ban. Their cattle producers, the cattle producers in the US, are quite gleeful by this closure because they're receiving a better price for their beef than they have for some time.

Furthermore Japan and Korea's position on Canadian beef makes the situation even more alarming. They have not only banned the import of cattle and beef products from Canada, but they have also stated that they will not accept US exports unless it is certified that it did not originate from Canadian cattle.

Japan was the largest export market for the US in 2002 and Korea was the third largest export market for the US. Combined they are a crucial trading partner for the US and worth 2.5 billion to \$3 billion per year. If both Korea and Japan stay firm on this decision, one option for the US is to segregate Canadian cattle which will be costly and cumbersome; and the other option, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is not to lift the ban on the border.

There are reports that say Japan has given the US a July 1 deadline to provide a proposal as to what the US will do or Japan will come up with its own proposal. It's ironic, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's ironic that the Japanese parliament has just extended its session for another month so that gives it plenty of time to put forward proposals of its own. We need to be very, very concerned, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as to what those proposals will be.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this brings me to the response by our Agriculture minister yesterday when he was asked if he would support our motion. And his response was absolutely ludicrous and unbelievably hypocritical. He told the reporters yesterday that he would not support the calling of the Standing Committee on Agriculture to meet weekly throughout the month of July because he couldn't trust the opposition. I don't understand, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what he's been afraid of.

Since the one case of BSE has been reported, every single member of the Saskatchewan Party has been extremely careful not to make this a political issue. On this side of the House, we have all . . . every one of us has recognized that there is absolutely nothing to be gained by making this issue political. And there is an incredible amount to lose for the producers of this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we don't handle this whole situation very, very carefully.

If there has ever been a political spin put on this issue, it's been made by that Agriculture minister and that NDP government who just finished having a good chuckle. Well maybe they should go back in *Hansard* and check to see how his minister has answered some very serious questions that we've asked that have not been political in nature. We have asked questions about the BSE most days and they have always been carefully worded, only asking for information and an update on the investigation.

The questions have given our Agriculture minister the golden opportunity, day after day, to update and reassure the public that everything that was being done . . . or that could be done was being done. That gave him the opportunity to do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Saskatchewan Party has always felt that keeping the public informed and reassuring them is far more important than any political games that that minister may want to play. Mr. Deputy Speaker, what evidence, what evidence does anyone on that side of the House have that we're going to make this a political issue?

We supported, we supported the CFIA (Canadian Food Inspection Agency) investigation and complimented the province's co-operation with that investigation.

We supported the minister's decision to put together an industry advisory committee and complimented him on that decision.

We supported the government's position that the federal government should waive the two-week waiting period on Employment Insurance applications for workers affected by the slowdown and the beef industry.

We supported the provincial government's position that the federal government . . . with the federal government that a compensation package should be separate and distinct from the agriculture policy framework, and we even passed an emergency motion to that effect.

We supported the Premier when he stated that just a loan guarantee from the federal government would not be acceptable.

We supported the Premier's proposal for a cattle recovery program. And in fact, we have been far more supportive of the Premier's proposal than the actual program that's being forced upon this province by the federal government.

So I have no idea, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where this minister's coming from in trying to make it a political issue now.

If this Assembly and the legislative committees serve no

meaningful purpose and the . . . then the minister should let the public know that he doesn't think there's any purpose to this Assembly, that he doesn't think that there's any purpose to the Legislative Assembly or the legislative committees, or anything that's done in the legislature. He should be telling the public that he has no respect for that process whatsoever. The hypocrisy of this position is so obvious, I don't even know how he's going to defend his position.

(15:00)

This is the minister who criticized the federal government for adjourning when such a critical issue was still unresolved. Mr. Deputy Speaker, a quote from *Hansard* dated June 20 — this was a comment by our Agriculture minister in reference to the federal government adjourning:

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.

He was appalled. He was appalled. And yet he can't even call together a committee. That's our deputy . . . or that's our Deputy Premier. That's our Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wonder who said on June 19, who said on June 19, and again I'm quoting from *Hansard*:

Has the Liberal member of this legislature participated in any meaningful way to assist the people of Saskatchewan as . . . (we move) through the BSE crisis? He says we have work yet to do. He's right we have work left to do.

And do you know who said that in *Hansard*? Our Premier, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's a quote from our Premier. He knows that there's work left to do on this extremely important issue. This is a minister, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and a Premier, whose government wants to reconstruct or restructure the legislative proceedings so that more government business will be conducted in committee. And they . . . The member from Regina Dewdney spoke to . . . in quite length to that particular issue. And I would like to quote from him in *Hansard* of May 13 . . . On May 15 the member from Regina Dewdney, who says it was an extremely good speech, said:

That this Assembly recognize the advancements that this government has initiated with democratic reform of the legislature, reforms that bring the people of Saskatchewan closer to government.

Further along in his speech he stated:

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to talk about the new opening . . . the opening up of the committee structure in the legislature that's been proposed by this government. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's going to have citizens and stakeholders being able to go before (the) committees of the legislature — all-party committees of the legislature — to talk about proposed legislation, to put forward ideas, amendments, concerns, so that all members of the . . . committee from all parties of the legislature have an opportunity to hear from those stakeholders firsthand. It's

(an) opening up democracy so that the citizens of this province have a greater say in the future of our province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, those are significant steps forward. That's talking about valuing the opinions of others. It's talking about listening to the opinions of all. It's talking about working with all people to make the province a better place.

Further along, he stated:

That's what democracy is about. It's about being able to speak freely about your concerns. And at the end of the day, democracy says that the minority have the say and the majority, through voting, get their way. Well on this side of the House, (he stated) we believe very strongly in that principle. We believe . . . that.

That's rather interesting, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But this Agriculture minister doesn't see any purpose in a legislative Agriculture Committee meeting just once a week to discuss what has the potential to be the most important agriculture crisis that this province has ever seen.

If the Deputy Premier of this province — and we'll assume that the Premier supports his position — believes that the legislative committees are that ineffective and that useless, then why in the world is this Assembly going to the expense of putting in all the necessary infrastructure to room 110 so that the two committees can be run congruently and then telecasted? Why are we going to that expense if legislative committees are simply not that important? What is the point to that, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

The truth of the matter is if this Agriculture minister can't make political hay for himself, then he doesn't know what to do. He does not have a clue what to do. He has no idea how to co-operate. He doesn't believe in anything that his colleague from Regina . . . or Regina Dewdney said on May 13. He would call that just simply rhetoric. He obviously doesn't believe in a word that was said by his own member, his own colleague.

A reporter asked me yesterday why I felt the need to have the committee sit once a week. And she suggested that I should just pick up the phone and phone the minister each week and get an update. Well that would be a really novel thought, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If we had a minister that I could count on to return those calls, that would be a real novel treat. But we simply don't have a minister that's going to do that.

I represent the constituency that has the largest feedlot in this province. Brad Wildeman of Poundmaker is on the minister's advisory team and he couldn't get a better man to do the job. Brad and I talk fairly regularly but, in all fairness to Brad, his plate is full and he has a lot of concerns and a lot of people that he is very concerned about. He is giving more of his time than anyone will ever know or can even imagine the amount of time that that man has committed to this situation and to the industry.

He has made more than one trip to Ottawa. He has been to Alberta numerous times since the BSE case was reported. He's been to Vancouver. He's made the two-hour drive to Regina any time the minister needs him. He is taking a lot of calls from

other producers who want some answers or just some reassurance, and he has spent hours and hours on conference calls with industry stakeholders, and with the federal government, and he's taking most of the media calls on behalf of the industry.

And it would be nice, it would be very, very nice, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if he didn't have me also making demands on his time to get updates because our minister, our Agriculture minister, wants to play political games.

Mr. Speaker, this Agriculture minister is more concerned about his political behind than he has . . . than he is about any issue to deal with agriculture in this province. Every chance that he can possibly get, every chance that he can possibly get, he tries to answer all questions with the same old political rhetoric. He continuously accuses myself and the Leader of the Opposition of not having any agriculture policy, of not having any suggestions, and he has two favourite quotes of myself that he has used continuously and continuously because he can't come up with anything new. And he uses these repeatedly to avoid addressing or answering to any real issues on the agriculture front, his portfolio, his responsibility. He's the government, he's the minister, and he's the one that is simply falling back, time and time again, on the same old tired quotes — one of which is from two years ago.

Mr. Speaker, my political background, I will willingly admit, is pretty shallow. In fact I was told by one seasoned politician — one that I respect very much — that I am very politically naive. And I know that that minister has a fairly lengthy political background. He's been at this for a while.

So it's with great humour that I listen to that minister continually use the same old quotes and the same old accusations because even I know, with my inexperience, even I know it's not giving him any political mileage. It's transparent rhetoric and no one is listening to him, and no one is taking these cute little quotes seriously. And do you know what? He's still — he can use them all he wants — he's still going to lose in the next election.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Brkich: — I am requesting leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sitting in the east gallery, there is a number of students, 27 to be exact, grades 5 and 6 from the school of Lucky Lake. I wish to welcome them here. They are here with their teacher Audrey Weir, chaperones Terry Hall, Sonny Luchenski, Lyndon Simonson, Lloyd Simonson, Laurie Kelk, Bonnie Petrie, and Carrie Overlid.

I hope they enjoy the proceedings here. We're doing a private member's motion right now. And if I have time I will visit with you after your visit.

So I would ask all members to welcome you here to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Motion No. 9 — Future Actions Relating to Occurrence of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (continued)

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it's nice to see the classroom here.

And it was interesting in the bit of a break that we had for the introduction, we had the member for Saskatoon Eastview chanting away, "And that's not political?" Of course it's political right now. Of course it is. The minister has used political excuses for not addressing a really serious issue. Yes, I am going to push back. Is that such a surprise? Of course I'm going to push back.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the excuses that the minister gives for not supporting our motion is that the Saskatchewan Party never has any solutions. Well let's just take a quick review of the last two years, and I was time limited so I am sure there's many things that I have missed.

But let's go back to September 19, 2001 when we laid out our ethanol policy prior to that government having a clue what their policy was going to be at.

Let's go to May 3, 2002. We called for a conference of the Western provinces to come to . . . come together to develop a united position in response to the US trade attacks on agriculture and softwood lumber. It's something we called for I believe three times before the Premier caught on and decided hey, maybe it's a good idea, maybe it would be more effective than a strongly worded letter, and did actually have that conference.

On May 23, 2002 we proposed a \$10 million program to assist drought-stricken livestock producers, and July 22, 2002 we proposed a six-point plan that could help address the serious drought situation in this province.

On August 14, 2002 we called on the provincial government to allow cutting of more than 2,500 acres of Crown owned hay land next to the Rafferty-Alameda dam so as much as 4,000 tonnes of feed could be provided for the struggling cattle producers.

On August 30, 2002 we called on the provincial government to change their crop insurance policy so that it did not force farmers to go to the expense of spraying for grasshoppers when the crop was already a complete write-off.

On November 6, 2002 we called on the federal government to remove the CWB (Canadian Wheat Board) monopoly on the marketing of wheat and barley and to make legislative changes to ensure that producers were not jailed for the simple act of marketing his or her own grain.

On December 19, 2002 we suggested that, due to the severe provincial-wide drought of 2002, farmers should be given the option of excluding the 2002 yields from their long-term average for the purpose of calculating crop insurance coverage levels.

On May 6, 2002 we called the surcharge on crop insurance premiums to be waived in light of the fact that it is a very unfair change when the producers have just faced two years of severe drought. And I'll change the date of that; I'm sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That was 2003.

And just last week, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we suggested that the province should be asking the federal government if we could have the same grasshopper program that's been given to Alberta.

We have continually pressured the minister to be an active voice at the table when the risk management program is being designed by the federal government and all the other provinces except for ours and Quebec.

So now, Mr. Deputy Speaker — I'm sure I missed a few things — but now let's review the minister's accomplishments. He's so quick to answer our questions by saying we have no suggestions; there's no point calling the committee together because we need to . . . you know, we have no ideas. Well let's check his record out since he's been minister.

For two consecutive years he's cut the Agriculture budget by \$40 million. Two years in a row he's cut the Agriculture budget. For two years in a row that Agriculture minister has increased crop insurance premiums and he's cut, he's gutted the crop insurance program.

Do you know what he did last year, Mr. Deputy Speaker? He tried to sell the producers that he was only increasing it by 7 per cent. But unfortunately they can do their math a little better than that minister can do his math because when they did the calculations, he had to backtrack and say, whoops it's a little bit more than 7 per cent. It certainly was. Some producers were faced with a 60 per cent increase on their crop insurance premiums. At least this year he came clean and said that the average increase would be 52 per cent.

He said that our six-point plan to address the drought issue wasn't possible because the federal government wouldn't allow it. And at the same time as those words were almost leaving his lips, Ralph Goodale was downtown in Regina saying the federal government would do whatever it could to the crop insurance program to make it flexible, to address the extreme drought condition that was happening in our province at the time. He said it wasn't . . . that Agriculture minister said it wasn't possible. This how great his ideas are.

(15:15)

He is sure very, very quick to cast a stone, but let him defend this particular record. He said that our suggestion for money for water infrastructure — something that is not ad hoc; something that would be there for a long time to address drought issues for many years to come — was just a dumb idea.

He did, their government did finally come out with an ethanol strategy but it was after we'd already announced our own. So I don't see how he can claim it as only their idea and suggest that we have had no suggestions.

He made welcome changes to The Farm Land Security Act, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but that's quite a hoot too because that has been the Saskatchewan Party policy since its inception, was changes to The Farm Land Security Act. So how the . . . whatever could he claim that to be his own idea and that the Saskatchewan Party is void of ideas?

He announced, he announced, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a \$220 million drought assistance package which only took less than five minutes for everyone to do the math and figure out that it only amounted to \$20 million of new money for any of the producers in the province.

He announced a hog loan program, one which the Saskatchewan Party supported, we supported. But it wasn't a new program; it's one that they used in the past and they just resurrected it at the time of need, and we support that.

He announced a conservation cover program which only covers a maximum of 50 acres when the average Saskatchewan farm, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is around 1,600 acres.

He announced a loopy little rainfall lottery which was supposed to be the big enhancement to crop insurance, but it did nothing to identify where there was a need for assistance and it was restricted, very restricted, to how many producers could participate.

He announced the Farm Families Opportunities Initiative and again that's something we supported. But again, it has very narrow limitations as to who can participate.

So where is this minister's ideas? He will answer questions on accusing the Saskatchewan Party of not having ideas, not having solutions, not having suggestions. Where is his grand solutions here?

Isn't it annoying, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the facts keep getting in the way of the good little NDP spin that he wants to put on everything, when the list of what's been done gets in the way of how he wants to spin it?

This minister so wants the public and the media to believe that they have all the answers. Then why are so many producers in this province struggling, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

There is no vision in anything that this Agriculture minister has accomplished; there has been no long-term planning. It's crisis management and it's weak crisis management at that because this NDP government has run this province's finances so far into the ditch that they can't implement anything that's meaningful to the agriculture industry in this province.

The minister needs to come clean. He needs to stop playing games and he needs to come clean.

What exactly is his agriculture policy? What exactly is his agriculture policy? Because I've never heard him state it. I have

never heard any member on that side of the House state what their agriculture policy is. They like to accuse us of not having an agriculture policy; let's hear what theirs is. And if he has one, if he has an agriculture policy that's more than two lines long, let's hear him lay it out when he addresses this motion.

I challenge him to put his money where his mouth is and lay out the agriculture policy, his agriculture policy. He can chirp all he wants about the Saskatchewan Party's agriculture policy but his record as Agriculture minister speaks for itself. He has done nothing for the producers of this province.

And this NDP government is going to be voted into oblivion if they ever get up enough courage to call an election.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm going to be supporting the motion put forward by the member from Thunder Creek. Almost all of the rural . . . of rural Saskatchewan is represented by Saskatchewan Party MLAs. Some of us even own cows. We need to be informed. We need to have the opportunity to bring forward our constituents' suggestions, ideas, and concerns so they can be discussed and considered.

There needs to be — this is getting critical — there needs to be a 30-day strategy, a 60-day strategy, a 90-day strategy if the US border remains closed. The committee can meet with the industry and listen to their suggestions. The minister and his officials could meet with the committee and brief them on their updates. The committee could, if the minister would allow it, set aside political differences and treat this crisis with the seriousness that the beef industry deserves.

This finding of one case of BSE has indeed put our governments and our cattle industry into an ocean of uncharted territory. This is our Agriculture minister's opportunity to prove that he can swim.

I will be supporting the motion put forward by the member from Thunder Creek.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm interested in getting into briefly speaking to the resolution that's been put forward today by the Saskatchewan Party. But only, Mr. Speaker, from the point of view of providing some factual information to the House, Mr. Speaker, and then proceeding to a vote, Mr. Speaker.

I want to say on the onset, Mr. Speaker, that when the members opposite stand on their feet and talk about this particular issue, never mind the other issues around agriculture, but just, let's just take some time to speak about this very issue, Mr. Speaker.

When in fact it was first announced that there was BSE in Canada, Mr. Speaker, the very first thing that we did is that we contacted the industry immediately, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And what we did is we got the industry into Regina immediately, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and organized a process for which we could have contact throughout the province with all of the industry.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, what we did immediately is that we

contacted all of the Agriculture ministers across the country and very quickly then called an emergency meeting of Agriculture ministers; simultaneously the premiers across the country in Western Canada too were having a conversation. So immediately within short order what happened is that the industry, the governments at both the national and the provincial level, came together immediately and began to put together a strategy for which we would be working on this particular issue, Mr. Speaker.

And when we went through the process, both at the provincial level and at the national level, the idea here, Mr. Speaker, was to develop a plan of which we would be able to manage this particular issue over a period of time. And the strategy, Mr. Speaker, was that we would develop a plan that would take us through right until the end of August of this given year, knowing full well that there will be a variety of different issues that will transpire between now and the end of August, and that in order to get there we need a number of commitments from a variety of different people — both from the industry, both from the federal government, both from the provincial government — and accordingly develop the plan for the next three months, Mr. Speaker, or for three months that would include three things.

First of all we decided, Mr. Speaker, that one of the first issues that we needed to do is get the whole issue around food safety off the table and support CFIA in their work to get there. And accordingly every day for the period of four weeks we had a press conference here in Saskatchewan; there was a national press conference that was done in Ottawa. And each of the provinces across the country did the very same thing to ensure that all Canadians were fully aware of what happened, Mr. Speaker, on a daily basis as it related to the science.

And interestingly enough I listened carefully to what the member from Watrous said, Mr. Speaker, and where she said that, on a daily basis they'd come in here and they'd ask questions and what it would do is to provide additional information to Saskatchewan people. What really happened, Mr. Speaker, is that we would do our press conference downstairs in the morning; the member from Watrous would be there along with her aide who would . . . or someone from the caucus office, and the translator from their office would assist them in getting the questions. They'd come up into question period, Mr. Speaker, and ask me the very same questions that I just finished answering in the press statements in the morning.

So what we did for four weeks in the House is respond to the Saskatchewan Party to questions that they put to me that we'd already answered nationally, either through my officials or that I personally answered, Mr. Speaker. Hardly an inquisitive or an additional question that was asked by the Saskatchewan Party that wasn't already completely, wasn't already completely responded to either by me personally on behalf of the provincial government or by CFIA as it relates to what was happening on the national scene, Mr. Speaker.

So the entire piece as it relates to the BSE and in terms of managing the science, we provided full, and we'll continue to provide full detail as it proceeds along the way.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, we said we needed to deal with the

compensation piece for producers. And what we did is we gathered, as you know, in Kelowna, the premiers did; from Kelowna came the meeting in Vancouver; and from Vancouver, Mr. Speaker, came the package that we are now working with today with the industry and other provinces and the federal government. And we'll stay abreast of that compensation package.

In fact as late as today, Western ministers had yet another conversation about how in fact the movement of livestock is working across the country, whether or not packers are moving livestock today, what's happening at the auction marts and at the auction barns. Our officials are communicating with each other on a daily basis to try and get the movement of livestock moving across the country, both in Eastern and Western Canada. And so that process, in my view, has been slower than what we'd like to see it happen, but the reality is, is that it's moving.

Now the other bigger piece of course that we're working on today is the whole area of opening the border. This is a far more difficult issue given that it lies solely in the purview of the federal government. And we have a strategy and a plan in terms of how the industry will be working closely with the American industry, how the provinces through the premiers will be working closely with the US government, and how Mr. Vanclief and the officials . . . and other elected officials from the federal government will be working closely to move this whole process along.

And the strategy that we built, Mr. Speaker, nationally is for a period of about 30 . . . or for about 90 days. And it is that strategy that we've tied our working processes around, that officials from all of the provinces are currently being guided by, that the work of the federal government and the US government are closely guided by, and that . . . And all of the work that we've talked about and put together over the several, the last several weeks is guided by those, by those directives. And we have a process of having regular contacts with one another to make sure that in fact we get through the piece in the way in which we hope to.

Now the biggest issue of course will be the opening of the border. Both the member from Thunder Creek and the member from Watrous who stand up and talk about the fact that this is a most serious issue facing Saskatchewan people and Canadians, has been stated numerous times in this Assembly and across Canada by everyone and all who know the impact of this particular issue, and so to make the statement that somehow someone's unaware of this issue would be totally inappropriate, Mr. Speaker, and to some degree misleading. Because not only have we been leading the campaign on many fronts, but have also . . . but also designed a package to, or a strategy in terms of how we're going to deal with the issue over this period of time. And so nobody for a minute is downplaying this particular issue at the national stage.

Now to suggest today that somehow a standing committee of agriculture, our provincial Standing Committee on Agriculture would have some greater impact today on the decision-making process, Mr. Speaker, here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, is absolutely, totally ludicrous and only has one particular benefit for the Saskatchewan Party and that's to try to assert themselves

into the political process because for the last several weeks, Mr. Speaker, they have been void from the television cameras. They have been void from the media. And so today they're putting this particular issue forward because they believe that somehow they could interject themselves, Mr. Speaker, and try to get some political visibility.

(15:30)

And I can understand, Mr. Speaker, why it is that they chirp from their chairs about not having any exposure on agriculture because the reality is, Mr. Speaker, they have been void on this issue, irrespective of what the member from Watrous says, where she stands up on her feet and says that these are all the things that we propose and we're taking credit for all of them. The reality is, Mr. Speaker, that for 25 or 26 men and women who sit on that side of the House, you haven't seen anything of any productivity on agriculture at all anywhere, Mr. Speaker.

And the member from Saltcoats, and the member from Saltcoats who's travelled, Mr. Speaker, a number of political parties, Mr. Speaker, and I hear him chirping from his chair and he tried, I think, to develop policy for Liberals and he tried to develop policy for the Saskatchewan Alliance and he tried to develop policy for Grant Schmidt. And what we'll find, Mr. Speaker, is that he'll be out working on his farm after the next provincial election because he hasn't been able to deliver any policy from his own constituency or from his own party, Mr. Speaker.

And so I say, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about . . . And I heard the member from Watrous say, you know, we've developed all of these wonderful strategies as a political party and this is all the things that we are going to do as a political party, as the Saskatchewan Party, in terms of building an agricultural strategy.

Well I have here, Mr. Speaker, today . . . I have here, Mr. Speaker, today the campaign literature that's being circulated by the Saskatchewan candidate, Saskatchewan Party candidate, Michelle Hunter from Regina Lakeview, Mr. Speaker. And this is her literature, Mr. Speaker.

And they have . . . And she has on her campaign literature three individual bullets of what the Saskatchewan Party is going to be doing, and one of them . . . right downtown Regina, Mr. Speaker. They have agriculture identified as one of their platform planks that they're going to be working on, Mr. Speaker.

Well let me just review for you what it is that Ms. Hunter is circulating on behalf of her party and her leader and their . . . in terms of agricultural policy for Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And I say, Mr. Speaker, let's just review it.

Well the first thing that she says under agriculture is that we're going to do this first. We're going to:

Negotiate a new long-term safety net to stabilize farm businesses and protect farm families from international commodity . . . wars.

Mr. Speaker, that's what they're going to do.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we've just finished negotiating in Canada one of the most comprehensive agricultural farm policies by not only one province but by 10 provinces and the federal government, Mr. Speaker. And we've been working at it for two and a half years. And it addresses itself to commodity prices, it addresses itself to disaster, and it decides itself to insurance, Mr. Speaker.

And the Saskatchewan Party candidate and their platform says you know what, what we're going to do is we're going to wake up, Mr. Speaker, and we're going to develop a brand-new policy on our own.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that is about as achievable, as achievable, Mr. Speaker, as the Leader of the Opposition ever being the premier in this province, because it'll never happen, Mr. Speaker.

One individual party is going to try and develop a plan for Canada, Mr. Speaker, to deal with commodity prices, Mr. Speaker, when in fact on a regular basis on that side of the House you hear the Leader of the Opposition or other members stand up and say they don't even support a subsidy program, Mr. Speaker, don't even support it, don't even support compensation on trade, Mr. Speaker.

And we have the Leader of the Opposition on record and they've got it in their campaign literature that they're going to undo a national plan over the next five years — that we're going to be signing, Mr. Speaker — how ridiculous could your literature be, Mr. Speaker, on the very first bullet that they put forward?

The second bullet that they have, Mr. Speaker, in their campaign literature is they're going to introduce an enhanced crop insurance program to strengthen protection against — and take this, Mr. Speaker — against weather-induced yield reduction. Could you believe it, Mr. Speaker?

We introduced in our crop insurance program over the last couple of years enhanced programs for weather programs, Mr. Speaker, and we've taken our crop insurance program today where we have a premium of \$250 million in a crop insurance, Mr. Speaker — the highest premiums that are provided today by the federal and the provincial government.

And the member from Watrous stood on her feet and ridiculed our program, Mr. Speaker. Today they have it in their platform of something they're thinking of doing when we've already completed it, Mr. Speaker. They're going to proceed with their agricultural policy to do that, Mr. Speaker.

And how about this, Mr. Speaker, their third bullet that they're going to do is they're going to reduce the burden on education property tax on farm land, is their third bullet, Mr. Speaker. Well we already have a committee in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, that's reviewing this piece. They're going to be providing that information not only to the Saskatchewan people, Mr. Speaker.

And I know that the member, I know that the member, I know that the member, Mr. Speaker, from Canora-Pelly is going to take the education property tax and he's going to take it off

completely, Mr. Speaker, and I know that as the critic of Finance he's going to reduce the taxes in this province, Mr. Speaker, because I hear him on a regular basis. But, Mr. Speaker, the process already is under way to look at the whole farm-land issue and what happens is that they've got it in their platform, Mr. Speaker.

Now they do have one original idea in their platform, Mr. Speaker, and this is their original idea that they're saying, Mr. Speaker — fourthly what they're going to do in their campaign, Mr. Speaker, they're going to support producer choices of grain marketing and we know what that means, Mr. Speaker. They're going to whack the Wheat Board, that's what that is. This is about getting ready to whack the old Wheat Board and they've got it in their campaign platform, Mr. Speaker.

So when they stand up and say, you know we're . . . have this wonderful platform here that we're developing today in agriculture, Mr. Speaker, four are already done and one is the privatization agenda, Mr. Speaker, and whacking the old Canadian Wheat Board, Mr. Speaker.

I say when you examine the record of this party, Mr. Speaker, when you examine the record of this party, there is absolutely no evidence for any reason for bringing them together for any public debate, Mr. Speaker, because there isn't any evidence of ability to provide, Mr. Speaker, any kind of support or any kind of recognition to what needs to be done in agriculture because they haven't provided one solid idea on one front — not one solid idea, Mr. Speaker.

And when in fact they have spoken out on what you should do on agriculture, along with what they said, Mr. Speaker, today in their platform campaign from Ms. Hunter . . . I heard the member yesterday, I heard the member yesterday in a media scrum, from Watrous, say, they say, well why is it that they don't listen to you? And she says, well when we talk they mock.

Well of course, Mr. Speaker, when she talks we mock. Because when you make ridiculous statements like this, Mr. Speaker — that you should be taking the crop insurance debt that we have in the province today and not leaving it at 15 years and reducing it to 8 or 9 years and planting that hardship on the producers' backs, Mr. Speaker — what kind of an agricultural policy would that be from a farm group of men and women today who would bring that forward, Mr. Speaker? Who would say that?

Well it would be the same party, Mr. Speaker, who would bring forth the resolutions as they have in their campaign literature today about issues that are already completed.

What kind of, what kind of party, Mr. Speaker, who represents rural Saskatchewan today, would say that what we should be doing is we should be paying the NISA (Net Income Stabilization Account) accounts to the provincial government first and the NISA accounts should be paid to the producers, when in fact the NISA accounts are paid directly to the producers, Mr. Speaker? We know how that works, Mr. Speaker.

What kind of a political party, Mr. Speaker, today, what kind of a political party today, Mr. Speaker, in Canada or in

Saskatchewan, who say today, that we should be matching our \$600 million that is paid by the federal government for trade compensation at 40 per cent? Who would suggest that, Mr. Speaker? Other than the Saskatchewan Party? Taking money out of the pockets of producers who are already in hardship, Mr. Speaker, and producing additional hardship for them?

And so when they come forward with a resolution like they put forward today, Mr. Speaker — that we should be participating in a month of sitting about listening, so that they could listen to what's happening about . . . on the BSE in Saskatchewan, in Canada, Mr. Speaker — what we say to them is that this is nothing but a political grandstand for the Saskatchewan Party because they're a party that's void of any new ideas, Mr. Speaker, and any of the new ideas that they had left with them when Mr. Boyd left a year and a half ago, Mr. Speaker, back to his farm. Not one new idea from one of those members on that side of the House on agricultural farm policy.

And when we get into the agricultural debate, Mr. Speaker, when we get into the agricultural debate into the future and we line up what this government has done and what the initiatives of the future will be for this government versus the kinds of campaign that will be on with the Saskatchewan Party, people will see and recognize that over there there isn't much, there is not much to offer in terms of agricultural policy. On this side of the, on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, growth and innovation and delivery on agricultural policy on a regular basis.

And that's why I've said on this motion, Mr. Speaker, that when we get into the month of August, if in fact we require, and we're not . . . we do not see the borders open in this province in the way . . . in this country in the way in which we hope they would be, we would be looking, Mr. Speaker, then to incorporate the political party in some discussion with us from the other side.

But we'll be doing a tremendous amount of work before then, Mr. Speaker, with the industry, with the federal government, with other provinces, and the bureaucracy. And hopefully, Mr. Speaker, that through that process the Saskatchewan Party will be able to keep up. And they'll be able to make some of their own inquiries and be able to do some of their own research, and be able to do some of their own work so they'll be able to understand what's happening in agriculture — not only on this particular file but on others across the province.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I am absolutely not supporting this particular motion because it is only about politics, Mr. Speaker, and has absolutely nothing to do with bringing about the growth and the improvement of what needs to happen in agricultural policy in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order.

Motion negated on division.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, I request the leave of the House to proceed to motions for returns (debatable).

Leave granted.

MOTIONS FOR RETURNS (Debatable)

Return No. 1

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, I move item no. 1, seconded by the member from Wood River:

That an order of the Assembly do issue for return no. 1.

The Speaker: — Order, please. I would just ask the member to read the full return into the record . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . The entire question, yes.

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, I move item no. 1, seconded by the member from Wood River, to move that order of the Assembly do issue for return no. 1 showing:

To the minister responsible for Crown Investments Corporation: (1) the policy of SaskPower regarding the policy for fighting fires caused by the failure of power transformers, power lines, power poles, and related equipment; (2) whether these costs are the responsibility of SaskPower where it's clear its equipment has caused the blaze; (3) further to that, in 2002, the number of claims that were made against SaskPower and whether the claims were honoured.

Motion agreed to.

Return No. 5

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave of the Assembly that returns no. 5 to no. 47 be deemed as moved, seconded, and ordered.

Leave not granted.

(15:45)

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Canora-Pelly, that the Assembly do issue for return no. 5 showing:

To the Minister of Crown Investments Corporation: during the fiscal year 2002-2003, the amount of money SaskEnergy spent on television ads aired on Global TV in Saskatchewan.

The Speaker: — Seconded by? The seconder is?

Mr. Wall: — Seconded by the member for Canora-Pelly.

The Speaker: — Thank you.

Motion agreed to.

Returns No. 6 — 47

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave of the Assembly that returns no. 6 through and including no. 47 be deemed as moved, seconded, and ordered.

Leave granted.

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave of the House to proceed to Committee of Finance.

Leave granted.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Highways and Transportation Vote 16

Subvote (HI01)

The Chair: — I recognize the minister to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to introduce the deputy minister of Highways and Transportation, Harvey Brooks, who is sitting on my left. And on my right is Barry Martin, the associate deputy minister of policy and programs. Fred Antunes, director of operations and planning and business support, is sitting on my right directly behind associate deputy minister, Barry Martin.

Immediately behind me is Don Wincherauk, assistant deputy minister of corporate services. And next to Don is Stu Armstrong, assistant deputy minister of operations. And Terry Blomme is sitting directly behind Don Wincherauk and he is the executive director of the southern region. Thank you.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, we will continue on this afternoon where we left off last night when we were so abruptly . . . terminated our discussions due to some indiscretions. But I will . . . At that point in time my colleague, the member from Shellbrook-Spiritwood, was asking the minister some questions that . . . of some concerns in his constituency so I, what I will do at this time is let that member ask the questions that he had intended to ask last night, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Allchurch: — Well thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, welcome to your officials again today. At the questioning that I was asking last night, was regarding the railways in Saskatchewan and in the Duck Lake area specifically because of a letter I received from Raymond Blanchard, from a councillor at Duck Lake, regarding the fencing of railways in that area.

And my last question to the minister was under the Railway Act, the Railway Act states that the government, the federal government, has a responsibility to the landowners for fencing and to municipalities for additional crossing responsibility. And according to your final question, Mr. Minister, there was some concern that under the short-line railway Act that has somewhat changed. Can you point out to me the differences between that in Saskatchewan now as versus what it used to be under the federal Railway Act?

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — As I was saying last night, there is,

there is . . . And we need to emphasize the clear distinction between the federal railroad Act and the provincial Railway Act. And in the federal Railway Act there is, again I'll repeat, there is no obligation in the Act upon the federally regulated railroads to look after the fencing. However, the class I railroads, CN (Canadian National) and CP (Canadian Pacific), voluntarily do look after the fencing. But when they sell those lines to short-line and they come under the provincial Act, they do not . . . that obligation that they have taken on to do fencing does not move with it. In our provincial Act, there is no obligation for them to look after fencing.

As I mentioned, it could place undue burden on the short-line rails. And the short-line rails operating in any of the jurisdictions that they are operating in really are dependent on the people in that area, the producers in that area, and their margins are not high and so they don't need excess burden.

However there are two Acts under which fencing can be looked at and that would be under The Line Fence Act and The Stray Animals Act and . . . But yet under our railways Act, there is no obligation under the provincial Railway Act for the rail lines, the short-line rails, the provincially regulated rails to look after it.

Within the federal system under their Railway Act, it is my understanding that there is no obligation but that the class I railways have taken that upon themselves to look after fencing.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, and Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, I'm going to re-read because I read it last night, a portion out of the Railway Safety Act of July 1988. And I still believe that this part of the Act is still in place . . . and you're saying it's not . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Okay.

In 1995 did they change this portion of the Act because in 1998 . . . or 1988, pardon me, it said the Canadian National and Canadian Pacific submitted written commitments that they would continue to maintain fences under the Railway Act. So what you're saying is that in 1995 that was changed?

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — In 1995 the Railways Safety Act of Canada was implemented. It replaced the old Railway Act, the Railway Act of Canada. And the Railways Safety Act does not require — does not require — a railway to provide the, or maintain livestock fencing.

Mr. Allchurch: — Okay. Thank you, Mr. Minister, Mr. Chair. In regards to the short-line railways that we have in the province of Saskatchewan, is there anything in that Act or anything that I could pass on to my constituents of Duck Lake regarding fencing of railways that states that they are responsible for the fencing themselves? Or is there a joint venture between the province and the individuals in regarding the fencing of such railways?

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — I think it's important to note that our department has been in contact with people in the, it's Duck Lake area I understand, and they've been in contact with them. They have looked at this issue and are trying to work out some kind of a compromise solution. But I need to again make clear that under The Stray Animals Act, it is the owner's, the landowner's obligation to look after fencing.

Under The Line Fence Act, though there is no obligation under the provincial Railway Act, the issues around fencing could be negotiated or indeed could be taken for arbitration. But at this point we're still trying to work out something that will be of mutual benefit.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, Mr. Chair. In regarding a letter of response that your department sent to Mr. Neal Hardy, president of SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) dated May 14, I just want to read an excerpt out of that letter, and it says:

With respect to your concerns regarding the shifting of additional responsibilities for crossing maintenance to municipalities, our view is that maintenance costs should be shared through negotiated agreements between the municipalities and the provincial (government or provincial) railway (pardon me).

From that I take it that there can be agreements made between the government and certain landowners in regarding that. Can you give some comment on that?

(16:00)

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — I think it's important to note that it is not the province. It's not the province's interest or ownership that is of issue here. The province regulates the short-line rails and the role that we are trying to take is as a facilitator between the two interests — between the landowner and the provincially regulated rail — to help facilitate the process to get some acceptable resolution.

We have also been involving the RMs (rural municipality) because it's very important if we can find some way of resolving this, if we can facilitate that, that there be commonality across the RM and the other RMs as well. So we're still running at a fairly new provincial Railway Act, and we're looking at ways that we can make this work successfully. But our role is as a facilitator between the two interests — the provincially regulated rail and the landowner themselves.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Minister, earlier this month during Committee of Finance I raised the issue with you over dealing with highway traffic officers and their section 23 action under The Occupational Health and Safety Act, unsafe workplace. And you'd indicated that a consultant had been engaged to do a risk assessment on that whole issue. And at that time, you'd also mentioned that the report was due June 23. Minister, my question is have you received that report?

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — I think at this point what has happened is that the draft report has come back to the health and safety committee. The committee gets a week to review the draft report — I have not received the report at this point — and the draft report will then be worked on for a couple of weeks and I'll get the report after that.

In the meantime, I mean, safety of course is always an issue for us. We look forward to getting the report and to working out what our responses are, but to this point I have not received a copy. That is the process that will be followed.

Mr. Hart: — Minister, I would think that members of your, members of your department make up or are at least represented on that committee. And if that in fact is the case, they would have then have seen the draft report. And if so, can you tell us from . . . Even though you may not have seen the report yourself, I would suspect that senior managers within the department have a copy of that report, and can you tell us what the report says or can you have your officials advise you as to the main recommendations of that report?

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — It is very important in an issue as sensitive as this, I believe, that we follow due process in terms of working through to our final report. This draft report, which the consultant has been working on, has been presented to the health and safety committee which has both management and traffic officer representation on it. When they have gone through the report with the consultant, the consultant will take it back and we will get the final report which we'll work with.

I think it's important to note again, regardless of what the report comes out saying, that it is very clear for the department that the safety of our employees is paramount. Specifically this is true of our traffic officers who are out on the highway who face a number of challenges in their daily work. I think it's very important to note that for safety reasons we have outfitted our traffic officers with the latest in safety equipment including — and the practices including — body armour, pepper spray, collapsible batons, a 24/7 communications centre linked to the Canadian Police Information Centre, video and audio cameras for their cars. And in addition to the physical protection, our officers have regular training and they have access to the majority of the RCMP protocols, procedures, and safety-training techniques.

So given all that, I'm confident that the work our government and our department has done, that we are following occupational health and safety guidelines. And until we get that report, we will not be taking further action and I'm not prepared to prejudice our response to that report at all by commenting on it further.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Chair, to the minister. So I understand from your comments then that the occupational health and safety committee — as you had indicated, made up of both management and employees, the highway traffic officers — they have seen the draft, first draft of the report.

I understand the process was that the consultant was hired to do a risk assessment of the duties of the officers. In fact, I understand that the consultant was, has . . . did some ride-alongs. Minister, what is going to change in the consultant's recommendations?

It seems to me that the work has been done in assessing risk and now it needs to be discussed with both management and the employees. Are you going to send the consultant back out into the field again? Is the consultant going to do more consultation and more . . . a further investigation? Has the consultant not completed that part of his work? If not, why has the consultant issued a draft report?

It's not as if the consultant is doing this report in a consultative process with management and the employees. It seems to me

the consultant was hired as an independent third party to provide a third-party perspective on this whole issue.

So it seems to me there seems to be an unwillingness to make a decision in this sort of thing. I don't see anything really changing from the first draft to the final draft. I sense that perhaps there's an unwillingness to openly discuss this issue, Minister.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — The process was agreed to originally by the committee, and I think it is very important for us to respect the process, also to respect the fact that the consultant is independent and is doing this assessment and reporting in an independent way.

In this intervening period now from the draft report and the time when the consultant is working with the occupational health and safety committee, it is our estimation that what is going on is clarification. If there are any concerns, those things will be addressed in the work between the consultant and the health and safety committee.

Any assumptions that would be made about motives around the process, I think, would be in error. And I think I would like to just very clearly say again that we are not prejudging. We don't anticipate that there will be significant changes between the draft report and the final report. But we are respecting the process as was put forward by the committee which has been looking into this.

And again I will say that we will . . . We await the report and we will then work with the report and come up with our final recommendations.

At this point I am not going to speculate and I'm not going to engage in a speculation across the floor. Since we do not have the report, we do not have the advantage of the information that was there. And so there is very little else that I can say other than we will deal with the report when it comes through the process that was agreed upon.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Chair, to the minister. Minister, how can you say you don't have the report? You have the first draft of the report and, as you yourself said, you don't anticipate a whole lot of changes. If you personally do not have the report, you certainly . . . the management within the transport compliance branch and the representatives on that committee have the report. And I'm sure the officials or at least some of the officials that are surrounding you have seen the report and read the report.

So it would . . . I would suspect that the report, as I'd indicated when we previously discussed this . . . And it seems to me that there's basically two, two conclusions that the consultant can come to.

And I would suggest that perhaps the consultant has come to these two conclusions. That is one, one is either you remove those duties that put the highway traffic officers in greater risk and thereby there is no need to issue them side arms, or, secondly, if the department doesn't do that and the consultant has identified the risk, then the highway traffic officers need to be issued with side arms.

You mentioned in your earlier comments that the highway traffic officers have a complete array of protection equipment including, as I understand, fully equipped police cars. So that would tell anyone that looks at the situation that the department has identified a certain amount of risk and has provided that equipment and training to those officers.

So it seems to me that this is a fairly straightforward situation. If the risk is there and the consultant said the risk is there, as I suspect he, the consultant has said, then a decision needs to be made by yourself and your government as to whether those duties that put highway traffic officers in harm's way, where they need to have a side arm to protect them, either those duties need to be withdrawn or perhaps they . . . if those duties are deemed essential then they need to have the side arms issued to them with proper training and proper policies and guidelines in place so that the general public is protected as well as the highway traffic officers.

It seems to me that is the situation, Minister, and it seems to me that there's a reluctance on your part and your department's part to discuss this issue. And it seems to me . . . I wonder if it isn't because of the lateness of the session and it is . . . Is there reluctance, Minister, to just deal with this issue and drag it on so that it cannot be raised during the session?

(16:15)

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Mr. Chair, I think it's important to note that the member opposite can speculate, suggest, imagine, posit, proclaim anything he wants about what he thinks the report might be. Anybody could do that. He can posit his ideas about the department and what they have or have not seen.

I have no indication from any of my senior officials here that they have copies or have seen copies of the draft report. I have explained the process that was agreed to, the process that has been undertaken, and a process which we do respect and which we will follow.

And, Mr. Chair, at this point I can only say again that given the process, given the work that we have already done, we will work with the health and safety committee. We will work with the consultant's report. And many of the speculations that have been raised I would imagine will probably be looked at.

But at this point, Mr. Speaker, I am not . . . or, Mr. Chair, I am not going to prejudice or prejudge the report and how we will respond to it. So speculating about it, suggesting about it really is not getting us anywhere in terms of dealing with department estimates. Thank you.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Chair, to the minister. When do you anticipate that this process will be completed and a decision will be made on this issue?

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Mr. Chair, the process . . . There'll probably be about a couple of weeks before we get the final draft of the report. And then we will go through a process where we are communicating with all of the employees what the report indicates. And we will also then be looking at our decisions and our implementation plans for bringing into effect the decisions that we make around that final report.

But we should have, in our hands, a copy of the final draft, we guess, we expect because of what has been laid out, within a couple of weeks.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Chair, to the minister. So you have said that you expect to have a copy of the final report in your hands within two weeks. At what time will you then make the decisions as to the following the recommendations of the report?

I would assume that the report will make some recommendations to deal with this issue. I'm assuming that it'll be, as I laid them out previously, be either one or the other or perhaps something in-between.

My question is, when will this whole issue that started back in December and actually has had some, I suspect, some negative impact on enforcement because of the restrictions placed on highway traffic officers — and we have seen the breakup of our highways and I would assume that perhaps the lack of enforcement played a part of a role in that sort of thing — and I'm asking when is this whole issue going to be resolved, Minister?

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Mr. Chair, there may be a number of decisions that we're called upon to make. Those decisions might be made at several different levels.

The member is asking for the timeline. Well as we work through the process we will . . . I mean, I'd love to be able to tell you on July 15 at 4:10 we'll have it sorted, but because of the human dynamics that are involved, because we are concerned about the well-being of our workforce including our highway traffic officers, that we need to make sure that we work through the process with them.

We need to make sure that the decisions we're making are the best, most responsible decisions that we can make to make sure that our highway traffic regulations are managed properly and to make sure that our employees are safe. And so the process will unfold after we get that report. There will be a series . . . I anticipate a series of decisions that will have to be made and implemented.

And as far as I'm concerned, and I think as far as I hear from the senior management of the department, there is no will within us to delay this in any way. We want to move ahead in as timely a manner as we can so that our regulations are enforced appropriately and our traffic officers and other employees are safe.

Mr. Hart: — Minister, further to this issue or at least to highway traffic compliance, the last time we discussed that, I had asked you as to whether the director of the highway transport compliance branch had a background in the law and in enforcement, and you had indicated that that person didn't.

And also I had asked if there was anyone within your department that had some background in law and enforcement, and you had said, I believe your answer was that you don't have anyone within the department but you have people to advise your department people.

I'm wondering if that in itself isn't an issue in this whole, or a problem in this whole issue, in that you have directors of branches who I would think have vast experience and training in the engineering field but really don't have any enforcement experience. And I'm wondering if that is part of why this issue hasn't been resolved quite some time ago. And I would speculate that perhaps . . . I'm wondering . . . Or was that part of the scope of the consultant's report, to review management's input on this whole issue?

And I wonder if you could comment as to who is advising your managers and directors on enforcement issues and legal issues when . . . because I'm sure in this latest issue, latest . . . The last few months I understand that directives were issued to highway traffic officers to disengage and to ignore highway violations and that sort of thing. And I understand that there was a concern from the highway traffic officers whether they would held liable for inaction and that sort of thing.

Who is providing advice to the director of the transport compliance branch, Minister, on these legal issues?

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Mr. Chair, the regulations that we are asking to be enforced are transport regulations. They are put together by officials who have a long history in transport compliance; they understand what those issues are. The former director, who had a similar background in government and engineering to the current director, just for the edification of the legislature, is now advising the US federal government on transport compliance and safety.

So it is very important that the member not diminish the skills, the knowledge, and the ability of the people who are in these positions, because they do know what they are doing, they do know what is needed in transport compliance. And they would not have that kind of record and would not be moved to that kind of status position if they were held in low disregard or low regard by others. So they know what is needed in transport compliance.

We do not have and we are not trying to create a provincial police force. What we want is good transport compliance officers that deal with our regulations. That's all we've asked for. That's what we're looking for.

We have policy managers who understand what the issues are in transport compliance and are putting the regulations together in order to meet those needs. And I can tell you clearly that I have the highest regard for our people who are engaged in that area.

The work that they are doing is excellent and when they need to consult they consult widely. Whether that's with Justice, whether it's with other branches of the trucking industry, whether it is with people from all across Canada, whether it is outside of Canada, they consult in terms of the regulations and the enforcement and get the very best of information.

These people, some of them have a long history of being good solid bureaucrats, making very good solid decisions, and that's why they're in place. They consult well, they understand the issues, and I just think that it would not be an appropriate place to go to diminish their skills, abilities, and to show any lack of

respect for the work that they are doing.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Chair, by my question I certainly wasn't implying that these people weren't capable of conducting the affairs of the province and doing their jobs. I simply asked the question as to, if you don't have a background and training in education in the law and enforcement and all your training is in engineering, that there will come such a time, particularly when you're dealing with transport compliance and enforcement of Criminal Code and moving violations and so on, that areas of justice will come up.

And my question simply was to the minister, you know, who do these people consult with when they get into a situation where their training and background and experience perhaps hasn't taken them into these areas. And I was happy to hear the minister say that they do consult with the Department of Justice and those sorts of things. So I was simply asking for clarification, Mr. Chair.

(16:30)

Minister, when we discussed this issue the last time I had asked whether you had any statistics that would indicate the level of enforcement in the last few months of this year since this whole section 23 action has been in place, and comparing that to a similar period a year ago just to get some sort of an indication as to the . . . whether there in fact has been a decreased level of enforcement.

And you said you would provide some information on that and to this point in time I haven't received that. I was wondering whether you have some information dealing with that situation.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Yes we do, Mr. Chair. I have that information here available for the member.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Chair, to the minister. Looking at this very quickly it appears that there has been a decrease in activity of enforcement if you want to gauge that by the number of tickets written.

The period December 1, 2001 to March 31, '02, we had 1,212 tickets; for the year December 1, '02 to March 31, '03, we only had 474. And I would suggest that this has been a direct result of reduced enforcement activities due to the filing of section 23 action by a number of highway traffic officers and the resulting directives to those officers to work in pairs rather than singly, to spend more time at the weigh scales, to not engage and stop suspected violators if they feel they are unsafe.

Would that be a fair summary of that, of this whole situation, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — There are a number of things that I would like to draw to the member's attention in this regard. First of all, I think it's very, very important — and the member may want to make note of this or follow up in *Hansard* — but there's a very, very clear distinction to be made.

It has been said, and I believe the member indicated, that officers were directed to disengage. That is absolutely not the case. The officers were not directed to disengage. But in

contrast to that, they were allowed to disengage if they felt threatened. So they were not directed to.

Okay, now if we go to a number of the items in the information that we have passed on to the members opposite, I think if you look at the issue of the numbers of tickets, you'll see that there is, as you've indicated, a drop there. I would like to believe — and I wasn't born yesterday — but I would like to believe that some of that has to do with an increasing compliance. And the evidence that would help us to believe that that in fact may be the case would be, if you look at the next line on the paper that was handed over and you look at the number of commercial vehicle inspections that happened, safety inspections, and what you will see is a significant increase in the number of inspections that were made. And with that increase in inspections we still have less tickets issued.

So first of all I want to indicate that the possibility is there that the trucking industry realizes that, with so many trucks on the road, that they need to be more compliant. And that's what our hope is, that they are working in that direction as well. We have spoken to them; we've worked with them to try and encourage that.

We also would think it's important to note that the number of tickets and revenue issued in '02-03 is slightly less than tickets and revenue issued in '01-02. And total revenue so far collected in '02-03 is still higher than what was collected in '99-2000.

The department will continue to maintain its priority on safety. And in '02-03, traffic officers significantly increased, as I've indicated, the number of commercial vehicle Safety Alliance inspections. This has been a significant part of our program in encouraging the trucking industry to comply to the regulations. So we'll say that, very clearly, the decrease in number of tickets isn't solely due to the department's directive that allows officers to disengage if they feel unsafe.

In the fall of '02, the transport compliance branch altered their business practices so that traffic officers will receive any necessary training. During the winter months, this reduces the number of officers there. At a minimum, this represents about eight days per officer for training, and this maximizes the traffic officers' time on the road during the spring and summer when our highways are in their weakest state.

And I just want to re-emphasize, as I've done many times in the House to the member opposite, that you've talked about the increasing damage that there seems to be this year. Well if you compare to the last couple of years, that would be so. If you went to another year where we had similar moisture conditions, I think that you would find the concerns would be very close to the same.

So I think the biggest impact that we're seeing, particularly on our thin membrane roads, is because of the change in the weather which does have a fairly significant impact on our highways. Thank you.

Mr. Hart: — Minister, I fail to really see the difference. You say that the officers were directed by the department to disengage if they feel unsafe. They weren't directed to disengage. I mean really, what is the difference?

It says here, and I quote:

The decrease in number of tickets is not solely due to the department's directive to have traffic officers disengage if they feel unsafe.

Is that not directing officers to disengage? You know, somehow I don't, I don't really see the difference in saying, well you just don't do . . . you don't stop anybody. You know, it's . . . I think that the result of this whole issue and the length of time that it's taken to resolve it has had a fairly significant effect on the enforcement activities, and if we want to use revenue generated from tickets as an indicator, minister, I would ask . . . I've been told that the revenue generated in this fiscal year from April 1 to June 10 is only \$47,000, whereas if you compared that for April 1 to June 10 of last year it was \$260,000.

Some 100 . . . 1,043 tickets were issued in last year in that time frame; this year only 184. So if in fact those numbers are correct, Minister, how do you explain such a significant difference in number of tickets issued and revenue generated?

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Mr. Chair, I am assuming at this point that the member opposite got his statistics from the member from Swift Current, but I don't know that for sure. All I can tell you is the statistics that he just put out are not statistics that we have. Thank you.

Mr. Hart: — Well, Mr. Chair, I'm not so sure that the minister . . . Perhaps it's like this report. It may be somewhere in the department but he hasn't seen it. But I would suggest perhaps that those numbers are quite accurate, and I think if the minister does further investigation he will find that the numbers are exactly as I have stated in the House.

But nonetheless it seems to me, it seems to me that, it seems to me that those issues . . . this issue we won't resolve here today, Mr. Chair, and I think it's time that we do move on to another issue within the department, Mr. Chair.

Minister, I'm looking at a headline in today's paper where it says, "Trans-Canada bypass likely," and the article quotes the minister, Mr. Chair, and he says that it's time that we look very close . . . or that this government looks very closely at building a bypass to solve the problem of traffic congestion in the east side of Regina, Mr. Chair. And in fact, the article goes on to say that there will be a open house held later this day where location and plan designs will be on display.

And I guess my question, Minister, to you is, I have raised this issue with you in the past and it seemed like there really was no great hurry to bring this bypass issue forward. And I'm wondering what has changed that this action — welcome action, I might add — is happening today and in the days ahead.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Mr. Chair, the member, when raising the question earlier and quoting some statistics, was reading from a document. And I would ask that the document be tabled, Mr. Chair. I would ask that the document be tabled so that we can, we can review those statistics and verify the numbers and then we'll be able to follow up from there. So I would formally ask that that document be tabled.

And secondly, Mr. Speaker, in answering the last question with regard to the bypass, southeast bypass, I think it's very essential that as a department we engage in long-term planning — not just around Regina, but in all of our work. And when we're looking at the situation in southeast Regina, we have seen tremendous growth in the city of Regina, I think an indication of how hot the economy of Saskatchewan is. That growth is pushing the demands on some of our roads and we in our planning are working with the city to find a resolution to a number of issues that challenge us. One of those will be around the corridor, Victoria East and Ring Road.

And we are working with the city to find a good solution to the problems there of congestion. And as we're working on that, we are also recognizing that the public is asking clear questions about, well what does the further future bring? And we think as people are planning their businesses, their lives, their work, that we need to be able to work with the public. We also need to, when we're planning out 10, 15, 20 years, we need to make sure that we have in place the resources and the infrastructure that is necessary in order to meet those demands.

So when we're talking about the southeast bypass, we definitely are planning and doing some more clear, step-by-step planning so that at such a time as the fixes that are going to be engaged in on Victoria East are reaching their capacity that we will in fact have in place the plans and the resources to meet the needs that occur on that day.

(16:45)

I think we will also, just in noting that, we will also see continued expansion around the city and that growth will continue. And we will be planning for the outer years on different portions of the city to make sure that we have a proper traffic management for the city of Regina, for the city . . . for all of the cities in the province. And I think that is our responsibility to make sure that we have done good forward planning.

Mr. Speaker, there was . . . Mr. Chair, there was also a question that was asked by the member from Swift Current. And I would like to pass this folder over to the member and ask if he would kindly deliver it to the member from Swift Current, please.

And as we are close to our wrap-up time now, Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take a few moments to thank the members opposite for their diligence in questioning. I would like to thank the . . .

An Hon. Member: — He's got more.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — I understood that you were preparing to shut down right . . . A couple of minutes yet? Okay, I'll reserve my remarks then until questions are completed. Thank you.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Chair, the minister indicated that when I asked the question and quoted statistics that I was reading from a document. I was; I was reading from my notes. Now if the minister would like a copy of my notes that I had written in preparation for these estimates, I'd be most happy to provide him with that as soon as I have the opportunity to photocopy

them. I must say, Mr. Chair, that my handwriting certainly is not that legible. It's a trait that I developed so that it's a bit of a code. But if the minister wants my personal notes, I'd be most happy to provide him with a copy of that, Mr. Chair.

Now on the issue of the sudden emergence of this bypass for east Regina, something that wasn't even on the radar screen with this minister and this government until a few days ago, at least in the public, the question I would have, Mr. Chair, is: did the NDP do another poll? And I would suspect that if they did they see that their ratings have dropped again and that they are grabbing at whatever issues that are out there that they feel will raise their re-election chances, Mr. Chair.

It's not unlike the speed limits on our twinned highways. I would suggest, Mr. Chair, that because this minister, back in December, said that he certainly was not open to increasing the speed limits on our twinned highways, and the NDP had a convention which voted down the idea of increasing the speed limits. And then all of a sudden here in April this minister has a change of heart.

Well I suggest this is the same situation here, Mr. Chair, where the NDP's acceptance and ratings by the voting public is dropping and I would suggest, Mr. Chair, that at some recent cabinet meeting the Premier asked his colleagues, or perhaps it was a caucus meeting, asked, okay, who's got an idea that can help us and get our polling numbers up? And I would suggest, Mr. Chair, that perhaps the Minister of Highways like little Johnny in the back seat waved his hand and said, I've got some ideas; we can take that Saskatchewan Party idea of increasing the speed limits and we can claim it as our own.

And you know what? The city of Regina has been asking for a solution to this congestion on the east side for quite some time and maybe we should move that up on the back burner. Maybe we can have an open house and we can show the plans that the city and ourselves have designed and we can make the people of Regina think that we're going to fix their problems, Mr. Chair.

Well I'm going to tell you, Mr. Chair, that I don't think this government's going to have time to fix those problems because sooner or later this Premier's going to have to call an election and we will, there will be a change of government and those highway congestion problems will be addressed in the very near future by a new Saskatchewan Party government.

But having said that, Mr. Chair, I see our time is coming short and the member from Moosomin has one or two questions for the minister, follow-up questions that he discussed with the minister in estimates earlier this session. So I would turn the questions over to that member.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Mr. Chair, I have some responses to the statements that the member made. I think, as was indicated earlier on in the member's discussions around highway traffic officers, he is prone to positing, suggesting, imagining, dreaming, making up — all of those terms are there in his questions and his statements. And I find myself being just slightly put off by some of the suggestions that the member opposite made, and I think that I would like to clarify in terms of the department because I think the kind of statement that was

made really does go after the department's credibility.

In 1996 the department was engaged in a Regina region highway planning study and in that study looked at the . . . began the process of looking at what would make near-term fixes and what would make long-term fixes for the Regina Southeast area. And in that work part of that was looking at the southeast bypass. So all the speculation and imagination and the dreaming that somebody just wakes up and has really doesn't count for much when way back in '96 we were already doing the planning, working with the city, and making clear that we had a plan and a direction for the development of this city.

And I would say that we have the same with other cities around this province and with the highways of this province. So the speculation and imagining — all of that that the member goes through — really is relatively meaningless.

I would also, Mr. Chair, like to put a little bit of flesh on the bones of his dreams around what happened with 110 and to clarify some of the facts around that. I indicated in the winter that, given the facts that we had, I was not prepared to recommend to cabinet that we go ahead with the 110 at that point. But I was directing the department and others to do research to make sure that we had the best information. And during the interim I was engaged in many discussions with the public through radio, in many other ways, engaged with the public about what the issues were around safety and about what the issues were around moving the speed limit to 110.

During that time period we got significant information, which I have subsequently named, which then enabled me to make a recommendation to cabinet which led to our decision to move to 110.

So the Sask Party can go on dreaming all they want about how we steal their ideas. But while they're sleeping, we're planning. When they wake up and see those ideas and claim them as their dream, well, Mr. Speaker, I can't . . . responsible for their dreams. I'm only responsible for the solid planning and the decision making that this government is doing and will continue to do as we build this province for many years to come.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a quick follow-up . . . Mr. Minister, the other day we were talking about Highway 47. And I'm not sure . . . I had mentioned about waiting for a report that was supposed to be sent to me. It was done by Trialpha Consulting Ltd. on the 47 Highway between No. 1 and No. 48. And the consultant basically pointed out a number of concerns that were raised at that time.

They did a study, I believe, on August 29, 2001 where they did a survey and out of that survey they determined we'll have more than 50 per cent of the vehicles using 616, would use 47 if it was in proper condition. And in their study it also reflected that the use of 616, for most people they used it because of the condition of 47 but they would prefer 47 because it actually made their trip shorter.

So just a quick question, Mr. Minister. Have you seen the survey and looked at it thoroughly, and how are you using this

survey to address the condition of 47 between No. 1 and No. 48?

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — I think if you'll take a look at the information you'll find that that is really a part of our normal information collecting that goes on.

And one of the things that has been happening there is that with that information we have been able to work closer with the RMs in looking at 616 as a possibility. Some of the other RMs don't see things quite the same way, and so what we're doing is continuing to work with them to try and build a consensus as to how that roadway should be developed.

But the study itself was a study that was jointly worked out with the RMs and jointly funded and so we . . . That's just part of our ongoing collection of data as we try and work with the RMs to find the most acceptable solution to all of them. And that's the direction we're headed in.

At this point I would like to thank my officials for all of the work that they've done. Not just in preparing and answering the questions, but in the long-range planning which . . . I appreciate the kind of thinking that this department has engaged in over many years and the good work that they are continuing to do.

And I think that we have as a government enabled them to really move forward with a lot of the program of building Saskatchewan with a three-year plan of \$900 million over those three years. We have done tremendous work on building up the highways infrastructure and really rebuilding our provincial highways. And I want to thank and commend the department for doing that.

I want to thank my officials for their diligent work in being prepared for this question period and in providing clear and concise answers to clear and concise questions.

I want to also say that this year my government proudly goes on record as having the second largest highways transportation budget in the history of the province — in the last four years more than a billion dollars invested in our transportation network. We've built new bridges like the one in North Battleford. We've been out there working with RMs co-operatively all across the province rebuilding roads. We have been working . . . hiring students; we hired more than 140 students this year alone. And we hire people with disabilities. And we know that throughout our work safety is absolutely vitally important and we continue . . . encourage best safety practices.

Mr. Chair, this government has a plan; we're on track. We have been meeting and exceeding the commitments that we have made and we will continue to do that. This year marks the final phase of our \$900 million investment in our roads and our transportation infrastructure.

Mr. Chair, this province is wide open to the future, to many opportunities. And I want to thank my department for their hard work in helping open up the future for all Saskatchewan people and for those who see this as a destiny. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Chair, I'd just like to take this opportunity to thank the minister and his officials for the answers they provided during question period, and certainly the information provided has been very useful to the members on this side of the House.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Chairman, I move that the committee rise and report an awful lot of progress this afternoon and ask for leave to sit again.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 17:00.

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